



Centar za građansko obrazovanje
Centre for civic education

Podgorica, 19 May 2012

SEEDS OF DEMOCRACY: EUROPE AND BALKANS, LONDON

Within the Trans-European festival of culture, arts and politics, which takes place in 14 European cities, organized by the European Alternatives - London based organization, representatives of civil society from Montenegro presented the political situation and the state of affairs within the NGO sector.

Namely, the executive director of the Centre for Civic Education (CCE), **Daliborka Uljarević** and the executive director of LGBT Forum Progress **Zdravko Cimbalević**, had presentations at the panel "*The seeds of democracy: Europe and the Balkans*" at the University of Goldsmith in London, on 18 May 2012. Participants of the panel, from their perspectives, analyzed the results within consolidation of democratic institutions and rule of law in the Western Balkans.

Uljarević addressed the challenges of Montenegrin institution building in the last two decades that are significantly burdened with unclear lines of separation of party and state interests, lack of adequate and powerful alternative political platform that would change the constellation of political relations at the elections. She noted that the pressure for development of institutions in direction of independence, efficiency and professionalism and acceleration of the process of depoliticization, largely comes from civil society and international institutions. She emphasized that this pressure produces results as evidenced by the fact that the Montenegro is at the doors of starting membership negotiations with the EU, but that a great disproportion power in the political arena remains a matter of concern. Uljarević spoke about the role and importance of the media, the controversy that followed their development and activities in Montenegro, as well as about the problems for which Montenegro is recognized in the wider European public and the need for systemic reforms. She concluded that the start of negotiations will accelerate the pace of building the capacity of Montenegrin institutions, which must be followed by some kind of consolidation of the political scene, in terms of better government and better political alternative offer.

Cimbalević spoke about the role of civil society in informing and educating citizens about democratic values and culture of human rights as the basis for the strengthening of democratic institutions in Montenegro. In this context, he presented the strengths and challenges for the NGO sector in Montenegro, with an overview on the organizations dealing with minority communities. In particular, he spoke about the need and importance of communication of the NGO sector with the EU institutions towards solving some of the burning issues of civil society in Montenegro and alignment with best European practices in the protection of LGBT rights, as well as other discriminated groups.

The panel gathered large number of participants from Great Britain and the Balkans, and was followed by dynamic discussions upon the panelists' presentations. Apart Uljarević and Cimbalević, speakers at the panel were also **Ian Bancroft**, one of the founders of the organization Transconflict and **Kemal Pervanić** from the organization Bridge of Peace from Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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