

CIVIC

Questionnaire: Unnecessary Mystery

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Instead of wasting our time on false mysteries, we should stand up for those questions which are of key importance for genuine democratisation and Europeanisation of our society and which this Government is doing everything to minimise, relativise and cover up. With a good reason too, for should these questions finally take the centre stage, it will be a sure path to the urgently needed changes and replacements.

Although the European Commission (EC) Questionnaire arrived to Montenegro 9 months ago, many are still fascinated by the stories about it. What makes the Questionnaire so vivid among so many big, existential issues without a solution which plague our society? And, what does it tell us about us?

In today's world of developed communication facilities, EC's decision to make a document like this secret was doomed to failure. By means of illustration, let me remind the reader that **Olli Rehn**, then EU Enlargement Commissioner, handed in a printed version of the document to Montenegro's Prime Minister, **Milo Djukanovic**, on 22 July at an official ceremony in Villa Gorica. Already by 10 am on the 23rd at least 5 persons known to the author of this text received an electronic version of the Questionnaire to their e-mail addresses – and there were probably many more. There is little in the document itself to explain such a degree of secrecy. But this clumsy attempt to conceal the document only opened up the space for nonsense tales, speculations and selective publishing of parts which some media managed to access, and all that failed to provide the public with a comprehensive, objective information about the document, which in the process acquired an aura of a miracle with imponderable consequences for our everyday lives. But, the evident futility of EC's decision, coupled with its record of learning from past mistakes gives us a realistic hope that in the future it will refrain from burdening the public and interested parties with useless questions, as if the region didn't already have plenty to worry about.

More problematic, however, is the way in which the Government of Montenegro approached the replies and further communication with the Commission, since the Government is not famous for its ability to learn from past mistakes. The process immediately took on a flair of emergency situation, and even those who could have contributed to improving the quality of the work were not allowed to see the Questionnaire, which the minister for European integrations, **Gordana Djurovic**, guarded like a personal testament that can only be shown in parts and only to the elect. Here I am referring to the government employees, of course – not the representatives of the civil sector who were these days reproached by the minister, in the basest manner, for their "frustration" for not being a part of their "team of experts". Moreover, 4 months after submitting the original replies, they still haven't disclosed who, apart from the Government employees, participated in the process. The official answer CCE got from the Ministry of European Integration was that such a list does not exist!? We should add, of course, that electronic versions of those "carefully guarded" replies have been circulating towards stakeholders for many months now. What an irony, in a country where fraud is most transparently performed on the highest levels and by the most senior officials, the least transparent part is that which concerns the mere reflection of our reality. But the Government's fear to hold up the mirror in its own hands might be justified. Perhaps we would finally glimpse in it the real **Dorian Gray**, and that picture is pretty gloomy...

Mistakes have been made on both sides. On the one, I believe, inadvertently and without a real calculation of benefits and damage. On the other - Government's – side, with plan, intent and pragmatism, and at the cost of publicly neglecting the court's decision, accompanied by extreme party solidarity in the attack on the court which dared to judge according to the law.

The lack of transparency in EC's and Government of Montenegro's dealings with regard to this particular issue doesn't help the quality or credibility of European integration process. Public affairs in EU are founded precisely on the notions of legality, transparency and full participation, and all parties involved should bear this in mind. Those who come to Montenegro and easily declare it a success

story, comparing it with more challenging countries in which they were seconded or turbulent neighbourhood, as much as those who in their petty calculations still believe that they can continuously cheat everybody.

Regardless of how long we will take from the beginning of negotiations with EU, it is important to immediately draw lessons from this event. Continuation of such practices might be in the final killing assumption, as it is defined by the matrix of logical framework, and jeopardize the overall objective: membership in EU.

In the Croatian case, more than 400 institutions, sectors, organisations and enterprises participated in the negotiation process. In other words: in addition to all the government bodies 39 university departments and other educational institutions, 13 agencies 20 bureaus, 24 institutes, 53 associations, 6 organisations of economic interests, 9 chambers, 9 trade unions, 3 academies and more than 100 companies. Throughout the pre-accession negotiations, a total of 1 500 experts participated in the work of 35 working groups, and 900 of them were not employees of public administration.

Whom will minister Djurovic involve? Will there remain anybody in Montenegro, outside of the Government whose duty it is cooperate, with whom she won't manage to break all connections, who wasn't already declared ill-intended, insufficiently patriotic or even incompetent for simply calling into question the politicised approach to an important job by Government in which she has been playing for way to long the role she is not sufficiently qualified for.

The road to becoming citizens of Europe leads through discovery and confrontation with one's environment, prejudices and false convictions about own superiority. It's been to long that we're paying the bill for the lack of critical spirit. It is high time that we change something about it. There is no way about it – each one of us can do something to become a citizen of this country in the full sense of the word – taking up one's rights and duties, and deposing those who question other people's ability based on their national, patriotic, political and other blood types or who offend their common sense by trying to sell them tragically false pictures of reality. Instead of wasting our time on false mysteries, we should stand up for those questions which are of key importance for genuine democratisation and Europeanisation of our society and which this Government is doing everything to minimise, relativise and cover up. With a good reason too, for should these questions finally take the centre stage, it will be a sure path to the urgently needed changes and replacements.

The author is executive director of Centre for Civic Education (CCE)