FOREWORD

Dear colleagues and friends,
The eighth and this year’s last edition of the Europe&Us newsletter is in front of you. The year we are leaving behind was marked by challenges and crisis in Europe, which brought about a revision of stances and approaches of relevant stakeholders. The British „yes“, given on the referendum in June, has additionally shaken the Union. It opened up other topics and pushed for a reassessment of the Union’s internal capacities, but also encouraged efforts towards learning lessons and strengthening the foundations of the EU. For these reasons, the enlargement policy was not high on the EU agenda in 2016, while doubts about its future course and dynamics caused concern among the candidate countries. However, there had been good news for Serbia, since four new chapters were open (23, 24, 5 and 25) and one closed (25), and their progress remains to be monitored in the future.

This edition of Europe&Us brings you topics which have been in CEP’s focus for the last months. It also includes analyses of the challenges facing the EU in 2016. Through the analytical texts and public events and debates, CEP has continued gathering the most prominent social actors, opening and covering topics of wider significance. CEP has been even more focused on improving the participation of civil society in the overall reforms in Serbia, especially in the public administration reform. The indispensable role of civil society in monitoring public administration reform has been emphasised by CEP through the regional WeBER project, implemented by the TEN network of think tank organisations in the Western Balkans, coordinated by CEP. Through WeBER, the first online platform for CSOs in the six countries of the region has been established. With additional conferences and workshops, CEP has supported CSOs from Serbia and the region to strengthen their internal capacity and knowledge in the field of public administration reform.

Challenges teach us more than success, and in this context CEP sees its role as well: as a driver of important topics, a serious interlocutor who daringly points out what could be better, but also gives constructive proposals for solutions. I am sure that these new insights and knowledge would greatly facilitate our work in the coming period and that we will start the next year smarter, better and stronger.

Happy New Year 2017!
Respectfully,

Nebojša Lazarević

CEP RESEARCHES

Managerial Accountability in Public Administration in Serbia

CEP was hired by SIGMA, a joint initiative of the OECD and the European Union (principally financed by the EU), to conduct an in-depth policy study of managerial accountability within the public administration (PA) in Serbia. Using a robust mixed methodology, CEP has collected quantitative and qualitative data from more than 300 managers. The analysis focuses on managerial responsibility, autonomy, and formal decision-making authorities in the areas of policy planning, development and coordination, human resource management, budget management, public procurement, and hierarchical structures of PA authorities. CEP’s analysis will be used to assess the current state of play and provide recommendations for improving the presently fluid concept of managerial accountability and removing systemic obstacles which presently prevent the delegation of authority and responsibility to PA managers. The overall goal is to provide a policy framework for making management within the PA more accountable, efficient, and effective.

WeBER Platform Officially Established

The WeBER Platform was officially established on the 9th Annual Conference of the Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA), on November 16, 2016 in Podgorica. The Memorandum of Cooperation regarding the functioning of the WeBER Platform was signed by 22 civil society organizations from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia. As the WeBER Platform provides a venue for consultation and evidence-based dialogue between civil society, government representatives, and international and regional organisations (European Commission, ReSPA, RCC etc.) on public administration reform implementation and monitoring membership in the Platform will enable CSOs to take more active involvement in these processes at the regional level and in their respective countries. Additionally, the Platform will serve as a venue for exchange of experiences and good practices.
Policymaking in the Western Balkans: Creating Demand for Evidence Beyond EU Conditionality

EU aspirants from the Western Balkans find themselves in a lengthy and demanding process of improving their policymaking systems. Sustainable results require not only robust tools and procedures, but also the involvement of all interested parties – civil society, media, interest groups and associations – into policymaking. However, policymaking as a topic is under-researched and its relevance somewhat underestimated both by the state and the civil society actors in the region. This Position Paper presents arguments to highlight the necessity for more streamlined engagement of the civil society to act as effective scrutinisers of policymaking reforms as well as to take a more constructive role in policymaking processes, consequently rendering it more transparent and evidence-based.

The Position Paper is made under the CEPS Web project, whose aim was to create a Centre for Excellence within the institutional framework provided by the Think for Europe Network (TEN). The project is financed under the framework of the Regional Research Promotion Programme (RRPP). The Position Paper can be accessed here.

Gender Mainstreaming of Public Policies in Serbia - A Case for (Light) Optimism

The persistence of gender inequality and continued discrimination of women has led to the adoption of the National Strategy for Gender Equality in 2016, which recognises gender mainstreaming as a tool for fighting discrimination through the (re)organisation, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes. An essential element of the new Strategy is gender impact assessment, i.e. gender analysis of policies, measures, and programmes. In parallel, policymaking reform is a part of the EU accession process and public administration reform whose central part is the adoption of the new law on policymaking – the Law on the Planning System - and a set of by-laws that will regulate the policy system management in detail. However, the present draft Law does not contain any provisions on gender assessment of policies.

This policy brief discusses the importance of ensuring that the new Law on the Planning System contains a provision that will explicitly stipulate the obligation for state institutions to conduct gender impact assessment and offers concrete policy recommendations for policy makers. The policy brief is available here.

CEP FOLLOWS

Visegrad Bloc and the EU's Future: Grand Aspirations Behind Anti-Immigration Stances

Despite a considerably assertive and costly media campaign, the Hungarian Prime Minister Victor Orban did not manage to convince the majority of Hungary’s citizens that the issue of migrants/refugees is the most critical “for their own future and the future of Europe”. The 43.4% turnout (out of which 6% of votes were blank/invalid) at the infamous “quota referendum”, point to the fact that exploiting the topic of migrants in a populist manner is not sufficient to mobilise the general electorate, worried about everyday issues, such as economic conditions. The referendum campaign, aside from presenting the migrants as a security threat, blamed Brussels for wanting “to take away a part of Hungary’s sovereignty”. However, the Council Decision has so far proven to be ill-fated in any case – one year since it was adopted, the member states have relocated only 5.2% of the agreed number of asylum applicants from Italy and Greece (5,651 out of agreed 106,000 persons). Hence, this referendum does not carry relevance even from the perspective of the implementation of this Decision, given that practically all member states have been failing to enforce it so far.

This issue of CEP Insight is available here.

(UN)Success of Public Administration Reform in Serbia - Case: European Commission v. Reality

At the first sight, in the recently published Serbia 2016 Report made by the European Commission, Serbia receives positive assessment in the field of public administration reform. An encouraging fact is that public administration reform has been labelled as an area with progress achieved. However, a more detailed reading of the report reveals certain deficiencies in the system, especially regarding depoliticisation and professionalisation of public administration, introduction of a merit-based recruitment system, improvement of public policy making, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, et cetera. In the new issue of CEP Insight, we analysed the EC’s assessment of Serbia’s results in the field of public administration reform - one of the pillars of the Enlargement Strategy alongside the rule of law and economic governance. The entire CEP Insight is available here.

(Non)Critical European Commission: Analysis of 2016 Findings and Reporting Effects

As was the case in previous autumns, the European Commission (EC) held the professional public in the countries of the Western Balkans (WB) in anticipation for the results of its assessment of compliance and progress in the Serbia EU accession process. The Commission is changing its reporting schedule and the next report can be expected only in the spring of 2018. The EC explained that by doing so, it will harmonise its actions with the schedule of Economic Reform Programs (ERP) for candidate countries. In this edition of CEP Insight, we analyse the new EC reporting methodology and its novelties, and comment on the findings of the newest Serbia 2016 Country Report.

This issue of CEP Insight is available here.
From Slovak to Maltese Presidency of the Council

On 20 December, the European Policy Centre organised a panel discussion in cooperation with the EU Info Centre, titled From Slovak to Maltese Presidency of the Council: Passing the Torch in Times of Uncertainty and What for Enlargement? The panel was moderated by Milena Lazarević, CEP Programme Director, while the panellists included H.E Michael Davenport, Head of the EU Delegation to Serbia, H.E Dagmar Repčekova, Ambassador of the Slovak Republic in Serbia, Mr. Fabian Psaila, Representative of Malta to the Council and Mrs. Tanja Miščević, Head of the Negotiating Team for the Accession of the Republic of Serbia to the EU. They spoke about the achievements of the Slovak Presidency and the priorities of the Maltese Presidency, with a special focus on enlargement policy. The panel equally focused on Serbia’s position towards the topics addressed.

Mr Psaila said that Malta has been committed to the enlargement policy from the beginning and promised that his country, presiding over the Union, will continue the work and cooperation initiated in the mandate of the Slovak and Dutch Presidency, in favour of the success of Serbia on the road to membership. H.E Devenport pointed out that this year has been significant in terms of achievements on the path of accession to the EU that Serbia showed, and emphasised that the areas of economic governance, the rule of law and public administration reform will be particularly important in the upcoming period.

The head of the Serbian Negotiating Team Ms Tanja Miščević pointed out that European security cannot be complete without the Western Balkan countries. Ms Miščević also pointed to the possible opening of chapters in the first half of 2017, among which are Chapter 7 about Intellectual Property, Chapter 29 on customs union, Chapter 33 on the budget and other issues and Chapter 13 on fisheries, stressing that the opening of the chapters is not as important as their substance.

Read more about the event here.

“Achieving Excellence through Regional Cooperation”: CEPS WeB Position Paper Presented

Working breakfast on the topic Achieving Excellence through Regional Cooperation was held on 24th November in Belgrade, gathering members of the Think for Europe Network (TEN) as well as distinguished experts from the Regional Environmental Center (REC) and the Center of Excellence in Finance (CEF).

Participants discussed the added value of pursuing a regional approach and shared their experiences in regional networking. The aim of the event was to formulate new ideas for inspiring the creation of a more constructive regional initiatives in the Western Balkans region. Additionally, the event served as an opportunity to present the first Position Paper of the newly created Centre for Excellence in Policymaking (CEPS WeB), established by six think-tank organisations from the Western Balkans, members of TEN. The discussion was moderated by Simonida Kacarska, Research Coordinator at the European Policy Institute (EPI).

Sena Marić, Senior researcher at CEP
“Europe in Crisis: Thinking Forward” - Panel Discussion for Participants of BEUM 2016

Brexit, the refugee influx, the rise of extreme political parties, and terrorism threats are only a few issues that have made the EU seem more vulnerable than ever. In cooperation with BEUM Association (Belgrade European Union Model), CEP organised two panel discussions titled Europe in Crisis: Thinking Forward, on October 26th, 2016. The event gathered prominent international and national experts and nearly 400 young graduates from across the world. The first panel examined the ongoing turbulent times in the EU, while the second panel addressed the possibilities for reinvention of the EU enlargement policy. The event gave a chance to the students to ask sharp questions to the panel experts and have their say on the issues discussed.

Public Administration Reform - Seminar for Civil Society Organisations

A two-day seminar for civil society organisations was held in Belgrade on 14th and 15th December 2016, gathering more than 30 CSOs from Serbia. The participants had the opportunity to learn from SIGMA experts on the framework of Principles of Public Administration, to participate in the workshops and see the premiere of multimedia presentations about the key reform areas these Principles cover, as developed by SIGMA/OECD. The presentations were produced within the WeBER project. The aim of the seminar was to introduce SIGMA Principles of Public Administration to a wider group of CSOs coming from local communities from all around Serbia who are active in PAR related areas. The event was organised by CEP and SIGMA as part of the WeBER.

CEP RECOMMENDS

Short Video Animations on the SIGMA/OECD Principles of Public Administration

The following videos are part of an animation series focused on the principles of public administration developed by SIGMA/OECD. The series is produced within the Western Balkans Enabling Project for Civil Society Monitoring of Public Administration Reform – WeBER, a three-year project funded by the European Union and co-financed by the Kingdom of the Netherlands. WeBER is implemented by the Think for Europe Network (TEN) composed of EU policy-oriented think tanks in the Western Balkans, and European Policy Centre (EPC) from Brussels is the partner. CEP is the Project Coordinator. Watch the short videos:

- Strategic Framework of Public Administration Reform
- Policy Development and Coordination
- Public Service and Human Resource Management
- Accountability
- Service Delivery

Impressum

Newsletter Europe&us number 8
Fall/Winter 2016
Publisher: European Policy Centre
Editorial board: European Policy Centre
e-mail: office@cep.org.rs
phone: +381 11 4082 265
web: www.europeanpolicy.org