

European pulse

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FOCUS

EU demands that economic good governance should become one of the pillars of enlargement: what does it mean for Montenegro?

Interview

Civil society representative in the WG for chapter 23,
Boris Marić

Region

Brussels on the Balkan's economy:
falling output, floods, youth unemployment...



Foreword:

Highway



Vladan Žugić

Nothing makes me laugh like stupidity does. Some ten years ago I read about European Agency for Reconstruction (EAR) financing a bridge in Romania or Bulgaria, I don't remember which, without access roads, so that the bridge only connected two meadows.

The construction of priority section of 40 km of highway between nothing and nothing reminds me again of that bridge. But I cannot bring myself to laugh at this monument of two decades of one party rule in Montenegro, knowing it will cost us over one billion euro. Nor does this highway have anything to do with the "good economic governance", one of the three pillars of EU enlargement. Nor do our decision-makers have an answer to the question: can the country with soaring public debt and consistent failure to meet the Maastricht criteria keep the euro as its official currency.

In absence of a debate culture and expertise, the key argument in favour of the highway was that "we need it", accompanied by tragic figures on the number of victims of traffic accidents in the canyon Platije (as if there can be no traffic accidents on highways). In short, nobody has yet explained to us what is truly the purpose of this highway.

If the purpose is to connect the north and the south of the country, my fear is rather that the north will simply use it to move to the south, unless other investments are made in that region. Even so, however, the connection could have been made at a price three or four times lower if instead of the highway we had opted for a high-speed motorway, like in some parts of Slovakia: everywhere the speed limit of 90km/h, and for those who find two lanes in each direction to be too little, erect a concrete wall in the middle, instead of the full line.

I also don't believe that the purpose of this grandiose investment is to raise the Montenegrin economy up on its knees and create jobs – according to the oft cited, but also widely criticised Keynesian principle. Help Montenegrin producers of rice, tea, reinforced concrete, electronics and paint! In the best case, we are going to provide work for a few dozen pieces of heavy machinery whose owners, the rumour has it, are on good terms with the highest authorities in the country. And still we are not sure what comes after: Chinese COVEC, the sister or the mother company – I can never tell the relations between these global firms – of the Chinese who are to build our highway, recently lost the contract to build 50 km highway between Warsaw and Berlin after it broke the deadline and failed to pay subcontractors.

To cut the long story short: I would agree with the former German ambassador **Pius Fischer** – this highway is a political project. Another cutting of the red ribbon is the best electoral commercial to the average Montenegrin voter. Let's survive another election. We only start repaying the loans in 2020. We'll no longer be the only country in Europe without a single kilometre of highway. But we will still be the only member of the Council of Europe that never changed the government.

Calendar

- 2 November **Help for the dying patient** / Prime Minister **Milo Đukanović** said it was not enough to just keep repeating that the EU's doors are open to the new members, but that the EU should also help the West Balkan countries through its doors. He said the economy of Western Balkans is now seen as a dying patient: "I believe this patient needs an electric shock that should come from the EU, the engine of the European continent and the European economy".
- 13 November **EU starts a gas-supply project in Montenegro** / The latest EU project will speed up the assessment of the preconditions for gas infrastructure and the development of a comprehensive plan to supply Montenegrin citizens with natural gas. A team of experts was sent to Montenegro to write the first feasibility study on the introduction of gas supply system across the country. The study will be financed by EU, with a budget of EUR 500.000.
- 17 November **Steinacker: Institutional efficiency the top priority** / Efficient functioning of legal institutions is the key element of the fight against corruption and organised crime, said the German ambassador to Montenegro **Gudrun Steinacker**. She added that she doesn't feel the "reform fatigue" in Montenegro with regard to EU integration process. "Some statements by individual politicians may be interpreted in this way, but I won't occupy myself with such speculations".
- 18 November **"Berlin worries that Putin might prevent the rapprochement between EU and the Balkans"** / German government is concerned with the spread of Russian influence in the Western Balkans, warns German newspaper Der Spiegel in a lengthy analysis titled "The return of the Cold War" on the Russian foreign policy. According to Der Spiegel, Berlin no longer sees Moscow as a partner: "**Vladimir Putin** wishes to prevent the region's further rapprochement with EU", warns the paper.
- 21 November **Hahn: Enlargement remains a priority** / EU enlargement is still a priority and there is no fatigue or resistance to the process among the EU member states, said **Johannes Hahn**, European Commissioner for neighbourhood and enlargement negotiations, during his first official visit to Montenegro. "To make it clear: further enlargement is still among the EU priorities, but there are some things we must achieve together. The pace of enlargement and negotiations depends on the country that wishes to become an EU member", Hahn said.
- 25 November **The Pope support Balkan's membership of EU** / **Pope Francis** told European Parliament that the EU membership of Balkan states could be the answer to the desire for peace in the region that had suffered much in the recent conflicts.

Is EU overreacting?



By: Nikola Dimitrov

The author is a former ambassador of Macedonia to UN and a Distinguished Fellow at The Hague Institute for Global Justice

The perspective of joining the European family has proven to be the most effective mobilising factor to stabilise and reform the Balkans.

It has undoubtedly been the EU's most powerful geopolitical instrument, the latest illustration being the brokered Belgrade-Pristina agreement. Before the process reached the point of no return, however, the enlargement policy has been challenged, accession hopes dangerously watered down and the door slammed shut, for now.

Prompted by the growing distrust of the enlargement policy within the member states since the 2004 "big bang" enlargement, as well as drawing lessons from the accession of Romania and Bulgaria, the European Commission reshaped the process. The very first paragraph of the EC Enlargement strategy 2014-15 reveals its goals: strengthen the credibility of enlargement, enhance its transformative power, and address fundamental reforms first. It put the emphasis on the three pillars of rule of law, economic governance and public administration reform. This creative approach, under heavy economic and political strains both within the EU and in the countries of the region, has so far kept the process alive. But has the EU over-corrected?

While the improved conditionality is important, the lack of EU political commitment moves the target further and darkens the light at the end of the tunnel. Once European membership seems too distant, the most important incentive to pursue difficult reforms is lost, weakening the transformative power of the process. One major issue here is frontloading a big pile of difficult conditions in the pre-accession phases of the process often used as a political cover for failure to reach consensus to start negotiations. This is not a sound strategy, taking into account that the real influence of the Commission kicks in after the accession talks are opened. Given the possibilities to halt the progress at every step, the accession talks should be opened with all the countries in the region in the next four years, without fixing the dates for accession. Second, the tendency for political interventions – focusing on particular issue(s) in what is promoted as a merit-based process – endangers its credibility. Redefining conditions for membership as

measurable outcome indicators that can be objectively compared across candidate countries would increase transparency and competition. Finally, the accession process must not be used for bilateral issues, as between Greece and Macedonia.

The high-level conference Chancellor **Angela Merkel** convened last August was the first sign of acknowledging the urgency to renew the commitment to the Western Balkans. It is now time to make a decision, because regardless of the inventiveness of the Commission, the job will not be done without political commitment.

Europe can proclaim itself not capable and acknowledge its limits in the region, or act and make it a case of a major foreign policy success. For the Western Balkans are probably the last best hope to demonstrate it can pull its weight. After its enormous financial, security and economic investments in a region surrounded by EU member countries, Europe must choose. It wants a non-EU "hotbed of unrest, instability, semi-authoritarian regimes and nationalism" or fully integrated and consolidated, stable democracies.

The EU itself is facing a lot of challenges. The euro crisis spurred fears of unemployment and immigration. The austerity measures created frustrations and distrust. The rise of Euroscepticism and hard-right populist parties seems only logical against this background. And in such circumstances, EU enlargement might easily come as the last thing on the minds of even the most responsible politicians. Thus, the easiest way out – as Commission President Juncker has apparently done – seems to be to hush the enlargement story for the moment. This might bring instant gratification and momentary political points, but leaving unfinished business unattended is never a wise strategy. One thing is for certain – a stable Balkans is an asset for all. And organized crime, corruption and immigration will be much bigger threats to Europe if the Balkan countries' knocking on EU's door remains unanswered.

Source: excerpts from the article published on www.friendsofeurope.org

What does EU mean by “good economic governance” – a demand that has just become one of the three pillars of the enlargement policy?

European semester in Montenegro



By: Svetlana Pešić

By the end of January 2015 Western Balkan countries, including Montenegro, are expected to submit to the European Commission their National Economic Reform Programmes. “Credible” plans for economic recovery, coupled with European assistance funds and enhanced EU surveillance should enable them to achieve economic stability and catch up with economically advanced EU members. These are the steps laid out in the latest Enlargement Strategy 2014/2015 which envisages three steps of European integration of the Western Balkans: rule of law, improved economic governance and reform of public administration. “All three pillars are closely linked, cross-cutting issues of fundamental importance for success in political and economic reforms and building a basis for implementing EU rules and standards”, states the Strategy.

The reasons for including good economic governance among the three pillars of enlargement policy for the Western Balkans were explained in late October by the outgoing enlargement Commissioner **Štefan Füle**. “We have lived through a major economic global crisis. Over

the mandate of this Commission, we have seen major changes in the European Union's economic governance. Since the aim of enlargement policy is to help you to prepare for the European Union

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membership, it is essential that we share with you the very important changes that are taking place at European Union level. The new process we are proposing – involving a credible reform programme and an enhanced surveillance with the European Union – is inspired by the European Semester process”, Füle said.

He reminded the audience that no Western Balkans country meets the economic accession criteria, in terms of functioning market economies or having the capacity to cope with competitive pressures and market forces within the Union. He also added that the Commission's goal is to enhance economic policy-making capabilities in the Western Balkans to boost competitiveness and growth and job creation.

The Enlargement Strategy for 2014/2014 explains that the countries in the enlargement process are expected to begin fulfilling economic criteria by first preparing National Economic Reform Programmes (NERPs).

The programmes will comprise two parts. The first part will consist of an enhanced version of the existing Pre-Accession Economic Programmes (PEP) and will set out a medium-term macroeconomic and fiscal policy.

Part two is a novelty, and will cover structural reforms which are sectoral in nature and of most concern for improved competitiveness and growth in the individual countries. The result is a comprehensive economic programme at the national level whose aim is to ensure annual



Štefan Füle

The Commission recognises that the reforms will be hard on the citizens, but they believe that profound structural reforms are essential in the Balkans, including public companies, liberalisation of the labour markets, balancing the budgets, reforming the pension systems and finding ways for sustainable healthcare financing. According to the Brussels officials, austerity in itself is not enough: improvements will also require new incentives.

implementation of intended measures and reforms and guide their development in the medium term. Western Balkans countries are expected to present the ongoing and planned national policies and a limited number of flagship reform measures in key sectors that directly contribute to competitiveness and growth. These national plans should address the most relevant issues that are in line with national priorities and EU recommendations, in line with the second Copenhagen economic criterion. They will also help to frame future debates on economic priorities and support exchanges of best practices with other countries facing similar challenges.

Should the EC conclude that these programmes are credible and realistic, they can also count on support from IPA funds. This means there will be more resources and better targeted to problems within the key sectors. Through the Instrument for Pre-Accession, the EU will provide the Balkan countries with one billion euro by 2020, and with the EC's help they should be able to raise another 10 billion from the international financial institutions. We see the International Financial Institutions as a key partner in this process. The IMF, the World Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the European Investment Bank (EIB) will also be involved in the process in various ways.

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At this stage, Montenegro's reform programme is above all expected to solve the problem of KAP, which plunged the country into international arbitration disputes, as well as the high unemployment rate and declining foreign investment. As for the reinforced focus on structural reforms, according to the European Commission the 2015 should be seen as the beginning of a new project. Given that the structure of the National Economic Reform Programme has been developed relatively late, its preparation is still in the early stages.

The Government entrusted the coordination of the programme to the Cabinet of the Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Policy and Financial System, while the first part of the NERP remains in the hands of the Ministry of Finance. The second part, which focuses on competitiveness, will be coordinated by the Ministry of Economy. "Sustainability of public finances in the currently

Government identifies eight obstacles

In order to formulate measures that would guide the investments and boost competitiveness and job creation, the Montenegrin Government outlined, following the EC's guidelines, a number of key structural reforms in flagship sectors that will be further elaborated by the NERP.

"To that end, the Government formed the working team and the mechanism for coordination of the overall NERP. We singled out eight sectors, or areas in which we have identified obstacles to growth, and formulated responses to the European Commission's recommendations: Improving the external position of the country, Education and structural unemployment, Business environment, Growth and development of small and medium enterprises, Transport policy, Improvement and protection of environment, Rural infrastructure and Development of electronic services. Each of these reform areas will be represented with a set of measures and reforms we are planning to implement in the medium term. Structural reforms that have a macroeconomic or fiscal impact will be dealt with, as until now, by the PEP", Stanković said.



Tijana Stanković

forecasted macroeconomic framework of real and lower GDP growth remains the key problem of this document”, **Tijana Stanković**, NERP coordinator and advisor to the Deputy Prime Minister for economic policy and financial system **Vujica Lazović** told *European Pulse*.

“Add to it the competitiveness of the economy as the basis of economic growth and development, without which it is impossible to secure stability of public finances in the long run. In that sense, NERP will present those structural reforms, macroeconomic and sectoral, which remove obstacles to growth, and implement recommendations of the European Commission”, Stanković said.

According to the Cabinet of Deputy Prime Minister for economic policy and financial system, the document is still in the early stages of development, and they do not yet have an estimate of the resources needed to implement the reform. More details will be known by mid-January 2015, when the NERP is to be discussed by the Government at one of its regular sessions.



Gordana Đurović

Prof. Dr. Gordana Đurović told *European Pulse* that the Commission proposed the new economic governance mechanism, the so-called “European Semester” in 2010, when the economic crisis turned into a serious debt crisis with an urgent need to coordinate economic policies of Eurozone

countries. This mechanism intends to achieve macroeconomic and financial stabilization through synchronization of economic policies. “Member states which are involved in the process of containing excessive budget deficit must prepare annual national economic reform programmes, based on current analyses and recovery forecasts, in line with the Commission’s recommendations, as well as programmes of stabilization and convergence. The programme of implementing Commission’s recommendations has been slowly coming to life since 2011, when

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the European Semester was first initiated, and the completion rate is still under 50%. Nevertheless, the mechanism is already giving positive results and has contributed to stabilization of fiscal indicators, as well as the improvement of overall macroeconomic performance of the most indebted Eurozone countries”, says the former Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for European Integration.

Đurović also thinks that NERP should help Montenegro to strengthen coordination of its economic policy and develop a mechanism of macroeconomic governance and planning for growth and spending projections in the medium term. The document, she says, should be compiled on the basis of realistic estimates, accompanied by coherent measures and forecasts of financial impact. “In that case, NERP would serve as a sound estimate of the possible path of economic recovery of the country, i.e. its economic growth and competitiveness, as measured by the rate of growth, employment, investments and overall state of international economic relations. The necessary structural reforms that are expected in the upcoming medium term, together with the external demand factors (especially those related to the Eurozone and the Ukrainian crisis) will determine the pace of general economic activity. The complexity of these factors, as well as the systemic uncertainty that accompanies any attempt to quantify these trends, coupled with the absence of necessary resources for investment (i.e. a model of development that relies on foreign investment, instead of export earnings) is the aggravating factor for the Montenegrin economy and its future growth”, Đurović said.

Member of the Working Group for Chapter 23 and senior legal advisor to the Centre for Civic Education (CCE) Boris Marić

Losing hope that Brussels can change things in Montenegro

European officials are conscious of the limits of the Montenegrin society, as well as of the region we are in, and the Montenegrin government is determined to persevere in its manipulations in favour of party and individual interests. This is the reason why some of our social problems are being relativised and the reform process remains unacceptably slow, **Boris Marić**, member of the Working Group for Chapter 23 and senior legal advisor to the Centre for Civic Education (CCE) told *European Pulse*.

» *One of the key objections to the Government's approach to European integration so far is that it only focused on adopting European laws and ticking boxes, but that these were never implemented in practice. Now, however, we are also behind on the adoption of strategies, action plans, laws, regulations...especially under chapter*

23. What is your take on this?

The government has long toyed with its foreign policy priorities, fabricating and propagating two false images. The first is about "commitment" to fulfilling the obligations under chapters 23 and 24, and the second is that only the parties currently in power can guarantee accomplishment of Euro-Atlantic integration, whenever that happens.

Both images are of Potemkin-like character and are profoundly misleading.

For a while, the government rubber-stamped laws that were supposedly aligned with European legislation. That was the period before we started membership negotiations, and these laws encountered enormous difficulties in practice, which has not changed to this day. Now we are also lagging behind in the adoption of normative frameworks under chapter 23 and 24, and the logical consequence is a substantial delay in the establishment of the

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institutional framework demanded by EC. It is more than obvious that the government is consciously obstructing reforms in the area of anti-corruption and fight against organised crime, as genuine steps to eradicate these problems would endanger party and particularistic interests which they hold far dearer than the foreign policy and economic interests of the Montenegrin society and which must be defended to the end.

» *What are your expectations of the further course of EU integration in a country that is practically lacking all serious opposition, while its government is trying to discredit and weaken critically minded parts of the civil society, and EU accession is increasingly pushed into the background. Earlier, it was precisely the attraction of EU, and even more the pressure from Brussels, that had forced Montenegrin authorities into some degree of reform?*

The enthusiasm among the Montenegrin citizens for the process of EU accession was an expression of hope for a more just, wealthier society. The citizens have known all along that this government will not build of its own accord the institutions that will guarantee the rule of law, or put the economic interest of Montenegro above the interest of powerful individuals. But they believed that Brussels will force



Boris Marić

them into it. I think that they still somehow believe in this, but by now they also have serious doubts, because the government has managed to manipulate the process, to manipulate elections and preserve its hold on political and other forms of power. At the same time the political system is clogged, it offers little hope or chance for a breakthrough. The consequence is a slowdown of all processes in the Montenegrin society, as if we were waiting for something, but nobody knows what it is or how it should look like.

» *Where is the opposition in all this?*

The opposition clings for dear life to its few areas of influence, sometimes by playing dirty. Much of the opposition has a foreign policy stance that would undermine the position of any alternative to this government, or it is struggling to openly articulate its opinions. The work of opposition parties is often and unnecessarily reduced to competition in who is more “oppositional”, while they pay little heed to objective responsibility for bad results, worse performance, and numerous contradictions in their work. Even when we raise the question of responsibility – to which we have the right as citizens – we immediately get labelled, suspected, accused of collaboration. Freedom of opinion and the need to accept criticism is the universal principle and the basis of civic engagement. I believe that they should all offer clear political platforms, and biographies of people who should lead their campaign to power – that would be a substantial contribution to a real struggle for fair and free elections. The citizens often find out things about politicians only when something happens, when somebody gets a good reason to air “unpleasant” details from a politician’s life. Instead of having a great debate, even a scandal about the work of security services, spurred on by the opposition representatives in the parliamentary committee for security, we have an internal fight in the opposition and entertainment for the public.

» *Is the civil sector a victim of this opposition, in the sense that it takes the brunt of attack which is no longer directed to the opposition representatives?*

The government is most brutally coming down on all critics of the regime from the civil sector because they know that this sector has a clear intention to change Montenegrin society in a direction that would

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call for individual responsibility, and that those people are honest in their intention to contribute to essential reforms, with the emphasis on establishing the rule of law.

Still, the reach of the civil society is limited. Political parties are key for articulation of the reform process, they are decision-makers, but somebody should also bear responsibility for these decisions – whether they are in the government or in the opposition.

» *Chapter 23 encompasses a broad range of issues. Where do you expect most problems, and why?*

Most problems can be expected in the establishment of normative and institutional framework for efficient and effective fight against corruption and organised crime. This area is directly contrary to most personal interests at the peak of the ruling structure, and it will be interesting to see how the fight against high-level corruption evolves and how often many times laws on this specific issue would have to be changed and amended.

» *What’s your experience with the work of the working group for chapter 23?*

My experience is somewhat divided. On the one hand, I am satisfied because the NGO representatives managed to obtain substantial transparency in the work of the working group, but on the other hand we are powerless to prevent in any greater measure various forms of obstruction, delays, to push through our proposals and have them accepted by the other party. Nevertheless, I believe participation of NGO representatives in the working group is useful, and that benefits will become more obvious with time.

V. Žugrić

Hungary's "tax on soap"



Hungarian lawmakers approved a series of new indirect taxes that are likely to hit foreign companies as well as the pockets of citizens. There are, among other, the new "tax on soap" that will be imposed on

shampoos, soaps and other hygiene products, while the "tax on chips" has been extended from unhealthy foods to alcoholic beverages. The "super-tax" on media income from advertising was raised from 40 to 50%, which some commentators see as a political move against the private TV RTL Klub. These are only the latest in the line of special taxes introduced by Hungarian authorities since 2010 in order to raise income without imposing direct burdens on the taxpayers. The EU, which believes such taxes to be detrimental to growth, estimates that the share of special taxes increased from 0.5% of GDP in 2009 to 2.5% in 2013.

The tax package also stipulates that supermarkets whose revenues exceed 300 billion forints per year, or about one billion euro, ought to pay up to 6% of their gross turnover in advance for food testing. The Government originally planned to include a tax on internet in this year's package, but the proposal had sparked a wave of protests, the biggest since **Orbán's** rise to power in 2010, which prompted authorities to withdraw the controversial tax.

In defence of new taxes, the government often blames Brussels for the economic difficulties in the country, and foreign companies for taking excessive profits. "Big firms have become scapegoats", warns the analyst of Institute Republikon **Csaba Tóth**. He adds that, despite dissatisfaction caused by the plans for an internet tax, **Orbán's** government has convinced the people that they will not suffer directly from these taxes.

Europeans troubled by bad cholesterol



Europeans suffer from the highest bad cholesterol in the world: more than 130 million people are affected by it in just the five largest European economies (Germany, France, Italy, Spain and UK). It is especially worrying

that a growing number of young people have high cholesterol due to poor diets. However, the problem with bad cholesterol does not receive enough attention at the EU level and the resources are diverted towards other long-term diseases.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), 54% Europeans of both sexes have high cholesterol, and their number has been on the rise in recent years.

Economic recovery only from 2016

European Commission lowered economic growth forecasts for 2014, which suggests that economic recovery will remain slow due to difficulties in the largest European economies, such as France.

The following year does not promise to be much better, and the accelerated recovery in the EU and the Eurozone is not expected before 2016, according to the autumn forecasts by the European Commission published on 4 November. In 2014 the growth rates in EU have been uneven, ranging from a 0.7% decline in economic activity in Croatia to a 4.6% growth in Ireland. In the next two years, however, the differences will fade and in 2015 and 2016 all EU member state will return to growth.

The growth forecast for 2014 for the 28 EU members was lowered from 1.6% to 1.3%. The 18-member Eurozone is now expected to grow 0.8% in 2014, down from the 1.2% expected half a year ago. The estimate for 2015 is not much better: the EU is expected to grow at an average rate of 1.5%.



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Montenegrin National Theatre

12 - 13 December 2014

Cinema "Boka" - Kotor

WEDNESDAY 10/12 / MNT

20:00 / LIVING EYES / Senad Šahmanović, Montenegro, 2014, 23'

21:00 / 20 000 DAYS ON EARTH / Iain Forsyth, Jane Pollard,
United Kingdom, 2014, 95'

THURSDAY 11/12 / MNT

17:00 / MAIDAN / Sergei Loznitsa, Ukraina, Holand, 2014, 131'

19:00 / THE GOOD SON / Shirly Berkovitz, Israel, 2013, 52'

20:00 / OMAR / Hany Abu-Assad, Palestine, 2013, 98'

FRIDAY 12/12 / MNT

17:00 / ART AND VIOLENCE / Mariam Abu Khaled, Udi Aloni, Batoul Taleb, USA,
Palestine, Israel, 2013, 75'

19:00 / THE FOREST / Siniša Dragin, Romania, Serbia, 2014, 73'

20:30 / TIMBUKTU / Abderrahmane Sissako, France, Mauritania, Mali 2014, 97'

SATURDAY 13/12 / MNT

17:00 / AMMA AND APPA / Franziska Schonenberger, Jayakrishna Subramanian,
Denmark, 2013, 89'

19:00 / NAKED ISLAND / Tiha Gudac, Croatia, 2014, 75'

20:30 / IDA / Pawel Pawlikowski, Poland, Danmark, 2013, 80'

SUNDAY 14/12 / MNT

20:00 / SALT OF THE EARTH / Wim Wenders, Juliano Ribeiro Salgado, France, 2014, 109'

FRIDAY 12/12 / BOKA

19:00 / NAKED ISLAND / Tiha Gudac, Croatia, 2014, 75'

21:00 / 20 000 DAYS ON EARTH / Iain Forsyth, Jane Pollard / United Kingdom, 2014, 95'

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25 years since the fall of the Berlin Wall - which walls are still standing in Europe and Montenegro?



By: Svetlana Pešić

Centre for Civic Education (CCE), in cooperation with the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), organized today, in the PR Centre panel discussion *25 years since the fall of the Berlin Wall- which walls are still standing in Europe and Montenegro?*

Key speakers were: **Igor Lukšić**, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of Montenegro, **H. E. Gudrun Elizabeth Steinacker**, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to Montenegro, and **Daliborka Uljarević**, executive director of the Centre for Civic Education (CCE).

Panelists agreed that the fall of the Berlin Wall on 9 November 1989, marked the end of the old and the beginning of a new historical epoch, the victory of democracy and freedom over totalitarianism of the communist regime, opening of the possibility that the states of the Eastern Bloc begin the process of democratization and comprehensive reforms in the political system, economic planning and building rule of law.

Igor Lukšić pointed out that: *"The 25-anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall reminds us that the human desire for freedom can't be repressed and reaffirms that freedom is fundamental and driving force of human action. During the fateful year of 1989, more and*



more eastern Germans overcame their fear of state repression and harassment... The fall of the wall was in a real sense a breakthrough of a quiet revolution - more than deserved coronation of moral and civic courage... People need to be able to take fate into their own hands, and that need ended the era of inhumane partition of Europe and the Cold war. It was the beginning of the end of the division of Berlin, the division of Germany, the division of Europe and the division of the world into two blocs". He especially reminded on the importance of the relations between Germany and Montenegro, as well as the many ongoing projects that are contributing to the improvement of the capacity of Montenegro for the EU negotiation process. In the wider review of the context, Lukšić assessed: *"Our current cooperation, in Europe and the region, is the real answer to the conflicts of the past... We must be aware that the challenges that stand in front of EU are changing. After World War II it was a peace project. Afterward the fall of the Wall, the project was the reunification of Europe. Nowadays, it is a challenge to adapt to global change, the challenge of defining a new role, but also the challenge of improving the overall competitiveness in the conditions of the 21st century".* He concluded: *"The fall of the Berlin Wall reminds us not only about the joy of unification, but also about the great responsibility to achieve a better life in the future with the belief that the borders, today and tomorrow, we can jointly overcome and Montenegro can help in that process, as future part of the EU".*

H.E. Gudrun Steinacker Elizabeth addressed the topic from personal point of view, with special



reference to the experience of Germans, as well as on the challenges that followed the process of unification and the consequences of the unification that has left on, not only in Germany, but in the EU and in the Europe. She assessed that Yugoslavia: *"wasn't considered problematic at that time and then none paid attention. I couldn't believe, that almost in the centre of Europe, such a war was going on, with the victims and the camps, and that the world doesn't respond. The European Union hasn't been able to respond to it and that is a fact"*. She particularly emphasized the importance of the European integration process, noting that the enlargement is opportunity for all both for the EU, and for the the countries od region, which are aspiring to membership, and fall of the Berlin Wall gave to it an important impulse. She concluded that: *"it is necessary to demolish the walls, especially in the minds of the people, in order to avoid inciting prejudice in all spheres of life"*.

Daliborka Uljarević referred to the tragedy of symbolism in comparing diametrically opposite processes: *"On the one hand, with the fall of the Berlin Wall begins removing of borders and the great integration of Europe, but on the other side, there is disintegration of the former Yugoslavia, directed by primitive, chauvinistic and xenophobic political projects."* She assessed: *"Montenegro and its former leadership didn't understand the historical processes and the message that rang with a fall of huge concrete blocks. Namely, rattling of arms and spreading intolerance and hate towards their neighbors, advocacy for mobilization and arming the nation for "defense", as they were than*



called that, was more understandable to them and the repercussions are felt even today". Uljarević stressed that: *"Europe has the experience of the fall of the Berlin Wall, but that Montenegro has no experience in the change of government in the elections and the lack of the experience that threatens the wall, which separates the Montenegrin society, is getting bigger and more dangerous."* She recalled that the dirtiest campaigns against critics of the regime are currently lead, as well as that there are attempts to t to warm up inter-ethnic intolerance, affirm xenophobia and try to keep Montenegrin society in fear of change. *"But, it is inevitable that each wall falls, sooner or later, and that no one is saved builders of shame",* stated Uljarević. She pointed to the importance of the process of European integration and the adoption of European values as the basis of establishment of functional democracy. *"The reforms of the Montenegrin society depend entirely on ourselves, on our ability to understand the importance of building of the political system that will produce change of government and the establishment of the necessary responsibility for poor results. It is not the essential question when we will join the EU, but when will the Montenegrin society begin to pulse as democratic society and committed to the rule of law. When that happens, we will know that the Berlin Wall finally fell in Montenegro",* she concluded.

The panel was attended by a large number of media representatives, local and international organizations, foreign embassies in Montenegro, students and interested citizens.



Chapter 23: Judiciary and fundamental rights



By: Boris Marić

Chapter 23 – Judiciary and fundamental rights is an area that will attract special attention from the European Union and the Montenegrin public throughout the negotiation process. It consists of the areas of judiciary, anti-corruption, fundamental rights and rights of EU citizens. In addition to adopting EU legislation and aligning it with the national laws, the biggest challenge will be to ensure its implementation, by attaining visible results.

Montenegro has to show full dedication to aligning its current and future legislation in this area with the EU acquis. Efforts to reducing the court backlog, introduce fast-track procedures, strengthen the legal security of citizens, ensure access to judiciary and improve functional organisation in order to ensure reasonable duration of trials will be under constant monitoring. The reform of judiciary includes changes to the Constitution, as well as alignment of laws concerning the functioning of judiciary. Amendments to the Constitution on issues of judiciary are a political process, which requires two-third majority in the Parliament of Montenegro. This process could to some extent slow down the process of EU integration. Nevertheless, the MPs generally agree on the need to speed up the process of EU integration, and can be expected to reach a consensus on the necessary constitutional changes in the near future.

With regard to independence of judiciary, amendments to the Constitution and the legal framework ought to ensure independence and autonomy of judges and courts, above all through depoliticised and merit-based appointments to the Judicial and Prosecutors' councils, in order to make these institutions the sole ones responsible for the appointment and sanctioning of those who should in any way violate the ethical and professional standards of their professions.

Introduction of objective and transparent criteria for the appointment of judges and prosecutors would further add to their independence and professionalism. In Montenegro, special attention will be paid to the procedures for appointment, promotion, disciplinary procedures and dismissal of courts, as well as to the transparency and independence of the work of the Judicial Council. Constitutional amendments on the institutional arrangements in the field of judiciary will result in numerous legal changes. The laws on courts, on the Judicial Council, state prosecutor, as well as many others will have to undergo changes.

In addition to having and independent, impartial and expert judiciary, it is extremely important to the citizens that they receive justice in reasonable time. To that end, Montenegro will have to implement a series of measures whose aim is to increase the effectiveness of judiciary, through greater use of IT technologies, rationalisation of court administration, rationalisation of the network of basic courts, better management and improvements to the legislative framework in order to reduce the duration of court proceedings. In smaller courts it will be necessary to establish a system of random allocation of court cases. Implementation of the Law on free legal assistance is inadequate, as the necessary funds are lacking.

Development of the society overall will depend to a great extent on the successful fight against omnipresent corruption. Special attention will be paid to the changes in EU legislation that will be reflected in the future directive on freezing and confiscation of proceeds of crime. Suppression of corruption is a key precondition to a democratic society and the rule of law. In order to reach that goal, the EU stipulates not only a firm legal framework, but also institutions capable of implementing a consistent policy of prevention and eradication of



corruption. Alignment of the candidate country to these rules requires development of a national programme of anti-corruption accompanied by specific policy measures. Activities in this field take place along two main tracks: preventive and repressive. The key to prevention is to reduce the risk of corruption, primarily by raising awareness among the public of its detrimental effects. Additional measures include changing the legislative framework concerning financing of political parties, prevention of the conflict of interests and the right to access information in order to ensure transparency of public institutions. In addition to prevention, a country should also ensure a repressive apparatus to uncover, process and sanction perpetrators of corruptive acts. Of special importance will be the process of developing action plans and building institutional capacity for their implementation.

The Charter on Fundamental Rights of EU citizens includes civic, political, economic and social rights of all citizens of EU which ensure respect of fundamental freedoms, equality and solidarity. Among other, candidate countries are expected to adopt effective mechanisms to fight all forms of discrimination, protect minorities and ensure access to justice for persons of lesser means through provision of free legal assistance.

European Commission has undoubtedly

recognised the problems that Montenegro ought to face with regard to its treatment of human rights and freedoms. Administrative capacities and financial resources for the implementation of regulations in the area of fundamental rights are limited. Legislative and institutional framework must be harmonised with the international standards above all with regard to the treatment of prisoners and living conditions in prisons, and to that end the EC has strongly recommended improvements to the system of alternative sanctions in order to reduce the pressure on prison capacities.

Old cases of attacks on journalists ought to be fully investigated and transferred to the criminal processes in order to establish the criminal and legal responsibility off the perpetrators and those who commissioned the attacks. The Law on the protector of human rights and freedoms, as well as the Law on the prohibition of discrimination must be aligned with the EU acquis. Cases concerning the rights of LGBT population are being processed too slowly, while civil society activists dedicated to the promotion and protection of LGBT rights continue to suffer discrimination. Much more needs to be done in order to reduce family violence, support the rights of persons with disabilities, include women into the political life of the country. Measures to facilitate access to education and employment of



Roma and Egyptians are limited. Drop-out rates and unemployment remain high, especially among the women in this population. Social dialogue ought to be enhanced, and the negotiations of the new collective agreement should be brought to conclusion. Property restitution continues very slowly, and the proceedings are lengthy and demanding. The Government has done very little to provide the necessary resources for an acceptable standard of living in camp Konik.

It should be noted that the EU acquis under chapter 23 is not particularly extensive compared to the other chapters, but is nevertheless demanding for the candidate country, as it impacts directly the state of the rule of law and the political system of the country, as can be seen from the short overview above. The fact that the chapters

monitors primarily the capacities of the legal institutions with regard to their independence and full implementation of the law, with an emphasis on the readiness and ability to conduct a systemic fight against corruption and organised crime sufficiently testifies to the complexity of negotiations that are to take place in this area.

Chapter 23 will remain open to the very end, as it is expected that the process of building the preconditions for the rule of law will have to be monitored throughout negotiations, as the success in ensuring a well functioning judiciary and respect for the fundamental rights is the guarantee of a functioning democracy, ready for a membership of EU. It should be evident from this short overview that Montenegro has to face a very long list of tasks in this field and will have to invest much effort to create institutions capable of meeting EU's exacting standards. It should also be stressed that progress in this area will significantly affect the overall public awareness of numerous issues that have so far remained closed or were only addressed from the point of interest of traditionalism and local politics.

Progress on the requirements stipulated by chapter 23 will contribute to greater legal security for the citizens, and strengthen their trust in the legal system. It will also help to raise overall awareness of the importance of respecting and demanding one's fundamental rights.

Montenegro's European integration path and efforts to enshrine the values of developed democracies that will contribute to establishment of the rule of law, are also accompanied by various prejudices. One of them is the belief that our problems under this chapter, specifically those related to the rule of law, in other words the fight against corruption, organised crime, and even respect for human rights and freedoms, will practically vanish. It is also a prejudice that EU integration process will be completed with Montenegro's entry into the EU. It is a prejudice that simply by fulfilling EU's recommendation we will finally take our institutions into the realm of full professionalism, depoliticisation, independence and autonomy. Nevertheless, this entire process will be of great help to us, and will take us long way towards establishment of a democratic society of responsible citizens.

European Commission presents its long-awaited investment plan

A good start or a fantasy

In late November, the European Commission unveiled the mechanism for its much-heralded €315 billion investment plan, revealing how a limited €21 billion of initial public money is intended to lift fifteen times as much in private capital.

Details on the new fund reveal that the cash will be funnelled towards Europe's crisis-ravaged south, away from the wealthier north in an effort to boost solidarity.

After years of firefighting to save the euro zone from collapsing under the weight of accumulated debt, Europe needs an ambitious investment plan, said **Jean-Claude Juncker**, the President of the European Commission. "We need to send a message to the people of Europe and to the rest of the world: Europe is back in business," Juncker told the European Parliament.

Assembled over the summer by the team of Commission vice-president **Jyrki Katainen**, the idea is to create a new European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), with €5 billion coming from the European Investment Bank and an €8 billion guarantee from existing EU funds designed to secure a contribution of €16 billion in total from the institutions. The €8 billion guarantee will come over a three-year period from the Connecting Europe Facility (€3.3 billion); Europe's research programme Horizon 2020 (€2.7 billion) and so-called "budget margin", or unused funds, worth €2 billion. The resulting EFSI fund totaling €21 billion is expected

The mechanism for the Commission's €315 billion investment plan envisages only €21 billion of initial public money lifting fifteen times as much in private capital.

to generate €240 billion for long-term investments and €75 billion for SMEs and mid-cap firms over the period 2015-2017.

This fifteenfold multiplication from the initial investment to the final amount is to be achieved through a series of leverage methods, according to the EU executive. First, the EFSI funds will serve as credit protection for a range of new activities to be carried through by the European Investment Bank (EIB). These include long-term debt financing for higher-risk projects, subordinated loans and a variety of equity financing. These longer-term financing instruments will be targeted at a range of sectors including transport, energy and the digital economy. Meanwhile, EFSI funding will also go to the European Investment Fund (EIF), which in turn will provide credit protection for a range of new activities designed to benefit small and medium enterprises. These include new venture capital injections, loan guarantees, securitisations and seed financing designed to offer micro-loans to SMEs, to fund start-ups or offer mid-cap companies venture capital.

The €21 billion investment will generate a threefold increase in the instruments available for the EIB and EIF to pass on as investments, and these loans will in turn "allow other investors to join in and produce a further fivefold multiplying effect," according to explanatory documentation produced by the Commission, accounting for the total fifteenfold multiplier.

Meanwhile, the EU executive believes that more financing can be provided by individual member states to build on the basic investment plan. Eurozone countries will be offered the opportunity to invest further top-up amounts into the fund, to be spent in their countries, which will then be discounted from the calculations of their deficits within the European Semester. "This is a long-term investment plan designed to respond to the lack of investment that Europe is currently experiencing," a Commission

The new tools are designed to allow the European Investment Bank and European Investment Fund to make riskier investments. The method of distribution of the funds will be decided by an administrative council jointly controlled by the EIB and the Commission, though no quotas are foreseen in respect of member states. However, since the funds are intended to act as levers for growth, there will be a bias towards those the southern Mediterranean countries which have suffered most as a result of the financial crisis. "There is no question of this money heading towards solar panel projects in Munich," an official told EurActiv.

source told *EurActiv*. "We want to reinvigorate confidence in investors and alleviate their doubts," he added.

In general, the new tools are designed to allow the EIB and EIF to make riskier investments. The method of distribution of the funds will be decided by an administrative council jointly controlled by the EIB and the Commission, though no quotas are foreseen in respect of member states. However, since the funds are intended to act as levers for growth, there will be a bias towards those regions – particularly the southern Mediterranean countries – which have suffered most as a result of the financial crisis. "There is no question of this money heading towards solar panel projects in Munich," an official told *EurActiv*.

The European Parliament's two main political groups cautiously welcomed the plan, saying that while they would have liked the capital of the investment fund to be higher, it was still a "good start". But far right and left-wing deputies and the Greens criticised it, saying the leverage effect of 15 times was a fantasy and that it made risks public and profits private.

"This package is just empty words," said **Dimitris Papadimoulis** of the European United Left. "Sixteen billion are to come from the current budget, and another five from EIB. There is not one euro of fresh money in there. You are promising a fifteen-fold leverage, but in these times of stagnation and recession in the Eurozone, there is no economist in the world that would believe this," Papadimoulis said.

Juncker, however, insisted the EU was not just "moving

The Commission claims that Europe is in an "investment trap", with private investors hesitating to commit funds despite being awash with liquidity, some of it provided by the European Central Bank as it tries to stave off deflation.

money around" but putting funds to better use. Adding to public debt would not help. Underlining the need to pursue structural reforms to ailing economies and pare back debt and deficits run up during the financial crisis, the EU's new chief executive said his plan was the third leg of a strategy to get Europeans back to work. "We don't have a money-printing machine. We need to attract money to make it work for us," he said.

The Commission claims that Europe is in an "investment trap", with private investors hesitating to commit funds despite being awash with liquidity, some of it provided by the European Central Bank as it tries to stave off deflation. By providing guarantees to absorb the initial risks of key projects that could improve Europe's infrastructure, Juncker said the EU could draw in more private investment.

According to the European Investment Bank, investment in Europe was about 15 to 20 per cent behind pre-financial crisis investment levels. "I believe that the plan, whilst not a silver bullet, can make a real difference to investment in Europe," said EIB president **Werner Hoyer**.

Juncker to face the tax evasion scandal

Only a few days before he presented the Commission's new investment plan, Jean-Claude Juncker and his European Commission had to survive a no confidence vote in the European Parliament – this time over the "Luxleaks" tax scandal which came out after the International Committee of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) published documents that showed Luxembourg gave tax deals to dozens of global firms during Juncker's 19 years as prime minister of the tiny duchy.

Although it is unclear whether anything in the uncovered agreements between Luxembourg and multinational companies – among which are such giants as Apple, Pepsi and IKEA – is really at odds with the international regulations, evidence that the Luxembourgish government helped companies to avoid paying taxes in other countries, be it in a formally legal manner, caused a major upset in the European public. At a time when nearly all EU member states are implementing harsh austerity measures, the citizens are especially sensitive to all measures that undercut the national budgets, and it is no wonder that some of the MPs had asked for Juncker's head. "It is intolerable that a person who has been responsible for aggressive tax avoidance policies should serve as President of the European Commission," states the motion for the no confidence vote.

Juncker once again managed to win the majority of votes in the European Parliament – both large parties refused to support his demotion. The situation has, nevertheless, dampened enthusiasm towards his investment plan, and some MPs have accused Juncker of rushing through a still incomplete investment programme in order to cover up the tax scandal.

A recent economic analysis of the European Commission shows deteriorating economic situation in the Balkans

Floods, falling industrial output, youth unemployment...

The economic situation in Western Balkans has been deteriorating for last several months, which means that the recovery that began in 2013 was fragile, says a recent economic analysis of the European Commission (EC).

The only significant growth in real gross domestic product (GDP) has been registered in Macedonia. Some growth has been also registered in Kosovo, but this is mainly due to the increase in the private consumption, stimulated by large increase of public sector wages and pensions in April 2014.

The analysis indicates that "the severe flooding this May in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina had devastating consequences for the infrastructure and caused huge losses in manufacturing, particularly in the mining and energy sector."

Halting of the growth in Montenegro and Albania is a result of the substantial decline in industrial production, while in Serbia the situation worsened due to the lack of investments.

The unemployment rate in the Western Balkans is still high, especially among young people, which requires decisive and credible structural measures on the labor markets and production, the analysis reads. Despite of the slight decline of unemployment rate in recent months, it is still high in the region, reaching 20% of working age population in Serbia, 28% in Macedonia, 18% in Albania, 27.5% in Bosnia and Herzegovina,

Banks in the region slightly increased loans to companies. The highest rate of non-performing bank loans is registered in Albania (24%) and Serbia (23%).

The only significant growth in real gross domestic product (GDP) has been registered in Macedonia and Kosovo.

and as much as 30% in Kosovo. However, the employment rate in the first eight months has been increasing in Albania, as well as in Macedonia as a result of the substantial recovery of the manufacturing sector.

A major challenge for most Western Balkan countries is the low coverage of imports by exports, worsening the current account deficit situation, especially in the first half of 2014. The deficit reached 11.6% in Albania, 7% in BiH and 15.2% in Montenegro. In Serbia, ongoing reduction in the current account deficit slowed down this year, due to a significant drop of exports in July and August caused by flood-related disturbances. This deficit was lowest in Macedonia - 1.2% of the GDP, due to a particularly high level of remittances. .

At the same time there has been a general decline of prices mainly in the sector of food, clothing, communications and transportation. Banks in the region slightly increased loans to companies. The highest rate of non-performing bank loans is registered in Albania (24%) and Serbia (23%). Balancing the budget expenditure is notified in Albania and Montenegro, partly due to improved tax collection. In contrast, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina are dealing with deteriorated economic situation and lower budget income as a consequence of flooding, the analysis reads.

This dark picture of the economy of Balkan states comes only 20 days after the EU had sent the region encouraging messages.



The outgoing European Enlargement Commissioner **Štefan Füle** said that the Western Balkans countries can count on up to a billion euro until 2020 from pre-accession funds in support of connecting infrastructure, and that the EU was ready to help them raise another 10 billion in loans from international financial institutions. Füle announced these new forms of support on 23 October 2014 in Belgrade, following the meeting of ministers of economy and foreign affairs from the Western Balkans region.

Ministers of foreign affairs and ministers of economy of Serbia, Kosovo, Albania, BiH, Montenegro and Macedonia gathered in Belgrade in presence of high officials from EU to discuss programmes that could support economic growth and attract foreign investment to the region. The initiative to connect the region through various infrastructural projects began at the meeting of the region's representatives in Berlin, and the Belgrade event was organised as a follow-up to this initiative. The next meeting should take place in Prishtina. Another important aspect of these gatherings is the focus on economic governance in the European integration process, which is part of the new approach to enlargement policy by the EU.

Speaking about regional cooperation projects, Füle said that the officials had discussed transport

Despite the slight decline of unemployment rate in recent months, it is still high in the region, reaching 20% of working age population in Serbia, 28% in Macedonia, 18% in Albania, 27.5% in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and as much as 30% in Kosovo.

and energy connectivity among the Western Balkan countries, and between them and the EU. "EU will help policy-wise and financially. Here, the EU is ready to support better connectivity with up to 1 billion euro in grants from IPA funds, and 10 billion euro in soft loans from international financial institutions until 2020", Füle said. The outgoing commissioner reiterated that all participating countries have committed to prepare and submit National Economic Reform Programmes to the European Commission, starting in January 2015. He added that this should send a strong signal to investors that a good business environment is a national priority. The EU laid out its new approach to "economic governance", which ought to prepare accession countries to meet the EU's economic criteria, in its previous Enlargement Strategy for 2013/2014, published in October 2013.

In line with that approach, the European Union sends specific economic recommendations to the countries of the region, which were first published in May 2014.

Every year, candidate countries are expected to submit the European Commission National Economic Reform Programmes and every two years programmes for economic competitiveness and growth, based on which the Commission is to formulate its recommendations.

Euractiv / V.Ž.

High school students from different Montenegrin municipalities learn about human rights

Centre for Civic Education (CCE) organised between 27 and 30 November 2014, in Hotel Residence in Miločer, the XIX generation of Human Rights School, with support of the US Embassy to Montenegro as part of the project “Youth build Montenegro”. The school was attended by 26 high school students from Podgorica, Bar, Cetinje, Žabljak, Pljevlja, Bijelo Polje, Danilovgrad, Gusinje, Tivat, Budva, Plužine and Nikšić. During the intensive four-day programme, the participants attended 23 sessions consisting of lectures, workshops, forum theatre, film projections, practical group work etc. in order to learn about the contemporary concepts of human rights, the development of the idea of human rights, legislative and institutional mechanisms of protection, the culture of human rights, principles of tolerance, solidarity, non-violent communication, as well as the specific issues concerning discrimination (especially of marginalized groups), reconciliation with the past, multi-culturalism, democratic engagement of youth, and corruption in education. The lecturers at the School come from various areas of activity: **Tea Gorjanc Prelević**, executive director of Human Rights Action; **Danijel Kalezić**, president of the Board of Managers of the Montenegrin LGBTIQ association “Queer Montenegro”; **Marijana Laković Drašković**, human rights expert; **Wanda Teifenbacher**, vice-president and the head of Department for international cooperation and public relations of the International Political Science Student Association; **Andrija Đukanović**, programme coordinator in Roma Education Fund; **Maja Raičević**, executive director of Women’s Rights Centre, **Dragoljub Duško Vuković**, editor of PCNEN, **Marina Vujačić**, executive director of the Association of Montenegrin Youth with Disabilities; **Tamara Milić**, psychologist; **Saša Mijović**, executive director of NGO 4 Life, **Petar Đukanović**, CCE programme coordinator, **Miloš Knežević**, coordinator of the CCE Yough Group; **Tamara Milaš**, CCE programme associate and port-parole of Coalition for Recom in Montenegro and **Dragana Tripković**, executive director of ATAК.

In addition to offering a broad theoretical and practical knowledge on the concept of human rights, the school also promotes the culture of human rights, inspiring and motivating young people to fight for their rights, as well as for the rights of those who are not in a position to do so themselves and empowers them to have a more direct influence on the society in the future. In December, the participants will visit some of the institutions which are key in the protection of human rights, and will receive diplomas. They will also receive support in transforming their ideas into concrete activities aimed at improving the state of human rights in their communities.

Project writing and project management

Between 13 and 16 November 2014 in Bar the second training of the project SPEED UP (Social Policies, Entrepreneurship, Employment, Dialogue Upgrading) was held on the topic of project writing and project management process. The training was organised by NGO Juventas in cooperation with SOS Telephone for women and children victims of violence from Podgorica and with support of the European Union Delegation to Montenegro. The training paid special attention to the process of project writing, preparation for project writing, as well as other phases of project management, including the financial and narrative reporting. The goal of the training was to improve the capacities of the members of Coalition “*Cooperation for the common goals*” in these areas. Among the participants were two representatives of the Centre for Civic Education: **Željka Četković**, CCE programme associate and **Miloš Knežević**, coordinator of the CCE Youth Group.

Open government partnership

Centre for Monitoring and Research (CEMI) organised on 29 November 2014 in PR Centre a public debate on the commitments Montenegro had undertaken as part of the global initiative *Partnership of open governments* and the results it had achieved. The first panel was dedicated to comparative experiences of Serbia and Montenegro in the adoption, implementation, and monitoring of action plans for open government partnership, their effects in these countries, as well as expectations from this global initiative. The topic of the second panel was the experience of the civil sector in preparing the action plans for open government partnership and forthcoming activities. Among the speakers were experts on open government from Montenegro and the region, and the discussion involved representatives of public institutions committed to the Action plan for Open government partnership and representatives of the civil sector. The debate was organised as part of the project “*Open government advocacy*” implemented by CeMI in cooperation with organisations from the Western Balkans and Eastern Europe, with support of the European Commission. **Boris Marić**, senior legal advisor to the Centre for Civic Education represented CCE at the discussion.

Financial support – the right of every child and the duty of every parent

On 20 November 2014 the Safe Women's House presented a study titled: *"Financial support – the right of every child and the duty of every parent"*, financed by the European Union via the Centre for Civic Education (CCE) and Civic Initiative (CI). The results of the study show that a majority of divorces filed for at the Basic Court in Podgorica end in spontaneous dissolution and that in nearly 93% of the cases the children are given to the mothers. A third of the parents, according to the study, had failed to pay alimony for over two years, while 70% has failed to do so for over a year. A conditional verdict is the most common sanction pronounced by the court in such cases, and accounts for 48.57% of complaints brought to the court. It is followed by a prison term in 37.14% of cases and fines in 14.29% of cases. The study shows that it is necessary to improve the current system of collection of spousal support and establish an alimony fund to support children whose parents have failed to honour their obligation to provide financial support. The study also recommends tightening criminal sanctions for those who fail to honour those payments and consider temporary seizure of driving licences or passports of parents who do not obey court rulings. Executive director of the Centre for Civic Education (CCE) **Daliborka Uljarević**, who opened the gathering together with the president of the board of managers of Women's Safe House said that child protection is a strategic priority of every society, but that children's rights are too often neglected and violated.

Good governance in Montenegrin local governments

Centre for Development of Non-Governmental Organisations (CDNGO) organised on 27 November in Podgorica a presentation of the *"Report on the attainment of principles of good governance in local administration units in Montenegro in 2013"* accompanied by a panel discussion titled *"The road to a modern, efficient and responsible local administration"*. Speakers at the event were: **Dragoslav Šćekić**, Mayor of Berane, **Mišela Manojlović** from the Secretariat for local government of the Capital City Podgorica, **Aleksa Bečić**, member of the local parliament of Podgorica, **Boris Marić** from Centre for Civic Education (CCE) and **Ljubinka Radulović**, deputy general secretary of the Union of Montenegrin Municipalities. **Ana Novaković**, executive director of Centre for Development of Non-Governmental Organisations presented the key findings and recommendations of the Report. The report recommends greater involvement of the citizens who participate too little in the decision-making process; improvements of cooperation among municipalities as well as better cooperation between local governments and non-governmental organisations. For better results, it is also necessary to increase transparency and efficiency, in order to increase accountability of local governments. The panelists emphasized the need to strengthen the principles of decentralization and de-politicisation, and improve local governments' websites in order to raise the level of information among citizens.

Inspectorates and protection against discrimination

Centre for Anti-Discrimination EKVISTA organised on 26 November in Podgorica a round table titled *"Inspection bodies and the protection against discrimination"* as part of the eponymous project, which is implemented with support of the Embassy of the Kingdom of Norway in Belgrade. The goal of the project is to contribute to development and strengthening of inspection bodies in the protection against discrimination, directly improving the quality of anti-discrimination system in Montenegro. Representatives of EKVISTA said that in the last year the prevalence of discrimination fell with regard to the elderly (from 36% to 32%), national minorities (from 35% to 31%), Roma (63% to 60) and persons with disabilities (from 58% to 51%). Discrimination towards women and LGBT persons, however, remained the same or even increased. The round table brought together representatives of several institutions, non-governmental sector and international organisations, as well as numerous media. **Tamara Milaš**, CCE programme associated, attended the event on behalf of the Centre for Civic Education.

TACSO conference on communication channels

In early November, TACSO Regional office organised a regional conference titled *Civil society organisations and good practices in the use of communication channels* in Skopje, Macedonia. The goal of the conference was to bring together representatives of civil society organisations in order to exchange good practices in the use of communication channels with the special emphasis on social network tools. The participants had a chance to learn about the best practices of civil society organisations in advocating and raising awareness of their own activities, and discuss more and less successful approaches. **Svetlana Pešić**, CCE programme associate, participated at the conference on behalf of the Centre for Civic Education.

A.V.

NGO Resources - financial, human, personal

This Training Course is for 30 manager and trainers of youth NGOs from Bulgaria, Germany, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Montenegro, Palestine, Poland, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine

Objectives of the training course: to provide the opportunity for organisations to meet and explore general needs of youth NGOs in Europe and its neighboring countries; to explore financial resources possibilities for youth work NGOs on both a local and international level; to explore strategies to increase the capacity of organizations through building their financial, human, and personal resources; to identify personal, professional and educational development opportunities that NGOs can provide for volunteers to ensure their long term cooperation and future employability; to discuss the similarities and differences related to NGO management in relation to the varying realities of the participating countries; to develop strategy plans that enable the participating organisations to reach their goal in terms of resources development in order to provide quality youth work in a regional, national and international level. Venue: 19-25 March 2015 | Switzerland

Application deadline: 12 January 2015

For more information, please contact: Oliver Schneitter via oschneitter@gmx.ch

European Citizenship in Youth Work Training Course

This training course will encourage the development of critical and democratic European Citizenship and support youth workers in the development and implementation of youth projects with a European Citizenship dimension; and it will introduce Erasmus+ Youth in Action. Venue: 8-14 March 2015 | United Kingdom

Application deadline: 25 January 2015

Deadline: 12 January 2015

For more information, please check: https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/trainingcalendar_training_download-file-4843/ECTC%20Infopack%202013-14.pdf or contact Natalia Boron via erasmusplustca@uk.ecorys.com

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