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## WHAT DOES NCEI AND TO WHOM IS IT RESPONSIBLE?

Centre for Civic Education (CCE) estimates as irresponsible and unacceptable the behaviour of authorities that were addressed regarding submission of narrative and financial reports on the National Council for European Integration (NCEI). **The process of collection of these seemingly simple data proven to be unusually slow, and also part of the collected information revealed concerning indicators that should be taken into account within further assessment of the future of NCEI.**

First thing which could be observed on the basis of responses received from the Office of the Secretary General of the Parliament of Montenegro, Ministry of Finance and Secretary of NCEI was that **these institutions don't know who is responsible for filing financial report nor how and in what way are the allocated funds for NCEI used for.**

Seeking further information we obtained two documents. **One from the Secretary of NCEI which refers to the Semi-annual narrative report for the period September 2009 to March 2010, as the only official narrative report on the work of this body that exists since autumn 2008, with the note that NCEI never produced financial report.** In addition, this report represents an empty statement about the five sessions, one of which was even not held. The methodology of the report does not exist, from its content it is impossible to determine what was discussed at meetings, what conclusions were passed or the content of participants' presentations. Also, there are no information on any recommendations of this body that can contribute to the process of European integration.

**The second document we received from the Ministry of Finance and it represents a financial card of the used funds in 2010 and 2011, where it was evident that in 2010 35,477.00 euros were spent, and in 2011 so far 13,865.41 euros by NCEI, but without any indication for what purposes.** Otherwise, the funds allocated for NCEI in the Budget of Montenegro amounted over 100,000.00 euros and it remains unclear why these funds are not used for capacity building of this body or for other purposes that directly contribute to the process of European integration.

Only in this effort to learn about the functioning of the body that exists for 3 years, it is impossible to enlight even the basic issues, such as those related to the financial principal on behalf of NCEI or purposes for which NCEI budget was used.

**The obligation of all authorities whose mandate is linked with European affairs is continuous and professional work.** In this context, it is hard not to notice the lack of action and indifference for its own job of one of the body mapped amongst the most important in this field – the National Council for European Integration (NCEI). This applies equally to the previous work in which the NCEI should have position itself as an important, indispensable



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and professional player, and to the potential of its future action. Namely, Article 1 of the Decision on establishing the National Council for European Integration (Official Gazette no. 22/08) defined it as the "strategic advisory body of high level of participation of representatives of the Montenegrin society, which will contribute to better coordination and monitoring of implementation of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement and monitoring of future negotiations on the accession of Montenegro to the European Union".

The founding of NCEI was accompanied by numerous difficulties from the beginning, including the negotiations amongst the opposition leaders for leading position to the rather controversial appointment of the NGO representatives. The latter was quite regularly commented in negative aspect within the European Commission reports, and in particular the European Economic and Social Council's report on "The role of civil society in relations between the EU and Montenegro". **It seems that it was the synergy of the awareness of the opposition leaders to use this body solely for personal promotion and apparent incompetence and illegitimacy of civil society representatives brought to that position as loyal players by political parties and not by the part of the professional sector, with the support from the governing structures that never even wanted to have this body functional resulted with the current state of affairs.** In that situation NCEI knocked itself out of European rail in terms of content, and its role and position is put under the question mark.

**NCEI failed to provide the social credibility of the process by giving suggestions and guidelines for fulfillment of the key EC's recommendations, since there were neither will for that nor expertise within the body itself.**

Therefore, if NCEI continues to work as it used to, the questions of existence of NCEI as well as the assessment of the need for its reorganization and change of working methodology are justified. **By restructuring the current NCEI, the role of the Parliament would be strengthened, especially if continuous cooperation of the NCEI and the Committee for European Integration and International Relations as well as the joint Committee of the Montenegrin and European Parliament would be established.** All these three bodies would have their own special competence, and common action would contribute to more rapid progress of Montenegro towards the EU. With the condition, that they do their job in committed and professional manner which is necessary when it comes to the European affairs.

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