

CIVIC

Visible results

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We should work on changing the dominant discourse, and start dealing with individual problems instead of the grand, often ungraspable issues which are perhaps important from the mythological or some other standpoint but which have no palpable consequences for the quality of our lives, but rather represent an obstacle to the democratic transformation of Montenegro.

Visible results and political will to achieve them are all the European Commission is asking from us in order to grant us the opening date for negotiations. Very concrete categories, even in the areas which are being rendered ever more ambiguous by the efforts to postpone or never resolve the problems. Let us take a look at two examples of the by now widely popular topics: fight against corruption and cooperation with the civil sector.

I

For more than a year Faculty of Law of the University of Montenegro (UCG) is a subject of numerous scandals which drag the reputation of this high academic institution to an inexcusably low level. In essence, everything revolves around the dean **Ranko Mujović**, his authoritarian style of running this institution and the accompanying activities, some of which have been the subjects of criminal charges.

This is not a case of an *ad hoc* scandal, but of systematic violation of the rights of students and employees, reflected in the (lack of) quality of the teaching process and by a person who feels free to act this way. The problem is not Mujović himself but that he has suffered no sanctions for what he does and „feels free” to do, that the responsible bodies of UCG and its high representatives prefer to stay out of their business and that even when forced to do something they resort to changing the rules in order to dodge the responsibility for maintaining order.

Moreover, parts of the recent regulations adopted by UCG, which passed more or less unnoticed, annul the very notion of democratisation of UCG. From now on, the rectors will be appointed effectively by the decision of the Senate, i.e. of some thirty people, whereas up to now this process was open to all university professors and members of non-academic staff and students in the councils of some departments. So far the only person who reacted to this was Dr **Filip Kovačević**, a personified anti-thesis of everything that Mujović stands for and, in spite of his impressive and in our environment rare educational references, a person who is finding it increasingly difficult to find his place at UCG.

Visible results in fighting corruption at UCG can therefore be measured, among other, also by the future fates of Mujović and Kovačević, by the resistance of the academic elite which keeps indecently quiet in the face of the worst party practices in decision making at UCG and pays the tribute to rotten coalition deals, but also by the reaction of the responsible bodies to illegal practices at UCG. Provided that a public university matters to this Government and that there is no plan to purposefully destroy its reputation in order to indirectly help the private universities.

II

Public funds are an important source of financing for NGOs around the world. In Montenegro they are substantial, but badly managed and prone to numerous manipulations which result in the fact that the Government is already boasting about its dedication to the development of the civil sector, illustrated by the fact that since 2006 it had already distributed 12 500 000 EUR in assistance to this sector only from

the revenues of lottery games. A large number, but invisible results. It should be borne in mind, however, that there is a conscious manipulation here and that those who are dealing with this issue seriously know very well that this number includes well above the legally prescribed 25% which is allocated to institutions, local governments and even enterprises, and that more than 20% prescribed by law have been accorded to the sports institutions, which are not registered according to the Law on NGOs and whose use of these funds is legally problematic. This gives us a number which is just above one half of the original – 5 600 000 EUR. But even this amount is no insignificant if it is invested transparently and in line with procedures. As a long-term president of the Commission, **Dragan Drobnjak** has secured friends who either keep quiet or actively support those who should not be quiet about irregularities in the work of the Commission.

Trusting that the power of arguments can counter the power of party overlords, it would be realistic to expect the new government to change the president of the Commission in the first hundred days of its rule, as well as other members of the Commission appointed by the Government, and to showcase a case of transparent adherence to the rule of law in the next call for distribution of funds – a law which offers a very solid basis, but was never entirely implemented.

That will be a very visible indicator of the readiness of this Government to cooperate with the civil sector, respecting the principles of autonomy and development of the sector and supporting high quality projects which contribute to the social change.

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This means that we ought to work on changing the dominant discourse, and start dealing with individual problems instead of the grand, often ungraspable issues which are perhaps important from the mythological or other standpoint but which have no palpable consequences for the quality of our lives, but rather represent an obstacle to the democratic transformation of Montenegro. In that, we each carry our responsibilities: those who talk about the social deviations openly, publicly and courageously, trying to identify the concrete problems so that they can be solved, as well as those who curry the favours of destructive individuals in power for the sake of some temporary interests.

In spite of the optimism we use to gloss over the shortcomings of reality, we cannot afford any more to pay for the luxury of those whose bad decisions and privatisation of institutions limits our life chances. It is good that Europe is reminding us of it, but it would be even better if we took ownership of this European impulse and started to produce visible results for ourselves, and not for others.

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