Expanding and Strengthening Partnerships

If I had to choose one word to describe CEP’s work during the first six months of 2017, that word would most certainly be partnership. New partners among CSOs in the country, region, and the EU, in the Serbian government and those in the Western Balkans (WB) and the EU, in addition to partners in media, international organisations, and the European Commission.

Advocacy efforts of CEP have also been boosted in previous period, through new relevant policy briefs, research papers and analyses in the field of staff retention in public administration, gender mainstreaming and decision making, sustainable development, and perspectives of EU enlargement in a changed EU context.

Participation of CEP in international conferences, such as the Civil Society Forum of the EU – Western Balkans Summit in Trieste, substantially helped in profiling our organisation as a relevant partner in policy dialogue, something that has been CEP’s longstanding mission. We are particularly happy that these efforts caught the eye of national and regional media, with CEP experts being regularly invited to comment on new developments and help inform the public through interviews and opinion pieces.

Advocating for reforms is never easy and the first step is always the acknowledgement that reforms are needed and that they bring major benefits to a country and its citizens. However, they cannot be implemented in isolation. Having partners in the process and an open dialogue with them helps to keep us on course and avoid pitfalls, and eventually leads to reform success.

In this issue of Europeus you will have an opportunity to read in more detail about our activities, partnerships, and advocacy efforts. One of our greatest accomplishments in the previous period was setting up a regional platform comprising of 22 CSOs from 6 WB countries, with the objective of monitoring PAR in the WB, particularly from the point of view of EU accession criteria. WeBER platform provides a new perspective on what needs to be done and how to improve the quality of governments in the region, as it applies regional peer pressure to incentivise progress. By involving local CSOs through the national extensions of the Platform – National Working Groups – it also strengthens the capacities of local, grass roots organisations and smaller CSO networks. Through the WeBER platform we have also initiated the practice of regular consultations with civil society in the dialogue between WB governments and the EU on public administration reform (PAR Special Groups).

In the end, we are also proud to report that due to the expansion of our activities, the CEP team was joined by 3 new research and project staff members. As always, our organisation will continue to provide experience for young experts and stay open for all qualified graduate students wishing to do an internship programme with us.

Cheers to new partnerships and enjoy the read!

Milena Lazarević, CEP Programme Director

Towards a Smart Staff Retention Policy for the Sustainable EU Integration of Serbia

Adequate administrative capacities are one of the crucial preconditions for a successful and sustainable membership of Serbia in the EU. Given that over 50% of surveyed employees working on EU/IPA jobs have an intention of leaving the administration within the following year, a quality staff retention policy is essential, especially considering the relevance of these employees and their contribution to the EU accession and integration processes. New CEP Study was initiated with the goal of assessing and understanding the intensity and causes of staff turnover, as well as factors of motivation and demotivation, and the overall job satisfaction of employees working on EU/IPA jobs. At the end of April, CEP organized the presentation of the above-mentioned study on a panel discussion: "Do we have the human resources for Europe? Relevance of civil servants in the European integration process".

Estonian Presidency of the Council of the EU - Unique chance to move things forward in the EU (and Serbia)

From 1st July, 2017, to 1st January, 2018, Estonia will hold the Presidency of Council of the EU. Estonia is the last new member state to hold the rotating presidency for the first time. After the Brexit vote occurred in 2016, the UK decided to give up on its Council presidency which was due to begin in July 2017, to focus on the complex Brexit negotiations lying ahead.

Consequently, Estonia’s presidency was rescheduled to begin six months earlier than it was originally planned. Despite such a challenge, Estonia has put in a serious amount of effort to ensure that its presidency goes smoothly and according to the plan.

This new CEP Insight deals with the priorities of the Estonian Presidency and what impact it will have on the EU enlargement policy.
Local Level Financing of the Environmental Protection

In order to ensure a healthy environment and full compliance with EU standards, Serbia has to face significant challenges in terms of financing environmental protection, especially at the local level. According to official estimates, more than 10 billion euros need to be invested to fully align Serbia with EU standards in the field of environmental protection. Given the scope of competencies, insufficient capacities and differing practices of municipalities and cities, the issue of financing the environmental protection at the local level deserves special attention. New CEP Brief includes a description of the expenditures recorded in the accounts of local budget funds for environmental protection, an analysis of the relationship between the mentioned expenditures and local environmental benefits and recommendations for improving the existing situation in this area.

Is the EU on the move again? The development of the CSDP and “Multi-speed” EU

After a series of crises, institutional paralysis, and the shock of Brexit, followed by more positive results of elections in France, Austria, and the Netherlands, a touch of optimism has returned to Brussels. In our new CEP Insight, ambassador Duško Lopandić, former Chief of the Mission of the Republic of Serbia in the EU and CEP Council member, writes about Permanent Structured Cooperation, what is the future of defence in the EU and what significance the current events have for Serbia.

Gender Parity and Decision-Making in the Serbian Public Administration

It is 2017 and gender inequality still abounds even in the most developed societies with robust policies aimed at achieving gender parity. In the context of the Serbian public administration, women make up 30% of highest managerial positions within the Serbian ministries, although in the total civil service they comprise as much as 62.24%. The lack of gender parity in managerial positions in both the private and public sectors in almost all European countries indicates the persistence of a range of structural, legal, and social barriers which continue to negatively affect women’s promotion and participation in positions of power. This new CEP Policy Brief aims to delve further into the importance of this issue, the reasons behind the lack of parity, the present situation in Serbia, and possible policy responses necessary to address the current inequality.

Women managers in ministries in Serbia: 2008-2016

CEP FOLLOWS

Western Balkans demand the abolition of roaming charges

Following the EU roaming regulations on the abolition of roaming charges among Member States, telecommunications ministers from Serbia, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro are preparing to submit a joint letter to the European Commission requesting that this decision be extended to these four Countries of the Western Balkans.

Milena Lazarević believes that this measure would directly harm the strong interests of the telecommunications industry and that their resistance could be expected, as extending the policy of abolishing roaming in the WB region would represent an additional loss of profit for them. However, can we do something about it? Read the whole interview here (in Serbian).

Summit in Trieste - Most comprehensive summit yet, but not everything will be fulfilled

Milena Lazarević, CEP Programme Director, and Ambassador Duško Lopandić, member of the CEP Council, were guests of the "New Day" show on N1 Serbia, where they talked about the Summit in Trieste.

Lazarević emphasised the impression that the Western Balkans is ‘returning to the scene’ and that the focus of the EU leadership on the Balkans is increasing. Although she agreed with Ambassador Lopandić that the Summit in Trieste has been the most comprehensive one until now, she expressed her suspicion that not all of the adopted agreements will be fulfilled. You can watch the video here (in Serbian).
Meeting of the NCEU Working Group for Chapter 3

A session of the Working Group of the National Convention on the EU for Chapter 3 (Right of establishment and freedom to provide services), which is led by CEP, was held on 4th July. Along with the members of the Working Group, the meeting was also joined by Nebojša Lazarević, member of the Core Negotiating Team for the Accession of the Republic of Serbia to the European Union in charge of Chapter 3, as well as members of the negotiating group for this chapter who encompass representatives of the Chamber of Commerce, Ministry of Trade, Tourism, and Telecommunications, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy, and Ministry of Environmental Protection.

The conclusion of this session was that, starting with autumn 2017, more participation of expert and professional associations is to be expected, along with a more intensive and expanded cooperation between NCEU and relevant government bodies in the context of this chapter.

Work meeting with Sectoral Civic Society Organizations (SCSO)

On Monday, 17th July, 2017, a work meeting with Sectoral Civic Society Organizations (SCSO) was held, and CEP attended as one of the members of the SCSO consortium for state administration reform. The meeting was attended by the representatives of the SCSO consortium, representatives of TACSO and TRAG Foundation, as well as representatives of The Office for Cooperation with Civil Society and the Ministry of European Integration.
CEP RECOMMENDS

Explore coalitions within the European Union!
The European Council on Foreign Relations conducted a survey of experts in the 28 Member States of the EU and presented its results through the EU Coalition Explorer. Aiming to reveal further potentials for coalition building, “the document can be used as an interactive tool to locate the EU’s political center – or centers – from which a more capable and cohesive European Union can be built.”

Differentiated integration – Explaining variation in the European Union
In the debates on the future functioning of the EU the idea of a “Multi-speed Europe” has attracted the greatest attention. However, it is often put aside that the EU has, from its very beginnings, been a community in which the integration of its member states is uneven. Why, for example, is the single market policy attractive even for non-EU member states, despite the fact that they do not have voting rights in the EU, whereas EU Member States themselves choose to opt-out from certain other policies?
This book offers a systematic overview of differentiated integration in the policies of the single market, economic and monetary union, defence and freedom, justice and security, through the prism of three dominant theories of European integration – neofunctionalism, intergovernmentalism, and constructivism. Hence, the authors offer a new perspective that explains the development of EU institutions and policies over time. This book is recommended for everyone who wants to monitor the developments or participate in a substantial debate on the modalities that would make the EU more functional in the future.

CEP organised trainings for CSO representatives (CSOnnect grantees)
From 31st March to 13th June CEP conducted a series of trainings for representatives of civil society organisations, with the aim of improving their knowledge and skills, and making them more effective contributors in the process of Serbia’s accession to the EU.
Trainings were held on topics of the accession process and civil society, public policymaking, and financing of environmental protection at the local level. Dejan Maksimović from the Ecological Centre Stanište held a training on financing environmental protection, while Milena Lazarević led a training on the processes of policymaking and public policy research. The training on EU development, the accession process, and the role of civil society with a focus on chapter 27 was led by Nebojša Lazarević, a member of the Core Negotiating Team for the Accession of the Republic of Serbia to the European Union, and Stefan Šipka, CEP researcher.
Trainings were carried out within the CSOnnect institutional grant, for CSO representatives who were also recipients of the grant.