

## News by SELDI members

### Three SELDI Members Awarded Five Stars from Transparify

In the 2016 [Transparify](#) ranking, three SELDI Members were awarded five stars for a second time: the Center for the Study of Democracy, Bulgaria, the Center for Democratic Transition (CDT), Montenegro and Institute Alternative (IA), Montenegro. Transparify, a non-profit initiative based in Georgia (Caucasus), provides the first-ever global rating of the financial transparency of 200 major think tanks in 47 countries. In doing so, the CSOs are able to be highlighted internationally as organisations that take pride in disclosing information. **Transparify and SELDI, 1 July 2016.**

### Bribery Remains Widespread in Bosnia and Herzegovina - The Real Problem is High-Level Political Corruption



Photo: CIN

SELDI's partner, the Center for Investigative Reporting (CIN), in collaboration with local partnership organisations, held the conference "Civil Society for Good Governance" in Sarajevo on 28 June 2016, to present the key findings of the *2016 SELDI Corruption Monitoring System*. The participants noted the negative trend of increasing corruption perception. Respondents identified political leaders as the most corrupt category, followed closely by the representatives of executive power. Corruption pressure on citizens has also been on the rise. The participants concluded that fighting high-level corruption should be a priority, with the necessary adequately staffed and independent judiciaries. **CIN, 28 June 2016.**

### SELDI Partner TEPAV Tried to Push forward Judicial Reform in an Increasingly Complicated Situation in Turkey



Photo: TEPAV

On 29 June 2016, SELDI's partner, the Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey (TEPAV), organised a meeting, attended by members of the higher judiciary, representatives of public institutions and embassies, lawyers and academics, in order to discuss the new bill that aims at the reorganisation of the Court of Cassation and the Council of State. Requested changes in the higher judiciary were discussed from different perspectives and the possible implications of the regulations were analysed. Two especially important regulations in the bill were discussed during the meeting: the limitation of the terms of office of the Court of Cassation's and the Council of State's members to twelve years and the termination of the membership of existing members. **TEPAV, 29 June 2016.**

### Civil Society Organisations' Role in the Global Development of the Western Balkans



Photo: MCIC

On 21-22 June 2016 SELDI's partner, Macedonian Center for International Cooperation (MCIC), participated with other civil society organisations in the conference *Civil Society Organisations in the Western Balkans for Global Development*, organised by the Balkan Network for Civil Society Development (BCSDN). The participants discussed the contributions and cooperation of civil society organisations for development assistance and gained knowledge and experience from the examples of Romania and Slovenia. They were introduced to the *European Consensus on Development*. **MCIC, 29 June 2016.**

### **CIN Databases Among Five Best World Projects**

The digital databases of the Center for Investigative Reporting (CIN) in Sarajevo have been declared as one of the five best digital projects in the category of online media and journalism by the World Summit Awards, held by the United Nations. CIN's databases about [politicians' property holdings](#), [public procurement](#) and [energy resources](#) of Bosnia and Herzegovina have been acknowledged at the world level for its quality among nearly 400 submissions from 86 countries. **CIN, 08 July 2016.**

### **Institute Alternativa Presented Research Findings on Freedom of Assembly in Montenegro**

Representatives from SELDI's partner Institute Alternativa (IA) participated in an Expert Conference on Freedom of Assembly in the Western Balkans, held on 21-22 June, 2016 in Skopje, and organised by the European Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ECNL). Organisations in attendance presented findings, and formulated and presented recommendations for legal and institutional improvement. IA outlined deficiencies in current legal solutions, while also evaluating Montenegro's compliance with international standards. The problems identified by IA included the duties and responsibilities of organisers of public gatherings with strict fine policy, overlapping responsibilities of national and local authorities, as well as the lack of proactiveness of key institutions in this area. **Institute Alternativa, 22 June 2016.**

### **Joint Initiative of the Civil Society for Urgent Democratic Reforms in Macedonia**

SELDI's partner Institute for Democracy "Societas Civilis" Skopje (IDSCS) and a group of civil society organisations and experts prepared a *Blueprint for Urgent Democratic Reforms* with the aim to provide an incentive, guidelines and detailed actions necessary for restoring the democratic standards and values in Macedonia. The objective of the document is to contribute towards creating the necessary conditions for free, fair and credible elections, by proposing measures for the implementation of key reform priorities. IDSCS, through the publishing of this document, calls upon the citizens, civil society organisations and movements, and political parties to support the initiative and have their own input for upgrading the document. **IDSCS, 08 July 2016.**

### **Award-Winning Idea at the Garage 48 Hackathon in Bucharest: Map the State**



Photo: SAR

On 17-19 June 2016 Technohub hosted the "Digitalising Governance" hackathon in order to develop and promote electronic applications relevant to good governance. Romanian Academic Society (SAR) researcher and SELDI partner Andrei Macsut was part of the team that won second prize with the idea for *Map the State*. The application idea intends to alleviate public confusion about what institutions provide the public services for citizens' needs. This online application would collect data about public institutions from user input, centralise it into a database, and compile a visual representation in the form of an organisation chart that displays the necessary information. The example given for use of this application involved a citizen wanting to denounce a case of corruption, but not knowing which of the anti-corruption institutions in Romania had the competence to handle their case, an issue demonstrably solved through a simple keyword search on their application. **SAR, 07 July 2016.**

### **National Forum for Exchange of Experience about Open Government**



Photo: Riinvest Institute

On 30 June 2016, SELDI's partner Riinvest Institute, in cooperation with the Kosovo Foundation for Open Society held a forum in Pristina to discuss open government under the project *Advocacy for Open Governance*. The goal was to encourage the governments of Kosovo and other neighbouring countries to become more transparent, accountable, innovative and in-step with technology, and to promote citizen involvement in policy-making. Experts from the region shared their experiences about the activities of the Partnership for Open Governance, as well as experiences from commitments in both government and civil society, in an effort to improve the structures and mechanisms for transparency, accountability, and active citizen participation. **Riinvest Institute, 30 June 2016.**

## Anti-Corruption News from the SEE Region

### **Albanian Parliament Passes Judiciary Reform Key to EU Accession**

Albania's governing and opposition parties passed a judicial reform package on 21 July 2016, meeting a condition of the European Union for accession talks. The constitutional package revamping the judiciary received unanimous approval, seen as crucial to giving the reform a solid foundation. The EU said that the reform would give citizens an "accountable, independent and transparent" judiciary and contribute to the fight against organised crime and corruption. The passage of the reform package was seen as remarkable considering that some Albanian leaders, who in the past have escaped corruption convictions on technicalities from friendly judges, could be threatened by an independent judiciary. **RAI, 22 July 2016.**

### **Bosnia and Herzegovina: Court Rules Banking Agency Illegally Withheld Data**

The district court in the city of Banja Luka found that the Banking Agency of Republika Srpska, which oversees financial institutions in the country's Serb sub-state, had improperly refused to comply with a request from Transparency International for external auditors' reports on Banka Srpske, which had its license revoked by the agency in 2015. The agency had earlier refused the request on the grounds that the information was a "trade secret". Irregularities in Republika Srpska's banking sector have been a key target of the region's opposition, which accuse the government of regional president Milorad Dodik of turning a blind eye to abuses. **RAI, 06 July 2016.**

### **Bulgarian MPs Pass Revised Anti-Corruption Bill**

Bulgarian lawmakers have overwhelmingly adopted draft legislation that aims at fighting high level graft. The bill has been backed on a first reading by a majority of 130-28, with 13 abstentions. If approved further, it will give way to a new anti-graft body, with the text establishing anti-corruption mechanisms and sets rules and procedures with regard to the forfeiture of illegally acquired assets. New rules on the declaration of assets by officials are also included in the bill. A text introducing the option to submit anonymous anti-corruption alerts to authorities was considered to be one of the most controversial issues. **RAI, 30 June 2016.**

### **Romania: Controversial Investor, Former Union Leader Sentenced to Jail for Embezzlement**

Sorin Ovidiu Vantu, one of the most controversial Romanian investors, and Liviu Luca, the former OMV Petrom union leader, were sentenced to six years in jail for embezzlement and money laundering. The two were found guilty of fraudulent misuse of some EUR 83.5 million that belonged to Petromservice, a company that used to provide services for OMV Petrom, the biggest oil and gas group in Romania. Their accomplices were also sent to jail, with the group ordered to pay some EUR 36.4 million worth of compensations to PSV Company (the former Petromservice). The Bucharest Court of Appeal's sentence is final. **RAI, 22 July 2016.**

## Upcoming Events

### **Multi-stakeholder Workshop on UNCAC and its Review Mechanism – Austria**

The Multi-stakeholder workshop to Strengthen Civil Society Capacity on the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) and its review mechanism will take place at the International Anti-corruption Academy, located near to Vienna in Austria. **UNCAC, 19-22 September 2016, Vienna.**

## Reports and Analyses

### **Corruption Assessment Report Albania 2016**

SELDI's partner, the Albanian Center for Economic Research, undertook in the beginning of 2016 a national survey with 1,000 respondents across Albania, which tracked citizens experience with corruption pressure and involvement, and their perceptions of the level of corruption and anticorruption efforts. The Corruption Monitoring System results for Albania 2016 indicate that almost one in two Albanian adult citizens admit to being demanded directly or indirectly to bribe public officials (49.6 %). This shows increase of the corruption pressure from public officials on citizens compared to

2014 of around 5 percentage points. The groups that citizens perceive as the most corrupt are judges, customs officials, public officials, political parties and political leaders. **SELDI, 25 July 2016.**

### Freedom of Assembly in Montenegro

SELDI's partner Institute Alternativa (IA) produced a study, conducted as a part of the regional project "The Western Balkans Assembly Monitor" and managed by the European Center for Not-For-Profit Law, with the goal of increasing the understanding of how the right to freedom of (peaceful) assembly is applied and how it can be protected. The study found that while Montenegrin legislation is mostly in compliance with international standards, legislators have failed to address certain issues. The issues range from overlapping competencies of authorities on the national and local level, rough fine policy to the organisers of assemblies, to lack of facilitation by the Ministry of Interior, as the state authority in this area, as well as repressive policing. The study emphasises recommendations to be implemented in order to reduce or eliminate shortcomings of legal framework and current practices of the responsible authorities. **IA, 07 July 2016.**

### The Western Balkans' Berlin Process: A New Impulse for Regional Cooperation

This briefing by the Directorate-General European Parliamentary Research Service (DG EPRS) is outlining the development and significance of the Berlin Process. Consisting of yearly high-level meetings between Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia, and several EU member states between 2014 and 2018, the process aims to reaffirm the region's EU perspective by improving cooperation and economic stability within it. It has brought a new perspective and impetus to the enlargement process, along with a positive momentum for regional cooperation, especially through projects that are expected to have an economic and social impact that will complement the EU membership ambitions of the individual countries. **DG EPRS, 07 July 2016.**

### Even Farther Union: Balkans and the Brexit

Freedom House published a brief as a part of the *Nations in Transit* series, examining how Brexit will damage the EU's influence on the develop of democracy in the region. The brief states that the Western Balkans are not only losing a key advocate for enlargement, but Brexit will consume the EU's policy and bureaucratic apparatuses for years and reduce the interest in enlargement. Brexit will also greatly diminish the pull of accession and thus the impetus for democratic reforms in the region. The briefing also describes three scenarios for how Brexit might affect the Western Balkans. **Freedom House, June 2016.**

### Breaking the Cycle? How (not) to Use Political Finance Regulations to Counter Public Procurement Corruption

This paper by the Government Transparency Institute tests whether political financing regulations can contribute to controlling corruption in public procurement. It utilises official micro-level data on almost 3 million contracts awarded across 29 European countries in 2009-2014 to measure the risk of high-level institutionalised corruption using novel proxy indicators. It also directly measures legislation regulating political finances by coding national laws in the period. The findings indicate that introducing additional political financing regulations do not have a measurable negative impact on public procurement risks, and in fact, have a positive observed effect in most models. **Government Transparency Institute, 13 June 2016.**

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