

Highlights 9 April - June 2025



From Losing Hope to Finding Legal Certainty: A Journey to Claim Your Property Rights in Albania

The small apartment on the second floor of a former communist-era building, located in a main road not far from the centre of the capital Tirana is always busy. Under the watchful eyes of concerned citizens, the officials of Tirana Legal Aid Society (TLAS) explain procedures in a simplified manner and provide valuable information regarding their problems in registering the property. There we meet Alma, a divorced mother of 3 children, coming from the small southeastern town of Përmet. He explains that for 36 years she was not able to find a solution to inherit her family property in her hometown.

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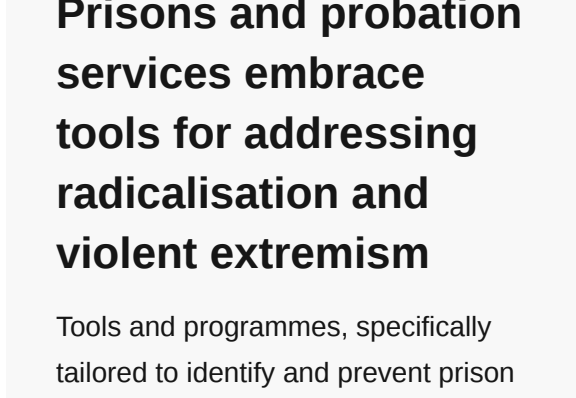
ADVANCING HUMAN RIGHTS



Constitutional courts in the region strengthen human rights protections through dialogue

Judges and advisers from the constitutional courts of Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia gathered in Belgrade on 31 March and 1 April 2025, to advance application of human rights standards in their judicial work. The regional working meeting provided a platform for legal experts to exchange best practices and reinforce cooperation in upholding fundamental rights and freedoms.

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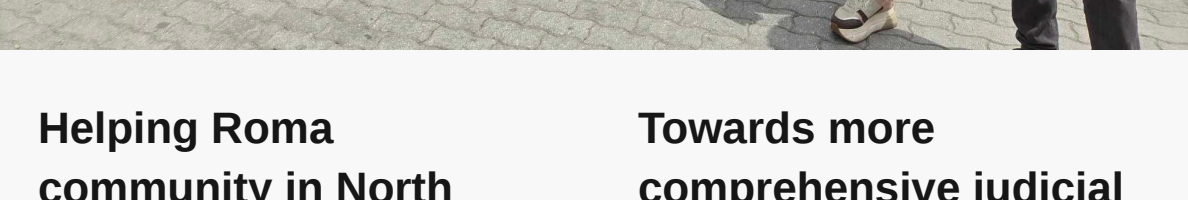


Prisons and probation services embrace tools for addressing radicalisation and violent extremism

Tools and programmes, specifically tailored to identify and prevent prison radicalisation and to help individuals disengage from use of violence, have proven to be highly effective in the Western Balkans. The 3rd Regional conference "Feedback from the piloting of the VEP specific tools and programmes" was held in Budva, Montenegro with prison and probation professionals from the region.

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STRENGTHENING JUSTICE



Helping Roma community in North Macedonia with civil documentation and ensuring access to free legal aid

A series of five information sessions on focusing on the importance of civil documentation and access to free legal aid were conducted in Skopje (Shuto Orizari and Gazi Baba municipalities), Kičevo, Bitola, and Kumanovo. The activities conducted by the Macedonian Young Lawyers Association with the support of EU and Council of Europe informed members of the Roma community regarding the significance of having proper civil documentation.

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Towards more comprehensive judicial response to domestic violence and violence against women in Montenegro

Judges and prosecutors from across Montenegro came together on 15-16 May for a specialised training aimed at improving the justice system's response to domestic violence and violence against women. Organised in co-operation with the Judicial Training Centre of Montenegro, the workshop focused on strengthening the capacity of legal professionals to handle gender-based violence cases with greater sensitivity and consistency.

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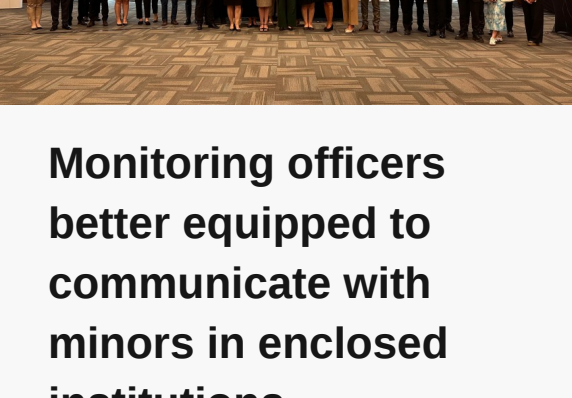
FIGHTING ECONOMIC CRIME & CORRUPTION



Advancing anti-corruption reforms in Albania: from education to concrete transformations

"...Since my studies, I have had a particular interest in engaging in the field of the fight against corruption. I see it as a major challenge for our country and, above all, as an urgent issue, especially in the context of Albania's integration path into the European Union. Personally, I aim to specialise in the field of anti-corruption, and such courses are of great interest and help in my professional development..."; this is how Xhulia Mulla, one of young public officials in the Directorate of Analysis, Control and Administrative Investigation (General Directorate of Anti-Corruption) starts describing her journey to be in the forefront of the fight against corruption.

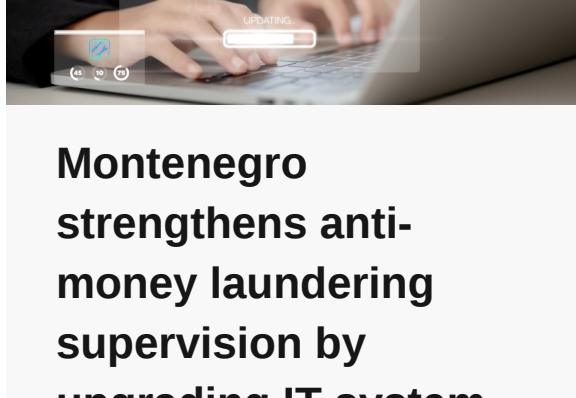
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Monitoring officers better equipped to communicate with minors in enclosed institutions

The European Union and Council of Europe "Action against money laundering in Türkiye", in co-operation with the Financial Crimes Investigation Board (MASAK), held a workshop in Ankara to support ongoing domestic efforts to enhance the transparency and reliability of beneficial ownership (BO) data in Türkiye. Beneficial ownership data refers to information that identifies the individuals or entities who ultimately own or control a company, organisation, or legal entity.

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Montenegro strengthens anti-money laundering supervision by upgrading IT system

The Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) in Montenegro successfully completed the upgrade of its information and technology (IT) infrastructure, a milestone achievement made possible through the support of the EU and Council of Europe Action against Economic Crime in Montenegro. This improvement helps automate the process of assessing risks related to money laundering and terrorist financing in areas outside of financial sector.

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PROMOTING DIVERSITY AND EQUALITY



United against discrimination in Serbia: Equality Commissioner and the Council of Europe driving change

From classrooms to newsrooms, the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality and the Council of Europe in Serbia are working side by side to challenge discrimination and promote inclusion. The Commissioner for the Protection of Equality in Serbia, Branka Janković, reflects on years of dedicated co-operation highlighting the key outcomes of joint efforts to fight discrimination and promote diversity.

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Religious communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina unite to promote interreligious dialogue and tolerance

In a powerful show of unity, representatives of religious communities, academia, civil society, media, and international organisations from across Bosnia and Herzegovina at the Orthodox Christian Zlomislić Monastery to champion interreligious dialogue and co-operation. This dialogue session, served as a platform to share successful practices and explore new ways to promote mutual respect.

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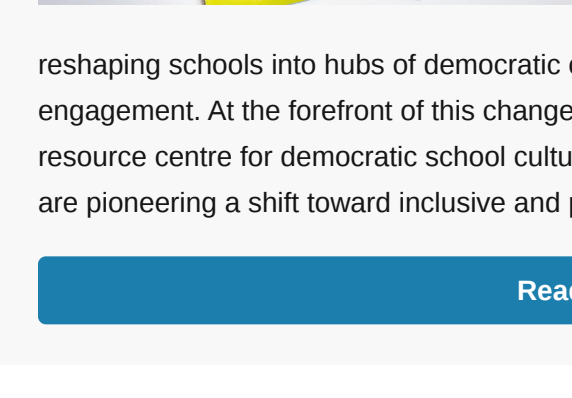


Young European Ambassadors unite across borders to counter hatred and promote equality

A two-day workshop held in Tirana, Albania, brought together 55 Young European Ambassadors (YEAs) from the Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership regions. The participants included 40 YEAs who joined online and 15 who attended in person. This event aimed to improve their abilities to combat racism, promote equality, and develop counter-narratives to discrimination and hate speech.

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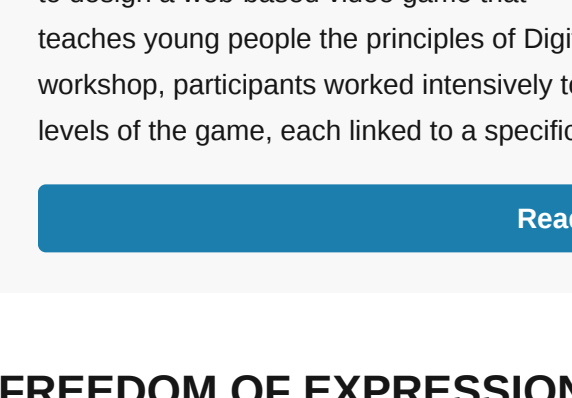
EDUCATION FOR ALL



From classrooms to communities, schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina embrace change

In the heart of Bosnia and Herzegovina, a transformative approach to education is reshaping schools into hubs of democratic culture, critical thinking, and community engagement. At the forefront of this change are three schools - each a newly established resource centre for democratic school culture - where dedicated educators and students are pioneering a shift toward inclusive and participatory learning.

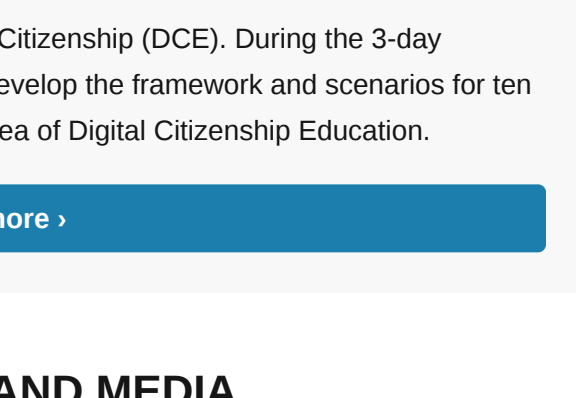
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Developing online video game's scenarios to enhance digital citizenship

Teachers, education experts and game developers joined forces in Kizilcahamam to design a web-based video game that teaches young people the principles of Digital Citizenship (DCE). During the 3-day workshop, participants worked intensively to develop the framework and scenarios for ten levels of the game, each linked to a specific area of Digital Citizenship Education.

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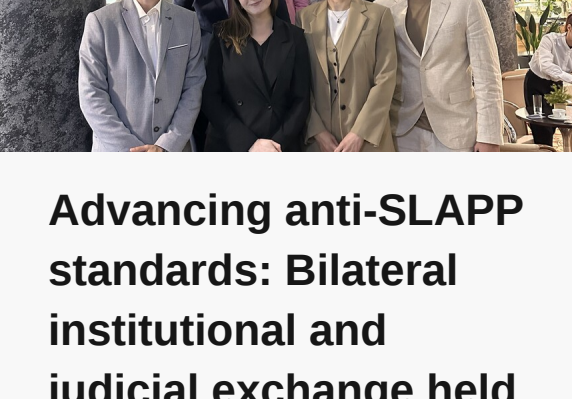
FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND MEDIA



Silencing truth: Confronting SLAPPs and defending press freedom in North Macedonia

Marking World Press Freedom Day on 3 May, free voices from North Macedonia are sounding the alarm about a growing threat to democracy: Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPs). These lawsuits, often disguised as defamation or civil claims, are increasingly used to intimidate journalists, drain their resources, and silence critical reporting.

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Advancing anti-SLAPP standards: Bilateral institutional and judicial exchange held in Podgorica

In a bid to align with European standards on freedom of expression and protection of public participation, representatives from judicial and justice institutions met in Podgorica to discuss effective responses to Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPs). The two-day event convened judges from appellate and basic courts, as well as ministry representatives from Kosovo* and Montenegro.

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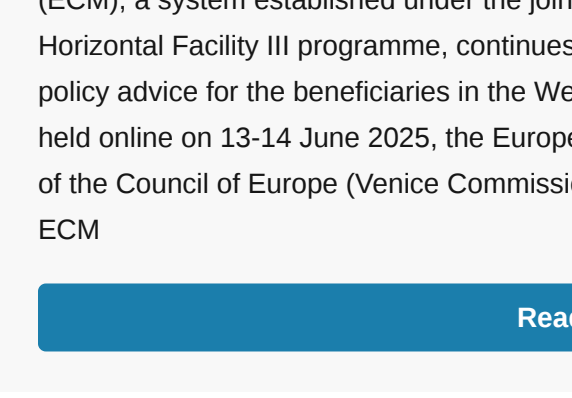


Prosecutors strengthen capacities to uphold media freedom and protect journalists

Safeguarding media freedom and ensuring the safety of journalists are essential components of a democratic society. Prosecutors play a key role in preventing and responding to threats, violence, and legal harassment targeting media professionals. To strengthen prosecutorial capacities in these areas, in co-operation with the Basic Prosecution Office and the Academy of Justice, a specialised training session took place for approximately 30 prosecutors.

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EXPERTISE CO-ORDINATION MECHANISM

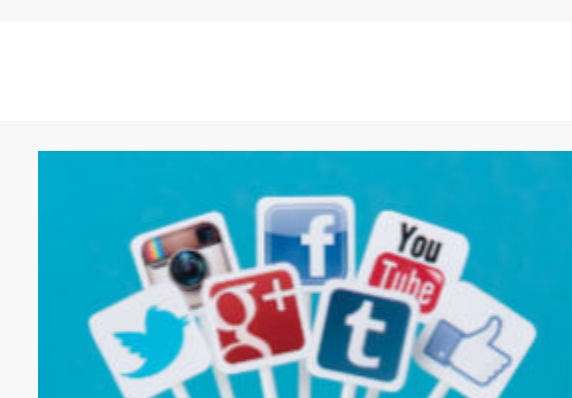


Venice Commission provides important opinions for the authorities in Kosovo

The Expertise Co-ordination Mechanism (ECM), a system established under the joint European Union and Council of Europe Horizontal Facility III programme, continues to provide important legislative expertise and policy advice for the beneficiaries in the Western Balkans. At its 143rd Plenary Session, held online on 13-14 June 2025, the European Commission for Democracy through Law of the Council of Europe (Venice Commission) adopted the following opinions under the ECM.

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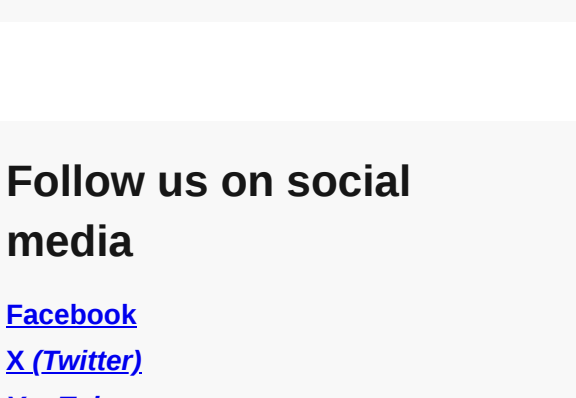
NEW PUBLICATIONS



Get to know the most recent publications under the Horizontal Facility programme

In this edition of Highlights, we present the main publications produced under the framework of the Horizontal Facility III programme with an aim to enhance knowledge and bring European standards in various areas closer to the beneficiaries in the Western Balkans and in Türkiye.

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