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TABLE OF CONTENTS

AKTUELNO

- 4–5 Gorčević: We are Building a Society where Citizens Live European Values
- 5–7 Jovetić: Montenegrin public procurement aligned with european standards
- 7–9 Ambassador of Denmark: I See Montenegro's Position on the Path to the EU as Very Encouraging
- 9–15 Sattler: Intensify Activities in the Negotiation Chapter 27 – Environment and Climate Change
- 16–17 The Plan to make DSA and EMFA a Part of Montenegrin Legal Order in 2026
- 18–20 Erasmus+ - A Bridge to Modern Europea Education

EU IN MONTENEGRO

- 20–23 With the Support of EU Funds to the Modern Vocational Education in Nikšić
- 23–26 Alchemist of the Z Generation
- 27–28 Trademarks and Copyright are More Protected, while Authors, Patent Holders and Brand Owners Have Easier Access to Justice
- 28–31 The Port of Bar is Building Green Future with the Support of EU Funds
- 31–32 Trademark “Good from Montenegro “ an Example of Intellectual Property Law

WE ARE BUILDING A SOCIETY WHERE CITIZENS LIVE EUROPEAN VALUES

Author: Minister of European Affairs

A year after obtaining the positive IBAR, Montenegro is in a completely new stage of the negotiation process. We got out of the deadlock and achieved what could not be achieved for years, continuing at the same pace the process of shaping a positive perception of Montenegro in Europe.

During the last six months, we were working intensively on meeting the benchmarks that will ensure closing of the negotiation chapters within the planned deadline, with the primary goal to finish the negotiation process by 2026 and become a Member State by 2028.

In the first half of the year, we received the pre-financing in the amount of 26.8 million euros within the EU Growth Plan for the Western Balkans. This package of funds will support reforms within which we will implement activities aimed at improving results of investigations, confirmed indictments and final judgments in cases of organized crime, as well as a comprehensive reform of the election legislation. The focus is also on improving the system of public procurement, strengthening integrity of inspection services and developing digital infrastructure. In the field of human capital development, we plan to reform social and childcare system, and invest in education on all levels, with a particular emphasis on digital education. Out of the total amount of pre-financing, 14.3 million euros will be allocated for infrastructural projects in the field of energy through Western Balkan Investment Framework.

A couple of weeks ago, we closed another negotiation chapter, reaching the number of seven closed chapters. Closing the Chapter 5 – Public Procurement, one of the most demanding, the institutions showed capacity to apply

European standards and improve the existing practices even in the most sensitive areas.

However, the successes we have made since the turning point in the accession process that took place in November 2023 have to be continued and we must intensify our work. On the basis of our current internal preparedness, we expect that already by the end of this year we will close a large number of chapters. Those are, inter alia, the chapters in the fields of the freedom of movement of workers, establishment of companies and provision of services, freedom of movement of capital, agriculture and fishery.

In addition to this, we are also focused on comprehensive reforms and on withdrawing as much available finances from the pre-accession funds as possible to contribute to economic development even before membership. One of the reforms we focus on is the reform of election legislation that will remove numerous social, political and financial challenges that originate in the organization of elections.



Photo: Minister Maida Gorčević

Organizing all local elections on one day together with parliamentary elections will reduce political tensions, while it will be possible to put the focus of the society on important and essential topics. In addition to this, a part of this reform will also include a mandatory quota of at least 40% of women on the lists of candidates, which adds a gender equality policy dimension to this reform.

This stage of our European path is not only time to celebrate achievements, but also a call for a shared responsibility and determination to persist. Every step in the future will demand commitment, unity and trust into what Montenegro can become. And Montenegro can indeed become a modern, just and more prosperous European country. In the years to come, we are not only to build our path towards membership in the EU. We are to build the society in which our citizens will live European values, here and now. That is the power of change we are bringing, and the vision we are resolutely committed to.

MONTENEGRIN PUBLIC PROCUREMENT ALIGNED WITH EUROPEAN STANDARDS

By Jelena Jovetić, MSc, Director General of the Directorate for Managing Public Investment and Public Procurement Policy in the Ministry of Finance

Public procurement constitutes one of the key progress indicators in the process of accession to the European Union since it has a direct impact on transparency, responsible management of public funds and fight against corruption.

For us in the Ministry of Finance, this process was not just a negotiation course, but also a way to strengthen our institutions and public procurement system. A voluminous framework of laws and bylaws has been adopted; the first system of Montenegrin electronic public procurement - CEJN has been developed, human resources strengthened, as well as supervision and control mechanisms, while a particular emphasis has been put on training, professionalization and monitoring of the system.

With a view to achieving full alignment with the European Union acquis, Montenegro has significantly improved its legislative framework in the field of public procurement, adopting the Public Procurement Law in 2019. This law is fully aligned with the key EU Directives: 2/14/24/EU, 2014/25/EU, 2017/2364, 2017/2365 and the Directive 2009/81/EZ for the field of defence and security. A large number of bylaws has also been prepared to regulate in details certain aspects of the public procurement system. The Law stipulates the principle of non-discrimination, which means that foreign bidders have an equal treatment as the domestic ones. Principles of environment protection, social and labour law and gender equality are now included in the process of evaluation of bids.

In the field of public-private partnerships and concessions, a new legislative framework has been adopted. It is aligned with the relevant European Union acquis and ensures more efficient implementation of infrastructure and development projects, with the involvement of private sector through clear and transparent procedures.

The reforms implemented in this field include also one of the most important breakthroughs – introduction of the electronic public procurement system, releasing the public procurement procedure of unnecessary paperwork, and increasing transparency and efficiency. Electronic public procurement has changed the concept of public procurement in Montenegro from the one focused on the form to the one emphasizing the most important segment – economically most favourable bid.

CEJN ensures electronic implementation of all stages of public procurement – from planning to publishing contracts and reports on implementation, including protection of the rights, i.e. complaint mechanisms. The number of CEJN users is about 14,000, out of which there are 4,796 active registered users.

All information about public procurement procedures (public calls, plans, decisions, complaints, implementation of contracts) have to be available through CEJN, which ensures full transparency and equal access to information for all interested parties. CEJN is at the same time a tool for fighting corruption, because it ensures an independent insight into the public spending flows and compliance with lawful procedures.

Upgraded CEJN is one of the pillars of the future Strategy for improvement of public procurement policy and public-

private partnerships for the period 2026-2030, in line with the recommendations from the World Bank's MAPS evaluation, another important process that Montenegro participated in.

Ministry of Finance is also implementing professional training and specialization of public procurement officers/ ordering entities, bidders and all other persons involved in the public procurement processes, with a view to developing a sustainable training system so that the employees in public procurement activities can respond to the demands of the system, but also that the effects of training can be monitored by testing the acquired knowledge and skills.

Montenegro has developed an institutional framework that ensures an efficient implementation of the public procurement policy, with the key control mechanisms that make the system reliable and stable. On the other side, the data show that competition has been significantly strengthened, so the competitiveness index is now above 3%.

As for monitoring and control mechanisms, it is important to emphasize that, since January 2024, a new system of simple procurement monitoring has been in use. It ensures that the

bidders who participate in simple procurement procedures can file a request for monitoring. This prevents violation of fundamental principles of public procurement and potential irregularities in the implementation of this type of procedures. When filed, a request for simple procurement monitoring stops all actions of the ordering entity in that procedure.

During 2024, the total number of the submitted requests for simple procurement monitoring was 161. The Ministry of Finance issued 76 recommendations to remedy irregularities, to analyse the bids again and to assess the bids again, while 12 times they recommended to annul the procedure. The total of 17 requests were forwarded to the Public Procurement Inspectorate for further procedure. In 12 cases the Ministry of Finance confirmed the decision of the ordering entity, while 2 requests for monitoring were not considered because the same entity had already decided about the same issues earlier.

Negotiation chapter 5 is a part of Cluster 1 – Fundamental Rights, and therefore it is even more complex.

One of particularly important reforms for us, with an



Foto: Brisel_ zatvaranje pregovaračkog poglavlja 5. Javne nabavke

emphasis on fiscal stability but also on the economic significance for small and medium-size enterprises, comprises measures for limiting direct procurement, introduced on the basis of an annual plan of the ordering entity to reduce their total share and increase transparency. In this respect, monitoring is also very important as a control mechanism for simple procurement and protection of bidders. It is therefore worth mentioning that, in 2025, the Ministry of Finance solved the total of 114 requests for monitoring.

In the period ahead, the focus will remain on development and implementation of the new Strategy for the period 2026-2030 prepared by the Ministry of Finance, strengthening digitalization, professionalization and continuous improvement of the public procurement system in line with the best practices of the European Union Member States.

A particular emphasis in the period to come will be on the strengthening of Montenegro's anti-corruption framework in public procurement. Montenegro committed to it and defined steps and deadlines for their implementation.

The Code of Ethics in Public Procurement was adopted in early 2025 and published on the website of the Ministry of Finance, and on the e-procurement platform. The Code regulates principles and rules of behaviour of the representatives of ordering entities and economic entities, as well as of other persons who are directly or indirectly involved in the public procurement process. The electronic system has already been upgraded with the function of reporting contracts and conflicts of interest, while the overall process of reporting irregularities will be completed in September this year.

Electronic public procurement system will be upgraded in the period to come, with a view to strengthening anti-corruption mechanisms, introducing „red flags“ (automatic detection of irregularities in the public procurement procedures).

In order to strengthen the fight against corruption, Montenegro is to amend Public Procurement Law and Law on Prevention of Corruption to clearly define corruptive activities in the context of public procurement, as well as actions of authorities in case there is a suspicion or it is established that there are corruptive activities in public procurement procedures. Strengthening anti-corruption activities will be our priority in the months to come.



Foto: Jelena Jovetić

Our obligation is to ensure that European Union standards are applied in practice, and the Ministry of Finance will be equally determined in that as in the entire negotiation process.

AMBASSADOR OF DENMARK FOR “EUROKAZ”

I SEE THE MONTENEGRO'S POSITION ON THE PATH TO THE EU AS VERY ENCOURAGING

By Marko Vešović, Portal RTCG

Montenegro is the country forerunner in the process of enlargement and integration into the European Union. As the only country of the Western Balkans that has opened all the clusters, in my opinion, Montenegro has a very encouraging position, said Pernille Dahler Kardel, the Ambassador of Denmark in Montenegro.

In the second half of the year, Denmark will preside the EU, and Dahler Kardel speaks about priorities and challenges...

- Enlargement of the EU to the countries of the Western Balkans will probably be high on the agenda of your country's presidency in the European Union. How do you see the position of Montenegro in that context, particularly after it obtained the positive IBAR?



Foto: Ambasadorka Danske

- Montenegro is a forerunner in terms of the enlargement and integration into the European Union. As the only country in the Western Balkans that has opened all clusters, in my opinion, Montenegro has a very encouraging position. On the path to meet the requirements within the chapters 23 and 24, the positive IBAR shows that the country is ambitious and focused on acquiring EU membership by 2028. That being said, of course, Montenegro needs to continue the reforms to meet the remaining benchmarks. All 33 chapters are opened, seven chapters have already been closed, but there are 26 chapters more to close before reaching the goal. So, I would say, keep up the good work, focus on achieving the progress needed to close more chapters and getting closer to the end goal. Important and hard work is yet to be done.

Montenegro is currently the most advanced country in the process of accession to the EU, where it is making an enormous progress and we are fully committed to supporting it in this important work on this significant path.

Enlargement is important both for the EU and for the Western Balkans. In these times of uncertainty, we must be united and make the European Union stronger. It takes efforts. But Montenegro's hard work and commitment prove that optimism about being a member of the EU is there, but the process requires efforts.

- What do you think about Montenegro on its European path and what should we focus on during the Danish Presidency?

It is indeed impressive to follow the commitment and determination that Montenegro has been showing on its European path. It is an example of efforts that do not come from the Government or institutions only, but from the entire society. It really takes the entire society to be involved to reach the final goal, membership in the EU.

As for the path ahead, Montenegro should focus on the remaining open chapters, like 23 and 24, to ensure that the reforms are truly implemented not only in the laws but in practice too. Rule of law is the essence of European values, and that is why you should keep working on these chapters and stay focused. Chapter 27 that deals with the environment is also very important and challenging and is an enormous priority for transformation of the society towards sustainability. We are, actually, considering how we could provide you with support in the remaining chapters and, in particular, how to support you on a more technical level in the chapter 27.

- From your point of view, what will the European path of the region look like in the future, particularly when it comes to Montenegro, in the context of all current developments in the EU and expectations that EU has in relation to the countries of the region?

If we look at it from a perspective of geopolitics, enlargement is a huge priority. Russian war of aggression in Ukraine was a wakeup call for all of us. We need a stronger Union that can better protect its positions. A part of it is a bigger Union and the Union that is more capable to defend itself. Ukraine is important, but the Western Balkan countries are equally important for that.

I can only encourage relevant stakeholders to engage and dedicate time to implementation of reforms that will ensure closing of chapters. We as the Embassy will support the country in achieving the required progress.

- Do you expect EU to continue strongly supporting the reforms in the field of the rule of law in Montenegro?

Definitely. Rule of law is the essence of European Union. The Union is based on the shared values – and those values are founded and rooted in the rule of law. We should not forget that the enlargement is a new momentum for the European Union and that we will support as much as we

can the process of achieving the required progress in the field of the rule of law.

- What is your opinion about bilateral relations between Denmark and Montenegro?

Denmark and Montenegro share decades of partnership and good relations. Recent opening of Montenegrin Embassy in Copenhagen is a significant proof not only of continuously good relations, but also of the importance of our partnership. So, we are indeed very happy that we have confirmed that by extending our operational work.

Progress in the rule of law, dedication and encouragements from the society that we can see in Montenegro largely correspond to our values and therefore I would say that we share some good values and attitudes about important issues. We fully support the process of Montenegro's accession to the EU and are optimistic about the progress that is being achieved.

However, our relations are not only diplomatic ones, because Montenegrin diaspora has developed precious ties between our countries. Although not big in size, Montenegrin

diaspora has an exceptional feeling for keeping the strong connections with Montenegro – as is actually the case also in the entire Western Balkans. Although very well integrated into the Danish society, the diaspora still maintains strong connections with Montenegro – through family ties, social and cultural events, some values and traditions that Denmark can also learn a lot from.

AFTER THE GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCED CLOSING OF ALL CHAPTERS BY THE END OF NEXT YEAR, DELEGATION OF THE EU SAYS:

SATTTLER: INTENSIFY ACTIVITIES IN THE NEGOTIATION CHAPTER 27 – ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

By Milan Žugić, MINA

Podgorica – Montenegro has made a certain progress in the field of environment protection and adaptation to climate change, particularly when it comes to adoption of the relevant legislative basis and implementation of certain key projects. However, since the Government has set an ambitious goal – to close all the chapters by the end of 2026, it is clear that the activities in this area must be significantly intensified, says the Ambassador of the European Union in Montenegro, Johann Sattler.

He says that, when we talk about chapter 27, we actually talk about the air we breathe, water we drink and nature we are to leave to our children. "The decisions we make in the field of the environment have a direct impact on the health, quality of life and future of our citizens. Clean air, drinking water and preserved nature are not matters of luxury, but the basic needs and rights of every citizen. That is why this chapter is of such a high importance for Montenegro's European path",





Photo:eu.me

underlines Sattler for the latest issue of Eurokaz.

He thinks that the challenges are numerous – starting with the implementation of the adopted laws, all the way to the adoption of sectorial strategies we are waiting for years, as well as the necessary secondary legislation, particularly in the field of waste management, air quality, nature protection and climate change. "It is of key importance to establish a sustainable system of financing, additionally strengthen the institutional and administrative capacities, so that Montenegro can meet the obligations within Chapter 27 within the given deadlines. At the same time, it is necessary to prepare administration and institutions for accession to European structural funds that will be available after the formal accession to the European Union", said Sattler.

Director of the Agency for Environment Protection, Milan Gazdić, said that Chapter 27 was one of the most complex and most demanding chapters in the process of accession to the EU, but that it was realistic to expect that, with intensive efforts, progress could be made on closing it by the end of 2026 and that it depended on the continuous political support, availability of the financial and human resources

and establishment of the functional systems for managing the environment.

At the same time, the director of the NGO Green Home Azra Vuković is of the opinion that Montenegro has serious difficulties in regulating the fields related to the environment protection in legislation, and even more serious difficulties in implementing the legislation.

"Given all of this and being aware of the financial and administrative capacities of the responsible institutions and the political atmosphere where very often party interests are given priority over the public interest, it is very difficult to expect the obligations within Chapter 27 to be met in such a short time," said Vuković.

Sattler warns that meeting of the benchmarks within Chapter 27 is uneven. There are areas where Montenegro has achieved some concrete progress, like civil protection where it is among the leaders in the region. "I will remind you that Montenegro has been a member of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism since 2015, which enables it to seek and provide assistance in crisis situations like fires, floods



Photo: Delegation of the EU in Montenegro, archive

or earthquakes. It has already received support within this mechanism in form of equipment and experts, and it also showed solidarity by providing assistance to other members. However, the significant challenges are still there, particularly in the field of waste management, air quality, nature protection and climate change", says Sattler.

Ambassador Sattler also noted that a significant breakthrough was made in the field of waste because the new Waste Management Law was adopted and it had been on hold for a long time. "Development of secondary legislation is in progress and the adoption of the National Waste Management Plan, the key strategic document, is expected. The problems of illegal waste disposal and numerous wild landfills demand a multi-sectorial approach: from education and awareness of citizens, to strong inspection and efficient sanctioning policy. We need to emphasize also that successful implementation of infrastructural projects for the treatment of waste waters, collectors and sewage networks are very important for achieving progress in the Chapter 27. Efficient wastewater treatment systems reduce pollution of rivers, seas and ground waters, which protects eco-systems and public health. In addition to this, modernization of collectors and sewage networks contributes to sustainable development of urban areas, increases capacities and reduces the risk of floods and pollution", said Mr Sattler.

He added that sometimes he had an impression that citizens were underinformed about the long-term benefits of these projects. "When it comes to nature protection, the challenge is not only to declare an area protected, but also to develop management plans and prove that the system has the capacity to implement the declared protection in practice – particularly in the context of the Natura 2000 network", underlined Ambassador Sattler.

As he says, in the field of climate change, the additional challenge is the dynamic nature of EU legislation, that keeps evolving and improving. Specialized human resources are therefore needed to transpose that legislation in a proper way into the Montenegrin legal framework. "As for the possibility of closing the chapters without fully meeting all the benchmarks – as I already said – this chapter should not be looked at from a purely administrative point of view. Alignment with the EU standards in the field of environment protection is a direct investment into the health, quality of life and future of citizens. Although there are mechanisms to extend the deadlines for meeting particularly complex obligations after the accession (this refers to the so called "transitional periods"), it is in Montenegro's best interest to ensure for its citizens as soon as possible the same level of safe and healthy environment that is enjoyed by the citizens across European Union. That is why my message is – although for some more demanding obligations there will inevitably be some transitional periods, we should put efforts into ensuring that Montenegro implements the highest European standards as soon as possible and as successfully as possible in the interest of all citizens that deserve healthy and safe environment", said Sattler.





Photo: MINA

For the latest issue of Eurokaz, Gazdić said that, although there was a clear willingness to speed up the process of meeting the obligations, closing of chapter 27 requires not only adoption of legislation, but also its full implementation in practice, as well as strong institutional strengthening.

For the latest issue of Eurokaz, Vuković said that, in the context of Chapter 27, promises that all the obligations would be met in a very short period of time, i.e. by the end of 2026, were given too easily.

"We often lack at least one element to complete the process. I want to remind that granting Ulcinj Saline the appropriate protection status and effective implementation of necessary preservation measures that lead to the improvement of the preservation status constitute one of the closing benchmarks in this chapter. However, Solana was declared a protected area 6 years ago, but the agreement about the manager has not yet been reached and thus the process is still ongoing", said Vuković.

She added that, when it comes to waste management, adoption of the new law was one of the first obligations within this chapter. "The process of adoption of this Law took as long as 7 years, while the adoption of secondary legislation is still under way. Let alone the establishment of the waste management system that can respond to EU requirements in terms of reducing the amount of waste that ends up in the landfills", she underlined.

Vuković noted that Montenegro did not have the key strategic policies, laws and secondary legislation in numerous areas related to the environment protection – waste management, air quality, biodiversity, etc. "We

do not have the amended laws. They have been in the process for a very long time. I am referring to the Law on Nature Protection. Law on National Parks, etc. In the recently published "Shadow Report for Chapter 27 – in the trap of time" that was published by Coalition 27 (informal network of 18 NGOs from Montenegro) it was noted that we thought that in the previous year Montenegro had achieved a limited progress in this chapter. The reason for that lies in the fact that implementation of the closing benchmarks in Chapter 27 is very slow and it takes a lot of time to implement activities. We have a very large part of the obligations that are partly met, and deadlines for implementation are often extended," said Vuković.

Ambassador Sattler thinks that the state has undertaken certain important steps in meeting the obligations within Chapter 27, but that it is clear that there is still a lot of work to be done – particularly when it comes to consistent implementation of the law, strengthening of institutions and more efficient application of policies in the field. "Reforms in the field of environment protection cannot remain on the paper only – they must be visible in everyday life of citizens: in cleaner air, unpolluted rivers, healthier nature. It is of key importance that the state, in cooperation with the EU, international partners, civil society and private sector, ensures not only full alignment of legislation with European legislation, but also their genuine, effective application. Education has a particularly important role in that process – investment into knowledge is investment into changing the mindset, into new generation that will respect and not pollute nature", said Sattler.



Photo: Green Home

He noted that he did not accept the thesis that wild landfills, polluted rivers or poor air quality were our "mentality" and that it could not be changed. "No – we have seen in many other countries that the change is possible. My country, Austria, used to have the same problems – waste along the roads, old refrigerators in the woods – and today it is unthinkable to see anything of the kind. The change happened, not because the Austrians have different mentality, but because of the smart connections between education, efficient laws, good sanctioning policy and their consistent application", he added.

– by reporting environmental incidents, not using plastic bags, educating the young or removing wild landfills. And that, with serious approach, responsibility and persistence, even the firmest habits can change. In the end, the truth is simple: Montenegro cannot be called an ecological state only because that is written in its Constitution. It must prove it every day, with every action and every decision. And that is the task of the entire society in Montenegro that European Union rightfully encourages and actively supports", said Sattler.

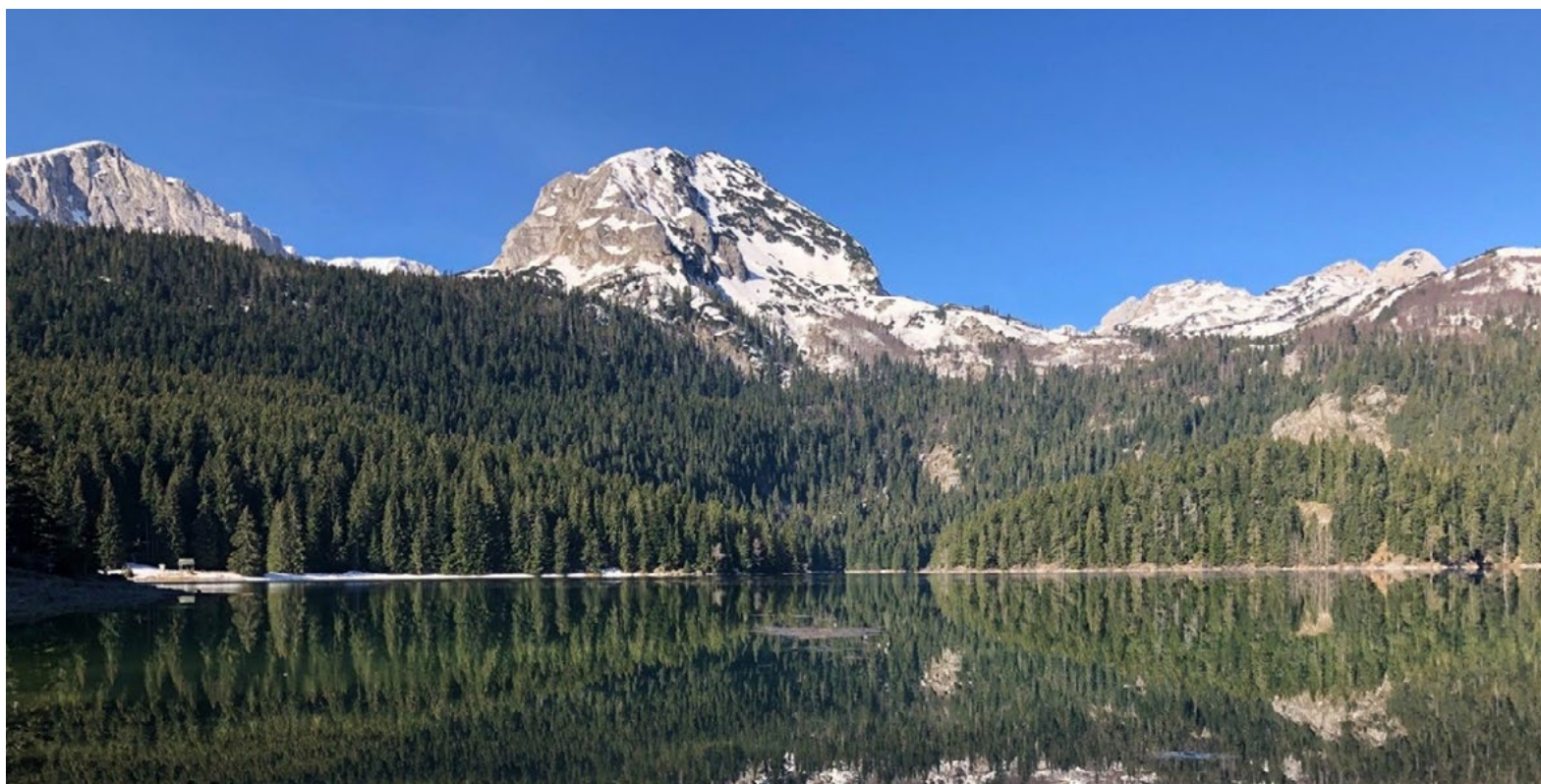


Photo: Milan Žugić

Sattler reminded that it was precisely why the Delegation of the European Union in Montenegro, in close cooperation with the national and local institutions, civil society and the media, on 5 June – the World Day of the Environment – launched a National Campaign "Save to Feel Safe". The goal of the campaign is clear: raise awareness, encourage change in behaviour and strengthen environment protection in Montenegro. Although the key partner in this campaign is the Ministry of the Environment, the campaign does not belong to one institution only – it is a joint venture of the "coalition of the willing": state institutions and schools, NGO activists, athletes, the young, artists and enterprises. The message of the campaign is that everyone can contribute

Gazdić underlined that Montenegro made visible steps forward, particularly in the process of adoption of the legislative framework. "Important strategies and laws were adopted, and a part of them is already aligned with European standards. Still, it is important to make a difference between adoption of legislation and their genuine application in practice. The key issue that remains is how to ensure that what is regulated in legislation is implemented in daily functioning of the institutions and society. There is a visible progress, but given the complexity of the field, stronger coordination is needed, as well as commitment of all relevant stakeholders so that the results can be manifested in the field in a faster and more sustainable manner.

Vuković said that, generally, in the accession negotiations, the rule was that the chapters could be closed only after all interim and closing benchmarks were met. "The practice has shown that the EU can show a certain level of flexibility, but under clearly defined conditions. EU can approve closing of chapters if benchmarks are formally met, but in that case some solutions are expected in the period after the closing, with precise plans, time frameworks and financial guarantees. For example, certain infrastructural investment may be postponed for the period after the accession if legal, planning and institutional aspects are met, and the implementation (e.g. construction of a plant) is postponed for the period after the accession", said Vuković.

Ambassador Sattler said that closing of the Chapter 27 by the end of 2026 could be one of the most inspiring stories of Montenegro on the European path showing that, with a clear focus and joint efforts, success could be achieved. "That would be a confirmation that Montenegro can meet even the most difficult challenges, because this chapter requires deep systemic changes and tangible results in the field, and not only adoption of legislation. Still, with a clear

plan, acceleration of activities and continuous strengthening of administrative capacities, this goal is not out of reach. It will be of key importance that the institutions show determination, that there is a continuity of political support on all levels and that all stakeholders – national authorities, local self-government, civil society and economy – work in synergy. If these conditions are met, Montenegro can use this opportunity not only to close one chapter in the negotiations, but to achieve the key turning point for the healthy environment and higher quality of life for its citizens," said Sattler.

Gazdić says that certain benchmarks have already been met, while some are in the process, which is expected given the scope and complexity of this chapter. "The pace of meeting the benchmarks varies depending on how demanding certain areas are in institutional, technical or financial terms.

A particular challenge is sustainability – not only in terms of implementing legislation, but also in terms of the functioning of the systems that have to last and be resilient to changes. Achieving that requires higher predictability in planning,



Photo: Milan Žugić



Photo: Milan Žugić

better cooperation between the sectors and more active role of all levels of authorities. It is important to approach this in a systemic and not in a partial manner – because the effects can be achieved only if all the elements function together”, said Gazdić.

Vuković thinks that the manner in which “development” projects in Montenegro are planned, and nature treated in such projects is far from European standards. “Neglecting natural values of sites that have multiple protection status both on the national and on the international level in the process of planning space and in the process of planning projects is not in line with European standards. Implementation of the agreements will not be possible in the way in which it was designed in the first place and presented to Montenegrin public if the chapters are to be closed. In the context of public procurement, for example, for which the chapter has been closed, Montenegro got an imperative to ensure that implementation of the Agreement is not in conflict with the EU acquis on public procurement, that it is in line with the principles established in the Stabilisation and Association Agreement, including transparency, equal treatment and non-discrimination, which will be closely monitored by the EU. I expect a similar approach in the context of Chapter 27”, warned Vuković.

At the same time Gazdić thinks that every development project must be in line with the current legislation in the field

of the environment. “That is the basic rule, regardless of who the investor might be and how high the investment is. It is precisely why there are procedures like the environment impact assessment. They are here to ensure that every project is analysed in detail before approval is issued. As for the protected areas and those who still do not have formally established management structure, this additionally emphasises the need for careful planning and establishing managers according to the law. Investment may have a positive effect if implemented in a planned manner and in line with the laws, but they must respect the principles of sustainable development”, said Gazdić.

Sattler said that, on one side, investment can contribute to mobilisation of resources and encourage sustainable development, including financing and transfer of knowledge and technologies. “On the other side, they can constitute a challenge if their implementation is not fully aligned with the European standards in nature protection and sustainability principles. Given Montenegro's aspirations to become an EU Member State, its economic growth must be achieved in the way that is in line with the EU standards, while agreements must be implemented in a transparent way and in line with the EU acquis in different areas. European Commission will closely monitor this, and it is willing, if needed, to provide Montenegro with support in that process”, said Sattler.

THE PLAN TO MAKE DSA AND EMFA A PART OF MONTENEGRIN LEGAL ORDER IN 2026

By Jovana Đurišić

The Government of Montenegro, or to be more precise, the Ministry of Culture and Media, plans to prepare concrete proposals of amendments to the laws by the end of the year in order to create conditions for transposition of the Regulation on a Single Market For Digital Services – better known under the name Digital Services Act (DSA) and the European Media Freedom Act (EMFA) into the Montenegrin legal order during 2026.

WHAT ARE DSA AND EMFA?

Through its two key pieces of legislation – Digital Services Act (DSA) and European Media Freedom Act (EMFA) – the European Union laid the foundations for stronger protection of the freedom of the media and freedom of expression in digital space. DSA regulates the operation of large online platforms, introducing the obligation of algorithm transparency, protection of users from arbitrary censorship and ensuring access to data for researches, which contributes to better control of disinformation spread. On the other side, EMFA strengthens the independence of journalists and editors, protects media from political and commercial pressures, promotes ownership transparency and prohibits abuse of spy software. Together, these enactments constitute a response of the EU to the increasingly serious challenges in the field of media freedoms, particularly in the context of digitalization and the increasing pressures on independent media around Europe.

For Montenegro, that aspires to close all the chapters in the negotiations with the EU by the end of 2026, implementation of these legislative enactments is a necessary part of that process.

WHAT IS ENVISAGED IN THE ACTION PLAN?

The Action Plan for the Chapter 23 envisages that the Government will align national legislation with the European Media Freedom Act (EMFA) and relevant parts of the Digital Services Act (DSA) during 2025, respecting the existing legislative and institutional framework and the capacities needed for implementation and supervision. The Plan envisages that during 2026 these two documents will be successfully transposed and implemented in the national legal order.

ANALYSIS CONDUCTED, WORKING GROUP TO ACT

The Ministry of Culture and Media clarifies that this year the analysis of conditions for these steps was conducted.

„In line with the obligations in the process of European integration and the need to align with the latest European Union legislation, during the first half of 2025 the Ministry of Culture and Media conducted a comprehensive analysis of national legislation in relation to the Regulation on a Single Market For Digital Services – better known under the name Digital Services Act (DSA) and the Regulation establishing a common framework for media services - European Media Freedom Act (EMFA)“, says the Ministry of Culture and Media for Eurokaz.

As they say, on the basis of that analysis, a table of concordance was developed and after that, in June, a multi-sectorial working group was established. This working group comprises representatives of judiciary, regulatory bodies, relevant state institutions and civil society organizations.



Foto: Ministarka kulture i medija Tamara Vujović



DSA

„The working group officially started working in July this year, and it already had two meetings, while the next one is planned for next week. It is expected that by the end of the year the concrete proposals for amendment of relevant laws will be prepared, creating thus the conditions for transposition of DSA and EMFA into the Montenegrin legal order in 2026“, adds the Ministry.

In the Ministry of Culture, they say that, since DSA and EMFA refer to a wide range of areas – from media laws, through electronic communication and trade, to data protection, cyber security and competition – it is clear that this will be an exceptionally complex and demanding legislative intervention that has to be implemented with prudent inter-sectorial alignments. However, they emphasize that, if the planned activities are implemented within the envisaged deadlines, adoption of the law to ensure application of the Digital Services Act (DSA) and European Media Freedom Act (EMFA) in Montenegro can be expected during 2026.

Speaking about how important it is for Montenegro to implement these Regulations, the Ministry of Culture underlines that the benefits are manifold.

„It is, of course, an important step in the process of meeting the obligations from the process of accession to the European Union. However, it is even more important what essential impact these reforms will have for the protection of fundamental human rights, digital space security and improvement of standards of transparency, responsibility and freedom of expression“, says the Ministry of Culture and Media.

Digital Services Act, that is being implemented in the EU since February 2024, establishes uniform rules for all

providers of digital services, including mediators on the Internet, social networks, online trading platforms and applications. Its basic purpose is to prevent spread of unlawful and damaging contents, to protect users' rights and to ensure responsible management of algorithm systems and online advertising, clarifies the Ministry.

As the Ministry claims, implementation of DSA will create conditions for better protection of personal data and rights of consumers, improved protection of minors, prevention of disinformation and combating hate speech on the Internet.

European Media Freedom Act, whose full application is expected in the EU in August 2025, focuses on the protection of independence of editors, transparency of media ownership, protection of information sources and ensuring independence of public media services. EMFA also introduces protection mechanisms for the cases where global platforms remove media contents without justification and regulates the way in which the state advertising is distributed using transparent criteria.

For Montenegrin public, as this Ministry says, adoption and implementation of these Regulations would mean establishment of a clear and comprehensive regulatory framework that ensures more secure and more responsible digital environment, strengthening of the media freedoms, as well as more efficient institutional mechanisms for supervision and protection of users.

„This will additionally strengthen citizens' trust into democratic processes, media freedoms and digital services, which is the key precondition for long-term progress of the society and institutional development“, concludes the Ministry of culture and Media.

PROVIDES OPPORTUNITIES TO PUPILS, STUDENTS, TEACHING STAFF AND ATHLETES – BUILDS AND MODERNIZES INSTITUTIONS

ERASMUS+ - BRIDGE TO MODERN EUROPEAN EDUCATION

By Bojana Milićević, Radio Montenegro

Acquiring new knowledge and skills, socializing and learning about different cultures and customs – that is how the second-year student from the Faculty of Economics in Podgorica, Katarina Popović, describes the key benefits of the Erasmus+ programme. From the beginning of February to mid-June this year, through international credit mobility, Katarina was in the Czech Republic where she attended courses in the HBS of the Technical University in Ostrava.

“During that time, I managed to align my duties in the faculty with socializing and trips, so I would emphasize that as the greatest advantage. Given the fact it is located in the heart

of Europe, I could find easy and inexpensive ways to visit neighbouring countries and cities. I met colleagues from all around the world: Asia, South America, Africa and, of course, the rest of Europe. I was surrounded by people who come from different cultures and managed to learn a lot about their customs, way of life, and absolutely different education systems”, says Katarina.

In general public, it is precisely the international credit mobility that is the first association to the Erasmus+ programme. Director of the National Erasmus+ office, Vanja Drljević, said that the interest of the young for this programme grew year after year. She explained that young people could study abroad in a partner higher education institution or get an internship in a company, research institute, laboratory or organization. As Drljević said, they could combine studying abroad with practical classes, i.e. internship “which additionally improves learning outcomes and development of skills”.

“Every academic year, several hundreds of students go to mobility abroad, while the total number of applications frequently exceeds the number of available places. Most frequent destinations are Spain, Italy, Poland, Germany, Austria, while experience of users shows that Erasmus+ is an opportunity that has a significant influence not only on the academic, but also on professional development of the young,” said Drljević.

The student Katarina confirms this too.

“Through mobility I acquired numerous skills and habits, that I think I can thank my living abroad for. I believe that all other students that opt for the exchange will not be mistaken, but only contribute to their education and personal development”, said Katarina.

She also said that the studies in the Czech Republic did not differ much from the studies in Montenegro.

“In their system the exams comprise final exam and sometimes a seminar, while in Podgorica before the exam sometimes we have seminars, presentations and we always take one or two mid-term exams. The volume of the teaching contents is also much smaller than in our system and it still includes everything that is important to learn”, said Katarina.

There is an increasing number of students who come to Montenegro through the Erasmus+ programme, most frequently from France, Poland, Spain, Turkey and Italy.



According to the Director of the National Erasmus+ office Vanja Drljević, foreign students are mostly happy and have positive experience. They emphasize hospitality, relaxed atmosphere and the opportunity not only to study but also to learn about new culture and the way of life.

As for the international credit mobility, Montenegro has more than 332 projects and it ensures to the students and to the academic staff to take part in various mobility programmes, said Drljević. She underlined that building capacities in the field of higher education – as one of the significant Erasmus+ programme – is focused on increasing the capacity of higher education institutions, bodies responsible for higher education, as well as on modernization of the higher education system, particularly when it comes to management and financing.

“We have a total number of 32 projects, out of which 7 are coordinated by Montenegrin higher-education institutions. Montenegrin projects for building capacities in higher education are focused on a broad range of areas, including the IT sector, agriculture, environment protection and protection of coastal areas, foreign languages, autonomy of higher education institutions, cooperation of universities and companies, digitalization, entrepreneurship, internationalization of universities, inclusion, etc.”, underlined Drljević.

In the projects within the Erasmus+ programme, University of Donja Gorica (UDG) has been active for more than ten years. In cooperation with reputable European partners, this education institution participated with more than 20 Erasmus+ projects, said Sandra Tinaj, PhD, General Manager of UDG, underlying that UDG was a coordinator in three Erasmus+ projects.

“The importance of the Erasmus+ programme exceeds the mere project approach – it builds institutions, strengthens individuals, modernizes systems and opens doors to European education area and shared values”, said Tinaj. She noted that the key benefits of participation in the Erasmus+ include international recognizability and reputation, modernization of study programmes and teaching methods, development of academic and administrative staff, opportunities for students, networking and strategic partnerships. Tinaj added that the role of a coordinator in an Erasmus+ project has a particular weight and responsibility but also brings a number of privileges as the leading role



in defining vision and goals, strengthening institutional integrity and capacity, access to larger funds and resources, visibility and leadership in national and regional context, but also sustainable development and impact after the end of the project.

Tinaj described her personal experience of participating in the Erasmus+ projects as rich, inspiring and professionally formative.

“Stays abroad within the project activities – regardless of whether those were study visits, trainings, workshops or coordination meetings – provided me with an opportunity to learn first-hand how the leading European institutions work, and what their education methodologies, organization and culture of academic life are. At the same time, those meetings provided precious opportunities to present innovative approaches, development initiatives and good practices from UDG, which affirmed our model of work and education visit”, said Tinaj. She underlined the importance of cooperation with the teaching staff from abroad and professional contacts that turned into durable partnerships, shared ideas and even friendships.

Erasmus+ programme also includes a scheme for secondary vocational education, where Montenegro has had an opportunity to participate since 2018.

“Our country has managed to do a significant part of the work in terms of numerous projects in the field of secondary vocational education, while the benefits from participating in these projects are more than visible. So far, we have had 5 mobility projects through pilot mobility scheme of the European Commission and 27 projects of building capacities within the Erasmus+ programme. In addition to secondary vocational schools, NGOs and educational institutions have been engaged in these projects”, said Drljević. She reminded

that Erasmus+ offered significant opportunities also in the field of sports, that "Montenegrin sport community is gradually recognizing". She added that an increasing number of sport clubs, organizations and alliances wanted to take part in the Erasmus+ projects.

"Benefits of this programme have been recognized in our sports community because it does not only bring gains in form of education, but also in form of broader connections with international partners, which can be illustrated by the total of 13 capacity building projects in the field of sports with various sports organizations from Montenegro participating in them, including the Montenegrin Olympic Committee (participating in the role of a coordinator), Paralympic Committee of Montenegro, Volleyball Alliance of Montenegro, etc.", concluded Drljević

JEAN MONNET – OPPORTUNITY FOR EUROPEANISATION OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

Jean Monnet action within the Erasmus+ programme, as an initiative that promotes studying, research and analysis of the European Union, as well as cherishing European values, is much less used than other actions within the higher education part of the programme. Director of the National Erasmus+ office, Vanja Drljević, explained that Jean Monnet programme was the opportunity to use modules, departments or centres of excellence to modernize study programmes in Montenegro, by introducing topics related to the European Union – its trends, values and policies.

"So far, we have had 9 Jean Monnet projects, and we can say that there is still room for using the potentials of this programme in a better way. Successful examples show how useful it can be, not only for strengthening teaching and research capacities, but also for accelerating the process of Europeanization of the education system, that is an important aspect of the Montenegrin path towards the accession to the EU. Given our process of integration into the EU, this programme is an extraordinary opportunity to know European Union better in various contexts. Although we cannot say that this program is being used in our country to a sufficient extent, it is important to underline that the projects we have had so far dealt with very relevant topics, like economic policy of the EU, law on the internal EU market, regional cooperation based on reconciliation,

challenges of the enlargement policy, migration, integration and intercultural dialogue", said Drljević.

ERASMUS+ MUST STAY A PRIORITY

Erasmus+ program je stub savremenog obrazovanja u Evropi, pa se njegove prednosti – od mobilnosti i povezivanja do reformi i inovacija – ne smiju uzimati zdravo za gotovo, rekla je doc. dr Sandra Tinaj, generalna menadžerka UDG-a.

"Upravo zato je važno nastaviti isticati, njegovati i unapređivati učešće u programu, ne samo radi benefita za institucije, već zbog ukupnog kvaliteta, relevantnosti i konkurentnosti sistema visokog obrazovanja Crne Gore" kazala je Tinaj.

WITH THE SUPPORT OF EU FUNDS TO THE MODERN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN NIKŠIĆ

By Stefan Bulatović, Ministry of European Affairs

Vocational education plays an important role in preparing young people for the labour market, because it ensures that they can acquire knowledge and skills that correspond to the requirements of modern society. To ensure that the vocational education system in Montenegro is up to date, integration of technology into the teaching process is an inevitable part of the chain. This has been recognized in the Innovation-Entrepreneurship Centre Tehnopolis, that helps the secondary vocational education establishments, with the support of the projects financed by the EU, to improve implementation of curricula and achieve learning outcomes.

With a view to strengthening competences of pupils in secondary vocational education, through two projects of cross-border cooperation, Tehnopolis ensured that the Secondary vocational school in Nikšić can modernize teaching in vocational subjects. Thanks to that, this establishment uses modern equipment today and provides pupils with an opportunity to acquire practical skills that are very important for an increasingly dynamic business environment.



put the parts together on a conveyor belt and used other parts to sort colours. This experience will be very helpful for further development within my education", says Viktor.

In addition to participation in competitions, the purchased equipment is used for the science fair that this school was organizing for the last two years within the event Science Days.

„I had an opportunity to participate in the science fair with my classmates. We presented projects of designing electrical installations for a house where we connected solar panels using the 'OFF grid' system. This helped me to improve skills in the field of designing, but also to better understand how the renewable energy sources function", says the pupil Ivan Koprivica and adds: "Working on this project, we have also developed some ideas for further improvements of the system by adding smart managing of energy consumption through Arduin, for example."

To improve the quality of teaching, it is particularly important to train the teaching stuff to implement innovative pedagogical methods. Since the teachers had not had any opportunity to work with the purchased machines in the past, the projects Innovanet and BEYOND organized practical cross-border trainings for them in robotics, mechatronics, work on CNC machines and 3D design. Thanks to that, the teachers can now apply the acquired knowledge in working with their students.

Professor Snežana Nikčević also confirms that the teaching process is different.

Through the project Innovanet, financed by Interreg IPA Programme of Cross-border Cooperation Croatia – Bosnia and Herzegovina – Montenegro 2014-2020, Tehnopolis equipped robotics and mechatronics room in the Secondary Vocational School, purchasing valuable equipment like 3D printer, CNC machine, set of educational robots, educational set for coding, little educational robot hands, solar micro power plant, micro wind power plant, sumobot and set of sensors for smart houses. This equipment is additionally supported by purchase of professional educational robot cell through the project BEYOND, supported by the funds of the Cross-Border Cooperation Serbia – Montenegro 2014-2020.

„Work with this kind of equipment was a real challenge for me – particularly starting the robot and its programming, which requires patience, preciseness and good technical knowledge", says Luka Lučić, a third-grade pupil in the course for web and mobile application developers.

„I would particularly emphasize the experience of working with the FANUC robot cell that I had the honour to present in the Days of Science in our school. Through extra curriculum activities we had an opportunity to connect the knowledge from various fields, which helped me to apply theoretical knowledge to concrete practical examples."

Viktor Smolović, a student in the course of electrical engineering – energy sector, that this year participates in the international competition Balkan Junior in Slovenia, shares his opinion.

„The task is very challenging, but our work is made easier by a 3D printer and Arduino set. We have made parts using the 3D printer, electronics, engines, sensors and plates. We





„The difference is major. Before new equipment was introduced, the teaching was more theoretical and based on simulations. Now the pupils have an opportunity to work directly on modern devices, which increases the quality of teaching process, interactive work and understanding of complex systems“, says Nikčević for Eurokaz.

As she says, there is more teamwork, experimenting and development of creative solutions, which used to be limited earlier. She has also noted an increased interest of pupils for vocational subjects, as well as their better self-confidence when working on technical problems.

„Pupils increasingly often take initiative to take part in extra curriculum activities like competitions, workshops and projects in cooperation with IPC Tehnopolis and other associates“, says Nikčević.

As she noted, cross-border trainings had been very useful, the most serious challenge being mastering new technologies in a short period of time.

„The lecturers were very professional and thorough. We got an insight into new trends in education and industry, and we also had an opportunity to connect with other schools and experts in the field“, says Nikčević.

Her colleague Vladana Mirković says that trainings for 3D printing, CNC technology and managing robot hand were particularly useful because they ensured acquisition of practical knowledge and self-confidence in working with the equipment.

„During the training for 3D printing, one of the challenges was to master software tools for modelling and preparing

files for printing, while with CNC technology and the robot hand it was of key importance to master preciseness skills.“ Says Mirković.

Jovana Miličić, who teaches Designing of micro-controllers, adds that Arduino equipment makes the teaching process much more dynamic. „Now we can do practical activities like managing LED diodes, engines and sensors“, she says.

Using new technologies has had a positive impact on the interest in enrolment into this school, and thus the number of pupils who enrolled in the last couple of years increased significantly. For example, in the academic year 2021/2022 they enrolled 367 pupils, while in 2024/25 the number was the record-high 526.

School management is very happy with these results. They underline how important it is to cooperate with the local community, including the Tehnopolis projects with the EU support.

„This cooperation ensures that we can modernize the teaching process and provide pupils with the education that follows modern trends in technology. All of this improves the quality of the teaching process, motivates pupils and makes them more secure and creative. In the end, it opens better possibilities for their employment“, says Milisav Kosović, the school principal.

Thanks to the new equipment, the school has been making significant results in the municipal, national and international competitions.

„Our school is the only school from Montenegro that is a member of the Association of Technical Schools of the Balkans (Balkan Junior) and every year we participate in the competition. It was precisely the purchased equipment that ensured implementation of the practical part of the competition when we hosted it. In addition, we can also boast with the successes in the competitions in informatics, robotics, energy and other areas“, concluded Kosović.

Tehnopolis is particularly proud that their projects bring concrete benefits to the local community.

„What I am particularly glad to say is that our projects keep producing results even after they are formally finished, which shows that Tehnopolis always tries to make a permanent change. Enthusiasm of teachers contributes to this. Without their support, we could not achieve such significant results“, says Đorđije Malović, CEO of Tehnopolis.

He has emphasized the importance of cross-border projects for improvements in employability of young people.

„Our activities are largely focused on improving the knowledge and skills of young people so that they could successfully respond to the future labour market needs. Support of the European Union through these programmes is of key importance, because it ensures connections between education and economy. In that way, we do not only keep young people in Montenegro, but build competitive economy for the future“, concludes Malović.



Foto: Anđela Nikčević

– how to use it to make souvenirs, but also liquid soap and candles.

“When I was 16, I started working in a bar to earn money for my education – first I financed my secondary school education in the medical school in Podgorica and later my University education in the Faculty of Psychology. One of the things that I still remember from my job in the bar was the hassle of carrying coffee bags. One day I was sitting in a cafe in Cetinje having my coffee and I thought – what if we recycled coffee. And thus, everything actually started. The team changed a lot, people came and went, but we are making a consistent progress,” says the young man from Cetinje who turned 25 last weekend.

Within a year, he managed to collect almost six tons of coffee and paper and managed to recycle and compost a third of that.

„I started using coffee to make souvenirs, and managed to develop a liquid soap on the basis of coffee that is also very good as a body scrub. I made candles too. However, for soap and candles I needed a huge amount of raw material, so I realized that it was not so profitable here, at least not in the beginning, so I started working on producing small briquettes made of coffee and paper, and I used them as a mosquito repellent, while in the last two months I actually used them for heating“, says Marko, showing a souvenir that he made.



MARKO MILAČIĆ MAKES SOUVENIRS FROM RECYCLED COFFEE

ALCHEMIST OF THE Z GENERATION

By Svetlana Mandić, Independent Daily Vijesti

Mnogima Many people find coffee to be the best wake-up thing and they cannot start a day without it. There are still people who like „reading“ from coffee cups and look for fortune telling „material“ in the symbols appearing at the bottom.

Coffee inspired a new idea for Marko Milačić from Cetinje, and coffee grounds served for an unprecedented challenge

A TRUCK COULD NOT DESTROY THEM

Objašnjava He explains that he made the souvenir using old moulds, that in the meantime he got the new ones, but that he is waiting for raw material - some organic glue.

He says he can make 20 souvenirs, but since he uses a natural drying process, it takes ten days for them to dry. He tested the hardness by running a truck over them. They remained hard, and he gave one of the tested souvenirs to the journalist of Vijesti.

"In addition to the souvenir making technology that I presented in public, there is another technology I could have a patent for, and I would like to do that. If I did that it would be only us in Montenegro who could produce souvenirs from coffee remains in that way. For getting the patent, I need to cooperate with universities and I have not had such an opportunity so far. I also need about 2,500 euros and the opportunity to do this work, because right now I cannot. We have about 5,000 tons of the raw material per year, and if we manage to get the patent and develop that production, we could generate 20% of the gross domestic product of Montenegro, at best", claims the young psychologist from Cetinje who decided to enrol statistics two years ago.



Foto: Marko Milačić

LEGISLATION AS AN OBSTACLE

In September last year, the start-up established by him and Igor Radulović, an IT specialist from Podgorica, turned into a limited liability company „Salvage" aimed at affirming production, advertising and sale of circular products. But not the coffee products yet.

„If I want to have people bringing me coffee waste and if I want to store it, I have to have a certificate from the Environment Protection Agency, and for all of that I need a huge piece of land, a large building and 30 thousand euros on my account. At the moment, I only have a machine and the idea, so I am making the souvenir only for personal needs or to give it as a present to some tourists. I think that legislative framework should be changed so that we can fully legalize this production."

However, the doors of the European Union countries are already wide open for him, and he has offers from Germany and Austria, but he is not yet ready to make that step. For now, he applied with various ideas, because he certainly has many, to all the advertisements that the state launched and he will see what happens.

"I am trying to be proactive – in the surrounding that I grew up and live in, that is my only way out. I am actually developing a couple of things that are related to circular economy and blockchain, which is the way to tokenize waste. I have another business I am developing, and it is related to helping small and medium-size enterprises to implement AI tools in their business operations."

Although doing circular economy and making recycled coffee souvenirs is not related much to psychology at the first sight, Miloš thinks that it is precisely how he is accomplishing the mission of his profession.

"In the Middle Ages there were no psychologists. Psychology is a relatively new science. It has been in existence since 19th century. However, if one refers to Jung and most of the known psychologists, even to Freud, we can see that they refer to the alchemists that tried to make gold out of common ground or anything else. I think I have absolutely accomplished my mission in my profession, in a way, at a deeper level with this initiative, because I am creating new value out of something that is considered to be waste".

Hearing the statement that he is then an alchemist of the modern time, laughingly Marko adds – "an alchemic of the Z generation".



Foto: Marko Milačić

He thinks that people who are always ready to support new ideas and to stand behind them, including him, are rather on the margins of the society, but that mediocrities are very much present. He says that the strongest resistance in the implementation of his ideas came from the people in high positions, both in the municipality and in the state and also from allegedly successful businessmen. Young people, as he says, are rather passive, and pathological cronyism is the most difficult obstacle for an idea to succeed.

"Young people are aware of the situation in our society, and they do not have enough courage to try to make something. I know many people who had support both from the family and from the surroundings and they managed to succeed, but unfortunately not in Montenegro. Statistics show that young people want secure employment because here, as soon as you have a stagnation, you are guilty and they forget about you. I think that some people really gave a contribution to the promotion of entrepreneurship in the last 30 years, but I am afraid that today they cannot make any difference between innovation and entrepreneurs. I respect every entrepreneur, but I would not like to put an equality sign, with all due respect, between a taxi driver who stands in front of a bus station and a guy like me who has been trying to make something for two years and due to numerous attempts mistakes and other things has no hope that he will see any return".

TEHNOPOLIS MISSION – CONNECTING ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND INNOVATION

Together with Igor Radulović, Miloš participated in the RISE project that has been implemented since 2019 by the Innovation-Entrepreneurship Centre Tehnopolis together with their partners. During this project, that is to be finished

at the end of this year, more than 200 young entrepreneurs from Western Balkan countries got support, and one idea was recycling coffee.

"RISE project, where within five cycles young people between 16 and 35 could apply, put in the focus corporate social responsibility, i.e. social entrepreneurship, that is different from pure entrepreneurship because a part of the profit is given back to the community, and it includes hard-to-employ persons. RISE project had elements of green and transition-circular entrepreneurship. That is something that makes this project different and after the RISE project ends, Tehnopolis will continue providing support to social entrepreneurs and social innovators, because through RISE we saw that it is an amazing potential and that such people should be given support", said Anđela Nikčević, manager of projects in Tehnopolis.

She explains that, during the RISE project, young people did not have to apply with a fully developed business idea. It was sufficient that it is recognized that they deal with social problems and think about solutions to be implemented in local communities and have certain potential to develop the idea.

One of the negotiation chapters with the EU that Montenegro has temporarily closed is Chapter 20 that is related to entrepreneurship and industrial policy and aims at encouraging entrepreneurship and innovation. EU underlines entrepreneurship and industry as priorities for the future of European economy and sets three basic pillars to define this chapter: entrepreneurship policy, industrial policy and sectorial policy focused on increasing entrepreneurship in the market. EU particularly encourages entrepreneurship of young people, beginners in business, persons with disabilities and women, as well as investing into energy efficiency, environment protection and introduction of the system of quality management and international quality standards. All of these were goals even before the RISE projects but also constituted one of the Tehnopolis missions – connecting entrepreneurship and innovation.

"All our programmes and all initiatives that Tehnopolis is implementing connect entrepreneurship and innovation. Actually, the core of this organization is bringing innovation into entrepreneurship. It connects and supports innovative enterprises, innovative individuals and start-ups to go out and be better prepared for the market. Marko is our tenant, he went through the programme in the incubator and by doing that, with the launched call he applied with the idea

to participate in the pre-acceleration programme," says Nikčević.

"Participation in the RISE project meant a lot for me in terms of connections, development of complete ideas and in terms of positioning myself, in social entrepreneurship, in a different way", says Marko.

CHAPTER 20 – FOUNDATION FOR MODERN, INNOVATIVE AND COMPETITIVE ECONOMY

Support to young creative people and their innovative ideas is one of the key commitments that Montenegro has made within Chapter 20 – Entrepreneurship and Industrial policy, says Predrag Zenović, Chief Negotiator of Montenegro with the EU for Vijesti.

"In that respect, the stories like this one, about this young man who translated his unique idea into concrete business and registered LLC, is the best illustration of how important and possible it is to translate ideas into sustainable business models, with appropriate institutional and financial support. He and people like him are the best ambassadors of what we do through this chapter – we build foundations for modern, innovative and competitive economy".

As he emphasized, initiatives like this one showed that young people did not have to rely solely on the Employment Office, but that they could create their own business future.

"This is precisely the task of the institutions implementing European reforms - to develop clear policies, concrete programmes and available sources of funds to ensure that young people can create their own business future. Through industrial policies of Montenegro 2024-2028, as the umbrella strategic document in this chapter, we have recognized young people and women as the key stakeholders of changes and development. Therefore we developed a number of measures for their strengthening – from grants, support to purchase equipment, mentorship, to access to finances and digital tools", says Zenović.

As he says, specialized programmes for self-employment and development of start-ups, as well as measures implemented with the support of IPA funds, create business environment conducive for starting and developing small enterprises, particularly in the field of green economy, digital transformation and creative industries.

"Joining the EU, we will not only adopt its standards, but also establish mechanisms that directly help young people to stay, create and make success in Montenegro", said the

Chief Negotiator of Montenegro with the EU.

Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation also emphasizes that the Innovation Fund, through its programme lines, recognizes the importance of support to young creative people with innovative ideas, which is very important for Chapter 20.

Milačić started with a start-up and reached the level of a limited liability company – from an idea to the opportunity to create a sustainable business model. As the responsible Minister said to Vijesti, the Innovation Fund put a particular focus on the support to development of early stages of start-ups, because „that is precisely when ideas are shaped into concrete products and services that can become competitive in the market."

"The programme of support to the early stages of start-ups has been designed to provide support to highly prospective teams aimed at validating their business ideas and proving future usefulness of their new product, service, process or technology – through development of the first prototype or minimum sustainable product. Programme beneficiaries get grants and mentorship support that helps them in implementing the first stage of deep market research, starting product development, establishing concept of business model and preparing for next stage of fund raising and further development," explained the Ministry.

By 3 June, the teams of two to five members or micro enterprises in private ownership (LLC) registered in Montenegro for not longer than two years at the time of application can apply for support and can get maximum 30 thousand euros per project and additional five thousand for mentorship support.

"In addition to the Programme of support for developing start-ups, other programmes implemented by the Fund are particularly relevant for this target group: Programme of support to implementation of training activities in the field of smart specialization and Programme for encouraging innovation culture. Both of these programmes have a goal to make a continuous contribution to increasing Montenegro's competitiveness and building economy based on innovation and knowledge", they said to Vijesti.

The Innovation Fund allocated 2.4 million euros to these three programmes, and for the programmes of strengthening innovativeness of micro, small and medium-size enterprises, checking the innovative concept and innovation voucher programme.

TRADEMARKS AND COPYRIGHT ARE MORE PROTECTED, WHILE AUTHORS, PATENT HOLDERS AND BRAND OWNERS HAVE EASIER ACCESS TO JUSTICE

by Danijela Lasica, TV Vijesti

Among the goods that are most frequently counterfeited in Montenegro, there are famous global brands: Nike, Adidas, Hugo Boss, Armani... Only in the first four months of this year market inspectorate conducted 178 controls, issued 12 misdemeanour orders, and seized goods worth more than 1,000 euros.

At the end of 2024, Montenegro temporarily closed Chapter 7, which was a confirmation given by the European administration that the legislative framework for the protection of intellectual property rights is aligned with EU standards.

"Closing this chapter was assessed as recognition of the commitment and results Montenegro made in the field of intellectual property", said the Ministry of Economic Development.

This means that trademarks and copyright is now more protected, while authors, patent holders and brand owners have an easier access to justice. In practice that is felt the best by market inspectors, that implement controls in the market on a daily basis – from boutiques to flea market.

"We control copyright, trademarks, industrial design, patents. However, the focus of our work is on the copyright and trademarks", said Marina Janković, the chief market inspector.

Among the goods that are most frequently counterfeited in Montenegro, there are famous global brands: Nike, Adidas, Hugo Boss, Armani... Only in the first four months this year



Foto: Marina Janković

market inspectorate conducted 178 controls, issued 12 misdemeanour orders, and seized goods worth more than 1,000 euros.

"Counterfeits cannot be sold, that is prohibited. For example, if somebody counterfeits a trademark on some goods and sells that, we will certainly seize the goods and undertake other measures. Consumers can see by the price whether an item is original or not", says Janković.

Thanks to the new legislation, authors now have the opportunity to deposit their works as a proof, and sanctions are stricter. This encourages innovation, because authors have legal certainty.

"Legislation now ensures that the authors can prove their rights in an easier manner, including the possibility to deposit their works as evidence in case of violation", said the Ministry of Economic Development.

However, there is still a lack of awareness about copyright. Janković says that they are aware that there are violations, but the authors rarely report them.

"Holders of rights decide to seek protection in court proceedings before a commercial court. For copyright, to be precise, we haven't had any request for protection of copyrights in the last two years", she explains.

A joint action with Customs and the Police was conducted in April, during which the goods were seized and several violations detected. Action was conducted in Podgorica and in Tuzi.



“We had results, of course – the goods were seized. However, they come back continuously. We cannot be present in the field all the time, because we have other activities, but we stop them in a way and sanction them. When a person pays a fine once, we think he will not continue selling the goods”, says Janković.

And fines are not small.

“As for copyright, criminal liability is envisaged, and when it comes to trademarks there is the offence of unauthorized use of trademarks in documentation, advertising, trade or on trade names, for which a threatened fine is 1500 to 20 thousand euro for legal entity and 500 to 2000 euros for responsible person in a legal entity and natural person, and 1300 to 6000 euros for entrepreneurs”, clarified the chief market inspector.

“We explore all possibilities in a commercial entity, check whether it has a proof of origin for the goods and then we contact the holder of the rights or representative and agent of the holder of the rights and establish the facts that way. In principle, on the basis of a picture or a detail they can establish if the item is an original or not. We have a product with us, we can send it, although holders of the rights for some of these brands are in Montenegro, so, in that case, there is no dilemma, we establish that, make further sale impossible and the buyer, of course, gets a refund”, she adds.

It is not only flea markets or bazaars that branded goods are also sold for ten euros. Inspectorate had a request to protect one famous brand and recently they started controlling another one through a bit larger selling points.

„We had an example of UGG shoes, but they turned out to be original, although the buyer claimed they were not.

We are about to work on protection of a brand right now in larger shops. I planned to do larger shops where branded items are sold, so we will see. With the support of the holder of rights we will probably establish things that are not good, but if not, we will be expecting the buyers to report irregularities”, says Janković.

Closing of Chapter 7 brings new obligations but also protection mechanisms. That is a signal, not only to European Union, but also to citizens and economic entities: their rights are better protected now – in the market, but also on the Internet.

ZATVARANJE POGAVLJA 7

- JAČA ZAŠTITA INOVACIJA I KREATIVNOSTI
- BOLJA KONTROLA FALSIFIKATA
- KORAK BLIŽE EU

THE PORT OF BAR IS BUILDING GREEN FUTURE WITH THE SUPPORT OF EU FUNDS

By Stefan Bulatović, Ministry of European Affairs

Decarbonization of transportation sector is one of the key elements of green transition. Special challenge on this path comes from maritime industry, given its important impact on the environment. These challenges have been continuously recognized by the Port of Bar, which, with the support of the European Union funds, works actively on establishing environmentally sustainable business model.

Since 2007, the Port of Bar implemented as many as 34 projects financed through Interreg mechanisms of



After the Action Plan was made, we started implementing the measures. Through the SuMo project, supported by the Interreg IPA programme of cross-border cooperation Italy – Albania – Montenegro 2014-2020, we purchased a hybrid bus worth 277,000 euros, for which more than 85% of the funds have been secured from EU funds. It serves the purpose of transporting employees within the port area, as well as employees in the companies doing activities in the Free Zone of the Port of Bar and guests.

„Starting using the hybrid bus significantly reduced the use of private cars, which is a big step towards meeting sustainable development goals of the Port of Bar, primarily through reduction of glass house gasses“, says Stanišić.

With a view to promoting electric mobility and reducing CO₂, the Port bought electric car and a charger, thanks to participation in the project EnterNETMob, which was supported by the Interreg Mediterranean programme of transnational cooperation 2014-2020.

One of the pillars of green transformation of the Port is the improvement of energy efficiency. Business operations of this shareholders company were burdened for years by huge consumption of electricity, which meant huge costs. To respond to that challenge, the Port of Bar, through SMARTPORT project financed by Interreg IPA cross-border

cooperation, using more than 5 million euros of EU grants. Out of that number, eight projects were dedicated to green transition, which is at the same time one of the strategic goals for development of the largest Montenegrin port.

Aware of its environmental and economic vulnerability, the Port of Bar participated in the SUPAIR 2018 project, supported by the funds of the transnational programme Interreg ADRION, and started development of an Action plan for sustainable and low-carbon Port of Bar. This document served as the basis for implementing seven projects focused on application of green measures proposed in that plan.

„Faced with the threat of climate change, we put improving energy efficiency in the Port of Bar high on the list of our priorities. Transport sector significantly contributes to the emissions of Glass House Gasses, so therefore, ‘greening’ of the port is the key step in reducing them. At the same time, we must be aware that the operation of the port will be jeopardized due to the expected increase of the sea level, so adaptation to these changes is of exceptional importance“, says Rade Stanišić, head of the Service for managing international projects in the Port of Bar.

According to his words, the basic goal of the Action Plan is to have the Port of Bar improve its energy performance through transferring to more efficient and more sustainable forms of using energy.

„The Plan contains a number of concrete measures that lay the foundations for environmental modernization of the port operations and preserving the environment“, adds Stanišić.



PROJEKTI ZELENE TRANZICIJE



LUKA BAR
PORT OF BAR

cooperation programme Italy – Albania – Montenegro, purchased 73 modern LED searchlights that replaced 102 searchlights that were more than 40 years old, which ensured savings in consumption and better lighting.

„Although they require higher initial investment, the new technologies like LED lighting offer longer working life, lower maintenance costs and superior performances in comparison to numerous conventional lighting techniques. This is how significant are the improvements in security, operational and environmental performances that have been made“, explains Stanišić.

Thanks to this investment, the annual savings exceed 50,000 kWh of electricity, while the CO₂ emissions were reduced by 31 tons. In addition to environmental and economic benefits, lighting on terminals has been improved, which in its turn improved security in the port area.

On the wave of the results achieved so far, the Port of Bar continued working on the green transformation also in the current programme period 2021-2027, securing almost 2 million euro of new EU funds for this field so far. Three new projects are implemented through the Interreg IPA ADRION

programme, while two are supported from the Interreg Euro-MED programme.

„Through the RENEWPORT and ADRIREC projects, they plan to install solar panels to increase energy efficiency and renewable energy sources. In addition to investment, the project SUPERALFUEL will include a study of use of alternative fuels, like hydrogen, ammonia and methanol, while the WATERBRIDGING project will explore the possibility of supplying ships with electricity from the coast (OPS)“, says Stanišić.

Within the Interreg IPA South Adriatic programme, in partnership with the Ministry of Maritime Affairs of Montenegro and port authorities of Italy and Albania, the Port of Bar is implementing a strategic project SA CONNECTIVITY.

„With a view to strengthening port sustainability, we plan to develop technical documentation for the upgrade of infrastructure and building a new parking lot. We are currently improving the system of video surveillance in the Port of Bar in the value of 99,500 euros, and we also plan to purchase the equipment for parking space within the port, including ramps, posts with LED lamps, RFID readers

and software, as well as the equipment for environment protection", says Stanišić.

Successful implementation of these projects brought to the Port of Bar firmer reputation of a reliable and responsible partner in international cooperation. In addition to green initiatives, they are continuously working on the improvements of multi-modal and inter-modal transport, digitalization and security.

„This comprehensive approach shows that in the Port of Bar we are not happy with the achieved results, particularly when it comes to environmental sustainability. On the contrary, aware of the climate change threat, we keep working with even stronger ambition and clearer goal on reducing the missions and position Bar as a modern and environmentally responsible port in the Adriatic“, concludes Stanišić.

TRADEMARK “GOOD FROM MONTENEGRO” “AN EXAMPLE OF INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY LAW

By Danica Janković, TV Nova

Closing Chapter 7 – Intellectual Property Law shows that Montenegro has aligned its legislation with that of the European Union, protecting itself from counterfeits and opening the door for domestic products in the European market, say collocutors of Nova. One of the examples that illustrates the importance of this chapter is the Trademark “Good from Montenegro”. If, when purchasing, we look for the groceries with the trademark “Good from Montenegro” we can be certain that we will buy products into the production of which much more was invested and that they are worthy of their price, say the consumers.

Such groceries, as the collocutors of Nova say, are worth more in the European market too, if they have

the trademark “Good from Montenegro” attached. That is, as they explain, the industrial property law contained in the Chapter 7 that was closed late last year in the negotiations with the European Union. In the line ministry and Chamber of Commerce they underline what the closing of that particular chapter means for producers in Montenegro.

“This could influence development of a better environment for investment and for protection of our innovation. It helps and creates more secure environment for working in this field. As for industrial policy and entrepreneurship, access to funds has been improved for our small and medium-size enterprises. And naturally, stronger economic growth is expected”, says State Secretary in the Ministry of European Affairs Biljana Papović.

The Chamber of Commerce says that the products with the trademark “Good from Montenegro” are more valuable.

“That is a label of quality, it increases credibility of the product both on the domestic and on the foreign markets. In the European Union, the consumers





appreciate local and protected products, which ensures better market positioning of the products that have this trademark", explains the Director of the Sector for Quality in the Chamber of Commerce, Mladen Perazić.

The appreciation of Europeans for domestic products is well known also to the family Miranović that is active in rural tourism and frequently has foreign guests. In addition to jams, they have a rose liqueur that foreigners adore.

"Every morning, before sunrise, I pick roses. Petals are easy to separate. Only petals are used for the liqueur. They are put into a jar. Do you see the difference in liqueur? Every petal is put in, every petal is precious", this is how Ivana Miranović describes the work in her holding. She appreciates the impressions shared by the buyers or people who taste their jams made of plums, apricots, pears and figs prepared in a traditional way. They are also known for special jam with dark chocolate that they intend to apply for the trademark "Good from Montenegro".

"As we are getting closer to the European Union, we will apply for the trademark with other products too, because our intention is to try to get a position in the European market. But there is a catch. We have been communicating with the Chamber of Commerce that is issuing this certificate. They can issue it to business entities, i.e. entrepreneurs and companies, and we are

a holding, which is something in between a natural person and an economic entity," explains Duško Miranović.

The collocutors of Nova also think that guarantees enshrined for the producers in Chapter 7 will be more available after European Union opens its door for Montenegro.

"It is important to note that the full benefits will be visible only after the membership in the European Union, because we will have access to structural funds and to the single market and, of course, see the full benefits," said Papović.

The Chamber of Commerce emphasizes that the trademark "Good from Montenegro" means that the product has met strict production and safety standards.

"It also serves to better branding of Montenegro as a country that quality products originate from, since in the European Union there is a system of protected products. Using this trademark can be one step towards integration of Montenegrin products into that system", said Perazić.

In addition to trademark, Chapter 7 refers also to the rights to preserve patents, industrial design and copyrights in arts. Closing this chapter means that Montenegro has protected itself from counterfeits in those areas and aligned its laws with those in the EU, conclude the collocutors of Nova.

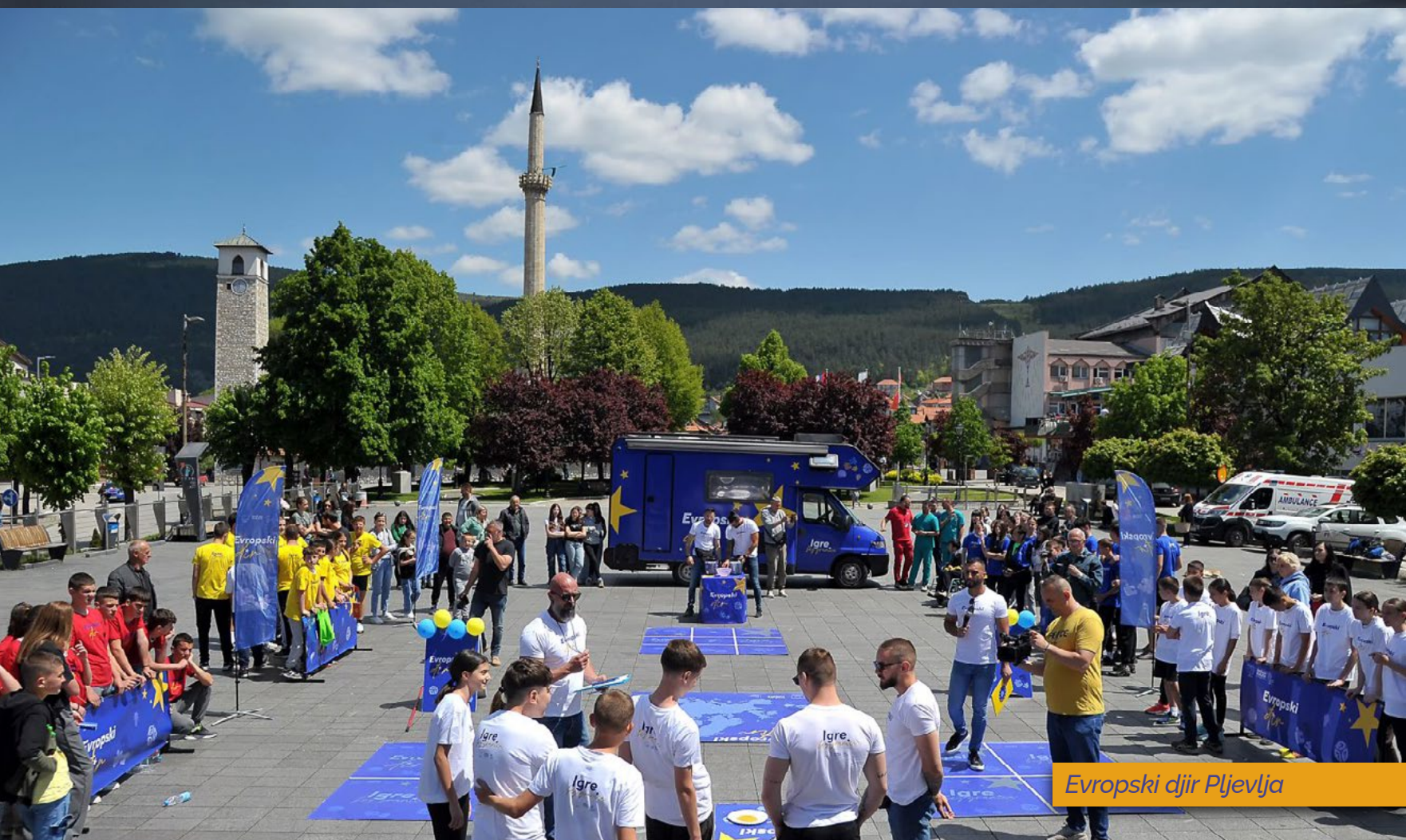


Dan Evrope, Žabljak





Evropski djir Berane



Evropski djir Pljevlja



Evropski djir u Baru



Evropski djir u Petnjici



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Igre bez granica, Niksic, 9. maj



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*Zgrada Vlada u bojama EU povodom
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