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Policy brief

The establishment of personal assistance services in Montenegro

Coalition for Social Changes

Association of Youth with Disabilities of Montenegro
Juventas
The Monitoring Center CEMI

CEMI



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Introduction

The importance of establishment of personal assistance services as a support service to persons with disabilities was recognized by the Poverty Alleviation and Social Exclusion Strategy (PASIS). Specifically, the Strategy states that the most significant causes of poverty of persons with disabilities in Montenegro are, among others, low levels of education and lack of employment. One of the main causes to this is the lack of support services for this population, including the personal assistance.

Within the framework of the project “Strengthening advocacy function of CSOs in Montenegro through developing policy-oriented capacities of Coalition for Social Changes”, funded by the Delegation of the European Union in Montenegro, implemented by the Monitoring Center - CEMI in cooperation with Juventas and Cezas, a Coalition for Social Changes was formed, comprised by ten NGOs from Montenegro. The Coalition has prepared recommendations for the improvement of policies in the areas of health, social care, employment and education, through monitoring of the implementation of PASIS, field research and interviews with relevant institutions. As part of the project, a study “The establishment of personal assistance services in Montenegro”, has been prepared by the representatives of the Monitoring Center CEMI, Association of Youth with Disabilities of Montenegro and Juventas.

The aim of this brief is to identify the problems faced by persons with disabilities in Montenegro in terms of exercising their rights, in particular the establishment of the personal assistance services, as a key precondition on which rests the principle of independent living. The brief provides recommendations whose application would enable the establishment of a system of personal assistance in Montenegro and thus improve the current situation in this area.

Notion of personal assistance and independent living

The **principle of independent living** of persons with disabilities includes independent decision-making in terms of meeting their needs, not independent physical implementation of daily activities. This approach stems from a social model of disability and is based on fundamental principles of: choice, decision making, control, responsibility and the right to make mistakes.

¹One of the basic preconditions for independent living of persons with disabilities is the existence of personal assistance services. Personal assistance enables persons with disabilities to obtain external support, which compensates for the things that seem difficult or impossible to exercise in independent living. Personal assistance service is defined according to specific and individual needs of each user, who defines and trains his/her assistant for meeting one's needs in the best way. This type of support is listed as a form of social support for persons with disabilities, as a rule number 4 of UN Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for persons with disabilities.² Thereat, a personal assistant is a person who assists a disabled person. Services are carried out according to specific needs of each user of personal assistance, whereby the user can specify the time and place where the services are to be provided, while a personal assistant provides assistance solely in the most convenient way to the user, and not in a way that is learned as a general rule. In countries where the personal assistance services are established, trainings for personal assistants are also provided, which includes mainly training on the needs of people with disabilities such as basic knowledge on helping tools, the social model of disability, protection of their own health in working with clients, as well as the management of service, ways of employment and the like.

Personal assistance service is established in European countries since the seventies. Initially, assistance was provided by private agencies, and referred to the help at home. Later, services were gradually expanded to include activities of social character.

Unfortunately, **the system of personal assistance controlled by the user, as well as law or legal act that regulates this is not established in Montenegro.**³ It is stated in the PASIS that the most important causes of poverty of persons with disabilities in Montenegro are, among others, low levels of education and employment, caused primarily by the lack of support services for this population, which includes personal assistance. The Strategy on integration of persons with disabilities in social life provides the adoption of

1 Based on social model, the problem rests in societal barriers, not in persons with disabilities. Disability is not viewed as a problem of an individual who needs treatment. Therefore, it is necessary to work on eradicating the barriers, as well as establishing a society with more equality in all aspects of life.

2 UN Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for persons with disabilities – General Assembly Resolution no. 48/96, December 29, 1993. Chapter I: Preconditions for equal participation, Rule 4: Support Services, Item 6: "States should support the development and provision of personal assistance programmes and interpretation services, especially for persons with severe and/or multiple disabilities. Such programmes would increase the level of participation of persons with disabilities in everyday life at home, at work, in school and during leisure-time activities", item 7: "Personal assistance programmes should be designed in such a way that the persons with disabilities using the programmes have a decisive influence on the way in which the programmes are delivered."

3 Strategy on the integration of persons with disabilities in social life for the period 2008-2016, Government of Montenegro (published by the Ministry of work and social care, November 2007), page 22

laws and establishment of lacking services, including the personal assistance services. The introduction of this service would increase employment of persons with disabilities, as well as increase the number of persons who would attend regular schools, thus gaining the prerequisites for independent living and inclusion in social life.

Previous experience in the organization and functioning of support services for persons with disabilities in the social welfare system demonstrate their effectiveness and efficiency. Due to this, support services should become an indispensable content in the creation of a system of expanded rights and a mean of improving social care for persons with disabilities at both the local and national levels in Montenegro.

Analysis of the current situation in Montenegro

In Montenegro the system of personal assistance controlled by the user is not established, as well as laws or legal acts that would regulate it.

Support services for persons with disabilities, including the personal assistance services are foreseen by the **National Strategy for the Integration of Persons with Disabilities** in the chapter concerning the education. However, it is important to distinguish between teaching assistants and personal assistants. Namely, teaching assistants are persons who help students in the process of taking classes, but they are not necessarily personal assistants.⁴ On the other hand, personal assistants are persons who help not only children but also adults with disabilities in the processes of socialization, education, employment and housework.

Foreseen measures by the Strategy for the Integration of Persons with Disabilities, in the field of education, accentuate that it is necessary to **“establish support services, such as daycare centers, personal assistance, accessible transportation, interpreters of sign language etc.”**⁵

Beside the fact that Montenegro has not yet enacted any laws or legal regulations which would govern the introduction and application of personal assistance services to persons with disabilities, to this day in Montenegro only one project was implemented which envisaged the introduction of such services. Namely, the Organization of the Blind of Nikšić, in cooperation with the organization “Plegije”, recently implemented a project “Personal assistance”, which aimed at: empowerment of persons with disabilities to participate actively in the life of community and the introduction of personal assistance services.

The implementation of the project would help persons with disabilities overcome the many difficulties they encounter in everyday life, especially through personal assistance, while all project participants expressed interest in using such services if they were provided

⁴ Laws regulating the field of education of children with disabilities are: Law on Primary Education and The Law on Education of Children with Special Needs

⁵ Strategy for the Integration of Persons with Disabilities, Government of Montenegro, Chapter 8.3, Education-measures, pages 29-31

in our community.⁶

In terms of other projects that involve the provision of personal assistance services, municipality of Herceg Novi participated in financing of personal assistance to one beneficiary, through additional scholarship, while the Ministry of Education and Sports and the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare through lump assistance provided to another beneficiary.

Although the outstanding pioneering efforts of NGOs aimed at improving the quality of life of persons with disabilities, including pilot projects for personal assistance were implemented, central issue of the whole process is the lack of legislation that would regulate this issue, further entailing the problem of systematic administration and jeopardizing the sustainability of the implemented projects.

In Montenegro, two cases of using personal assistance services were recorded. Miroslava Mima Ivanović, second year student of the Law Faculty in Podgorica and Danijela Vušurović, third year student of Faculty of Philosophy in Nikšić – Department of Psychology, describe personal assistance as the most convenient way to exercise and achieve the right to independent living.⁷

Both beneficiaries of personal assistance consider that personal assistants are crucial for their independent living, as they are a requirement for independent exercise of their rights as persons with disabilities, while at the same time they are very important for the implementation of social model approach to persons with disabilities. Thanks to the assistant, they feel as “persons who independently make their own decisions and move where they want”.⁸ Without the help of personal assistants, they would not be able to study and would not be involved in social life. The life of person with disability and life of her entire family, says Danijela, would be greatly eased if personal assistance services are established. The existence of a database on persons with disabilities who require personal assistance is necessary for proper establishment of this service and its adequate implementation.

„I think the State should provide training for personal assistants and establish personal assistance services. Furthermore, research should be conducted at the state level on the number of users and their needs, and based on that data plan training and number of personal assistants. At the same time, this field should be legally regulated.” - Miroslava Ivanovic.

6 Publication: „Personal assistance”, Organization of the Blind of Nikšić, Šavnik and Plužine, Nikšić 2010

7 Interviews with Miroslavom Mimom Ivanović and Danijelom Vušurović were published on December 8th, 2010.

8 Ibid.

„All people are equal and therefore should have the same rights. What separates us are our prejudices and it is up to us to overcome them and be equal” - Danijela Vušurović.

Conclusions and recommendations

Although the provision of support services, which include the personal assistance services, is foreseen by the National Strategy for the Integration of Persons with Disabilities to persons with disabilities, especially to children with disabilities, which includes the personal assistance services, the Government of Montenegro has not fulfilled the legally binding obligations concerning the field of education. The specific objective of the Strategy in this area is the inclusion of all categories of children and adults with disabilities, in order to ensure the development of their potential, sense of dignity and personal worth.⁹

Given that the personal assistance services are not established on either the national or local levels, measures foreseen by the Strategy for the Integration of Persons with Disabilities have not been implemented. Although the system of personal assistance services has not been established, a number of persons with disabilities use the services of personal assistants.¹⁰

The absence of this service will result in the fact that a number of people with disabilities, for their degree of disability, is unable to meet their needs without assistance, while others are unable to meet their needs because of the large number of barriers that society places on them. In this way, people with disabilities in Montenegro are not integrated into the social mainstream. At the same time, barriers to education and mobility, lack of adaptation of the environment, as well as the low level of awareness of opportunities for persons with disabilities and limited interest in special schools result in a high level of poverty in this population.

Due to the absence of this service, a certain number of persons with disabilities are unable to meet their needs, while others are unable to meet their needs because of the

⁹ It is important to accentuate the difference between student teaching assistants and personal assistants. Student teaching assistants are persons who help students in the classroom learning process, but they are not necessarily personal assistants. On the other hand, personal assistants are persons who help not only children, but also adults with disabilities in the processes of socialization, education, employment and housekeeping.

¹⁰ According to the data of the Association of Youth with Disabilities of Montenegro, currently two persons are users of personal assistance services. Namely, these are Danijela Vušurović, student of psychology and Miroslava Mima Ivanović, student of Law in Podgorica. See more in chapter 2.1

numerous barriers that they face in everyday life. In this way, persons with disabilities in Montenegro are not integrated into the social mainstream.¹¹ Consequently, barriers to education and mobility, the lack of adaptation of the environment, as well as the low level of awareness on opportunities for persons with disabilities and limited number of specializations in special schools result in high poverty levels of this population.

The ideal solution for regulating this area in Montenegro is the adoption of laws and the establishment of a fully free personal assistance service for all persons with disabilities in who need it. This can be done in the same manner as in the Kingdom of Sweden. In this case, it would be necessary to legally provide that all persons with disabilities, who need personal assistance, are eligible for a personal assistant. This would prevent the discrimination against persons with disabilities and ensure equality among users, regardless of their specific needs for personal assistance. At the same time, there would be no criteria or conditions to be met for the use of personal assistance services.

Personal assistance users would train their own assistants in accordance with their needs. Personal assistants would earn their salary through providing assistance to persons with disabilities in carrying out their daily activities, so that these persons can socialize more.

This model is seen as an ideal or best suited for people with disabilities. However, aware of the fact that due to the current economic situation and inability to meet financial obligations which the Government would have to fulfill by adopting such a legal framework, this model is not feasible in Montenegro. Consequently, as the most acceptable solution of this issue we propose the following model.

The most appropriate model of establishing personal assistance services in Montenegro includes the adoption of the Law on personal assistance and, above all, a comprehensive definition of personal assistance and the definition of the philosophy of independent living, which is to be achieved through the existence of personal assistance services. The criteria that determine the precise conditions, under which the persons with disabilities are entitled to the service of personal assistance, should be elaborated and defined in detail through by-laws. At the same time, the number of hours of personal assistance services should be precisely established in accordance with the daily duties, that is, with the level of inclusion of person with disabilities. The greater participation in social activities would enable persons with disabilities to pay back the money, through their contribution to the development of society.

The law on personal assistance should regulate that the users of personal assistance can be persons older than 18, thereat maintaining the equality of gender representation among users, with at least 40% of users being female. Additionally, an important criterion should be that the persons, who have a determined disability of 80% to 100%, must be provided

¹¹ According to the data of the Association of Youth with Disabilities of Montenegro, there are no adequate conditions for schooling of persons with disabilities due to the lack of adequate didactic materials and supplies and insignificant number of architecturally suitable regular schools.

with personal assistance. The minimum use of personal assistance services should be 30 hours a month, and the maximum would depend on the need for assistance, in accordance to the degree of social engagement of person with disability.

The criteria would further establish that the users of personal assistance service can be persons with disabilities with different levels of education. Also, the criteria would predict that the users of personal assistance can be persons with disabilities who live alone or with their family, whose members are no longer able to assist them in their everyday activities (elderly parents and/or partners, employed parents and etc.). Users of personal assistance services would also be persons with disabilities who are not employed as well as those involved in various forms of employment.

At the same time, the desire of person with disability to obtain a personal assistant should be one of the essential criteria. This would imply that the engagement of a personal assistant is carried out exclusively on a voluntary basis of person with disability. Consequently, the advantage would be given to users who believe that personal assistance would provide them with: new and/or continual employment, education, greater autonomy, independence from parents and family, social engagement and social communication. It is very important to legally regulate the fact that the assistant is chosen by the person with disability, not by a member of the family. If the user cannot find a suitable assistant, then the person with disability announces the job position or looks for an unemployed person through the Employment Agency of Montenegro.¹² Any person that applies for this job position will go through an interview with the user.¹³ The selection is based on the assessment of the user of personal assistance, in accordance with his/her needs. The price of personal assistance should also be regulated in the by-laws, with the gross payment of 2 euros per hour of service.

Given that the personal assistance service requires financial expenditure by the Government, this model suggests that the funding for personal assistance should be provided from the social welfare system, and that the funds currently allocated from the budget on behalf of the Annex on carer's help,¹⁴ should be diverted to the Fund for financing personal assistance. This is particularly important because the goal of the right to assistance is support to independent living, and not the improvement of material situation of people with disabilities. However, given the fact that a significant number of persons with disabilities use these funds to improve their financial position, it is expected that the idea of financing the personal assistance in this manner would evoke significant disapprobation from persons with disabilities.

Baring in mind that the personal assistance service is envisaged exclusively as a service

12 In this case, the Employment Agency shall include the personal assistant position in the occupational category.

13 Article 15 of the Labor Law from 2008 „Employer is a domestic or foreign legal or physical person, or part of the foreign legal or physical person that signs the labor contract with the employee

14 In November 2010 in Montenegro, there were 7 203 persons with allowance for carer's help, and during the 2010 the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare provided 5.131.090 euros for long-term care

controlled by the user on a voluntary basis, this scenario suggests that the funds earmarked on behalf of the Annex on carer's help, in other words, the funds opting for long-term care and assistance from social security, should be diverted to some extent, to the Fund for financing of personal assistance, in accordance with the number of people with disabilities who express their need for personal assistant. Since there can be no interference with vested rights, current users of carer's allowance would express whether they need and want assistance or simply do not want to relinquish the funds they receive under the said conditions. In other words, there would be no possibility for persons with disability to exercise multiple rights under the same basis. In order to access personal assistance services, potential users would have to provide to the local Office for Persons with Disabilities¹⁵ a certificate from the Center for Social Work, confirming that they are not exercising the right to carer's allowance.

Further, the criteria would identify the conditions under which persons with disabilities would contribute to the costs of personal assistance services. In this way, the users whose income is greater than the average wage in Montenegro would finance 10% of the monthly amount that is paid to the assistant.

Since the Department of Employment implement programs aimed at active employment policy measures, and implemented for persons with disabilities and other individuals with barriers to employment, with the aim of increasing personal competence of these persons, for successful integration into the labor market, to ensure that persons with disabilities who participate in this program, services, personal assistance in attending the program could be paid from the Fund for vocational rehabilitation and employment of persons with disabilities. Of course in this case is important to respect the criteria that need to meet people that would use personal assistance services. At the same time, it is important to regulate by law that the time refers to the activities assistant in the work during working hours users be financed from sources that are intended for teaching assistants in the work, not from the means of personal assistance.

The law should provide that part of the costs should be covered by local government in whose territory person with disability resides and works. This would also lessen the financial expenditures from the state budget. Given that the Employment Agency implements programs aimed at active employment policies in relation to persons with disabilities and other individuals, with the aim of increasing personal competences of these persons, personal assistance services can be provided to persons who participate in this program from the Fund for vocational rehabilitation and employment of persons with disabilities. During this process, it is important to adhere to the criterion that needs to be met by a person that would use personal assistance services. Withal, it is important to legally regulate funding for work assistant's activities, which should be provided from sources intended for work assistants, not from the funds for personal assistance.¹⁶

¹⁵ See more below

¹⁶ The Law on employment and vocational rehabilitation of persons with disabilities identifies the work assistants who do not have to be personal assistants. The obligations of these assistants would be regulated through bylaws.

In order to better coordinate the implementation of the Law on personal assistance, it is necessary to establish a **Department for the rights of persons with disabilities**, as a separate organizational unit of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare. The jurisdiction of this department would include all activities related to social and labor protection of persons with disabilities. The sector would prepare policies for the promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities, in cooperation with other stakeholders. Further, it would be necessary to establish a special **Bureau for personal assistance** within this department, with primary responsibility of monitoring the implementation of the Law on personal assistance and ensuring conditions for its implementation. This bureau would employ five people, headed by the Chief and deputy Chief, while other employees would coordinate provision of personal assistance services for central, southern and northern regions of Montenegro. Each of these positions can be held by persons with disabilities, while their wages can be subsidized by the Fund for vocational rehabilitation and employment of persons with disabilities.

The local governments within the Secretariat for Social Affairs should establish branch offices for persons with disabilities. These offices would oversee the expenditure of funds from the municipal budget for the service of personal assistance at the local level, monitor the law enforcement at the local level, educate the users and assistants at a quarterly year period and submit reports to coordinators in charge of providing personal assistance services. After the training sessions, teaching assistants would receive a certificate proving that they have successfully completed the training, in order to avoid the abuse of user's choice of assistants (such as employment of family members, etc.). Finally, these offices would sign contracts on the financing of personal assistance services with users, while users would sign a contract with certified assistants for provision of the personal assistance.¹⁷

Although the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol were ratified in the previous period, as well as that the Strategy for the Integration of Persons with Disabilities for the period 2008–2016 was adopted by the Government and several laws that deal with their needs, the status of persons with disabilities in Montenegro is still at an unsatisfactory level.

Social inclusion of persons with disabilities (access to social services, employment, assistance to dependents and proper health care) is at a low level, while persons with disabilities still face discrimination in our society.

To the end of meeting international standards and recommendations of international organizations in the field of disability, as well as a comprehensive implementation of existing laws governing the rights of persons with disabilities, the Poverty Alleviation and Social Exclusion Strategy as well as the national Strategy for the Integration of Persons with Disabilities, it is necessary to:

¹⁷ On the basis of the Article 165 of the Labor Law, "The employer may conclude a service contract with a person for the purpose of performing the activities outside the business activity of the employer, the subject of which is independent development and repair of a certain object, independent performance of certain physical or intellectual work."

- o Adopt the law on personal assistance and establish a service that would meet the criteria, precisely defined by bylaws;
- o Provide by law the financing of personal assistance services, by reallocating funds intended for payment of increments for aid and care of other person, into a special fund for financing personal assistance, as well as through participatory financing from various entities (local governments, users of personal assistance and resources of the Fund for professional rehabilitation and employment of persons with disabilities, contained within the Employment Agency of Montenegro);
- o Establish a department for the rights of persons with disabilities within the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, as a separate organizational unit of the Ministry. The competence of this department would include all activities related to social and labor protection of persons with disabilities;
- o Establish a special department for personal assistance, with primary responsibility of monitoring the implementation of the Law on personal assistance and ensuring the conditions for its implementation;
- o Set up offices for persons with disabilities within the Secretariat for Social Affairs, which would oversee the expenditure of funds from the municipal budget for personal assistance services at the local level, monitor the law enforcement at the local level, quarterly educate the users and assistants and submit reports to coordinators of personal assistance services, employed by the Department for personal assistance at the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare.

The establishment of personal assistance services in Montenegro is very important because it would empower persons with disabilities to be equally involved in the social life of Montenegro. The establishment of this service and adequate normative framework would represent an approximation to European standards in the process of integration, and recognition of Montenegro as a state that respects human rights and provides equal opportunities to all citizens. Moreover, this line of action would increase employment in the country and reduce the poverty rates of the population.

About organizations

Coalition for Social Changes was established on the 15th of December 2009, among ten leading organizations of civil society in the area of health, social protection, labor market and education: The Monitoring Center, AD Center Equista, Center for Civic Education, Juventas, CAZAS, Institute for Social inclusion, Pedagogical Center of Montenegro, Montenegrin Association of Youth with Disabilities, Association of parents of Children with Disabilities „Sunbeam“. The Coalition is open for who all interested organizations of civil society, dealing with problems of poverty and social exclusion, can freely join. Main aim of forming of the Coalition is contribution to strengthening of advocacy capacities and watchdog functions of civil society organizations in Montenegro, in order to influence creation of policies and laws in the area of education, labor market, social and children's protection.

Association of Youth with Disabilities of Montenegro is a non-governmental organization, registered on October 22, 2001. It gathers youth with all kinds of physical and sensor disabilities (cross-disability approach) as well as non-disabled people willing to participate in activities of the future co-existence and integration. It is a non-profit organization, founded firstly to provide psychosocial support, solving numerous and complex problems that disabled youth encounter daily, as well as creation of educational conditions for College and University opportunities. Vision of AYDM - For youth with disabilities, without barriers! Mission of AYDM: Association of Youth with Disabilities promotes equal position of youth with physical and sensor disabilities in society through initiatives for establishing legal, educational, cultural and social frame that enables it. The Association implements several programs and projects, such as the Program for education, Program for schooling and assigning of guide and assistance dogs, Legal Program and antidiscrimination, Program of personal empowerment of persons with disabilities, as well as projects Monitoring and education of rights of persons with disabilities and Student services.

Juventas

Juventas is a non-profit organization established on January 29th, 1996 in Podgorica. Juventas envisages Montenegro as a stable, democratic society in which young people can freely express utilize their potential. Some of the goals of Juventas are: to stimulate critical thinking and develop a culture of dialogue, promotion of culture, peace, tolerance and peaceful conflict resolution, promotion of human rights, healthy lifestyles, and fight against drug abuse. More information at www.juventas.co.me

The Monitoring Center – CEMI is a nongovernmental, non-profitable organization founded in May 2000, whose main goal is to provide infrastructural and expert support for continuous monitoring of the process of transition in Montenegro. CEMI envisages Montenegro as a land of free citizens, the rule of law, social justice and equal opportunities.

The mission of CEMI is to continuously provide support to reforms and strengthening of institutions of political system and civil society organizations, by proposing and monitoring the implementation of public policies in the fields of human rights and freedoms, fight against corruption and Euro-Atlantic integration of Montenegro. CEMI implements its activities through three programs: Democratization and human rights, Fight against corruption and European Integration, while the organizational structure consists of four departments: Public policy research department, Legal department, Public opinion survey department and Public Relations Department. More information at: www.cemi.org.me

Authors

About authors

Bojana Lakovic, born in 26.07.1985 in Pljevlja. She graduated from the Faculty of Political Science in Podgorica, with major in International Relations and Diplomacy, in June 2009. She is employed at the Association of the Youth with Disabilities of Montenegro since September 2007 as an Office Manager. As part of her work in the Association she has prepared and coordinated the EU project “Umbrella of different nationalities”. Areas of interest: development of civil society, respect for human rights, democracy, rule of law, European integration and international security.



Tijana Pavićević was born on 27/07/1979 in Podgorica. She is currently a senior at undergraduate studies at the Faculty of Political Science in Podgorica, majoring in Social Policy and Social Work. She works as a program director at Juventas, where she coordinates the program for reduction of health and social harm among marginalized and vulnerable groups.

She participated in drafting of the National Strategy for AIDS and the National Strategic Response to Drugs 2008-2013. She was also a site manager for two National bio-behavioral studies with female sex workers (2007, 2010), and one National bio-behavioral study with drug injecting users (2008), implemented by the Institute of Public Health of Montenegro.

In 2005, she conducted qualitative and bio-behavioral study with drug-injecting users for the Royal College from London, and participated in a research project conducted by the Monitoring Center CEMI “Respect for the presumption of innocence in Montenegro”.

She is a member of the Board of Directors of the Network for treating addictions of South-Eastern Europe and International Consortium for drug related policies.

Nikoleta Tomovic was born on February 15, 1985. She graduated from the Faculty of Political Science in Podgorica, majoring in Diplomacy and International Relations. She completed her postgraduate studies in the field of diplomacy at the Faculty of Political Science in Podgorica. Specialization in the field of American political and economic systems she received at Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic. She graduated from the diplomatic academy in Vienna (Diplomatic Academy of Vienna). Nikoleta Tomović is a doctoral candidate at the Faculty of Political Science, University of Belgrade, where she is currently attending the second year at the Department of International and European Studies. In December 2008, she obtained Master's degree from the Faculty of Political Sciences in Podgorica, major in European Studies. Simultaneously, she was awarded a stipend from European Union and obtained a Master in Adriatic Region and Local Development at the University of Bologna, the area of security cooperation in Adriatic-Ionian region.



From 2008 until the end of 2010 she was employed at the Ministry of Defense of Montenegro, as an advisor in the Office of the Minister. She is an assistant at the Humanities program of University of Donja Gorica. She works at CEMI as a program coordinator since 2010.

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- o The Law on Vocational and Disability Protection („Official Gazette” number 69/03).
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- o UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities <http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=150>;
- o UN Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for persons with disabilities



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**The establishment of personal assistance services
in Montenegro**