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WHY ARE DIPLOMATIC PASSPORTS HIDDEN?

Centre for Civic Education (CCE) continuously makes efforts towards enhancement of the level of transparency of information from all the spheres of the society, contributing to establishment of the responsible government.

This also refers to the access to information concerning the number and holders of the diplomatic and official passports of Montenegrin citizens, which contributes to the fight against eventual abuse and illegal use of these passports. On several occasions, CCE filed to the Ministry of foreign affairs a request for the access to information regarding the number of citizens in Montenegro with Montenegrin citizenship who were issued diplomatic passports, as well as the list of the holders of such passports and their functions, number of Montenegrin diplomatic passports currently in use, namely, those with renewed visas, as well as who are the persons who use them and on what position are they. Furthermore, we requested information regarding the number of holders of diplomatic passports from Montenegro who returned their passports to the Ministry of foreign affairs of Serbia after the change of the statehood of Montenegro on May 21, 2006, as well as the information regarding the number of citizens of Montenegro who were issued a diplomatic, and an official passport after the enforcement of the Law on travel documents (Official Gazette of Montenegro No. 21/08). Unfortunately, by not acting upon our request, not only that the Ministry of foreign affairs violates the Law on free access to information and Law on travel documents, but it acts contrary to the public interest which is in this case the transparency of the work of this institution. Further, this approach towards (not) conveying information regarding these passports which have to be made public, in the light of the last scandal with the former Thailand prime minister, convicted of felony, can only strengthen the perception about high level of abuse of office.

The reason why the Ministry denies answering our requests remains unclear, considering they are obliged not only by the Law, but also by the professional ethics and devotion to constituting credible institutions, which cumulatively raises doubts that someone's personal interest is stronger than the public interest and that is why the Montenegrin public cannot find out to whom are diplomatic and official passports issued, meaning, who formally and honorably represent the citizens. Citizens have a full right to this information, as well as the information regarding every type of visit of a public official using a diplomatic passport, because that person represents and advocates the interests of Montenegro, thus the transparency of this document is of a special importance, while for the private trips civil passports must be used, which mostly isn't the case.

CCE will use all the legal means stipulated by the Law on free access to information, as well as the Law on travel documents, thus making requested information accessible, but we recon that further proceedings can only harm the reputation of the Ministry of foreign affairs and further strenghten suspicion towards the public institutions.

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