Dear colleagues and friends,

You are looking at the first edition of *Europeus* in 2017. For us, the start of the new year was marked by numerous activities, research endeavours, publications and events, all in line with new developments at the European and national level.

Europe celebrated its 60th birthday with many significant challenges ahead of it, to which it can only respond by becoming more united than ever before. The United Kingdom formally began the process for leaving the Union, while populism and anti-EU parties are becoming stronger in some member states, and the migration crisis and fear of terrorist attacks continue to shape daily life in Europe. Marking 60 years since the Treaties of Rome, we present you with key arguments from the text written by our researcher, Sena Marić, for the daily newspaper *Danas*, reflecting on the history of the EU and its beginnings. The text also addresses how the EU’s “sixties” are different and what it can do to recover. In this edition of *Europeus*, we invite you to explore a virtual exhibition of photographs and archival documents focused on the developments of the EU since the Rome Treaties until today.

The beginning of the year also brought a new President of the European Parliament, significantly different from his predecessor, and our researchers examined the effect of this change on EU accession negotiations in Serbia. In the context of the accession negotiations, it should be mentioned that Serbia opened two new negotiation chapters, 20 and 26, which increases the number of opened chapters to eight. You can read more about the relevance of these chapters, as well as the steps Serbia should take to fulfill activities in accordance with the required benchmarks. In this *Europeus*, you can also read about the factors which influence public opinion about the EU accession in Serbia.

In the first quarter of 2017, CEP has strengthened its organisational structure by forming an advisory body - the CEP Council, whose members are national and international experts in various academic, professional, and public spheres, known for their achievements in areas such as EU integration, international relations, foreign policy, political science, civil society development, and economics. At the same time, CEP’s Director, Nebojša Lazarević, finished a five-year term. CEP is now managed by the duo composed of Ranka Miljenović (Executive Director) and Milena Lazarević (Programme Director).

Finally we recommend the new portal “ME in the Spotlight” which allows citizens to share challenges they face while using public services. We hope you will enjoy these and other relevant topics we’ve covered in this issue of *Europeus*.

Warm regards,

Your CEP team

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**CEP RESEARCHES**

**Towards more effective administrative-lobbying capacities of Serbia in Brussels**

Does Serbia have adequate administrative, diplomatic, political, and lobbying capacities directed towards EU institutions? CEP is currently researching and preparing a policy study on the current state of play and key challenges in this area. This project will also provide recommendations for improving the capacities of Serbia in Brussels, in order to ensure greater success in the EU accession context. The results of the policy study will be directed towards Serbian decision-makers and other relevant stakeholders.

The project is funded by the Think Tank Fund of the Open Society Foundations within the Think Tank Young Professional Development Programme. This programme helps think tanks from Central and Eastern Europe attract recent graduate and postgraduate social sciences students, giving them an opportunity to attain first-hand experience in policy research.

**Benchmarking for EU Reform – How effective?**

During 2017, the European Policy Centre, in cooperation with TEN partners, is participating in the BENCHER project (Benchmarking for EU Reform – How effective?). The goal of the project is to explore the effectiveness of the EU benchmarking mechanism for the Western Balkans and contribute to improving the mechanism as an impetus for EU related reforms in Western Balkan countries.

The project will focus on the exchange of knowledge and experiences between the countries, and will strive towards improving regional cooperation of think tanks engaged in the EU integration process, taking into account that partners from all countries in the region are participating in this project.

You can find out more about the BENCHER project and its achievements here.
UK formally began the BREXIT process

Nine months after the referendum in which the citizens of the United Kingdom voted out of the EU, the procedure formally began. We can expect that this process will be complicated because both the EU and the UK have significant gaps in their negotiating positions.

“The EU has a complex task, and that is to find a unique position which is very difficult, given the diversity of interests and priorities of member states which have bilateral relations with the United Kingdom. A unique position is to be expected when it comes to future trade relations and protection of the rights of member states’ citizens living in the UK,” says Sena Marić, Senior Researcher in CEP. Read more about how BREXIT will affect Serbia’s EU accession negotiation process in CEP’s statement (in Serbian).

60 years of the EU: What is the diagnosis?

The EU celebrated its 60th birthday on 25 March this year. More precisely, 60 years have passed since the signing of the Treaty of Rome, which laid the foundations of today’s European Union. Sena Marić, Senior Researcher in CEP, writes for Danas: “It is impossible to summarise the genesis of the EU and the success of this unique form of integration in international relations. While in its twenties, the EU developed and matured in terms of transfer of authority to a common level, but it also experienced its first existential crises. In its fortieths the EU was in full power - it doubled the number of member states, created its currency, and became the most prosperous economic bloc in the world. Now, 60 years old, it can be said that the EU looks like a serious chronic patient, whose achievements left many adverse effects on its functioning. Is it possible to give a diagnosis and is there a cure for this state?” Read the whole article here (in Serbian).

Why are the views of citizens about the EU continually divided?

"Far more citizens support reforms than the EU integration process. However, the EU integration 'pushes' the reform process. Perhaps many reforms would not have happened without integration process. The average citizen should be interested in living in a well-functioning country in which it is possible to earn more and have better quality of life, and he or she should be aware that the EU integration process stimulates reforms which all citizens benefit from." This was pointed out by Milena Lazarević, CEP Programme Director, in an interview on N1 regarding public opinion research on Serbia’s accession to the EU. Her views on why the attitudes of the citizens of Serbia are constantly divided in half in terms of whether they will, if referendum is tomorrow, vote for or against Serbia's accession to the EU, the quantity of undecided voters, as well as on why citizens in other differently worded questions about the EU also respond differently and what all of this means, can be seen in her interview here (in Serbian).

Tajani’s presidency: new EP President, mini political earthquake and why it matters for Serbia

On 17 January this year Antonio Tajani became President of the European Parliament (EP), succeeding Martin Schultz. A new CEP Insight takes a closer look at Tajani’s profile and ambitions as EP President, analyses new shifts in the balance of power that came as a result of Tajani’s election, examines its implications on Serbia’s EU membership aspirations, and, lastly, suggests how Serbian decision-makers should position themselves vis-à-vis the new circumstances.

Restarting a dormant consumer protection policy

On the occasion of 15 March, World Consumer Rights Day, CEP suggests that, although certain progress exists, consumer protection in Serbia is still on a low level. Mechanisms of control over market actors in terms of fulfilling their obligations to consumers, weak capacities of consumer organisations, the lack of legal protection, and low level of awareness of consumer rights are just some of the characteristics of the current situation, said Dušan Protić, Programme Manager for the Internal Market and Competitiveness in CEP and coordinator of the working group of the National Convention on the European Union for chapter 28 - Consumer and Health Protection.

“A key event in the field of consumer protection at the moment is preparing negotiating positions for chapter 28, which is currently in progress, and the possibility of opening negotiations on this chapter during this year.”

“A key event in the field of consumer protection at the moment is preparing negotiating positions for chapter 28, which is currently in progress, and the possibility of opening negotiations on this chapter during this year. It is our expectation that the opening of the chapter 28 will again draw attention to the situation in this field and provide a new impetus for strengthening protection, improving procedures to protect consumer rights, and also creating a culture of respect for the consumer in the business practices of market actors,” Protić added.

You can read more in this CEP press release (in Serbian).
Trainings for civil society organisations

As a part of an institutional grant of the CSOnnect programme of support for CSOs, during February and March CEP organised communication skills trainings for representatives of partner organisations and other organisations which are involved in topics of EU development, accession process, and the role civil society - with a focus on chapter 27. In addition to CEP, other participants in the CSOnnect institutional grant are the Ecological Centre Habitat, Odžaci Ecological Movement, Local Ecological Movement, and the Business and Economy Center Beograd.

CSOnnect (Environmental Civil Society Support Programme for Serbia) is financially supported by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), and implemented by the Regional Environmental Center (REC).
CEP RECOMMENDS

**ME in the Spotlight!**

Experiences in acquiring personal documents, enrolling children in kindergarten and school, or scheduling medical appointments and otherwise using other public services can be very different. Most often there are complaints about long waiting lines, being directed from one office to another, visiting multiple institutions, excessive paperwork, stress, waste of time, costs...

Visit the website [www.mojauprava.rs](http://www.mojauprava.rs) and share your positive and negative experiences with the public administration, public services, and civil servants. We focus on three most widely used services - acquiring personal documents, healthcare services, and services in the education sector which are related to enrollment in kindergarten and school. However, we encourage you to also share stories and experiences about public services which you care about.

Campaign **ME in the Spotlight** is a part of the project "**Partnership for good governance**" which aims to contribute to the public administration reform and enhancing the system of public services in Serbia.

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Milena Lazarević at the regional conference **Dialogue and Cooperation With Civil Society for Better Public Administration Results**

"Civil society which, by sharing experiences, joins its efforts in projects and initiatives and cooperates in this manner, has a much greater chance of creating visible changes and positive peer pressure among governments in the Western Balkan region in the process of implementing reforms," said Milena Lazarević, CEP Programme Director, at the regional conference **Dialogue and Cooperation With Civil Society for Better Public Administration Results**. The conference was held in Sarajevo between 13-14 March and organised by **Transparency International** and **TACSO**.

In the panel discussion titled **How to engage more actively in policy-making and monitoring of implementation of Public Administration Reform Strategy at the national level?**, Milena Lazarević presented the structure and composition of the regional **WEBER platform** for monitoring public administration reform in the Western Balkans. She pointed out that the aim of the Platform is to bring together developed and experienced organisations in the field of public administration reform and mobilise them at the regional level, which is achieved through membership of 22 organisations from 6 countries. More about this event can be found [here](#).

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**Ever Closer Union: Legacy of the Treaties of Rome for Today’s Europe**

The exhibition of archival documents and photographs **Ever Closer Europe** was created to mark 60 years since the Treaties of Rome. It presents the development of EU integration from 1957, while also taking into account the implications of these developments for the EU we see today.

This exhibition is the result of cooperation between the Archives of the Council of the European Union, the Historical Archives of the European Union, the European Parliament, and the European Commission, with contributions from the European Investment Bank, the Italian Presidency of the Council of Ministers, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and ANSA.

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