

HORIZONTAL FACILITY FOR THE WESTERN BALKANS AND TÜRKIYE

FOR YOUR RIGHTS: TOWARDS EUROPEAN STANDARDS

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THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE OFFICE IN BELGRADE

The Council of Europe Office in Belgrade was opened by the Secretary General on 16 March 2001, as a contact point for co-operation with the State authorities, following the application of the country for Council of Europe membership.

■ Serbia became the 45th member of the Council of Europe in April 2003, a development that was a consequence of the major political changes which took place in autumn 2000 and which allowed Serbia to claim its place among the democratic states of Europe.

■ The main task of the Council of Europe Office in Belgrade is to assist the country in its process of democratic reforms and its European integration. Acting in close co-operation with the Government and with other relevant authorities of Serbia and civil society, the Council of Europe provides targeted advice and assistance more effectively to support the process of reform, particularly in the promotion of democracy, good governance, the promotion and protection of human rights, and the rule of law, with a view to the fulfilment of Council of Europe membership commitments.

CO-OPERATION ACTIVITIES

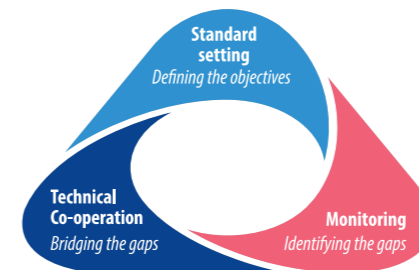
The Council of Europe is implementing country-specific and regional projects in Serbia, in close co-operation with the relevant authorities and stakeholders. Ongoing projects include:

■ **Support for the implementation of judicial reform in Serbia** - The joint programme of the European Union and the Council of Europe (2022-2024) consolidates the rule of law in Serbia by supporting the advancement of reforms of the justice system. Programmes' key areas include the development of legislation and practices for increased judicial independence and accountability and more efficient management practices in the judiciary. It supports also training of judges and prosecutors and case law harmonisation. The programme focuses on supporting the further alignment of the Serbian legislative framework with European standards, recommendations of the Council of Europe monitoring and advisory bodies and Chapter 23 of the EU acquis.

■ **Promoting good governance and Roma empowerment at local level (ROMACTED II)** - is a regional joint programme of the European Union and the Council of Europe implemented in the Western Balkans and Türkiye since 2017. The programme improves the integration of Roma population in local communities and enhances democratic participation. It assists local authorities in integrating Roma specific dimensions and measures into local policies and related action plans, as well as in budgets, and public service delivery. It targets 78 municipalities in the Western Balkans and Türkiye including a dozen local self-government units in Serbia.

■ **Targeting crime proceeds on the internet and securing electronic evidence in South East Europe and Türkiye (iPROCEEDS-2)** is a regional joint programme of the European Union and Council of Europe (2020-2023) that further strengthens the capacity of the authorities to search, seize and confiscate proceeds from crime online, prevent money laundering on the Internet and secure electronic evidence. The project reaches out to judges, prosecutors, cybercrime investigators, financial investigators, digital forensics experts, Financial Intelligence Units (FIU), central authorities for mutual legal assistance in criminal matters, training institutions, cybersecurity community – national and sectoral Computer Emergency Response Teams (CERT) and Computer Incident Response Team (CIRT).

■ **Preventing money laundering and terrorist financing in Serbia** - The implementation started in 2020 with the aim of supporting Serbia in addressing the remaining regulatory shortcomings in preventing and



Council of Europe's strategic triangle

combatting money laundering and terrorist financing. This is being achieved by developing an effective and sustainable framework for preventing and fighting against money laundering and terrorist financing in Serbia, inclusive of primary and secondary legislation, organisational solutions, and specialisation. The project is funded by the Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency (SIDA).

■ **Council of Europe human rights education for legal professionals (HELP) in the Western Balkans** enhances the capacities and skills of legal professionals for the effective application of European standards. The programme provides professional training and university education at national and regional level. HELP courses are implemented jointly with Western Balkans Justice Training Institutions and Bar Associations. Some of the courses are becoming integral part of the domestic training programmes. They also help reinforcing regional networking between these institutions and legal professionals. The specific courses are identified in close co-operation with Western Balkans partners. The programme is funded by the Human Rights Trust Fund of the Council of Europe.

HORIZONTAL FACILITY FOR THE WESTERN BALKANS AND TÜRKIYE

The "Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Türkiye", launched in 2016, is a joint programme of the European Union and the Council of Europe which supports Beneficiaries in the Western Balkans and Türkiye in meeting European standards in the areas of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. The third phase of the Horizontal Facility will last until the end of 2026.

This programme in Serbia works in the following thematic areas:

- **Strengthening justice** - programme actions focus on enhancing the protection of human rights of detained and sentenced persons and on strengthening people's human rights through effective domestic remedies and mutual legal assistance;
- **Promoting anti-discrimination and protection of the rights of vulnerable groups** - actions support fostering democratic school culture, strengthening the protection of national and other minority groups, and preventing and combating trafficking in human beings;
- **Freedom of expression and freedom of the media** - this action contributes to improving the situation in the media as well as freedom of expression by enhancing the independence and effectiveness of media regulatory authorities and promoting rights and responsibilities of journalists, along with reinforcing judicial expertise on freedom of expression and of the media.

Serbia also participates in **regional actions** that enable the Beneficiaries' institutions to exchange experiences and best practices. The regional actions cover the mentioned thematic areas, in addition to **combating economic crime, strengthening women's access to justice** and **collection of data on results of the judicial reforms** conducted by Beneficiaries, that allows them to base their future policies on the findings of European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ).

■ **The Expertise Co-ordination Mechanism** is the second component of the Horizontal Facility programme - the tool provides Council of Europe expertise in response to ad hoc requests for legislative and policy advice.



Nadia Ćuk

Head of Office *ad interim*

"Since 1949 the Council of Europe has been upholding the values which are a common heritage of the European people and a true source of individual freedom, political liberty and the rule of law, principles which form the basis of genuine democracy."