



## FOCUS OF THIS ISSUE

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clear legal  
framework yet  
defining cooperation  
between the state  
and the civil society



## INTERVIEW

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## FOREWORD

In less than a month from now, Montenegro is to choose for a future that even European Union cannot dismiss as irrelevant. At least, this is what the government officials and the fore bearers of the independence movement say. They claim that, except for deciding on the restitution of sovereignty to the once 27th internationally recognised state in the world, the citizens of the tiny member of the State Union SM will, on the May 21st, have the last word on the Brussels' chance to get one small partner with an efficient system, capable of easier and swifter adoption of European rules. Otherwise, the Brussels administration will have to face, across the negotiation table on association and stabilization, one dysfunctional union of Serbia and Montenegro, burdened with constant mutual haggling over Serbia's insistence to dominate and Montenegro's attempts to retain autonomy. On the other hand, opposition representatives are convinced that the survival of the union with Serbia is a requirement for progress and a guarantee of quicker accession to European Union, believing that an independent Montenegro will become no more than a private fiefdom of the Prime Minister and his cronies.

Hearing the both sides, it seems that either way for EU it is a win-win situation. It could well be, if the referendum provides a clear answer – either for independence or for the survival of the Union. The question is, what if the result is in the so-called "grey zone" – if independence is voted by more than 50, but less than the necessary 55 % of the people? Evidently, the statehood issue will remain pending, and the government can promise another referendum in some three years, using it to cover up all its faulty or missing "reform" steps. All will be calling themselves winners, but all could end up losing the game. Podgorica, Belgrade, and Brussels alike. Most of all, however, the citizens of Montenegro. N.R.

ACCORDING TO THE LATEST RESEARCH BY CENTRE FOR MONITORING (CEMI)

# More than two thirds of citizens in favour of EU accession

Since June 2005, the percentage of citizens believing that membership in EU is good for Montenegro has steadily increased, whereas the number of those considering it detrimental remained virtually the same (3.8%). These are the latest results of the public opinion poll conducted by PR Centre on behalf of Centre for Monitoring (CEMI).

Membership in the EU will be a good thing, believes 75% of the citizens, while 15.8 % think it will be neither good nor bad.

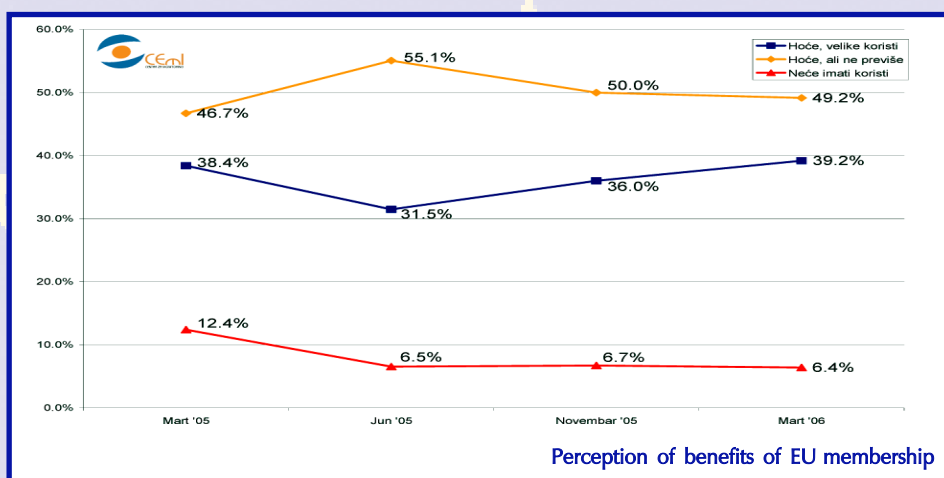
Most of the citizens believe that membership in the EU will improve their own lives (66.7%), although the greatest number (41.4%) feels these will not be great-scale improvements. Hoping for great improvements are some 25.2%, whereas 20.5%

dom of travel (24.7%), and after that economic prosperity (23.7%) and social security (7.1%).

Compared to the EU countries, citizens of Montenegro are champions in optimism. "It is getting better", believes some 59.9% of the citizens, which is 6% more than in November last year. Respectively, the number of citizens believing it is "going to be worse" fell for 6%.

In relation to the candidate countries, citizens of Montenegro are in the second place in their expectations, following Northern Cyprus (65%), but ahead of Romania (56%), Turkey (53%), Croatia (41%) and Bulgaria (28%).

Grade average determining the level of knowledge about the EU rose since last November for 0.1, now reaching 2.73 on a



expects improvements but also disadvantages, while 2.9% believe it may also bring certain disadvantages. The least are those who expect accession to EU to bring plenty of disadvantages (1%).

European Union is generally perceived as positive (59.5%), with very few citizens having a very negative prejudice (5.5%). Compared to November results, the number of citizens with a positive attitude towards the EU fell for 2%, and the number of those neutral increased for app. 3 %.

With respect to the "meaning" of EU, there are significant differences from the November results. For most of our citizens, EU primarily means peace (26.5%), free-

scale from 1 to 5.

Citizens' support to introducing education on EU into elementary and high schools curricula is high (cc.83.2%) and more or less constant in all polls.

The public opinion poll "Public attitude to and understanding of European integration processes in Montenegro" is a periodic research, conducted by CEMI European integrations programme since 2005. The questionnaire is fashioned after the standard Eurobarometer, and the questioning itself took place through CATI (computer assisted telephone interviewing) method on a stratified sample of 1.064 citizens of a voting age in 9 Montenegrin municipalities.



photo: VIJESTI

by dr Judy Batt

The European Commission's January Communication on the Western Balkans makes a brief but welcome reference to the need to promote 'civil society dialogue' between the EU and NGOs from the region, and to foster 'a culture of civil society consultation'. All of these proposals are welcome. The EU certainly needs to improve its capacity to communicate its messages beyond the narrow circles of political leaders and government officials. Unfortunately, the EU is notoriously bad at doing this even for its own citizens, and as a result, 'euroscepticism' has been on the rise in several EU member-states for some years, culminating in the French and Dutch voters' backlash in the referenda on European Constitution last year.

Nor has EU accession been helpful to the development of civil society in the new EU member-states in central Europe. Pressure to keep up the pace of European integration, and the enormous demands of legislative harmonisation led governments to 'lead from the front'. Executive power was strengthened at the expense of parliamentary debate and consultation with civil society. As a result, EU accession was experienced as something 'done to' society, and as an elitist project rather than a project in

## NGOs to have a crucial role sustaining confidence in EU

which all were involved and from which all could benefit. This reinforced patterns of social passivity and mistrust of political elites.

Much needs to be done to avoid these traps in the Western Balkans. Most people see the EU still represents their best hope for a better life, but the EU is still far too distant and intangible a player, which gives rise to frustration and disillusion. NGOs have a crucial role to play in sustaining confidence in and commitment to EU integration. The European Commission Delegations in the region need to be boosted with extra staff specifically tasked to carry out 'public diplomacy' – actively engaging every day with NGOs, universities and schools, and religious institutions of all denominations. EU funding mechanisms need to be more 'user friendly' for NGO applicants to support small-scale and local initiatives. Each EC Delegation should have a special fund for flexible and rapid disbursement to NGOs. This could make an immediate and visible impact quite out of proportion to the modest size of the sums involved by capitalising on the energies and imagination of 'ordinary' people, building their capacities to help themselves and boosting self-confidence.

In new 'transitional' democracies, NGOs are often regarded by both governments and public opinion with scepticism and mistrust. One legacy of authoritarian communism is the assumption that 'civil society' is, by definition, against the

state. But NGOs in a democratic context should be partners of the state, neither political puppets nor political subversives. The fact that most NGOs in transitional democracies today are still heavily dependent on foreign funding gives rise to the suspicion that they are pursuing an 'alien' agenda, hostile to 'national security'. The most regrettable example is in Russia, where recent legislation has seriously restricted the autonomy of NGOs. Public opinion across the Western Balkans shows low levels of popular trust and understanding of NGOs. Governments in post-communist democracies have yet to overcome their deeply ingrained instincts to control 'from above', and to learn that the most effective way to exercise power in complex modern societies is to engage, consult and build broad social consensus. NGOs in their turn have to find ways to work with government, while preserving their integrity and autonomy. NGOs' key challenge is to build firm and durable constituencies of support in their own society, to ensure their credibility and legitimacy with government and public alike. Foreign funding can at best play a supporting role here. It won't last forever, and donors are increasingly – rightly – focussing on the sustainability of NGOs over the long term.

*The author is a renowned expert for Western Balkans from Paris based European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS)*

## WHY IS THERE NO CLEAR LEGAL FRAMEWORK YET DEFINING COOPERATION BETWEEN THE STATE AND THE CIVIL SOCIETY

# Government to cease favouring the party cronies

Government is all supportive while its interests are not in direct jeopardy, but as soon as we tackle more serious or controversial issues, cooperation with the civil sector runs into a wall.

This is how Mr. **Stevo Muk**, Director of the Centre for Development of Non-Governmental Organisations (CDNGO), explains the current relationship between the Government of Montenegro and the civil sector.

The Law on Non-Governmental Organisations was adopted in 1999, and since was described by the civil sector representatives as a very liberal one, as it provides for, among other, a very simple registration procedure.

This is one of the reasons why today in Montenegro we have some 3.450 non-governmental organisations (NGOs), most of them in the area of culture and arts, or dealing with social and humanitarian issues, with very few working on legislation, public policy and the problem of refugees and displaced persons.

However, the number of active NGOs is much lower. According to CDNGO figures it is judged to be between 100 and 300 at most.

Such a high number of registered NGOs is particularly detrimental to the active ones, since they are often a target of criticism by certain politicians who occasionally use it as a way to show that these organisations are either "not serious" or that politicians themselves do not know how to choose the right partners among them – an argument typical of the power structures.

Nevertheless, it is evident that the role and the influence of the civil sec-

tor in Montenegro have become stronger, the best example being the case of the river Tara. On that occasion, the non-government sector and the media won their case against the Government, which, under pressure, resigned on its intention to flood one of the most beautiful canyons in the world in order to build a hydro-power plant.

Together with the strengthening and maturing of the civil sector, its relationship with the executive power has advanced compared to the period of three or four years ago.

"Increasingly, NGOs are being involved in drafting of the new laws, which was unthinkable only a few years



Stevo Muk

ago", says Muk.

With more or less resistance from the government, the civil sector has prepared or participated in the drafting of the Law on Public Procurement, Lottery games, the Law on Political Parties and their financing, Law on conflict of interests, Law on witness protection, etc.

Owing to the adoption of these reform laws, representatives of the NGO sector are now able to sit on the

## PREVENT ABUSE BY CHANGING THE LAW

By the current set of tax regulations, non-governmental organisations in Montenegro have been freed of the taxes on profit, added value, real estate, possessions...

"Entrepreneurial" Montenegrins seized this opportunity to register a number of cafes and sports-betting houses as NGOs in order to evade taxes.

**Stevo Muk** reminds that the non-governmental sector had proposed amendments to the Law on NGOs aimed at preventing such abuse.

"It is abnormal that cafes and restaurants should be registered as NGOs.

By these amendments we wanted to, on the one hand, protect or re-establish credibility of the non-government sector, and on the other help the state bring its money back into the budget. We were assisted in this by USAID and the Budapest International Centre for Non-Profit Law. We worked out a compromise with the Ministry of Finance, but once we got to the Ministry of Justice we ran into problems. This Ministry proposed the Law on NGOs, and is therefore in charge of its amendments. They judged it was not a problem to be solved through the Law on NGOs, but rather through a series of tax laws, which, in my opinion, is a mistake. Our compromise solution has been shuttling for the past four months somewhere in between these two ministries", says Muk.

## MINISTRY FOR EUROPEAN INTEGRATIONS THE BRIGHT SPOT



Daliborka Uljarević

Several ministries have been making efforts to create partnership relations with NGOs, such as the Ministry of Tourism which already has a coordinator for the non-government sector, but the Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations and European Integrations is undoubtedly a few steps ahead of the rest of the government.

Ministry for European Integrations signed a special memorandum on cooperation with a number of NGOs, and this cooperation has been very successful, especially in the implementation of the Com-

munication Strategy for Association with EU.

"This Ministry is a bright spot in terms of relationship between the Government and NGOs. It should become a model for the others, in both the form and the content of its framework for cooperation with the NGO sector", says **Daliborka Uljarević**.

Needless to say, this partnership too is far from idyllic, but the fact is that this Ministry has made significant efforts to involve the NGO sector in some areas of its work. CCE, together with a few other non-governmental organisations, signed a Memorandum on Cooperation with MFEREI and we are quite satisfied with the relationship we have built so far. The example of CDNGO trainers in organisation of the CCE conducting a training programme for future MFEREI employees, the fact that MFEREI employees participate as either students or teachers in a number of our programmes illustrates the mutual respect of our capacities. Naturally, once established, this cooperation should be intensified further, both in content and through the institutional framework" said Uljarević.

She reminded that European integrations process is a lengthy and complex one, and that all relevant actors should be involved in this journey to EU.

"It goes without argument that Montenegro lacks the necessary cadre potential for European integrations. Synergy with the NGO sector can help significantly in overcoming this problem and accelerating our efforts to join EU", says the CCE director.

Council of Radio-Television Montenegro, of the Radio Broadcasting Agency, Council for the Control of the Police, Statistics Council and other.

In addition to this, NGOs participated in the creation of the Government's strategic documents, such as the Programme for Development and Poverty Reduction, as well as the Programme for Fight against Corruption and Organised Crime.

According to the director of CDNGO, forms and principles of cooperation between the state administra-

tion and local authorities on one side and NGO sector on the other were first defined through laws on state administration and local government, adopted in 2003.

These laws established an obligation for the civil service and local authorities to consult NGOs while preparing and adopting legal acts and regulations, as well as development strategies and projects.

Muk explains that these principles found a clearer definition in the Law on the local government as well as the

accompanying legal acts, such as municipal statutes and decisions on the manner of citizens' participation in the proceedings of the local government.

"The problem is the national level, where NGO participation has not been clearly regulated. The Law on State Administration defines this issue as a matter of principle, so that the actual implementation of the civil sector participation in resolving some concrete issues depends more on the good will and the individual democratic capacity of the people in charge.

We proposed that the experiences from the local level be transferred to the national one through a new law which would demand transparency in the creation of public policy and stipulate the civil sector participation, defining deadlines and requirements for the drafting procedure of legal acts and other development projects", says Muk.

Regarding cooperation between the civil sector and the municipal governments, CDNGO director says the experiences vary from one municipality to another, citing the positive examples of Bijelo Polje and Tivat and marking Ulcinj as the worst case, where, due to the disputes among local authorities, the statute defining the relationship between the civil sector and the authorities remains out of force.

Deputy Prime Minister **Dragan Đurović** said for the EIC Bulletin that the relationship between the Government and the civil sector is "good, but could be, and should be still better".

"I am content to see NGO representatives taking part in the legislation process regarding important laws and strategic documents. In terms of political and legal system, Montenegro today looks nothing like it did three or four years ago, and we owe that to the contribution of the NGO sector", says Đurović.

Asked whether certain legal acts were made better through implementation of additional solutions demanded by the civil sector and international organisations, Đurović described their input as "useful assistance".

"The Government is not omniscient. The NGO sector harbours signif-



photo VIJESTI

Dragan Đurović

icant intellectual capacity and expertise, and their help is certainly welcome", says Đurović.

Muk and the Executive Director of Centre for Civic Education (CCE), **Daliborka Uljarević**, were unanimous in their assessment of the lack of a clear framework or a strategic document for cooperation between NGOs and the Government as being a grave problem for the civil sector.

The European Partnership for S&M for 2004–2005 contains special recommendation for Serbia and Montenegro indicating the need for adoption of a strategic document on cooperation between the Government and NGOs.

"First on the agenda is a paper on the "Basis for cooperation between the Government and NGOs" –there is already a draft version of this document. Then we will make a team bringing together government and NGO sector representatives – the Government cannot issue such an important document without the help from the civil sector", says Đurović.

According to Muk, however, an Action Plan is needed, either as a part of the strategy for the Government–NGO relationship, or separately, in order to ensure that commitments on both sides are clearly defined with precise deadlines for their implementation.

One of the main problems in this relationship, claims Muk, is the lack of communication between the Government and the NGOs.

"The Government doesn't have a coordinator for cooperation with the civil sector, with the result that the civil

sector often has no one to address in relation to a particular problem, channelling all such concerns through the Prime Minister's cabinet" – says CDNGO executive director, stressing the need for the Government appointing a single coordinator for the non-government sector, either through this Strategy or rather in some other way".

However, Daliborka Uljarević claims that, rather than blaming the lack of a clear framework, defining relationship between the Government and NGOs, a more flagrant problem lies in the fact that the government "neither sees nor wants to see the NGO sector as a true partner".

"Exceptions are rare. I believe this phenomenon is mainly due to the lack

of knowledge about the essence of the civil sector and the values it advocates, but also to the powerful syndrome of party loyalties which is symptomatic of our insufficiently developed political culture. Certainly, the process of European integration will strengthen the principle of participation of the civil sector in the decision-making and implementation processes, and this is already yielding some improvements. We would be a lot happier if the Government's rapprochement with the NGO sector was motivated by some other reasons, but the reality is this. All we can do is to use it and improve it in the best possible way", concludes Uljarević.

Vladan ŽUGIĆ

## HARD TO SEE EFFECT OF THE GOVERNMENT MONEY

According to representatives of the non-government sector, foreign donors, unlike the national ones, are very carefully monitoring the implementation of the projects they finance, requiring NGOs to submit detailed financial reports.

The sum of financial aid through various forms makes the Government of Montenegro the largest single donor of the non-government sector, **Daliborka Uljarević** explains. However, the genuine non-government sector is still heavily relying on foreign assistance.

"The results of the projects supported by the government are hardly visible, and this is a fact, when you compare them to the projects supported by international organisations. This contradiction is an important indicator in itself", says Uljarević.

European Union, through its Agency for Reconstruction in Podgorica, allocated some 575 thousand euros into the civil sector projects in 2005 alone.

The second batch of the European aid for the civil sector in Montenegro comes through EIF (European Integrations Fund). EAR also organised a tender for distribution of some 850 thousands through European Movement in Serbia. Out of the 45 competing organisations, 6 Montenegrin NGOs received some 217 thousands in total.

One of the largest civil society donors is also the Foundation Open Society Institute. Last year, this Foundation invested nearly 400 thousands in the NGO sector in Montenegro, 150 000 of it through its European Programme (School of European Integrations, trainings, building links with the decision makers in Brussels, promotion of the EU standards, Government–NGO cooperation, etc.). Other funds went to the Legal Programme, Programme for the Reform of Public Service and Local Governments, as well as the Women's Programme.

The US Consulate, through its Democratic Commission Small Grants Programme, awarded 250 000 dollars in the period from October 1st 2005 to September 30th 2005 as means of support to the civil sector in Montenegro. This programme encompassed 24 projects of non-government organisations and the media, ranging from a minimum of 3.000 to the maximum of 19.500 dollars per project. This is only a small part of the American support to the civil sector in Montenegro. Another, larger, part comes through USAID and its implementers.

## SHOULD THE PARLIAMENT COMMISSION FOR FINANCIAL DISTRIBUTION TO THE CIVIL SECTOR BE PROFESSIONALIZED?

# By investing in the genuine NGO sector, the state invests in itself

One of the problems confronting the civil sector in Montenegro is the question of financing. Relevant NGOs are angry at the state for the ways in which it controls and distributes the money intended for the civil sector.

National sources of financial assistance are the budget of Montenegro, some ministries and local funds.

Non-government sector received some 300 thousand euros from the state budget for 2005. Another 300 thousands are disbursed from the local funds, as each of the municipalities has a special NGO fund. The Ministry of Tourism, for instance, allocated 90 thousands for this purpose in the last year, while the Ministry of Culture gave 40 to 50 thousands.

Stevo Muk emphasises the problem with lottery games profit, a portion of which is designated to the civil sector.

"Although the Law on Lottery Games was adopted in July 2004, application procedure for the distribution of this money to various projects was only opened some 15 days ago. Only for the period July – December 31st 2004 this source accumulated some 750 000 euros", says Muk.

According to him, some million to a million and a half euros is "allocated, but not distributed" to the non-government sector from the public funds of Montenegro. This, says Muk, is a pertinent sum for the conditions in Montenegro.

CDNGO director stresses that "the money exists, but distribution is the real problem".

This is particularly relevant, he says, in a situation when the American donors are leaving the site, and the European ones have not arrived yet.

The money from the budget funds is being distributed to the civil sector by the Parliament Commission, and the working of this Commission has been a particular source of bitterness for active NGOs.

By the Law on NGOs, the State assumed responsibility for financing the non-government sector, with Government



From a session of Montenegrin Parliament

in charge of the distribution throughout 2000 and 2001.

However, the High Court ruled that the section of the Law on NGOs giving the Government the right to define criteria, manner and procedure for the distribution of the state aid to NGOs was against Constitution. This resulted in an amendment to the Law on NGOs, with the management of the state support to NGOs being transferred to the Parliament Commission for the Financial Distribution to NGOs.

Criticism of this Commission by NGOs culminated last year when the state allocated 289 thousands for the NGO projects.

Some relevant NGOs made headlines with their complaints about the Commission giving funds for already finished projects, and comments appeared linking certain prominent politicians of the government coalition with the NGOs that received the most substantial funds.

Active NGO representatives found laughable the Commission decision to give some projects only a part of the financial aid required, while some other NGOs that won assistance never returned their financial reports.

One of the problems, according to Muk, was the fact that party affiliation became an important criterion for distribution, while, on the other hand, some Commission decisions earned controversial comments, because it was evident that the

members of the Commission have very little knowledge of the NGO scene.

"These people cannot just sit down and decide within some five or six days on who deserves the money. The Commission should either consist of professionals, or involve people who are aware of these things", says Muk.

The key question, according to him, is whether the Government knows why it wants to help the NGO sector.

"Is it just trendy, or is it a demand from the international organisations, or is there a more profound reason to it? Has the Government realised that in certain areas the NGO sector has both more competence and more experience, and that they should seek help from the civil sector?", asks Muk.

He reminds that certain NGOs publicly demanded that the Law on NGOs be changed in terms of budget distribution procedure, but that there was nobody willing to tackle that question.

**Dragan Đurović** says the Government lost the leverage regarding the money distribution to NGOs.

"The NGO sector should propose amendments to the Law because they know the best where the problem lies and how to solve it, and which NGOs are the ones that obstruct the principle of cooperation between the Government and the non-government sector, spoiling the image of the civil sector", says Đurović.

v.ž.

FLORIAN RAUNIG, HEAD OF PODGORICA LIAISON OFFICE OF THE AUSTRIAN EMBASSY IN SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO

# You will get to the EU faster if you join forces with your neighbours



Florian Raunig

Not only for Serbia and Montenegro, but for all the countries participating in the Association and Stabilisation Process, the key challenge for the future rapprochement with EU will be implementation of the reform commitments they assumed during the stabilisation and association negotiations – estimated in the interview for EIC Bulletin Mr. **Florian Raunig**, the Head of Podgorica liaison office of the Austrian Embassy in Serbia and Montenegro and the first Austrian diplomat in Montenegro since 1918, the year when Montenegro lost its independence.

"The regional approach to stabilisation and association yielded some very encouraging results so far – already two countries, Croatia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia have reached candidate status for accession negotiations with

EU" – underlines Raunig.

● **Which, according to you, are the main weaknesses, and which are the main advantages of Montenegro in the EU negotiation process?**

Montenegro is very committed to European integrations. There is a common agreement regarding the association process among all political forces going beyond deep political cleavages. The Montenegrin negotiation team made an impressive performance so far. It proves that Montenegro has accepted the challenges. Nevertheless there is still a lot of work ahead – just imagine the scope and volume of the so called "acquis communautaire", i.e. common set of legal regulations of the European Union, which comprises several thousands of pages.

● **According to you, how long will it take for Montenegro and this region in general to join European Union?**

This is not an easy question to answer, because it will depend on the further economic and political developments in South East Europe. Generally, it could be said that the faster and the closer cooperation amongst the countries in the region can be established, the easier rapprochement to the EU will proceed.

This is also why the European Commission is encouraging the establishment of a regional free trade zone, bearing in mind that the creation of the European Union went the same way.

● **How feasible you think is EU plan to make the Balkans a small Euro-region, beginning with the creation of a free-trade area?**

There is definitely a need for enhanced and closer co-operation in the Western Balkans Region. The EU expects the countries of the region to co-operate more closely with each other than has been the case so far. The creation of the Visegrad Group (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia) in the early nineties can serve as an example of best practice regarding regional cooperation that takes place parallel to the individual country's EU integration process. These countries agreed in the framework of the Visegrad Declaration on close political, economic and cultural co-operation in order to ease the rapprochement process with the European Union. The bundling of their forces proved to be a success. Such intensified regional cooperation will not prevent each South East European country from developing further its individual relations with the EU. And the EU will continue to judge each of



the countries of the region on its own merits in implementing the European Partnership programmes.

● What is your opinion of the statements by some Montenegrin high officials saying that Montenegro alone will make it much easier and much faster to the Stabilisation and Association Agreement, if it doesn't have to wait for Serbia to fulfil its own obligations?

The European Union took note of different settings in Montenegro and Serbia regarding the Stabilisation and association negotiations by introducing the twin-track negotiations. The outcome of the referendum on the future status of Montenegro will consequently also decide on the further framework of the Stabilisation and association negotiations.

● How do you comment the statement by Minister Đurović saying that if Montenegro resolves to join EU independently, it will have a much better standing (i.e. easy access to loans and donations, seen its debts are much lower than Serbia's, direct access to EU funds, relaxed visa regime...)?

As I said before, Montenegro is very committed to European Integration and the negotiation team, led by Minister Đurović, is performing very professionally. Nevertheless, there is still a very long way ahead on the road towards EU integration, the Stabilisation and association agreement being the first and very important step on this way.

● Does Austria have plans to assist Montenegro's efforts in European integration process through its office here, and what would be its activities in this venue?

The Podgorica Liaison Office of the Austrian Embassy in Serbia and Montenegro is also in charge of the preparation and implementation of development co-operation programme with Montenegro. European integration and European standards are a significant factor influencing design and content of the Austrian-Montenegrin co-operation. Currently the co-operation programme is focus-

## ASSOCIATION AND STABILISATION AGREEMENT LONG-TERM BENEFITS



● Which would be the concrete advantages of EU association process for ordinary citizens? What will they gain with the signing of the SAA and what are Austrian experiences in this context?

Signing the Stabilisation and association agreement would bring Montenegro as well as Serbia closer to European standards, particularly in the field of economy and trade, but also in terms of human and civil rights and the relationship between the state and the citizens. It is an important step on the way to European integration and it will promote the regional economic and political co-operation. Furthermore it will prepare the ground for enhanced economic activities, domestic ones and above all enhanced and eased cross border relations with the neighbours in the region and the European Union. The long term advantages of such developments are to be felt by ordinary citizens through gradually advanced living standard and improved state and administration performance.

The signing of the SAA will not have an immediate impact on the citizens' daily lives, but there will be steady and continuous improvement as the reform measures need some time in order to become effective.

Austria's accession to EU was a big step further especially in the economic development of the country. It opened new horizons to Austrian companies. However, politically and historically Austria regained its place in the heart of Europe, being able as a member of the Union to actually contribute to and take part in the daily formulation of EU's policies and politics. On the individual level, there are manifold advantages for Austrian citizens, beginning with the free movement inside EU.

ing on higher education, amongst other, supporting the implementation of the tasks set by Bologna Declaration, as well as vocational education in the field of economics and tourism, aimed at strengthening of the

regional cooperation and the development of mountain tourism in Northern Montenegro, in the Bjelasica and Komovi region.

N. Rudović

REFERENDUM COMING UP ON MAY 21<sup>ST</sup>: IS INDEPENDENCE A SWIFTER WAY FOR MONTENEGRO TO APPROACH EU THAN REMAINING IN A UNION WITH SERBIA?

## The final countdown



How are we to go faster towards European Union scuttling along with Serbia, if that means we will have to wait for them to complete reforms and legal harmonisation in many areas, to indebt ourselves further and make it more difficult to pay back both the core and the interests, with diminishing chances to draw new credits? To have a greater unemployment rate, higher inflation, to labour together on restructuring of the industry and privatisation in Serbia, accompanied by social tensions, to haggle over the restitution issues and the question of foreigner founding companies, buying real estate... To take back the dinar, running the risk of a renewed inflation we will not be able to control... To have to allocate more and more money to some new state institutions, instead of financing our own development and strengthening our own administration...

This is how Ms. **Gordana Đurović**, Minister of European Integrations of the Government of Montenegro, explains, in one breathe, that in case referendum fails to restore the state independence on May 21st, Montenegro is bound to suffer delays in terms of rapprochement with European Union.

On the other hand, the camp for the survival of the state union with Serbia (SM) has no doubts about SM being the easiest, the quickest, and

the most certain way to join the elite club based in Brussels.

"We are now standing at a cross-

roads that will irreversibly decide on the future of our territory. This is the time of integration, there's no waiting and bargaining. We should face our past, but we must define clearly and unambiguously the best way to adopt European standards. In the last few days we have witnessed statements by the Austrian minister of foreign affairs, Ursula Plasnik, whose country is currently presiding over the EU, as well as those by Mr. Brok, president of the Foreign Relations Committee of the European Parliament, president of the Social-Democratic parliamentary group, Mr. Martin Schulz, and those of the former European Commission president, Mr. Jacques Santer, all of whom are adamant about saying that the State Union is the best and the most effective way of integrating into

### ĐUROVIĆ: INDEPENDENT MONTENEGRO GETS MORE MONEY FROM THE EU FUNDS

We cannot risk our hard won macro-economic stability and sound basis for a swift dynamic growth in the upcoming medium term by waiting for another member state to fulfil its own obligations regarding political criteria for association (the Hague), to establish political security and accomplish complex political deals it is currently involved with, in order to be able to handle economic problems and plan development projects, says dr **Gordana Đurović**.

She is convinced that, in case of Montenegrin independence, EU will respond with a "Plan B", as was already announced, meaning that all the agreements made until now between SM and EC through the double-track approach will serve as a basis for consolidation and quick finalisation of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement between Montenegro and EU.

"Montenegro can be a good example of a dynamic economic integration into EU, representing a small, open economic system, without much protectionism, with excellent resources, qualified work force, high frequency of accomplished reforms and the level of privatisation above 70%", explains Đurović.

Another factor is direct access to European Funds and greater range of financial instruments available to countries on the road to accession.

"Montenegro can receive more money as a sovereign subject. Already through the double track model, within the CARDS programme, Montenegro received amounts increased by 8% in 2003, and almost 12% in 2004. The same is true for the future IPA (Instrument for Pre-Accession) funds to become available in 2007", says Đurović.

According to her, economic reforms are carried through dynamically and systematically, including restructuring of the public-owned companies, restitution, enhancement of the private property rights as well as incentive measures in the area of investment policy, which facilitate access to the Montenegrin market for strategic foreign partners, boosting employment in Montenegro.

As an argument for Montenegrin independence, Đurović cites the lower import rates improving the offer on the market and making visas both cheaper and easier to get.

## MILIĆ: COUNTRIES SUING MONTENEGRO WILL BLOCK OUR COUNTRY'S ACCESSION TO EU



Srđan Milić

**S**rđan Milić judges that the adoption of European standards will undermine the pillars of the system, and that all "cosmetic" changes fail to address the essence.

"Can we speak about the process of European Integrations without having anti-discrimination legislature, with the EU constantly bragging about the disastrous state of implementation of the adopted laws in Montenegro?"

State Union, having fulfilled its commitments, can expect the Stabilisation and Association Agreement to be signed within two months, and arbitrary guesses on how fast Montenegro can join EU if it becomes

a private micro-state are misleading, if we consider comparative practice and if we think about the image of Montenegro in Europe", says Milić.

He doubts that Montenegro can hope for unimpeded continuation of negotiations and the final ratification of the SA Agreement in all 25 European Union states while several EU member states are pursuing court cases directly concerning some of the leading figures of the current Montenegrin regime.

"EU will never accept a member country which would become a burden – all of these countries each state must solve on its own. The country must have a serious partner image, the membership in EU being not a reward, but a sign of maturity and ability of a country to deal with its problems. No one has the right to make Montenegro a hostage of his or her own problems with European legislature. European standards must be applied even before the Agreement on stabilisation and association is signed, in order to give the investors a clear signal that this country is safe for investments. The example of Slovakia and its prime minister Meciar (a close friend of Đukanović) is particularly instructive", claims Milić, adding that it took Slovakia 5 years to return to the level it had while in Czechoslovakia, just because it had a government that refused to adopt anti-discrimination laws, to combat organised crime and corruption – a government that, in the end, could only be dissolved by the broadest possible alliance of democratic powers.

the European family. This is why I call upon all the citizens of Montenegro to believe in these European messages", says **Srđan Milić**, representative of the leading opposition party, the Socialist People's Party.

He asserts that we must not allow "anyone's question of immunity or evasion of the personal responsibility to push Montenegro into becoming a black hole or a ghetto of Europe".

"It is time we lift all the barriers to the functioning of the State Union which have been created systemati-

cally and intentionally in the last years and to do everything to return to Europe as soon as possible. We must all together build a political and social consensus to alter the current value system (not only to change the government, because mere personal replacements will not affect the key reasons to our situation today), and re-establish the individual and his family as the centre of reforms. The idea of European Integrations goes much deeper from sheer paperwork and law-making – it requires a differ-

ent way of thinking", says Milić.

On the other hand, at the Government of Serbia office for European Integrations they are neither in favour of the union nor of a divorce, as long as the system is efficient.

"The swiftest way to join European Union for both Serbia and Montenegro is for them to become efficient states. Whether one of two is less important, what matters is that these states have institutions capable of undertaking the commitment to fulfil the agreement we are about to conclude – state that will be capable of channelling their activities into reforms, democracy, rule of law, and thereby accomplish a membership in EU", says dr. **Tanja Mišćević**, professor at the Faculty of Political Science in Belgrade and the chief of the European Integrations office.

Acknowledging that the State Union in its current state, as created by the Belgrade Agreement in 2002 bears no resemblance to a functioning state, she reminded of the fact that European Commission recognised this problem in October 2004, allowing for a new approach to integrations, the so-called "double-track", treating separately Serbia and Montenegro. "It has proven to be a good one, providing for differentiation of responsibilities and commitments, it brought on the Feasibility Study, initiating and helping along with the Stabilisation and Association Agreement negotiations. However, once the agreement is signed and we begin implementing it, we will have to start considering new steps – candidate status and membership negotiations – and this is where the double track approach will cease to be applicable," warns dr. Mišćević.

This, according to her, means that by the date Stabilisation and Association Agreement comes into force, at the latest, Serbia and Montenegro must have a functioning state.

"As I said, whether one or two states, seen from the vantage point of the Union commitments, is not so important", says Mišćević. **N.R.**



by mr Tanja Janković

# Why do I want to be a citizen of Europe?

Two Balkan countries, Greece and Slovenia, have already gained full EU membership. Both Romania and Bulgaria are on their way to become members as well, while the rest of the Balkan states thread along the path of European integration, sooner or later to become a part of one European system. Most of the people in the Balkans believe that the road to EU is the road to a brighter future, a road to higher life standards, lower unemployment and better quality of life. Both its geography and its role in the European history set the Balkans at the heart of Europe. Europe is the future of the Balkans.

Yet, European integrations will not happen without powerful and well coordinated regional initiative. Liberalisation of cooperation among the Balkan countries is a natural first step in preparing for highly competitive West European and global markets.

I do not belong to those Euro-sceptics who approach the European Union road with doubt.

Closer bonds between countries, creation of a single market,

improved infrastructural connections, greater exchange flows, stabilisation of the region – these are my aces when arguing for a better and brighter future.

I believe that the best strategy for our country is to integrate into EU. Aside from gaining access to the world's most important market, our task is to solve development problems of our own economy and to create a stable democratic society. Also, under the EU wing, Montenegro will reconstruct its infrastructure and, by adopting the European legal and institutional framework, improve its own competitiveness, modernising the enterprise and using modern technologies to improve business productivity.

Joining the EU will also provide Montenegro with a stable political background supportive of its social and economic development, create a safe business environment and offer new development possibilities within the framework of the economic and monetary union. Other advantages of EU membership are reflected in the field of tourism and agriculture. Tourism, as the key sector of our economy, can expect great changes in terms of infrastructural improvements, partnerships between domestic tourist agencies and those in EU countries, and finally, through establishment of European quality standards regarding tourist services.

What can an ordinary citizen gain by joining the EU?

First of all, we gain educational opportunities and the chance to work in other EU countries. The citizens will be able to move at will

through all member states, free of visas and other limitations. Joining the EU, we can expect to see our life standards change as well, with the growth of the gross domestic product and real public spending.

The citizens can gain a life without borders. A life that means free exchange of ideas, goods, knowledge and people. A life which inspires political democracy, strengthens the rule of law, punishes corruption, creates an open market and motivates the citizens to work harder, better and more effectively.

This is the life I expect in Montenegro. The life of a European citizen!

The road to such life is already set, but it is by no means an easy one: it is long and difficult and not to be travelled overnight. Montenegro must go through structural reforms, which are likely to be painful, but necessary. These reforms are not only essential for a country that hopes to function well within the EU – they are the basic element of modernisation.

Montenegro, with its prestigious gift of geography, an educated work force and citizens striving to become a part of EU holds all the strength necessary to overcome the obstacles which are waiting on the road to and beyond the EU membership. Montenegro is now gathering its forces to assume the place it deserves inside EU.

*The author is Billing Coordinator within Telekom Group of Montenegro. She attended the III generation of the European Integration School.*

VASSILIS MARAGOS, DESK OFFICER FOR MONTENEGRO IN SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO RELATIONS UNIT OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION ENLARGEMENT DIRECTORATE-GENERAL

# The rule of law is crucial condition to your accession to the European

European Union and the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro do not have a contractual relationship. This is the result of the historical processes of the 1990s. The free trade regime is unilateral (from the EU side), and the negotiations for a Stabilisation and Association Agreement aim at remedying this lack and creating a strong link between the European Union and Serbia and Montenegro – says Mr Vassilis Maragos, desk officer for Montenegro in Serbia and Montenegro relations unit of the European Commission Enlargement Directorate-General.

Maragos, lawyer and holder of PhD in political sciences, prior to assuming this office in September 2005, has served in the Delegations of the European Commission in Sofia and Skopje.

In the interview for EIC Bulletin, Maragos underlines that the goal of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement is creation of cooperation platform between European Union and Serbia and Montenegro.

"The Agreement contains a number of mutual obligations in terms of opening up markets, approximating legislation and adapting structures to the EU standards, but it also paves the way for integration to the European Union. The capacity to negotiate and properly implement the Agreement will be an important test of maturity for your administration which is crucial for the further progress towards the EU. The SAA is negotiated both at the



Vassilis Maragos

level of the State Union and at the level of the Republics. This is what we call a "twin-track". Implementation will be also at twin-track level. Therefore, the responsibility for the implementation of the Agreement will lie also with the Montenegrin authorities on the Republican level – underlines Maragos.

Emphasising that "every step we make together makes our bond stronger", he expects that, if the negotiation pace continues without obstacles and if the conditionality is met, the conclusion of the SAA can be expected before the end of

2006.

"A lot of progress has been achieved in the negotiations, but there is still much work ahead of both sides. There are some sectors where you will be undertaking an obligation as from the entry into force of the agreement. In these areas, rapid steps are needed in order to prepare you for implementation. Once the SAA signed, the process of its ratification will be launched – this will take some time. As the SAA is a mixed agreement (covering competences of the EU and its member states) it needs to

be ratified not only by the European Parliament but also by the parliaments of the member states of the EU. In the meantime, the trade and economic cooperation provisions of the agreement will enter into force by virtue of an Interim Agreement" – Mr. Maragos explained.

He added that the access to EU funds was not strictly speaking linked to the SAA.

"However, EU assistance is linked to the political objectives of our cooperation, in particular those which are mentioned in the European Partnership, and the overall framework is the same: the Stabilisation and Association process. The assumption is that as soon as a country moves to the stage of negotiating a SAA it has to be ready to assume all related obligations. If this does not happen then this may have a negative effect on the assistance framework", warns Maragos.

According to him, the EU assistance is both an economic and a political instrument, which presup-

poses a certain administrative capacity.

"Access to these funds will be easy as long as a beneficiary knows what it wants to do, can formulate its priorities, and is ready to introduce the reforms which are mentioned in the European Partnership. There is also a need to create certain structures so that little by little you undertake more responsibility to manage these funds. This process will take a few years until all procedures for the management of EU funds are taking place within the Montenegrin administration (under the control of the European Commission of course). The first step to that direction is the appointment of a national coordinator for the Pre-Accession Instrument and the appointment of Programme Officers within each Ministry or other beneficiary body so that the planning of projects is done according to joint priorities. Absorption capacity is crucial in this context", says Maragos.

He warned that accession to

the European Union is a complex process which requires mobilisation of resources at all levels.

"When a country wants to join the EU it needs to invest in this aim, at the political level, first, then at the level of the administration, the economy and the civil society. Without a fundamental consensus around this goal, it will be impossible to achieve it. And, you are right, the basis for this consensus is a change in mentality of both citizens at large (what we call the civil society) but also the political and economic elites. There must be a will on the side of the people to focus on values and standards and to create the structures which will enforce them. Rule of law is crucial. An independent and efficient judicial system is essential. There is a legal and administrative –technical if you like – work which has to be done. There is no shortcut to this path. But the foundation of this work is political and cultural commitment to the European values", Mr. Maragos concluded. **N.R.**

**DR. NICHOLAS WHYTE, INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP EUROPEAN PROGRAMME DIRECTOR**



Nicholas Whyte

## The largest economic area in the world awaits you

in the world, and part of a general system of European values. It is the best guarantee for Montenegro's future stability and security, through integration with its neighbours, says dr. Nicholas Whyte, director of the European Programme of the Interational Crisis group.

Asked which were the benefits for the Montenegrin citizens from the signing of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement, he said that this agreement was the first

step towards membership in the EU.

"It commits Montenegro to align its policies and legislation more closely with European norms, and also commits the EU to help Montenegro on the way there. The most important element is a gradual move to free trade between Montenegro and the EU, and also institutions for political dialogue between the Montenegrin government and the European institutions", said Whyte.

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY FOR INFORMING THE PUBLIC ON MONTENEGRO'S ASSOCIATION PROCESS WITH EUROPEAN UNION

# Citizens must know what EU is bringing



By: Nada Vojvodić

Integration into European Union is a priority for Montenegro. In order to enhance the process, a high level of understanding and acceptance of this process by all the citizens of Montenegro is essential. In order to strengthen the citizen's awareness about the process of European integrations, the Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations and European Integrations (MFEREI) prepared a Communication strategy for informing the public on the process of Montenegro's association process with European Union, which was adopted in September 2004. This Strategy is a basic framework for all the activities developed within the annual action plans. In July 2004, the Ministry had signed a Memorandum of Cooperation with representatives of the non-government sector as means to strengthen collaboration on the promotion of the European integrations process, in addition to its own

"Krenimo" (Let's go) campaign. This communication strategy should enable the citizens to acquire the necessary knowledge and participate actively in the EU accession process.

The communication strategy cooperation activities are coordinated by the MFEREI, while the activities themselves are realised through cooperation with the Government of the Republic of Montenegro, representatives of the civil sector (NGO), social partners (trade unions, employers' union, the chamber of commerce) and the Institute for the Media.

In cooperation with its partners and donors MFEREI organised a number of lectures and round tables related to European integrations. With support of Konrad Adenauer Foundation it started a project of regular communication between the main actors of the European integration process and the media representatives.

As a contribution to informing the citizens about the process of European

integrations, the Ministry issues a special "EuroMont" as an addition to the daily "Vijesti". The Ministry has also taken to printing a series of books and brochures on European Union and the process of European integrations.

In addition to this, various trainings for the civil servants regarding the process of European integrations took place throughout the 2005.

The Action Plan for the implementation of the Communication strategy for 2006 was adopted in February. It envisages a series of activities to be implemented by MFEREI together with its partners and donors.

In order to improve the Communication strategy, MFEREI officials will attend a meeting about the establishment of a communication network in mid-May, together with the government representatives of the EU candidate states, as well as those of the countries who are potential membership candidates.

Except for the European Commission representatives, this meeting will gather envoys from Turkey, Croatia, Macedonia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia Montenegro, Bulgaria and Romania.

The goal of this meeting will be to exchange knowledge and experience on communication strategies, and to discuss the possibility of European Commission funding for development of the communication strategies in these countries.

*The author is an advisor at the Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations and European Integrations. She attended the 4th generation of the European Integrations School.*

SOME OF THE MOST INFLUENTIAL COUNTRIES OF THE "OLD" EUROPE DECIDE TO KEEP BARRIERS TO WORKERS FROM THE NEW MEMBER STATES OF CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

# Union still far from free movement of workers

The "old" Europe is still wary of the idea that the new members might bring headache, not only new markets for free investment. Reluctance of the EU15 to open their labour markets for the citizens of the new EU 10 speaks for this fear. The "Polish plumber syndrome", symbol of the resistance of the founding member states to a complete liberalization of their labour markets for the fear that they

might be flooded with cheap services endangering the national bidders is now more acute than it was last June. According to some analysts, this was one of the reasons for the French citizens voting down the EU Constitution, and already it resurfaces in the possibility that a majority of the "old" EU states might delay for at least another 3 years the opening of their borders to the new members' working force.

Except for Cyprus and Malta, which are very small countries, the rest of the EU 10 citizens are unable to seek jobs in the old members, which decided to use their power to restrict this right for 7 years from the date of accession. With the exception of Great Britain, Ireland and Sweden, the rest preferred to avoid labour force inflows from the poorer members.

Countries of EU are expected to announce whether they will maintain these restrictions or open the labour markets for the new states by the end of April. Some of the most influential members have already decided to keep their barriers for the Eastern workers for at least another 3 years, signaling the states who are still hoping for the membership that their status might become even worse.

This is why the Government of Montenegro, otherwise beaming optimism in all areas of EU cooperation, remains very cautious with respect to the labour movement policy.

"Citizens of Montenegro and Serbia, as well as those of other countries wishing to join European Union, cannot count with the opportunity to seek employment on the European labour market in any recent future. Full mobility in the labour market and opportunity to seek jobs is not available even to those who already acceded to EU on May 1st 2004. Economic free-





doms, meaning that you can look for a job in any other EU country, are going to take a while, because they too have their own problems with respect to unemployment levels and the rate of economic growth", said recently in a working breakfast with journalists the Minister for Foreign Economic Relations and European Integrations, **Gordana Đurović**.

She explained that, in a Belgrade meeting with EU representatives in early April, they discussed the section of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement regarding the free

movement of workers, where it was agreed that our people working in EU and vice versa, will keep the same status as before.

"They will have the right to reside in these countries. After 5 years of residence, they will be able to work in another EU country without a special permit from that state", said Đurović.

According to the European Union Bulletin, by April 30th all of the old member states should issue a final decision, although it seems like some of the EU governments, such as Finland, Spain and Portugal, are seriously considering abandon-



Vladimir Špidla

ing all restrictions for the workers from the new member states. However, Austria, the Netherlands and Germany have already decided to keep them. The others are yet to decide.

"Free movement of all workers in the EU is our goal and we need to look ahead and plan for this reality," said Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, **Vladimir Špidla**.

National restrictions on workers' free movement in the EU were introduced in May 2004 by all old Member States (except Ireland, Sweden and the United Kingdom) on workers from the eight new EU Central and Eastern European countries. Reciprocal restrictions on labour flows in the opposite direction were imposed by three new Member States: Hungary, Poland and Slovenia.

A report issued on 8 February found that most countries had seen lower than expected labour flows from Central and Eastern Europe. New Member State (EU10) nationals represented less than 1% of the working age population in all countries except Austria (1.4% in 2005) and Ireland (3.8% in 2005). Ireland has seen relatively the largest inflow of workers and the new workers had contributed to its impressive economic performance, helping alleviate skills bottlenecks. **N.R.**

## THE FREEDOM ESTABLISHED MORE THAN 50 YEARS AGO

According to EU regulations, Free Movement of Workers and the Principle of Equal Treatment means that every citizen of the EU has the right to work and live in another Member State without being discriminated against on grounds of nationality.

Free movement of persons is one of the fundamental freedoms guaranteed by Community law. It is perhaps the most important right under Community law for individuals, and an essential element of European citizenship.

For workers, this freedom exists since the creation of the European Community in 1957. It is established by the Article 39 of the EC Treaty, prescribing: the right to seek employment in another Member State; the right to work in another Member State; the right to reside there for that purpose; the right to remain there; the right to equal treatment in respect of access to employment, working conditions and all other advantages which could help to facilitate the worker's integration in the host Member State.

Community rules on free movement of workers also apply to Member States of the European Economic Area (EEA) – Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.

Article 39 applies to so-called migrant workers, i.e. nationals of one Member State who leave their country of origin and go to work to another Member State. It does not apply to persons who have never left their country of origin, but it covers nationals of a Member State when returning into that Member State after having exercised their right to a free movement.

It applies to workers and not to self-employed persons, students, retired or non-active persons. The latter are covered by other provisions of Community law. The European Court of Justice has interpreted the concept of worker as covering a person who undertakes genuine and effective work, under the direction of someone else, for which he is paid.

Following the case-law of the European Court of Justice, article 39 also applies to professional sportsmen.

Certain rights are extended to family members of the worker. They have, in particular, the right to live with the worker in the host Member State and the right to an equal treatment as regards to for example education and social advantages. Some members of the family have also the right to work there. There are certain limitations on the exercise of this right, related to public security, public policy and public health grounds.

## INTRODUCING THE EU INSTITUTIONS

# European Economic and Social Committee



EESC Lisbon strategy conference

European Economic and Social Committee is a European Union advisory body bringing together representatives of various civil society interest groups, providing studies, recommendations and advices to facilitate the work of other EU institutions – Council of European Union, European Parliament and European Commission. With the spectre of democratic deficit "haunting" Europe, EESC acquired great importance in establishing cooperation between the EU decision-makers and the civil society. European Economic and Social Committee was established already by the 1957 Treaty of Rome, as a mechanism to engage civil society groups in the creation of the common market and establish communication between EU economic and social actors and its institution. European Commission, Council EU and EU Parliament are obliged to consult the Committee in matters regarding decisions on economic and social policy. On the other hand, the Committee is free to issue proposals on its own initiative relative to any issue it considers relevant.

The EESC has 317 members – the number from each EU country roughly reflecting the size of its population. Members represent interests of different civil society sectors, organised within 3 groups within Committee: Employers, Employees and Various Interests. The first group has members from private and public sectors of industry, small and medium-sized businesses, chambers of commerce, banking and agriculture. The second group represents trade unions, while the third group represents a wide range of interests, from NGOs and environmental organisations, to consumer associations and academic communities. The members are nominated by the national governments and appointed by

the Council of EU for a period of 4 years.

Every two years the EESC elects a bureau made up of 37 members. Since October 2004, the President of the Committee has been Anne-Marie Sigmund, from Austria, former President of the Austrian Federal Committee of Liberal Professions.

The Committee meets in Plenary Assembly, held once a year. In the meantime, Working Groups within the Committee maintain continuous contact with economic and social councils on the national level, gathering information and organising joint discussions. EESC has developed an active cooperation with economic and social associations from all over the world, which meet together at a bi-annual International Meeting. The Committee is divided into six sections, working in different areas of economic and social life. The first one comprises of Agriculture, Rural Development and the Environment (NAT), then comes Economic and Monetary Union and Economic and Social Cohesion (ECO), Employment, Social Affairs and Citizenship (SOC), The Single Market, Production and Consumption (INT), Transport, Energy, Infrastructure and the Information Society (TEN), and finally External Relations (REX). The latter consists of several delegations over viewing several regions of the world relevant to EU interests, among which exists a Contact Group for the Western Balkans. This group has the task of developing contacts with the civil society, as well as economic and social councils in the region, assisting them in establishing relationships with EU institutions and participating in Stabilisation and Association Process. Recently, this group has organised the first Western Balkans Civil Society Forum.

Twice a year Economic and Social Committee offers traineeships for a period of five months. Application procedure for the period February–July 2007 has been opened in early April. All details are available at

[www.esc.eu.int/tgj/trainees/index\\_en.asp](http://www.esc.eu.int/tgj/trainees/index_en.asp).

Website of Economic and Social Committee is [www.esc.eu.int](http://www.esc.eu.int)

Vera ŠČEPANOVIĆ

## NON – GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS IN EUROPEAN UNION

### socialplatform

The Platform of European Social NGOs is the alliance of 40 representatives of European federations and networks of non-governmental organisations working to build an inclusive society and promote social dimension in EU. Members of the Social Platform represent thousands of organisations, associations and voluntary groups on the local, regional, national and European level advocating a wide range of civil society interests. These include organisations of women, older people, people with disabilities, unemployed, people affected by poverty, LGBT population, young people, children and families, as well as organisations campaigning on issues such as social justice, homelessness, life-long learning, health and racism.

The Platform was established in 1995, following an appeal by the European Commission to non-government organisations to engage in dialogue on EU social policy. Its aim is to channel the concerns of civil society all over Europe, creating strong base for influencing EU institutions. On the other side, Social platform collects and ensures a wide circulation of information on EU activities and policies to its members on the national level.

The Social Platform political positions are developed by thematic Working Groups, where members meet to exchange concerns and agree on common positions and strategies of Social Platform. Within SP, there are currently two main Working Groups, one on Social Policy, the other on Fundamental Rights & Non-Discrimination, as well as two more informal Working Groups on Social Services and on the Social Rights of Migrants. Policy and campaigning work is led by the Steering Group, and the Management Committee has an overview of all the Groups. Currently, there is an ongoing campaign demanding that social services be defined within EU regulations, expanding them from the national onto the European level.

The Social Platform strongly supports the enlargement of the European Union as a means of strengthening social policies and provisions across the EU. For this purpose, SP supports its members' efforts to develop their networks beyond EU borders, strengthening civil society in candidate and potential candidate states. It provides this support mainly through organising networking visits to accession countries.

Website: [www.socialplatform.org](http://www.socialplatform.org)

E-mail: [roshan.dipuppo@socialplatform.org](mailto:roshan.dipuppo@socialplatform.org)

## THE FIRST BALKAN CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM TAKES PLACE IN BRUSSELS

# Relax the visa regime

The European Economic and Social Committee, has organised the first Western Balkans Civil Society Forum. The Forum brought together almost 200 participants, including representatives of Western Balkans civil society organisations, the EESC, European and international socio-professional organisations, European NGOs, Economic and Social Councils, EU institutions and international organisations. The staging of this Forum has demonstrated the willingness of civil society players to meet on a cross-border basis to discuss a better future together. The participants stressed how important it was that the European Union and the region's governments should

listen to the voice of civil society in the Western Balkans.

At the Forum, main topics discussed were the current situation, needs and future of civil society in this region, as well as the possibilities for further development of social dialogue and cooperation between civil society, national governments and EU institutions. The participants of the Forum stressed that development of social dialogue is one of the key elements of building stable democratic states and that governments of the Western Balkans states should more seriously understand the necessity of the cooperation with civil society in order to achieve real reforms. The Forum called the EU to enable civil society organisations more active participation in the process of European integration through creation of Joint Consultative Committees, made up of civil society within the Stabilisation and Association Process, as well as to allocate special means for the civil society projects in the framework of new plan of financial assistance to the pre-accession countries. For the better and more efficient cooperation between EU and countries of Western Balkans, the participants appealed on EU to relax the visa requirements towards this region.

The EESC representatives will continue to cooperate with civil society in the region



From the forum

through setting up of joint consultative committees, firstly with Croatia, and afterwards with other candidate countries. To enhance exchange of information and experiences, the EESC will, in cooperation with local organisations, soon also start creation of detail study on civil society in the region. The next Western Balkans Civil Society Forum is planned by 2008 at the latest.

From Montenegro, participants at the Forum were: Ms **Daliborka Uljarević**, Executive Director of the Centre for Civic Education, Mr **Stevo Muk**, Executive Director of the Centre for Development of NGOs, Ms **Ljiljana Raičević**, Executive Director of Shelter, then Mr **Danilo Popović**, President of the Association of independent trade unions and Ms **Jasmina Anđelić-Tatar**, Head of International Cooperation Division of AITU, as well as Mr **Predrag Mitrović**, President of Union of Employers and Mr **Budimir Raičković**, Secretary General of the Union of Employers, and Mr **Ilija Kračković**, Secretary General of the Economic and Social Council of Montenegro. **V.Š.**

## Jestrab in Pljevlja

In a visit organised by European Movement in Montenegro and NGO Centre for development of Pljevlja, the Ambassador of the Czech Republic in S&M, Mr Ivan Jestrab met on April 19th with representatives of the local government, enterprises and NGOs in Pljevlja who briefed him on the economic, cultural and social conditions in Pljevlja.

On this occasion, Ambassador Jestrab held a lecture at the great hall of the Centre for Sports and Recreation in Pljevlja, titled "European Union and the experiences of the Czech Republic in the accession process".

## CEDEM hosts Dinstbir

On his working visit to Montenegro, Mr Jirzi Dinstbir, President of the Czech Council for International Relations and former Foreign Affairs Minister of the Czech Republic, visited CEDEM where he met with NGO sector representatives. Czech delegation consisted of three members, Jiržina Dinzbírová, Stanislav Stah and Jana K. šindelková. At the meeting, they agreed to continue cooperation between the Czech Centre for cooperation with Serbia, Montenegro and B&H and Montenegrin NGOs which expressed their interest in participating in the European Integrations Programme through exchange of experiences and other forms of collaboration.

## CDNGO to train trainers

Centre for development of non-governmental organizations (CDNGO), in cooperation with the Ministry for Foreign Economic Relations and European Integrations and European Movement in Montenegro, began, on 15 April, a training programme for project management of the European Union funds.

The goal of this project is to improve the level of information and enhance knowledge and skills of non-governmental organisation, as well as the local and national administration, in terms of access to the EU funds and management of EU-supported projects.

Participants in this programme are trainers and consultants of CDNGO, Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations and European Integrations employees, and members of European Movement in Montenegro.

Participants will pass through three training modules where they will get acquainted with EU funds accessible to non-governmental organisations, state and local administration. They will also learn about necessary elements of project implementation required for applying to the EU funds, selection criteria, financial management and methodology of training.

Upon the completion of this programme, trainers will be able to transfer their skills to the employees of the local and state public service, other NGO members, etc., with the aim to create conditions for effective usage of the EU funds accessible to the states in the process of EU integrations. Owing to the support of the Foundation Open Society Institute – Representative Office Montenegro, the budget for this programme amounting 10 776,46 euros has been provided.

## FOR THIS ISSUE WE RECOMMEND:

**M.A. IN ADVANCED EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES, ISTANBUL, TURKEY****Deadline: July 31th, 2006**

The Institut Européen des Hautes études Internationales (I.E.H.E.I.) offers a one-year interdisciplinary graduate programme in European Studies and International Relations, leading to the "M.A. in European and International Studies", awarded in cooperation with the University Bahoesehir in Istanbul. The programme includes the following modules:

- \* International Relations
- \* European Integration
- \* Democracy and Society
- \* Federalism.

The programme includes semesters in Istanbul, Nice and Berlin.

The Institute accepts applications of university graduates from all countries and disciplines (B.A. level). Active knowledge of French and English languages is a requirement.

**Website:** <http://www.iehei.org>

**INTERNATIONAL MASTER'S SCHOLARSHIP, UNIVERSITÄT BERN, SWITZERLAND**

The Universität Bern has decided to grant international students Master excellence scholarships for the academic year 2006/07. A financial support of 1600 CHF/month for the entire duration of the Master program is offered.

Students must have graduated from a university with at least a Bachelor Degree.

Candidate files are due before May 15, 2006 at the following address:

Universität Bern,  
Internationale Beziehungen,  
Hochschulstrasse 4,  
CH-3012 Bern.

**Website:** <http://www.int.unibe.ch>

**MA IN INTERNATIONAL AND EUROPEAN STUDIES, HUNGARY**

The Institute for Social and European Studies (ISES), in collaboration with

the Corvinus University, Budapest, provides students with the opportunity to

obtain theoretical and practical knowledge in the fields of international relations, economics, political

science, history and sociology. A limited number of tuition scholarships may be available for the most outstanding and needy applicants.

**Contact person:** István Bariska,  
[postmaster@ises-koszeg.t-online.hu](mailto:postmaster@ises-koszeg.t-online.hu)

**ALPBACH SUMMER SCHOOL ON EUROPEAN INTEGRATION 2006, AUSTRIA**

**August 17 – September 1, 2006**

**Deadline: 12 May 2006**

Open to senior students and young graduates of law, economics as well as of other social and political sciences.

The chief objective of this intensive Summer School is to provide senior students and young graduates of law, economics as well as of other social and political sciences, an intensive basic course on the law, economics and politics of European integration. In addition to the lectures given by distinguished teachers of European Community and



Union Law, high-ranking officials of EU institutions, the Austrian Government, the Austrian Parliament, and of organisations and socio-economic interest groups representative of a broad spectrum of civil society will also informally participate in classes of the Summer School from time to time, talking about their own professional experience, answering questions and contributing to discussions.

**For further Information contact:**

**Franz Mailer,**  
[stipendium@alpbach.org](mailto:stipendium@alpbach.org)

**Website:**

[www.alpbach.org/English/Summer%20school.htm](http://www.alpbach.org/English/Summer%20school.htm)

## EUROPEAN SUMMER SCHOOL 2006, PRAGUE, CZECH REPUBLIC

July 8 – July 18, 2006

**Application deadline: April 30, 2006**

EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy associated with the Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence in European Studies at the Faculty of Social Sciences of Charles University has launched a summer school to discuss economic, political and social challenges the new EU members from Central Europe are facing. If you are an undergraduate/gradu-



ate student of European studies, political science, international relations, economics, sociology, humanities or journalism interested in the region of Central Europe and in the current and future developments of the European Union – this Summer School is just for you!

**E-mail: [ess2006@europeum.org](mailto:ess2006@europeum.org)**

## CHANGING CULTURES: EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVES, GHENT, BELGIUM

November 15 – 17, 2006

**Deadline: June 15, 2006**

The conference 'Changing Cultures: European Perspectives' aims at providing social scientists who study these and related issues within Europe, with a forum for discussion and exchange. It is an international gathering for the sociological com-

munity, but one which is also open to contributions from related disciplines.

We welcome papers that address a range of conceptual, methodological and empirical issues. Sessions have already been planned on the future of cultural theory and qualitative and quantitative methods within the sociology of culture, on cultural memory & collective identity, on measurement issues, on art and cultural participation, on value change within Europe, on ethnic minorities & multicultural society, on cultural industries, on cross-cultural & comparative research, on daily cultures & life styles and on cultural globalization.

We also welcome individual papers that focus other issues related to the main conference theme and proposals for a thematic session, workshop or round table.

The deadline for proposals is June 15, 2006. Acceptance will be notified by September 1st. Submissions are to be made online at the conference website. Authors are asked to submit a short (400 word) abstract. Authors may modify their submission online until October 1, 2006. Abstracts must be sufficiently detailed so as to allow the program committee to judge the merits of the paper, including a description of the topic to be studied, the theoretical focus, the data and research methods, and the expected findings.

**Website: <http://www.esaculture.be>**





Centre for Civic Education (CCE), Centre for Development of non-governmental organisations (CDNGO) and European Movement in Montenegro (EMiM) with support of Royal Norwegian Embassy in Serbia and Montenegro, announce

## ADVERTISEMENT

for the participation in a

## STUDY VISIT TO THE EU

The study visit is a part of the programme "Learn about the EU personally", and it includes a few days visit to Brussels as the headquarter of the main EU institutions. During that period, programme participants will be able to visit main institutions of the EU and familiarise themselves with the organisation, functioning and decision making process within these institutions, as well as of EU in general, through contacts with the institutions' representatives.

The goal of this programme is to offer the citizens of Montenegro, who have already gained certain knowledge about European integration process, to improve their skills through practical experience, and establish important contacts for their future work and personal development.

The right to participate is open to all candidates whose priority is to develop previously acquired knowledge in above-mentioned fields and to contribute to the affirmation of ideas, meaning and standards of European integrations in Montenegro. All candidates are welcome regardless of their age, gender, nationality, religion or personal beliefs, although priority will be given the candidates demonstrating high levels of social activism in governmental, non-governmental, party, trade-union, commercial, scientific, cultural, media and student framework.

All expenses of the study visit will be covered by Royal Norwegian Embassy in SM, CCE, EMiM and CDNGO.

Application with short CV and motivation letter should be forwarded no later than May 11th 2006, to the contact address:

Centre for Civic Education  
(for "Study visit to the EU")  
Njegoševa 36, 81 000 Podgorica  
By fax: 081 / 665 112 or via e-mail: [cgo@cg.yu](mailto:cgo@cg.yu)

**CCE** – Centre for Civic Education is a non-governmental organisation dedicated to the alternative education in the field of democracy, civic society, human rights and European integrations.

**CDNGO** – Centre for Development of non-governmental organisations offers support to the development of non-governmental organisations in Montenegro and contributes to the creation of adequate framework for participation of citizens and non-governmental organisations within public policy issues and development of civil society.

**EMiM** – European Movement in Montenegro is a non-governmental organisation focused on the promotion of European values, standards and principles in Montenegro.

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