

News by SELDI members



Photo: SELDI

SELDI Discusses the New Enlargement Strategy for the Western Balkans and How to Enhance Civil Society Role in Anti-Corruption and Good Governance

Facilitated by the Bulgarian and Austrian EU Council presidencies, as well as by shifting European focus towards to region, 2018 will grant Western Balkans an unprecedented access to the EU. Further European initiatives, especially the Berlin Process and the upcoming new Enlargement Strategy, will contribute to the strategic importance of the next 12 months. However, national governments will have to take ownership of their own integration process. Anti-corruption has to be addressed comprehensively and horizontally with increasing prioritization of economic governance. This needs to be channelled through clear commitment on part of the Western Balkan countries and establishment of wide cooperation platform, involving decision-makers, CSOs, the business sector, as well as local, national and regional initiatives. These were among the key messages from a SELDI roundtable discussion, held in Podgorica, Montenegro, with the support of the Regional Cooperation Council. **SELDI, 28 November 2017**



Photo: RAI

RAI, UNDP and OECD Support the Corruption-Free Cities of the Future

The Regional Anti-corruption Initiative (RAI), in cooperation with UNDP and the Anti-Corruption Network of OECD, exchanged experiences about achievements and challenges in preventing corruption at the local level, including by cities, regions and other sub-national levels of public administration during a regional conference in Tirana, Albania. The discussion enabled the identification of examples of successful tools and good practices. The event brought together around 80 participants from Eastern Europe and OECD members in charge of prevention of corruption at the local level, including practitioners from central government bodies and local level officials, academics and civil society organizations. **RAI, 7-8 December 2017**

Promoting Collaboration among Judicial Training Institutions

Joint meeting of the regional Working Group on Justice and Western Balkans Judicial Training Institutions group was held in Brussels on 6-7 December 2017, under auspices of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC). The participants discussed preliminary findings of the draft RCC-commissioned Study on the existing systems of judicial training in the Western Balkans, and provided comments, inputs and proposals. The draft Study identifies possible areas for cooperation among the judicial training institutions in the region. The meeting gathered representatives from ministries of justice, judges' and prosecutors' training institutions/judicial academies from Western Balkans economies; GIZ Open Regional Fund for South East Europe – Legal Reform; and European Commissions' Directorates General for Justice (DG JUST) and Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR). **RCC, 6-7 December 2017**

Monitoring of Judicial Response to Corruption in Bosnia and Herzegovina

SELDI's member, Analitika Center for Social Research, presented a comprehensive methodology for assessment of judicial response to corruption in BiH. The experts emphasized that the main challenges during the analysis included unevenness of the statistics related to corruption proceedings in BiH, and inconsistent practice in terms of proactive publishing of confirmed indictments and final verdicts on the web pages of judicial and prosecutorial institutions. A judge at the Supreme Court of FBiH noted that the quality of the analyzed indictments and verdicts in corruption cases is at a very low level. For example, significant number of indictments related to Abuse of Office or Official Authority does not contain a blanket regulation and consequently, lack the constituent element of a criminal offense. A large number of cases finalized with an agreement due to admission of guilt or confession of the accused during the trial. **Analitika Center for Social Research, 14 November 2017**

Encouraging the Use of Special Investigative Actions in Investigations of Corruption Offenses in Bosnia and Herzegovina



Photo: RAI

SELDI's member RAI, in cooperation with the Center for Business Studies (CEPS) and the Agency for Prevention of Corruption and Coordination of the Fight against Corruption (APIK) promoted the application of special investigative actions in investigations of corruption offenses during a roundtable held on 7 December 2017, in Kiseljak, Bosnia and Herzegovina. The event was organized in support of the implementation of the Anti-Corruption Strategy in BiH and its strategic objective "Improving the Efficiency and Effectiveness of Judicial Institutions and Law Enforcement Bodies in the field of Anti-corruption". In addition to sharing experience among the public institutions, the roundtable also presented the results of the scientific work and activities of the academic community and the non-governmental sector. **RAI, 5 December 2017**

Municipal Competitiveness Index will Promote Transparency and Good Governance in Kosovo*

SELDI's partner, Institute Riinvest, launched a new initiative to create a Municipal Competitiveness Index (MCI). The Index will be designed for all municipalities in Kosovo*, involving survey of 3100 companies and focus groups. MCI is a project aimed at promoting transparency and good governance throughout Kosovo* by creating competition among municipalities and encouraging them to exchange best practices, and find solutions to the challenges they face. The Index is also expected to have an impact on improving information on important aspects of the business environment. **Institute Riinvest, 8 December 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.*

Hurdling on 3, 6, and 9

The Institute for Democracy "Societas Civilis" – Skopje (IDSCS), a SELDI member, initiated a monitoring of the implementation of the reforms from the Government Plan 3-6-9. The results show partial fulfilment of the activities envisaged for the first three months. In the legislative power area, out of a total of 9 activities, 3 are fulfilled, and 6 are immeasurable; in the judiciary, out of 13 activities, 6 are fulfilled, 3 are partially fulfilled, 1 is not fulfilled, and 3 are immeasurable; and regarding the reform of the public administration, from 7 measures, 4 are fulfilled, and 3 are immeasurable. **IDSCS, 29 November 2017**

Montenegro: Institute Alternativa Calls for Accountability in the Police

During a press conference, SELDI's partner, Institute Alternativa underlined that the perception of the public of the degree of corruption in the police remains high, and the Agency for the Prevention of Corruption, as well as the prosecution should pay attention to the efficient implementation of internal controls. In addition to analysing issues such as corruption, lack of professionalism and use of exceeding authority, Institute Alternativa also made in-depth research on the financing and internal procedures of the police. The experts noted that of key concern are the transparency of Ministry of Interior's procedures for public procurements, and the excessive expenditures of the Police Directorate (e.g. for fuel). Institute Alternativa also highlighted that citizens do not recognize the Internal Control department as a body that should investigate possible cases of corruption of police officers. **Institute Alternativa, 6 December 2017**

Anti-Corruption News from the SEE Region

Protests against the Amendment of Laws of Justice Continue in Romania

December 6th, 2017 in Bucharest was another socially tense day as yet another protest took place in front of the Parliament, "against the vote to amend the laws of justice", while in the Chamber of Deputies the law on the status of magistrates was debated. When the demonstrators understood that lawmakers were trying to leave the parliament through the exhibition hall in order to make a "quiet" exit, people headed towards them, while the police tried to block them. The situation was further aggravated by the use of tear gas. **Independent Balkan News Agency, 7 December 2017**

Former Romanian Interior Minister Sentenced to 5 years in Prison for Corruption

Former Romanian interior minister Cristian David was sentenced to five years in prison with no parole, for influence peddling. The magistrates decided that the state confiscates EUR 500,000 from the former minister. The prosecutors found that David demanded and received EUR 500,000 in 2008 in exchange for helping a litigious rights owner get a 15-hectare land plot in Buzau. He then contacted the Buzau prefect to ask for his help with this matter. The former minister's chief of staff, who was also involved in this scheme, apparently received EUR 600,000 and the former Buzau prefect also got EUR 700,000, according to the prosecutors. **RAI, 7 December 2017**

EU Agrees Aid to Help Moldova Reforms

Ahead of a summit of the EU's 'Eastern Partnership' in Brussels, Moldova has obtained aid worth 100 million euros to modernize its economy and plug budget holes. The EU's Eastern Partnership (which includes Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Belarus) aims to tackle corruption, improve the rule of law and economic modernisation. According to reports, Moldova will receive 40 million euros in the form of a grant and 60 million euros as a loan. The first installment is due to arrive by the end of this year. The agreement was signed by the European Commissioner for Economic and Financial Affairs, Pierre Moscovici, Moldovan Finance Minister Octavian Armasu and Moldova National Bank governor Sergiu Cioclea in the presence of Moldova's Prime Minister, Pavel Filip. **Balkan Insight, 24 November 2017**

Threats to Journalists in Bulgarian Media

A series of attacks on – and threats to – independent-minded reporters highlights the perils facing investigative journalists in today's Bulgaria. Maria Dimitrova, an editor-in-chief of Zovnews, a local newspaper in the town of Vratza, northwest of Bulgaria, was attending a family gathering at the end of October when she started receiving threats over the phone and on Facebook. The messages came from a well-known figure from the Vratza underground. Her publisher also received threats. A few months earlier, she had helped the Bulgarian investigative website Bivol with a story that had revealed an organized criminal group active in Vratza involved in racketeering, drug trafficking and a wide range of other offences. The journalist approached the authorities about the threats

made to her and her publisher, but said the case remained neglected until it gained broader publicity later in November. A number of Bulgarian journalists have learned this lesson the hard way. Violent attacks and threats against journalists have intensified. **Balkan Insight, 8 December 2017**

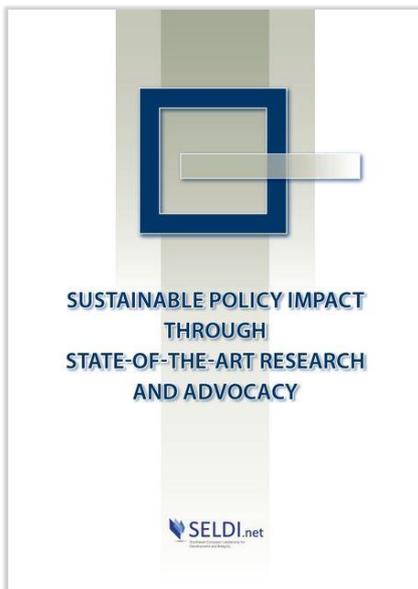
Upcoming events

Regional Workshop on Integrity and Professional Standards in Law Enforcement

The Regional Anti-corruption Initiative (RAI), in cooperation with the Anti-Corruption General Directorate – Ministry of Interior of Romania, is organizing a Regional Workshop on Integrity and Professional Standards in Law Enforcement, which will be held in Bucharest, Romania, on 13 – 14 December 2017. The objective of the Workshop is to strengthen a regional cooperation in the field of integrity and professional standards in law enforcement. It is anticipated that the participants will gain better understanding of the modalities and mechanisms in the field of integrity and professional standards applied in the region, increase awareness about available legal and practical solutions, but also identify main challenges in this field. **RAI, 13-14 December 2017**

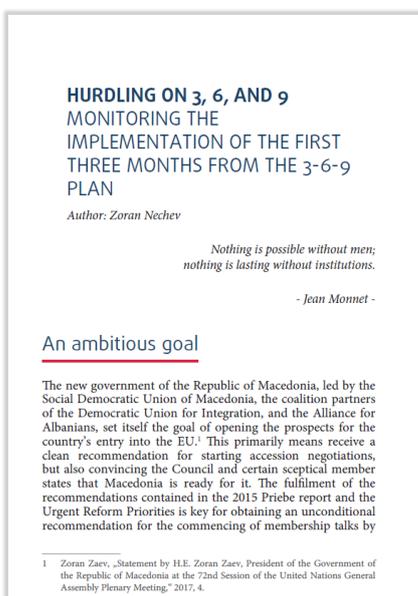
Reports and Analyses

Sustainable Policy Impact through State-of-the-Art Research and Advocacy



The publication provides a review of the architecture and key results from the main methodological instruments, applied by the Southeast Europe Leadership for Development and Integrity (SELDI) network in Southeast Europe (SEE). SELDI's advocacy impact, channelled through local ownership and strong public-private partnership foundation, is built upon state-of-the-art corruption and hidden economy monitoring tools. SELDI's constant drive for social innovation has pushed its members to also devise new instruments, particularly in response to recently emerged, complex and systemic corruption practices in the region. **SELDI, 1 November 2017**

Hurdling on 3, 6, and 9



In the 2016 European Commission's annual report, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was described as a 'captured state'. Operationalization of the commitment by the government to tackle this challenge began on 4 July 2017 with the launch of a reform plan related to the EU accession process, entitled Plan 3-6-9. SELDI's member, IDSCS, published its conclusions about the first three months of the implementation of the Plan. The results show partial fulfilment of the activities. The authors underline that it is of utmost importance to harmonize the reform activities in the Plan 3-6-9 with the National Program for the Adoption of the Acquis. **IDSCS, 29 November 2017**

¹ Zoran Zaev, „Statement by H.E. Zoran Zaev, President of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia at the 72nd Session of the United Nations General Assembly Plenary Meeting,” 2017, 4.

Assessment of Progress of Montenegro with the EU



The Center for Democratic Transition (CDT), SELDI member, performed an assessment of the levels at which the political criteria in the negotiations with the European Union have been met. CDT's key conclusions were published in two analytical documents, covering six segments: the judicial system, fight against corruption, media, fight against organized crime, public administration reform and human rights. The authors underline that Montenegro needs to approach the meeting of the political criteria in a more energetic, determined and efficient way. The first phase, establishment of prerequisites for a high-quality functioning of institutions has been completed relatively successfully. What remains is the harder, significantly more complex second phase – the phase of turning laws into reality and establishment of credible and independent institutions. **CDT, 15 November 2017**

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