

# ANNUAL

## REPORT



# 2022

Centre for Monitoring  
and Research





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## Letter from CeMI President

### Dear friends and colleagues,



*Over the past year, CeMI has remained steadfast in its commitment to promoting transparency, accountability, and democratic values within our society. We have navigated challenges, adapted to changing circumstances, and continued to drive positive change through our projects and initiatives.*

*Throughout this year, we have collaborated with various partners, including governmental institutions, civil society organisations, and international foundations, to advance our mission. The efforts of our dedicated team and the support of our partners have allowed us to make significant strides in the areas significant for Montenegrin society.*

*One of our projects, "Online Trials – The Pathway to Efficient Judiciary," stands as a testament to our dedication to progress. In cooperation with esteemed partners and with financial support from The Balkan Trust for Democracy, we embarked on a journey to create an environment conducive to the introduction of online trials in Montenegro. This initiative has not only addressed existing inefficiencies in our judicial system but has also served as a response to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Through this project, CeMI is taking a significant step towards modernising our judicial processes and enhancing access to justice.*


*Our collaborative efforts have extended beyond borders. We have had the privilege of working with international organisations, leveraging their expertise to amplify our impact. Our project, "Support to decision-makers in the implementation of anti-corruption standards," undertaken in partnership with the International Foundation for Electoral Systems, is a prime example of our commitment to creating lasting change in cooperation with our global partners.*

*Despite the progress we've made, we recognise that there is still much work ahead. The road to positive transformation is not without its challenges. However, I firmly believe that our collective determination and the values that drive us will guide us through any obstacles that may arise.*

*As we review the highlights of the past year in this report, I encourage you to see the fruits of our labour not as mere accomplishments but as stepping stones towards a brighter future. Our dedication to a more transparent, accountable, and democratic society remains unwavering.*

*I extend my gratitude to our team, partners, stakeholders, and supporters for their unwavering commitment. It is through your collaboration and shared vision that we continue to make a difference.*

*Thank you for being a part of this journey with us. Together, we can continue to shape a better tomorrow.*



## About the Centre for Monitoring and Research (CeMI)

The Centre for Monitoring and Research (CeMI), is a non-governmental, non-profit organization in Montenegro, founded in March of 2000.

The organization's vision is Montenegro as a country of free citizens, social justice, rule of law and equal opportunities.

CeMI's mission focuses on continuously providing support to reforms and strengthening of the institutions of the political system and civil society organizations through proposing and monitoring the implementation of public policies in the field of human rights and freedoms of European integration and fight against corruption in Montenegro.

During its long and consistent work, CeMI evolved from a regular non-governmental organization to the concept of a research centre for the creation and representation of policy proposals. As a think tank organization, it works on proposing and monitoring the implementation of public policies in the field of human rights and freedoms of European integration and fight against corruption in Montenegro.

CeMI represents the first organization founded with the goal of monitoring the electoral process in Montenegro. Since its foundation (2000) CeMI monitored the largest number of parliamentary, presidential and local elections in Montenegro. CeMI monitored all of the parliamentary elections in Montenegro, starting in 2001. By realizing the project of civic monitoring of elections, CeMI strives to contribute to democratic conditions for the organization of transparent, free and fair elections through civic control of the electoral process on the parliamentary and local elections.

Besides the activities in the field of democratization, human rights, fight against corruption and Euro-Atlantic integration, CeMI is recognized as a think tank that provides expertise in the field of the electoral process, fight against corruption and the rule of law.

CeMI is the founder and the full member of the international organization ENEMO ([www.enemo.eu](http://www.enemo.eu)) and the Global Network of Domestic Elections Monitors GNDEM ([www.gndem.org](http://www.gndem.org)). CeMI's representative is the Secretary-General of ENEMO and the member of the Governing Board of GNDEM. Through ENEMO and OSCE ODIHR members and experts of CeMI participated in many international observing missions as experts, short-term and long-term observers, and on three occasions CeMI's expert was the head of an international observing mission (Ukraine and Kosovo).

The organizational structure of CeMI consists of three departments: Legal Department, Empirical Research Department and Finance and Public Relations Department.

CeMI's support to reforms and strengthening of the institutions of the political system and civil society organizations significantly contributed to changing the social and political circumstances in Montenegro.

## GOALS

- Contribution to the effective implementation of public policies and international commitments in the areas of human rights and freedoms of European integration and fight against corruption;
- Contribution to the harmonization of national legislation and institutional framework with the requirements of the EU accession process;
- To improve awareness and educate the public about human rights protection and freedoms, European integration and fight against corruption;
- Contribution to improving the efficiency of the work of institutions involved in the protection of human rights and freedoms, European integration and fight against corruption;
- Increasing the transparency of the institutions of the political system and civil society organizations.

## PROJECT

# „On the way to the inclusion of the RE population in the decision-making system in Montenegro“



The goal of the project is to influence the realisation of strategic goals from the Minority Policy Strategy 2019-2023, which empowers members of minority nations and other minority national communities to participate in the political life of Montenegro through the education of members of minorities. The project affects the strengthening of the capacity of organisations dealing with this issue in order to contribute to the improvement of political participation of members of the RE population in Montenegro.

## MAIN ACTIVITIES

### Training on political rights, representation and political participation of the RE population in Montenegro

The lecturers during the one-day training were professors at the Faculty of Political Sciences of the University of Montenegro, prof. Dr Danijela Vuković-Ćalasan and executive director of the NGO Roma youth organisation “Step with us - Phiren America”, Mr Elvis Beriša.

The topic of the first training session was the normative strategy of multiculturalism as a model of integration. The participants analysed this integration strategy on the model of Montenegro and exchanged experiences and knowledge.



During the second training session, lecturers and participants analysed the position of the RE population on the political map of Montenegro and discussed possible mechanisms for improving the position of this population in the political life of Montenegro by analysing the positive practices of European Union countries.



*Training on political rights, representation and political participation of the RE population in Montenegro, April 28th 2022*



## Training on political rights, representation and political participation of the RE population in Montenegro

A training session on “Writing effective practical policy proposals” was held in Mojkovac from October 21 to 22. The training was attended by organizations dealing with the protection of the rights of the RE population.

During the first day, the participants had the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the concept, purpose and types of practical public policy proposals, as well as with the process of creating public policies.

The second day of training was dedicated to practical work. Training participants had the opportunity to apply the acquired knowledge by writing practical public policy proposals.



*Training to strengthen the capacity of organizations dealing with the protection of the rights of the RE population, October 24th, 2022*

## Round table “How to achieve effective participation of the RE population in the decision-making system?”

The round table “How to effective participation of the RE population in the decision-making system?” is one of the activities within the project “On the way to the inclusion of the RE population in the decision-making system in Montenegro”, which is implemented by CeMI with the financial support of the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights of Montenegro.



**CeMI's project coordinator, Maja Bjelić,** said that within the framework of the project, the organisation conducted qualitative research in which the respondents cited the absence of authentic community representatives in political decision-making bodies, which is one of the main reasons for their bad socio-economic position.

“The problem is in the legal system, which the possibility of minorities to participate in political life depends on, that is, the shortcomings in the Law on the Election of Councilors and Members of Parliament,” said Bjelic.

According to her, apart from those shortcomings, and considering the poor socio-economic status of most members of the RE population and the absence of an authentic representative, the members of the RE population are an easy target for “vote hunters” during pre-election processes. “Also, they have limited access to education about voting rights and the electoral process due to the lack of targeted awareness programs created by the authorities.” Moreover, in all pre-election campaigns, there



is a noticeable lack of election material in the Romani language,” said Bjelić.

“Besides these shortcomings, discrimination is still one of the biggest problems faced by members of the RE population. Also, the systemic nature of the problems faced by members of the RE population is also reflected in the problem of unresolved legal status, which has been preventing part of the members of this population from participating in political life for many years,” said Bjelic.

She said that the lack of affirmative action in the higher education system makes it even more difficult for members of the RE population to participate in the decision-making system.

“However, it is encouraging news that the draft Law on Higher Education, which is expected to be adopted soon, foresees the return of affirmative action to the higher education system,” said Bjelic.

**The President of the Management Board of the Roma Council, Senad Sejdović,** recalled that in 2013, the Parliament was dealing with the issue of amendments to the Law on the Election of Councilors and Members of Parliament and the reduction of the census from 0.7 per cent to 0.35 per cent, which, as pointed out, crucial for the political participation of Roma.

“At that time, no one raised a hand for that law.” This community can reach its rights in a much easier way, and that is the goal and purpose of these amendments to the law,” said Sejdović.

He said that until 2019, they managed to establish a dialogue on the issue, but after that, they did not have a positive response from the newly formed Government.

“The Assembly of Montenegro and the relevant Ministry have been denying us invitations for admission ever since. “An institution that presents itself as an umbrella for one population does not have access to find systemic solutions in dialogue,” Sejdović said.

He said that it is necessary to find systemic solutions and establish a dialogue with the institutions. “Working unplanned and ad hoc with projects leads to little progress, but if we could all build a common story, that would be perfect.” Interaction between civil society and institutions is needed,” Sejdović pointed out.

**Andrija Đukanović, representative of the NGO Koračajte sa nama - Phiren amenca,** repeated that the Roma are the only national community that does not have representatives in the highest legislative chamber in Montenegro.

“Last year, our organization renewed the initiative to reduce the census for the RE community according to the Parliament of Montenegro, and we expected that the change of government and political structure would influence this issue to be resolved positively.” For now, we don’t have any feedback on what is happening with our initiative,” Djukanovic said.



He added that the NGO Koracajte sa nama - Phiren amenca sent an initiative to the Constitutional Court of Montenegro for the review of the constitutionality of the Law on the Election of Councilors and Members of Parliament, "which gives some national communities that are numerically smaller than the Roma community the right to have their representatives and a reduced electoral census. and it is not possible for Roma"

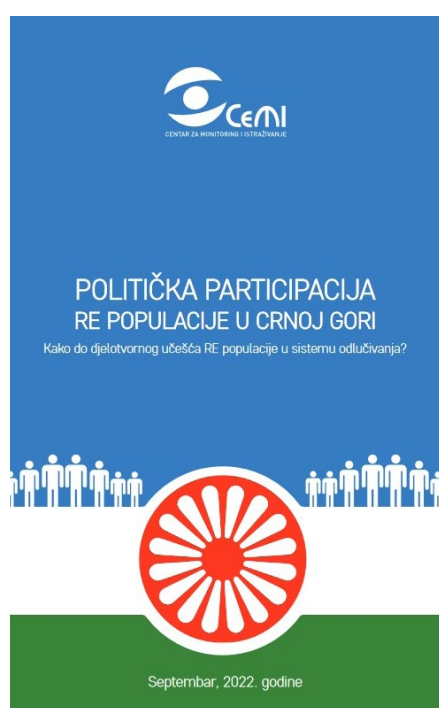
Đukanović pointed out that almost no party has a more detailed plan for the Roma population in Montenegro and their integration process.

"There are no representatives of the Roma national community on the lists of political parties, or they are in the last places on the lists. We are encouraged by the fact that the first Roma party in Montenegro was formed - the Democratic Party of Roma and that it participated in the last local elections in Podgorica. This is a positive fact, and this political party could play a significant role in improving the political participation of the Roma," Đukanović concluded.

## Policy brief - Political participation of the RE population in Montenegro

The issue of the reform of the electoral legislation is one of the critical issues that, year after year, arouses the interest of the domestic and international community at the level of meeting the political criteria for membership of Montenegro in the EU. For many years, messages have been coming from different addresses about the necessity of amending the electoral legislation regarding the community of Roma and Egyptians and the importance of securing their place in the Parliament.

However, although the Constitution of 2007 proclaimed the rights of minorities as a constitutional principle in the legal system of Montenegro and amended the Law on the Election of Councilors and Members of Parliament several times, there was never an amendment aimed at equating the RE population with other minorities and other minority national communities.



The result is that Montenegro still needs to provide adequate political representation of the RE population, both at the national and local levels. This brief deals with the issue of political participation of the RE population from a normative-legal and sociological aspect, defining the basic concepts of political participation, analysing the causes and shortcomings of the absence of political participation of the RE population in Montenegro and analyzing the importance and mechanisms of the inclusion of these two communities in decision-making positions.

The policy brief was created as a result of qualitative research within the project "On the way to the inclusion of the RE population in the decision-making system in Montenegro", implemented by CeMI with the financial support of the Ministry of Justice, Human and Minority Rights of Montenegro. The project aims to contribute to the inclusion of the RE population in the political life of Montenegro and to strengthen their capacities.

This policy brief aims to propose to decision-makers a set of rec-

ommendations for changes to the legal framework and other recommendations aimed at achieving equal and effective participation of members of the RE population in the political life of Montenegro. Also, we try to draw the attention of both decision-makers and the general public to the importance of including members of the RE population in political life while warning them of the effects their exclusion from it can have on the community and society as a whole. In the end, this policy brief aims to influence all elements of Montenegrin society with the aim of more tremendous respect for rights and the realisation of complete equality of the RE population in society as a whole.

## PROJECT

# „Improving citizens` knowledge about democratic process by using modern forms of communication. “



In cooperation with the Montenegrin News Agency – MINA, CeMI implemented a project called "Improving Citizens' Knowledge about Democratic Processes using Modern Forms of Communication".

In today's climate, individuals find themselves inundated with a deluge of information on a daily basis. This phenomenon, commonly known as information overload, hampers clear comprehension of issues and effective decision-making due to the excessive influx of data. This project seeks to address this challenge by fostering the education of both journalists and citizens on these pertinent subjects. Its overarching objective is twofold: to elevate the quality of information within Montenegro and to foster a deeper grasp of political and societal subjects and occurrences among its citizens.

At its core, this project is geared towards enriching the understanding of Montenegro's populace on contemporary subjects encompassing the rule of law, electoral reform, institutional operations, as well as human and minority rights. To achieve this, the project harnesses modern communication platforms, notably video content and podcasts, as effective conduits for disseminating knowledge.

## PROJECT

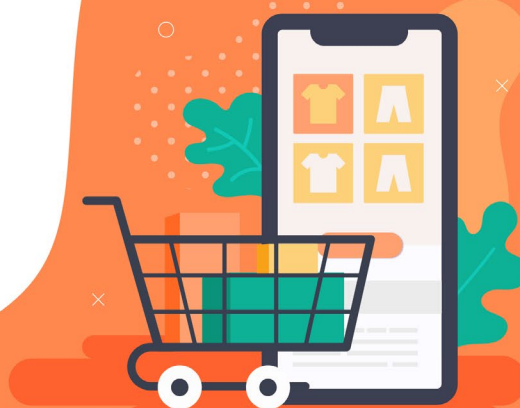
## „Improving capacities of CSOs and the system of consumer protection in Albania to reach European Standards - PROTECT ME “



# ZAŠTITI ME

Unaprjeđenje kapaciteta organizacija civilnog društva i sistema zaštite potrošača u Albaniji u cilju dostizanja evropskih standarda

 [www.cemi.org.me](http://www.cemi.org.me)
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 Centar za monitoring i istraživanje CeMI
  [cemi\\_me](https://www.youtube.com/c/cemi_me)



CeMI in cooperation with the Albanian Consumer Center is implementing a project called “Improving the capacity of civil society organisations and the consumer protection system in Albania in order to reach European standards - PROTECT ME”. The primary aim of the project was to directly impact citizens, civil society organisations, and decision-makers by emphasising the vital role of civil society and citizens in Albania’s journey toward aligning with European standards. A central focus was on enhancing citizens’ awareness and understanding of their rights as consumers.

*The European Union provided substantial financial support for this noteworthy project. This endorsement highlighted the project’s importance and its shared alignment with the European Union’s goals. The successful completion of the project marks a significant step forward in advancing consumer protection awareness and civil society capabilities in Albania, in line with European standards.*



## MAIN ACTIVITIES

### Preparation of a study on the system of consumer rights protection in Albania and how to reach the European level of consumer rights protection

This study, grounded in meticulous research and a comparative analysis approach, has focused on two main dimensions: the state of consumer protection in both Albania and Montenegro and the dynamics of civil society organisation (CSO) functioning within the negotiation process, particularly in the domain of consumer protection, along with their involvement mechanisms.

The primary objective of this study has been to elevate the expertise levels among representatives of civil society organisations engaged in consumer and health protection. Recognising this as a key priority, the study underscores the imperative for CSOs and public institutions alike to bolster their proficiency in these areas. The rationale behind this is twofold: first, to ensure that CSOs possess the independent expertise required to effectively monitor the activities of public institutions and serve as corrective agents when necessary; second, to engender a synergistic exchange of knowledge, experience, and know-how among experts from both the civil and public sectors. This collaborative exchange extends not only across local and international EU experts but also between countries that have traversed prior cycles of EU accession. This holistic approach contributes to the efficacy of information sharing between stakeholders, thereby enhancing the efficiency of implementing reforms in the spheres of consumer and health protection.

A pivotal emphasis within the study pertains to international stakeholders' active participation in the transposition of EU *Acquis Communautaire* regulations and rules into Albania's legislative framework. To accomplish this, concerted efforts are recommended, involving collaboration with both public institutions and key players from civil society, particularly Non-Profit Organizations (NPOs), academic representatives, and media entities.

It is important to note that the study has been crafted in both Albanian and English, further facilitating its accessibility and dissemination across various audiences. This report underscores our commitment to fostering effective collaboration, knowledge exchange, and reform implementation within the realms of consumer protection.

### Workshop for public institutions on EU consumer policy rules and best practices

Four training sessions were meticulously organised and executed for 12 days, from January 10th to 22nd, 2022. These trainings were divided into four categories, each addressing consumer-related topics and their respective overseeing public institutions. This initiative was carried out in close collaboration with the Albanian School of Public Administration (ASPA) and demonstrated a strong partnership between ACC and ASPA.

The training sessions were thoughtfully distributed among local and central government institutions,



fostering a comprehensive reach, and each training day comprised two parts, where the first segment featured an Albanian expert delving into pertinent issues within the national context. Subsequently, the second part of the day was helmed by an expert from Montenegro, shedding light on consumer concerns in Montenegro and the challenges faced in the context of EU integration.

The initial training centred on non-food product safety from January 10th to 12th, 2022. Over three days, the discussions encompassed areas like market surveillance obligations arising from EU integration, the challenges encountered in Albania, and the interplay of e-commerce with consumer protection. This training saw the participation of 14 individuals, comprising ten women and four men. Among them were representatives from various institutions, including the Central Inspectorate, Market Surveillance Inspectorate, Teknik and Industrial Inspectorate, Consumer Protection Agency, and Ministry of Finance and Economy representatives.

The second training grouping revolved around food products from January 13th to 15th, 2022. This series featured presentations by experts like Mrs Yllka Allaraj, Mr Admir Ago, and Mr Ismet Bici. Topics encompassed "Food safety from a consumer standpoint," "Practices and procedures ensuring consumer safety regarding animal health," and "Practices and procedures ensuring consumer safety about plant protection." This segment attracted 22 participants, with an equal split of 11 women and 11 men, with a notable presence from the National Agency of Veterinary and Plant Protection.

The third training batch homed in on public health and was conducted in collaboration with ASPA. This event, held from January 17th to 19th, 2022, saw the participation of diverse institutions such as the Ministry of Health, Public Health Institute, Health State Inspectorate, and Consumer Protection Agency.

The fourth and final training category focused on the local government and its role in consumer protection. Facilitated by both ACC and ASPA, these sessions were designed to encompass a comprehensive coverage of municipalities. Mrs Dafina Hysa led discussions on "The role and competencies of local government units in consumer protection and unfair trade practices," along with "The role and importance of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) in trader-consumer relations" on January 20th and 22nd, 2022. On January 21st, 2022, Mr Admir Ago delved into "The role and competencies of local government units in controlling stray animals, self-collection of waste, and managing zoonotic diseases."

The impact of these training sessions surpassed the envisioned outcomes outlined in the project plan. Aimed initially at empowering 40 participants from various public institutions, the sessions reached and benefited 62 individuals from diverse institutions and regions. This impressive achievement underscores the significance and effectiveness of the training initiative.

## Final Conference

On September 22 nd and 23 rd, 2022, the final event of the project was organised both psychically and online, in two days.

Throughout this comprehensive two-day engagement, experts disseminated the project's outcomes, deliberated on activity findings, and provided key recommendations to the participants. Deliberations centred on consumer issues, delving into present challenges and sharing exemplary practices. The members of the Civil Society Network for Consumer Protection, an entity established by this project

on a voluntary basis, played an active role. This network notably engages in discussions pertaining to chapters 12 and 28, contributing to the alignment of Albanian legislation with EU standards.

The final conference was uniquely orchestrated to accommodate both in-person attendance and virtual participation via Zoom. A specialised link was created to facilitate the proceedings across these two days. In-person attendance saw the presence of 25 individuals each day, while nearly 30 participants actively engaged online. The session was marked by dynamic interaction, with participants contributing to discussions and fostering a comprehensive exchange of ideas. Notably, simultaneous translation services were provided, facilitating seamless communication between Albanian and English languages. This initiative represented an important step in promoting cross-lingual dialogue and ensuring inclusivity in the conversation.

## PROJECT

# „Supporting decision-makers in the implementation of anti-corruption standards“



CeMI in cooperation with the International Foundation for Electoral Systems, the Central and Eastern European Legal Initiative, the Bulgarian Institute for Legal Initiatives and the Forum of Experts from Romania, implements the project ECAC- and under the name “Support to decision-makers in the implementation of anti-corruption standards”

Through this innovative initiative, CeMI is strategically aligned to collaborate with domestic decision-makers and influencers, orchestrating a dynamic effort to identify, prioritise, and craft action plans for the effective execution of anti-corruption reform recommendations. These endeavours are meticulously tailored to align with international and regional obligations, reinforcing a robust commitment to combating corruption. Drawing from INL priorities and the expertise harnessed by IFES/CEELI, the project casts a spotlight on critical areas, including the enhancement of judicial integrity and independence, the formulation of robust measures to criminalise and penalise bribery, and the elevation of transparency and efficacy in the financing of political parties and election campaigns.

*Integral to the success of this endeavour is the unwavering financial support extended by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES). Their collaboration is a cornerstone, enabling the seamless realisation of the project’s objectives. This initiative, rooted in collective expertise and guided by a shared dedication to anti-corruption pursuits, is a testament to CeMI’s commitment to fostering meaningful change and elevating governance standards.*

# A study in the field of conflicts of interest in Montenegro with a comparative presentation of the legal framework and recommendations for improvement

More than five years and eight months have passed since Montenegro started implementing the Law on Prevention of Corruption (hereinafter referred to as the Law) and established the Agency for the Prevention of Corruption (hereinafter referred to as the Agency) as an independent body in charge of preventing conflicts of interest, restrictions on the performance of public functions, verification of reports on income and assets of public officials and other issues of importance for the successful fight against corruption. That is a long enough period to evaluate both the application of the Law and the effectiveness of the Agency's work.

The expectations of the Law and the Agency were to harmonise Montenegro with the standards of the European Union and other international standards in solving the problem of corruption and preventing conflicts of interest.



The study shares the positive view of the European Commission that, because of the recent changes in the Agency's leadership in 2020, the Agency has started a proactive approach to the challenges of its independence, integrity, impartiality, transparency, non-selective approach and the quality of its decisions, improving its overall performance. Likewise, the Study shares the European Commission's opinion that improved results and public trust in the Agency will depend on the Agency's continued efforts to ensure its integrity, impartiality and responsibility, and to correct deficiencies in decision-making.

The aim of the Study is to provide support to the Ministry of Justice, Human and Minority Rights and the Agency for the Prevention of Corruption in finding the best legal solutions and improving the legal text in response to the amendments to the Law on Prevention of Corruption. In this regard, the target group of this publication are legal practitioners who deal with the analysis and preparation of amendments to legal solutions, as well as the practical application of the legal framework in preventing conflicts of interest, restrictions on the performance of public functions and submission of reports on income and assets.

Accordingly, this study, considering the reports of the European Commission and data on the performance of the Agency, provides a comparative overview of regional approaches that offer a number of good practices and undertakes its own analysis in order to generate recommendations for improving the Law and the performance of the Agency.

# Comparative analysis of the Montenegrin legislative and institutional framework in the area of whistleblower protection with recommendations for improvement

Reports by Transparency International, as well as other organisations, indicate that corruption is the most pronounced problem in the whole of Europe. Within the general democratic processes in Montenegro, which include changes in the political, economic, and legislative system, the fight against corruption represents a significant part.



Within Chapter 23 - Judiciary and fundamental rights, apart from the establishment of an independent and efficient judiciary and the protection of human rights, special attention is devoted to the fight against corruption. Namely, reducing this social scourge is a prerequisite for the stability of a democratic society and the rule of law. To achieve this goal, the European Union emphasises, above all, the existence of a solid legislative framework and its consistent implementation.

One of the most important mechanisms for the fight against corruption is whistleblowers.

The aim of this publication is to provide support to the Ministry of Justice, Human and Minority Rights and the Agency for the Prevention of Corruption in finding adequate and effective solutions to improve the legal framework in the area of whistleblower protection in response to the amendments to the Law on Prevention of Corruption.

In this regard, the target groups of the publication are legal practitioners who deal with the analysis and preparation of amendments to legal solutions, as well as the practical application of the legal framework in the area of whistleblower protection. From the methodological aspect, the publication initially defines the term "whistleblower" and related terms, after which international instruments in this field are presented, with a special focus on the standards of the United Nations, the Council of Europe and the European Union.

Bearing in mind the similar legal heritage of the countries in the region, the legal framework for the protection of whistleblowers in certain countries of the region was specially treated: the Republic of Slovenia, the Republic of Croatia and the Republic of Serbia. Within a separate chapter, the legal framework of Montenegro in this area is presented, with an additional focus on the results of the work of the key anti-corruption body in charge of reporting and protecting whistleblowers in Montenegro.

All of the above resulted in a special chapter at the end of the publication that contains concrete recommendations for improving the situation in this area, with an emphasis on the necessary changes and additions to the legislative framework.

# Reporting on the work of the Agency for the Prevention of Corruption in Montenegro (ASK)



In the past five years, the Agency for the Prevention of Corruption (Agency/ASK) has faced numerous challenges through the process of its institutional growth. Although the public's expectations were high, the initial results of the Agency's work and the effects of the interventions it implemented were not convincing for the public.

This work is aimed at evaluating the Agency's regular annual and quarterly reporting and defining recommendations for its improvement.

This work will not evaluate the content of the information presented in the adopted reports, nor is it intended to defend or attack the work of the Agency. It will offer recommendations for improving the Agency's reporting based on the analysis of the report's structure and elements.

The Agency's existing reporting system consists of annual, quarterly, and special 'thematic reports.' They are mainly based on the activities of the Agency and the presentation of collected information, which is obtained by law enforcement under its jurisdiction.

This paper is divided into four thematic parts that offer evaluations of different elements of the Agency's reporting - from general/horizontal to more specific/formal issues.

In the first part, horizontal issues related to the Agency's reporting are analysed, with the target audience at the centre of the Agency's overall capacity to objectively present the achieved work results. The second thematic part of this paper is devoted to the assessment of the regular reporting process of KAS, with an emphasis on the last adopted annual report for 2020 and the first quarterly report for 2021. Assessments of reporting elements and specific recommendations on indicators that could be useful for systemic performance reporting are presented throughout this part of the paper. Questions related to the quarterly reporting of KAS are evaluated in the third thematic part of this paper.

In the end, general findings and recommendations for improving the Agency's overall reporting process are presented in the last part of this paper.

## Policy study - Abuse of State Resources in Montenegro

The phenomenon of abuse of state resources for the purposes of the pre-election campaign has manifested itself in almost all electoral processes since the introduction of the multi-party system in Montenegro. The lack of a quality methodological platform for monitoring election abuses has significantly determined the possibility of influencing the prevention or suppression of this phenomenon over a long period of time.





## POLICY STUDY

### ABUSE OF STATE RESOURCES IN MONTENEGRO



The methodology applied by Transparency Russia and the Open Society Justice Initiative during the electoral process in Russia served as the basis for a new methodological monitoring platform that CeMI first applied during the election campaign for early parliamentary elections in 2009. Monitoring the misuse of government resources was disheartening from the start.

The extent of abuse of state resources resulted in a decrease in public trust and led to a crisis in the legitimacy of the election results in 2012, 2013 and 2016, jeopardizing the competitiveness and transparency of elections.

Since then, recognizing the importance and comprehensiveness of this problem and its negative impact on the democratic environment, our organization has made significant organizational efforts advocating for the adoption of a special law that would regulate the abuse of state resources for the purposes of the pre-election campaign.

Although the policy makers decided to apply a different approach and regulate the ASR through the existing regulation on the financing of political entities and election campaigns (2015), the fact that the ASR was comprehensively regulated in Montenegro for the first time was promising. A window of opportunity has been created for the legal framework to finally enable the separation of the state and the ruling political parties. Unfortunately, the practice and manifested forms of ASR in recent election processes cause serious concern because of the stronghold this phenomenon has in Montenegro.

However, almost 12 years later, and despite significant legislative improvements, we draw similar conclusions about the state of the ASR in Montenegro. This is an indicator that, in the meantime, there was neither true political will nor sufficient institutional readiness to prevent or eradicate the ASR phenomenon, which continues to threaten the legitimacy and democracy of electoral processes. Electoral processes since 2009 have been marked by extensive use of state resources by the former ruling majority party (DPS) and its subordinate coalition partners.

Although the expectations after the democratic change of government in 2020 were high, the current ruling majority and the attitude of the new government towards the use of state resources for pre-election purposes, campaigns, unfortunately, are unchanged. In this context, this study wants to present the result of monitoring the misuse of state resources during the last parliamentary elections (2020) and local elections in Nikšić and Herceg Novi (2021).

## PROJECT

# Online Trials – A Pathway to Efficient Judiciary

In 2022, (CeMI) successfully executed a project titled "Online Trials – The Pathway to Efficient Judiciary," made possible through financial support from The Balkan Trust for Democracy (BTD), an initiative under the German Marshall Fund of the United States, and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

The project was strategically designed to address and alleviate persistent challenges within Montenegro's judiciary, explicitly targeting the issue of efficiency. These challenges, which had already been prevalent, were further exacerbated by the global COVID-19 pandemic. Drawing upon its prior accomplishments and fruitful collaborations with Montenegro's judicial institutions, CeMI embarked on a mission to provide critical stakeholders with comprehensive recommendations. These recommendations were tailored to address the legislative and procedural adjustments required to implement online trials successfully. Furthermore, a significant emphasis was placed on educating judiciary members about the many benefits associated with adopting online trial mechanisms. Central to the project's execution was the development of a comprehensive study. This study undertook an exhaustive analysis of the prevailing judicial system, meticulously comparing it against innovative alternatives. Additionally, it delved into a comparative assessment of best practices observed in European Union nations that had already operationalised or were in the process of implementing legal frameworks for remote hearings. Through the realisation of this project, CeMI took a pioneering step towards introducing the concept of online trials in Montenegro. The significance of this concept, deemed both necessary and inevitable, was underscored as a viable solution to prevalent challenges within the Montenegrin judicial system.

*As part of CeMI's commitment to fostering positive change and innovation, the successful execution of the "Online Trials – The Pathway to Efficient Judiciary" project marked a significant stride towards a more streamlined and effective judiciary in Montenegro.*

## Round table

*Establishing a remote trial system in Montenegrin courts would not be an easy task, considering the level of digitalisation and readiness of the judicial information system. The current strategic framework regarding judicial reform has yet to fully adapt to the new circumstances.*



Zlatko Vujović, President of the Governing Board, recalled that Montenegro opened EU accession negotiations in Chapter 23 - Judiciary and Fundamental Rights on December 18, 2013. However, even nine years later, the country is only "moderately prepared" to apply EU legal norms and European standards in the field of judiciary.

He highlighted that according to the European Commission's latest report for 2021, Montenegro needed to make progress in the functioning of the judiciary compared to the previous year.



Key reforms have stalled, primarily due to political crises and the inability to secure the necessary majority in Parliament to unblock crucial judicial institutions. Vujović appreciated the efforts of the Ministry of Justice, Human and Minority Rights in the field of judicial digitalisation and the efforts of judicial institutions to achieve good results despite challenging circumstances. However, he believed that the current strategic framework for judicial reform is not fully adapted to the emerging possibilities.



CeMI, as an organisation continuously monitoring the judicial reform process in Montenegro, recognised the potential of judicial digitalisation and modern technological solutions, particularly highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic. Through the implementation of this project, CeMI aimed to contribute to creating the necessary environment for introducing online trial systems in Montenegro. Such an innovative and essential mechanism, which has already been adopted in many European Union countries, could address longstanding challenges in the judicial system, further worsened by the pandemic.

Vladimir Simonović, Project Coordinator at CeMI, presented a study titled "Reflection on the Possibility of Implementing Remote Trials in Montenegro." The study aimed to introduce the concept of remote trials and the possibilities such a mechanism offers to the judicial system and its stakeholders. In the context of Montenegro's current situation, the degree of digitalisation, and the readiness of the judicial information system for such a venture, implementing online trials would be a challenging task. Simonović emphasised that various normative and technical conditions must be met to successfully introduce online trials.

He suggested that the Higher Court in Podgorica, with its technical capabilities, might be best suited for initially conducting remote trials. Additionally, the Basic Court in Podgorica, dealing with a high volume of cases, could employ remote practices for more straightforward civil patients, thereby alleviating the limited spatial capacities of the court.

As for the legal framework, Simonović noted that current legal provisions in Montenegro do not place specific restrictions on implementing remote trials in civil cases. The feasibility of online trials appears to depend on the digitalisation level of courts and the technical readiness of all relevant parties involved, including the Bar Association and citizens.



Simonović concluded that remote trials would require technical equipment and proper training, awareness-raising, and promotion of the idea among the broader public. The conference was attended by around 50 participants, mainly from the judiciary, including judges from various Montenegrin courts, representatives from judicial councils, the Ombudsman institution, and the Ministry of Justice, Human and Minority Rights, along with civil society representatives.

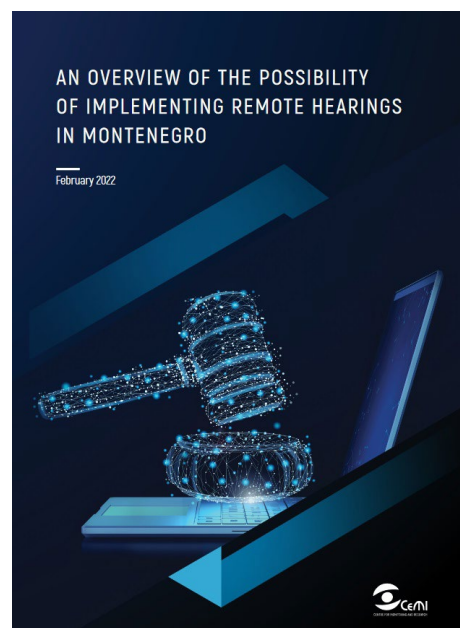
## The study “An Overview of the Possibility of Implementing Remote Hearings in Montenegro”

As a candidate country for membership in the European Union, Montenegro opened Chapter 23 – Judiciary and Fundamental Rights on 18 December 2013. Nine years later, Montenegro is still only ‘moderately prepared’ to implement the EU acquis. According to the latest report of the European Commission, issued in 2021, Montenegro had made no progress in the judiciary from the previous year. The implementation of key reforms is stagnating, which is largely the result of the political crisis and an inability to secure the necessary majority in the Parliament to adopt reform laws and unblock key institutions. This has had a domino effect on other aspects of the judiciary, including shortcomings in efforts to resolve some of the key problems affecting the efficiency of the judicial apparatus.

This study deals precisely with the problem of judicial efficiency, not from the political aspect, but from the aspect of the digitalization of justice and the introduction of innovative methods of conducting judicial proceedings, and it is inspired by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the functioning of judicial systems around the world. During the pandemic, judicial systems were faced with a dilemma between the complete closure of the courts, which would have had inconceivable consequences for the system protecting human rights, and innovative solutions such as remote hearings (online trials). The prevailing view was to ensure the smooth conduct of court proceedings through an online service, thus avoiding the exposure of any participant in the proceedings to the risk of infection. Many EU countries implemented such solutions in their own national legal systems, and this helped to reduce the consequences of the pandemic on the functioning of the judiciary to a minimum.

The study is intended primarily for legal practitioners and holders of judicial offices, but it may also benefit the public, bearing in mind that the citizens are participants in court proceedings. The study presents the concept of remote hearings and its advantages and disadvantages, as well as the most important international standards for fair trial in the context of remote hearings and the practice of the European Court for Human Rights in Strasbourg. The study also provides a comparative overview of the state of the judiciary in the EU countries during the pandemic, the way in which remote hearings were implemented, and the effects of remote hearings in these countries. The study describes the efforts of the Montenegrin judiciary to improve its digitalisation. The study ends with the conclusions and recommendations reached by CeMI during the research.

The goal of this study is to provide the stakeholders with a set of recommendations for legislative changes, such as recommendations aimed at achieving the other preconditions necessary for the implementation of online trials in Montenegro. With this study, CeMI aims to present, to the representatives of the judiciary and the public, the benefits of this type of hearing as one of the elements of the digitalisation of the judiciary and at the same time to familiarise them with the potential problems in the implementation of a new and innovative system for conducting court proceedings in Montenegro.



## PROJECT

# FOR HEALTHIER HEALTHCARE!

In collaboration with NGO Bonum, CeMI started the implementation of the project "For Healthier Health!" with a resolute commitment to fostering equity in the realisation of the right to healthcare in Montenegro. Through an extensive array of research, analysis, and advocacy initiatives, the project was geared towards rectifying disparities, combatting corruption, and enhancing patient rights within the healthcare sector. The project was executed within the framework of the Centre for Civic Education's project "CSOs in Montenegro - from basic services to policy formulation - M'BASE", supported by the European Union and co-financed by the Ministry of Public Administration, Digital Society and Media. The project's implementation will continue in 2023 too.

**Project Objectives and Achievements:** The overarching objective of the "For Healthier Health!" project was to advance equality in healthcare provision by scrutinizing and amending existing policies and procedures.

### Several key accomplishments were realized during the project:

1. **In-depth Research and Analysis:** Research was conducted on various aspects of the healthcare system in Montenegro, including public policies, legal frameworks, appointment procedures, conflicts of interest, and potential abuses. These findings formed the bedrock for subsequent initiatives.
2. **Enhancing Transparency:** The project focused on unveiling hidden conflicts of interest, affiliations, and potential abuses within the health sector. Research into the practices of management and protectors in healthcare institutions shed light on areas necessitating corrective action.
3. **Citizen Trust Assessment:** Through CAPI research, the project gauged the level of trust citizens placed in Montenegro's healthcare system.
4. **Protection of Patient Rights:** A qualitative study scrutinized the extent to which patient rights were upheld, exposing instances of corruption and rights violations. This analysis served as a basis for proposing comprehensive solutions.
5. **Policy Recommendations:** A comprehensive study of public policies was undertaken, resulting in a series of recommendations aimed at bolstering patient rights and combating corruption. These recommendations were developed through a consultative process involving stakeholders and experts.
6. **Advocacy Campaigns:** A multifaceted advocacy campaign was executed to secure the acceptance and implementation of recommended policies and procedures. The campaign harnessed both traditional media and social networks to maximize its reach.
7. **Empowering Citizens:** An extensive outreach campaign sought to equip citizens with knowledge about their rights as patients. The initiative aimed to bridge information gaps and empower patients to assert their rights effectively.

CeMI's campaign encouraged Montenegro's citizens to report potential corruption instances and patient rights violations through an application *Za Zdravije Zdravstvo*. Reports of corruption and other abuses within the healthcare sector, based on citizen submissions, were formally submitted to competent authorities.

**Target groups of the project:** The project's efforts were geared towards benefiting the most vulnerable segments of Montenegro's population. Among these were beneficiaries of social security rights, children without parental care, individuals with disabilities, victims of domestic violence and human trafficking, marginalised populations such as LGBT, RAE, and persons with adverse material situations. Additionally, the project catered to the needs of HIV-positive individuals, drug users, sex workers, and the families of these groups.

The "For Healthier Health!" project, realized through the concerted efforts of CeMI and NGO Bonum, has made significant strides towards creating a more equitable healthcare system in Montenegro. By meticulously dissecting existing policies, uncovering potential abuses, and empowering citizens, the project fostered a sense of responsibility, transparency, and accountability within the healthcare sector. As the echoes of our advocacy reverberate through Montenegro's healthcare landscape, we remain committed to the pursuit of healthier health for all its citizens. The collaborative spirit of the project demonstrates the potential for positive change when civil society organizations, governmental bodies, and international partners unite in the quest for a fairer, more just healthcare system.

## MAIN ACTIVITIES

### Introducing the "For Healthier Health!" Application: Enhancing Transparency and Combating Corruption in Montenegro's Healthcare

As a pivotal component of the comprehensive project "Health for Health!" the "For Healthier Health!" application has emerged as a groundbreaking innovation aimed at instilling transparency, accountability, and fairness within Montenegro's healthcare system. This dynamic application aligns with CeMI's dedication to fostering positive change and upholding the rights of citizens, and it stands as a testament to our commitment to enhancing the quality of healthcare services in Montenegro.

There are several advantages of the application:

1. **Empowering Citizens Through Technology:** The "For Healthier Health!" application introduces an advanced and user-friendly platform for Montenegrin citizens to report instances of corruption or rights violations within the healthcare sector. This innovative tool is a direct reflection of CeMI's enduring pursuit of justice and its aspiration to create a healthcare system free from malpractices.
2. **Features and Functionality:** The application offers a myriad of functionalities designed to streamline the reporting process and amplify its impact.
3. **Comprehensive Reporting:** Citizens can submit detailed reports accompanied by photographs, audio recordings, and other evidence that substantiate instances of corruption or abuse in the healthcare system. This inclusive approach facilitates precise reporting, fostering a more informed response.
4. **Raising Awareness:** Beyond its reporting capabilities, the application serves as an informative channel for citizens to learn about their rights as patients. It empowers individuals with knowledge, enabling them to assert their rights confidently.
5. **Transparency and Monitoring:** The application empowers citizens to track the progress of their reports, offering real-time updates on their status. This direct engagement fosters transparency and builds trust in the system.

6. Expert Analysis: CeMI's legal team meticulously reviews the content submitted through the application, strategising appropriate actions based on the nature of the reported cases. This analysis informs both the public and relevant institutions, stimulating a proactive response to reported issues.

*The application symbolises our collective determination to usher in an era of fairness, justice, and improved healthcare experiences for all Montenegrin citizens. As the application paves the way for more informed citizens and responsive institutions, the entire nation stands to benefit from a healthier, more equitable healthcare system. Accessible through both Android and iOS devices, as well as the website [www.zazdravijezdravstvo.me](http://www.zazdravijezdravstvo.me), the "For Healthier Health!" application invites citizens to become active participants in building a brighter future for Montenegro's healthcare landscape.*

## Informational posters available in health care institutions across the country - Report corruption in health care!



CeMI has placed informational posters in health facilities across the country to inform citizens about the means available to report corruption. Posters are placed in places with the highest frequency of patients and contain information about the availability of the application for reporting corruption and rights violations in healthcare, as well as a contact phone number and e-mail address that citizens can contact for additional questions, help or concerns. CeMI adapted its services to all age groups and citizens of different levels of digital literacy in order to combat corruption and violation of rights in healthcare.

## Findings of public opinion research within the project "For Healthier Healthcare"

According to research by the Center for Monitoring and Research (CeMI), 58% of Montenegrin citizens believe that corruption exists in healthcare, and the most common reasons for this are low salaries of healthcare workers, moral crisis, bad legislation and the absence of strict internal control. This research was conducted from November 1 to 15, 2021 on a sample of 1,004 respondents within the project "For Healthier Health!"

Research methodologist Ivana Vujović stated that 58% of citizens believe that corruption is present or highly present in the healthcare system, while only 9.1% believe there is no corruption in this field.

"Here we see a significant change in attitude compared to the research we conducted in 2016. and 2013., and a significant increase in the proportion of people who believe that corruption is present," Vujović explained.

According to her, the public perception is that corruption is most present in the relationship between patients and doctors, compared to the relationship between patients and nurses or technicians and patients and officials in medical institutions.





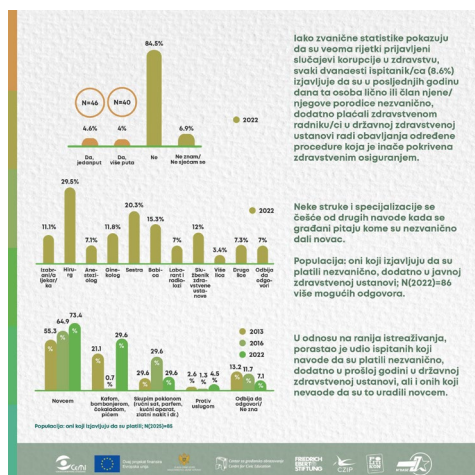
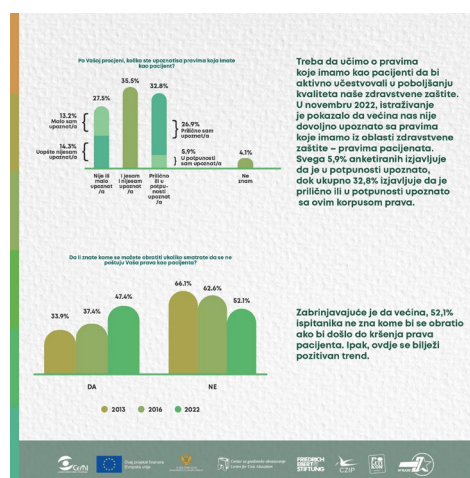
During the research, it was recorded that 4.6 per cent of the surveyed individuals said that their families paid for a service in a healthcare institution illegally, once during the past year, while 4 per cent paid for the service multiple times," stated Vujović.

She also highlighted that 86 per cent of the surveyed individuals reported that they or members of their families paid for a service, most commonly giving money to surgeons, gynaecologists, midwives, medical assistants, technicians, laboratory workers, radiologists, anesthesiologists, or officials in the healthcare institution, as well as to the chosen physician.

"As in previous years, surgeons are those most frequently mentioned as having been given money, expensive gifts, or in some other way paid for services illegally," added Vujović.

According to her, the motivation for paying, according to the statements of the respondents who said that such payment in the health service was carried out, is the need to avoid waiting, to ensure better treatment, to obtain a certain commodity, to choose a specific doctor or a necessary test or opinion that provides early pension.

"A large majority, 73.4% of respondents claim that they paid for the service with money, 17.2% of respondents claim that they sometimes honored the health worker even though it was not requested, and this percentage has decreased compared to previous research when it amounted to 44% in 2013. and 35% in 2016," Vujović stated.



She said that 22.5% of respondents stated that they were referred to a private institution by a doctor where they had to pay for an examination, although they could have received a free examination in a health institution.

"The reasons for the existence of corruption in health care, according to the respondents, are low wages of health workers, moral crisis, poor legislation and lack of strict internal control," Vujović said.

She pointed out that a significant number of respondents do not know whom to turn to to report corruption, while those who mention one of the institutions in the first place have

mentioned the police, the Anti-corruption Agency, the management of the health institution, the Ministry of Health or the Prosecution.

Vujović stated that almost half of the surveyed, 49.4%, reported that they have to wait a long time for an appointment with a doctor.

A similar proportion of surveyed individuals, 49.4%, stated that they believe that waiting lists for certain medical services are long. Among the surveyed individuals, 46% stated that they believe the quality of medical services has remained the same as in the last two years and has not changed.

Vujović expressed concern that 52% of surveyed individuals do not know who to contact in case of a violation of patients' rights, noting that this trend is positive compared to previous studies. She also noted that almost half of the surveyed individuals reported that they occasionally, often, or always have to pay for medication that is on the reimbursement list.

"Doctors, the Ministry of Health, the media, and patient rights advocates should inform people about their rights," Vujović concluded.

The Project Coordinator of CeMI, Maja Bjelic, reminded that the organisation was the first to launch the topic of corruption in healthcare, stating that this project continues their previous efforts in this area.

"The general goal of the project is to contribute to a greater level of equality in exercising the right to health care in Montenegro." "He contributed to the realization of this goal by implementing a series of activities aimed at achieving several key results for improvement in the mentioned area," said Bjelic.



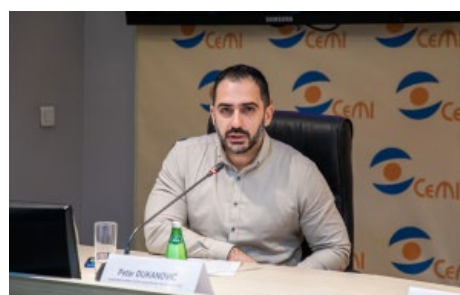
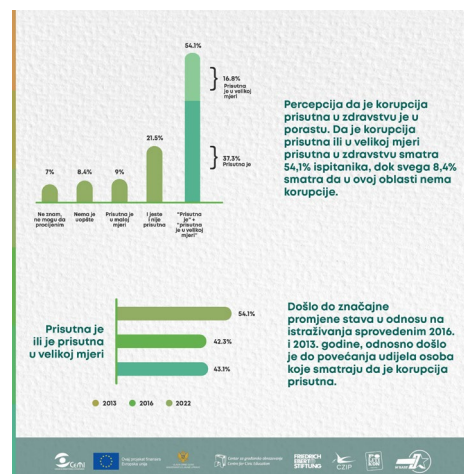
According to her, a comprehensive analysis of the system of providing healthcare services and protecting the rights of patients in Montenegro was conducted, on the basis of which alternative models and policies will be proposed to improve the work of healthcare institutions and the protection of patient rights.

"Given the insufficient level of public awareness of their rights, CeMI, within the project, contributes to increasing the awareness of citizens of Montenegro about their rights as patients, with special attention to anti-discrimination, protection of personal dignity and privacy, and the right to equal access to healthcare," said Bjelic.

The program director of the Center for Civic Education CGO, Petar Đukanović, said that the project contributes to the improvement of health policy, especially in part related to the prevention of corruption, in order for the system to function so that access to health services is equal for everyone.

"We believe that today's research will be important for decision-makers as an evaluation of what has been done in the field of healthcare, in order to further reform this sector, which has been facing challenges for a long time to be fully functional and, at first, oriented towards needs. those for whom they exist, namely the citizens," said Đukanović.

He assessed that through the project, citizens are brought closer to and facilitate the way to react to cases of corruption or violations of patients' rights, in order to further process cases of inadequate access to health care and improve the system.



## TV Promotion: Empowering Citizens to Report Corruption in Healthcare with CeMI's Application

Maja Bjelić, the Project Coordinator at CeMI, made a call to action for citizens to contribute to the fight against corruption in healthcare using the "For Healthier Health!" application during her appearance on TV Niksic and Gradska TV. Bjelić highlighted that CeMI was the first organization to address the issue of corruption in healthcare and that this project is a continuation of CeMI's unwavering commitment to improving this critical area.



Bjelić underscored the crucial role citizens play in this endeavour and commended their engagement in project activities. She elaborated on the application's features and how it facilitates the direct involvement of citizens in reporting corruption. The project aims to streamline the process, making it easy for citizens to report problems or situations related to corruption or rights violations in healthcare. Users can provide descriptions and even attach visual or audio evidence to their reports.

Bjelić detailed the role of CeMI in the process. The reports submitted through the application are directed to CeMI's legal team, who carefully analyze each case and determine the appropriate course of action based on the nature of the reported violation. CeMI also ensures transparency by informing the public and relevant institutions about the reported violations and subsequent actions taken.

Bjelić emphasized that corruption within the healthcare sector is inexcusable. She acknowledged that both citizens and healthcare professionals share responsibility for addressing this issue. Furthermore, Bjelić recognized that the insufficient level of information among citizens about their rights contributes to the perpetuation of corruption. Healthcare professionals sometimes neglect to inform patients about their rights and the appropriate channels to report violations.



*The appearance on TV Nikšić and Gradska TV aimed to raise awareness about the "For Healthier Health!" application, encouraging citizens to actively participate in the fight against corruption and rights violations in Montenegro's healthcare system.*



## PROJECT

# Facebook/Global/Election Integrity Strategy in Montenegro

The collaborative effort between CeMI and IFES, as part of the Facebook/Global/Election Integrity Strategy in Montenegro project, aimed to enhance CeMI's capability to monitor social media activities. The objective was to track instances of state resource misuse, campaign violations, and coordinated inauthentic behaviors leading up to the August 2020 elections in Montenegro.

**Project Scope and Focus:** CeMI's primary goal within this project was to consolidate its ability to identify evidence of various online activities:

1. **State Resource Abuse:** Detect instances where state resources are being improperly employed for election-related activities.
2. **Campaign Violations:** Monitor social media platforms for violations of campaign regulations and codes of conduct.
3. **Coordinated Inauthentic Behavior:** Identify orchestrated, deceptive online activities designed to manipulate opinions and influence the election narrative

## PROJECT ACTIVITIES

In order to effectively achieve its objectives, CeMI undertook a series of activities:

- **Knowledge Sharing Resources:** Drawing on their experience in social media monitoring during the 2020 elections, CeMI developed resources that distilled key findings and outlined methodologies to approach monitoring for state resource abuse, campaign disruption, and coordinated inauthentic behavior.
- **Collaborative Product Design:** Working closely with IFES, CeMI designed and delivered the final project outputs, ensuring that they were comprehensive and aligned with the project's objectives.
- **Training and Knowledge Exchange:** CeMI took part in or led up to five trainings, workshops, or meetings to share insights, methodologies, and tools with other partner organizations involved in similar efforts.
- **ENEMO Network Workshop:** A significant aspect of the project was the organization of a one-day workshop in collaboration with the ENEMO network. This workshop aimed to enhance the technical capabilities of the network by conducting working sessions in the three identified areas: state resource abuse, campaign disruption, and coordinated inauthentic behavior.

*CeMI's participation in this collaborative project underlines its dedication to maintaining election integrity and ensuring transparency within Montenegro's electoral processes. The project's outputs, guidelines, and tools will not only assist CeMI but also serve as valuable resources for other civil society organisations facing similar challenges in different countries. Through sharing knowledge and strengthening networks, the project seeks to bolster the efforts against online manipulation and maintain the fairness of elections.*

## IDEAS AND APPROACHES TO INVESTIGATING ONLINE CAMPAIGN VIOLATIONS



The CeMI Toolkit offers a comprehensive guide on how to investigate electoral campaign violations through social media. It is an extension of CeMI's pilot investigation ahead of the Montenegrin 2020 Parliamentary Elections where the original methodology for identifying Abuses of State Resources, Coordinated Inauthentic Behavior, and Campaign Violations was developed. The toolkit provides a forward-thinking approach to political campaigning on social media and includes useful tips on documenting and reporting research findings, as well as tools to support investigation efforts. This toolkit is an essential resource for those looking to monitor and research the impact of social media on election campaigns.

## INVESTIGATING THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA FOR POLITICAL PURPOSE DURING ELECTIONS

The rise of social media has dramatically changed the way we consume and share information. This transformation is particularly notable during election campaigns, as political actors increasingly use online platforms to reach and influence voters. In developing regions, where traditional media may be limited and democracies are still evolving, the impact of social media on politics is significant and unique.

This toolkit, as part of a larger series, focuses on monitoring Abuses of State Resources, Campaign Violations, and Coordinated Inauthentic Behavior on social media. Drawing on insights from the Social Media Monitoring Pilot Project in the 2020. Parliamentary Elections in Montenegro, it provides a practical guide to implementing effective monitoring strategies in this rapidly changing landscape.



The series of toolkits provide practical guidance for stakeholders to monitor and investigate the use of social media in political processes. Based on the findings of the Social Media Monitoring Pilot Project, these publications are designed to support civil society organizations in their efforts to monitor social media during electoral periods and evaluate its impact on politics. The toolkits are also available to the general public, organizations, media outlets, experts, and academics who wish to study the use of social media in elections. Written in simple language, the publications offer a step-by-step guide to developing effective and high-quality investigation plans for the use of social media, including the abuse of state resources, campaign violations, and coordinated inauthentic behavior. They serve as a starting point for developing research methodologies and can be adapted to fit specific investigation goals.

## IN THIS DOCUMENT YOU WILL FIND:

- » What investigating the use of social media implies and why it is important
- » Guidance on how investigating the use of social media can support organizational/institutional priorities
- » What Abuse of State Resources (ASR) is and why it is important
- » What Campaign Violation is and why it is important
- » What Coordinated Inauthentic Behavior (CIB) is and why it is important
- » Tips on how to leverage insights from investigating efforts.

## TOOLS AND APPROACHES ON INVESTIGATING ABUSE OF STATE RESOURCES



ASR is a form of political corruption that occurs primarily during election campaigns, characterized by the ruling majority parties using state resources for unfair electoral advantage. This unethical and sometimes illegal behavior by civil servants, political candidates, and parties, who use their official positions and connections to government institutions, can alter power balances among political actors and negatively impact the integrity of the electoral process and citizens' trust in fair and free elections.

Social media has become a crucial tool in election campaigning and can be used to investigate ASR in two ways: as a means of abuse (such as the abuse of institutional resources and communication tools) and as evidence of abuse (such as documenting the use of state cars or government offices during campaigns). Monitoring social media and providing e-evidence of ASR cases can lead organizations to advocate for establishing or adjusting legal frameworks and institutional response mechanisms to prevent and combat abuse both online and offline during the electoral period.

Improving anti-corruption strategies can help stop false political activity and misuse of resources on social media, as political groups globally are using new techniques to create and boost social media content.

## INVESTIGATING AND UNCOVERING COORDINATED INAUTHENTIC BEHAVIOR

Social media has become a crucial tool for organizing social movements by enabling rapid dissemination of information and facilitating collective action. However, it has also played a significant role in the spread of disinformation campaigns. These campaigns aim to exploit societal divisions, influence elections, and confuse people on important issues, such as the Covid-19 pandemic.



It is important to distinguish between organic coordination on social media and the coordinated behavior of disinformation campaigns. Some coordination is authentic, involving real users or pages sharing information, while other coordination is manufactured and deceptive.

Social media companies, such as Meta (formerly Facebook), regulate content based on authenticity and maintain Community Standards to ensure the security of user accounts and create a trustworthy platform for communication and interaction.

Meta is committed to promoting authenticity and discourages users from engaging in inauthentic behavior (IB) on Facebook or Instagram. IB involves misleading people by using Facebook or Instagram assets (such as accounts, Pages, Groups, or Events) to misrepresent:

- » About the identity, purpose, or origin of the entity that they represent.
- » About the popularity of Facebook or Instagram content or assets.
- » About the purpose of an audience or community.
- » About the source or origin of content.
- » To evade enforcement under Community Standards.

Meta also discourages users from engaging in Coordinated Inauthentic Behavior. Social media companies have taken steps to protect users from coordinated inauthentic behavior (CIB) through updated policies, but the individuals or groups behind CIB continue to adapt and evolve their tactics. With ample funding and motivation, they persist in their efforts, even if some of their actions have limited impact. As a result, there is a constant need for social media platforms to remain vigilant and enforce their policies against CIB.

Social media platforms have inconsistent policies and enforcement for coordinated and inauthentic behavior, relying mostly on internal mechanisms. However, reported CIB networks may not meet the threshold for such behaviour, leading to lack of corrective action. When monitoring social media, it's crucial to understand the relationship between inauthentic and coordinated inauthentic behaviour. These terms describe attempts to deceive people or social media platforms about the popularity of the content, the objective of a community (e.g. Groups, Pages, Events), or the identity of the individuals or organisation behind it. Such deceptive practices, which aim to increase the distribution of content, are not tolerated under Community Standards.

When analysing CIB, it's crucial to distinguish between two types of activities: coordinated inauthentic behaviour in domestic, non-state campaigns (CIB); and 2) coordinated inauthentic behavior by a foreign or government actor (FGI). FGI encompasses two forms of behaviour: foreign efforts to sway public opinion in another country and government operations aimed at their own citizens. These activities can be especially alarming when they involve deceptive tactics and the authority of a state. CIB may include financially driven activities, whether by foreign or domestic, state or non-state actors. However, when investigating CIB, one may uncover networks with a variety of motivations that may be difficult to differentiate from the outside.

All these handbooks are published as part of Facebook's monitoring project on the network carried out by the Center for Monitoring and Research (CeMI), in collaboration with the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES).

## PROJECT

## SOCIETY OF RESTORATIVE JUSTICE - AFFIRMATION OF THE SYSTEM OF ALTERNATIVE SANCTIONS IN MONTENEGRO



This year, CeMI continued its commitment to driving positive change within Montenegro's justice system by building upon the successes of previous projects. One such project that significantly influenced our current efforts is the "Restorative Justice - Alternative Sanctions for Re-socialization!" initiative conducted in 2020. Informed by the valuable data obtained through qualitative and quantitative research in the prior project, we embarked on a new project, seamlessly aligning with strategic objectives and the needs identified during past implementations.

**Project Objective and Alignment:** The project's aim was to bolster and advocate for the utilisation of alternative sanctions within Montenegro, contributing to the advancement of restorative justice practices. This endeavour finds its roots in the strategic documents guiding our actions, as well as the insights gleaned from our previous work in this realm.

Throughout the year, we undertook a range of impactful activities:

1. **Capacity Building:** Our commitment to improving the justice system led us to organise comprehensive training sessions. A two-day training brought together officials from the Conditional Freedom Directorate and judges, focusing on alternative sanctions and measures. A parallel one-day training was tailored for the Conditional Freedom Directorate and the Center for Social Work personnel.
2. **Informative Resources:** Recognizing the need for knowledge dissemination, we developed informative brochures. These brochures catered to various stakeholders, addressing the application of alternative sanctions for judges, prosecutors, and lawyers, while also spotlighting the diverse forms and benefits of alternative sanctions for citizens.
3. **Storytelling production:** CeMI produced an engaging video that highlighted the positive impacts of alternative sanctions vis-à-vis traditional institutional punishments. This video underscored the



transformative potential of work in the public interest as a form of sanction.

4. Round table organisation: Our commitment to inclusivity and dialogue was further demonstrated through a round table discussion. This event brought together representatives from key institutions, including the Conditional Freedom Directorate, the Center for Social Work, holders of judicial functions, and fellow NGOs.

*We are grateful for the financial support provided by the **Ministry of Justice, Human and Minority Rights**, which enabled us to translate our vision into impactful actions. Their partnership reinforced our collective commitment to a just and equitable society.*

## A seminar on probation and the application of alternative sanctions and measures in Montenegro was held

A two-day seminar entitled "Probation and the System of Alternative Sanctions and Measures in Montenegro" was held at the Hotel "Bianca" in Kolašin from November 14th to 15th. The seminar was attended by representatives of basic courts, the Directorate for Conditional Freedom and the Center for Social Work.

The speakers at the seminar were Milorad Markovic, Executive Director of the Institute for Legal Studies and Rade Cetkovic, a member of the Judicial Council and judge at the Basic Court in Podgorica.



On the first day of the seminar, Milorad Markovic spoke about alternative sanctions in the sources of universal and European regional international organizations, while Rade Cetkovic spoke about the experience and practice in the application of alternative sanctions.

On the second day of the seminar, participants had the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the comparative practice of certain countries in the application of alternative sanctions with a special focus on probation and to gain valuable knowledge about the application of conditional sentence with protective supervision, as one of the alternative criminal sanctions that is least applied in Montenegro.



## A brochure - Penal Policy and Application of Alternative Sanctions in Montenegro



The aim of this brochure was to provide a brief overview of the penal policy in Montenegro with a focus on the application of alternative sanctions and measures compared to institutional punishment in the last 10 years, from 2012. to the end of 2021., in order to determine to what extent, the implementation of new solutions and institutions has taken root. Although there are more alternative sanctions and measures in a broader sense, the focus and subject of this brochure will be alternative sanctions and measures in a narrower sense, i.e., only those sanctions and measures that require supervision from the competent authority. These are community service as punishment, house arrest, and conditional sentences with protective supervision.

## Round table Criminal policy and application of alternative sanctions in Montenegro

*Montenegrin courts have made progress in the application of alternative sanctions, but there are still significant deficiencies, as the criminal justice system is primarily focused on institutional punishment.*

This was stated at the roundtable "Criminal Policy and the Implementation of Alternative Sanctions in Montenegro".



Project Coordinator at CeMI, Vladimir Simonovic, said while presenting the publication 'Criminal Policy and the Application of Alternative Sanctions in Montenegro' that the criminal system is still primarily focused on institutional punishment, as evidenced by the number of short-term prison sentences that often exceed the average in Council of Europe countries.

He added that the data on public opinion is also concerning, as two-thirds of citizens believe that prison is the most effective punishment, and many citizens have not heard of the term "alternative sanctions". Simonovic said that the number of prison sentences of up to six months deserves special attention.

"According to him, the effectiveness of short-term prison sentences is very questionable, that is, the possibility of achieving a positive effect on the convicted person from the aspect of special prevention in such a short period of time.

He said that when it comes to the punishment of house arrest, data shows an increase in the imposition of this sentence, but it should be noted that a large number of these sentences are imposed for the criminal offense of non-compliance with health regulations for the suppression of dangerous infectious diseases. In fact, in a very short time, the majority of house arrest sentences, since this sentence is applied in Montenegro, have been imposed precisely for this criminal offense, which no longer occurs in practice and is not expected to be relevant in the future," said Simonovic.

He pointed out that the third alternative sentence that CeMI dealt with during the research-conditional sentence with protective supervision, has not taken hold."

"At the state level, we have only about ten judgments in which this warning measure was imposed, and that is in the Basic Court in Podgorica and in the Basic Court in Kotor. In all the cases in which we had insight, it was about the criminal offense of violence in the family or in the family community," Simonović said.

He believes that in order to have a more precise analysis of this issue in the future, it would be of great importance for courts to keep separate records for prison sentences and sentences of house arrest, as well as for conditional freedom and conditional freedom with protective supervision."

The Director of the Directorate for Criminal Sanctions and Supervision, Stevan Brajušković, said that the significance of alternative sanctions is multiple, both for the state and for the perpetrators of criminal acts.



"The significance of alternative sanctions lies in avoiding the negative effects of imprisonment such as stigmatization in society and the bad influence of other convicted individuals. At the same time, this reduces the number of convicted individuals in prisons, which results in significant savings in the budget. And most importantly, convicted individuals on this type of sanction have the opportunity to continue their employment, education or to maintain their family relationships," Brajušković noted.

According to him, the Strategy for the Execution of Criminal Sanctions 2022/2026 has been prepared and announced for public discussion.

"The current Strategy has set more realistic goals. The previous strategy was, as I heard recently at a roundtable, like a wish list. My wishes align with that strategy, but realities are much different from that. We have planned the hiring of new officials, as well as training for officials of the Directorate," Brajušković said.



Judge of the Basic Court in Podgorica and member of the Judicial Council, Rade Ćetković, said that the topic of alternative sanctions is very important for Montenegro, which aims to become a society of restorative justice.

"When we look at the statistics for 2021, the budget allocation per prisoner was slightly less than 30 euros. The European average is around 77 euros. When rounded on an annual level, you get to a figure of ten and a half million euros, and it becomes

clear that this money could have been used much better, as the rate of recidivism is extremely high. In terms of the purpose of punishment, significant results are not achieved, especially when it comes to penalties up to six months," Ćetković noted.

He assessed that if alternative forms of sanctions are introduced and if work is done on affirming work in the public interest, such as home detention and conditional sentences with protective supervision, budget expenditures will be significantly reduced, "and in terms of the purpose of punishment, the same result is achieved."

"It is necessary to work on raising awareness among professionals in terms of the importance of alternative sanctions, but also among citizens," said Ćetković.

He pointed out that the existing judicial information system is outdated, but a new one is expected to be established that will help to keep records in a more consistent way.

"The new judicial system is something that we are working on diligently, and we expect to switch to it in the near future," said Ćetković.

The Executive Director of the Institute for Legal Studies, Milorad Markovic, stated that alternative criminal sanctions should be considered as an integral part of the criminal sanctions system, and not as an exclusive replacement for imprisonment. He emphasized that a holistic approach that involves preventive action and action through the criminal justice system must be based on a concept that puts the offender's personality at the center of the system.





## PROJECT

# Combating Gendered Disinformation and Online Violence Against Women in Politics in Montenegro by Educating Women and Advocating Campaign

Within the scope of its activities, CeMI undertook a significant project titled “Combating Gendered Disinformation and Online Violence against Women in Politics in Montenegro by Educating Women and Advocating Campaign.” The primary objective of this project is to address the critical issue of the inadequate representation of women in Montenegro’s political sphere.

This initiative seeks to confront the root cause of the underrepresentation of women in Montenegrin politics. By specifically targeting the pervasive problem of gendered disinformation, including the harmful dissemination of online content aimed at women in politics, CeMI aims to eliminate a substantial barrier that impedes women’s active engagement in public life.

**Project Objectives:** At its core, this endeavor aligns with the broader goal of advancing gender equality and empowering women throughout Montenegro. The focal point of this ambition revolves around enhancing female participation in political and public domains within the nation. By combatting the adverse impacts of gendered disinformation and online violence, CeMI envisions a future where women can more freely contribute to shaping Montenegro’s socio-political landscape. CeMI’s comprehensive strategy, involving education, awareness campaigns, and advocacy, embodies a transformative journey towards a more inclusive and equitable political arena in Montenegro. Gender equality is not just a concept—it’s a catalyst for progress, a beacon of hope for positive change, and a resolute commitment to fostering a brighter, more balanced future for all.

*This project has come to fruition through a collaborative partnership with the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI).*

## PROJECT ACTIVITIES

### Social media monitoring on online violence and gendered disinformation in Montenegro

The digital landscape has seamlessly integrated into our lives, serving as a dynamic conduit for information exchange and opinion formation. However, this realm harbors a pressing issue that poses a formidable obstacle for women seeking to engage in public life and politics: gendered disinformation and online violence. The transformative potential of this project lies in its dedication to breaking down this barrier and fostering a more inclusive political environment in Montenegro.



CeMI recognizes the power of collective action and citizen involvement in catalyzing change. Through this project, a series of activities have been designed to facilitate public participation, rendering each individual a vital contributor to positive transformation. The project's architecture empowers citizens to be part of the solution, extending the reach and influence of its objectives.

Among the project's pivotal activities, citizens are offered the opportunity to actively participate and drive change. These activities encompass:

1. **Reporting Disinformation:** Citizens can play an instrumental role in combating online disinformation and harmful content by utilizing the Fair Elections application. By promptly reporting instances of misleading information, they contribute to the creation of a more accurate and balanced digital discourse.
2. **Live Display:** A powerful tool in the project's arsenal, the Live Display aggregates all content published on the subject. This feature not only offers real-time insight but also showcases the collective effort in addressing gendered disinformation and fostering an environment conducive to women's engagement in public life.

*CeMI's innovative approach transforms citizens into advocates for change, harnessing the potential of technology and collaboration to eradicate the digital barriers that hinder gender equality and political participation.*

## 2) Creation of an online application for reporting online violence against women and gendered disinformation

CeMI is the first non-governmental organization in Montenegro to establish this system, through the CrowdTangle platform, with the support of the CFLI.

Through the mobile and web application "Fair Elections" (<https://www.ferizbori.me/>) citizens can report disinformation and online harmful content directed against women, by clicking on the option "report irregularity or violation of rights", and by filling out online forms.

So this is a special pleasure within this project, because the participation of citizens is also possible. In order for the citizens of Montenegro to be informed, Cemi published a report on the collected data and identified violations of rights in the online space, with an analysis of the situation in 2022 in Montenegro.

## 3) Trainings for 50 women present in political and public life in Montenegro



*CeMI organized a training called „Women in politics and digital space: training on gender-based disinformation and online violence“.*

At the training, which is one of the activities of the project „Fight against gender-based disinformation and online violence against women in politics in Montenegro“, the following spoke:

1. Nj.E Ambassador Giles Norman, Embassy of Canada in Serbia, North Macedonia and Montenegro,
2. Professor dr. Nataša Ružić, Associate Professor of Media Studies and Journalism, Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Montenegro
3. Mrs. Teodora Gilić, Program Director, Center for Monitoring and Research (CeMI)
4. Mr. Milan Jovanović, Head of Analytics, Digital Forensic Center (DFC)
5. Mrs. Danica Ilić, Journalist and media consultant, Media Diversity Institute
6. Mr. Dario Jovanović, Project Manager, Centers of Civil Initiatives (CCI)
7. Mrs. Nataša Vajagić, Activist, Center for Civic Initiatives CGI Poreč
8. Mrs. Milica Zrnović, Project Coordinator, CeMI



**„It is necessary to work on strengthening institutional protection in order to improve the position of women in the online space“**

This was concluded at the training “Women in politics and digital space: training on gender-based disinformation and online violence” organized by the Center for Monitoring and Research (CeMI) on Friday, January 28, 2022.



An introduction to the issue of online violence and disinformation towards women was given by the CeMI's program director, Mrs. Teodora Gilić and H.E. Ambassador Giles Norman.

Then CeMI, in cooperation with regional lecturers, presented to the participants numerous examples of gender-based violence in the digital environment in Montenegro and the region, as well as practical examples of how to combat this phenomenon.

Comparative findings from Montenegro and the region were presented by:

- Mr. Milan Jovanović, Head of Analytics, Digital Forensic Center DFC (CG)
- Mrs. Danica Ilić, journalist and media consultant, Institute for Media Diversity (RS - UK)
- Mr. Dario Jovanović, project manager, Centers of Civil Initiatives CCI (BiH)
- Mrs. Nataša Vajagić, activist, Center for Civic Initiatives CGI Poreč (HR)
- Mrs. Milica Zrnović, project coordinator, CeMI (CG)

In addition, the focus of the training was on the acquisition of digital skills and information and media literacy.



Prof. Dr. Nataša Ružić gave a lecture on media literacy and presented the main tools for recognizing (gender-based) disinformation and fake news. Prof. Dr. Ružić also emphasized the importance of solution journalism, i.e. journalism oriented towards solutions, the goal of which is not only to inform the public about a social problem, but also to offer a solution to combat it.

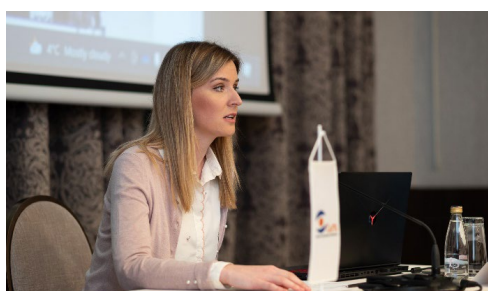
Misogyny, gender-based misinformation and online violence appear as an increasingly frequent problem in Montenegro.

The conclusions of the training were that there is a lot of discussion about inappropriate and misogynistic comments on social networks and online portals addressed to women, however, the fact is that behavior in the digital environment, unfortunately, is still not legally regulated and that institutional protection mechanisms are still not applied to adequate way.

It is necessary to work on legislative and institutional protection mechanisms, so that women feel safer in the online space, and are empowered to react if they become victims of online violence.

The training brought together more than 50 women from political parties, NGOs, media, international institutions.

#### 4) Final conference for presenting the report and advocacy of recommendations



Panel discussion *"The impact of gender-based misinformation and online violence against women in politics on the process of democratization and EU integration in Montenegro"*, organized by the Center for Monitoring and Research (CeMI).

Users of social networks in Montenegro most often use baseless moral discrediting based on physical characteristics or disrespect for the stereotypical roles of women in society, and the attacks are most often directed at women who occupy high positions.-was announced at the panel discussion.

Certain political parties, which are financed almost exclusively by citizens' money from the budget, pay for discrediting campaigns of prominent individuals on social networks. Prominent individuals in society, creators of public opinion, leaders of NGOs become the target of brutal campaigns of lies and insults. The goal is to intimidate those who are the target, but also to threaten everyone else who expresses their opinion," stated Teodora Gilić.





„She pointed out that one of the groups most exposed to this kind of violence are women in politics, it is also obvious that hate speech always spreads towards those women who publicly express their views on certain political issues and events”, said Gilić.

### CeMI's program director, Mrs. Teodora Gilić



"At CeMI, we believe that more attention should be paid to this problem in society and that we need a systemic response. We need the cooperation of the state, media, social networks, regulatory bodies and non-governmental organizations in order to be able to stop the growing internet violence against like-minded people, therefore, we strongly advocate the strengthening of institutional protection, so that women feel safer in the online space, and are empowered to react if they become victims of online violence," said Gilić.

The project coordinator, Center for Monitoring and Research, Milica Zrnović, said while presenting the "Report on gender-based misinformation and online violence against women in politics in Montenegro", that the organization conducted monitoring that focused on monitoring the content, reactions and comments on Facebook via the CrowdTangle platform from September of 2021 to February of 2022.

During the monitoring period, the activity of **79 pages was observed**: 25 media activities, 17 political parties, five politicians, 11 state bodies, 21 pages. The sample included a total of 115,532 published contents," said Zrnović.

She explained that only 995 (1%) of the recorded contents concerned or reported on misogyny, sexism in public discourse, hate speech in general, but also condemnations of the same directed towards women in political and public life in Montenegro.

"Regularly, in the media and comments, there are women MPs, ministers, holders of electoral lists, and the like. The focus of the content was women present in political and public life, namely: *MP Draginja Vuksanović Stanković* 29%, *MP Božena Jelušić* 11%, *Minister Vesna Bratić* 8% , *MP Aleksandra Vuković* 5%, *Minister Tamara Srzentić* 4%"; said Zrnović.

- which means that attacks are most often manifested towards women who occupy high positions, that is, who have a role in the decision-making process and management.

She indicated that in the observed period, there were a total of **86,684** user interactions on content related to gender-based violence against women in politics, stating that the most common reaction was like 55% and laughter 23%.

Speaking about the reaction of the public to cases of gender-based misinformation and online violence against women, Zrnović said that it is noticed that in Montenegro public condemnation, which is not present in all cases, is the only reaction and sanction.

The head of the Directorate for Gender Equality, Ministry of Justice, Human and Minority Rights, Biljana Pejović, said that hate speech is present on social networks where the media do not pay enough attention to its censorship or do not have enough capacity to regulate it.

She reminded that national laws also oblige the media of mass communication to avoid gender stereotypes, gender discrimination, as well as to actively contribute to the policy of gender equality.



## Biljana Pejović



"The gender equality strategy was adopted 2021 for the period 2021-2025, where it is stated that the media should take care not to reflect gender stereotypes, to regularly take measures through their editorial policy to combat the use of sexist hate speech," Pejović added.

*Acting Director General of the Directorate for Strategic Planning in Public Administration, International Cooperation and IPA Projects, Marija Hajduković, said that women in positions and in public life have the opportunity to influence changes,*

*create a society of equal opportunities, and create opportunities for some new little girls who, perhaps, had no equal.*

## Marija Hajduković



"Through the Public Administration Reform Strategy for the period 2022-2026, as a key document in the field of public administration, we have recognized gender equality as a horizontal goal, to which much attention has been paid and significant progress has been made, and the recognized activities permeate through all strategies to contribute to the implementation and promotion of this standard". According to her words, through the Agenda related to the further digitization of Montenegro, it is important to promote and launch

initiatives that will affirm women in public administration, the ICT sector, platforms for girls who code, to use the moment so that the digitization of all processes is equally the result of work and women and men.

The event was held as part of the project *"Combating gender-based misinformation and online violence against women in politics in Montenegro through women's education and an advocacy campaign"*, which was financially supported by the Canadian Embassy in Belgrade through the CFLI.

## PROJECT

# Access to Justice and Human Rights in Montenegro

Centre for Monitoring and Research (CeMI) in cooperation with Human Rights Action (HRA) is implementing the project „Access to justice and human rights in Montenegro - trial monitoring project 2021-2023“.

The *overall* objective of the project is to contribute to further democratization and increase of the level of the rule of law enforcement and respect of human rights in Montenegro, through advocacy campaign towards key decision-makers for adequate legislative, policy and/or institutional changes in relation to administration of criminal justice system in Montenegro, and raising public awareness on the most important aspects of equal access to justice, including the new legal mechanisms and human rights.

The *goal of the project* is also strengthening of the role of civil society organizations in promoting human rights and good governance, especially in the area of access to justice and the rule of law. Throughout the project, CeMI and HRA will establish a joint committee with civil society organizations and judicial institutions and regular communication between civil society organizations and representatives of the judiciary.

Project also envisages trial monitoring and analysis of respect for human rights, with a focus on respect of the procedural rights of suspects/accused and victims, as well as monitoring access to justice of vulnerable groups and those prosecuted due to measures imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. For this purpose, CeMI will renew and improve its trial monitoring methodology, and provide training for the members of the trial monitoring team.

Project activities will be followed by publishing of thematic and annual reports on topics of importance for the protection of human rights in the criminal justice system.

The project is supported by the European Commission (EIDHR).

## PROJECT ACTIVITIES

The project envisages the organization of the following activities:

- The supreme Court of Montenegro and CeMI signed a Memorandum of Cooperation;
- A three day seminar on trial monitoring methodology
- Competition for awarding small grants to registered and unregistered civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations in Montenegro;
- Training to strengthen the capacity of civil society organizations supported through the sub-granting competition

## 1) The Supreme Court of Montenegro and CeMI signed a Memorandum of Cooperation

Representatives of the Center for Monitoring and Research (CEMI), *Zlatko Vujović*, Ph.D., and the Supreme Court, **Vesna Vučković**, Ph.D., signed on 05/30/2022. **Memorandum on Cooperation**, the aim of which is to contribute to further democratization and raising the level of application of the rule of law and respect for human rights in Montenegro through an advocacy campaign aimed at key decision makers in the area of application of the criminal justice system in Montenegro.

The Supreme Court and CeMI will exchange information and work together on the implementation of the project *"Access to justice and human rights in Montenegro - trial monitoring project 2021-2023"*, which is being implemented with the support of the European Commission (EIDHR), as foreseen in the Memorandum.

*"One of the goals of the project is to strengthen public awareness of the most important aspects of equal access to justice, including new legal mechanisms and human rights."*

The goal of the project is to strengthen the role of civil society in promoting human rights and good governance, especially in the area of the rule of law and access to justice," said *Vučković*.

"For the purposes of monitoring, CeMI will renew and improve the methodology of monitoring court proceedings and provide training to team members who will deal with this activity." Court proceedings will be monitored by trial monitors by attending selected hearings and reviewing the files of legally binding court decisions," said *Vujović*.

The project envisages monitoring and analysis of court proceedings and respect for human rights, with a focus on respect for the procedural rights of accused persons and victims, and monitoring of access to justice for vulnerable groups and those prosecuted for violating measures to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

The Supreme Court will inform the courts about the concluded Memorandum and the activities that CeMI will implement in accordance with it, and provide support for the implementation of CeMI's project activities within its jurisdiction.

## 2) A three day seminar on trial monitoring methodology

*From June 17-19, a three day seminar on trial monitoring methodology was held at the hotel "Palas" in Petrovac.*

The participants were representatives of the Center for Monitoring and Research (CeMI) and Action for Human Rights (HRA), which in the coming period will conduct activities of observing court proceedings, with the aim of increasing their capacities in this area.

The lectures at the seminar were *legal consultant M.Sc Milovan Marković and coordinator of the monitoring team Ognjen Mitrović*.

During the first day, the methodology that the CeMI and HRA monitors will use when monitoring court proceedings was presented.

The participants started the second day of the seminar learning about the differences between systematic, thematic and ad hoc monitoring, and they continued their education through a lecture on standard procedures and the behavior of monitors, the choice of courts and cases they will monitor, and they got acquainted with the basic standards of fair and equitable trials.

On the third day of the seminar, the focus of the training was on thematic monitoring and practical work, where the participants gained knowledge on how to compile and fill in various forms that they will use when visiting hearings and when inspecting case files.

The seminar was held as part of the project "Access to justice and human rights in Montenegro- trial monitoring project 2021-2023", which was financed by the European Union co-financed by the Ministry of Public Administration of Montenegro.

### **3) Competition for awarding small grants to registered and unregistered civil society organizations and NGOs in Montenegro**

The Center for Monitoring and Research CeMI in partnership with the Action for Human Rights HRA within project "Access to justice and human rights in Montenegro -trial monitoring project 2021-2023" has announced a competition for awarding small grants to NGOs in the field of respect for human rights. The total budget for the distribution of funds amounts to 30,000 EUR.

Registered and unregistered civil society organizations and NGOs had the right to participate in this competition.

All information and application forms can be found on the websites of the NGO CeMI ([www.cemi.org.me](http://www.cemi.org.me)) and the partner organization NGO HRA ([www.hracion.org/](http://www.hracion.org/)).

#### **Competition results:**

A total of fifteen applications were received within the call.

After the evaluation, the following organizations received financial support for project implementation:

- The Institute for Legal Studies (IPLS) for the project "Improving the Protection System in the Judicial System of Montenegro" was supported in the amount of 9,830 EUR;
- Montenegrin LGBT association Queer Montenegro for the project "Equal access to justice for LGBTQ+ persons in Montenegro" was supported in the amount of 9,715 EUR;
- The Media Union of Montenegro for the project "Safety of journalists through judicial practice" was supported in the amount of 9,799.5 EUR.

## **Signed contracts for awarding small grants to NGOs in the field of respect for human rights**

The Center for Monitoring and Research (CeMI) has, within the framework of the project "Access to justice and human rights in Montenegro- trial monitoring project 2021-2023" implemented in partnership with the Human Rights Action (HRA), signed contracts with civil society organizations that have been allocated funds within the sub-granting program.

The project was financed by the European Union, and co-financed by the Ministry of Public Administration.

"One of the goals of the project is to strengthen public awareness of the most important aspects of equal access to justice, including new legal mechanisms and human rights", said Project Coordinator Maja Bjelić.

According to her, the goal of the project is to strengthen the role of civil society in promoting human rights and good governance, especially in the area of access to justice and the rule of law.

The representative of IPLS Tijana Živković-Petraković, said that the general goal of the project "Improving the protection system in the judicial system of Montenegro" is a contribution to the protection of human

rights of vulnerable social groups in the judicial system of Montenegro, and the specific goal is to improve the effectiveness of legal and institutional mechanisms for victim support.

In front of *Queer Montenegro*, they said that the goal of the project "Equal access to justice for LGBTQ+ persons in Montenegro" is to contribute to improving the level of professionalism and integrity of the judiciary in ensuring equal access to justice for LGBTQ+ persons through increasing the degree of participation of CSOs in the process of monitoring and/or creation of practical public policies related to the LGBTQ+ community.

The representative of the Media Union of Montenegro *Bojana Konatar*, pointed out that their project "Safety of journalists through court practice" refers to the safety of journalists and the practice of the courts on the above issues.

#### **4) Training to strengthen the capacity of civil society organizations supported through the sub-granting competition**

From September 30 to October 2, CeMI organized a seminar to strengthen the capacity of civil society organizations supported through the sub-granting competition.

The seminar was organized as part of the project "Access to justice and human rights in Montenegro-trial monitoring project 2021-2023" which is implemented by CeMI in partnership with the Action for Human Rights HRA, and which is financed by the EU and co-financed by the Ministry of Public Administration Montenegro.

Lecturers on the topics of judicial system, management of projects financed from EU funds and financial management were *Ognjen Mitrović- coordinator of the monitoring team at CeMI, Marija Vesković- legal advisor at HRA, Goran Đurović- director of the Media Center and Dubravka Tomić- financial manager of CeMI.*



## PROJECT

# Contribution to the inclusion of LGBTI persons in the labor market

*The general goal* of the project is to contribute to increasing the level of respect for the human rights of members of the LGBT population in Montenegro.

The stated goal will be achieved by achieving the specific goal of the project, which is reflected in the reduction of the degree of discrimination against LGBTI persons in employment, through conducting research on the position of the LGBTI population on the labor market, creating a guide for protection against discrimination of LGBTI persons on the labor market, and organizing educational meetings and presentations and implementing a campaign to raise awareness about the position and rights of LGBTI persons with a special emphasis on the rights of LGBTI persons on the labor market.

In order to analyze the situation as comprehensively as possible, CeMI conducted qualitative and quantitative research during the project.

## PROJECT ACTIVITIES

The stated goals will be achieved through the implementation of the following activities:

- conducting qualitative research on the position of LGBTI persons on the labor market;
- conducting quantitative research on the position of LGBTI persons on the labor market;
- preparation of a guide for the protection of discrimination against LGBTI persons on the labor market;
- organizing educational meetings and presentations with relevant stakeholders;
- signing a public declaration of support for LGBTI persons on the labor market;
- organizing a press conference to present the research results;
- organizing a round table for the presentation of guides and advocacy of public policies.

**The project was financed by the Ministry of the Justice, Human and Minority Rights.**

### 1) Preparation of a guide for the protection of discrimination against LGBTI persons on the labor market;

Discrimination and harassment of LGBTI persons at work and in employment has been documented by a large number of sources, and the negative impact of these phenomena on the health and well-being of employees, as well as one the reduction of commitment and job satisfaction, has been repeatedly confirmed.

*Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI)* people face discrimination in almost all aspects of their lives.

LGBT persons often experience workplace discrimination that includes lower incomes and fewer work benefits compared to their peers.

*The aim of this guide* is not only to present the different forms and methods of discrimination of LGBTI persons on the labor market in Montenegro, and to define the legal mechanisms for the protection of LGBTI persons at work, but also to familiarize employers with the best practices when employing LGBTI persons, and the methods that will ensure full recognition of the importance and use of the principles of inclusion and respect for diversity in the process of employment, work and functioning at work.

In December 2021, the Center for Monitoring and Research (CeMi) started the implementation of the project *“Contribution to the inclusion of LGBTI persons on the labor market”* with the financial support of the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights with the general goal of contributing to increasing the level of respect for the human rights of members of the LGBTI population in Montenegro.

The stated goal will be achieved through the development of a guide for protection against discrimination of LGBTI persons on the labor market, based on examples of good practice in EU countries.

The guide is available on the website [www.cemi.org.me](http://www.cemi.org.me)

(<https://cemi.org.me/storage/uploads/wdQU2r1NyFIRCYF562qbugx7IKQLVFle6lQpQUQI.pdf>)

## **2) Findings of the public opinion survey- „Contribution to the inclusion of LGBTI persons in the labor market“ - quantitative research**

See the findings of the public opinion survey that the Center for Monitoring and Research - CeMi reached within the project *“Contribution to the inclusion of LGBTI persons on the labor market”*, which is being implemented with the financial support of the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights.

The survey was conducted among adult citizens of Montenegro from October 28 to November 16 on a sample of 990 respondents.

The *direct target group* of this project is the public and private sector in Montenegro, while the final beneficiaries of the project are all citizens and citizens of Montenegro.

The *indirect target group* is the LGBT population whose goal is to provide a higher degree of enjoyment respect for human rights and equality in employment.

Data collection was done in the field, face to face, using the CAPI method.

The average duration of the questionnaire was about 20 minutes.

The sampling frame is based on data from the 2011 census and MONSTAT's estimate of the number of inhabitants on January 1, 2022.

A three-stage stratified sample was used.

The sample covers the territory of Montenegro.

The findings of the public opinion survey are available on the website [www.cemi.org.me](http://www.cemi.org.me) (<https://cemi.org.me/storage/uploads/BxOkD7YBXrp0WvR5h4d1t9E1RwyU7m393N6P16rM.pdf>)

## **3) Organizing a press conference to present the research results;**

### **- In Montenegro, 45 percent of citizens believe that employers are not ready to hire LGBT people**

*The project coordinator of CeMi, Vladimir Simonović*, said at the press conference on the occasion of the presentation of the public opinion survey *“LGBT persons and the labor market”* that a positive change was recorded in relation to some attitudes about LGBT persons.

“The share of misinformed citizens that sexual orientation is different from heterosexual - a disease - has significantly decreased. The more educated a person is, the higher their level of information in relation

to sexual orientation, and the lower the level of prejudice. A higher level of prejudice is observed among the older population," *Simonović* said.

According to him, women are significantly less prone to homophobia than men, and residents of the central and southern parts of the country compared to the northern ones.

There are significant differences in relation to the national declaration. "Personal contact with an LGBT person, as in previous research, proved to be crucial, that is, knowing an LGBT person most likely implies the absence of homophobia," said *Simonović*.

He said that 50 percent of respondents believe that we are born with our sexual orientation and gender identity.

He said that the majority of young adults (18-29) are supportive, as are the majority of respondents with a higher degree of education, and especially supportive people who know a person who belongs to the LGBT population.

He said that 47 percent of respondents believe that LGBT people should not hide their sexual orientation in the workplace, while 30 percent of those believe that they should.

#### **4) Organizing a round table for the presentation of guides and advocacy of public policies;**

Employers should promote the prohibition of discrimination against LGBTI persons in the workplace, and encourage respect for diversity through public statements of top management in the organization, institution and company.

This was announced at the round table "Rights and inclusion of LGBTI persons in the labor market", which was organized by the Center for Monitoring and Research (CeMI) within the project "Contribution to the inclusion of LGBTI persons in the labor market".

*The project coordinator at CeMI, Maja Bjelic*, said that the project aims to contribute to increasing the level of respect for the human rights of members of the LGBTI population in Montenegro.

"The contribution to the achievement of this goal is reflected in the reduction of the level of discrimination against LGBTI persons in employment, through the set of project activities. The direct target group of the project is the public and private sector in Montenegro, while the ultimate beneficiaries of the project are all citizens of Montenegro. The indirect target group is the LGBTI population whose goal is to ensure the enjoyment of a greater degree of respect for human rights and equality during employment," said *Bjelic*.

*The representative of the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights, Branka Drecun*, said that the project "Contribution to the inclusion of LGBTI persons in the labor market" was recognized as a quality contribution to the implementation of the policy of the Government of Montenegro in the area of protection and improvement of the quality of life of LGBTI persons.

"LGBTI people in Montenegro face the greatest number of problems when it comes to exercising human rights in the field of employment. Very often they are faced with stigma and discrimination in almost all aspects of their lives," said *Drecun*.

*Executive co-director of the Association for LGBTI Equal Rights for the Western Balkans and Turkey, Daniel Kalezić*, speaking about the recommendations aimed at greater inclusion of LGBTI persons in the labor market, said that it would be desirable for the organization/institution/company, especially the council, to have a special mechanism for anonymous reporting of discrimination.

"It is very important that employers avoid questions of a discriminatory nature during job interviews. Such questions include intrusively seeking information related to: age, genetic characteristics, place of birth, country of origin, citizenship, disability, gender, sex, sexual orientation, partnership status, familial status or parentage, race, color or ethnicity, religion or belief", stated *Kalezić*.

*The representative of the Employment Agency of Montenegro, Gordana Vukčević*, pointed out that the Law on mediation in employment and rights during unemployment prohibits any form of discrimination. "It states that the principle of gender equality and affirmative action aimed at vulnerable groups on the labor market must be affirmed." The institute does not keep special records on persons who are members of the LGBTI population, because according to our regulations, this is not a mandatory record," said *Vukčević*.

She pointed out that the employer must not ask the question when it comes to gender, religion, nationality and other preferences.

"However, in practice, we know that this is not the case. One of the questions that penetrates deeply into the intimacy of every person is whether and when they plan to have children. It is necessary to strengthen the awareness of employers and employees, as well as of all citizens. If we all refuse to answer that question, that question will become unnecessary and the employers themselves will stop asking that kind of question," said *Vukčević*.

*The representative of the Administration for Human Resources, Đuro Nikač*, said that there is constant talk about the improvement of the normative framework, which, as he stated, on the other hand, is experiencing rapid degradation.

"The Human Resources Administration had the obligation to take into account the proportionate representation of ethnic, minority and other minority groups in state bodies during recruitment, which was extremely important for us. The LGBTI population was not included in that norm. However, with the changes in the law, we lost that authority," said *Nikač*.

The round table is one of the activities of the project "Contribution to the inclusion of LGBT persons on the labor market", which is implemented by CeMI, and is financially supported by the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights of Montenegro.

## **5) Conducting quantitative research on the position of LGBTI persons on the labor market;**

### **- Infographics - Attitudes of citizens about LGBTI persons on the labor market**

See the infographics on citizens' attitudes towards LGBTI persons on the labor market.

The infographics were created within the project "*Contribution to the inclusion of LGBTI persons on the labor market*", which is implemented by CeMI and is financially supported by the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights of Montenegro.

### **Signing a public declaration of support for LGBTI persons on the labor market**

The Center for Monitoring and Research CeMI initiated the signing of the Public Declaration on Combating Discrimination in the Workplace "*Accept DIVERSITY! Reject DISCRIMINATION!*"

The declaration was signed by: Law office Marijana Laković-Drašković, NGO Aktivna zona, Center for Women's and Peace Education ANIMA, NGO CAZAS, Center for Democracy and Human Rights CEDEM, Center for Roma Initiative Nikšić CRNIK, Center for Development of Non-Governmental Organizations

CRNVO, Secretariat for social care of the Capital City, HELP - Hilfe zur Selbsthilfe, NGO Juventas, Porto Montenegro, Clinical Center of Montenegro KCCG, Montenegrin network for harm reduction Link.

The signatories of the public declaration are: Ministry of Justice, Safe Women's House, Spektra Association, Montenegrin LGBTIQ Association Kvir Montenegro, Regent Porto Montenegro, Office for LGBTI Persons of the Capital City, European Network of Election Monitoring Organizations ENEMO, Glovo Montenegro, Action for Human Rights HRA, Institution of the Protector of Human Rights and Freedoms of Montenegro, Alternative Institute and PR Center.

The Declaration states that the legislative framework and legal order of Montenegro expressly prohibit discrimination on any basis and promote the protection of human rights and freedoms, including the rights of members of the LGBTI community. We agree that it is necessary to invest further efforts in order to advocate the democratic and European values behind which Montenegro stands.

"Therefore, we invite the public to contribute to the preservation of equality and a reduced level of discrimination in the workplace on any basis, as well as on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity," concluded the signatories of the Declaration.

Public declaration is available on the site [www.cemi.org.me](http://www.cemi.org.me)

( <https://cemi.org.me/storage/uploads/SG38ydkzmcjXKXuPsE2eIJu2QNv8sg4gjTTYWJiV.pdf> )

## **7) Video on the occasion of the promotion of the Public Declaration on Combating Discrimination in the Workplace**

Video showing the Public Declaration on combating discrimination in the workplace "Accept DIVERSITY!" Reject DISCRIMINATION!" which was created as part of the project "Contribution to the inclusion of LGBTI persons on the labor market", implemented by the Center for Monitoring and Research CeMI, and financially supported by the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights, is available on the website [www.cemi.org.me](http://www.cemi.org.me)



## PROJECT

# A step towards gender equality

The project *"A step towards gender equality: the fight against digital gender-based hate speech and violence"* will contribute to the strengthening of gender equality and the improvement of the position of women in Montenegro through the implementation of activities aimed at suppressing digital gender-based hate speech and violence.

This project is an upgrade to the previous activities and projects that CeMI carried out in the field of monitoring gender-responsive media and protection of rights and freedoms in the online space. Noticing the problem of lack of transparency and insufficient protection of rights in the digital space, as well as the increasingly frequent use of disinformation, fake news and discrediting campaigns directed against women in politics in Montenegro, CeMI started the campaign "(Un)safe in the online space?" which aims to raise the level of awareness of women in politics about their digital rights and how to react to online violations of their rights, especially during elections. Through direct cooperation with women who were or are constantly victims of media attacks, the campaign showed that this problem is one of the key causes of the insufficient representation of women in public and political life, and therefore of gender equality in Montenegro. Bearing in mind that this problem has gained momentum and that women face media lynching every day, both through traditional media and through online portals and social networks, it is necessary to constantly work on solving this problem in the future. CeMI will continue the campaign, and the concrete contribution of this project will be aimed at providing funds for propaganda material - brochures, visuals, boosting material on social networks, etc.

The set of activities of this project is designed to build the capacities of women in Montenegro, not only women present in public and political life, but also those in the private sector, academia, media, how to recognize and protect themselves from threats present in the online space. The project plans to train at least 25 women.

**The project was financed by the Ministry of Justice, Human and Minority Rights.**

## PROJECT ACTIVITIES

- An informative guide to protection against digital gender-based violence
- Training on the protection of rights in the online space
- Conference "(Un)secure in the online space?"
- Informative video "(Un)secure in the online space?"

### 1) An informative guide to protection against digital gender-based violence

The Center for Monitoring and Research (CeMI) prepared an informative guide for protection against digital gender-based violence as part of the project *"A step towards gender equality: The fight against digital gender-based hate speech and violence"*.

This guide presents an informative and educational approach to the phenomenon of digital gender-based violence and provides guidance for the protection of rights in the online space. The guide brings together different aspects of digital violence aimed at women, with special reference to hate speech, that is, discrimination and discrediting online campaigns against women. The guide allows all interested parties to become familiar with the concept of digital violence, its main characteristics, types of violence and concrete examples, as well as mechanisms for protecting rights in the digital space.

## | IN THE GUIDE YOU CAN FIND:

- » Definition and main characteristics of digital violence
- » Types and examples of digital violence, with a special focus on gender based on hate speech and harmful content
- » Practical tips for protecting rights in the digital space
- » Consequences of digital threats and violence

An informative guide is available at [www.cemi.org.me](http://www.cemi.org.me)  
(<https://cemi.org.me/storage/uploads/yHolnPwzgP692yMkrYQojSvK3395cZmGfpf2rCYF.pdf> )

### 2) Training on the protection of rights in the online space

The Center for Monitoring and Research CeMI organized a two-day training entitled *"Information Society and Digital Literacy: Training on the Protection of Rights in the Online Space"*, on June 28 and 29, 2022, at the Hotel "Bianca" in Kolašin.



This training is a new education module and a continuation of the previously successfully conducted training organized by CeMI, during which more than 50 women from political and public life, state authorities and institutions, the NGO sector, the media, academia, were educated on the topic of gender-based misinformation and online violence against women in politics in Montenegro. You can find more about the held training on the website [www.cemi.org.me](http://www.cemi.org.me)

The program director of CeMI, *Mrs. Teodora Gilić*, gave an introduction to the issue of digital gender-based hate speech and violence while the lecturers were *Mr. Jakša Backović*, head of the High-Tech Crime Prevention Group of the Department for Combating Organized Crime and Corruption, Police Administration of Montenegro, and *Mrs. Nerma Dobardžić*, Deputy Protector of Human Rights and Freedoms of Montenegro.

The participants in the training were representatives of political parties, state bodies and NGOs.

### 3) Conference "(Un)secure in the online space?"

Montenegro needs a systemic response to combat the growing online violence against women engaged in public work and to strengthen institutional protection so that they are empowered to react if they become victims.

This was announced at the conference *"(Un)safe in the online space"*, which was organized by the Center for Monitoring and Research (CeMI) as part of the project *"Step of Gender Equality: Fight against digital gender-based hate speech and violence"*.

The project coordinator at CeMI, *Maja Bjelic*, said that we are witnessing increasingly frequent occurrences of systemic internet violence against dissenters in Montenegro, which, as she stated, is often coordinated by different political centers.

She pointed out that in the project CeMI analyzed the occurrence of misogyny, the spread of gender-based misinformation and online attacks on women whose jobs are public.

She said that CeMI carried out monitoring of thematic content from **March to September**, observing the activities of **81 Facebook pages, of which 28 media pages, 12 state bodies, 18 meme pages, five politicians, 17 political parties and one organization.**

*The head of the Department for Gender Equality in the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights of Montenegro, Biljana Pejović*, said that we are witnessing hate speech against women, which has taken on a wide scale.

"When we talk about hate speech and online violence, these are the most common ways of discrediting dissenters in modern society. With the popularization of social media and various platforms of modern communication, access to public space has become very attractive and easy for hate speech. We are witnessing that misogynistic speech and hate speech are on the rise in our country," said *Pejović*.

*Project Coordinator in the Program for Gender Equality in the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Marija Blagojević*, assessed that laws and institutional mechanisms are extremely important and one of the main links in the fight against discrimination against women, but they cannot change entrenched patriarchal patterns. "according to which we are structured to live and behave"

"Today, you only have about ten percent of property owned by women. This is a direct consequence of the patterns and behavior we are used to." Today, the family law in Montenegro guarantees equality between heirs and heiresses, but women predominantly renounce their share of the inheritance due to the deeply rooted manifestations of customary law that remain," said *Blagojević*.

*The executive director of the Media Institute of Montenegro, Olivera Nikolić*, said that the dominant image of women in a society largely depends on their representation in the media.

"When we look at the narratives in the media, we notice that they are still such that all gender stereotypes are encouraged, where it is rare that we have a situation where women and men are equal in terms of their personal qualities and professional abilities, and that the woman is not put in the context that she is it is important that she is a mother, wife, etc.," said *Nikolić*.

*Teaching assistant and doctoral student in the field at the Faculty of Political Sciences of the University of Montenegro, Jovana Davidović*, presented the research that was part of her doctoral dissertation, which in one part deals with media reporting in Montenegro on the topic of selective abortion.

The research was conducted from 2012 to 2019, and all types of media were analyzed.

"The research showed that more than 50 percent of the media information was signed in some way, but the fact that more than 40 percent of the information was not signed or was taken from other authors is worrying," stated *Davidović*.

She said that the photos in the media were most often personalized, that they showed people who were quoted, but that the content of the depersonalized photos was interesting.

"Depersonalized photographs most often showed pregnant women who are undergoing a medical examination or are alone in the photo, with their pregnant belly exposed. "Depicting depersonalized pregnant women further dehumanizes women as such, portrays them as a medical tool, and reduces a partnership act such as pregnancy to only the woman and her responsibility," said *Davidović*.

*An external expert at CeMI, Ana Nenezić*, spoke about the political campaign related to local elections in Podgorica and 13 municipalities and examples that illustrate violent behavior in the online space, which, she believes, causes no less consequences than other forms of violence.

Description automatically generated "It is enough to look at the numerous mimes that have been created in relation to the image of a female politician in today's society, so unlike the criticisms we can hear of male politicians, regarding their actions, we see criticism of women through various caricatures and bad messages that concern the integrity of a woman, her physical appearance, family circumstances," said *Nenezić*.

*Doctoral student and teaching associate at the Faculty of Political Sciences of the University of Montenegro and moderator of the G-spot podcast, Marko Savić*, pointed out the consequences and connection of gender-based violence in cyberspace with the protection of human rights. "The reality of this type of violence against women and girls is also indicated by the serious consequences that such violence causes: emotional stress, loss of status, inability to advance professionally, loss of self-confidence and self-esteem, reduction of productivity, withdrawal from public life, invasion of privacy, and even suicide." Therefore, we are talking about consequences for mental and physical health and endangering life," said *Savić*.

The conference was held as part of the project "A step towards gender equality: The fight against digital gender-based hate speech and violence", which is implemented by *CeMI* and financed by the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights of Montenegro.

#### 4) Informative video "(Un)secure in the online space?"

As part of the project "A step towards gender equality: the fight against digital gender-based hate speech and violence", CeMI produced an **informative video** on the topic of digital gender-based hate speech and violence. The project is financially supported by the Ministry of Justice, Human and Minority Rights of Montenegro.

We are witnessing increasingly frequent occurrences of systemic internet violence against dissenters in Montenegro, which is coordinated by various political centers. Prominent individuals in society, creators of public opinion, leaders of NGOs become the target of brutal campaigns of lies and insults. The goal is to intimidate those who are the target, but also to threaten everyone else who expresses their opinion. One of the groups most exposed to this type of violence are women in public life and politics. Unfortunately, apart from the absence of an adequate reaction from the institutions, society also does not have an adequate response to combat this problem.

It is important to work on educating women about their digital rights, to recognize online violence and to inform them of the protection mechanisms available to them, which is one of the goals of the video available on the website – [www.cemi.org.me](http://www.cemi.org.me)

( <https://cemi.org.me/me/post/nesigurna-u-online-prostoru-936> )

## Financial Report 2022

DONOR	PROJECT	AMOUNT
European Union - IPA	Improving capacities of CSOs and the system of consumer protection in Albania to reach European Standards – PROTECT ME	6.620,00 €
Canada Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI)	Combating gendered disinformation and online violence against women in politics in Montenegro by educating women and advocating campaign	8.257,91 €
The Balkan Trust for Democracy	Online Trials – A Pathway to Efficient Judiciary	4.535,71 €
European Union	The program “CSOs in Montenegro - from basic services to policy shapers - M’BASE” implemented by the Centre for Civic Education (CCE), Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), NGO Center for the Protection and Research of Birds (CZIP) and NGO Politikon Network (PIN) from Montenegro	23.839 €
Center for the Study of Democracy Bulgaria	Understanding and Responding to Foreign Malign Influence	2.953,29 €
European Union - EIDHR	Access to justice and human rights in Montenegro - trial monitoring project 2021-2023	44.434,88 €
European Union	International Observation of the 2021 Early Parliamentary Elections in the Republic of Moldova	11.957,34 €
The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES)	Facebook/Global/Election Integrity Strategy in Montenegro	15.345,44 €
Ministry of Justice, Human and Minority Rights of Montenegro	On the way to the inclusion of the Romani population in the decision-making system in Montenegro	13.781,5 €
Ministry of Justice, Human and Minority Rights of Montenegro	Contributing to the inclusion of LGBTI persons in the labor market	18.480,6 €
Open Society Foundation	Improving the health of democratic elections in Hungary	108.737,60 €
Ministry of Justice, Human and Minority Rights of Montenegro	Restorative Justice Society - affirmation of the system of alternative sanctions in Montenegro	7.990,00 €
Ministry of Justice, Human and Minority Rights of Montenegro	A step towards gender equality: Combating digital gender-based hate speech and violence	12.395,00 €
National Democratic Institute (NDI)	International Election Observation Mission of the 2020 Local Elections in Ukraine	5.752,02 €
OTHER		70.038,70 €
TOTAL		374.034,99 €



## FINANCIAL OVERVIEW BY DONORS 2022

European Union	86.851,22 €
Canada Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI)	8.257,91 €
The Balkan Trust for Democracy	4.535,71 €
Center for the Study of Democracy Bulgaria	2.953,29 €
The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES)	15.345,44 €
Ministry of Justice, Human and Minority Rights of Montenegro	52.647,10 €
Embassy of the United States of America in Montenegro	18.916,00 €
Open Society Foundation	108.737,60 €
National Democratic Institute (NDI)	5.752,02 €
<b>OTHER</b>	<b>70.038,70 €</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>374.034,99 €</b>

## Financial overview 2003-2022

