

# European pulse

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How and why did the EU became interested in the problem of Ulcinj Saline

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Vlado Dedović

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Foreword: **Asylum**

Vladan Žugić

During 2014, Montenegro exported goods in the amount of EUR 338 million. During the first 11 months, the registered inflow of remittances from abroad amounted to EUR 322 million, and it will probably rise to about EUR 350 million on average per year. This is the money that comes via banking transactions and it is estimated that at least another half or twice as much is delivered by the citizens who temporarily work abroad to their friends or families in Montenegro as a gift or in another form through unregistered, private channels.

It turns out that the labour force is Montenegro's best export product. And we should not be perplexed by the fact that in recent months an even greater number of Montenegrin citizens for the umpteenth time went abroad in a search for a better life.

**Rafet Husović**, vice president of Government for regional development, announced that during the first four months of this year 1.015 persons applied for asylum in EU member states, a slight increase on the previous year. Civil sector and the opposition claim that more than 4.500 persons from the north of the country left since the beginning of the year.

Both sides are most likely right - the difference is that significantly higher number of Montenegrin citizens is not looking for asylum, knowing that it is hard to obtain, and instead tries to find an illegal job for a few months using their cousins and friends who left long ago and have proper working papers in Germany, Sweden, France, Luxembourg...

The choice is simple. Risk being caught by immigration services on some construction site or in the kitchen of a restaurant and be deported, after having saved a few thousand euro by sleeping at your cousin's or friend's for three months, the period for which you can stay as a tourist in the Schengen zone. Or, take up the advice of the Minister of Labor **Zorica Kovačević** and pick peaches and grapes on plantations in Montenegro for 10 to 15 EUR per day.

Or keep waiting for the promise of the of Prime Minister **Milo Đukanović** from 2012 to come true – a promise that 40,000 new jobs will be opened by the elections in 2016.

**Calendar**

- 4 - 8 May **Celebration of European week** / EU Delegation to Montenegro organised a celebration called "European week in Montenegro" with a series of activities and programmes, such the dance with EU ambassadors, workshops on creative writing with Montenegrin writers, debate on the benefits of EU membership. The programme involved a "Mini EXPO" event as well, inspired with this years' Universal exhibition in Milan, where EU member states will be presented.
- 7 May **EC: Growth 3.3%, debt 62%** / According to the spring forecast of the European Commission (EC), Montenegrin economy will grow 3.3% this year. The previous winter estimate put the expected growth at 3%. The Government still expects the growth to reach 3.5%. According to the EC's projections, Montenegro's public debt is expected to reach 62% of the GDP this year, and 65.7% next. Countries with over 60% of public debt are regarded as highly indebted.
- 19 May **Solid foundations for tangible results for EU** / Montenegro made solid foundations for the following, more demanding stage of European integrations in which tangible results are expected, concluded the Committee for EU accession talks, chaired by Prime Minister **Milo Đukanović**. Ministers of Justice, Internal Affairs and Human and Minority Rights attended this session of the Committee, alongside the president of Supreme Court and Supreme state prosecutor.
- 26 May **Đukanović: "It doesn't matter whether we join the EU in 5 or 10 years..."** / Prime Minister Milo Đukanović said it was less important whether Montenegro became an EU member state in 5 or 10 years, as long as the state remained focused on reforms. "It does not matter whether the goal is achieved in 5 or 10 years. It is important for us to stay focused on reforms. We will continue at this pace and I have no doubts that our progress will reflect positively on the entire process", Đukanović said in an interview for Italian paper *"La Stampa"*.
- 28 May **1.015 persons from Montenegro applied for asylum** / **Rafet Husović**, vice president of Government for regional development, said 1.015 persons have filed for asylum in EU member states during the first four months of this year. "Out of that number, 850 submitted their first request for the asylum, while 165 persons repeated the request", Husović said, stating that the highest number of asylum requests was recorded in Germany, Sweden, France and Luxembourg. He said 561 citizens had moved out temporarily from Rožaje. Part of the civil sector previously announced that more than 4.500 persons from the north of country had left since the beginning of the year.

## Fake empires



By: Tanja Fajon

The author is a Slovenian politician and a member of European Parliament

As I am writing this article, my thoughts hark back to May last year. Slovenia was undergoing a demanding and dynamic campaign for the European elections when the news about Serbia being hit by severe floods broke out. Besides successful calls to international community to help and donate, one other thing that caught attention was the alleged blocking of some websites and online content. Namely, online content perceived as critical of the government's reaction to the flooding was removed from several websites in Serbia, and entire websites were temporarily disabled.

And this is not the only alarm bell on the state of freedom of expression and media we heard from Serbia in the recent past. Since I was appointed a shadow rapporteur in the European Parliament, troubles with media freedom are the first thing that comes to mind in relation to the situation in Serbia. Studies show that the Serbian media landscape is unfavourable to journalists, who are often victims of verbal and physical attacks. The space for objective, professional and highly critical reporting has also been considerably limited. 2015 World Press Freedom Index illustrates this: Serbia is ranked 67 (out of 180 countries), 13 ranks lower compared to 2014. It seems the situation is deteriorating and this trend worries me.

Unfortunately, the state of play looks even gloomier in Montenegro, where only a week ago another attack happened and another journalist doing her job was a victim of aggression. Her car was destroyed, leaving her in fear and under police protection. In the European Parliament we expressed our concern over attacks on journalists and media property on several occasions, but the situation does not seem to have improved. I believe that unless the cases of criminal attacks on journalists are resolved and justice served, we cannot expect this trend to stop. According to the 2015 World Press Freedom Index, Montenegro is ranked 114 (out of 180 countries), the second worst result in Europe.

The worst rank in Europe and 117th position out of 180 countries goes to Macedonia. A country currently in a deep political crisis, where the media – just like in any other crisis – play an important role. Ever since Gruevski's government took control of the country and its policies there were serious accusations of him taking over control over media, too. Rewarding merely

pro-government media and ignoring critical voices, Gruevski created a 'fake empire', which received an epilogue only couple of days ago when massive anti-government protests took place and not a single Macedonian TV station was broadcasting them! As a consequence, Twitter and Facebook which became more and more popular among young and educated in the past couple of years, were the most reliable source of information. But the government was clever enough to limit the reach of social media on the day of the protests: internet connection turned weak, making it difficult for the photos to be uploaded, as reported by those who were holding different flags and asking for Gruevski to leave.

And this makes me wonder: Is controlling the public opinion, building the fake empire of like-minded and violating one of the fundamental freedoms – that of expression – sustainable in the long-term? It is certainly not democracy, as free media and pluralism of thought form the very basis of it.

In order to achieve a 'healthier' state of media in Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia, I see two main areas in need of improvement: first, higher level of media freedom is necessary, enabling journalists to report critically and avoid self-censorship; and secondly, better regulation of transparency of media ownership. Letting financial capital dictate the information flow and creating public opinion in the historical times for these countries – the process of joining the EU – is simply unacceptable. Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms is at the very core of the European Union. On the other hand, the future of Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia lies within the European family. However, my impression is that peoples of these countries want higher media freedom and respect for freedom of expression not because of their future within the EU, but because they are fed up with suppression and censorship.

With sophisticated technologies and social media giving power back to the people, I will remain optimistic about reaching this goal.

*Source: European Western Balkans website*

Will Ulcinj saline be revived or we await for more reprimands from Europe

## Birds die singing in Ulcinj saline



By: Svetlana Pešić

After the bankruptcy of the Ulcinj saline, which represents one of the most important nesting grounds for birds in the Mediterranean, the company stopped pumping out fresh and pumping in salt water, and with it, the food for the birds. This endangered the migration of more than 250 species out of about 500 birds registered in Europe. If the pumps for pumping the salt water into the pools of Ulcinj saline are not started soon, and if the food is not provided to the birds and the area declared as protected area and hunting prohibited, biodiversity will be destroyed. Also, that could jeopardise negotiations between EU and Montenegro.

Even though Montenegrin civil sector warned about the gravity of the problem in Saline, Montenegrin authorities reacted only after a dramatic warning from ambassadors of France, Germany and Poland - **Veronica Brumo**, **Gudrun Stainaker** and **Grażyna Sikorska**. This was the first occasion on which EU representatives used a specific example to drive home the importance of preserving the environment. They requested urgent revival of biodiversity, which requires the Ulcinj saline to be put back into operation. They warned that the situation must be regulated so that the current state of affairs would not jeopardise international reputation of Montenegro and its accession negotiations with the EU. They submitted a letter to the Council of Europe and European Parliament in which they warn that it is the obligation of Government to protect the area of the Saline. The basis for that can be found in the Convention of Berne, Bonn and Ramsar, to which Montenegro is a party. Similar obligations stem from EU 2000 Natura Programme, and are part of the negotiation process in Chapter 27 - Environment.

Ulcinj Saline is an artificial ecosystem and serves as a nesting ground for a great number of birds, as well as several endangered species of fish, amphibians and reptiles. In 2003, Saline was acquired by Eurofond, backed by businessman **Veselin Barović**

*If the pumps that pump the salt water in the pools of the Ulcinj saline are not started soon, and the food is not provided to birds and this area declared as a protected area and hunting prohibited, biodiversity will be destroyed. Ambassadors of Germany, France and Poland warned that it could jeopardise negotiations between EU and Montenegro.*

who is close to Prime Minister **Milo Đukanović**. The Saline started bankruptcy procedures in 2005 due to a EUR 13.000 debt, and in 2011 it experienced insolvency and bankruptcy.

The Saline was constructed in 1934, on the location of a former lagoon Zoganj mud, which was drained and turned to salt water pools. Its surface covers an area of 1.468 hectares. Out of 500 species of European birds, 250 have been registered in the area of Saline. Saline is in a "sandwich" of most significant ornithological sites in the Adriatic, even wider. Additionally, the Ulcinj saline is one of the ten largest and one of the youngest salines in the Mediterranean. Two years ago a decision was made to prevent the transformation of this area into an urban plot, which appeared to have been the initial intention of Eurofond. Meantime, the land occupied by the Saline was unsuccessfully advertised for sale eleven times. The price of the entire property was valued at 179 million EUR. Another problem obstructing the return to the pumping is the ongoing dispute between the state and the owners of Saline, who demand the state to recognise their full ownership of the property or pay them EUR 200 million.

In a letter to Prime Minister Đukanović in April, **Anneliese Dodds**, member of European Parliament and Head of Parliamentary committee for Stabilisation and Association (SAPC), urged the Government to come up with the best solution for the Saline. An EP Delegation, including Dodds, paid a visit to Saline and organised a meeting with the president of the municipality, trade unions,



Anneliese Dodds

ministry representatives, bankruptcy management, NGOs. *"Despite our expectation to meet the minister or his deputy, we were only met by low ranking officials of the Ministry of sustainable development and tourism (MSDT), who were not able to explain how the resources allocated by the Government will be used – who will start the works, in what manner and when. We understand that urgent steps are needed in order to rebuild pump stations which would direct sea water to Saline. If this is not done during the next few weeks, the birds will lose this year for reproduction and many of them will die. We urge You to intervene, so that we don't lose time"*, Dodds pointed out in her letter to Montenegrin Prime Minister.

Following the urgings from EP and ambassadors, the authorities took immediate steps. **Daliborka Pejović**, state secretary of MSDT, announced that the Ministry is preparing information on the necessary EUR 165.000 that would be used for the reparation of pumps and pumping of fresh and salt water into pools.

**Ivana Vojinović**, deputy minister of sustainable development and tourism and head of the Working group for chapter 27, told *European pulse* that MSDT secured EUR 60.000 for the reparation of pumps, with support of UNDP and the Commercial court, in line with the conclusions of the international conference: *"In a government meeting organised on 28 May 2015, the Government decided to allocate additional 80,000 EUR for the renewal of infrastructure in Saline"*, she clarified.

Municipality of Ulcinj announced it would with a voluntary action to clean the channels needed to pump the salt water into the Saline pools on 5 June, the World day of the protection of environment. The action will be organised in cooperation with MSDT, Centre for protection and research of birds (CZIP) and Centre for sustainable development.

However, **Darko Saveljić**, ornithologist and executive director of Centre for protection and research on birds (CZIP), stressed that regardless of the good news, the state of Saline is chaotic and extremely difficult for the birds: *"Many pools are without water and 300 pairs of flamingos, who started nesting,*



Darko Saveljić

*Out of 500 species of European birds, 250 have been registered in the area of Saline. Saline is in a "sandwich" between two most significant ornithological sites in the Adriatic.*

*were forced to seek other habitats. Many other species were also forced to nest in empty pools which exposed them to predators"*, Saveljić told *European pulse*. Saveljić said that the state received warnings on the need to protect the biodiversity of Saline since 1999, that nine years later a plan was made to manage the Saline, and in 2011, a study which emphasised the protection of the environment. He said that *"It was all shelved. The State assumed the obligation in 2012 of declaring it a monument of nature. Today, Saline presents a great problem, and its existence depends on our consciousness and conscience"*.

Saveljić added that the Managing board of Saline declared the area first a private park of nature in Montenegro in 2004, and a year later it banned hunting and fishing in that area by a special decision. *"Contrary to the vision of the current management, Ministry of agriculture adopted a controversial decision in 2010 which again approved hunting in one part of the Saline, thereby ignoring the decision of the management as a legal subject, a decision which is moreover in line with the public interest of Montenegrin citizens and international community"*, he said.

Saveljić added that nobody reacted because of the catastrophic situation in Saline, until CZIP urged EC, Bird Life International and secretariats of conventions to which Montenegro is a signatory to react. Saveljić reminded that CZIP pointed out that pumps need to be opened so that the ecosystem on the eastern shore of the Adriatic could be maintained, protecting migration of more than million birds flies in spring and autumn: *"Saline ceased its work last year and all vital objects for the pumping of water were destroyed, even though the appointed bankruptcy management was under a legal*

*Ministry of sustainable development secured 60,000 EUR for the renovation of the pump, along with the help of UNDP and Commercial court, and Government allocated additional 80,000 EUR for the renewal of infrastructure in Saline. However, this is just the first step.*

### "Public interest" more important than the preservation of nature

EC and EU officials indicated several times that Chapter 27 - Protection of environment will be one of the most difficult chapters for Montenegro. The screening for Chapter 27 stated that Montenegro "partly harmonised" its legislation with EU acquis and that its implementation of legal acquis is still "at an early stage".

The Report states that "Before the opening of Chapter 27, Montenegro will have to fully align its legislation with directives on habitats and wild birds. Articles of essential importance are still missing, which determine the entire logic of EU regime related to the protection of birds, species and habitats..."

The logic of Chapter 27 is based on Natura 2000 programme. It is an environmental network of protected areas in the EU and the largest coordinated network of protected areas in the world. Montenegro will become a member of Natura 2000 once it joins the EU.

In 1992, governments of European Union adopted the legislative framework designed to protect most endangered habitats and species throughout Europe: Habitats directive (requires special areas of preservation intended for other species, excluding birds) and Birds directive (requires the establishment of special protected areas for birds). Together they make Natura 2000 network of protected areas.

Screening for Montenegro adds that scientific data for the determining of protected areas and future Natura 2000 network are limited as well: "Montenegro only marked five land Emerald areas so far (future NATURA 2000 network) and there is no protection of coastal and marine areas... In addition, Montenegro will have to compile a national list of locations of significance for the Union within the Habitats directive, as well as to mark areas of special protection within the Birds directive in order to establish environmental NATURA 2000 network". EC indicated that Montenegro overemphasised the definition of prevailing public interest. "This approach is not in line with the objectives of EU directives that relate to nature", stressed the Report.

*and criminal obligation to preserve them".*

Saveljić emphasised that it is important to make the destroyed pumps functional in order to pump out rainwater and pump in salt water and with it the food for birds. *"We expect that these pumps are made functional and ecosystem is maintained in line with previous 80-year practice. If that is not done by mid June, the area will turn into a desert, and thereby cease to service millions of migrant birds. Ecological damage caused will be immeasurable and it will inevitably lead to a turbulent international reaction. We hope for a final attempt at protection, as envisaged by the spatial plans",* Saveljić said.

Vojinović pointed out that the process of revision is currently taking place at the Agency for the protection of environment regarding the Study on protection of Saline, which will define precise borders, the concept of protection, improvement, sustainable development, as well as the way to manage this area, considering the owner's rights

*Darko Saveljić, ornithologist and executive director of Centre for protection and research of birds (CZIP), underlined that, regardless of the announcements, the state of Saline is chaotic and extremely difficult for the birds: "Many pools are without water and 300 pairs of flamingos, who started nesting, were forced to seek other habitats. Many other species were forced to nest in empty pools which leaves them exposed to predators."*

and existing economic activities. She said the study will provide a proposal for the management of this protected natural property, and identify the possible resources necessary for maintaining protection. Vojinović said that in the meantime, all activities undertaken for the protection of Ulcinj Saline seek to establish such conditions that will protect biodiversity in present circumstances.

Member of the State Election Commission (SEC)

Vlado Dedović for *European Pulse*

## Next elections are one of the the most important tests for Montenegro in the EU integration process

Member of the State Election Commission (SEC) **Vlado Dedović** told *European Pulse* that organization of the next parliamentary elections will be one of the most important tests for Montenegro in the European integration process. "I expect that the electoral environment in the next elections will be under special scrutiny of the international public since the previous electoral cycle was marked by decline in confidence in elections and phenomena like the affair "Recording", as well as allegations of abuse of state resources during the electoral process. The way elections have been conducted in the past has continuously give rise to contestation of integrity of the elections and their results. Allegations of different types of electoral abuse were present in all electoral processes, and are a consequence of, in my opinion, inadequate response of state institutions

to the affair "Recording", which is also the key event that made us take a step back and review the confidence of political subjects in electoral processes", said Dedović, who was elected to the SEC as a representative of nongovernmental organizations.



Vlado Dedović

» *How do you comment the fact that virtually none of the key innovations stipulate by the new set of electoral laws to ensure fair elections have been implemented in practice?*

The Law on the Election of Councillors and Members of Parliament stipulates as one of the most important innovations a new approach to voter identification at the polls. Although provisions for electronic identification entered into force in early November last year, the conditions for implementation of these procedures have not been

*It is very important that the SEC and the Ministry of Interior join efforts to train institutions to implement the new system of voter identification and test it before the parliamentary elections*

put in place to this. There has been a lot of talk about it during organisation of local elections in Herceg Novi, in December 2014, when electronic voter identification could not take place as envisaged by the law. A different approach to identification using spray and optical readers was applied, which did not have a basis in the Law, and was an improvised opinion of the SEC, as a consequence of which the results are not legally binding. In theory, we could have had a situation that citizens of Herceg Novi cast their vote without previous identification – since nobody could have obliged them to be identified at a polling station in a way that was not laid down in the Law on Election of Councillors and Members of Parliament.

» *Is the situation the same with regard to electronic identification of voters?*

The situation is the same even today, since the Ministry of Interior has not yet provided equipment for electronic identification of voters, even though more than a year and three months has passed since the adoption of the Law on Election of Councillors and Members of Parliament. According to the latest information from the Ministry of Interior, the procurement of equipment is in its final stage – and I indeed expect that the conditions for the implementation of the new system of identification will be provided soon. I believe it is especially important that the SEC and the Ministry of Interior join efforts to train institutions to implement the new system of voter identification and test it before the parliamentary elections.

*Allegations of different types of electoral abuse were present in all electoral processes, and they are a consequence of, in my opinion, inadequate response of state institutions to the affair "Recording", which is also the key event that made us take a step back and review the confidence of political subjects in the electoral processes.*

» *There are also speculations about early elections being organised this autumn. What would this mean, given the lack of legal preconditions for such elections?*

Possible scheduling of early parliamentary elections for the second half of 2015 would be a serious problem in terms of organization, since the conditions for organization of elections in accordance with the provisions of the Law on Election of Councillors and Members of Parliament still have not been created.

» *The SEC has completed all of its tasks either. The previous SEC had problems with staff, services, office space... have these been provided to the new SEC?*

The SEC still lacks elementary capacities to enforce its authority prescribed by the law - primarily with regard to the control of political party financing and monitoring implementation of the Law on Electoral Rolls. The SEC adopted the act on internal organization and systematization of professional service, which was confirmed by the Administrative Committee of the Parliament at the beginning of the year - but the recruitment for the professional service has not yet been conducted. I would like to stress that the budget of the SEC has been increased this year, and given the set-up of a professional service it should be possible for it to build its capacities and improve its work regarding enforcement of competences accorded to it by the law. The European Commission has repeatedly warned against SEC's lack of capacities in its recent reports on Montenegro's progress, but to this day the situation remains unchanged.

» *The Law on Electoral Rolls is now centralized and this is a part that was done in accordance with the statutory deadlines. Could you tell us something more about that part of the electoral legislation?*

The new electoral roll has not provided guarantees that all persons who are enrolled in

## Police and prosecution must take an interest in electoral abuse

» *What is the role of police and prosecutions in the electoral process?*

Through adoption of a new package of election laws, legal prerequisites for a more efficient fight against electoral abuses during the electoral process were created. However, as until now, the major bottleneck remains effective implementation and the degree to which the institutions are willing to take a proactive approach to reduce the space for electoral abuse.

In addition to bodies of election administration, police and prosecution ought to take much more interest in tracking and prosecuting cases of electoral abuse. During a recent conversation with Supreme State Prosecution, I have especially stressed the need for more proactive action of the prosecution within electoral processes, which has not been the case so far. I remind that several verdicts were passed in the previous period, some of which are already final, in which both violation of freedom of choice during voting and electoral abuse have been established.

it really do meet the requirements for exercise of the right to vote. It seems that the problem of so-called fictitious voters will continue to exist, since spot checks of the data contained in the registers of residence have not been carried out. Furthermore, given that during the process of establishing a new electoral roll, change of data on polling station for nearly 90,000 citizens has been conducted, it is essential that the Ministry of Interior implements a legal obligation under the Law on Electoral Roll and inform citizens of all the changes that have occurred in relation to their polling stations, in order to avoid problems in the period after announcement of elections - or even during the very election day.

V.Žugić

## Casual Juncker



European Commission tried to justify the behaviour of its president **Jean Claude Juncker**, by portraying his style of behaviour as "casual". During a recent summit in Riga, Juncker acted close with European leaders numerous times - he patted the Minister of Foreign

Affairs of Luxembourg on cheek, and kissed the Belgian Prime Minister on the head. Still, the thing that drew the most of the attention was the greeting he addressed to Hungarian Prime Minister **Victor Orban**, welcoming him with "Hello, dictator". His spokesperson, **Margaritis Shinas**, told that Juncker is "known for his informal and often causal style", which resulted in laughter in the press hall of the Commission.

His spokesperson reminded that Juncker (60) is already 35 years involved in politics, and was the Prime Minister of Luxembourg for 19 years. "He is very well acquainted with all European leaders, with whom he has mutual trust", told the spokesperson of president of European Commission. He added that Orban replied to Juncker, by addressing him as "great duke" (the full name of member state from which Juncker comes from is Grand Duchy of Luxembourg), but he refused to comment Juncker's views on Orban's politics.

## Portuguese golden visas



Corruption scandal regarding the so-called golden resident visas that Portugal offers to foreign investors, reduced the interest on the party of wealthy Chinese people by 20%, as reported by the Government in Lisbon.

Portugal had been offering so-called golden visas to foreigners in return for investments. Given that Portugal is a member of EU and Schengen area, this also provides them with access to other EU member states. Golden visa requires a minimum of 500.000 EUR for the purchase of a house or an apartment, investment of at least half a million EUR in Portugal

or the opening of 10 new jobs. Smaller investments in scientific or art projects are also possible.

So far, 2.738 residence permits have been issued in Portugal in turn for 1.4 billion EUR. Opponents of this mechanism believe that the origin of money is unknown, that this is suitable for the entrance of criminal organisations, but also point out that the money is not invested in the development of the economy, but only in real estate. Most interest comes from the Chinese buyers. Out of 2.738 residence permits issued by April this year, 1.909 were issued to the Chinese, followed by 86 visas to Brazilians, and 79 to Russians.

The scandal involved arrests of 11 persons by Portuguese police in November of 2014, among whom were three Chinese nationals, director of Portuguese border police and two high officials, who were allegedly part of a much wider network. The events led to the resignation of Minister of Interior Affairs, **Miguel Macedo**.

## Europe 20-25% cheaper for US and Chinese tourists

Since the weakened euro rendered Eurozone countries much cheaper for tourists, particularly those from US and China, travels to Europe became even more attractive. There was a notable increase in the number of reservations and sale of airplane tickets to Europe since



the beginning of the year, and the trend is expected to continue. Now tourist workers in Europe only need to persuade tourists to spend more, since it has been shown that Chinese tourists spend four times more money on average compared to Americans.

Thanks to the strengthening of dollar, vacations in Europe will be some 25% cheaper for American tourists compared to 2014. Chinese price of vacation is lower by some 20%, which is how much the Chinese currency gained relative to the euro. Residents of the Eurozone, on the other hand, are expected to spend their vacations inside of the euro area as their spending declined again with the deteriorating economic growth.

Studies of the expectations of business and public in the Western Balkans

## Little optimism



Business circles in the Western Balkans are very cautious and do not expect to see short-run improvements in the economies of region, which have still not found a solution to the key problem: how to stimulate economic growth and employment, and reduce budget expenses and debts. They also stress that the only way in which growth and development could be spurred is by establishing a comprehensive regional policy oriented towards the European Union. That is the conclusion of the opinion poll among the businesses and citizens in Western Balkan states, conducted as part of the strategy "South-East

Europe 2020" of the Regional Cooperation Council in Sarajevo. The results of the Balkan barometer were publicised on 6 May in Brussels, as part of the "Day of regional cooperation", which gathered together ministers and officials from the Western Balkans, representatives of European Commission and European Parliament, and analysts who monitor development in the region. The poll was conducted in December of last year, and it interviewed 1.400 companies and about 7.000 citizens from states of region.

Expectations of the citizens of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia and Serbia are mostly focused on job creation, economic growth, and improved social situation. Citizens also underline the problems with mismanagement of governmental and public affairs, inefficient rule of law, endemic corruption, and great dissatisfaction caused by the fact that transition, democratic changes and change of governments did not bring any real improvements, above all with regard to the state of the labour market.

Business circles, on the other hand, stress that they would be "willing to increase employment... but the dominant sentiment of business circles is that they are not very optimistic in their expectations". Moreover, notes the Balkan Barometer, they "face deteriorating odds in most economies, especially in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia".

Both the business circles and the citizens of

### 53% of citizens spend their vacation at home, and 28% do not pay for utilities

Unemployment is the leading problem for citizens of region: 64% of citizens from region overall listed that as a problem. About 75% of citizens in South-East European countries are mostly or entirely dissatisfied with economic situation. The percentage is even higher in Bosnia and Kosovo, and about a third of citizens believe that the economic situation will not improve in the next 12 months. More than half of citizens of the region, 53%, could not afford a seven-day vacation away from home, 28% could not pay their utility bills during last 12 months, and 18% were not able to service their loans. About 52% of citizens from South-East Europe would consider living and working abroad, while 45% would not. The highest percentage of citizens who think about going abroad are found in BiH (58%), and the lowest in Macedonia (35%), while 45% of citizens from Serbia are considering that option.

### Serbians sceptical of EU membership

Citizens of Western Balkan countries are fully supportive of regional cooperation and EU membership. However, half of citizens mostly do not think that relations in South-East Europe improved during the last 12 months, while 40% thinks that they have. For the majority of citizens from the region (40%), EU membership is a good thing, 37% finds it neither good or bad, and 20% thinks it is bad.

Only in Serbia the majority of citizens see EU membership as rather a bad than a good thing, notes the study. In Serbia, 24% - which is the lowest rate in the region, thinks that the EU membership is a good thing, while 27% thinks that it is bad. Still, the majority of citizens are undecided - 44%. Unlike in Serbia, in Kosovo and Albania the overall opinion is that the EU membership is a good thing. 89% of citizens from Kosovo and 84% of citizens from Albania hold this opinion.

In terms of EU accession, the biggest optimists are the citizens of Albania, half of whom expect their country to join the EU by 2020, and another 31% by 2025. Citizens of Kosovo are similarly hopeful, but 13% of them think that this might never happen. The biggest pessimists are the citizens of BiH, 38% whom thinks that their country will never become an EU member state, while only 19% thinks that it could join by 2020.

the region expect, primarily, bigger investments in production and infrastructure, and the businessmen point to the great problems related to solvency, "financial grip" due to high level of non-performing loans and growing costs of financing. Businessmen are also worried by macroeconomic problems, especially the pressing need for reduction of deficits and budget balancing. They believe it is crucial to improve technology in order to advance economic growth, as well as to invest in human resources and infrastructure, and that governments and authorities should better manage economic and public affairs.

The majority of companies from South-East Europe (SEE) have a positive view on the membership of EU and just 8% of analyzed companies see membership as a bad thing. Across SEE, 56% of analyzed companies believe that EU membership is a good thing for business, while 34% of them believe that it would be neither good nor bad. However, there are substantial differences among countries. The majority of sceptics are found in Serbia, where only 41% of companies believe that EU membership would be good for their business, 12% sees it as a bad thing and 42% as neither good nor bad. Even in Kosovo ¾ believes that the EU membership would help them to improve their business. However, Kosovo also has a great number of sceptics (13%) compared to other states from region. Albania is the only state with a higher percentage of companies that believe EU

membership would be bad for their business than either Serbia or Kosovo - 14%. In BiH, 68% of businesses believe that EU membership is good for business, 59% in Croatia, 55% in Montenegro and 53% in Macedonia.

The poll also shows that companies in the region see taxes as biggest obstacles to doing business. Financing costs are another problem, together with the practice of other businesses focused on suppression of competition. The least problematic issue is access to land.

Directors of companies from Kosovo are worried about several things, particularly about corruption, organised and street crime. On the other hand, Macedonian companies seem to be less concerned, but not problems with business licences, electricity and, to a certain extent, lease of land. Croatian and Serbian companies see tax rates as their biggest obstacles, while companies from BiH find regulatory uncertainty to be the key problem. In Montenegro, most mention the difficulty of raising finance, and in Albania anti-competitive practices. Research showed that bigger companies are mostly worried about taxes, uncertainty in the area of regulatory policy and macroeconomic stability.

*Source: Beta, EurActiv.rs*

## Chapter 29 - Customs union



By: dr. Jelena Žugić

Customs union is a unique customs area of 28 European Union member states within which the entire internal trade and exchange takes place between member states, without customs formalities, or without the conducting of customs supervision over the goods, and without the payment of customs duties. Since its establishment on July 1, 1968, customs union has represented one of the founding pillars of European integrations and the key component of good functioning of internal European market.

In terms of trading relations with third countries, the principle is that all goods that enter the area of the Union are subject to unique rules of control and payment of prescribed customs founded on mutual customs tariff and mutual harmonised customs legislation for the application of that tariff.

Legal regulation of Customs union consists almost entirely of legislation that is directly binding for member states. It includes Customs code of the EU (on the day of the accession in the EU, law on customs of a member state ceases to be valid) and regulations for its implementation. Those regulations relate to Combined nomenclature, joint customs tariffs and regulations on the classification

of tariffs, customs benefits, suspension of customs and certain customs quotas, customs control of counterfeit and pirate goods, precursors for narcotics, export of cultural goods, as well as on joint administrative assistance in terms of customs and transit.

National member state customs services are in charge of operating the customs rules of European Union. They collect customs fees, excises and VAT on imported products from third countries and take care that import quotas and other limitations are respected. These services conduct corresponding customs controls on outer borders of the Union in order to suppress all forms of crime, organised crime, terrorism, money laundering, as well as to protect the rights of intellectual property, ensure protection of health and security of consumers and preserve the environment.

It is expected that the course and duration of negotiations between Montenegro and the EU in this chapter will be greatly influenced by the political decision of EU on whether Montenegro will be accepted together with other Western Balkan states or not. Should the dynamics of EU accession continue at the current pace, Montenegro would be the first Western Balkan state to join the Union, which would imply that its borders with Albania, Kosovo, Serbia and BiH would represent outer borders of the EU.

Also, future EU member states, even Montenegro, need to secure connection with corresponding computer customs programmes of EU, such as the TARIC, QUOTA2, Surveillance2, EBTI, AEO, NTCS. Customs service, also, has to guarantee adequate measures for the implementation and conducting of special rules stated in corresponding areas of the EU acquis, such as the provisions on foreign trade, health and security.

Montenegrin customs system is regulated by Law on customs, Law on customs tariff, Law on customs





service and other bylaw acts. Ministry of Finances is in charge of the customs policy, while the Customs administration, as a body within the Ministry of Finances, is in charge of its implementation.

Montenegro made some progress in customs legislation, and it mainly reflects in the harmonisation of combined nomenclature with the Combined nomenclature of EU and abolition of all customs administrative fees, that were not in line with the Agreement on Stabilisation and Association between Montenegro and EU acqui.

Combined nomenclature, prescribed by the EU, represents one of the basic prerequisites for proper conducting of foreign trade exchange with EU member states and it changes each year, hence the Government of Montenegro assumed the obligation of harmonising nomenclatures of customs tariffs with the Provision each year in November.

Montenegro will have to invest some effort during the pre-accession negotiations in order to harmonise its regulations with the EU ones. Thus, for instance, based on the one of the newly adopted regulations, Government of Montenegro was granted delayed payment of customs debt within 30 days period from the date of the adoption of customs declaration, while in Customs code of Union that period is 10 days. Further, when it

*Many of our citizens think that EU accession annuls all borders, passport and customs controls in relation to other member states of Union.*

*EU accession does not automatically annul passport controls with neighbouring EU states. It annuls the customs between member states. Passport control is annulled entirely once the country has accessed the Schengen agreement which, based on the experience of new member states, can take place several years after the EU accession.*

comes to legislation, Montenegro recognises only customs quality quotas for specific agricultural and food products, determined with the CEFTA 2006 Agreement, Interim Agreement on Trade and Trade-related Issues between the EU and Montenegro and Agreement on Free trade between Montenegro and Republic of Turkey, which will require additional harmonisation with EU regulations. In addition, it will be necessary to adopt regulations and train customs officials, for instance, for detailed description of customs control of goods with dual application (including the software and technology which can be used both for military and civil purposes, goods which can be used for non-explosive use and assistance in the production of nuclear weapons), customs control of cultural goods, precursors for the production of narcotics and risky chemical products.

The department in Customs Administration responsible for the subsequent customs controls has to be strengthened, in order to systemically plan and conduct subsequent or repressive controls, thereby compensating the reduction of physical and documenting checks. Out of the series of areas, subsequent control in Montenegro covers only the areas that relate to customs value of goods, classification of goods in the nomenclature of customs tariff and the origin of goods. Customs Administration will have to invest additional efforts to strengthen internal control for the purpose of a more efficient prevention and discovery of



corruption and other illegal actions within the customs system.

New Rulebook on the control of cash, which elaborately regulates the procedures of importing the cash in country and taking it out of the country as well as the sanctions on failure to report it, came into force in June of 2011. Last year saw the adoption of regulations in June, which secure better protection of intellectual property, for the purpose of harmonisation of this area of the acquis. According to those regulations, goods suspected to violate the rights of intellectual property, which include the stamp, design, geographic landmark of origin or the patent, terminate customs procedure, and suspicious goods are retained. However, in both cases, additional harmonisation with EU regulation will be necessary.

A very important item related to Chapter 29, as stressed by the EC in its Progress report on Montenegro for 2011, is the need to accelerate the reception in membership in the Convention on mutual transit. It is about the project which introduces one document for the transit of goods through all EU member states and four EFTA member states (Lichtenstein, Norway, Iceland and Switzerland). This project, also, helps in the harmonisation of national regulations and

customs procedures with those of the EU and EFTA member states, which in the end enables the transport of goods without stopping freight vehicles on borders of EU and EFTA member states. Membership of this Convention, where the reception lasts for years, would practically imply that, for instance, goods destined for Hungary could be cleared through the customs in Luka Bar, and 25% of EU customs would be left in Montenegro.

In terms of EU accession negotiations, it is very significant that Montenegro joined the CUSTOMS 2013 programme, which ultimate goal is to harmonise customs business of a member state or of state which is in the process of accession with the needs of the unique market of Union. This programme, financed by the EU, is conducted through the development of IT system of electronic exchange of data, comparative analysis of legislations, training of customs officials...

Finally, Customs Administration will have to undertake comprehensive action to strengthen its capacities during the pre-accession negotiations, as well as to develop and establish series of informative systems from European concept e-customs, which need to be fully operational on the day of the EU accession.

*Based on EU membership, Montenegrin citizens will be able to buy more quality products from any other member state of the Union, and for much lower prices compared to the current. Customs union is a unique trading area, where all goods circulate freely, regardless of whether they are made in the EU or imported from third countries. Thus, clothes manufactured in Germany could be delivered in Montenegro without customs duty and application of any customs control (now the customs duty is charged on goods which value exceeds 150 EUR), whereas, for instance, customs duty on a TV imported from South Korea, as a non-EU member state, is paid on its first arrival in the EU, and afterwards there are no additional customs or checks inside the EU.*

## Eastern neighbours disappointed



By: mr Vladimir Vučković

The summit on Eastern partnership, held on 21 and 22 May in the capital of Latvia, Riga, resulted in disappointing conclusions for some of the states of eastern European region and southern Caucasus which aspired for European perspective.

Primarily for Ukraine and Georgia. They had great expectations in terms of obtaining the status of candidate state for EU accession, even though the Eastern partnership programme did not envisage the possibility of enlargement for these states, but only the establishment of quality political and economic relations with the EU, with special accent on the stabilisation of region and rule of law. Much less than the demanded, in addition to signed Agreement on association and free trade, these states, together with Moldova, could be rewarded in following period only with the liberalisation of visa regime.

On the other hand, Armenia, Belarus and Azerbaijan are more oriented to partnership with Russia and the establishment of closer relations with Euroasian Economic

*Even though the EU did not offer these countries the possibility of integration in European structures through its Eastern partnership programme, positive views have been noticed in Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova regarding the EU policy in terms of democratisation of society and institutions, rule of law and respect of human and fundamental rights.*

Union (EAEU) as a pendant to EU. Concluded agreement between Armenia and EU still has not been signed due to Armenian tendency to cooperate with both organisations, which is contrary to regional policy of EU, while the government in Baku has been refusing to sign the collective Agreement on association with the EU since 2013, except for the individual (such as the Agreement on Energetic cooperation). When it comes to further strengthening of relations between Belarus and EU, their expectations are not high, both due to fact that this country is a founder of Euroasian Economic Union (together with Russia and Kazakhstan), and due to sanctions that EU imposed to Belarussian leadership based on repressions towards political opponents.

After the conflicts in South Ossetia (Georgia), EU launched a regional initiative in 2009 - Eastern partnership, in order to strengthen political and economic cooperation with these six states. Eastern partnership, as a special eastern dimension of European neighbouring policy, seeks to establish stable multilateral and bilateral cooperation with these states through new contractual relations, agreements on strengthened and comprehensive free trade, and liberalisation of visa regime.

EU and Armenia agreed that they will





strengthen cooperation in all areas (in addition to Armenian participation in EAEU), particularly in the area of EU assistance to political and social reforms, simplification in the issuance of visas, protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and securing assistance in the amount of 140 to 170 million EUR for the period of 2014-2017, focused on the development of private sector, reform of state administration and reform of judiciary sector.

Azerbaijan and EU have the Strategic energetic partnership from 2006, with room for the enlargement of cooperation in area of democracy and fundamental freedoms. EU is negotiating on better relations with this state, and in 2010 they concluded special agreements on association.

Relations between the EU and Belarus depend on the context of Belarussian respect of the international law and human rights. Such state of affairs caused the continuation of EU sanctions towards Belarus.

Georgia and EU have good relations in terms of political and economic cooperation. As

one of the leading proponents of partnership, Georgia could soon achieve the liberalisation of visa regime with the EU.

Relations between EU and Moldova are in a significant ascent, especially after liberalisation of visa regime and provisional application of Agreement on association took place, which involves the area of free trade. Negotiations regarding the Agreement on association with Ukraine started in 2007, after which the political crisis in this state significantly influenced the advancement of dynamics of its signing in 2014. Ukraine is still not a part of the visa liberalisation, even though it signed the Agreement on liberalisation of visa regime in 2008, and initiated the dialogue on visas that same year. Even though the EU did not offer these countries the possibility of integration in European structures through its Eastern partnership programme, positive views have been noticed in Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova regarding the EU policy in terms of democratisation of society and institutions, rule of law and respect of human and fundamental rights.

These positive examples can influence other states of Eastern partnership (Belarus, Armenia and Azerbaijan), which are not currently interested in the strengthening of cooperation with EU, whose active participation is of great importance for the stabilisation of region.

Hence, this requires further involvement of EU in this area, with the provision of clear indications regarding the future of integration of these states in EU, so that the security and stability of region would not be questioned in the near future.

Is Brexit an option now that David Cameron's Conservatives have returned to power?

## Neither Brussels nor London is ready for the unknown



By: Vera Šćepanović

This year's general elections in the UK were promising to be all about Europe. It started with the now infamous speech by the Prime Minister David Cameron in late 2013, when in an effort to boost his image of a statesman and counter accusations that his hands are constantly pulled by Brussels, he promised to hold a referendum on UK's membership of EU in 2017.

Many scoffed at this as a cheap political trick, as Cameron was effectively promising a referendum in exchange for another term in office, at a time when his political ratings looked less than promising. But as the elections approached, the concern among other European statesmen that this election might in fact be a preliminary vote for against EU grew. It did not help that at the European Parliament elections in 2014 the anti-EU United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) scooped the majority of seats, overtaking both the ruling Conservatives and the Labour Party. Both major parties rushed to woo the voters away from UKIP by mimicking its rhetoric: Cameron made a big show out of opposing Jean Claude Juncker's appointment as the President of the Commission due to his "unionist" credentials, and even the Labour Party was rumoured to be

*Big investors such as Airbus, Deutsche Bank and Swiss HSBC already warned that they have back-up plans for leaving UK should the UK leave EU. UK would continue to do most of its business with the EU, and nobody knows what the economic relations would look like if the country was to leave*

*The UK elections were very little about the EU. The key issues on the electoral agenda were the weak performance of the economy and the ways to increase funding for the country's much beloved but hard to finance NHS. The only issue on which the EU even remotely figured was immigration*

considering an EU membership referendum, although its leader never mustered the courage to announce a specific date.

In the event, the UK elections were very little about the EU. The key issues on the electoral agenda were the weak performance of the economy and the ways to increase funding for the country's much beloved but hard to finance National Health Service. The only issue on which the EU even remotely figured was immigration, but even then the voters' main concern seemed to be with the lack of jobs. UKIP, the party that just a year ago swooped nearly 30% of the votes in the European Parliament elections, managed to win all of one single seat in the House of Commons. The Britons may appreciate its provocative stance on the European stage, but are clearly unwilling to entrust it with the serious business of government at home. The support for Labour floundered, not so much because of its pro-European stance but because 56 out of 59 seats in traditionally pro-Labour Scotland now went to the Scottish National Party, which is equally pro-European, but also much more Scottish and – frankly – significantly more pro-labour. The Conservatives won practically the same number of votes as in 2010, but first-past-the-



post system allowed them to convert it into a slightly higher number of seats, and they no longer need the support of the Liberals to form a government.

Grandstanding against the EU turned out to be a political blank. Moreover, now that it is no longer needed to stir electoral sentiments, it may turn out to be outright dangerous. Big investors such as Airbus, Deutsche Bank and Swiss HSBC already warned that they have back-up plans for leaving UK should the UK leave EU. Even the possibility of a break-up could cause trouble in the already volatile international markets.

Moreover, UK does most of its business with the EU, and nobody knows what the economic relations would look like if the country was to leave. The most likely scenario would be an arrangement like the one EU currently has with Norway, in which Norway accepts the rules of the EU single market and pays an annual contribution to the EU programmes in exchange for access to it. If the UK's goal is really to reassert full sovereignty over its national economic policy, this option seems worse than the status quo – the UK might end up paying a little less into the common coffers, but will lose all influence over the shaping of the EU economic policy.

Pushing for the exit from the EU could also prove to be politically dangerous. The failed

*The most likely scenario, thus, is that the UK government will make some more vague demands, the EU will agree to some cosmetic concessions and the operation will be declared a success on both sides. The upcoming mid-term review of the EU budget is just the opportunity to orchestrate such a bit of political theatre.*

referendum on Scottish independence only seems to have reinforced the nationalist sentiments, and SNP already warned that in case of UK's leaving the European Union Scotland would hold another referendum in order to stay in the EU as an independent country.

Prime Minister Cameron knows all this, and as soon as he was safely back in power he began to make conciliatory noises towards Brussels. He said he would even campaign for the UK to stay, if the EU was able to reform, saying "Britain's national interest is best served in a flexible, adaptable and open European Union." For their part, the Brussels officials are also likely to do whatever they can to prevent the UK from leaving, as long as it doesn't involve major structural changes.

In a note congratulating Cameron on the reelection, Juncker immediately offered that the European Commission will examine any proposals that Britain puts forward and ensure that UK gets a "fair deal". President of the European Council Donald Tusk also said he was ready to assist the UK in pushing any changes it wanted, as long as they didn't require changing the EU's basic treaties.

It probably helps that Cameron has so far only made vague references to what the UK might want from the EU. These include UK's desire to opt out from the ambition of "ever closer union" and for the national parliaments to have more power to reject EU legislation. In practice, it is hard to see why any of these would be a problem.



First, the UK has already opted out from a great many aspects of European integration. It is not part of the border-free Schengen area, and has also opted out from integration of justice and home affairs legislation introduced by the Treaty of Lisbon. The UK also never signed the Fundamental Charter of Human Rights, and has continuously managed to secure rebates from its contributions to the EU budget on account of not fully participating in the European Agricultural Policy. Second, whatever “closer integration” might happen in the next few years – such as the banking union or greater fiscal coordination – it is bound to affect primarily the members of the European Monetary Union of which the UK is also not a member.

The only specific issue which the UK has voiced so far is its desire to restrict access to social benefits to EU nationals in order to limit the so-called “welfare tourism”. This is a direct attack on the freedom of movement of EU citizens and their right to be treated equally under the laws of the host member states. Both Juncker and some heads of EU member states, notably Germany, have insisted that they will not allow for the abrogation of the freedom of movement by individual member

states. However, the vice-president of the European Commission Frans Timmermans has already offered Cameron help in finding a national solution to the problem. The UK may, for instance, change the rules of access to social benefits by stipulating that they only apply to those who have paid into the national contributions fund for a number of years – as long as the rule applies equally to both nationals and other EU citizens. Such measures would disproportionately affect the young unemployed Britons, but might prove a boon to the Conservative government: a measure that is both popular, as it is seemingly aimed at foreign “moochers” and helps to curtail public spending.

The most likely scenario, thus, is that the UK government will make some more vague demands, the EU will agree to some cosmetic concessions and the operation will be declared a success on both sides. The upcoming mid-term review of the EU budget is just the opportunity to orchestrate such a bit of political theatre. The UK is also scheduled to take over the EU presidency in the second half of 2017, which could somewhat mollify the popular stance on EU.

Meanwhile, the UK will keep its right to opt out at every corner and the EU will continue its muddling-through, multi-speed and multi-focal integration process with various countries falling out at one point or another – some because they want to, and others because they simply cannot keep up. An a la carte EU integration process is not something its leaders would have hoped for even ten years ago, but it might be a good way to vent the various national frustrations, and let the member states regain their footing and try to remember why they chose to join forces in the first place.

## The role and importance of media in the EU integration process – regional experiences and lessons learned



As part of the project *"EU news – be informed!"*, supported by the communication budget of EU Delegation to Montenegro, Centre for Civic Education (CCE) organised an international conference in Podgorica on 15 May 2015 in cooperation with daily *Vijesti* on the subject: "Role and importance of media in the EU integration process – regional experiences and lessons learned"

In the introduction to the event, **Alberto Cammarata**, head of political sector of EU Delegation to Montenegro, warned the audience that information is power. *"In a democratic society, power should come from the people, which is why the main challenge we face is to encourage citizens, by providing them with legal and quality information so that they could make informed decisions themselves,"* he said. **Željko Ivanović**, executive director of *Vijesti*, said that the process of European integration is very important for the states of this region, because they would be lost if they were to be

excluded from those processes. **Ana Vujošević**, coordinator of EU integration programme at CCE, added that: *"Montenegrin negotiations with the EU have been the most demanding process so far when it comes to achieving European standards. The role of civil society in the democratisation of Montenegro is inevitable"*. She also mentioned attacks on the representatives of media and NGOs as well as attempts to discredit them, stressing that those attempts cannot lessen the commitment of the NGO sector and independent media to contribute to Europeanization of Montenegrin society.

During the second session which took was organised as a forum, the keynote speaker and moderator **Patrick Schmelzer**, head of the department for reform of public administration and media of EU Delegation to Montenegro, said he believed Western Balkan states had no other alternative but to continue with reforms, and that their efforts will be met with support. **Augustin Palokaj**, correspondent from Brussels for daily papers *Koha Ditore* and *Jutarnji list*, said that journalists must be critical, because it is the nature of journalism. **Ines Sabalić**, Croatian correspondent for several regional media from Brussels, compared reporting from Brussels to the job of a miner. She believes that, currently, the information that comes from Brussels is very obscure. *"The thing that we receive in Brussels is a compressed message, and it is hard to get a hold of specific information."* **Vildana Selimbegović**, editor in chief of *Oslobođenje* described the media scene in Bosnia and Herzegovina and stressed that despite the lack of will on the part of political elites to cooperate on matters of European integrations, they are more than willing to cooperate to keep themselves on the political stage, and more effort is needed to truly make the European integration a priority for the citizens. **Tanja Maksić** from *BIRN* (Serbia), said that European integration is the biggest project in Serbia at the moment, and that it must also be made a priority to the citizens. **Agron Bajrami**, editor in chief of *Koha Ditore*, warned that European integration has become a tool of internal politics in Kosovo, as the government tries to capitalize on the current situation to remain in power, by presenting every improvement as its own doing and by manipulating facts. **Petra Sovdat**, journalist of daily *Finance*, discussed the experience of Slovenia in reporting on European integrations and underlined that there is no point in reporting in figures and bureaucratic language. **Nedjeljko Rudović**, journalist daily *Vijesti*, said that it is *"not an easy task to report on European Union and integration while someone is trying to "strangle" you, to make you disappear from the face of the earth"*. He expressed his hope that Brussels will continue to be an ally in the fight for independent media, as well as in the fight against corruption and organised crime, in which case it will never lose its popularity in the media.

The objective of the conference was to bring together editors and journalists from the international, regional and national media who have experience in reporting on EU integration, as well as on other issues linked to this process. This was an opportunity for the participants to exchange experiences and opinions regarding the role of the media in EU integration. The meeting gathered more than 50 representatives of government, NGOs, media, political parties and diplomatic corps.

## Risk Mapping: Corruption in Public Procurement

Institute Alternative (IA) organised a consultative meeting of businessmen and NGOs in Podgorica on 25 May 2015, titled *"Risk Mapping: Corruption in Public Procurement"*, with support of the embassy of Kingdom of Netherlands, and with the aim exchanging the views of purchasers and suppliers on the risks for corruption in procurement proceeding. The meeting was organised as part of the project *"Civil society and citizens against corruption in public procurement"* focused on the strengthening of mutual efforts between state and non-state to identify irregularities in the area of public procurement and formulate recommendations for improvement. **Nikola Donović**, programme coordinator, and **Boris Marić**, senior legal advisor, attended the meeting on behalf of the Centre for Civic Education (CCE).

## Gender and democracy

**Balkans, Let's Get Up!** (BLGU) organised a summer school *"Gender and democracy"* in Cetinje from 9 to 17 May 2015 – an international school for the study of equality as the key principle of democratic thinking. BLGU started as a youth initiative in 2009, with the aim of creating a living democracy, civil self-determination and engaging young people from the Balkan region, and in 2013 it evolved into an association with official headquarters in Serbia. This year BLGU's summer school *"Gender and democracy"* gathered participants from Albania, BiH, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Montenegro and Serbia. **Željka Četković**, CCE programme associate, attended the summer school on the behalf of CCE.

## Women's court - feminist approach to justice

*Women's court - feminist approach to justice* was organised in Sarajevo from 7 to 10 May 2015, with the intention of shedding light on the crimes against women, preventing further silence, oblivion and impunity of crimes; revising history and introducing women's approach to the justice and permanently recording testimonials on the crimes and violence against women from the SFRY successor states, from 1990 to date. In accordance with the feminist approach to justice, Women's court provided public space for free testimonial of women as well as the possibility to record their testimonials permanently. Organisers of Women's court are: Association "Mothers of Srebrenica and Žepa", Foundation CURE (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Anima (Montenegro), Centre for women's study, Centre for Women War Victims - ROSA (Croatia), Kosova Women's Network (Kosovo), Council for gender equality (Macedonia), Women's Lobby of Slovenia (Slovenia), Centre for women's study, Women in black (Serbia). **Jelena Nedović**, CCE programme assistant, participated on the behalf of the CCE.

## Models of financing civil society organisations from public funds

TACSO Regional Office from Sarajevo and TACSO Office from Montenegro organised on 13 May 2015 in Podgorica a regional meeting on the topic: "Overview of the possible models of managing public resources and potential challenges". The meeting was launched by **Marija Vučinović**, Minister in the Government of Montenegro and president of the Council for development of NGOs, and **Andre Lys**, head of the Sector for Cooperation in EU Delegation to Montenegro. Among the participants were representatives of governments and civil society organisations from Croatia, Serbia, BiH, Albania, Romania, Estonia, Kosovo, Turkey and Macedonia. **Snežana Kaluđerović**, CCE programme coordinator and **Wanda Tiefenbacher**, CCE programme associate, attended the gathering on the behalf of the CCE.

## Employment of youth with disabilities

Association of Youth with Disabilities of Montenegro organised a conference "Employment of youth with disabilities" on 8 May 2015, as part of the project "Strengthen capacities in order to strengthen changes", supported by the EU Delegation to Montenegro. Introductory panel featured presentations by **Aleksandar Andrija Pejović**, state secretary for European integrations and chief negotiator, **Slaven Radunović**, president of the Committee for European integrations, **Edina Dašić-Perazić**, general director of directorate for labour market and employment in the Ministry of labour and social affairs, **Šučko Baković**, Ombudsman and **Alberto Cammarata**, head of the political sector in the EU Delegation to Montenegro. At the panel "Employment of persons with disabilities - from law to practice", speakers were **Vukica Jelić**, director of Employment Agency of Montenegro, **Milica Čurčić**, representative of Ministry of work and social care, as well as the representatives of partner organisations, **Goran Macanović** (Association of Blind of Montenegro) from Montenegro and **Brede Kristensen** (transFORMA) from the Netherlands. **Petar Đukanović**, programme coordinator, attended the conference on behalf of the CCE.

A.V

## “Right to Dialogue” World Youth Forum

University of Trieste runs its 8th edition of world youth forum “Right to dialogue” from 2 to 4 October 2015, in Trieste, Italy. The theme for this year is “Old and new poverties. Europe and other worlds”. The following fields of discussion are suggested: values - Goods and values; economic and cultural values; modern and postmodern between ethics and economics; culture of wealth - From welfare to the «economics of happiness»? Needs and historie; strategies - Out of poverty: growth or degrowth? Is there a global economy?; new poverties - loss of memory, loss of beauty, loss of identities, loss of rights: towards the «bare life»?

Participants are invited to present their own proposals within the suggested fields of discussion, or to present different topics / panels (within the given general theme) bringing their own local experiences, views and inputs from different scientific fields in a transdisciplinary perspective (economics, social sciences, history, psychology, arts, cultural studies, political science... ).

Open to: young adults aged 18 to 35, without distinction as to nationality. Those who are interested in taking part to the Forum must apply by filling the [form](#) and sending it to [dirittodialogo@gmail.com](mailto:dirittodialogo@gmail.com).

**Deadline for applications:** 30 June 2015.

For more information, please check the official [web-page](#) or download the [official call](#).

## “Falling Walls” Science Fellowship for Journalists

[Falling Walls](#) is a unique international platform for leaders from the worlds of science, business, politics, the arts and society. It has been initiated on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin wall. In an effort to keep the public informed on life-changing scientific breakthroughs, the Falling Walls Science Fellowship for Journalists has been created. It is aimed to journalists and bloggers with at least three years of experience, and who hope to advance their knowledge in the area of sciences. The Fellows get the opportunity to attend the **Falling Walls Lab, Falling Walls Venture and the Falling Walls Conference on 8 and 9 November 2015 in Berlin**.

Open to: freelancers, full-time journalists or bloggers with minimum of 3 years of professional journalism/ blogging experience. The fellowship includes travel expenses (economy class), accommodation for 3 nights, conference fees and meals (breakfast at hotel, catering during the Falling Walls events). Applicants must complete the [online form](#) and submit two work samples together with a CV and cover letter (both in English) stating their motivation to apply for the fellowship.

**Deadline for application:** 31 July 2015.

For more information, please check the [official website](#).

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