

## News by SELDI members

### **Recurring Corruption Patterns in 2014 - 2016 are Cause for Concern in Albania: Presentation of the 2016 SELDI Corruption Monitoring System Results**



Photo: ACER

On 12 May 2016 SELDI's partners, the Albanian Centre for Economic Research (ACER) and House of Europe, in cooperation with the Center for the Study of Democracy, Sofia presented the results of the *SELDI Corruption Monitoring System in Albania 2016*, at a policy conference held in Tirana. The results for Albania 2016 indicate that almost one in every two Albanian adult citizens is being demanded directly or indirectly to bribe public officials (49.6 %) – a worsening of around 5 percentage points compared to the study from 2014. 38.2% succumbed to the pressure, while 1.6% of the citizens initiated the transaction themselves. Mr Zef Preci, Executive Director of ACER, welcomed the noticeable increased public support for the judicial reform in the country, however at the same time he expressed concerns about the recurring corruption patterns and invited the CSOs to engage more actively. **ACER, 12 May 2016**

### **The 2016 SELDI Corruption Monitoring System Shows declining Corruption Pressure in Serbia**



Photo: CLDS

On 12 May 2016, the Center for Liberal-Democratic Studies (CLDS), a SELDI member, presented and discussed a new report on the trends of corruption in Serbia, based on a survey conducted in February 2016. The key research findings were presented by Professor Boris Begovic from CLDS. Almost 20% of Serbian citizens acknowledged to be, directly or indirectly, asked to pay bribe to public officials. Nonetheless, compared to 2014, data shows improvement of close to 10 percentage points, indicating that corruption pressure of public officials to citizens is declining. These findings are in line with the long-term downward trend, observed since 2001. **CLDS, 12 May 2016.**



Photo: CDT

### **Corruption is Declining, but Still Widespread in Montenegro: 2016 SELDI Corruption Survey Results**

SELDI's partners Center for Democratic Transition (CDT) and Institute Alternativa presented the results from the *2016 SELDI Corruption Monitoring System* and shared a draft version of a program for increasing efforts to ensure good governance, strengthen anti-corruption efforts, and enhance the civil society's role in Montenegro by 2020. The key findings from SELDI's survey demonstrated that corruption is widespread in Montenegro, and [while every fifth citizen gave a bribe, every fourth citizen was asked to give a bribe](#). The experts and professionals, attending the event, concluded that broad societal changes and increasing people's trust in the country's institutions are the factors needed to counter corruption. **SELDI, 14 April 2016.**

### **Institute Alternativa Assesses Montenegro's Fight against Corruption after the Start of EU Accession Negotiations**

In assessing Montenegro's progress in accomplishing the tasks required for EU accession, Institute Alternativa's associate Jovana Marovic points out to the successes and failures in the fight against grand corruption. According to her, the Montenegrin administration failed to: assure

the Agency for Prevention of Corruption's complete transparency and independence; to strengthen the control system for public procurements, the majority of which currently remain uncontrolled; to include key corruption problems and risks in Montenegro's future strategic framework; to establish a system for monitoring corruption cases. On the other hand, the Montenegrin Special Prosecution has managed to produce positive results since its establishment last year. **Institute Alternativa, 18 April 2016.**

### **Institute Alternativa Proposes Improvements for Montenegro's Annual Report on Public Procurement**

Representatives of IA met with the Assistant Director of Public Procurement Administration (PPA) to discuss improvements and identify mistakes in the *Annual Report on Public Procurement 2015* that is to be published on 31 May 2016. The recommendations were based on IA's influential 2015 report [Public Procurement in Montenegro: Corruption Within the Law](#). Most importantly, the Institute proposes the PPA: to publish the total number of tenders where only one bid is submitted; to ensure that individual reports on public procurement are submitted in a machine-readable form, which would respectively enable automatic processing of the data; to prescribe instructions to contracting authorities that publish incorrect data; to publicize more information about the results and challenges of implementing the public procurements. **Institute Alternativa, 21 April 2016.**



### **How to achieve good governance? Institute Alternativa Discusses the Public Administration Reform**

Institute Alternativa, along with two NGOs, the Centre for Investigative Journalism Podgorica, and members of the Ministry of Interior, discussed the future Public Administration Reform Strategy, which is expected to impact considerably the lives of Montenegro's citizens and is of great importance in the newest EU Enlargement Strategy. The participants defined indicators for reform development that would create a service-oriented public administration and ways for the civil society to monitor the public administration reform in the most efficient way. **Institute Alternativa, 6 April 2016.**

### **Institute for Democracy in Skopje Proposed Solutions to Resolve the Political Crisis in Macedonia**

SELDI's partner IDSCS in Skopje appealed to representatives of the international community, to the President of FYROM and political leaders to join efforts in resolving the political crisis in the country. The Institute put forward a set of proposals to enable a meaningful implementation of all reforms, in particular, those to organize fair and credible electoral process. The Institute demanded the President of FYROM to [withdraw the act](#) for pardoning officials subjected to investigations on crimes related to abuse of office and power since this renders the combat against corruption inefficient and useless. In the proposal, the IDSCS also supported increasing the Public Prosecutor's independence, enhancing the civil society's role in the decision-making process, and establishing a transitional government with the sole purpose of implementing urgent reforms supported by the European Commission. **IDSCS, 20 April 2016.**

### **Bosnia and Herzegovina: Public Procurement Contracts for 2015 Amount to More Than 1 Billion KM**

The Center for Investigative Reporting estimates that for last year, government agencies and public institutions in BiH spent at least 1.1 billion KM in public procurement. CIN's database that includes records on all public procurements between 2011 and 2015 identifies the biggest contractors as the ones involved in the energy sector. Out of 647 public institutions, the BiH Power Utility is the largest spender for 2015. Moreover, government agencies and other public bodies spent more than 25 million KM on fuel and close to 8 million KM on purchasing vehicles and expensive SUVs. **CIN, 12 April 2016.**

### **49 People Detained in Anti-Corruption Sweep in Serbia**

On 15 April 2016, the Serbian police arrested officials from the Ministry of Finance and the tax administration, individuals involved in state-owned enterprises in the energy and road infrastructure sector, as well as more than ten police officers, all suspected to have been involved in abuse of office and corruption. It is estimated that since 2007 the group's alleged corruption activities amount to 7.6 million euros. This is the second biggest crackdown on corruption [since March](#). The sweep comes before the April 24 Serbian parliamentary elections. **RAI, 15 April 2016.**

### **Freedom House Report: Macedonia's Democracy Scores Worst in the Western Balkans Since 2010**

According to the [new 'Nations in Transit' 2016 report](#) by the US-based watchdog organization Freedom House, Macedonia experienced the sharpest decline in its democracy score due to the recent leaked recordings scandal that exposed electoral fraud, high-level corruption, and other criminal activities, ultimately causing a [renewed political crisis](#) in the Balkan country. According to the report, corruption is widespread in the entire region, with clear evidence of state capture in Serbia and Montenegro. The Montenegrin administration also failed to make progress towards a genuinely independent anti-corruption bodies and transparency in the public procurement procedures. Kosovo, despite being [the worst performer in the region](#) characterized as "semi-consolidated authoritarian regime", made incremental progress in combating corruption and improving media independence. Albania and Croatia maintained the same score as last year. **SeeNews, 12 April 2016.**

### **Croatia 16th in Bribery, Corruption, and Fraud in Business Transactions**

A [new study](#) by the consultancy company Ernst & Young (EY) ranks Croatia as the 16<sup>th</sup> most corrupt in a list of 62 countries. The survey states that 60% of the Croatian respondents, composed of executive board members and managers, believe that bribery and corrupt practices are widespread in their country. Serbia ranks as 23<sup>rd</sup> out of 62 with respectively 48% of the surveyed believe corruption is widespread. In addition, Croatia's score concerning the presence of bribery in business transactions is close to the average for all countries. In questions regarding the transparency and independence of anti-corruption agencies, more than 70% of the Croatian respondents believed in the state agencies' will to combat corruption but perceived them as ineffective in doing so. **RAI, 20 April 2016.**

### **EU 2016 Justice Scoreboard: Bulgarians with Lowest Levels of Faith in Convicting Corrupt Officials**

Eurobarometer ranks Bulgaria lowest amongst all EU states in terms of people's perception of the independence of its judges and courts, says the [new 'Justice Scoreboard' Report](#). In total, close to 70% of Bulgaria's population perceive the country's judicial system as "bad" partly due to the inability to convict officials involved in high-level corruption cases. The latest annual CVM report also attests to that, demonstrating the lack of real track record of cracking down such corruption cases. Lastly, a [recent survey](#) showed that only one out of ten Bulgarians believes that an official could be successfully convicted on corruption charges. CSD's senior fellow Tihomir Bezlov argued that the low levels of faith in the rule of law are also rooted in the absolute independence of Bulgarian judges. The judges' immunity to change and their complete independence tend to create circumstances in which corruption could easily occur. **EUobserver, 11 April 2016.**

## **Upcoming Events**

### **Anti-Corruption Summit: London 2016**

It is considered as the first Summit of world leaders to be focused exclusively on tackling corruption. The Summit seeks to drive progress in combating corruption globally since a package of concrete actions to achieve the task will be agreed upon by the participants. The discussions will revolve around measures to expose corruption and punish the perpetrators; to support those affected by such crimes; and to remove the culture of corruption in places where it is widespread. **UK Government, 12 May 2016, London.**

## **VSPS Western Balkans Anti-corruption Forum**

Organized by the Visegrad School of Political Studies, it is a fully funded programme devoted to combatting corruption in the Western Balkans and the Visegrad. It is comprised of a workshop session in Belgrade and a study visit to Warsaw and the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. The objectives of the programme are to identify gaps in tackling corruption in the region, to share experiences in the field, and to equip those who participate with the competencies and skills to implement effective anti-corruption measures in their countries. **VSPS, 13 – 17 June 2016, Belgrade/Warsaw.**

## **Reports and Analyses**

### **Transparency International: Nations in Transit 2016**

This annual study by Transparency International measures seven different categories - corruption, media freedom, electoral process, civil society, judicial framework, national democratic governance and local democratic governance – in order to track the progress on democratic processes in countries around the world. The largest decline in democracy scores in the whole world is Macedonia's. The Western Balkan country dropped in six out of seven categories because of the ruling party's overreach led to massive corruption and election fraud. Despite efforts to counter it, crippling corruption gained prominence in the whole region with signs of capture in Serbia and Montenegro. With the exception of Albania and Croatia, all other Western Balkan countries showed a decline in their democratic scores. **Freedom House, 12 April 2016.**

### **U.S. Department of State: Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2015**

The report identifies corruption, discrimination and the weak rule of law as the major problems in the Western Balkan region. Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, and Kosovo all suffer from pervasive corruption in all branches of government and a widespread culture of impunity of individuals involved in high-level corruption, which ultimately acts as a drag on progress in all socio-political spheres. Macedonia is singled out as the most problematic country in this aspect in light of the recent political crisis and the failure of the government to respect the rule of law. Deterioration of media freedom is also a pervasive problem in many of the Balkan countries. **U.S. Department of State, April 2016.**

### **"It's None of Your Business!": 10 Obstacles to Accessing Company Register Data Using the Right to Information Report**

Members of the Access Info Europe team and the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project conducted the research that underlies this report across 32 European jurisdictions. It concludes that the majority of company register databases across Europe are not freely accessible by the public, making it challenging for civil society organizations to examine the owners and shareholders of problematic companies. The report provides a list of ten significant barriers to accessing such information, which includes lack of responses to requests and limitations on the basis of nationality, searches, bulk access and data re-utilization. The biggest obstacle was identified to be financial, whereby the company register databases are bought from prices ranging from EUR 0.03 to EUR 380355. **Access Info Europe and OCCRP, April 2016.**

### **Action versus Performance: Confiscation of Property in Kosovo**

SELDI's associate partner, the Organization for Democracy, Anti-corruption and Dignity (COHU) in Kosovo, presented research related to forfeiture of illegally acquired assets in Kosovo as one of the most significant challenges to fight organized crime and corruption. The study aims to provide recommendations to the legal

format of confiscation of property in Kosovo in light of the best international and regional models. The need for a new fundamental law to deal exclusively with confiscation of illegally acquired wealth is highlighted in the study. **Organization for Democracy, Anti-Corruption and Dignity, March 2016.**

**Transparency International: National Integrity System Assessment – Turkey**

The new report by Transparency International Turkey concludes that despite having developed the right laws, agencies and anti-corruption resources, Turkey's institutions still fail to comply with good governance principles and combat corruption. In particular, Turkey's key institutions are also not independent. In particular, it is argued that the executive branch of the government has too much influence over the judiciary, legislature, ombudsman and the media, which ultimately undermines the rule of law. Freedom of access to information and speech as well as freedom of the press are severely hindered. Transparency International makes several recommendations. The most significant is to separate further the powers and increase efforts to keep the executive power in check. **Transparency International, 7 April 2016.**

**U4: A Transparent and Accountable Judiciary to Deliver Justice for All**

With this report, UNDP and the U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Centre aim to promote transparency and accountability within the judiciary system by presenting successful examples from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Indonesia, and Afghanistan. The report advocates that judiciaries around the world should become more open to end-users and new technologies as well as to peer learning by engaging their representatives in capacity assessments in order to improve the integrity of the judiciary. **U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Centre, April 2016.**

**GRECO Compliance Report Albania: Corruption Prevention in Respect of Members of Parliament, Judges, and Prosecutors**

This report by the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) proposes recommendations to prevent corruption among the Albanian MPs and judges. It also evaluates Albania's progress on [previous GRECO reports](#), where only one out of ten recommendations to prevent corruption among MPs and judges has been implemented satisfactorily. Nonetheless, GRECO points out to a number of positive steps taken by the Albanian government. Most importantly, despite Albania currently being developing a sweeping judicial reform, GRECO considers the creating of an ethical code for the MPs and their interaction with lobbyist much needed to prevent corruption and conflict of interest. **GRECO, 14 April 2016.**

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