

Horizontal Facility for Western Balkans and Turkey



EU and Council of Europe launch new programme of support to reforms in the areas of rule of law, democracy and human rights

Podgorica, 24 November 2016 - The European Union and the Council of Europe, through the joint programme [“Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Turkey”](#) (Horizontal Facility) will assist the authorities of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” and Kosovo* in achieving greater compliance with the European standards in three key areas: ensuring justice, fighting corruption, economic and organised crime, and in combatting discrimination and protecting the rights of vulnerable groups. As presented at the launching event, this three-year programme (May 2016 – May 2019) has a total budget of 25 million euros, of which 20 million euros has been provided by the European Union and 5 million euros by the Council of Europe.

EU Ambassador to Montenegro, Aivo Orav explained that through this initiative €3.1 million has been set aside to provide technical assistance to Montenegro to achieve greater compliance with European standards. He also pointed out that this programme is very timely, in light of the recently adopted European Commission’s 2016 Report on Montenegro, which states that its entire rule of law system needs to deliver more results, in particular to strengthen the track-record in the fight against corruption and organised crime, as well as on fundamental rights protection.

The launch event focused on the six Actions under the Horizontal Facility programme to be implemented in Montenegro from May 2016 to April 2019.

- ***Action against economic crime in Montenegro (AEC-MNE),***
- ***Fighting ill-treatment and impunity and enhancing the application of the ECtHR case-law on national level (FILL),***
- ***Enhancing human rights protection for detained and sentenced persons in Montenegro,***
- ***Fostering a Democratic School Culture,***
- ***Strengthening Integrity and Combat Corruption in the Higher Education,***
- ***Accountability of the Judicial System***

“For results to be achieved, institutions need to be strengthened”, stressed Ambassador Orav, pointing in particular to the importance of strengthening the Anti-Corruption Agency and the Agency for Prevention of Money Laundering and Financing of Terrorism, including the capacity of the Police in conducting financial investigations. In addition, he reminded the audience that “Actions related to human rights protection will help Montenegro in addressing the issue of implementation of legislation, which remains weak as stated in the latest Report”.

Ms Pilar Morales Fernández-Shaw of the Office of the Directorate General of Programmes of the Council of Europe said that the Horizontal Facility relies on the Council of Europe’s unique working methods, whereby tailor-made technical co-operation activities are based on conclusions and recommendations of the Council of Europe’s monitoring bodies, which highlight areas where

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

improvements are needed in legislation and policies of the beneficiaries to comply with the Organisation's standards. She stressed that the results of the programme would depend on the involvement of the national institutions and encouraged the authorities of Montenegro to make best use of the provided assistance.

The opening session included the interventions of the representatives of the State institutions that would benefit from the forthcoming Actions, who highlighted the importance of the programme and confirmed their institution's commitment to its successful implementation: the President of the Constitutional Court, Desanka Lopicic, the President of the Supreme Court, Vesna Medenica, the Chief State Prosecutor, Ivica Stankovic, the Minister of Education, Predrag Boskovic, the Deputy Minister of Justice, Marijana Lakovic Draskovic and the Director of the Agency for Anti-Corruption, Sreten Radonjic.

The full programme of the launch event is available in English [here](#) or in Montenegrin [here](#).

More information on the Horizontal Facility is available [here](#).