

The Role of Civil Society in the EU Accession Negotiation Process:
Learning exchange between CSOs from Montenegro & Serbia with CSOs from Albania & North Macedonia
Tirana, 30-31 March 2023

Civil Society & the EU Integration of Montenegro

**Achievements,
Challenges,
Lessons Learned**

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Montenegrin Pan-European Union

Pan-European Union



- **Oldest European unification movement.**
- **Roots: publishing of Richard von Coudenhove-Kalergi's article "Paneuropa: A Proposal" in 1922.**
- **International Pan-European Union (IPEU): President Alain Terrenoire (since 2004).**
- **30 member organizations – most recent: Pan-European Union of Ukraine (since 2022).**

Montenegrin Pan-European Union (MPEU)

- **Founded on 17 May 2016.**
- **Chairperson: Gordana Đurović, PhD – former Minister of European Affairs of Montenegro.**
- **Goals and objectives – fully compatible with Montenegro's EU accession agenda.**
- **Supports the Montenegrin EU accession process through various projects and programs, as well as via participation in the EU-Montenegro Joint Consultative Committee (JCC).**

CSOs and Montenegro's EU Accession Agenda

- **European Commission's 2022 Montenegro Report:**
 - *The role of civil society is recognized and promoted.*
 - *The current legal and institutional framework needs to be further improved to strengthen the consultation and cooperation mechanisms between state institutions and civil society in the context of the EU accession process.*
 - *The quality of cooperation between state bodies and civil society would be enhanced if ministries had greater capacity to carry out strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation of the support they provide to CSOs.*

CSOs and Montenegro's EU Accession Agenda

- **Key achievements:**

- **Civil society organizations helped increase the general visibility of the overall EU membership negotiation process.**
- **Non-governmental organizations provide their inputs and comments on various legislative and other negotiation-related documents.**
- **Montenegro – the only EU membership candidate that included civil society representatives in its negotiation framework.**
- **Inclusion of CSO representatives in the accession negotiation process is supported by the EU and other international partners.**
- **EU-Montenegro Joint Consultative Committee (JCC): civil society platform of the EESC and civil society in Montenegro.**

CSOs and Montenegro's EU Accession Agenda

- **Main challenges:**

- **Insufficiently developed infrastructure for making use of all project grants that are at the civil society's disposal.**
 - *Over 1 m EUR was not distributed in accordance with the budget for 2022.*
- **Some lack of political will is noticeable – reflected in the uncooperativeness of certain governmental institutions.**
 - *In 2022, not all ministries conducted public consultations while preparing draft laws and strategies - A significant number of laws were adopted without prior consultation of CSOs or without accepting their suggestions.*
- **Relevant legislature needs to be strengthened and improved.**
 - *Although the Analysis of the Implementation of the Law on Non-Governmental Organizations was prepared two years ago, amending this Law is still ongoing.*



- ***The JCC welcomed the adoption in July 2022 of the Strategy for cooperation of State Administration Bodies and Non-Governmental Organizations for the period 2022-2026 and invited the Council for Cooperation between Government Institutions and NGOs to finally nominate its members and resume with its work interrupted in October 2021.***
- ***The JCC urged the Montenegrin government to keep budget grants for CSOs as separate budget lines and to provide access to co-financing not only to NGOs, but also to other types of CSOs.***
- ***The Anti-Corruption Agency's opinion that representatives of NGOs who are members of the working groups and bodies are public officials remains questionable and may harm the cooperation between the government and NGOs as well as reduce the influence of NGOs.***
- ***The JCC regrets that important laws for civil society such as the revised framework allowing free access to information without unnecessary restrictions and the new legislation on volunteering have still not been adopted.***

Focal Message to other Negotiating States

- **The “Functioning of Democratic Institutions” pillar of the “Fundamentals” cluster is one of the main novelties of the 2020 revised methodology, and it places a lot of emphasis on cooperation between state institutions and the civil society.**
- **Progress made in the “Fundamentals” cluster affects the progress in all other parts of the *acquis communautaire*.**
- **Thus, in order to achieve palpable progress in the general EU accession process, clear political will to cooperate with the civil society needs to be demonstrated, and it has to be accompanied with adequate legislative and institutional infrastructure which enables fruitful cooperation.**



Thank You
== For Your Attention ==

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