

NEWSLETTER

OF THE MINISTRY OF EUROPEAN AFFAIRS



NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2023.

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Editorial

Dear reader,

Twenty-sixth Newsletter on European Integration offers and overview of the key developments and activities in the EU accession process that took place in the fourth quarter of 2023.

The Ministry of European Affairs is committed to coordinating the work of the negotiation structure and intensifying activities aimed at producing tangible results in all chapters, ensuring partnership and cooperation with other bodies, and strengthening the ties and relations with EU institutions and EU Member States so that Montenegro can take its place in the European family as one of equal partners.

During the previous three months, we continued implementing the activities aimed at coordinating the negotiation process, IPA, cooperating with local self-governments and civil sector, as well as organizing appropriate activities and campaigns.

We believe that this Newsletter contributes to raising the level of information, understanding and awareness among our citizens about the accession process and future Montenegro's membership in the EU.

MINISTRY OF EUROPEAN AFFAIRS

THE ACCESSION NEGOTIATIONS

29. XI 2023

MINISTER GORČEVIĆ MET THE EUROPEAN COMMISSIONAIRE VARHELYI IN BRUSSELS

Minister of European Affairs **Maida Gorčević** talked in Brussels with the European Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement, **Oliver Varhelyi**. European Commissioner said that Montenegro, after a period of stagnation, had to use favourable internal and external circumstances to meet the key requirements and implement the necessary reforms.

Varhelyi expressed the expectation that Montenegro would manage to mobilize all its capacities in the period ahead to meet the interim benchmarks set in the chapters 23 and 24 that are crucial for further course of accession negotiations with the European Union.

„I believe that all prerequisites have been met so that the stable and pro-European Government,



together with the functional legislative and judicial branch of power, can intensify reforms in the field of the rule of law. It is in our common interest to speed up the negotiation process. We count on Montenegro and keep strongly supporting you on that path”, said the Commissioner.

Minister Gorčević conveyed the message of full commitment and determination of the Government to work together with the other two branches of power on ensuring that the remaining obligations in the field of the rule of law are met as soon as possible. „I am here to convey the message about the consensus of political parties, but also to express strong commitment of all ministers in the Government to the obligations stemming from our EU agenda”, said Gorčević.

The fact that in today's meeting we have managers of all relevant institutions in the field of the rule of law speaks for itself about our joint commitment, joint responsibility and strong awareness about the moment that we are in”, said the Minister of European Affairs, **Maida Gorčević**.

She underlined that the election of the seventh judge of the Constitutional Court that happened the day before was a good sign in that context and at the same time a strong encouragement to our country on the path towards its membership in the EU. She added that having the complete Constitutional Court would definitely open a new perspective in the accession negotiations.

Minister Gorčević emphasized that, in addition to these appointments, Montenegro was working hard on the implementation of all necessary activities that would lead to meeting the remaining interim benchmarks in the chapters 23 and 24, particularly in the fields of judiciary, combating corruption and organized crime, freedom of expression and media.

23. XI 2023

MEETING OF THE MANAGERS OF ALL RELEVANT INSTITUTIONS IN THE FIELD OF THE RULE OF LAW WITH HIGH REPRESENTATIVES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

In the meeting with high representatives of the European Commission, the Ministry of European Affairs brought together all the managers of relevant institutions in the field of the rule of law. The meeting was attended by the minister **Maida Gorčević** and the ministers of justice and interior, **Andrej Milović** and **Daniilo Šaranović**.

Acting President of the Judicial Council **Vesna Simović Žvicer**, acting President of the Supreme Court **Vesna Vučković**, President of the High Court in Podgorica **Tatjana Begović**, and Chief Special Prosecutor **Uladimir Novović** represented the judicial branch of power in the meeting.

On behalf of the Police, the meeting was attended by the acting Director of the Police Directorate **Nikola Terzić**, and heads of the Division for Criminal Intelligence and Group in the Special Police Division **Ivan Jokić** and **Vukosav Ivanović**. The meeting was attended also by Jelena Perović, Director of the Agency for Prevention of Corruption.

On this occasion, the Head of the Unit for Montenegro and Serbia in the Directorate General of the European Commission for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations **Michael Miller** said that Montenegro should focus on meeting the interim benchmarks in the chapters 23 and

24 in the field of the rule of law. In his opinion that would be a significant turning point in the process of Montenegro's accession to the European Union, and ensure that the country can speed up the accession process and start closing the remaining negotiation chapters.

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16. XI 2023

16TH MEETING OF THE EU-MONTENEGRO SUBCOMMITTEE FOR ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ISSUES AND STATISTICS

Sixteenth meeting of the Subcommittee between European Union and Montenegro for economic and financial issues and statistics took place in Podgorica.

The meeting was opened by the Minister of European Affairs **Maida Gorčević** who commented on the achieved progress and remaining obligations in the chapters 17 – Economic and Monetary Policy, 18 – Statistics, 32 – Financial Supervision and 33 Financial and Budget Provisions.

„Our economic priority for the period ahead is certainly to implement fully the programme 'Europe Now 2', that will use improvements of economic and fiscal parameters to pave a clear path towards brighter and healthier economic future. That will have a strong effect primarily on the stabilisation of public finances and economic diversification, which will result in a much better assessments in the next

EC Report”, emphasized the Minister Gorčević.

The meeting was co-chaired by the State Secretary in the Ministry of Finance **Bojana Bošković** and **Cindy van den Boogert**, deputy head of the Unit for Montenegro and Serbia in the Directorate General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations of the European Commission (DG NEAR).

Deputy Head of the Unit for Montenegro and Serbia in DG NEAR **van der Boogert** emphasized that the enlargement process was high on the EU agenda and that Montenegro should use the momentum to speed up the reforms and stimulate the enlargement process. She underlined the importance of the new Growth Plan for the Western Balkans that was designed to bring Western Balkans closer to the EU through encouraging crucial reforms and supporting WB countries with a view to achieving stronger development of their economies.



18. XI 2023

PRESIDENT OF MONTENEGRO JAKOV MILATOVIĆ DISCUSSED MONTENEGRO'S PROGRESS ON THE EUROPEAN INTEGRATION PATH WITH THE HEADS OF NEGOTIATION GROUPS

President of Montenegro **Jakov Milatović** met with the heads of the negotiation groups to discuss Montenegro's progress on the European integration path. He emphasized the importance of high quality and professional negotiation structure in that process.

The President informed the participants about the priorities in the internal and foreign policy, key meetings and summits he attended in the period behind and the strong support that numerous countries expressed regarding the acceleration of Montenegro's European path.

State Secretary of the Ministry of European Affairs **Milena Žižić** presented Montenegro's achievements in the negotiation process, which was followed by all participants presenting their work in their respective chapters and the key priorities and challenges that they are faced with in their fields.

In conclusion, President Milatović said that the process of EU integration was a joint effort that required connections and cooperation of all branches of power and all institutions since it was the only way to achieve the desired results.



13. XI 2023

13TH MEETING OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE FOR INNOVATION, HUMAN RESOURCES, INFORMATION SOCIETY AND SOCIAL POLICY

13th meeting of the Subcommittee for innovation, human resources, information society and social policy took place on 13th October in Brussels in a hybrid format. The meeting discussed the results achieved within the negotiation chapters 2 – Freedom of movement for workers, 10 – Information society and media, 19 – Social policy and employment, 25 – Science and Research and 26 – Education and culture.

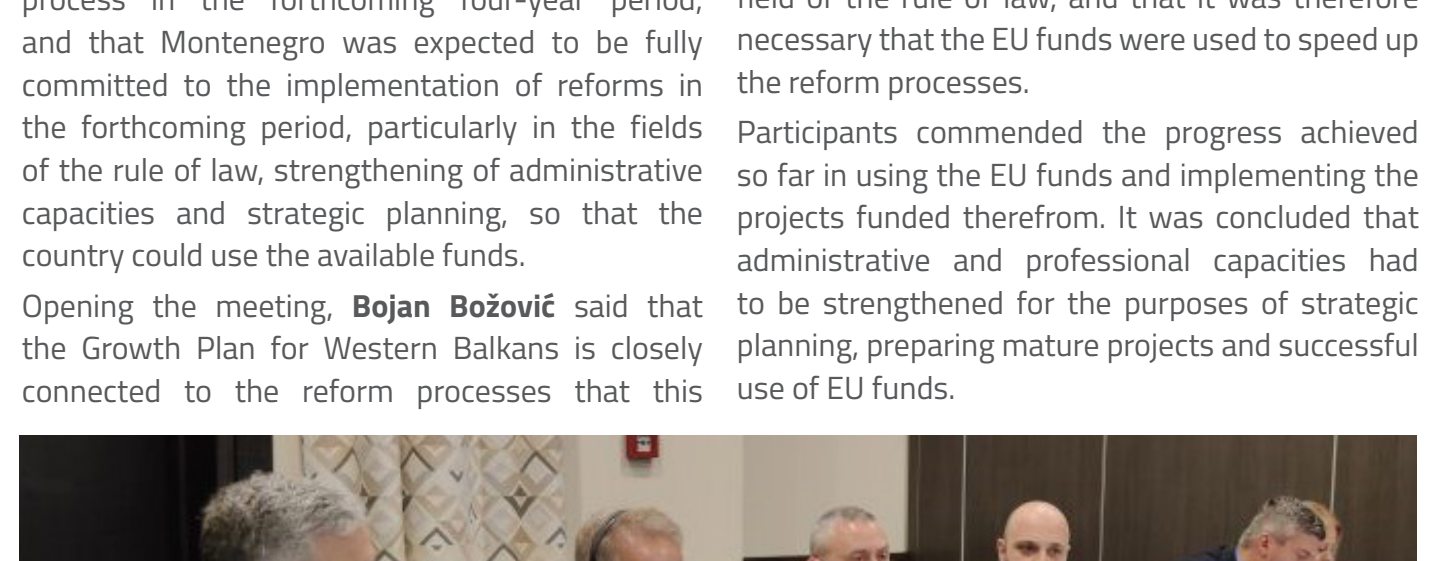
On behalf of the European Commission, the co-chair, Deputy Head of the Unit for Montenegro and Serbia in the Directorate General of the EC for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Policy **Cindy van den Boogert** said that, in the current geopolitical context, where EU enlargement is again high on the agenda, a new opportunity emerged for Montenegro. She invited for more attention to be dedicated to meeting the closing benchmarks and said that the Commission expected Montenegro to encourage and accelerate functioning of the education system, digitalization in the field of social policy, and improvement of the conditions for gender equality.

“The changed geopolitical circumstances made the process of approximation of Western Balkans to the

EU even more urgent than before. We need to hear the messages that are coming from the EU officials about the right moment to speed up our efforts in the integration process”, says the Head of the Mission of Montenegro to the EU Petar Marković.

He underlines that meeting the closing benchmarks is a priority for the Government when it comes to the open chapters within this Subcommittee, but that Montenegro remains equally committed to implementing the appropriate education and research policies related to the temporary closed chapters 25 and 26.

Co-chair of Montenegro side, State Secretary in the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and the head of the negotiation working groups for chapters 2 and 19, **Edina Dešić**, expressed gratitude for the comprehensive support of the European Commission in the negotiation process, emphasizing that Montenegro, regardless of all the current political circumstances, is dedicated to the EU agenda. She also added that Montenegro was aware of the transformative power of policies in these chapters and that she believed that we would consistently continue our work on meeting the obligations from the EU agenda.



10. X 2023

16TH MEETING OF THE EU-MONTENEGRO SUBCOMMITTEE FOR AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES

16th meeting of the EU-Montenegro Subcommittee for agriculture and fisheries took place in Brussels with a view to getting an overview of the last year's developments in the sectors of agriculture, rural development, fisheries and aquaculture.

Subcommittee was co-chaired by **Cindy van den Boogert**, Deputy Head of the Unit for Montenegro and Serbia in the Directorate General of the European Commission for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Policy and Director General of the Directorate for rural development in the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Industry, **Andrijana Rakočević**.

European Commission invited Montenegro to increase efforts, particularly on harmonization of its legislation, since there were some important draft laws, for example in the fisheries and aquaculture, waiting in the Parliament since 2019 due to the political instability in the country. **Van**

den Boogert underlined how important it was to continue implementing the IPARD II as the highest priority, to avoid further allocation of funds and to start the implementation of IPRO III programme as soon as possible because it could bring enormous possibilities to farmers and food processing business.

Rakočević underlined that Montenegro was fully committed to working on obtaining the closing benchmarks. She informed the meeting that the Government of Montenegro had used the period between two Subcommittees to adopt two important documents for Montenegro agriculture – Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development with the Action Plan and IPARD II programme. She emphasized that adoption of these documents showed that Montenegro commitment to meeting the closing benchmarks was absolutely clear.



4. X 2023

16TH MEETING OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE FOR TRADE, INDUSTRY, CUSTOMS AND TAXES

In the 16th meeting of the Subcommittee for trade, industry, customs and taxes between EU and Montenegro that took place in Brussels, representatives of Montenegro institutions presented results achieved since the last meeting that took place in October last year in the following chapters: Free movement of goods, Taxation, Enterprise and Industrial policy, Customs Union and External Relations.

It was emphasized that Montenegro continued producing good results in the field of trade and access to the EU single market and remained committed to implementation of reforms aligned with the EU acquis and standards, which was to lead to further progress on its European integration path.

The meeting was co-chaired by **Michael Miller**, Head of the Unit for Montenegro and Serbia in the Directorate General of the European Commission for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Policy and **Jovana Krunić**, acting Director General of the Directorate for international trade and economic cooperation in the Ministry of Economic Development and Tourism.

In the field of trade, European Commission welcomed Montenegro's alignment with the EU regime of sanctions and emphasized the importance of progress in the matters covered by this Subcommittee for Montenegro's approximation to the EU Single Market. They also supported the measures undertaken to combat smuggling in cigarettes but emphasized that significant challenges remained in the efforts to eradicate illegal trade in cigarettes, including destruction of the seized property.

Acting Director General in the Ministry of Economic Development and Tourism, **Jovana Krunić**, said that Montenegro was an active promoter of regional cooperation and that it participated in more than 30 regional initiatives and platforms. She particularly emphasized Montenegro's role in chairing certain regional mechanisms, which contributed to permanent positioning of our country and economies of the region on the European map.

She presented the achieved results and further plans in the chapters 1 – Free Movement of Goods, 16 – Taxation, 20 – Enterprise and Industrial Policy, 29 – Customs Union and 30 – External Relations.

14. XII 2023

MINISTRY OF ECONOMIC AFFAIRS ORGANIZED AN INFO-DAY ABOUT THE SECOND CALL FOR PROJECT PROPOSALS WITHIN THE DANUBE REGION PROGRAMME

The second call for the Danube Region Programme is opened for state institutions, state-owned companies, local self-governments, civil society organizations and private companies interested in implementing projects in the field of environment protection, sustainable tourism, social inclusion, strengthening administrative capacities and other specific goals.

In the Info-Day, that took place in Podgorica, potential beneficiaries were presented programme priorities, as well as rules for submitting project proposals within this call.

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12. XII 2023.

CONFERENCE OF THE PROGRAMME INTERREG IPA CROATIA – B&H – MONTENEGRO 2014-2020

The conference “We shape the future together” conveyed the message that cross-border cooperation between Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro, with the support of the European Union, constituted the foundation of sustainable development and European integration of this region.

The conference, that was attended by representatives of the three countries, presented result achieved within the programme framework IPA II, that included the financial period from 2014 to 2020.

Opening the conference, the State Secretary in the Ministry of Regional Development and EU Funds of the Republic of Croatia, **Domagoj Mikulić**, congratulated to all beneficiaries on the achieved results and emphasized that the implemented projects contributed to the improvement of infrastructure, increasing thus the economic activities and generating new jobs in the cross-border area.

Elvira Habota, Director of the national body of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Directorate for European Integration, emphasized that the purpose of the programme of territorial cooperation was inter alia to help everyone deal with the challenges that the states could not solve alone.

The State Secretary in the Ministry of European Affairs of Montenegro **Bojan Božović**, said that the conference was a crown on the very successful cooperation between the three countries, reminding that the total support allocated by the EU for the 59 implemented projects amounted to more than 57.2 million euros.

Deputy Head of the Sector for cooperation Liselotte Isaksson greeted the conference on behalf of the Delegation of the European Union in Montenegro. She underlined that the European Union was proud of having supported these projects because they improved the lives of people living in the areas covered by the programme.

8. XII 2023

IN THE MEETING OF THE STRATEGIC AND OPERATIONAL BOARD OF THE WESTERN BALKAN INVESTMENT FRAMEWORK, MONTENEGRO WAS ALLOCATED ADDITIONAL 112.6 MILLION EUROS FOR INFRASTRUCTURAL PROJECTS.

The meeting of the Strategic and Operational Board of the Western Balkan Investment Framework took place in Brussels, and Montenegro was represented by the Minister of European Affairs **Maida Gorčević** with associates.

The meeting decided that Montenegro would be allocated additional 112.6 million euros for the reconstruction of the railway, including the 6.5 km

long superstructure in the Sozina tunnel, 17 km of the station tracks and 6 km of shunting tracks.

Minister **Gorčević** underlined that Montenegro highly appreciated additional EU support through the new Growth Plan and expressed her belief that it would be an efficient mechanism for starting reforms that were needed to bring the accession process back to track and to improve the quality of daily lives for citizens.

28. XI 2023

MEMBERS OF THE DELEGATION OF THE GOVERNMENT OF MONTENEGRO DISCUSSED THE GROWTH PLAN AND AGENDA OF PRIORITY REFORMS WITH THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Delegation of the Government of Montenegro, comprising Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economic Development **Nik Gjeloshaj**, as well as the Minister of European Affairs, **Maida Gorčević** and Minister of Energy and Mining **Saša Mujović**, participated in the meeting dedicated to the new Growth Plan for the Western Balkans. In this meeting, with the representatives of the European Commission they discussed Growth Plan and Agenda of Priority Reforms. They presented plans of the Government in the implementation of the policies in the fields of business environment, digital transformation and innovation, reforms of the energy sector for encouraging green transition, and the rule of law.

In addition to the existing support to the Western Balkan countries, the European Commission proposed an additional investment package of 6 billion euros, comprising 2 billion euros of grants, and 4 billion euros in form of favourable loans. Out of this amount, 413 million are planned for Montenegro.

„In this way, EU wishes to encourage economic growth, reduce significant differences in the standard of living between Western Balkan and the EU and encourage the region to implement more intensive reforms in the European integration process”, says the EC.

The ministers said that the Government would prepare and submit to the EC in the shortest possible time the proposal of the Reform Agenda, with concrete proposals of support measures in three priority fields: business environment, digitalization and innovation and energy. They said that the Government would propose 60 to 80 reform measures that would be implemented in the forthcoming 4 years, which would be a precondition for allocation of a part of the financial support.

It was also underlined that a part of the reform agenda would include some of the crucial reforms in the field of the rule of law and public administration reform that are of particular importance for the process of accession to the EU.

27. XI 2023

FINAL CONFERENCE OF THE IPA II PROGRAMME OF CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION SERBIA-MONTENEGRO 2014-2020

The Conference that took place in Podgorica promoted the results of the projects implemented during the financial perspective IPA II with a view to improving the quality of living for citizens of 14 Northern municipalities in Montenegro and 3 districts in Western Serbia.

It was noted that Montenegro and Serbia had been cooperating successfully for 15 years already within the programme of cross-border cooperation with the support of the European Union, and that the cooperation would continue in the future as well, within the Programme Framework IPA III.

„During the financial cycle that covered the period from 2014 to 2020, we contracted 28 projects of the total value of more than 7.7 million euros. Contribution of the European Union is 6.4 million. Since the beginning of the cross-border cooperation in 2008 until today, more than 15 million euros were allocated for the projects implemented by institutions and organizations from these

two countries”, said **Maida Gorčević**, Minister of European Affairs.

Minister for European Integration of the Republic of Serbia **Tanja Mišević** reminded that cross-border area had benefited hugely from the funds that were not so big, while beneficiaries were actually diverse from local self-governments, non-governmental organizations, new businesses, start-ups, and vulnerable groups.

Ambassador of the European Union in Montenegro Oana-Cristina Popa said that European Union was proud of having supported these projects because they significantly improved the lives of people living in the areas included in the programme.

„Programmes of cross-border cooperation of the European Union build stronger ties between neighbouring countries and prove that cooperation can be powerful in dealing with common challenges. As such, they constitute a clear illustration of the EU commitment to the united, prosperous and peaceful Europe”, concluded Ms Popa.

24. XI 2023

MEETING OF THE MONITORING COMMITTEE FOR THE INSTRUMENT FOR PRE-ACCESSION ASSISTANCE (IPA)

The meeting that took place in Podgorica was co-chaired by the State Secretary in the Ministry of European Affairs **Bojan Božović** and the Head of the Unit for Montenegro and Serbia in the Directorate General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Policy (DG NEAR) **Michael Miller**, while the participants were representatives of the line ministries, European Commission, Delegation of the EU in Montenegro, and the civil sector.

The message from the meeting was that the new Growth Plan for the Western Balkans envisaged a double increase in the funds to be allocated by the European Union to the states in the accession process in the forthcoming four-year period, and that Montenegro was expected to be fully committed to the implementation of reforms in the forthcoming period, particularly in the fields of the rule of law, strengthening of administrative capacities and strategic planning, so that the country could use the available funds.

Opening the meeting, **Bojan Božović** said that the Growth Plan for Western Balkans is closely connected to the reform processes that is

Government planned to undertake. “We are determined to put the reforms in the field of the rule of law as the key priority so that as soon as possible we could create conditions for gradual closing of the negotiation chapters”, emphasized **Božović**.

Michael Miller emphasized that the new Growth Plan for the Western Balkans constituted a strategic shift in the way in which pre-accession support was allocated to the countries candidates for EU membership. Explaining the new strategic approach, **Miller** emphasized that the new Growth Plan was focused on reforms, particularly in the field of the rule of law, and that it was therefore necessary that the EU funds were used to speed up the reform processes.

Participants commended the progress achieved so far in using the EU funds and implementing the projects funded therefrom. It was concluded that administrative and professional capacities had to be strengthened for the purposes of strategic planning, preparing mature projects and successful use of EU funds.

24. XI 2023

INITIAL MEETING WITH THE BENEFICIARIES OF CONDITIONALLY APPROVED PROJECTS WITHIN THE FIRST CALL IN THE DANUBE REGION PROGRAMME FOR THE PERIOD 2021-2027

The meeting took place in Podgorica and was dedicated to the presentation of contents and expected results of the projects the contracting of which is expected by the end of the year. Activities that will be implemented by Montenegro partners were discussed as well.

Beneficiaries were presented the news on the level of the Danube Region Programme, with the emphasis on the Second Call that was in progress at the time, as well as on the forms of support that the Ministry of European Affairs provided to the

beneficiaries in the procedure of implementation of the projects.

Within the First Call, Montenegrin institutions and organizations achieved exceptional success participating with 31 out of the total number of 60 projects that were conditionally approved, which is two times more than the entire previous financial perspective 2014-2020.

Total amount of funds allocated to Montenegrin partners amounts to about 5.4 million euro.

25. X 2023

MEETING OF THE MONITORING COMMITTEE OF THE DANUBE REGION PROGRAMME

The meeting that took place in Vienna decided that 60 projects would be conditionally approved for financing through the First Call for Project Proposals within the Danube Region Programme.

Within the 60 projects that were conditionally approved, there are 37 institutions and organizations from Montenegro participating in 31 projects, which is two times more than the entire previous financial perspective 2014-2020. The total amount of funds allocated to Montenegrin partners amounts to 5.4 million euro.

It is expected that the procedure of contracting projects will be finished by the end of the current

year, after which the project partners will start their implementation.

Danube Region Programme is the instrument of the European Union that promotes cooperation between institutions and organizations in the Danube region. In addition to Montenegro, the programme area includes 13 countries that are located in the Danube basin region: Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Croatia, Hungary, Moldova, Germany (Federal Provinces Baden-Wuerttemberg and Bavaria), Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Serbia and Ukraine.

23. X 2023

MEETING OF THE MONITORING COMMITTEE OF THE INTERREG IPA SOUTH ADRIATIC PROGRAMME

The meeting of the Monitoring Committee of the cross-border cooperation programme between Italy, Albania and Montenegro, that took place in Shkodra, decided to support 40 projects through the First Call for Small Scale Project Proposals within the programme Interreg IPA South Adriatic. Institutions and organizations from Montenegro will participate in 36 of them.

The approved budget within this call amounts to 6.8 million euro, while Montenegrin partners will have the total amount of 1.4 million euro at their disposal.

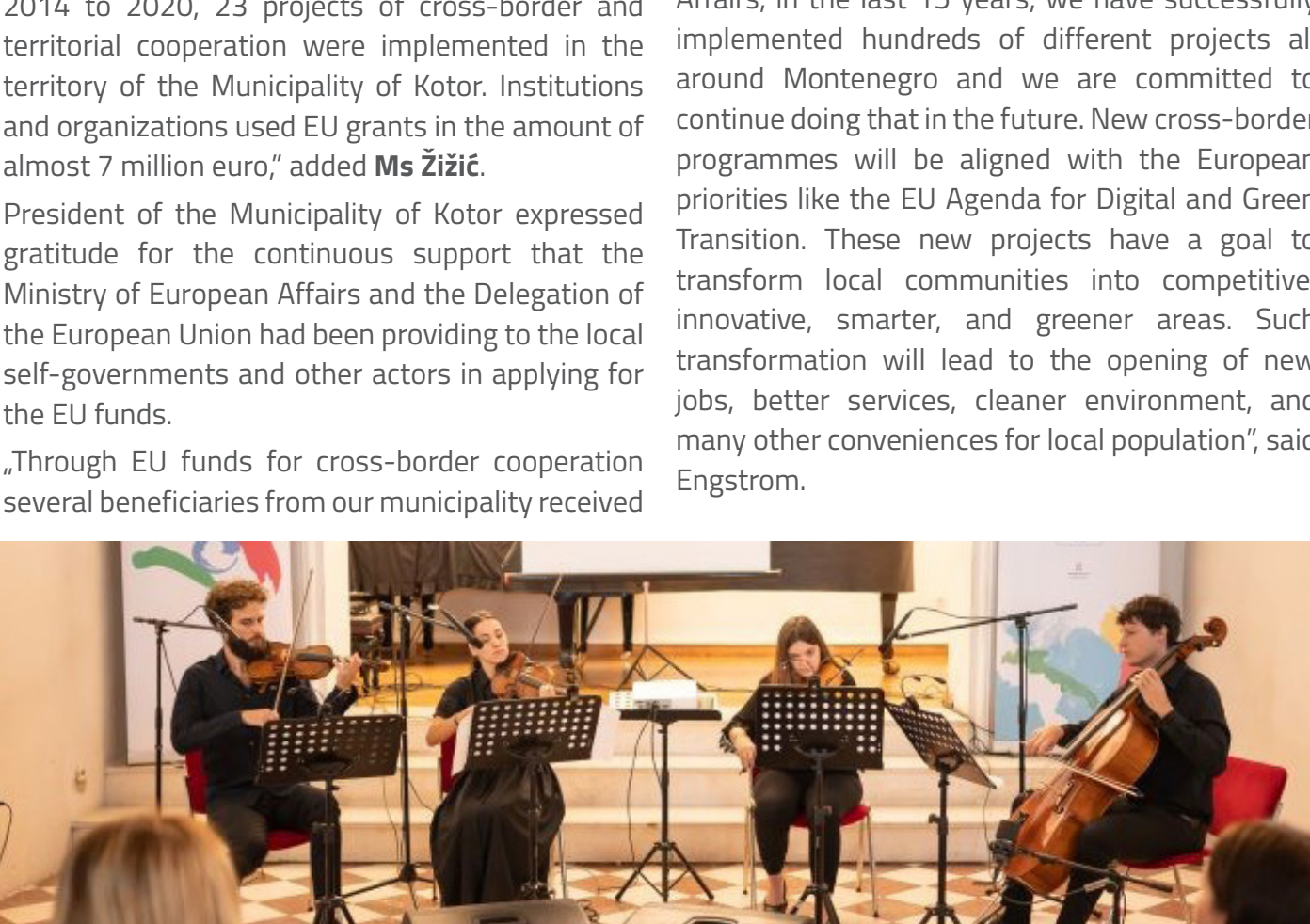
The meeting agreed on the key elements of the standard call for submitting project proposals, the announcement of which is expected by the end of the current year. Within this call, beneficiaries will have about 38 million euro at their disposal.

The meeting confirmed readiness for the beginning of implementation of five strategic projects that were approved within the South Adriatic programme. Strategic projects will be implemented through participation of institutions from all three states, while the leading partners in two projects will be from Montenegro – Ministry of Culture and Media and Institute for Marine Biology.



9. X 2023

DAY OF INTERREG COOPERATION MARKED IN KOTOR



Ministry of European Affairs, in cooperation with the Delegation of the European Union in Montenegro, marked the Day of Interreg Cooperation by a visit to the Municipality of Kotor.

Delegation of the Ministry, led by the State Secretary and National IPA Coordinator **Milena Žižić** and the Head of the Sector for Cooperation in the Delegation of the EU **Yngve Engstrom** with associates, met with the President of the Municipality of Kotor **Vladimir Jokić** and talked about the results of the projects of cross-border cooperation achieved so far and future possibilities for financing projects by the European Union.

Ms Žižić emphasized that organizations from Kotor had an opportunity to apply for funds from 8 programmes of cross-border and territorial cooperation, out of the 11 that Montenegro participated in.

„Let me remind that only within the Programme framework IPA II, that covered the period from 2014 to 2020, 23 projects of cross-border and territorial cooperation were implemented in the territory of the Municipality of Kotor. Institutions and organizations used EU grants in the amount of almost 7 million euro“, added **Ms Žižić**.

President of the Municipality of Kotor expressed gratitude for the continuous support that the Ministry of European Affairs and the Delegation of the European Union had been providing to the local self-governments and other actors in applying for the EU funds.

„Through EU funds for cross-border cooperation several beneficiaries from our municipality received

support, including the Institute for Marine Biology, Maritime Faculty, Centre for Culture, as well as the Ministry of Culture and Media. As for the future projects that will be supported by EU funds, I would like particularly to mention the construction of the water-supply and sewage grid in the municipality, that is to solve the issue of the water-supply systems and systems for discharging wastewater permanently. Our intention is to secure additional funds with the support of the Investment Framework for the Western Balkans“, said **Jokić**, adding that, in the future period, the Municipality will dedicate special attention to the projects of energy efficiency and environment protection.

Head of the Sector for Cooperation in the Delegation of the EU **Yngve Engstrom** emphasized that the cross-border cooperation was the basic idea of the united Europe, while programmes and people who implement them relentlessly worked on that goal.

„In cooperation with the Ministry of European Affairs, in the last 15 years, we have successfully implemented hundreds of different projects all around Montenegro and we are committed to continue doing that in the future. New cross-border programmes will be aligned with the European priorities like the EU Agenda for Digital and Green Transition. These new projects have a goal to transform local communities into competitive, innovative, smarter, and greener areas. Such transformation will lead to the opening of new jobs, better services, cleaner environment, and many other conveniences for local population“, said Engstrom.



6. X 2023

CERTIFICATES ALLOCATED FOR 10 PROJECTS SUPPORTED THROUGH THE THIRD CALL OF THE IPA II PROGRAMME OF CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION SERBIA-MONTENEGRO 2014-2020



In Zlatibor, certificates were allocated to 10 projects supported through the Third Call of the IPA II Programme of Cross-Border Cooperation Serbia-Montenegro 2014-2020, in the total value of 2.2 million euro.

The projects will be implemented by the institutions and organizations from the programme area that includes 10 municipalities in Serbia and 14 municipalities in Montenegro – mostly in the North of the state, while their implementation will contribute to increasing the employability and opportunities for employment, improved waste management and wastewater treatment, as well as to the improvement of capacities for using tourism potentials.

On that occasion, Minister of European Integration of the Republic of Serbia **Tanja Mišević**, State Secretary in the Ministry of European Affairs of Montenegro and National IPA Coordinator **Milena Žižić** and ambassador of the European Union in Serbia **Emanuele Giaufrè**, signed financial agreement between the partner states and the

European Commission for the implementation of the Programme of Cross-Border Cooperation Serbia – Montenegro 2021-2027 within the programme framework IPA III. The Monitoring committee for this programme was also established. It comprises representatives of the key institutions of these two states.

„I am exceptionally pleased to see continuation of cooperation between Serbia and Montenegro through the next Programme framework IPA III. In cooperation with the colleagues from Serbia, with the financial support of the European Union, we managed to secure funds in the amount of 8.4 million euro for the Programme of Cross-Border Cooperation Serbia-Montenegro for the period 2021-2027, which is a significant investment into development of the territory included in this programme“, said **Ms Žižić**.

She reminded that cross-border cooperation between Serbia and Montenegro had started in 2008 and that since then, within the financial cycles IPA I and IPA II 62 projects had been contracted, of the total value of more than 13 million euros.

CONFERENCES, REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL EVENTS

7. XII 2023

MINISTER GORČEVIĆ SPOKE IN THE PANEL „EU ENLARGEMENT: NEW GEOPOLITICAL URGENCY“



Minister of European Affairs **Maida Gorčević** spoke in the panel „EU Enlargement: New Geopolitical Urgency “ organized by the Institute Friends of Europe in Brussels.

On that occasion, she said that the process of European integration was not an ephemeral political decision, but a choice of generations that was shaping our society.

“Being a part of the generation that firmly believes in the idea of European Montenegro and European Western Balkan region, I will strongly advocate implementation of all the required reforms so that we can make the many-years-old wish of our citizen come true, and that is to achieve the

European standard of living and membership in the EU“, said **Ms Gorčević** and added that, in Montenegro, there was this new energy aimed at speeding up the accession negotiations with the EU.

Minister **Gorčević** emphasized that Montenegro was the most eligible candidate to become the next member of the EU and that the Government would dedicate its resources and capacities in the political and technical sense to meet all the accession requirements by the end of its term of office. However, she said that it was very important that the EU itself was more present in the region and accelerated its full integration.

17. X 2023

REPRESENTATIVES OF THE GOVERNMENT OF MONTENEGRO PARTICIPATED IN THE MINISTERIAL MEETING IN SKOPJE



Upon the invitation of the Minister of Finance of the Republic of Northern Macedonia, the Minister of Finance **Novica Vuković**, together with the Minister of Economic Affairs **Maida Gorčević** and Minister of European Development **Nik Gjeloshaj**, attended the Ministerial meeting that took place in Skopje.

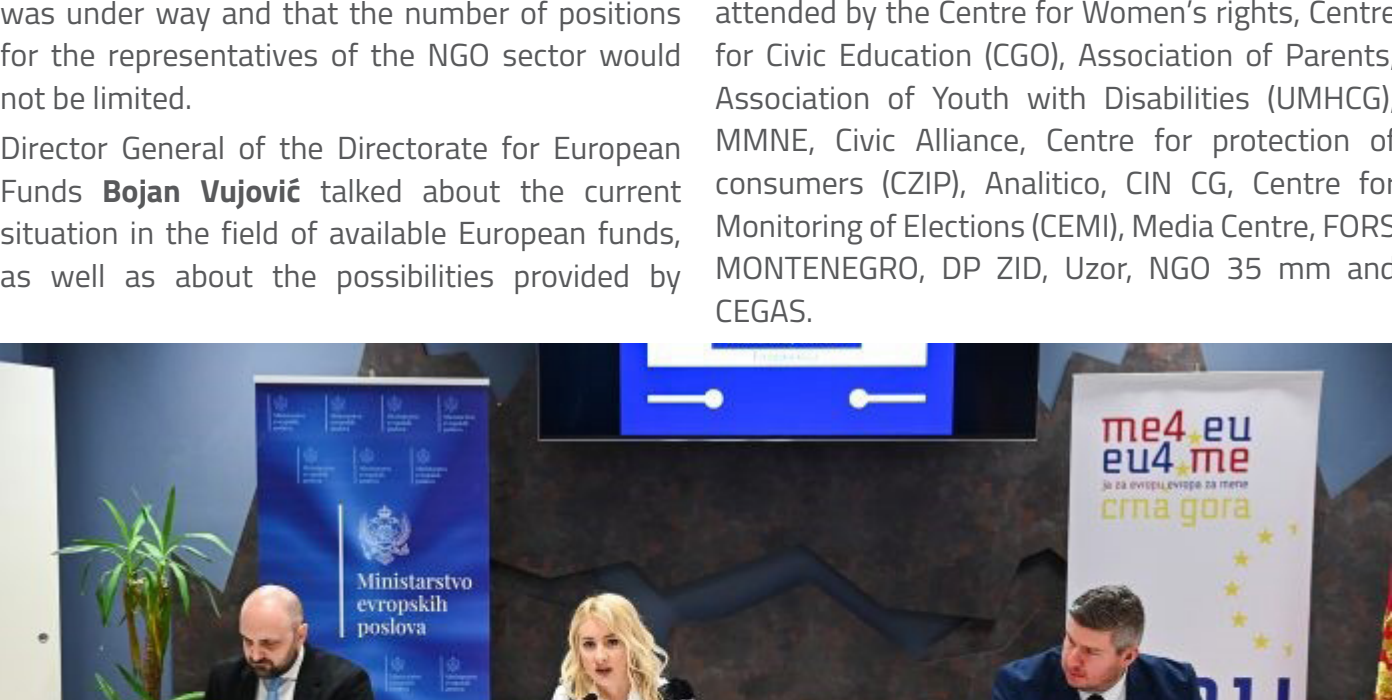
The topic of the Ministerial meeting was the Growth Plan for the Western Balkan, with a particular emphasis on strengthening social and economic

convergence between EU and Western Balkans to ensure accelerated integration in the EU.

The meeting conveyed the message that the Growth Plan for the Western Balkan showed a renewed support and focus of the European Union on the enlargement process, and that it would strongly support reforms and approximation of our region, providing significant financial and technical support.

26. X 2023

DIRECTOR GENERAL VUJOVIĆ SPOKE IN THE PANEL WITHIN THE 12TH ANNUAL EUSDR FORUM



The panel of the representative of the countries signatories to EUSDR that are in the process of joining EU was dedicated to the topics of strategic planning and financing of activities that can contribute to achieving the goals of this Strategy on the national level. The Panel took place in Brdo near Kranj in Slovenia.

European Union Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) has a significant role in the process of European integration, regional cooperation and strengthening of the relations between EU Member States and candidate countries, said **Bojan Vujović**, Director General of the Directorate for European Funds in the Ministry of European Affairs.

“EUSDR priorities and goals should be appropriately integrated in the national strategies and programmes, as well as in the priorities of the

programmes of territorial cooperation financed by the EU. This is particularly important for the countries that are candidates for membership in the EU, in order to create a framework for using European Union funds“, said Vujović.

As he says, each of the thematic goals and priorities of this strategy should be considered important, since they are focused on dealing with specific challenges and problems in the Danube region.

“As for Montenegro, directions of its development are most complementary with the goals contained in the first pillar of the EUSDR. Tourism is, namely, the most important strategic branch of Montenegrin economy and it is directly conditioned by the protection of the environment and development of transport infrastructure, particularly that intended for sustainable transport“, emphasized Vujović.

24. X 2023

MINISTER NOVAKOVIĆ ĐUROVIĆ PARTICIPATED IN THE TWELFTH ANNUAL FORUM OF THE EU STRATEGY FOR THE DANUBE REGION



Minister of Environment, Spatial Planning and Urbanism and Coordinator of the work of the Ministry of European Affairs **Ana Novaković Đurović** participated in the Twelfth Annual Forum of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region that took place in Brdo near Kranj in Slovenia. Within the Forum, the Minister also participated in the High-Level Panel “EU Strategy for the Danube Region and Process of Enlargement of the EU”.

“The Government of Montenegro is focused on the implementation of current reforms that will result in better quality of life of all our citizens. With that in mind, we put a special emphasis on the environment protection and combating climate change. We are dedicated to the implementation of international measures that will brand Montenegro as a genuinely ecological state, in line with our Constitution, and we are determined to continue developing our country in line with the principles

of green economy, clean energy and environment protection“, said Novaković Đurović.

In the meeting of the ministers of the countries in charge of implementation of the Strategy, Novaković Đurović said that macro-regional strategies played the key role in the EU enlargement process, promoting regional cooperation, strengthening governance, encouraging investment in infrastructure, and strengthening regional cohesion. She reminded that Montenegro had incorporated the priorities and goals of the strategy into its national policies and plans, and that the national strategies are aligned with the goals of the Strategy.

In addition to the representatives of the European Commission, the Conference was attended by the representatives of the governments of Hungary, FR Germany, Czech Republic, Croatia, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Austria, Slovenia, Slovakia, Serbia, Romania, Ukraine, Moldova, and Montenegro.

24. X 2023

REPRESENTATIVE OF THE MINISTRY OF EUROPEAN AFFAIRS PARTICIPATED IN THE CONFERENCE ON EFFICIENT POLICY PLANNING IN THE WESTERN BALKANS



Head of the Direction for Sectoral Policies of the Ministry of European Affairs, Andrej Orlandić, participated in Vienna in the regional conference on challenges in the implementation of efficient policy planning in the Western Balkans.

The Regional Conference „Challenges of Achieving Effective Policy Planning in the Western Balkans“, organized by ReSPA and OECD SIGMA, brought together representatives of the governments of the countries from the region, officials of the Austrian Government bodies and experts in the field of developing and managing public policies.

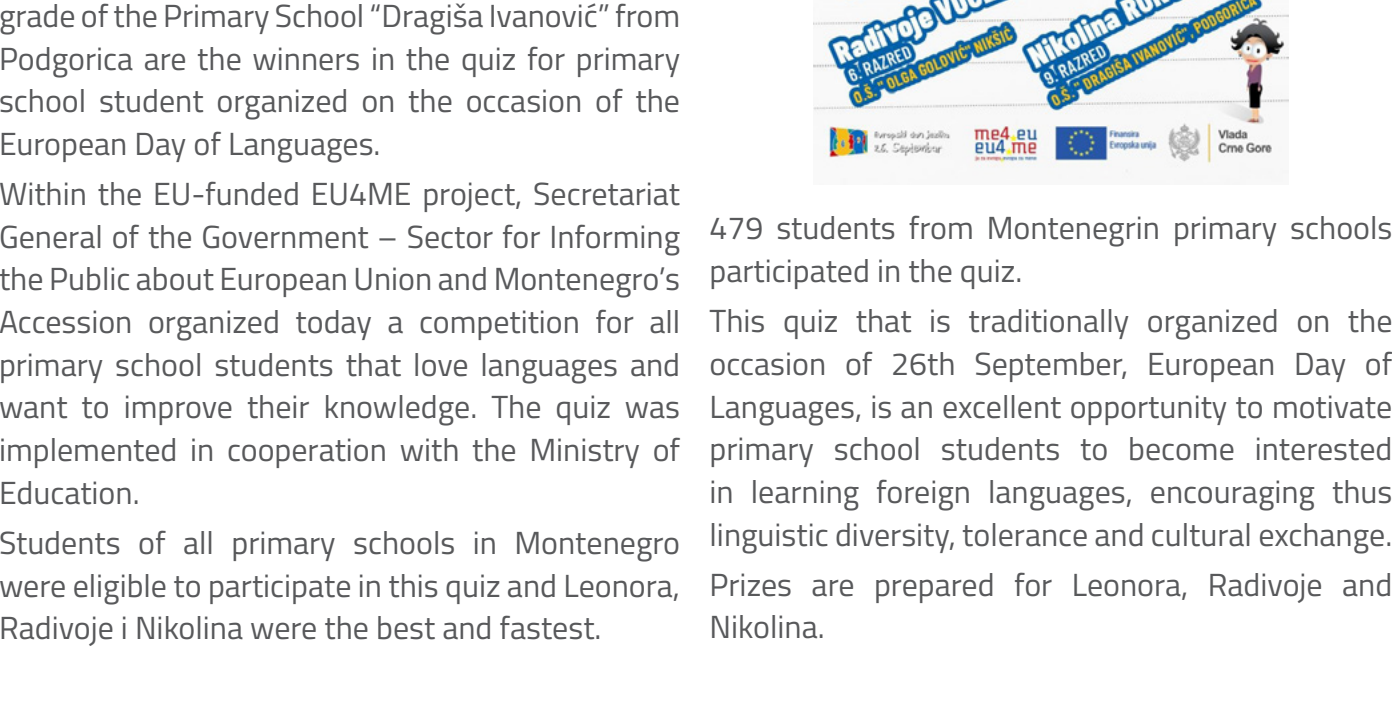
Within the discussion dedicated to planning the obligations in the field of European integration, Orlandić presented the Montenegrin legal framework and experiences from the process of strategic planning, emphasizing the importance of the

Programme of Accession of Montenegro to the European Union, coordination of preparations and monitoring of the implementation of this document that makes the basis of our country's European agenda. He said that the Programme of Accession was the most comprehensive overview of the obligations defining the scope and dynamics of the reforms that were needed so that Montenegro could align with the legal order of the European Union.

The Conference presented the initial findings of the SIGMA study about parliaments and legislation in the administrations of the Western Balkans, as well as the study from OECD SIGMA Programme about challenges of aligning policies and financial planning – the new study that will be presented in January 2024.

7. XII 2023

SEVENTEENTH MEETING OF THE EU – MONTENEGRO JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE (JCC)



The meeting that took place in Brussels was opened by the President of the European Economic and Social Committee **Oliver Röpke**, Vice-President of the European Economic and Social Committee **Aurel Laurentiu Plesceanu** and Minister of European Affairs of Montenegro, **Maida Gorčević**.

In the introductory part, the participants in the meeting were welcomed by the co-chairs of the JCC, **Decebal - Stefanica Padure** and **Gordana Đurović**.

Members of the JCC considered the current state of affairs in the relations between EU and Montenegro, with a focus on the EC Report on Montenegro for 2023 and overview of developments within the Berlin Process.

Within these two topics that refer to the situation of the obligations within the Cluster 1: Fundamentals of the accession process, with a focus on the public administration reform and overview of the situation

of the civil society in Montenegro, including the social dialogue, JCC could hear representatives of the civil sector from Montenegro who presented their views: **Paule D. Radovanović** (Chamber of Commerce), **Marina Vujačić** (Association of Youth with Disabilities), **Tatjana Đžudović** (Union of Employers), **Tatjana Đžudović** (Trade Union Confederation) and **Marko Sošić** (Institute Alternativa).

Pija Handžić (Trendo Raportu), **Kristian Pirvulesku** (ECOSOC Fallowale), **Tatjana Roman** and **Ana Marijuga** (Delegation of the EU in Montenegro) also spoke about the topics of the meeting.

The meeting adopted a joint declaration that will be sent to the Stabilization and Association Committee, Parliamentary Stabilization and Association Committee, European External Action Service, European Commission and the Government of Montenegro.

1. XII 2023

CONSULTATIONS WITH THE CIVIL SECTOR ABOUT THE NEGOTIATION PROCESS

Minister of European Affairs **Maida Gorčević** talked with the representatives of non-governmental organizations today in the first meeting with the representatives of the NGO sector. In addition to the minister, the meeting was attended by the State Secretary **Bojan Božović** and Director General of the Directorate for European Funds **Bojan Vujović**.

The Minister announced that the Government would establish regular consultations with the civil sector about the negotiation process. “Process of regular consultations with the civil sector has been designed through thematic segments within which you will be able to hear more concrete promises from us. We have a lot of work to do, and we believe that, working together, we can meet expectations of citizens and European partners“, said Gorčević.

State Secretary **Bojan Božović** said that establishment of the Directorate for European Funds **Bojan Vujović** talked about the current situation in the field of available European funds, as well as about the possibilities provided by

the new Growth Plan for the Western Balkans. Montenegro could expect significant funds within this instrument, if the conditions related to the key reform measures were met.

During the consultations, representatives of the civil sector emphasized that their criticisms were always aimed at improving the situation. They said that it was needed to change the attitude of the state towards the non-governmental sector that had to be respected and thus the mutual trust would be restored. They underlined the need to re-examine the way in which the state funds were allocated to non-governmental organizations and said that they expected the new Ministry of European Affairs to have a strategic approach of clearly defined expectations from the role of the civil sector in the negotiation process.

On behalf of the civil sector the meeting was attended by the Centre for Women's rights, Centre for Civic Education (CGO), Association of Parents, Association of Youth with Disabilities (UMHCG), MMNE, Civil Alliance, Centre for protection of consumers (CZIP), Analitico, CIN CG, Centre for Monitoring of Elections (CEMI), Media Centre, FORS MONTENEGRO, DP ZID, Uzor, NGO 35 mm and CEGAS.

OTHER

25. XII 2023

WINNERS IN THE QUIZ “HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW ABOUT EU?” AWARDED THEIR PRIZES

The quiz was organized by the Ministry of European Affairs within the project „EU4ME“ financed by the European Union in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation.

130 pupils of the eighth and ninth grade of primary schools participated in the competition. They gave 1950 answers to 15 questions.

Nikolina Vojvodić, pupil of the 9th grade of the Primary School “Vuk Karadžić” from Podgorica

won the first place, while **Arnes Drpljanin**, pupil of the 9th grade of the Primary School “Nedakusi” from Bijelo Polje was the second and **Ksenija Dubravčević** pupil of the 9th grade of the Primary School “Njegoš” from Kotor was the third.

The prizes – vouchers for purchase of sports equipment were awarded to them by the Minister of European Affairs **Maida Gorčević** and Minister of Education, Science and Innovation **Andela Jakšić-Stojanović**.

18. XII 2023

PUBLICATION OF THE THIRTEENTH ISSUE OF THE MAGAZINE EUROKAZ

In its several columns, Eurokaz presents the news from the negotiation process, results of the reforms undertaken by Montenegro in the accession process, examples of success in using the EU funds.

Collators of Eurokaz speak about topical themes from the negotiation process and about the news in the field of functioning of the EU.

Correspondents and collators of Eurokaz include representatives of the Government of Montenegro, European Commission, journalists of Montenegrin printed and electronic media, as well as representatives of local self-governments, economy, and non-governmental organizations.

Among other things, this issue of Eurokaz brings the text written by the Minister of European Affairs **Maida Gorčević**, and an interview with the Ambassador of Belgium **Cathy Bugenhout** about the priorities of the Belgian presidency in the EU in the first half of the next year.

The magazine is published every six months, and it is available on the website and social media of the Ministry of European Affairs and eu.me.

15. XII 2023

MINISTRY OF EUROPEAN AFFAIRS ORGANIZED ONLINE QUIZ “HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW ABOUT EU?”

Ministarstvo evropskih poslova, u okviru sprovođenja Strategije informisanja javnosti o pristupanju Crne Gore EU 2023– 2026. godine, tradicionalno, svake godine u decembru organizuje online kviz „Koliko znaš o EU?“

Takmičenje je realizovano u okviru projekta “EU4ME”, koji finansiraju EU, a u kvizu je učestvovalo 130 djece iz cijele Crne Gore i dali su 1,950 odgovora.

Cilj realizacije kviza je podsticanje mladih ljudi da što više istražu i saznaju o Evropskoj uniji i procesu pristupanja Crne Gore EU.

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14. XII 2023

MINISTRY OF EUROPEAN AFFAIRS AND LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENTS SIGNED A MEMORANDUM ON COOPERATION

Government and local self-governments – synergy on the path to the EU – Ministry of European Affairs and municipalities signed a Memorandum on Cooperation

Ministry of European Affairs signed a Memorandum on Cooperation with the local self-governments and Union of Municipalities of Montenegro with a view to achieving better information of citizens on the local level about the process of European integration. That should indirectly lead to better utilization of EU funds, raising the quality of living and modernization of services in municipalities.

The Memorandum says that almost 70% of European legislation is implemented on the local level, which makes it necessary to include local self-governments in planning and implementing the activities together with the Government that leads the accession negotiations. In her introductory word, the Minister of European Affairs **Maida Gorčević** confirmed that local self-governments had an irreplaceable role in the process of European integration. She also reminded that a significant portion of the EU financial support targets local self-governments.

Ambassador of the European Union in Montenegro **Oana-Cristina Popa** said that local self-governments played the key role in the process of accession to the European family. She encouraged representatives of municipalities to involve

their citizens actively and to share with them the responsibility for success of the European integration process.

Dušan Raičević, President of the Managing Board, spoke on behalf of the Union of municipalities of Montenegro. He said that, in addition to new obligations, local self-governments would also have new opportunities in the form of using cohesion and other funds, and that preliminary assessment that after the accession Montenegro would have access to up to ten times larger funds than now was an additional incentive for the local self-governments to strengthen their project teams, both institutionally and in terms of human resources, and to have an increasing number of technically mature infrastructural projects.

State Secretary in the Ministry of European Affairs **Bojan Božović** presented the Public Information Strategy on Montenegro's Accession to the EU 2023-2026 that will make the basis for the implementation of the Memorandum.

Božović also presented the Call for municipalities to express their interest in cooperating through various projects that would contribute to better information and involvement of citizens into the European integration process. The ideas that are selected will be financed through the EU project EU4ME implemented in the Ministry of European Affairs.

24. X 2023

TWENTY-FIFTH ISSUE OF THE NEWSLETTER ON EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

The twenty-fifth issue of the Newsletter on European Integration presents the key events and activities in the accession process that took place in the third quarter of 2023.

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16. X 2023

WINNERS IN THE ONLINE QUIZ FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS ON THE OCCASION OF THE EUROPEAN DAY OF LANGUAGES AWARDED THEIR PRIZES

Within the EU-funded project „EU4ME“ Secretariat General of the Government, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, organized the quiz on the occasion of 26th September, European Day of Languages. 479 primary school students from Montenegro participated in the competition.

Leonora Lažić, student of the ninth grade of the Primary School “Milorad Musa Burzan” from Podgorica won the first place, while **Radivoje Vučelić**, student of the sixth grade of the Primary School “Olga Golović” from Nikšić was the second and **Nikolina Rončević**, student of the ninth grade of the Primary School “Dragiša Ivanović” from Podgorica was the third.

The awards – smart watches – were awarded to them by the State Secretary in the Ministry of European Affairs **Milena Žižić** and the State Secretary in the Ministry of Education **Milijana Vukotić Jelušić**.

State Secretary Žižić said that by their excellent results in the quiz, Leonora, Nikolina and Radivoje confirmed how important it was to learn languages, to understand each other and overcome differences.

State Secretary in the Ministry of Education Vukotić Jelušić emphasized that by creating inclusive, empathic and solidarity environment, preconditions were created for cherishing the culture of differences and building the society of social justice.

16. X 2023

PUBLICATION OF THE NAMES OF THE WINNERS IN THE ONLINE QUIZ FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS ON THE OCCASION OF THE EUROPEAN DAY OF LANGUAGES

Leonora Lažić, student of the ninth grade of the Primary School “Milorad Musa Burzan” from Podgorica, **Radivoje Vučelić**, student of the sixth grade of the Primary School “Olga Golović” from Nikšić and **Nikolina Rončević**, student of the ninth grade of the Primary School “Dragiša Ivanović” from Podgorica are the winners in the quiz for primary school student organized on the occasion of the European Day of Languages.

Within the EU-funded EU4ME project, Secretariat General of the Government – Sector for Informing the Public about European Union and Montenegro's Accession organized today a competition for all primary school students that love languages and want to improve their knowledge. The quiz was implemented in cooperation with the Ministry of Education.

Students of all primary schools in Montenegro were eligible to participate in this quiz and Leonora, Radivoje i Nikolina were the best and fastest.

479 students from Montenegrin primary schools participated in the quiz.

This quiz that is traditionally organized on the occasion of 26th September, European Day of Languages, is an excellent opportunity to motivate primary school students to become interested in learning foreign languages, encouraging thus linguistic diversity, tolerance and cultural exchange.

Prizes are prepared for Leonora, Radivoje and Nikolina.