

EUROKAZ



me4.eu
eu4.me
ja za evropu, evropu za mene



Impresum:

Eurokaz
Magazine of the European Integration Office

No. 2

Published by:
Sector for informing public on European Union and EU
accession process
Secretariat - General of the Government of Montenegro

Editorial board:
Sector for informing public on European Union and EU
accession process
Secretariat - General of the Government of Montenegro

Graphic design:
Radna soba

Contact:
Sector for informing public on European Union and EU
accession process
Secretariat - General of the Government of Montenegro

Bulevar revolucije 15, Podgorica

E-mail: nada.vojvodic@mep.gov.me
bojana.mucalica@mep.gov.me
Web: www.kei.gov.me
www.eu.me

Content

Foreword

4 - 5 Opening Statement of Montenegro's Chief Negotiator with the European Union,
Aleksandar Drljević

News from negotiating process

6 - 9 European Commission's Report - insight into dynamics of approximation
to European standards

11 - 13 Chapter 17 opened - Positive impact on economic and social development

Greetings from EU

14 - 15 Chapters 23 and 24 will require sustainable focus and efforts U

16 - 21 European future within reach

News from IPA

22 - 25 Using IPA Funds - Overview and Perspective

26 - 27 Eight projects for strengthening good neighbourly relations and for social and
economic development of Montenegro and Albania

EU in Montenegro

28 - 33 Fears of accession to the EU are unjustified, but competitiveness needs
to be strengthened

34 - 39 To Europe without borders through Erasmus+ programme

A view from civil society

40 - 44 Civil sector ready to continue contributing to quality negotiating process

Interesting stories

45 - 47 Awards to journalists and talented students

48 Celebrating Europe Month

49 - 52 Photo collage



Introductory speech by Montenegro's Chief Negotiator with the European Union, Aleksandar Drljević

When it comes to the integration process, Montenegro has achieved an enviable result over the past six years, with 31 negotiating chapters being opened and three chapters provisionally closed. The small Montenegrin administration has promptly responded to numerous and demanding obligations on its path towards the EU, providing a quality track-record that the state of Montenegro and its citizens can be proud of today.

Integration of Montenegro into the EU is a national priority. By setting up the European Integration Office within the Office of the Prime Minister of Montenegro, responsibility for fulfilment of obligations assumed has been raised to a higher level. As regards the new model, the citizens can expect better coordination of work at the level of the overall negotiating structure, as well as closer dialogue and more intensive cooperation with all social actors involved in this process. I believe that it will contribute to faster and more quality implementation of reforms and, finally, to better results in practice, which will impact the lives of our citizens.

Even though it is important for us to maintain a good pace of accession, it is even more important that the reforms we are implementing have a good impact on the standard of living of our citizens. This is our guiding principle in the accession negotiations that goes along with our desire to truly adopt the European system of values and to become an inseparable part of modern European civilization.

What awaits Montenegro in the upcoming period is the opening of two remaining chapters, meeting of interim benchmarks for Chapters 23 and 24, as well as more intensive work when it comes to

the fulfilment of the closing benchmarks and the closing of negotiations. Each closed chapter will mean that our country is a step closer to the community of European families, and thus to the European standard of living. The cornerstone of the integration process and the condition for further progress are measurable results in the field of rule of law. For this reason, we will continue increasing our efforts and the intensity of reforms in the field of justice, fundamental rights, fight against corruption and organised crime.

From historical, geographical and cultural point of view, Montenegro has always been part of Europe. The EU's commitment to creating sustainable peace, stability and progress, based on respect for diversity, mutual trust and dialogue, as well as on a compromise in achieving common goals, remains a guideline of today's Montenegro, which has always fostered the values of communion and respect for diversity.

Today, Montenegro and other Western Balkan countries have a historic opportunity to firmly and unequivocally bind their future to the EU. Therefore, through the conduct of accession negotiations, as the most efficient mechanism of our overall internal transformation, we are building a new, European quality of life.

I am convinced that the second issue of Eurokaz magazine, through an overview of interesting and latest topics concerning the European integration process, will be a kind of witness to our country's progress and kind of means for informing our citizens about the tasks that have been fulfilled, but also about those awaiting us, as well as about our obligations arising from all fields covered by the negotiating process.

European Commission`s Report – insight into dynamics of approximation to European standards



Author: Miodrag Radović, Chief of Staff Office of the President of Montenegro and former Deputy Chief Negotiator for Chapters of the Acquis

During the process of integration into community of developed EU countries, the country concerned is subject to detailed evaluation of the state of play, and commits itself to regular delivering of written contributions, reports and information on developments in all fields. Continuous communication of the candidate country or possible candidate for EU membership results, inter alia, in publication of the annual report of the European Commission (EC), which represents the objective overview of the current and real achievements of the country in its endeavours to fulfil all requirements for becoming a member of the European family of nations. For that reason, this document is important from several aspects, not only for public institutions and authorities, but also for other social entities that participate in shaping of social, political and economic image of a country.

The report is useful for further development of a country and improvement of its status on the European path, since specific issues in all fields are pointed to in diplomatic manner, and, at the same time, it provides the guidelines for further work and development of policies representing the EU agenda, which is, as a form of political support from European partners, substantially important for all the countries undergoing the European integration process. Therefore, the EC report contributes to development of strategic documents and other national regulations that are used as a guide in development of a country, and it also often contributes to the dynamics of development of the country. The thing that is particularly put into focus is the idea that the countries should accept complete implementation of reforms in order to improve the quality of lives of their citizens and that, particularly for this reason, a strong political will is required, along with hard work and efforts of all entities, both governmental and non-governmental, with continuous informing of public on the implementation of the acquis.

Although written in a specific style of Brussels administration, the report at the regular annual level provides the citizens with the opportunity to be informed on development of the country and dynamics of approximation to European standards, even those policies that may not be in the citizen's everyday focus. Thus the report contributes to raising awareness of citizens on the fact that the EU integration process is rather complex and demanding, that it influences daily behaviour, rules and habits of individuals, and that country's European path requires full cooperation of all social entities, so as to develop solid grou-

nds for the progress of the society as a whole through broadest synergy.

Enviably progress has been achieved so far in the process of negotiations between Montenegro and the EU. Negotiations have been opened on the total of 31 chapters, of which three chapters have been provisionally closed, Chapter 25 – Science and Research, Chapter 26 – Education and Culture and Chapter 30 – External Relations. Overall, the Government of Montenegro adopted 32 negotiating positions, while the remaining negotiating position for Chapter 8 – Competition Policy is being developed.

Prior to publication of the mentioned report, the EC is informed by the country on the activities implemented in the context of the accession process. In this regard, on 2 November 2017, the Government of Montenegro adopted the First Contribution to EC's Report on Montenegro for the period 1 October 2016 – 20 October 2017, while the Second Contribution to EC's Report on Montenegro for the period 20 October 2017 – 19 January 2018 was adopted on 1 February 2018.

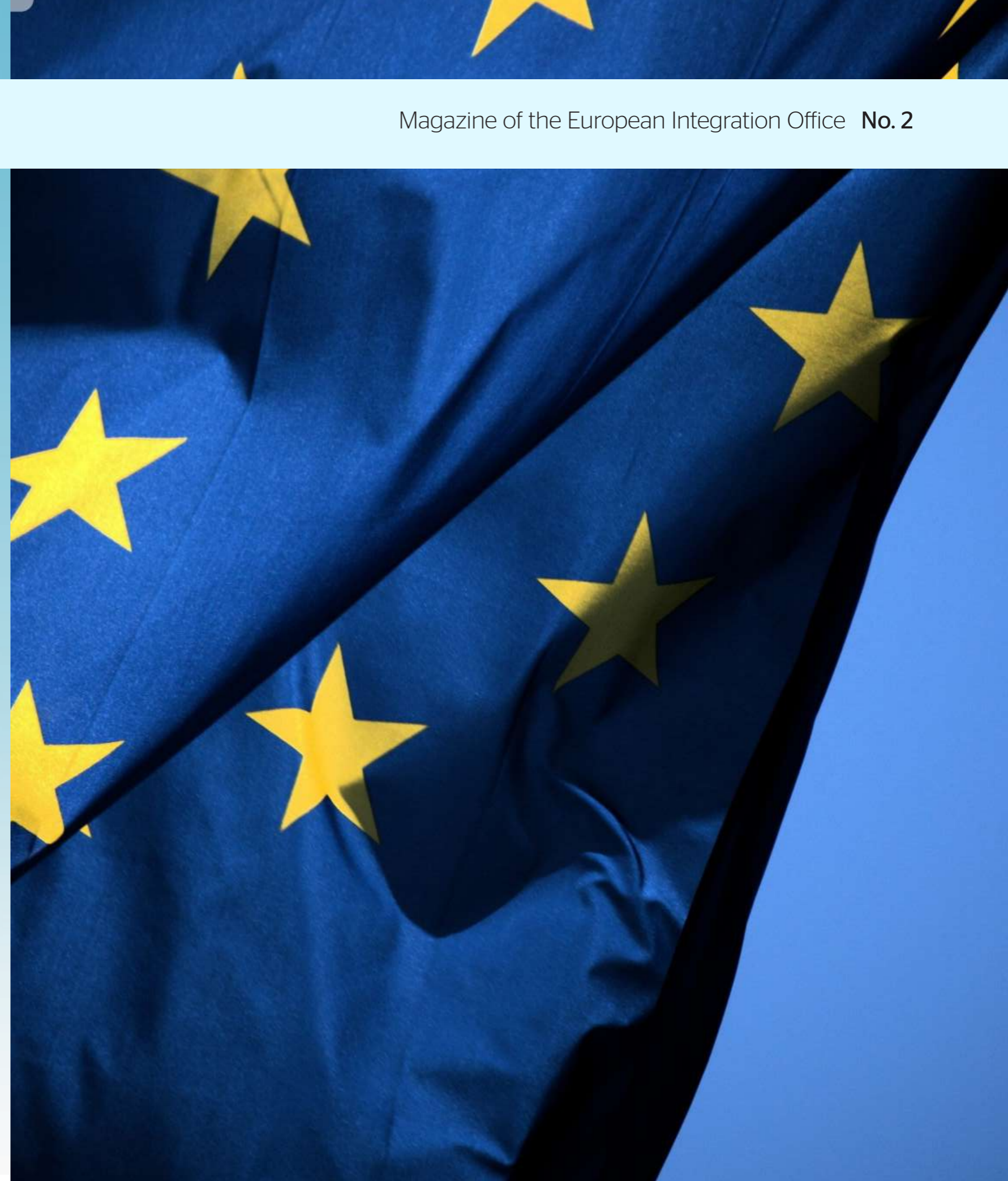
The EC's report is a document that is always eagerly awaited in the countries of the region. Pursuant to new approach in reporting, the EC did not draft reports during 2017, so that, following 18 months, the new report was published on 17 April 2018. During the last reporting period Montenegro opened six negotiating chapters, while one chapter was provisionally closed. Montenegro is expected to be dedicated to further work on fulfilment of political criteria, while, as regards economic criteria, it has achieved enviable progress.

In this year's Report on Montenegro, out of the total of 33 negotiating chapters, Montenegro achieved a good level of preparation in 6 chapters, moderate preparation in 19 chapters, moderate to good level of preparation in 1 chapter, moderate to certain level of preparation in 1 chapter, certain level of preparation in 3 chapters and an early stage of preparation in 2 chapters. When compared with the previous report, Montenegro achieved progress in 3 chapters: Chapter 6 – Company Law, where it advanced from certain and moderate to a good level of preparation, Chapter 15 – Energy, where it advanced from moderate to a good level of preparation and Chapter 18 - Statistics, where it advanced from certain to moderate level of preparation.

By closing the first chapter with defined benchmarks, the country entered a new stage of negotiations, where it is expected to intensify its work on fulfilment of closing benchmarks. For that reason, although it advanced the most when compared with other countries of the region, Montenegro still needs to face a number of challenges in its endeavour to reach European standards. Particular attention in the following period will be paid to fulfilment of interim benchmarks and implementation of action plans for Chapters 23 and 24, since the overall dynamics in negotiations will depend on success in the field of rule of law and protection of fundamental rights. Furthermore, we should not

forget the challenges all candidate countries faced in the past, such as financially demanding chapters like environment, and chapters complicated in terms of organisation and legislation such as agriculture and rural development or the ones that are in the focus of public's interest such as food safety.

Anyway, when it comes to negotiations, Montenegro has so far achieved enviable results, which is a good basis for further implementation of reforms and systematic changes, so that the country could fulfil citizen's expectations in due time when it comes to safer life and better quality of life, i.e. finally confirm its commitment to EU membership.



Chapter 17 opened

Positive impact on economic and social development

Author: Milica Kilibarda, head of the Working Group for Chapter 17 and advisor to the Vice- Governor for Financial Stability and Payment Operations at the Central Bank

On 25 June 2018, at the Intergovernmental Conference in Luxembourg, Montenegro opened Chapter 17 – Economic and Monetary Union.

Chapter 17 – Economic and Monetary Union is divided into two basic sub-chapters. The first sub-chapter is Monetary Policy, which includes the acquis in the field of independence of the national central bank, prohibition of monetary financing of the public sector, prohibition of privileged access of public sector to financial institutions and standards for the use of euro. The second sub-chapter is Economic Policy, which includes the acquis in the field of fiscal policy and supervision.

The acquis in the field of economic and monetary policy consists of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU and the Protocol (no. 4) on the Statute of the European System of Central Banks and European Central Bank in the field of independence of the national central bank, prohibition of monetary financing of the public sector and prohibition of privileged access of

public sector to financial institutions. The acquis for this chapter also consists of the regulation related to privileged access of the public sector to financial institutions, standards for the use of euro as a legal tender and fiscal policy.

Strategic framework for this chapter consists of the Action Plan for alignment with the acquis in the field of economic and monetary policy. The Action Plan, which represents one of two benchmarks for opening negotiations on the mentioned chapter, defines clear goals and timeline for complete alignment of legislation with the acquis, as well as measures for building required administrative capacities.

As the chapter itself, this plan is divided in two parts: monetary policy and economic policy. It is important to note that the majority of activities under this plan have been carried out.

By adopting the Law Amending the Law on the Central Bank of Montenegro and the Law Amending the Law on Foreign Current and Capital Transactions, in October last year, the principle of independence of the Central Bank of Montenegro was completely implemented.

The amendments to the Law on the Central Bank of Montenegro supplemented the existing law with two new chapters that govern the following:

- 1) business operations of the Central Bank from the date of Montenegro's accession to the EU and
- 2) business operations of the Central Bank from the date of Montenegro's accession to the Economic and Monetary Union.

In this manner, requirements mentioned in the Action Plan that refer to the issue of integration of the central bank into the European System of Central Banks were also fulfilled.

Furthermore, by adopting the Law Amending the Law on the Central Bank of Montenegro and new Decision on more detailed requirements for granting loans to banks in case of their liquidity needs (November last year), which repealed Decision on the approval of financial aid in final instance, the principle of prohibition of monetary financing of the public sector was completely implemented.

When it comes to the segment that refers to the principle of prohibition of privileged access of public sector to financial institutions, the Action Plan has been implemented when it comes to amending of Decision on compulsory bank reserves in the Central Bank of Montenegro and the Law on Voluntary Pension Funds. Namely, in December 2015, the Decision on compulsory bank reserve of the Central Bank of Montenegro was amended and complete alignment with this principle was achieved. At the same time, the basis for fulfilment of the first benchmark for opening Chapter 17 was set. Then, the Law Amending the Law on Voluntary Pension Funds was adopted in February of the current year. In addition, amending of the Law on Insurance and the Law on Protection of Deposit have been initiated so as to fulfil the principle of prohibition of privileged access of the public sector to financial institutions.





It was stated in the Action Plan, in the segment of Monetary Policy, that the EU regulatory requirements related to standards for the use of euro have been met; this was also recognised in the EC reports on Montenegro in Chapter 32, in the segment related to protection of euro against counterfeiting.

The challenge in this field will be amending of the Constitution of Montenegro upon request of the European Commission, in order to harmonise the goal of the Central Bank of Montenegro with the goal of the European System of Central Banks.

As regards the second part of the Action Plan, which refers to Economic Policy, substantial part of activities has also been implemented, and some of them are continuously implemented.

The Programme of Public Finance Management Reform for the period 2016-2020 was adopted in December 2015, and stipulates

the key reform plans of Montenegro in this field in order to increase responsibility and secure solid financial management. The following documents important for this chapter have been passed: Montenegro's Fiscal Strategy for the period 2017-2020, Macroeconomic and Fiscal Policy Guidelines for the period 2017-2020, Montenegro Development Directions for the period 2018-2021, Economic Reforms Programme for the period 2018-2020, Mid-Term Debt Management Strategy for the period 2018-2020.

It is important to note that Montenegrin representatives participate in the meetings of the European Commission twice a year, where they analyse and discuss macroeconomic forecasts.

In this field, the greatest challenge is the implementation of the ESA2010 standard, which is also a part of negotiations under Chapter 18 – Statistics. Substantial activities



have been carried out in this field, with technical assistance of foreign experts. As regards fiscal notification, i.e. excessive deficit procedure, the data are submitted in line with the national regulations and methodology, and they will be revised following complete implementation of ESA2010 and Deficit and Debt Manual.

In case of Montenegro, the negotiating chapter 17 represents specific chapter which cannot fully rely on experiences of other EU Member States. Namely, the European Commission negotiates on the membership for the first time with country that is using euro as a legal tender.

Montenegro wants to keep euro as a legal tender, it agrees with the fact that its current method of use of euro is completely different than the method used in Economic and Monetary Union and it will strive to fulfil convergence criteria for access to Eurozone. We expect modification of the Maastricht criteria that are not applicable, such as the foreign exchange rate criterion. Further activities are directed to maintaining macroeconomic stability in order to meet the Maastricht criteria as soon as possible and to harmonise the legislation related to this negotiating chapter.

By fulfilling requirements under this chapter and by accessing the EU, we will have improved environment and established policies and procedures that are in line with EU rules and that will positively influence the overall economic and social development. The main goal is to maintain macroeconomic stability, by securing stability of prices, increasing economy competitiveness, and securing stable and sustainable public finance.

European Commissioner for Enlargement Negotiations Johannes Hahn:

Chapters 23 and 24 will require sustainable focus and efforts

Author: Jovana Đurišić, Daily Newspaper Pobjeda

European Commissioner for Enlargement Negotiations Johannes Hahn stated that, following delivery of application for membership in the European Union (EU), Montenegro constantly advanced in the accession process. In his interview for Eurokaz, Hahn stated that he was pleased that our country set the EU membership as its first political priority.

“Montenegro applied for EU membership and gradually advanced in the accession process over the last few years. As far as I can see, EU mem-

bership is its first political priority and I commend that. The support we provide to Montenegro – technical expertise and substantial financial pre-accession assistance is aimed to help Montenegro reach its goal of becoming EU member, which was several times mentioned by Montenegrin authorities as the foreign policy priority”, Hahn stated.

He added that further progress on the integration path would depend on the progress made in chapters covering the rule of law, which is proven by tangible results in practice, all in line with the own merit principle.



“The 2018 Report on Montenegro provides comprehensive overview, including detailed analysis of the rule of law, where we have indicated challenges Montenegro is facing at the moment. Fulfilment of interim benchmarks in chapters 23 and 24 will require intensive and sustainable focus and efforts, as well as political attention in the following months”, indicated Hahn when he spoke about challenges that our country has to overcome on its path towards the EU.

As it happened several times so far, the high-level European institutions stated that control of media in Montenegro was the reason for concern. Hahn indicated once again that freedom of expression and media were fundamental values of the EU and there should be no room for political interference.

“In the last few months, the EU concluded several times that political interference in the Council of the national Radio and Television of Montenegro (RTCG) is a matter of serious concern. Apparent politically motivated dismissals of RTCG management as well as cases of physical violence against journalists further aggravated the situation. Such decisions are against freedom of expression and media, which represent fundamental EU value, and they are also key element of the process of Montenegro’s accession to the EU and important interim benchmark to be fulfilled under Chapter 23”, European Commissioner stated.

He also added that, in the forthcoming period, all the countries of the Western Balkans will have the opportunity to move forward on their European path. He stated that the Commission expects all of them to provide tangible and sustainable reforms, achieve reconciliation and resolve open bilateral issues prior to their accession.

“In that context, the 2025 membership perspective represents an indicative date. This goal is very ambitious and it completely depends on results achieved by each country”, Hahn stated.

As he said, the accession negotiations will be conducted pursuant to the merit-based principle, so it was up to Mon-

tenegro to keep the pace of its reforms and provide results so that the country could be ready and use in the best possible way the momentum provided by the Strategy of the Commission for the Western Balkans and Summit in Sofia.

The migration issue, which was the topic addressed at the recent summit in the EU, also exists in Montenegro. Montenegrin Prime Minister stated that the Government was working in all fields in order to better regulate the migration process, particularly in the context of controlled entry into its territory, while Commissioner Hahn stated that the EU would cooperate with Montenegro to prevent this issue from escalating.

“There is a very close and fruitful cooperation in resolving common challenges between the EU and the Western Balkans. This was also proven by the recent meeting between the Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Dimitris Avramopoulos, Commissioner for Security Issues Julian King, ministers of interior from the Western Balkans and recent and future presidencies of the Council of the EU that took place on 19 June. In fact, the EU also provides substantial funds to help Montenegro in overcoming common challenges. For example, the EU provides EUR 20 million to Montenegro for strengthening border management”, European Commissioner stated.

Speaking on the recent meeting with representatives of the opposition, Hahn also reiterated his previous position that debate between political entities should take place in the Parliament.

“The recent positive steps made by the opposition should be aimed at gradual returning into Parliament, and all political entities must be involved constructively in debate and reforms. Ad hoc parliamentary committee will consider the issues related to the reform of the judiciary, freedom of expression and media, as well as electoral reform; these are all issues important for Montenegro’s path towards integration into EU”, Hahn stated, adding that termination of boycott in the parliament was the obligation of all political parties.

What Bulgarian presidency of the Council of the EU brought to Montenegro, and what will Austrian presidency bring

European future within reach

Author: Marko Vešović, Daily Newspaper Dan

The Bulgarian presidency of the Council of the EU was very successful for the Western Balkans, considering the fact that the region was offered tangible EU membership perspective for the first time after 15 years. This is reflected in the EU enlargement strategy issued in February, which offered to Serbia and Montenegro specific date for possible accession to European alliance. During the Bulgarian presidency, dozens of consultative meetings and expert mission visits took place, all with a view to improving the quality of reforms in practice and strengthening the European integration process in the region. Bulgaria did not conceal its support to accession of countries of the Western Balkans to the EU, but it openly advocated for maximum acceleration of the enlargement process before the highest-level European institutions.

In the meantime, EU's financial support to reforms was strengthened, parliamentary cooperation was improved, and particular emphasis was put on providing assistance to the entire region in strengthening the fight against organised crime and corruption, constituting of the rule of law, regional cooperation and appropriate resolving of issues from the past. At the end, Bulgaria hosted a large summit of leaders from the region and EU in May in Sofia, when representatives from the highest level clearly stated for the first time after more than a decade that the future of the Western Balkans indisputably lies in the European Union.

Regional leaders, including Montenegrin officials, did not hide their satisfaction with effects and programme of Bulgarian presidency. Furthermore, Bulgarian officials did not hide that the Western Balkans were the

focus of their presidency of the Council of the EU. Even the declaration itself from the summit in Sofia offered to region clear goals related to digital economy and new perspective of infrastructural connecting, which would enable better economic cooperation at the level of the entire region. When the six-month office of Bulgarian presidency expired, it became clear that, as of 1 July, Austria will become the new country presiding the Council of the EU.

In addition, it becomes clear that Austria assumes the presidency at a very complex period of time, at the peak of migration crisis, the issue that the most important entities in the EU struggle to reach an agreement about. Therefore, we must bear in mind that the focus on the region might not be so intensive during the Austrian presidency as it was the case with Bulgaria.



Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz presented three priorities of his country's presidency, and indicated that the first priority would be protection of the EU external borders and control of migration pressure on the EU borders in Southern Europe. He stated that the mentioned crisis brought insecurity among European citizens and that maximum attention should be paid to it. He stated that the second priority

was development of digital economy in order to reinforce the EU competitiveness. The third priority is the integration of the Western Balkans into the EU.

According to Austrian Ambassador in Podgorica, Ana Janković, the future of the Western Balkans is in the EU. When asked what Austria will insist on during its presidency of the EU when it comes to Mon-

Much has been done, but much still awaits us

When asked how she evaluates Montenegro's recent progress on its European path and on what we have to focus during the Austrian presidency, ambassador Ana Janković stated that we managed to achieve a lot, but there is still work to be done.

"Montenegro is a reliable partner of the EU in the field of foreign policy and completely in line with the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy. It plays a very constructive role in regional and good neighbourly policy; here I primarily refer to efforts related to Demarcation Agreement with Kosovo, as well as initiatives for supporting regional cooperation, such as establishment of the international Institute for Sustainable Technologies in South East Europe, which is a project initiated by the Minister of Science Sanja Damjanović. I think that regional and good neighbourly policy represent the field in which Montenegro can further advance", Janković stated.

As she stated, when it comes to the field of the rule of law (negotiating chapters 23 and 24), institutional and legal frameworks were set up.

"Now we need to achieve tangible results in this field, to intensify our efforts and ensure sustainable achievements, which I personally consider Montenegro's main task during the Austrian presidency. As regards economic aspect, Montenegro will continue its way on the well-worn path and focus on measures aimed at securing fiscal sustainability, reducing public debt and trade deficit, continuation of reforms in fields such as public procurement and labour market, as well as improvement of business conditions. However, what is also important for continuation of the accession process is delivery of specific and good news from the country towards the EU. Recently expressed readiness of certain opposition parties for participation in the implementation of important forthcoming reforms, such as reform of the electoral system through parliamentary work, is an example of good news, which was observed with great interest abroad, which may help the accession process", Janković indicated.



tenegro and its commitments under the European agenda, Janković stated that approximation of the Western Balkans/south-east Europe to the EU was one of priorities of Austrian presidency of the Council of the EU.

"Our presidency is a continuation of intensive focus of the EU on this region during the first half of 2018. Milestones on the path were primarily the following: European Commission's Strategy in February, progress reports in April, EU-Western Balkans Summit in Sofia in May, as well as discussion in the Council of the European Union in line with the enlargement

package, including conclusions at the end of June. Together with our partners in the region, we must seek to develop a positive image of the EU and accession process once again, both within the EU and among the candidate countries, and make the best use of the resulting dynamics", Janković stated for Eurokaz.

She stated that Montenegro recently opened 31 out of 35 negotiating chapters, the last of which was Chapter 17 (Economic and Monetary Union), which was opened on 26. June.

European perspective reinforced

Bulgarian ambassador to Montenegro Mladen Chervenjakov said that Montenegro, as the leading country in the process of European integration, will have to make even greater progress when it comes to the strengthening of the rule of law and freedom of the media.

Chervenjakov reminded that Montenegro had recently opened Chapter 17 (Economic and Monetary Policy) and expressed his opinion that Chapter 27 (Environment) could be opened by the end of the year. According to him, the Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of the European Union was a major challenge and responsibility, but what it has been proved is that a medium/small size country, according to European standards, can manage it and hold presidency in a quality way.

"We are pleased with our presidency, it was a great success and we have proved that we have the capacity to organise such an important event," Chervenjakov said.

He explained that the priority during the Bulgarian presidency was the European perspective

and connection of the Western Balkan countries. Chervenjakov said that the declaration on the European perspective of the countries of this region, adopted in May in Sofia, was very significant, because the EU had not produced any such document during the previous 15 years.

"The priority is for the Western Balkan countries to be a stable, prosperous and developed zone," Chervenjakov said.

As he said, during its presidency, Bulgaria emphasised the importance of connection between road, rail and air traffic of the Western Balkan countries, as well as the importance of resolving the problem of unemployment of young people.

He also added that one of the key topics addressed during the Bulgarian Presidency was the issue of security and stability in the region.

"Much has been done to address the problem of refugees, but much has also been done when it comes to fight against terrorism," Chervenjakov added.

"Montenegrin efforts should be centred on the rule of law, as well as the field of the rule of law. The progress made in this field is a benchmark which determines successful continuation of accession negotiations. The benchmarks are also precondition for the recent closure of other chapters, which Austria supports. Therefore, efforts must be focused on the fight against corruption, organised crime, money laundering and trafficking in human beings. Fields of the freedom of thought and independence of the media are equally important as the administrative reform and strengthening of independence of institutions. In any case, with emphasis on individual progress, the goal of Austrian presidency will be the advancement of Montenegro's accession negotiations as far as possible", Janković stated.

Janković indicated that efforts of Austria would be particularly aimed at the opening of Chapter 27 (Environment), as well as closure of other chapters, as soon as the mentioned preconditions have been fulfilled.

"The Berlin Process is very important as regards the given context. Inter alia, the emphasis will be put on reconciliation and thematization of certain inherited issues, such as missing persons. At the same time, we must be aware of the fact that Austrian presidency will face great challenges. Austrian presidency will be the last presidency that will fulfil its mandate prior to European parliamentary elections in spring 2019. Until that date, they have to resolve as much open issues as possible. The additional challenges are Brexit negotiations and negotiations

on Multiannual Financial Framework after 2020. Austria considers its role in the presidency of the Council as a neutral mediator building bridges between the countries involved. There is no doubt that this presidency can make progress only if it can count on the unity of the EU and its members. Therefore we will give greater importance to this aspect", Janković stated.

When asked whether she shares the position that it is important for the EU itself to make the Western Balkans its integral part and why is that important, she recalled that the slogan of the presidency was "Europe that protects", which, in addition to the field of "security and migration" and "ensuring competitiveness through digitalization" also includes tendency towards stability and prosperity in neighbouring countries. She stated that the EU enlargement was one of the instruments for achieving the mentioned goal, and as such it represented the investment into peace, democracy, solid state of play, safety and stability in Europe.

"This is a matter of mutual interest. Responsive engagement of the EU is also important from geostrategic point of view. After all, this is a long-term geopolitical issue: to what rules will this region at the very centre of the European Union adhere in future? Austria's position is very clear: all the countries of the Western Balkans should, once they fulfil all preconditions, become full-fledged members of the European Union as soon as possible. Besides, from the geographical point of view, they are already located in the middle of Europe", Janković concluded.

Instrument for the Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA)

Using IPA Funds – Overview and Perspective

Authors: Milica Abramović Radivojkov and Marko Dragaš, National IPA Coordinator Office

With a view to providing support to potential candidate countries and candidate countries in their efforts to meet the criteria for membership in the European Union (EU), the European Commission decided to unify the hitherto forms of assistance into a single instrument - Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance – IPA, which took place in 2006. IPA is designed to provide financial, technical and expert support to candidate countries and potential candidate countries in the European integration process. It is implemented through several separate areas – components, i.e. sectors, which are implemented through individual projects, programmes or through other forms used for providing assistance.

Under the financial perspective 2007-2013 (IPA I), the European Commission has allocated EUR 165 million to support the transition and institution building, i.e. for the IPA Component I, supporting a total of 102 national projects, while as regards cross-border cooperation programmes (IPA Component II), it has allocated EUR 30 million. When it comes to regional development (IPA Component III), which implies support for sustainable development and environmental protection, develop-

ment of transport, small and medium-sized enterprises and competitiveness, the European Commission has allocated a total of EUR 22.3 million. As for IPA Component IV, which covers development of human resources and includes support in the field of employment, education, scientific and research work and social development, the European Commission has allocated funds amounting to EUR 5.6 million.

Although encountering this form of assistance for the first time, the Montenegrin institutions have proved to be able to cope with their tasks and have successfully programmed and used more than 80% of funds that were made available through this financial perspective. Some of the most important projects are Fight against Organised Crime and Corruption (total value of the project: EUR 3.6 million); Permanent Solution for Refugee Status in Montenegro (total value of the project: EUR 1.5 million); Enhancing Environmental Protection Infrastructure (total value of the project: EUR 14.1 million); Construction of a Wastewater Treatment Plant in the Municipality of Pljevlja (total value of the project: EUR 11 million); Implementation of the European Blood Transfusion System in Montenegro (total value of the project: EUR 3 million); Rehabilitation of the Main Railway Line



Bar-Vrbnica (total value of the project: EUR 15 million); EU Support to the Rule of Law (total value of the project: EUR 3.6 million), etc. The aforementioned projects represent only a part of the results that were achieved during the 2007-2013 perspective, which significantly improved the quality of life of the citizens of Montenegro and strengthened the capacities of institutions for the process of European integration.

The experiences gained and lessons learned during implementation of projects and programmes during the 2007-2013 financial perspective showed the need for redefining the rules and postulates IPA I was based on. In this regard, in order to improve the overall efficiency and effectiveness of assistance provide to Montenegro, the European Commission has initiated gradual transition from a project-based approach under IPA I (2007-2013) to a sector-based approach under IPA II (2014-2020).

IPA II targets reforms within the framework of pre-defined sectors. These sectors cover areas closely linked

to the enlargement strategy, such as democracy and governance, rule of law or growth and competitiveness. This sector approach promotes structural reform that will help transform a given sector and bring it up to EU standards. It allows a move towards a more targeted assistance, ensuring efficiency, sustainability and focus on results. Furthermore, it also allows for a more systematic use of sector budget support. Finally, it gives more weight to performance measurement: indicators agreed with the beneficiaries will help assess to what extent the expected results have been achieved. The amount of financial support provided to Montenegro under this instrument for the period 2014-2020 totals EUR 270.5 million.

Under the IPA II, a growing importance is given to the sectoral approach, and with the Berlin Process that was initiated in 2014, IPA is also gaining importance through the support it provides for the implementation of projects under the Connectivity Agenda and regional networking. In this regard, we can mention the assistance amounting to EUR 20 million provided by the EU for

the co-financing of works on replacement of the signalling system at Podgorica railway station, rehabilitation of six critical slopes and reconstruction of bridges made of concrete on the Bar–Vrbnica railway line. The European Union has allocated additional EUR 25 million for the co-financing of works on the construction of the Montenegrin part of a 400kV power grid connecting Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia. The total value of these two projects amounts to EUR 167 million, of which the EU grant funds total EUR 45 million. Another significant result in this process is the project entitled Construction of a Wastewater Treatment Plant in Podgorica, phase I, for which the EU has

allocated EUR 10.5 million out of EUR 50 million, which is the total value of the project.

What is certain is that the following sectors will be supported through the national IPA 2018 programme during the forthcoming period: Agriculture and Rural Development - EUR 9.5 million for implementation of priorities under negotiating chapters 11, 12 and 13, and Rule of Law and Fundamental Rights, in the sub-sectors: Justice, Law Enforcement and Human Rights – EUR 13.5 million. Under this programme, Montenegro received a for the first time performance reward amounting to EUR 8 million, which will be used to further support reforms of the social welfare system, health-

-care system and the childcare system, through implementation of a new strategic, legal and institutional framework in line with the EU acquis.

Through national IPA 2019 and IPA 2020 programmes, support will be focused on the following sectors: Transport, Environment, Competitiveness and Innovation and Education, Employment and Social Policy, in the total amount of EUR 52 million, which will significantly contribute to fulfilment of key priorities in the aforementioned areas of relevant negotiating chapters.

A particular challenge that Montenegro, our institutions and structures dealing with IPA will face is the preparation

for the new financial perspective 2021-2027, i.e. for IPA III. An increase in pre-accession assistance has been announced - from the current EUR 12 billion to EUR 14.5 billion for the stated budgetary period, as well as a change in the method of financing, which will be shifted from country-specific funding to thematic funding.

Bearing in mind the existing and new challenges that IPA III will bring, taught by previous experience and lessons learned, we believe that we will successfully manage and prepare ourselves for what we are yet to face in the EU, which is the use of structural funds.



Eight projects for strengthening good neighbourly relations and for social and economic development of Montenegro and Albania

Authors: Irena Bošković, Miodrag Račeta and Nikola Đonović, Division for European Territorial Cooperation

Montenegro participates in nine cross-border and transnational cooperation programmes under the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance IPA II. Funds amounting EUR 160 million have been provided under bilateral and trilateral programmes (Bosnia and Herzegovina-Montenegro, Montenegro-Albania, Montenegro-Kosovo, Serbia-Montenegro, Albania-Italy-Montenegro and Croatia-Bosnia and Herzegovina-Montenegro). When it comes to transnational programmes, funds amounting EUR 231 million have been allocated for the Danube programme, of which EUR 19.8 million being allocated for the IPA beneficiaries, EUR 99.2 million for the Adriatic-Ionian Programme (of which EUR 15.7 million are IPA funds), while as regards the Mediterranean programme, a total of EUR 275.9 million has been provided, of which EUR 11 million being allocated for IPA beneficiaries.

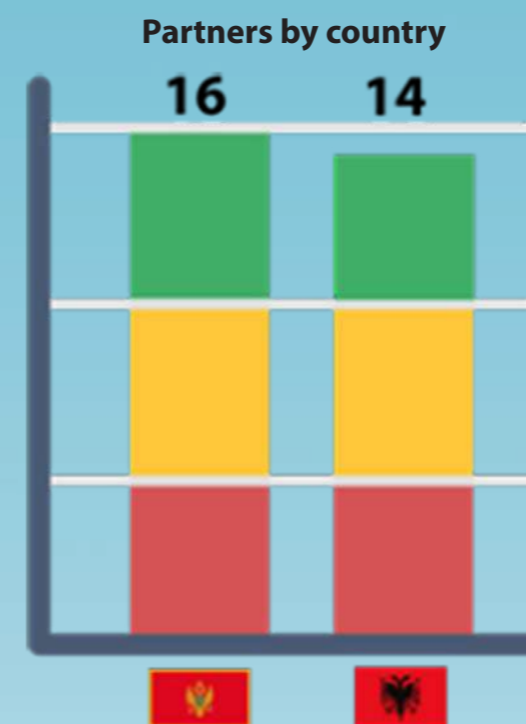
A total of 87 projects are currently being implemented under the aforementioned programmes. It is important to point out that Montenegro has the opportunity to implement bilateral programmes with Albania and Kosovo for the first time under indirect management.

As a result of the First Call for Proposals under the IPA Cross-Border Cooperation Programme Montenegro-Albania 2014-2020, eight projects with a total value of EUR 2.7 million will be implemented by 2021. Given that

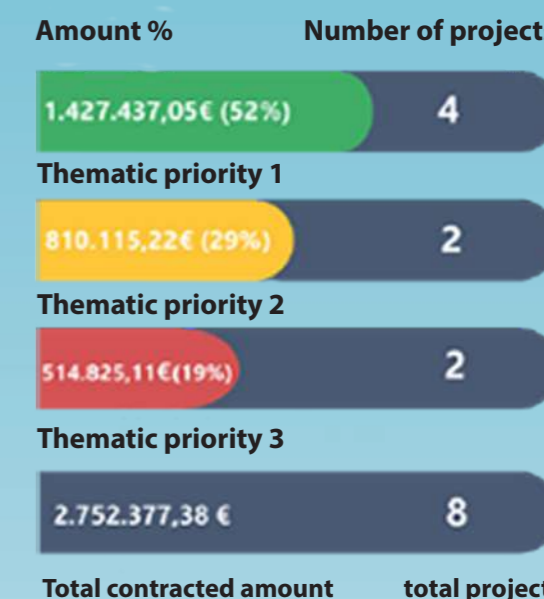
In practice, indirect management means that the Ministry of Finance of Montenegro, i.e. Directorate for Finance and Contracting of EU Assistance Funds, is responsible for announcing calls for proposals, selecting and concluding contracts with grant beneficiaries, payments, etc., thus assuming the responsibility for managing the pre-accession assistance funds under the IPA Cross-Border Cooperation Program Montenegro - Albania and Montenegro - Kosovo 2014-2020.

Montenegro has assumed the responsibility for managing the European Union funds under this programme, the contracting authority is the Directorate for Finance and Contracting of EU Assistance Funds (Ministry of Finance). These are the first projects to be implemented in this way under IPA II bilateral programmes, which is a confirmation of efforts made by the Operating Structure composed of Directorate for Finance and Contracting of EU Assistance Funds (Ministry of Finance) and the European Integration Office.

A total of 30 partners from both sides of the border will be involved in the implementation of the projects (14 NGOs, seven municipalities, seven public institutions and two educational institutions). Projects dealing with tourism will be used to



Contracted projects (by Thematic Priorities)



support the development of the tourism sector through promotion and valorisation of local gastronomy, improvement of conditions for child-friendly tourism, joint promotion and valorisation of the Christian archaeological heritage and preservation of cultural landscape of the region reflected in architecture.

Projects to be implemented under the Thematic Priority 2, dealing with environmental protection, will contribute to establishment of an efficient and integrated waste collection system, and waste collection and recycling activities will be organised. In addition, protection of people and target areas from danger, primarily from floods, will be improved, and activities aimed at raising awareness of disaster risk reduction will be carried out.

Employment-related projects will contribute to the employment of women, particularly of those coming from rural areas, using the agricultural potential of the two countries. Furthermore, project activities will make

it possible for the unemployed persons to access information and generate new ideas from the agricultural sector in Montenegro and Albania through training courses and procurement of equipment.

More information about projects can be found on the internet presentation of the IPA Cross-Border Cooperation Programme Montenegro - Albania 2014-2020: www.cbc-mne-alb.org.

Activities aimed at strengthening the capacities of beneficiaries of the First Call for Proposals under the IPA Cross-Border Cooperation Programme Montenegro - Albania 2014-2020 are underway, as well as planning of training courses for potential beneficiaries of the Second Call for Proposals. Evaluation of project proposals under the IPA Cross-Border Cooperation Programme Montenegro-Kosovo 2014-2020 is expected to be completed by September 2018, while the Second Call for Proposals under both programmes is planned to be announced by the end of the year.

What membership in the EU means for farmers

Fears of accession to the EU are unjustified, but competitiveness needs to be strengthened

Author: Biljana Matijašević, Daily Newspapers Vijesti

The opinion of interlocutors of Eurokaz magazine is that membership in the EU brings many benefits to farmers, but also challenges that they need to get familiar with in a timely manner. However, they believe that there's nothing to be afraid of because the traditional and in-many-ways specific Montenegrin production will not be called into question, and there will be no ban on the production of brandy (rakija), slaughtering of livestock on private farms and the like.

Former Croatian negotiator for the agriculture chapter and expert in that area, Ružica Gelo, states that the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy (EU) has been significantly simplified over the past few years and no longer has any restrictions in production since all product quotas have been abolished.

"When we take this into consideration, the fears are completely unjustified. However, the issue of competitiveness of national products when compared to products coming from other Member States deserves all attention and it is very important to address it as soon as possible", said Gelo.

According to her, membership in the EU brings many benefits, among which the most important ones are access to EU funds and the Union's single market.

"The Common Agricultural Policy is still the most generous EU policy providing for, through its two funds, a budget amounting to EUR 75 billion under the financial perspective 2014-2020 to help farmers' income, co-finance projects in the area agriculture and rural development, as well as to stabilise the agricultural products markets. Furthermore, entry into the EU implies not only abolition of customs duties, but also removal of all other obstacles, which leads to significantly simplified and cheaper exports", Gelo added.

When it comes to agriculture, she said that one of the basic problems in all countries in the region was inadequate structure of the agricultural sector.

"This structure-related problem can be best resolved by directing producers towards greater added value products and by organising them into producer organisations. EU funds can be used to finance the setting up of producer organisations, as well as their projects", Gelo said.

As regard Croatia, she reminded that negotiations on Chapter 11 were the one that started among the first and ended among the last.

"The period from the screening to provisional closing of this Chapter lasted about five and a half years. This happened due to many reasons. First of all, the acquis under Chapter 11 is really extensive and the agricultural sector is generally sensitive both to candidate countries and the Member States. After all, we also must not forget that significant amount of financial resources is intended for the new Member States", Gelo said, answering the question of why the chapters related to agriculture are the most difficult to negotiate.



Montenegro officially opened all three chapters in the area of agriculture in 2016 (11 – Agriculture and rural development, 12 – Food safety, veterinary and phytosanitary policy, 13 – Fisheries).

Member of the Negotiating Group for Chapters 11, 12 and 13, Radana Damjanović, stated that the work on meeting the benchmarks, which implied adoption of strategic documents and plans for alignment with the EU acquis in these areas, came before the opening of these chapters.

“When it comes to the pace of alignment with the acquis under these chapters, good results have been achieved, in accordance with the plans. It should be noted that the process of adoption of regulations goes in parallel with constant communication with all the entities involved in the process. Apart from education, producers are provided with financial support for approximation to EU standards, and they also have grants at disposal from the national budget and EU funds”, Damjanović said.

“At present, as she added, we are working on meeting the closing benchmarks with a view to closing the chapters”, she added.

As regards Chapter 11, the closing benchmark implies establishment of new administrative structures, such as the Paying Agency and the Integrated Administration and Control System, necessary for implementing measures under the Common Agricultural Policy in Montenegro as of the date of accession to the EU.

“As regards Chapter 12, we can say that the first benchmark for closing the chapter has been fulfilled because Montenegro submitted to the European Commission an approved national programme for the upgrading of establishments for products of animal origin, including establishments for animal by-products and a national programme for the use of non-compliant raw milk”, Damjanović added.

Fulfilment of the second benchmark and the third one is a complex process because, as she explained, it implies guarantees to be provided by Montenegro for the establishment of an EU-compliant system for official controls of live animals and animal products, including its funding, as well as guarantees when it comes to the setting up and development of relevant administrative structures, strengthening of administrative and infrastructure capacities in under this chapter.

According to her, the new Law on Marine Fisheries and Mariculture and the Law on Structural Measures, Market Regulation and State Aid in Fisheries and Aquaculture, along with relevant by-laws, are planned to be adopted 2018, all with a view to meeting one of the benchmarks for closing Chapter 13.

“Full alignment with the EU acquis covered by Chapter 13 will be achieved no later than the date of accession of Montenegro to the EU, but if Montenegro continues to advance in the alignment and application of the EU acquis in the area of fisheries, the negotiations on Chapter 13 may be provisionally closed when the EU determines that the final benchmarks have been met, i.e., when it determines that the aforementioned laws have been adopted and administrative capacities strengthened, particularly when it comes to inspection and control. By meeting these benchmarks, significant alignment with the EU acquis will be ensured. Furthermore, this will show that Montenegro is able to fully apply the principles of the Common Fisheries Policy after joining the EU”, Damjanović said.

She said that the EU agricultural policy was a complex policy, but she also said that it had been created to ensure stable income and a decent standard of living for producers.

“Funds used to finance agriculture constitute a significant part of the European budget (over 40%) and are intended, directly or indirectly, for producers. Our goal in the pre-accession period is to prepare producers to use these opportunities and to adapt to the rules”, Damjanović added.





According to her, the application of the European agricultural policy would not call into question the traditional and in-many-ways specific Montenegrin production.

“What is important is that the rules are respected and food safety and food quality requirements met. In this regard, producers are supported by the state and have substantial support from EU pre-accession funds. We are working on educating, informing and advising farmers so that they could improve production in an easier and faster way, and so that they could make better use of available grants”, Damjanović said.

She also believes that farmers should associate in order to improve their competitiveness, which is one of the prerequisites for efficient use of available pre-accession funds, but she also believes that they should also work on improving the quality of products.

“Despite the fact that production in Montenegro is fragmented and that the supply is limited in terms of quantity, I think that our products will find their place in the European market thanks to their quality and authenticity”, Damjanović added.

Representatives of the Montenegrin Chamber of Commerce stated that the benefits that the EU membership brings to farmers were improvement of living conditions in rural areas, which would ensure retention of young people in the countryside through greater employment opportunities, increase in income of farmers, restructuring and modernisation of farms, etc.

“Furthermore, membership opens up great opportunities for producers who have ideas, knowledge, innovativeness and skills, but it can also be a threat to those who do not know how to face challenges and competitiveness in a large market. Therefore, it is very important to get the producers acquainted with benefits of EU membership in good time, but also with the challenges and constraints that are an integral part of this policy”, Chamber’s representatives added.

For example, as they added, extension of wine-growing areas will not be allowed in the EU, except revitalisation of the existing ones, which means that efforts need to be made in the pre-accession period to increase the number of planted vine.

They believe that the unresolved property-related issues could prevent many small farmers, but also local authorities, from providing necessary resources for agriculture, local infrastructure and other projects that would contribute to rural development. Furthermore, export of food of animal origin will not be possible if establishments do not have an EU export number, i.e. if they do not meet strict standards in terms of food safety.

“However, it is necessary to eliminate some misleads when it comes to prohibition of production (for example, production of brandy (rakija), slaughtering of livestock on private farms), because these procedures will not be forbidden, except that these products must not be found on the market, but should be used in one’s own household. With its legislation, the EU does not ban this kind of food preparation for one’s own needs, but leaves it to its Member States

to resolve such issues by themselves, i.e. to regulate them by their relevant national legislation. That is why the fear that traditional pig slaughtering or production of brandy (rakija) will be forbidden when Montenegro joins the EU is completely unjustified, but it must be in line with the national regulations governing these areas”, Chamber’s representatives explained.

They also said that it was necessary to prepare all the participants in the food chain, both producers and consumers, for everything that they could face on the path towards the EU and help them cross that path in an easier way, i.e. teach them how to use the European funds for increasing competitiveness. They added that, among other things, it was necessary to introduce changes when it comes to the structure of production, organisation of farms, as well as management and conservation of resources.

The new EU policy is to Montenegrin producers’ advantage

IPARD funds for the Montenegrin agriculture amounting to EUR 39 million were approved at the end of 2017. Representatives of the Montenegrin Chamber of Commerce said that along with the national contribution and share of beneficiaries of the funds, IPARD would provide investments amounting EUR 85 million in the following four-year period. Together with other investments (IPARD like, MIDAS, ADMAS, Agrobudget), funds amounting to around EUR 250 million are expected to be invested in the development of agriculture and approximation to European standards.

Chamber’s representatives point out that the new EU Common Agricultural Policy 2014-2020 is in favour of Montenegrin producers because it recognises in particular “small farmers-small farms” that will enjoy better forms of support through a fixed amount of subsidies, regardless of the size of the property or the type of production. The advantage of “small farms” is that they will not have to fully comply with environmental protection standards and others that apply to “larger” producers. So-called “green payment” has also been introduced, which means that 30% of direct payments will relate to the fulfilment of requirements concerning environmental protection, animal welfare and plant health. Younger farmers and women will have the opportunity to get up to 25% more funds for the first 25 to 90 hectares. Furthermore, producer organisations will also receive additional funds in order to improve their market position.

To Europe without borders through Erasmus+ programme

Author: Bojana Milićević, Radio of Montenegro

In the last three years, under the Erasmus+ programme, 158 projects of international credit mobility for high education institutions from Montenegro were approved. Hundreds of students, dozens of professors and non-academic staff underwent advanced trainings in the faculties abroad. The opportunities for advanced trainings will be greater, and European funds will become more available after our country enters the European Union (EU).

When we mention Erasmus+, the first thing that comes to our mind is student exchange, but this programme offers more than that. It covers the fields of education, training, youth and sport for the period 2014-2020, and its value exceeds EUR 14.7 billion. The greatest opportunities are offered in the field of high education through projects for capacity building and international credit mobility.

In the period 2015-2017, as stated by the director of the National Office for the Erasmus+ programme, Vanja Drljević, Montenegro was approved EUR 3.9 million for mobility projects.

"The programme implies signing of bilateral agreements with universities across the EU, which provide for 1,223 mobility projects - 797 outgoing and 426 incoming mobility projects for students, teaching and non-academic staff. All three universities participate in these projects, particularly University of Montenegro (UCG), as the largest

high education institution gathering the largest number of students", Drljević stated.

The University of Montenegro has more than 70 contracts with high education institutions in the majority of Western Europe countries. As it was stated by Ana Dragutinović from the Office for International Cooperation of the University of Montenegro more than 250 students used benefits of the Erasmus+ programme.

"In this year alone, 110 students spent one or two semesters in some of partner faculties in EU countries, and used scholarship that covered travel and accommodation costs. Most of them went to Germany, Poland, France and Romania. The most interest for these programmes was expressed by the students of the faculties of economy, philology, law and political science, while the students of technical faculties are the least active. Outgoing mobility programmes are more popular since we don't have study programmes in English language. Therefore we had only 13 foreign students in Montenegro under the student exchange programme", Dragutinović stated.

Among the students who got the opportunity to live and study abroad was the student of the Faculty of Political Science Irena Gigović. She has been studying at the Humboldt University in Berlin for four months; she chose this university since it is one of the oldest and one of the best universities in Europe, and also to improve her German language skills.

"Their study system is substantially different than Montenegrin. Here, every lecture is based on reading and understanding of texts, usually articles from Cambridge, Oxford and Princeton. Active participation of students in discussions is the most important thing. The emphasis is put on development of critical thought, while memorizing a large number of information is less emphasized. However, the knowledge which our students come is vast and they are often among the best", Gigović stated.

She indicated that knowledge and education were not only benefits of the Erasmus+ programme.

"Berlin exceeded my expectations, everything is well organized, studying conditions are impeccable. The most beautiful thing brought by Erasmus story is friendships. It is amazing how many people from different sides of the world have in common when they discuss their culture and customs in more details. I am glad that now I have

friends on every continent. Such experience can be a milestone, therefore I warmly recommend to students to follow the competition announcements, collect the required papers and begin the unforgettable story", Gigović stated.

Drljević recalled that since the last year the Erasmus+ offers not only studying, but also practice for our students in the EU and vice versa.

"Now there is an opportunity to undergo practice from two to twelve months in a company, government institution or NGO in the EU, but also an opportunity for internship of foreign students in Montenegrin companies. Bearing in mind that this part of the programme was opened to countries of the Western Balkans in 2017, we are waiting for results of the first competition. In future, the emphasis will certainly be put on its promotion", Drljević stated.



Besides students, the Erasmus+ programme offers the opportunity for advanced training abroad to faculty employees as well – teaching staff, as well as non-academic staff. This opportunity was seized by 138 employees of the University of Montenegro.

During the current academic year, the Vice-Dean for international cooperation of the Faculty of Civil Engineering Biljana Šćepanović visited universities in Lisbon, Bratislava, Vig and Gljivice. She visited some of them as a guest professor and held lectures, while at some of them she attended training courses.

“Each of these visits is very important, both for me personally and for the University of Montenegro. I have the opportunity to apply the knowledge I obtained in science work and work with students, in administration, i.e. in any field of my work at the faculty. There is no need to note that such experiences build and improve us as persons, providing us with the opportunity to learn about conditions in different environment, different cultures and way of life”, stated Šćepanović.

Besides mobility, the Erasmus+ enables implementation of capacity building projects in high education. For that purpose, our country was approved EUR 1.9 million in the period 2015-2017. Montenegro currently participates in 12 such projects. They cover various fields, such as the law, medicine, agriculture or economy.

Drljević indicated that under capacity building projects our universities share the equal status with institutions in EU countries in the context of management, which means that they may be project coordinators. The benefits are multiple.



“They enable structural reforms in the sphere of high education, improvement of high institution management, improvement of support services, improvement of quality of the study programmes through development of teaching methodologies and curricula, modernisation of equipment etc. Contacts made with regional and European institutions surpass the framework of project activities, and continue to last through other forms of cooperation”, Drljević stated.

Eight Erasmus+ capacity building projects are currently implemented at the University of Montenegro.

“All of them are important projects, through which all segments of the University are improved. They refer to modernisation of curricula, development of entrepreneurial skills of students of technical faculties, support to students with disabilities who perform their work practice in neighboring countries, etc”, stated Ana Dragutinović from the Office for International Cooperation of the University of Montenegro.

The Faculty of Law implements coordination project titled CABUFAL, which refers to revision of curriculum, encouraging international cooperation and improvement of human resources. Project coordinator, Aneta Spaić, indicated that the opening of the Faculty of Law towards the region and Europe was very important.

“Our partners are universities in Germany, Slovenia, Croatia, FYR of Macedonia and Great Britain. Institutions involved in the project are the Judicial Council and Centre for Training in Judiciary and State Prosecution. The goal is to prepare the teaching staff for European disciplines of law studying and enable the students to respond to and fulfil the needs and requirements of the EU market”, Spaić stated.

Overall, the benefits of the Erasmus+ programme are multiple, both at the individual and institutional level, speakers for the magazine Eurokaz agreed.

“This programme provides the international visibility to the state university, establishment of a broad network of partnerships, publication of joint works, and contacts for cooperation in research projects. Furthermore, these projects make us constantly improve our work, teaching methods, plans and programmes in order to make them comparable with partner institutions”, Dragutinović stated.

Drljević thinks that the quality of high education has been improved. There are new methodologies, new technologies, student and teaching staff exchange, and there is almost no university unit that did not obtain the appropriate equipment under some of the Erasmus+ projects. The success itself, as indicated by Drljević, can be proven by the fact that the negotiating chapter related to education was one of the first chapters to be opened, and provisionally closed.

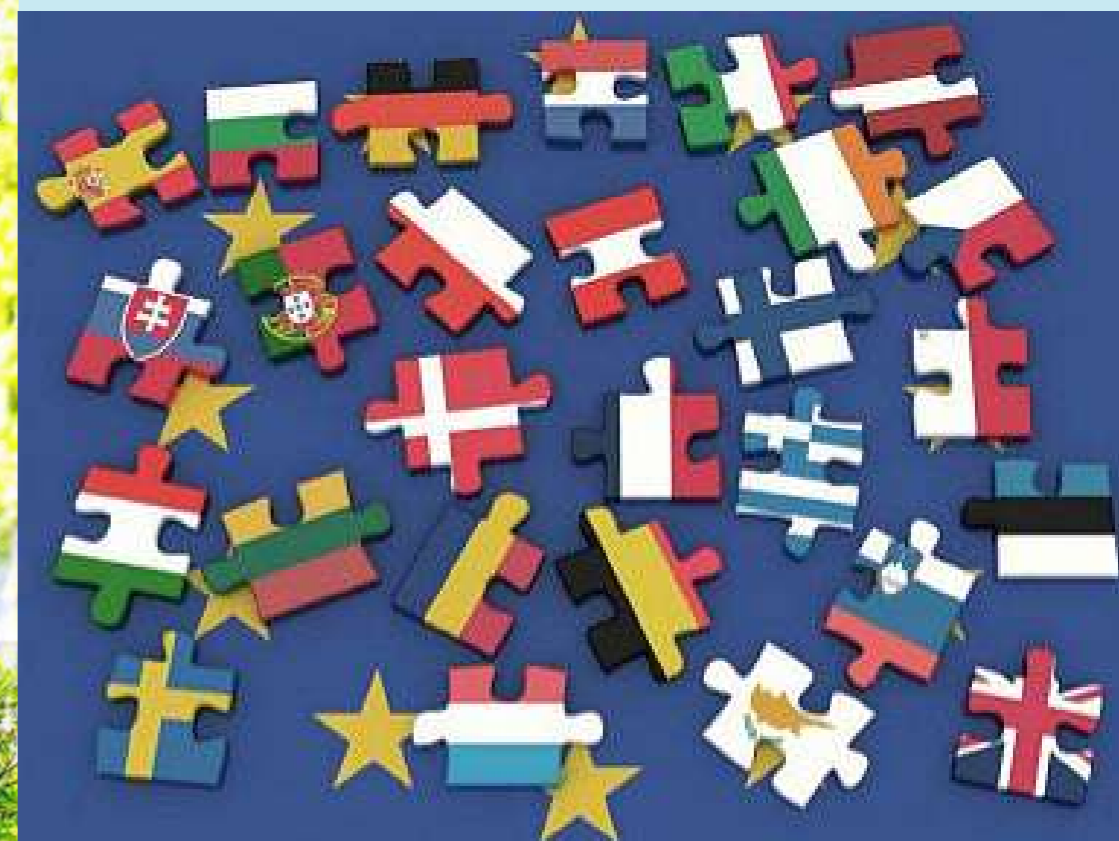
When Montenegro becomes a full-fledged member of the EU, the opportunities will be even greater and European funds more available. This is also confirmed by the recent decision of the European Commission,

by which the opportunity to study and undergo the advanced trainings through the Erasmus+ programme 2021-2027 will be given to 12 million instead of four million people worldwide. They will promote the activities that foster the knowledge and awareness on the EU, research in the fields of robotics and climate change, inclusion of people with reduced abilities. The budget will be doubled.

“That is the very essence of Europe without borders. Each cent invested into the Erasmus+ programme is investment into future”, concluded Jyrki Katainen, Vice-President of the Commission for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness.

Bearing in mind Montenegro’s aspirations towards the EU, Drljević stated that we should particularly insist on the use of the Jean Monnet programme.

“Activities in that component of the Erasmus+ programme are primarily aimed at the high education institutions dealing with study and analysis in the field of European integration. Countries involved in the accession process should use them more. All fields may be subject of the programme, even though priorities are the law, politicology and economy. I think that this programme would also contribute to better informing of citizens on the accession process. The programme is very interesting, but unfortunately it is not sufficiently used”, Drljević stated.



Civil sector ready to continue contributing to quality negotiating process

The fact that civil sector representatives make up a third of the negotiating structure of Montenegro, which has more than 1,400 people, speaks best when it comes to the role of the civil sector in the reform of the Montenegrin society. Representatives of non-governmental organisations Green Home, Institut alternativa (Institute Alternative), Politikon Network and the Centre for Development of Non-Governmental Organisations stated their views about the conditions under which Montenegro is negotiating with the European Union, which have changed as compared to the countries that had previously joined the EU, and spoke about their role in the next stage of the negotiations. Here are their statements.



Jelena Marojević Galić, Green Home:

Montenegro's accession to the European community implies inclusion of the entire society and is, above all, a big chance for creating better conditions and new opportunities for Montenegrin citizens and our country through a comprehensive reform and adoption of EU values. The conditions under which Montenegro is negotiating have changed as compared to the practice of previous enlargements, but this should not be seen as an obstacle or an aggravating circumstance. Namely, the dynamics and quality of the reform, which will enable substantial change of the Montenegrin society, are crucial for the success of the integration process. This means that we should avoid what is often presented to the public, i.e. measuring the success of the process of association with the European family by the number of opened or closed chapters, deadlines or by the percentage of benchmarks that have been met. As a society, we have to focus on the fact that measurable results in practice that will have a positive impact on citizens, their legal and social security and, finally, quality of living in Montenegro, will be achieved through instituti

on building, improvement of legislative framework and fulfilment of political criteria.

In cooperation with its partners, Green Home has initiated and formed Koalicija 27 (Coalition 27) as an open platform for the joint action of 20 civil society organisations in the process of European integration in the area of environmental protection and climate change in Montenegro. The aim of this structure is to contribute to the quality, transparency and swift as possible fulfilment of EU requirements in the negotiating chapter 27 through active monitoring of the process of alignment and of application of those Montenegro's policies and regulations that have been aligned with EU acquis covering the area of environment and climate change Through joint action of civil society organisations in the monitoring, advocacy and promotion of the EU acquis in the area of environment, the civil sector will make a significant contribution in to the quality of the negotiation process and its transparency in the upcoming period and, in the long run, to the capacity building of institutions taking care of the environment.

Dina Bajramspahić, Institut Alternativa (IA):

It is enormously important to the Montenegrin citizens to use the negotiation process to the fullest extent possible for substantial, not superficial reforms, and therefore, I see the tightening of conditions as something positive. What can be learned from experiences of those countries that have joined the EU in several recent waves of enlargement is that political elites and administration get tired and sated after joining the EU, and then they become much less attentive when it comes to democratic standards. What reforms should lead to the situation where the new way of functioning of institutions becomes a new "natural" state rather than forced acting for European Commission's statistics. We are still far from such a functioning and the rule of law.

The participation of civil society in working groups has been deprived of sense to the largest possible extent. For example, in the Working Group for the negotiating chapter 23, of which I am a member, the entire process has been brought down to mere marking of what has been implemented/not implemented without analysing the problems in the areas concerned. Members coming from NGOs do not even have access to relevant documents. For this reason, on behalf of IA, I put forward 4 requests for the next stage at the meeting with the Chief Negotiator, based on which we will see whether there is a real willingness to give NGOs a chance to contribute to the negotiation process. This initiative implies:

- start working on revision of the Action Plans for Chapters 23 and 24 because temporary benchmarks in these chapters will not be met by implementing the remaining activities. This proposal was brought forward by the IA a year ago and time has been unnecessarily wasted on making no progress/getting nowhere,
- publishing a Dynamic plan of work on interim and closing benchmarks in EU-Montenegro negotiating chapters,

- publishing minutes from all meetings of every working group dealing with negotiating chapters,
- that the negotiating structure should show more flexibility for cooperation and less formalism, and that it should provide another, additional mechanism for participation of NGOs in the working groups, as an observer, and not as a full-fledged member. For example, there are currently no NGO representatives in the Working Group for Chapter 24 although there are many organisations that could, if necessary, contribute to certain issues covered by this chapter



Jovana Marović, Politikon network:

The new EU approach has been designed in a way to ensure a high level of democratisation in the candidate countries through the monitoring of reforms over a longer period of time. The EU has chosen to open the most demanding chapters at the very beginning of negotiations with Montenegro due to negative experiences it had in the previous waves of enlargement, but also because of the state of play when it comes to democracy and the rule of law in Montenegro and other countries in the region. However, six years have passed since Montenegro started negotiating with the EU and the results achieved during that period are very limited, which requires new instruments from the EU level, primarily for monitoring the activities that the countries are undertaking and for reporting about them. The European Commission has announced new mechanisms in a credible enlargement strategy, but they have yet to be designed and developed in practice. Furthermore, quality reforms require commitment from both sides. The

Montenegrin government is only rhetorically committed – in practice, it makes controversial decisions and does not care about the laws.

The role of civil society is to point to things that can lead to improvement public policies and practices. Thus, it will continue to influence the strengthening of democracy and the rule of law by bringing forward its sustainable proposals. Until now, the involvement of civil society organisations in the process of public policy-making has been stopped by formal observance of procedures, with the Government ignoring the proposed solutions, regardless of their quality. Therefore, this is a standard relationship between the Government and civil society, regardless of the stage of the integration process, in which civil society organisations are carrying out their mission, while as regards the Government and the ruling party, not only have they not provided meaningful participation of civil society in the decision-making process, but they are often targeting it and putting it in a negative context.

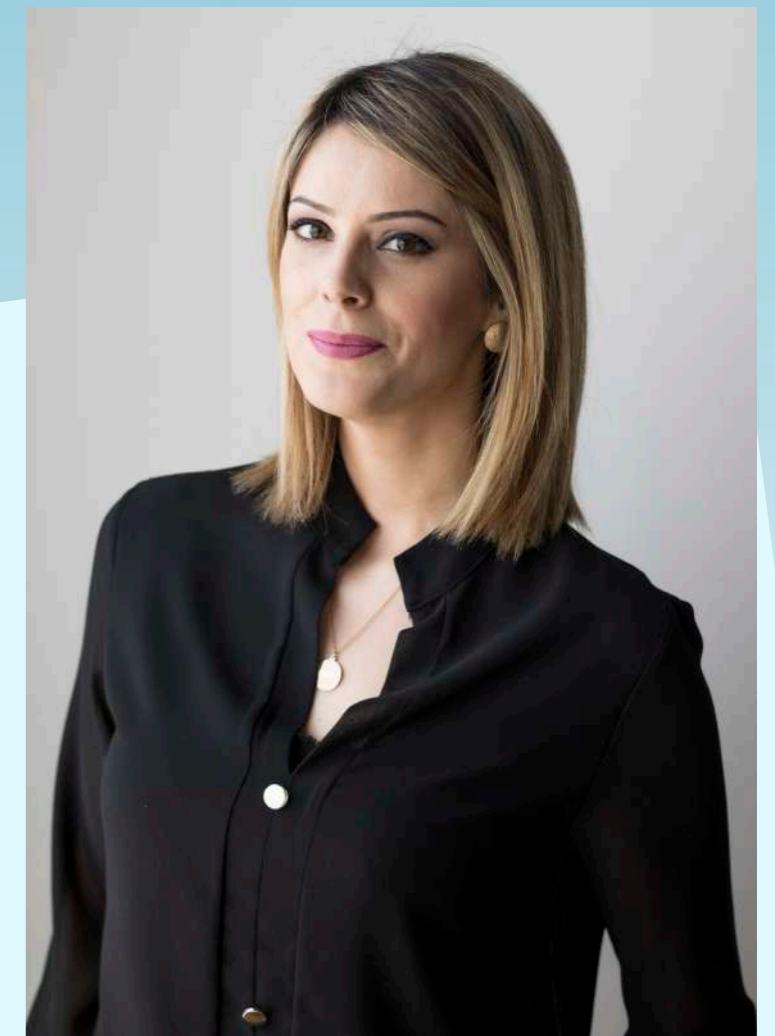


Ana Novaković, Centre for Development of Non-Governmental Organisations

At some time past, the non-governmental sector strongly supported the European Commission's decision to start the negotiation process with Montenegro by opening Chapters 23 and 24. We believed that the opening of these chapters at the very beginning would provide faster and more efficient reforms in key areas such as the judiciary, fight against corruption, human rights, justice and security. Today, six years later, I am of the opinion that this different condition set in relation to Montenegro was not enough to encourage the Government to devote special attention to these areas and to achieve concrete results. Therefore, in the end, the quality of reforms depends largely on the political will of the state conducting negotiations, as well as on the capacity to adequately implement them.

Participation of NGO representatives in working groups for negotiating chapters made great sense at the beginning of this process, particularly when it comes to the drafting of action plans, when representatives of NGOs could influence their contents, thus making it possible for some important areas to be incorporated into the future benchmarks for certain chapters. In addition, thanks to the representatives of NGOs and their requirements, the transparency of the process has improved. Furthermore, participation of NGO representatives in working groups was an excellent opportunity for the non-governmental sector to further build capacities in the areas concerned, taking into account the complexity of the EU acquis, as well the complexity of the integration process in general.

As regards the next stage of the negotiation process, I mostly believe that NGOs' role will imply independent monitoring of implementation of reforms in all areas, creation of alternative reports and continuous dissemination of information to the public in order to ensure the transparency of the process and to broaden understanding of substantial impact of integration on the everyday life of citizens.





Anđela Radovanović, Association of Youth with Disabilities of Montenegro

We see the changed conditions as lessons that the European Union learned in the past and now it doesn't want to repeat mistakes with the new candidate countries, and possibly particularly when it comes to the Balkan countries, burdened with many historical circumstances, political and social context. Due to all of the aforementioned, we see the changed or more stringent conditions for negotiations as a good opportunity for Montenegro – opportunity for it to strengthen its democratic capacities and genuine reforms that will really contribute to the advancement of the Montenegrin society. Only substantial reforms that are regularly and thoroughly implemented can contribute to quality membership. We must be aware that we are the ones who need reforms, i.e. that we must implement them for our own benefit, not for the EU, nor for any of its Member States.

The role that civil society plays in the negotiating process is very important, taking into account the role of the corrective factor and the link they created between the target groups they deal with and whose interests they represent, regardless of whether representatives of civil society organisations are formally involved in the work of negotiating groups or are monitoring the process from the “outside”. This role should not be marginalised, but should be strengthened in the upcoming period through a structural dialogue that will be oriented towards reforms and implementation of recommendations put forward by the European Commission. Furthermore, what should be shown through concrete actions is that the opinion of civil society organisations is taken into account during the negotiation process. Certainly, the civil sector should encourage the process by showing that not only political structures will benefit from membership in the EU, but each and every individual. I would also add that, by considering the overall process, the involvement of organisations of people with disabilities is extremely important, taking into account exclusion and frequent isolation of this social group and the fact that the rights of persons with disabilities are addressed through a whole series of different chapters. In this regard, we believe that reforms in all sectors will contribute to this matter, ensuring equal opportunities for people with disabilities.

Awards to journalists and talented students

The importance of the role of the media in the accession of Montenegro to the European Union was discussed during the ceremony at which awards were presented to Montenegrin journalists who, with their various, interesting and information-providing stories, got the citizens acquainted with the process of accession to the EU and with benefits that membership in the European Union brings.

Six Montenegrin journalists were awarded under two competitions, which were organised in accordance with the Strategy for informing the public about accession of Montenegro to the EU 2014-2018 under the project “EU4ME”, with a view to encouraging the media in Montenegro to deal more closely with the process of European integration. The awarded journalists proved to be able to cope with their tasks: they have succeeded in spreading messages regarding common European values among Montenegrin citizens, they have converted abstract concepts into vivid examples and have showed how people's lives can change thanks to the accession process and EU support.

Under the competition entitled “Europe for Me”, the following journalists were awarded: Borislav Višnjić (journalist of the RTCG portal), Bojana Komnenić (Radio Antena M) and Darvin Murić (journalist of independent daily newspapers Vijesti). Under the competition called “Europe through the lens”, journalist of TV channel Prva - Jelena Gardović, journalist of RTCG - Darko Bulatović, and journalist of the TV channel Vijesti - Danijela Lasica, won the award

for the best video report outlining concrete results of the EU accession process and the impact on everyday life of citizens.

Being aware of the responsibilities they have in the process of accession of Montenegro to the EU and their obligation to clearly and accurately explain to citizens the benefits of EU membership, journalists are determined to promote successful examples and to give vividness to the pages of the EU acquis.

Furthermore, students of Montenegrin primary and secondary schools gladly responded to the invitation to express their interest and attitude about the European Union, the values that the community inherited, as well as about the process of accession of Montenegro to the EU, in a way most suitable for their ages.

Ena Šajkić, Evgenija Popović and Vasilisa Minić are authors of the best literary and art works that were collected during the competition for primary and secondary school students called “Europe and Me”. Through their works, Ena, Evgenija and Vasilisa have shown that they already share the same values with EU citizens - they see Europe as a community built on elements of peace, they have painted the importance of hard work and persistence, and have described the idea of tolerance in the EU in a wonderful way. Their works, but also the works of their friends, should serve as a reminder that we should talk to them about the EU on a daily basis, so that future EU citizens would seek to obtain new information and develop their own vision of the importance of European democratic society.



Celebrating Europe Month

On 9 May, the European Integration Office and the ME4EU project team marked the Europe Day, celebrating peace, freedom, unity, democracy, prosperity and common European values. Marking of the Europe Day and Europe Month began already at the end of April, when around 40 students from all universities in Montenegro met with ministers of economy, education and sports, Dragica Sekulić, Damir Šehović and Nikola Janović. At the “Ask the Minister” forum, issues of importance for education and professional development of university students were discussed.

Young people were in focus throughout the entire campaign, so representatives of ministries of sports, education and economy, Nenad Koprivica, Mubera Kurpejović and Ivana Janković responded to their numerous questions on radio shows of the student radio Krš. The campaign was continued during the first days of May, when employees of the European Integration Office spoke to citizens about the benefits of membership of Montenegro in the EU on several locations in Podgorica. Furthermore, citizens were also given the opportunity to be photographed next to the physical model of the logo “ME4EU”. The campaign was supported by many public figures, such as prominent media representatives, athletes and artists.





