

Highlights 11

October - December 2025



Learning to speak up and stand up against injustice

The first time Emilija Marinković stood up for her rights, she was a preschooler. Equipped with nothing more than a kindergarten lesson about the child's right to play, she faced her parents with unwavering seriousness: homework could wait- her rights could not. Many years later, she laughs at the memory, but it still reminds her why knowing your rights matters.

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STRENGTHENING JUSTICE

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Children's corner supported by EU and Council of Europe inaugurated in Idrizovo Prison

Idrizovo Prison, the largest penitentiary facility in North Macedonia, now has a dedicated children's corner for young visitors and the families of inmates. Located in the visitors' area, the children's corner provides a safe and welcoming environment during family visits. Representatives of public authorities, the European Union Delegation and the Council of Europe attended the inauguration ceremony at Idrizovo Prison.

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Guidelines for victims' compensation presented in Montenegro

The Guidelines for exercising the right to compensation to victims in criminal proceedings (criminal cases of trafficking in human beings, domestic violence, war crimes, and other criminal cases) were presented on 22 December in Podgorica. The document is intended for judges, prosecutors, and other participants in criminal proceedings, with the aim of improving practice in cases in which victims exercise their right to compensation within criminal proceedings.

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Pilot courts in Bosnia and Herzegovina advance court



Kosovo Correctional Service to integrate Council of Europe

management practices based on internal survey findings

On 28 November, the European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ) organised a one-day workshop bringing together representatives of its eight pilot courts to discuss the implementation, analysis, and long-term sustainability of internal satisfaction surveys in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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methodology for managing violent extremist offenders

Kosovo Correction Service (KCS) has taken further steps toward integrating the Council of Europe's methodology for working with violent extremist offenders (VEOs), bringing together prison practitioners, management representatives and experts to prepare for full scale implementation across the system.

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ADVANCING HUMAN RIGHTS



Constitutional and Supreme Court advisers bring Strasbourg experience into Serbia's judiciary

For Milan Bajić and Nikola Djekić, legal advisers at Serbia's Supreme and Constitutional Courts, a six-month placement at the ECtHR in Strasbourg provided a unique insight into how European legal principles are interpreted at the highest level. By closely engaging with the Court's rulings on freedom of expression, the right to a fair trial, and other fundamental issues, the advisers have not only expanded their knowledge of

the Convention system, but also, upon their return, shared their experiences within Serbia's judiciary.

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Türkiye strengthens human rights protection in the context of migration

Representatives of domestic institutions, legal professionals and international partners gathered for the Closing Conference of the European Union and Council of Europe joint action 'Strengthening the human rights protection in the context of migration in Türkiye.' As part of the Council of Europe's Visibility Week, the event celebrated tangible progress in placing human rights and dignity at the heart of migration management.

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Simulation-Based Training on Human Trafficking Pioneered in North Macedonia

As part of the efforts to build the capacities of various anti-trafficking stakeholders, EU and Council of Europe joint action on "Strengthening anti - trafficking action in North Macedonia" delivered a simulation training with a mock trial, based on a human trafficking case scenario. This simulation programme guided local practitioners towards a victim-oriented approach and its integration in their daily work.

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Montenegro judiciary marks 75 years of the European Convention

Judicial leaders from across Montenegro met in Budva on 29-30 October to reflect on the legacy and continued relevance of the European Convention on Human Rights, 75 years after its adoption. The high-level Judiciary Days event brought together judges from the Supreme, High, and Basic Courts, as well as representatives from the Administrative and Commercial Courts, to discuss key developments and challenges in criminal, civil, and administrative law.

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Marking 16 Days in Albania by highlighting women's property rights

Women and girls from the Shkoza community marked the global 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence by learning how property rights protect dignity, security and independence. Organised by the Tirana Legal Aid Society with the support of the D-REX action the session highlighted that access to property is not only a legal entitlement of Albanian women and girls, but also a fundamental human right and a key source of empowerment for families.

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TACKLING ECONOMIC CRIME & CORRUPTION



Strengthening financial investigations and prosecution of major economic crimes in Türkiye

Türkiye has taken another step toward strengthening its response to money laundering and major



Reinforcing the Financial Intelligence Agency's role in safeguarding Albania's financial system

To strengthen the knowledge and operational skills of newly recruited and existing staff of the Financial

economic crimes, as financial oversight and law enforcement institutions improved their investigative and prosecutorial capacities during a training in Ankara.

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Intelligence Agency, a two-day training was held in Tirana under the joint European Union and Council of Europe “Action against Economic Crime in Albania”.

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PROMOTING DIVERSITY AND EQUALITY



Students' glimmers through 'Living Books' in Bosnia and Herzegovina

The most powerful lessons don't always come from textbooks, sometimes they come from stepping into someone else's life. Across Bosnia and Herzegovina, 437 students from 17 primary and secondary schools discovered a different kind of library- one where books breathe, speak, and share their stories.

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Tackling structural racism in the Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership region

Representatives from public institutions and experts from the Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership regions, part of the European Union and Council of Europe Anti-racism Network, gathered to strengthen their joint efforts against racism and intolerance.

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EDUCATION FOR ALL



Side by side: A mother and daughter's digital journey

In a Kuşadası school, a quiet classroom marked a meaningful moment for a mother and her daughter. They were taking part in an activity under the 'Pilot Project on Digital Citizenship Education in Türkiye', supporting families and schools in helping children see the digital world as a space requiring empathy, responsibility and awareness.

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Orašje school joins democratic school culture network

The new school year in Orašje has begun on an inspiring note. For students and teachers of the School Centre fra Martin Nedić, this period marks more than just a return to classrooms — it marks the beginning of a new chapter as the school joins Bosnia and Herzegovina's growing network of Resource Centres for Democratic School Culture.

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FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND MEDIA



On the frontlines of journalists safety in the Western Balkans



Inside the struggle for gender-sensitive reporting

Dragan Sekulovski, Executive Director of the Association of Journalists of North Macedonia, has long been one of the leading voices on journalists' safety in the Western Balkans. He has collaborated with journalists, judges, prosecutors, police officers, and lawyers across the region, translating international standards into practical guidance. In this interview, he shares insights on shared challenges and regional best practices.

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Aleksandra Ničić, a journalist and member of the Journalists' Association of Serbia, is one of the authors of the newly published 'Guide for Gender-Sensitive Reporting', a publication born out of the growing gap between ethical standards and what actually happens in newsrooms. Her work sits at the intersection of practice and principle, where good intentions often collide with entrenched habits.

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Western Balkan regulators call for stronger support to align with European standards

With European digital governance standards evolving rapidly, regulatory authorities from the Western Balkans Beneficiaries met in Athens to discuss alignment with Council of Europe and European Union standards, focusing on the EU Digital Services Act.

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Finding the balance between freedom of expression and hate speech

European standards and relevant case law on combating hate speech, focusing on the risks of misusing criminal law to restrict freedom of expression, were examined during a Judicial Dialogue in Pristina, organised with the support of the EU and the Council of Europe.

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HORIZONTAL FACILITY III BENEFICIARY STEERING COMMITTEE MEETINGS: Where European values meet local reforms

Through the Horizontal Facility III programme, the European Union and the Council of Europe continue to jointly support democratic reforms, human rights protection, and the rule of law across the Western Balkans and Türkiye. This commitment was reaffirmed during the third round of Beneficiary Steering Committee Meetings, held across all seven Beneficiaries, focusing on sustainability of the results and priorities for the future.

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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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Horizontal Facility Co-ordination Team
Directorate of Programme Co-ordination
Avenue de l'Europe F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex, France
E-mail: Horizontal.Facility@coe.int / Tel. +33 (0)3 88 41 20 00



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