

News by SELDI members

Improving Democratic Governance to Unlock Growth in Southeast Europe: Dialogue on Current Policies and Future Perspectives



Photo: SELDI

The Berlin Process initiative opened a new chapter for EU integration of the Western Balkans countries, as the Southeast Europe (SEE) region continues to experience serious governance and democratic deficits. Data from the Southeast Europe Leadership for Development and Integrity (SELDI) network points to a stagnation at best in corruption victimization levels between 2014 and 2016, which denotes backsliding in terms of rule of law and democratic development in the region despite improvements in some of the countries. The SEE 2020 Strategy seeks to close such gaps through reinvigorating the regional economy and focusing on improving governance processes. But the economic growth, prioritized also by the Berlin process, cannot be achieved without improving governance, reducing systemic corruption, and tackling state capture. And while the European Union remains the key external anchor for reforms, it is regional civil society organizations that have a crucial role to play both in terms of addressing the existing challenges and of keeping good governance high on the regional and European policy agendas. These and other issues were put forward during a roundtable discussion, organized on 19 June 2017 in Belgrade, by the Center for the Study of Democracy and the SELDI network, with the support of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC). The conclusions from the discussion are going to serve as a stepping stone for SELDI's work in the region and cooperation with government and non-governmental organizations in further tackling corruption and state capture. **SELDI, 19 June 2017**

Anti-corruption Prosecutor Charges 94 people in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

The special prosecutor for corruption has charged 94 people in connection with the illegal wiretapping scandal in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, which brought down the previous government. The prosecutor, Katica Janeva, raised the charges ahead of a legal deadline. Her office was established in EU-brokered talks in 2015 as a part of an attempt to defuse the serious political blockade. No specific suspects were named, but it is likely that former Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski and other high-ranking members of his government were among those charged. Politicians, government officials, activists, journalists and judges were among those thought to have been victims of wiretapping. **RAI, 30 June 2017**

Evidence and Data for Better Governance in Montenegro



Photo: Institut Alternativa

Representatives of state administration, media and NGOs attended a three-day training (16-18 June 2017) on monitoring and evaluation of public policies, organized by Institut Alternativa. This year's School of Public Policy topic was Monitoring and Evaluation, which is of great importance, considering the implementation and effects of specific reforms in Montenegro, required as a condition for joining the European Union. Through a series of lectures and practical work with national and regional experts, the participants in the advanced public policy workshop expanded their knowledge about this stage of the policy-making cycle. **Institut Alternativa, 19 June 2017**

Serbia: Former and Current Mayors Among 74 Arrested for Corruption

Interior Minister Nebojsa Stefanovic announced that 74 persons suspected of corruption have been arrested during Operation "Signal", carried out by the Interior Ministry (MUP) in cooperation with prosecution offices, the tax police, and the security agency BIA. A MUP statement quoted Stefanovic as saying that the operation "dealt a strong blow" to financial crime and corruption, especially when it comes to abuses occurring in state institutions. The operation was carried out in 19 towns across Serbia. Beside the 74 suspects that have been placed under arrest, criminal complaints have been filed against 46 others. Charges include money laundering, tax evasion, fraud, abuse of office, giving and receiving bribes, and counterfeiting money. **RAI, 12 June 2017**

Romania Moves Up on the Freedom House Democracy Score

Romania improves its score for the first time in 3 years in the Freedom House's 2017 Nations in Transit Report. Romania is now ranked 9th overall, as a semi-consolidated democracy, surpassing Hungary in the rankings. The country improved its scores on National Democratic Governance and Electoral Behaviour. And while Romania did not witness any worsening of a particular score, the overall rating for Independent Media, Judicial Framework and Corruption remains quite high. **Romanian Academic Society (SAR), 13 June 2017**

Practicing Corruption Proofing of Legislation

The Regional Anti-Corruption Initiative (RAI) organized two trainings on Corruption Proofing of Legislation in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina on 22 and 23 June 2017. The participants from the governmental institutions and the civil sector learnt how to review the form and substance of drafted or enacted legal rules, in order to detect and minimize the potential risks of corruption. **RAI, 23 June 2017**

Anti-Corruption News from the SEE Region

Courts in Kosovo* with over 200 Thousand Unresolved Cases

The large number of unsolved cases in the courts of Kosovo* remains a serious challenge, which the judicial system is yet to resolve. Competent authorities claim that there are over 200 thousand old cases, which are still unsolved and the majority of them belong to first instance courts. Meanwhile, analysts point to the lack of accountability of judges, as the main problem for the current situation. **Independent Balkan News Agency (IBNA), 27 June 2017**

Bulgaria: 23 Customs Officers Detained at Kulata Checkpoint in an Anticorruption Operation

23 customs officers were detained and 63,000 BGN (EUR 32,200) seized during a joint anticorruption operation conducted by the Directorate for Combatting Organised Crime and the State Agency for National Security at Kulata border crossing (between Bulgaria and Greece). The criminal proceedings will be based on charges for organized crime group, operational since March 2015. Kulata border crossing was temporarily closed for traffic causing long queues of vehicles. All customs officers on the shift were detained on suspicions for involvement in the corruption scheme. **Novinite, 14 June 2017**

Albanian Gangs "Control" the UK Drug Trafficking Market

Violent Albanian crime groups are exerting "considerable control" over the drug market in the UK, while gangs from Serbia and Turkey dominate maritime cocaine trafficking routes, according to a report by the National Crime Agency (NCA). The annual report "National Strategic Assessment of Serious Organised Crime 2017" also points that Romanian groups are collaborating with Mexican counterparts to import cocaine from Europe in heavy goods vehicles. **OCCRP, 29 June 2017**

Islands of Integrity – Black Sea Countries Join Hands to Fight Corruption

Anti-corruption practitioners, representatives of local governments, and civil society organizations from Georgia, Moldova, Turkey and Ukraine took part in the second Regional Meeting of the Anti-Corruption Professionals Network at the Black Sea on 26 June 2017, in Kutaisi, Georgia. The Participants shared experiences of implementing anti-corruption policies in their home countries and discussed ways of multiplying the “Islands of Integrity” methodology in the Black Sea Region. **Georgia Today, 26 June 2017**

Moldova: Stability and Political Will Needed to Fight Corruption over the Next 3 Years

More ethical deputies, increased integrity, enhanced control regarding conflicts of interest and favoritism - this is part of the Action Plan for the implementation of the National Integrity and Anti-Corruption Strategy for 2017-2020, published in the Official Gazette on 30 June 2017. The anti-corruption strategy for the next 3 years is aimed at discouraging corruption at public institutions level, being a continuation of the Strategy for 2011-2016. **Crime Moldova, 2 July 2017**

** This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.*

Upcoming events

Workshop on the UN Convention against Corruption and its Review Mechanism, 25-29 September 2017, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

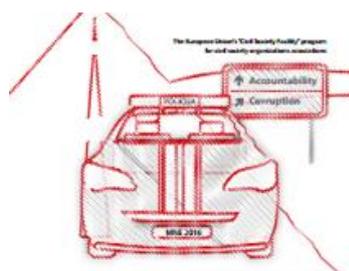
UNODC is organizing a workshop on the UN Convention against Corruption and its Review Mechanism. CSOs, trade unions, indigenous groups, charitable organizations, faith-based organizations, professional associations and foundations from the Southeast European region are eligible to apply. **UNODC, 27 June 2017**

First Eastern Partnership (EaP) Think Tank Forum, Chişinău, 21-22 September 2017, Republic of Moldova

The overall aim of the Forum is to provide for a platform to better connect Think Tanks across Europe for a maximum impact on their research, policy making and advocacy effort in promoting Europeanisation. The EaP Think Tank Forum will also offer an opportunity to discuss a set of Policy Recommendations on the future of the Eastern Partnership for the upcoming EaP Summit in Brussels. Experts from Western Balkans countries will be invited to share their experience on issues of European integration and the role of the Think Tank partnerships in this regard. The Forum will be held 21-22 September 2017 in Chişinău, Republic of Moldova. **Institute for European Policies and Reforms, June 2017**

Reports and Analyses

Assessment of Police Integrity in Montenegro (2016)



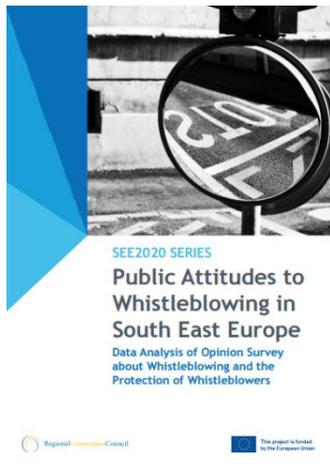
ASSESSMENT OF POLICE INTEGRITY IN MONTENEGRO

The publication
supported by the EU

POINTPULSE

The second assessment of the institutional integrity of the police, prepared by a team of researchers of the Institute Alternative, analyses the methods used by the system to resist irregularities and illegalities in the work of police officers, how the system responds to the observed irregularities, and especially the problems faced by the actors in charge of controlling the police in their attempts to achieve efficiency. The analysis covers the period from November 2016 to November 2017. **Institut Alternativa, 2017**

SEE2020 Series: Public Attitudes to Whistleblowing in South East Europe



The study assesses the public attitudes towards whistleblowing and whistleblower protection in seven economies in South East Europe (SEE). The report also undertakes a qualitative analysis of the current state of play of whistleblower laws and practices in these economies. By comparing and contrasting public attitudes to whistleblowing against the strengths and weaknesses of whistleblower protection policies, key areas for improvement are identified. **RAI, 2017**

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