

European Policy Centre - CEP

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I MAIN DEVELOPMENTS IN 2018

2018 was another successful year for the European Policy Centre (CEP), marked by accomplishments in all areas of the organisation's work, and by the enhancement of its organisational capacities. In fact, as a result of its continued positive development, CEP was named the best think tank in the Western Balkan region in 2018 in the rankings of a prominent American programme of the University of Pennsylvania ([*Go To Think Tanks Index*](#)), and ninth among think tanks in Central and Eastern Europe.

In December 2018, CEP successfully completed the three-year EU-funded flagship project "Western Balkans Enabling Project for Civil Society Monitoring of Public Administration Reform (WeBER)." This action represented a pioneering achievement, equipping civil society in the Western Balkans (WB) with the tools necessary for systemic involvement in the process of public administration reform (PAR) monitoring at both the national and regional levels. The products of this project have had a significant impact and have been widely used, especially by the European Commission's Directorate General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR). In [evaluating the impact of its Civil Society Facility instrument](#), the European Commission (EC) praised WeBER, highlighting its "long-haul efforts to bring in structural changes in an institutional environment that has recently become fairly acute and difficult" as well as its capacity to mobilise national partners. Furthermore, the **Regional WeBER Platform** and the National Working Groups on PAR participated for the second year in a row in consultations for PAR special group meetings between the European Commission and national authorities.

In 2018, the National Convention on the European Union (NCEU) went through a status transformation, in which it grew from an informal structure into an **alliance of civil society organisations**, with CEP being one of its ten founders. This transformation was done with the experience and good practice of the NCEU's founders in mind, to strengthen the alliance's organisational capacities, and in order to continue to push for thematically structured debate and the successful representation of the interests of civil society in the process of Serbia's accession to the EU. The NCEU has thus acquired legal personality and has been focused on restructuring its internal organisation accordingly.

In line with its pace of development, CEP has continued to upgrade its in-house capacities. The organisation upgraded its quantitative research methods with the use of the RStudio application for processing statistical data. CEP also continues to strengthen the writing skills of its researchers, with two training sessions for effective policy writing at proficiency level taking place in 2018. Regarding internal communication, CEP has started using Slack.

In addition, new HRM tools and procedures have been adopted and have begun to be applied, namely for selection of employees, performance appraisal, retention and professional development.



In 2018, CEP also began to research new topics, such as the impact of China on the Western Balkans, education policy, and anti-corruption efforts. Interest in the latter has brought CEP a new partnership, as it has become a member of the Anti-Corruption and Good Governance Coalition (SELDI).

In 2018, CEP continued to prove itself a trusted partner of the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR) in Serbia and the Western Balkan region, and was thus entrusted to organise the promotional campaign of its 2018 Enlargement Strategy, which took the form of a regional conference held in Belgrade over two days in March 2018, titled "EU and Western Balkans: towards greater credibility and engagement on both sides."

In the media, CEP has been recognised as one of the most prominent think tanks in Serbia and the region, especially when it comes to topics of public administration reform, rule of law, regional politics, and Serbia's path towards EU accession. Media outlets now often seek comments from CEP experts, both senior and junior (as CEP's has always sought to promote promising young individuals). CEP has also continued to organise working breakfasts with media representatives on a regular basis, with the aim of raising the knowledge and capacities of journalists on important questions CEP covers. To achieve this goal, three such events were organised in 2018, during which CEP experts provided info sheets with key information to journalists to inform them about topics analysed by CEP, and to improve the general quality of media representation of CEP's areas of expertise.

In addition, CEP has become a recognised think tank at the EU level, with experts and researchers having participated as speakers at a number of prominent events, such as the [European Think Tank Summit](#), which took place in Berlin in March 2019. At this summit, which hosted over 100 representatives from about 80 of the top think tanks of Europe, the USA and other countries under the motto "Bridging the Gap between Knowledge, Politics, and Proper Governing in the Digital Age," CEP's Programme Director had the important role of moderating and speaking at two plenary sessions. CEP's Programme Director also attended and moderated a plenary panel at the [Global Think Tank Summit in Brussels](#) in November 2018, further confirming CEP's standing in the international think tank arena.

The following sections of the report present CEP's achievements within its four programme areas in greater detail, as well as some additional horizontal results.

II CEP'S RESEARCH, PROJECTS, AND PROGRAMMATIC ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2018

Programme Area 1: Good Governance

"Good Governance," the largest and most developed of CEP's programme areas, continued to achieve significant results in 2018 through the implementation of projects and initiatives at the national and regional levels. CEP has proven itself as a leading think tank in the area of public



administration reform (PAR), with ever growing influence, expertise and recognition. In 2018, important outcomes in the first programme area include the **completion of the organisation's multiannual projects on PAR** and the **deepening of existing partnerships and the exploration of new policy arenas** within the topic.

Getting PAR closer to citizens: three years of WeBER's impact

In 2018, and as part of the [Think for Europe Network](#), CEP completed the three-year, flagship "Western Balkans Enabling Project for Civil Society Monitoring of Public administration reform" - [WeBER](#) project. Focusing on PAR requirements in the EU accession process, and targeting all PAR areas, WeBER has become a civil society initiative sui generis in the region. The project has been recognised by domestic and international stakeholders as the main driver within civil society's wider involvement in PAR dialogue in Serbia and the Western Balkan (WB) region, pushing for a more transparent, participatory, and citizen-oriented public administration reform (PAR) process.

As a result of WeBER, in 2018 civil society organisations completed a [full PAR monitoring cycle, and 7 reports were published for 2017/2018](#) (1 regional report for the Western Balkans and 6 national PAR monitor reports). All PAR monitor reports, together with results from the latest PAR reports for individual WB countries regularly prepared by the Support for Improvement in Governance and Management (SIGMA) initiative of the OECD, have been made easily accessible through the regional [PAR Scoreboard](#) (an online tool for comparing PAR achievement across the WB from the view of civil society, which works to drive regional peer pressure and peer learning among governments).

Participants in the high-level ["Citizens First: Civil Society Demands for Better Administration in the Western Balkans"](#) WeBER conference, held on 25 and 26 September 2018, commended WeBER as the example of how civil society can constructively contribute to PAR policy through evidence and dialogue. The purpose of the conference, the first in what is planned as a series of biennial regional conferences focusing on civil society's role in monitoring and supporting PAR in the context of the region's EU accession process, was to enhance and open up dialogue on creating and implementing inclusive and transparent policies that take citizens' needs into account.

CEP, as WeBER's coordinator, advocated, through a policy brief titled ["Balkan Enlargement and the Politics of Civic Pressure: The Case of the Public Administration Reform Sector"](#) and co-authored with the EPC from Brussels, that the European Commission should insist on greater transparency in the policy dialogue on PAR it holds with Western Balkan authorities. As a result, in several countries of the region, the conclusions of PAR special group meetings have been made publicly available. In addition, WeBER team members were regularly invited to multi-stakeholder events on PAR. These events include [DG NEAR consultations with civil society](#) in January 2018, the [14th Meeting of the Eastern Partnership Panel on Governance and PAR](#) in March 2018, the [SIGMA/OECD workshop "Challenges for Public Administration Reform \(PAR\) in Serbia: Key Findings of the 2017 SIGMA Monitoring Report"](#) in March 2018, and the



[presentation of the Western Balkan PAR Monitor report at DG NEAR, and policy dialogue of the European Policy Centre \(EPC\)](#) in Brussels in November 2018, to name a few.

In addition, more than 130 civil society organisations (CSOs) from the WB were involved in **PAR dialogue and monitoring** through WeBER Platform meetings, which fostered meaningful interaction between civil society, governments, and international and regional organisations. Additionally, more than 200 CSOs and media representatives in the WB region, of whom 170 were trained in the PAR monitor application and influencing the design of PAR, were introduced to the PAR requirements of the **SIGMA Principles of Public Administration**.

Finally, between June 2017 and June 2018, a region-wide WeBER Small Grant Facility provided for 33 locally based and grassroots organisations to monitor and get engaged in PAR in their cities and municipalities.

“PARtnerships”

In May 2018, CEP finalised the [“Partnership for Public Administration Reform and Public Services in Serbia – PARtnerships”](#) project in collaboration with the European Movement in Serbia (EMinS). Implemented throughout the territory of Serbia in cooperation with twelve local partners, it included several phases, and produced important results. [“ME in the spotlight,”](#) the country-wide campaign for the promotion of a citizen-oriented public administration concept, was successfully completed in 2018. This campaign for the involvement of citizens and civil society, and the collection of their experiences as users of public services, engaged 3,778 citizens: 3,121 through street events and 657 through participation in local public events. [Mojauprava.rs](#), another initiative, a portal for citizens to send feedback on and to assess public services in the areas of primary health care, delivery of personal documents, pre-school and primary school enrolment, has since been kept available and functioning for the submission of citizen feedback and comments.

Moreover, 2018 saw a continuation of the empowerment and training of Serbian local civil society representatives to strongly advocate for better service delivery. For this purpose, a **fourth and final capacity building workshop** was held in Kladovo on 23 and 24 February 2018 on methods of involving civil society in policy development in Serbia.

As a result of research within the “PARtnerships” project coordinated by CEP, a policy study followed by a policy brief of the same name, [“Openness and inclusiveness of public policy-making in Serbia - Examples of three ministries,”](#) were produced, focusing on the services most frequently used by citizens, including the issuance of personal documents, primary health care services (at community health centres), and enrolling children in pre-school institutions and primary schools. By exploring the policymaking process in three selected ministries (the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, the Ministry of Interior, and the Ministry of Health), the study offers an overview of the quality of the policymaking process from the perspective of the governance requirements outlined in SIGMA/OECD’s “Principles of Public Administration.” The CEP team also authored the [“Grey Book of Public Services,”](#) a compilation of key findings (including qualitative and quantitative research results, and inputs



from the “ME in the spotlight” campaign and the mojauprava.rs portal), that offers a set of specific recommendations for the improvement of the policymaking process to enhance the quality, efficiency, and accessibility of public services.

Rule of Law

In December 2018, CEP began implementation of the 10-month [“Access to justice in enforcement proceedings – building a model through consumer protection lens”](#) project, with the overall goal of supporting judicial reform and increasing judicial efficiency in Serbia by improving the **accountability and transparency of public enforcement officers**. To this end, the project plans to develop and pilot a model for an independent mechanism for consumer and human rights organisations to use in monitoring the work of public enforcement officers (PEOs), as well as to raise the awareness of relevant stakeholders and the general public of the role of civil society in monitoring the work of PEOs. The project is supported through a grant provided by [USAID’s Rule of Law \(RoL\)](#) project, which promotes the strategic advancement of Serbia’s judicial reform process, an improved judicial efficiency, as well as access to justice through non-judicial services (such as public enforcement officers), and works to build capacities of institutions in the judiciary system outside of the courts.

UK Good Governance Fund (GGF)

In 2018, CEP continued to implement projects supported by the UK Government’s [Good Governance Fund \(GGF\)](#).

The focuses of the GGF supported projects remained on PAR, human resources management in public administration, as well as on access to justice and the proper implementation of anti-discrimination and human rights legislation, areas in which CEP has developed significant expertise over the years. Through the **“Strengthening capacities of Serbian institutions and organisations for the proper enforcement of human rights and anti-discrimination legislation”** project, CEP has continued to support Serbia’s Commissioner for the Protection of Equality and to provide expert and technical assistance in three areas identified by the commissioner as priorities in 2018: strategic litigation, situational testing, and improving the attitude of the media towards discrimination. During the course of this project, CEP also raised the capacities of various CSOs to perform situational testing, and sensitised journalists to promote equality in their reporting.

The year 2018 saw the completion of the **“Promoting Public Administration Reform in Serbia through further support to the modernisation of Human Resource Management”** project, aimed at improving human resource and performance management in the Serbian public administration, increasing professionalism in this field by introducing modern practices. This project focused on the appraisal of civil servants and on preparing recommendations for overcoming current issues in this field.

The **“Support further development of citizen-oriented administration through building the Capacities of the National Academy for Public Administration (NAPA)”** project aimed to assist NAPA in developing capacities to introduce new training programmes for the professional development of public servants. This will help to lead to the transformation of the



Serbian public service into a citizen-oriented, accountable administration, capable of providing high-quality services through improved professional development methods and approaches.

In 2018 CEP provided expert services, as an implementing partner, within the following GGF projects: **“Improvement of financial accountability of Serbian institution through external audit”** (for the State Audit Institution), and **“Promoting governance reform through introducing paperless operations in public administration in Serbia”** (for the Ministry of Telecommunication and Ministry of Culture).

OECD/SIGMA cooperation: joint efforts for better administration

Since 2015, CEP has been providing support to OECD/SIGMA as [the local hub of expertise](#) in Serbia. Successful cooperation continued in 2018, furthering, on the one hand, the recognition of CEP’s portfolio in PAR and, on the other, the expansion of opportunities for CEP to upgrade its in-house analytical capacities and to explore new areas of work in PAR fields.

In 2018, CEP’s engagement with OECD/SIGMA resulted in a **comparative analysis of weaknesses highlighted in the SIGMA 2017 Monitoring report**, with measures envisaged in national reform strategies/action plans, a **revision of [the Principles of Public Administration for EU candidate countries and potential candidates](#) document**, as well as a measure of **Serbia’s 2017 progress against a selected number of SIGMA indicators within all six areas of public administration reform**. With this last activity, CEP assisted SIGMA in an assessment of reform developments since the last monitoring report, and directly contributed to an update of SIGMA’s findings for Serbia.

Furthermore, CEP produced a **feasibility study for the establishment of a Registry of Public Authority Holders in Serbia**, envisaged by the new Public Administration Strategy Action Plan 2018-2020 as a brand-new instrument. Following the endorsement of the study by SIGMA and the Serbian Government, the second phase of CEP’s assistance in the project entails the development of a methodology and the design of a database model expected to serve as a basis for the registry. CEP was also engaged to collect and analyse data, and to provide **expert advice to support SIGMA’s 2019 monitoring and assessment of PAR progress in Serbia** in two priority areas: (1) public service & human resource management and (2) service delivery.

CEP also provided support to the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government in **improving the readability of their annual report on the implementation of the PAR Action Plan** through data visualisation. Finally, CEP contributed to the research and writing of SIGMA papers published in 2018, regional studies [on managerial accountability](#) and the [professionalisation of the senior civil service](#) in the Western Balkans. For the former paper, CEP’s Programme Director Milena Lazarevic was part of the core SIGMA authorship team, while for both papers CEP’s researchers provided local expert support.



OGP Independent Reporting Mechanism: in constant pursuit of open government in Serbia

During the reporting period, CEP remained deeply involved in the **Open Government Partnership (OGP) Initiative in Serbia** as the national research organisation within the **Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM)**. CEP performed independent monitoring and reported on the government's progress in fulfilling its 2016/2018 OGP commitments. To this end:

- ✓ CEP released the **Progress Report 2016-2018** in April 2018, following its thorough review by experts, civil society, government representatives and the wider public. This report provided an assessment of the government's progress in the fulfilment of OGP commitments in Serbia. The publication of the report further promoted the OGP in Serbia and informed CSOs about how to get involved in this process, reiterating the importance of increasing the activity of civil society in open government efforts and public administration reform. A [report launch event](#), organized on 11 April 2019, stimulated discussion about the government's openness towards citizens and reaffirmed the importance of establishing inclusive dialogue in order to work towards open government within the OGP community in Serbia.
- ✓ A CEP researcher participated in the [global OGP Summit in Tbilisi, Georgia, on 17-19 July 2018](#), contributing to the strengthening of CEP's research capacities and to the expansion of knowledge about current issues of government openness around the world. This event served as a platform to discuss OGP efforts and developments with more than 2,200 participants from 115 countries, and to share experiences among researchers, government representatives, civil society members, think tanks, and others. Focused on peer-learning and interactive group work, the summit helped the CEP researcher to advance her own analytical and monitoring skills.
- ✓ In October, CEP drafted the **Serbia End-of-Term Report 2016/2018**, presenting final monitoring results from the implementation of Serbia's OGP Action Plan. The draft will undergo a process of review and commentary and will be made public in spring 2019.

Staying relevant through regular and topical publishing

In the past year, CEP continued to publish regularly, addressing relevant issues in varied formats. Specifically, in numbers, within the "Good Governance" programme area, CEP produced 3 policy studies, 3 monitoring reports, 2 policy briefs, 2 infographics, and 1 "CEP insight" on topics related to PAR both in a general sense and to specific public administration areas, such as public services, responsibility, and managerial accountability. Some publications also addressed topics related to Serbia's progress in regard to OGP implementation.

All CEP policy products published in the first programme area can be accessed in English at the following links: [studies](#), [briefs](#), [insights](#), [presents](#), [discussion papers](#), [reports and other editions](#) and [infographics](#).



Programme Area 2: Internal market and Competitiveness

2018 was marked with noteworthy progress in CEP's second programme area, "Internal Market and Competitiveness." Besides CEP's involvement in the National Convention on the EU and the coordination of its working groups, CEP also implemented several other projects in this area.

Coordination of NCEU Working Groups

In 2018, CEP played a significant role in reorganising and changing the status of the NCEU, resulting in the formal registration of the NCEU as a legal entity (CSOs alliance) in September 2018. The reestablishment of the NCEU's internal organisation and staff is ongoing, with strong support provided by CEP.

In 2018 CEP continued to lead **three NCEU working groups**, covering EU accession negotiating chapters 1, 28, and 3 (addressing the free movement of goods, consumer and health protection, and the right of establishment and freedom to provide services, respectively), organising, coordinating, and delivering regular meetings. In total, **five meetings** were held in 2018. On 23 April 2018, the **regular annual NCEU plenary session** was held with the participation of CEP and representatives from NCEU working groups, together with members of the National Parliament and the Negotiating Team for Accession of the Republic of Serbia to the European Union, ministers, and representatives from the civil sector and the media. CEP also contributed by **developing monitoring reports on progress made until 2018 within negotiating chapters 1, 3, 4, 9 and 28, which were published in the NCEU Book of Recommendations.**

A **special thematic joint session** of the three NCEU WGs was held in June 2018 at the National Assembly on the topic of **"New trends in trade in the EU: the impact of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Single Digital Market on internal market and consumer protection and Serbia."**

"Prepare to Participate – P2P"

In December 2018, CEP began implementation of the two-year **"Strengthening Capacities of Civil Society Organisations for Active Participation in EU Negotiations through Selected NCEU Working Groups"** (**"Prepare to Participate – P2P"**) project together with the [National Alliance for Local Economic Development](#) (NALED), and the [Centre of Contemporary Policies](#) (CSP) as partners. The general objective of the project is to enable various segments of civil society to actively take part in the EU accession process on selected economic chapters of the *acquis* through the NCEU working groups (WGs) so as to fully open the process to citizens, as well as to strengthen civil society's capacities to protect citizens' interests in projects and initiatives. With enhanced knowledge and skills in this area, civil society in Serbia will be able to continually protect the interests of citizens and advocate them to policy makers. Additionally, the project will push awareness-raising activities in order to improve CSO and policymaker understandings of the needs of, and ways of involving, civil society in EU negotiations on selected economic *acquis*.



The project is financed by the Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Serbia as part of its **Civil Society Facility and Media Programme**, which aims to strengthen participatory democracies and the EU integration process by empowering civil society to actively take part in decision making.

The “Increasing economic growth through support to the promotion of competition policy” project

In 2018 CEP provided legal and economic expertise as part of the **“Increasing economic growth through support to the promotion of competition policy”** project, which has provided technical assistance to the **Commission for the Protection of Competition of the Republic of Serbia (CPC)**

CEP’s experts have prepared and delivered input on **legal solutions to the new draft law on the protection of competition**, based on a comparative review of legal solutions in select EU countries, best EU practices, and experience in the implementation of the existing Law on the Protection of Competition. Five workshops were also held with CPC staff in order to present and discuss potential legal solutions, resulting in proposals for public discussions.

In addition, two public discussions were organised and delivered (in Kragujevac and Niš) for the business community, media, and general public on potential policy to be included in the new draft law on the protection of competition.

UK Good Governance Fund

In the reporting period, CEP implemented one project, titled **“Support to simplification of administrative procedures to improve the business environment in Serbia,”** supported by the Good Governance Fund (GGF) in its second programme area.

Policy products

Within the “Internal Market and Competitiveness” programme area in 2018, CEP produced [one infographic](#) on the Law on Point of Single Contact.

All CEP policy products published in the second programme area can be accessed in English at the following links: [studies](#), [briefs](#), [insights](#), [presents](#), [discussion papers](#), [reports and other editions](#) and [infographics](#).

Programme Area 3: Regional Policy, Energy, Environment

CSOnnect

Following successful cooperation and significant efforts made in this programme area in 2017, CEP was granted another **institutional grant under the CSOnnect program** implemented by the Regional Environmental Centre (REC), and financially supported by Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). With this CSOnnect institutional grant, CEP and partner organisations (including the Habitat Ecological Centre, the Ecological Movement of Odžaci, the Local Ecological Centre from Smederevo, and the Business and Economy Centre)



contributed to the improvement of civil society participation in addressing negotiating chapter 27 (focused on the environment) of the accession process. In order to institute these changes, CEP and partner organisations implemented inter alia advocacy activities, with, based on their research and analysis, the aim of adopting the best solutions in the fields of environmental protection at the local level, and in environmental impact assessments. In the reporting period, CEP and partner organisations conducted **nine training sessions for pupils in primary and secondary schools** outside Belgrade on [the Aarhus Convention](#), and **two training sessions for civil society organisations** on the EU integration process, public policy-making and research, and the financing of environmental protection at the local level in Serbia. In addition, the team worked to research environmental protection in Serbian local governments by conducting numerous interviews with officials and employees working at the local level.

Three meetings of a wider consultative group of civil society organisations were also held in Belgrade (June and July 2018), and Šid (June 2018). The meetings were attended by representatives from civil society organisations, the [Ministry of Environmental Protection](#), the [State Audit Institution](#) (DRI), the [Serbian Chamber of Commerce and Industry](#) (SCCI), municipal administrations, public utility enterprises, and local companies.

The first phase of the project ended on 31 July 2018, and phasal reports were submitted. However, during the first half of September 2018, all lead organisations from 11 consortia received a statement from the REC that the program was about to end, due to technical and procedural concerns. Nevertheless, during the reporting period, the program was not officially concluded, nor have relevant issues been resolved.

Banat Plaform

CEP experts continued to provide expertise within the "**Banat Platform**" project (November 2017 - October 2018), implemented by the Habitat Ecological Centre organisation and financed by the Open Society Foundation in Serbia. The aim of this project was to strengthen the capacities of Banat's local communities to participate in EU accession negotiations with a focus on negotiating chapters 11 (agriculture and rural development), 12 (food safety, veterinary and phytosanitary policy) and 27 (environment), in a continuation of this initiative which commenced in 2015. In 2018, 12 workshops were held within the Banat platform in Zrenjanin, Vrsac, Novi Knezevac, Ada, Tornjoš, Kovin, Bela Crkva, Lukin Selo, and Novi Sad. The topics discussed included the current state of negotiations (the preparation of the negotiating position for chapter 27 and the fulfilment of the criteria for opening chapters 11 and 12), financing environmental and agricultural protections in the context of Serbia's accession to the EU, as well as recommendations. The organisation EC Staniste also produced a [policy study](#) on EU and Serbian agricultural policy, in which a CEP researcher took part in developing the chapter on the topic of **EU Common Agricultural Policy and IPA for Rural Development (IPARD 2014-2020) in Serbia**.



UK Good Governance Fund

In the reporting period, CEP implemented one project, titled **“Support to modernisation of the energy sector in Serbia,”** supported by the Good Governance Fund (GGF) in its second programme area.

Policy products – focusing on Chapter 27

In the reporting period, CEP published a [paper](#) on the relevance of the European Commission Serbia 2018 Report, as well as a general progress assessment for chapter 27.

All CEP policy products published in the third programme area can be accessed in English at the following links: [studies](#), [briefs](#), [insights](#), [presents](#), [discussion papers](#), [reports and other editions](#) and [infographics](#).

Programme Area 4: Europe&Us

Timely publication of policy products on pertinent issues

As in the past, in 2018 CEP has continued to produce and publish products in its “Europe&Us” programme area with the aim of **bringing the EU debates closer to Serbian citizens** by examining Serbia’s current and future position in the broader context of EU politics, policies and institutional setup, while simultaneously analysing challenges within the EU.

Key topics covered include the effects of EU rule of law conditionalities in Serbia and the Western Balkans, improving the EU benchmarking mechanism in the WB, the role of civil society in the EU accession process, reinventing the EU enlargement policy, Serbia’s progress in the EU accession process, Brexit and its potential impact on the WB, EU electoral reforms (i.e. Spitzenkandidat and transnational lists), the Bulgarian and Austrian Council presidencies in the context of the Western Balkan’s accession process, the role of China in the WB, the opinions of Serbian citizens on the EU, and the state of the rule of law and Article 7 procedure in the EU.

The number and impact of **policy products published with an advocacy component** continued to grow. Proceeding from the assumption that the “business as usual” approach is unproductive in terms of pushing forward the EU accession process, CEP has created and openly advocated for concrete and evidence-based proposals on how to tackle some issues regarding the EU integration process. Most notably, this was the case with some of CEP’s discussion papers, including [“Away with the enlargement bogeyman: Reforming the EU Enlargement Policy for a prompt acceptance of the Western Balkans”](#) on how to reform the EU enlargement policy for a prompt acceptance of the Western Balkans, and [“2018 – the Year Credible EU Enlargement Policy Returns?”](#), focused on drawing attention to certain essential elements that should be included in a new credible EU Enlargement Strategy.

In 2018 CEP also increased the range of topics covered within its “Europe&Us” programme area, with analysis of China’s rising footprint in the Western Balkans, especially in Serbia, for the first time. Working with a network of European partners within the framework of the [Think Initiative project](#), CEP has been begun to analyse the challenges and opportunities China’s increased involvement brings to the Western Balkans and the region’s accession process to the



EU. The policy study on this topic was completed in February 2019 and is to be made available in June 2019.

CEP as an initiator of expert debates on Serbia's and the WB's EU accession process

Within the framework of the "Europe&Us" programme area, CEP organised **five high level international events** in Belgrade, with the presence and participation of prominent representatives of EU institutions, member states, EU and regional think tanks and academia, and the Serbian civil and state sector. These events have proven to be of tremendous importance for the promotion of CEP's work and for successful engagement with the Serbian, regional, and wider European public.

In 2018 CEP organised two **panel discussions on the results achieved and the upcoming priorities of presidencies of the Council of the EU**, when [Austria](#) and [Romania](#) respectively took over the presidency. These events hosted ambassadors from the outgoing and upcoming presidencies alongside other prominent guests. Events of this kind not only work to introduce the goals of the upcoming presidency, but they also serve as an opportunity to evaluate results of the previous presidency, especially in relation to EU enlargement policy. The success of these events has made the presidency handover discussion one of CEP's trademarks, attracting the attention of the media alongside that of the diplomatic community, civil society, academia, and other stakeholders.

In March 2018, in cooperation with DG NEAR, CEP organised a regional conference in Belgrade entitled "[**The EU and the Western Balkans - Towards greater credibility & engagement on both sides.**](#)" One of the organisation's main achievements in 2018, this conference gathered more than 70 participants from across the Western Balkans, including experts, members of civil society, and academia, to whom the [new enlargement package](#) was promoted.

In parallel with the EU-Western Balkans Summit in Sofia in May 2018, CEP organised an event titled "[**New Pact for Europe - Exploiting the Window of Opportunity.**](#)" As part of CEP's efforts to bring EU debates closer to the Serbian public, and to bring Serbia closer to EU debates, CEP, together with the King Baudouin Foundation, the Bertelsmann Stiftung, the Open Society Initiative for Europe, and the European Policy Centre Brussels (EPC), produced a landmark report titled "**Re-energising Europe: A package deal for the EU27,**" which provides a systematic overview of the internal and external challenges facing further European integration. **Belgrade thus became the only non-EU capital in which the report was presented and discussed.**

The "[**The European Union and the Western Balkans – Making enlargement a more credible process?**](#)" conference was held in Belgrade in November 2018. It gathered a domestic and international audience, in order to discuss and try to determine the overall contribution of the Berlin process until that point and what support it can deliver in the future, whether the new impetus indicates more credible enlargement perspectives for the countries of the region, how to keep enlargement on the EU's agenda, not only in Brussels but also in other EU capitals,



as well as how to better prepare EU member states for the prospect of enlargement. This conference, organised in the framework of the Austrian Presidency of the Council of the EU, was part of the **“Western Balkans Reflection Forum” initiative**, a framework project launched in 2015 by a network of European think tanks in support of the Berlin Process. The conference was jointly organised by CEP, the Austro-French Centre for Rapprochement in Europe (CFA/ÖFZ), and the Centre International de Formation Européenne (CIFE, Nice / Berlin), and supported and in cooperation with Open Regional Funds South- East Europe – Promotion of European Integration (German Cooperation – GIZ), the Institut français des relations internationales (IFRI, Paris), the Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI, Rome), the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP, Brussels) and the European Commission (Erasmus + program).

As part of CEP’s efforts to promote its findings, and to advocate for solutions to pressing issues concerning the European Integration of the Western Balkans, CEP took active part in a large number of debates, at the local, regional, and EU level, of which many fit into topics within the “Europe&Us” programme area. CEP’s experts also took part in a number of notable events, including the EU-Western Balkans summit in Sofia, the Berlin Process summit in London, [public events organised by EPC-Brussels](#) and the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS)-Berlin, the [EU Committee of the Regions](#), and the [Global Think Tank Summit](#), among others.

Fostering regional and international partnerships on EU related affairs

CEP continued to intensify its promotion and development of the [Think for Europe Network \(TEN\)](#), a network of think tanks from various Western Balkan countries. In the past years, TEN has managed to achieve significant achievements in its EU-related policy research, and each of the network’s members has established prominence in policymaking processes in their respective countries. In the framework of TEN, in 2018 the **“Europeanisation Beyond Process”** project proposal was developed and granted. TEN plans to take advantage of the existing cooperation between its individual members with renowned think tanks across Europe, with the aim of improving the quality of communication on EU enlargement in the broader context of changing definitions of the EU and its future.

As part of the aforementioned **“Think Initiative”** project focused on **analysing China’s impact in the Balkans**, CEP joined a pan-European network of think tanks, which gathered organisations from Austria, Poland, and Slovenia, and allowed CEP to establish new contacts and to further exchange ideas via a multilateral consultations process.

New cooperation and potential partnerships were also advanced with **think tanks from Germany, Austria, France, Poland, Hungary**. These partnerships were initiated either in the framework of previously organised events, or in the framework of the “Europeanisation Beyond Process” project.

Staying relevant through regular and topical publishing

The total number of “Europe&Us” products released **reached its peak in 2018 (16 in total)**, with yet more products in the late drafting phase. Published products include **2 policy studies**,



2 policy briefs, 1 “CEP presents,” 3 “CEP insights,” 2 discussion papers, and 6 infographics.

The topics covered ranged from directly addressing the EU and its system of governance to other subjects which could impact accession processes in Serbia and the rest of the countries of the Western Balkans.

All CEP policy products published in the fourth programme area can be accessed in English at the following links: [studies](#), [briefs](#), [insights](#), [presents](#), [discussion papers](#), [reports and other editions](#) and [infographics](#).

Cross-cutting projects and programmes

Organisational Development Grant

In 2018, with the support of the **Open Society Initiative for Europe (OSIFE)**, CEP achieved further growth, and continued to develop its internal capacities, research quality, and communication outreach. Particularly through the advancement of the organisation’s researchers’ methodological skills, its external quality reviews, and its developing of new areas of research, CEP has ensured long-term progress in the quality, relevance, and impact of its research.

During the reporting period, CEP implemented numerous research efforts and activities, and strengthened its skills with an advanced quantitative research training, resulting in CEP’s first [entirely quantitative policy research](#) project and the launching of several other research projects and initiatives. CEP’s research team also underwent two training sessions in advanced policy writing, and received guidance, mentoring, and external reviewing from a senior researcher from EPC, Brussels in the development of different policy products throughout the year. Furthermore, with this grant support, CEP’s level of **media outreach** has substantially increased in 2018, and CEP’s organisation of events has been finely tuned (the numerous events organised in 2018 and described in sections above serve to prove this statement).

CEP also established cooperation with a **human resource management** (HRM) consultancy company in order to improve the existing, and to develop its own, guidelines, procedures, and templates for use in different segments of HRM. In 2018, this collaboration resulted in the creation and launch of improved HR procedures for staff recruitment, performance evaluation, staff retention, and professional development. This collaboration also included general management capacity building for CEP’s managers.

Good Governance Fund (GGF)

In 2018, CEP’s experts continued to work together with PwC Serbia, and in close cooperation with the British Embassy in Serbia, in the implementation of the Good Governance Programme (GGF) for Serbia. The GGF is an initiative of the UK Government designed to provide reform

assistance to Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Moldova, North Macedonia, Serbia and Ukraine.

In the scope of the GGF, CEP has implemented four projects that fall into CEP's first three programme areas and are described above.

Cross-cutting topics

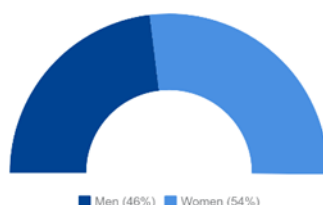
Gender Mainstreaming

CEP continues to integrate a **gender perspective** into the preparation, design, realisation, monitoring, and evaluation of all of its programme areas, policy products, individual projects, activities, and events in order to combat discrimination and promote equality in a wider sense between women and men.

Most notably, CEP's "[Gender Issues in the Western Balkans](#)" policy brief was presented as one of the proposals by civil society from the Western Balkans for the [Western Balkans Summit in London](#), the fifth summit convened under the Berlin Process.

CEP also takes care that to ensure that there is a gender balance in all of its activities. At the eight CEP events organised in 2018, out of 150 key speakers, 69 were men and 81 were women.

CEP public events in 2018 - gender statistics of panelists



CEP also publishes policy products on various cross-cutting topics which can be accessed in English at the following links: [studies](#), [briefs](#), [insights](#), [presents](#), [discussion papers](#), [reports and other editions](#) and [infographics](#).

CEP and the media

Growing media attention and public influence

Media appearances remained an important component of CEP's advocacy towards a wider spectrum of the public. While CEP has appeared in the media in previous years, in 2018 the organisation's number of appearances reached an all-time high. In the Serbian media, CEP experts were either interviewed or invited to appear as guests at TV channels such as **RTS**, **N1**, **B92**, and **Al Jazeera**. CEP also continued with its well-established practice of communicating through daily and weekly journals such as **Politika**, **Danas**, and **Nedeljnik**, and online portals



such as **European Western Balkans**. Strategic media coverage has allowed CEP to intensify communication with the public on topics related to public administration reform, rule of law, the economy, political developments in the region, and Serbia's EU accession process. Main insights from CEP events were covered by the Serbian media and promoted on CEP's social media platforms, and its press-releases were shared and commented on (CEP continues to publish press releases on relevant subjects of public interest at least once a month).

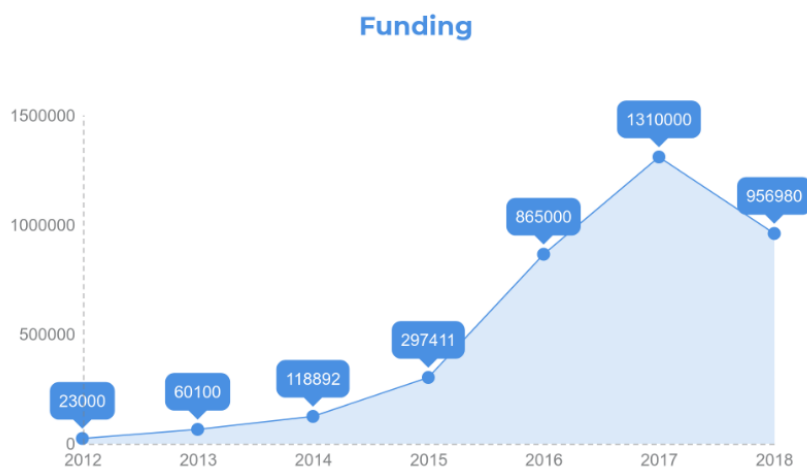
CEP was also recognised by, and present in, foreign media as well, having made appearances on the **Estonian (ETV)**, **Swedish (SVT)** and **Bulgarian (BTV) national televisions**, and in the prestigious **Brussels Times**, **Bloomberg**, and the London-based **EURACTIV** and **Daily Telegraph**.

Another goal of CEP was to increase the knowledge and capacities of journalists on important questions. CEP has continued to organise **working breakfasts with journalists**, with the overall goal being to inform the media on CEP-analysed topics, as well as to improve the quality of the media coverage of the areas in which CEP works. In 2018, **three** such working breakfasts were held: one on the subject of the European Commission's Annual Report on Serbia 2018, another in order to present the National PAR Monitor Serbia 2017/18 report (produced within the WeBER project and described in the "Programme Area 1: Good Governance" section), and the last on the Commission's so-called "non-paper," held on 24 April, 19 November, and 20 December 2018, respectively.

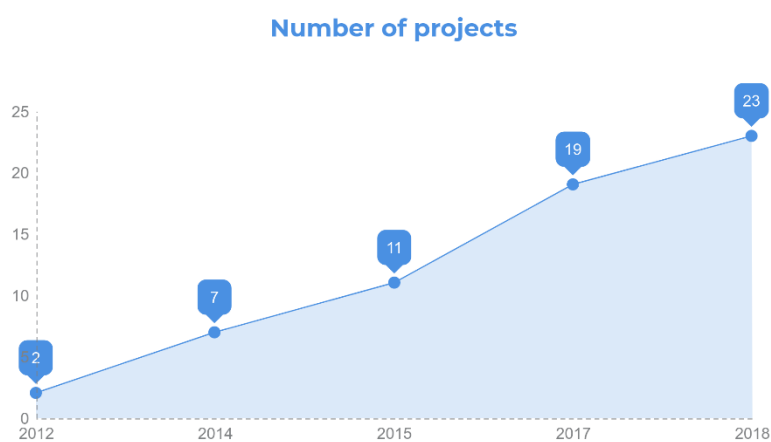
In late 2018, CEP began to prepare the development of a new **podcast platform titled "European Talks,"** which was then launched at the beginning of 2019.

III FINANCIAL DATA AND FUNDING SOURCES

In 2018, CEP's annual turnover amounted to €956,980.86. A decrease in comparison to 2017's figures has been recorded due to a change in the methodology used to calculate the amounts in the financial report, which no longer includes funds received as the coordinator of projects and then transferred to partner organisations.



The number of projects continued to grow – CEP implemented or initiated 23 projects in 2018.



CEP's sources of funding in 2018 were the following:

- ✓ The European Union through the Regional Civil Society Facility Programme and the National Civil Society Facility Programme
- ✓ The Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands
- ✓ The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) through the CSOnnect programme

- ✓ The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)
- ✓ The U.K. Government through the Good Governance Fund (GGF)
- ✓ The Open Government Partnership (OGP)
- ✓ The King Baudouin Foundation
- ✓ We Build Europe (WBE)
- ✓ The European Fund for the Balkans (EFB)
- ✓ The International Visegrad Fund (IVF)
- ✓ The Open Society Initiative for Europe (OSIFE)
- ✓ SIGMA (Support for Improvement in Governance and Management), a joint initiative of the OECD and the European Union
- ✓ The Regional School of Public Administration - ReSPA

In 2018, similarly to previous years, CEP did not receive any funding from the Serbian government or from the domestic private sector.

