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**Biljana
Alković**

Life on the Margins

LIFE ON THE MARGINES

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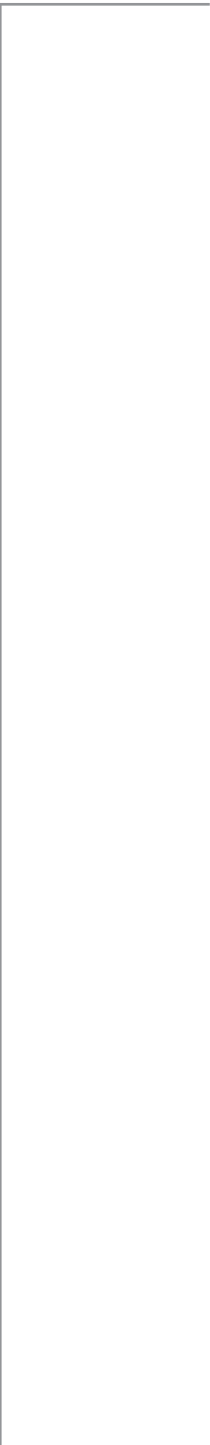
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LIFE ON THE MARGINES

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ROMA
SCHOLARSHIP
FOUNDATION

Biljana Alković, a well known civic activist born in 1971, is the first Egyptian who studied at the University of Montenegro, where she graduated journalism at the Faculty of Political Sciences. She is the Executive Director of the *Roma Scholarships Foundation*, President of the Board of Education, Culture and Media of the *National Council of Roma and Egyptians* in Montenegro and member of the *Council of Protection Against Discrimination*. Biljana has, among other things, edited kids magazines *Mosaic* and *Children's Planet* published by primary schools in Podgorica and Ulcinj.



Ms Alković on the project: “*Monitor's* and *ERSTE Foundation's* initiative was not one of ‘coup de grace’ projects that are so common on the Montenegrin scene. This was a project that has accepted me as a person and offered me a chance to learn through journalistic practice and earn my living in a dignified manner. This is exactly the kind of projects that we need. Because we, like all of you, want to have a sustainable livelihood. One, where things would not be uncertain, from month to month, from project to project. I have finished college, gained significant experience and would not like to depend only on the goodwill projects or donor affection.”



Introductory Notes

Knut NEUMAYER, Director *Programme Europe*, ERSTE Foundation:

It is my utmost pleasure to write these lines in order to close a very successful project – the first internship of an individual from the Montenegrin Roma/Ashkali/Egyptian community who spent more than a year working with journalistic professionals from weekly *Monitor*. ERSTE Foundation had the great opportunity to support Biljana Alković through *Monitor's Centre for Media and Democracy* in the course of twelve months within her internship in the editorial office of Montenegro's first independent weekly magazine.

We highly appreciated Biljana's work not only from the perspective of empowering topics of a fragile minority throughout various reports and covers in the media but also being able to exchange various viewpoints about many open issues which this minority (among others) has to struggle with, within modern day Montenegro.

We saw the project also as an opportunity for mutual exchange between our fellow and the editorial office she was working for, giving the possibility to both sides to learn from each other. In the course of the last fifteen months various topics were touched by Biljana: the overall social status of members of the Roma community, questions of their identity in the 21st century and the role of women and influence of tradition in their daily work, but also questions regarding official (state and private) institutions which deal with Roma issues.

One very specific aspect of Biljana's work, which should be highlighted is the attempt not only to cover burning topics of the community she comes from, but also to show the need of other fragile communities, e.g. the LGBT population which has been subject of public attention in the course of the last years. The present publications represent not only a collection of Biljana's a journalistic endeavours, but also an effort to help to empower those fragile parts of our society to act as multipliers of their own cause's strife for a broader public recognition.

Milka TADIĆ MIJOVIĆ, Executive Director, Weekly *Monitor*:

Integration of the Roma, the Egyptians and the other members of vulnerable groups is one of the biggest challenges Montenegro is facing as a society. The country cannot become a democratic and developed society until all its citizens are integrated at all levels.

The first step towards integration is education and bridging of the gap between the majority groups and the population that has been for a long time on the margins of the society.

The training provided to Biljana Alković by the weekly magazine *Monitor* been the first in-house journalist coaching in Montenegro of a member of the Egyptian population. The coaching included the commitment to publish Ms Alković's articles in *Monitor* which has been one of the most rewarding, and at the same time, one of the most challenging undertakings for *Monitor* in recent years.

This project was supported by the ERSTE Foundation and it has significantly raised public awareness about the Roma and Egyptian population integration issues.

During the 12 month long training and coaching of Ms Alković, who had no previous experience of journalism, she was first taught basic journalistic tasks and forms, such as rewriting news and reports. After that she was introduced to the more complex journalistic forms which included the thematic analyses and research.

In addition to gaining experience as a journalist, Ms Alković developed a significant sensibility and skills to identify and communicate the issues, not only related to the position of the Roma and the Egyptians, but also those affecting other marginalised and vulnerable groups in the society. Her articles about the issues faced by the people with disabilities and the LGTB population, which were published in the last months of her training, have

been particularly highly assessed and received by *Monitor's* editors.

Biljana Alkovic was not the only one to gain from the project, the weekly *Monitor* has improved itself as well. Since its inception, *Monitor* closely followed the challenges faced by minority and vulnerable groups in Montenegro, but the quality of the coverage of this particular area has been further improved by Ms Alković's contribution. Her own experience and the 'insider' community information about the issues the population to which she belongs grapples with, have been of the utmost value, as have been her penetrating insights into the position of other vulnerable groups.

The project has demonstrated that well focused training and coaching can enable members of the minority groups to offer specialist knowledge and experience which can give them an edge over other colleagues and improve the quality of the media coverage of the issues affecting their own, as well as other marginalised communities.

The project carried out by *Monitor* confirmed that the media, as well as society as a whole, would significantly benefit from the integration of all excluded minorities.

Forgers of Their Own Identity

Egyptians in Montenegro call themselves 'kovaci' (ironsmiths or iron forgers) and they insist that they are not Roma. Originally from Egypt, they do not speak Roma language but in common with the Roma people, they share an equally difficult position in today's Montenegro

In Montenegro and beyond, it is believed that the Roma and the Egyptians are the same people, or that they are closely related. Consequently Montenegro has a joint national council for both minorities called the *Council of Roma and Egyptians* and all official documents treat them as one minority group.

Egyptians in Montenegro, however emphasize that they and the Roma are not the same people. In Montenegro, the last National Census in 2003 recorded 225 Egyptians, but it is believed that this community is much more numerous.

DIFFERENCES: "The exact numbers are hard to come by, but the figure which is often mentioned is in the range of 15.000", claims anthropologist and ethnologist **Vesna Delić Rasulić**. "The only problem is that this figure also includes the Roma, who encounter similar problems when it comes to estimating the size of their population", she explains.

"Some equate the Egyptians and the Roma out of ignorance", says professor **Rubin Zemon**, an ethnologist, who earned his doctorate at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and the subject of his thesis was *Balkan Egyptians, Historical and Ethnographic Aspects*.

"These are white men's racial prejudices and stereotypes towards the dark-skinned. Creating *racial uniformity* is not an unknown phenomenon in the world. All African-Americans are perceived as one racial-ethnic identity: Negro. Also, all Asians are perceived as Chinese", says Zemon. "That *melting pot* racial identification is a hell of a machine which, from the 19th and 20th centuries onwards, have been grinding and melting all smaller communities that do not belong to an imaginary circle of **us** and are seen as the **others**. As for those **others**, the majority racial groups do not bother much with recognising their diversity".

The differences between the Roma and the Egyptians, which Egyptians themselves identify, are their origins and their language.

"The Roma are originally from North West India and they arrived to the Balkans in the late 14th century AD. Balkan Egyptians come from Egypt. The links between the Egyptian and the Roma populations are few and there is no intermarriage", claims Zemon, adding that Roma and Egyptians do not speak the same language.

"Many Montenegrin Roma speak Albanian in addition to their own language. The essential difference between them and the Egyptians, which the Egyptians cite, is that Egyptians do not speak Roma", says Vesna Rasulić Delić.

She explains that Egyptians in the Balkans speak the language of the environment they live in and thus represent a different linguistic group from Roma. "Quick adjustment and absorption of other dominant languages in the environment are considered to be the main reasons why they have forgotten their old Egyptian language".

In Montenegro, she explains, there are two populations of Egyptians - those who first settled in the coastal cities, and who still inhabit towns of Bar and Ulcinj and the second group, which migrated from Kosovo between the two world wars and after the Second World War and in the last ten years, due to the war in Kosovo.

Rubin Zemon: "There are many differences between the Roma and the Egyptians. The Roma are originally from the North West India and they arrived in the Balkans in the late 14th century AD. Balkan Egyptians come from Egypt and they do not speak the same language and do not have the same material, spiritual and social culture. The links between the Egyptian and Roma populations are few and there is no intermarriage"

WHO ARE THE KOVACI: Egyptians in Montenegro say they are *kovaci* and not Roma.

"Some historians use the synonym *kovaci* for the Roma, although it is known that the Egyptians were first to master metalworking", Zemon said. He believes that this is yet another case of racial prejudice, stereotyping and generalization of concepts.

The *kovaci* from Montenegro have never accepted that they are Roma. Even King Nikola wrote this in his Memoirs. Confusion was created by Tihomir Djordjević in the 1920s, in a publication by the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, where he wrote without any evidence that *kovaci* from Ulcinj and Bar are Roma/Gypsies.

"Unfortunately, many generations of ethnologists and historians are trained according to this model and some of them by the professor Tihomir Djordjević himself. The iron forging craftsmanship cannot be a profession for people who live a nomadic, migratory way of life". Zemon emphasizes that the iron forging as a profession is typically connected with a stationary style of life and also strongly linked to agriculture. "One cannot install and dismantle the furnace and the anvil every day or every week".

Vesna Rasulić Delić says that the Egyptians are known to be ironsmiths, "but that some Roma groups also engaged in this activity". In her study on the same subject she says: "Science has for years claimed that the first Gypsies

are in fact today's ironsmiths who later segregated into a separate group due to different occupations, but it is indisputable that they are of Roma origin. Today's research, however, shows that the identification processes have concluded that the iron forging business, created a community and thus the ethnic identification *kovaci*, which became the keystone and the symbol of another, we can say, newly discovered community, now known as the Balkan Egyptians".

When the Roma arrived in Europe in the 14th century, they were not well received by the Balkan and European population, explains Zemon. According to him, this was, among others, the reason why some of them began to identify themselves as Egyptians. "This contributed to an even greater confusion, by equalizing of the Egyptians and the Roma in the society", says Zemon. He argues that there is clear evidence that the Egyptians have been in the Balkans since the 13th century, which is long before the Roma arrived. In the Balkans, there are archaeological findings, he claims, such as artefacts depicting the temples of Isis, the Egyptian supreme goddess, and Osiris, or Serapis, Thoth, Hermes, Heracles, and there is jewellery with scarabs. "All this proves conclusively that Egyptians have lived in the Balkans since the ancient times".

Dr Marsel Kurtijad, one of the greatest experts on Roma culture and civilization, once explained: the Roma were called Egyptians, probably because in the early fourth century, during the Diocletian persecution of Christians, a wave of Egyptian refugees of Coptic origin came to Europe through the Middle East. Data on this exist in the Vatican archives. When in the 12th and 13th century came the first wave of Roma refugees, the rural population believed that the Egyptians had arrived again from the same direction. At the same time, the Roma noticed that they could do better as Egyptians, so they themselves used and spread the legend.

Aleksandar Saša Zeković, human rights researcher and Executive Director of the *Roma Scholarships Foundation*, is one of a few in Montenegro who has repeatedly pointed out that these are two nations, although the funds from

Egyptian Fana Delija says: "We have always been aware of our origin because this has been passed on from generation to generation. But what we have never done until now is talked publicly about our nationality"

his Foundation equally cater for both. "The truth is that these two peoples who ethnically and culturally distance themselves from each other. We certainly recognise these groups as separate ethnicities and in case of their possible equating, this happens within the context of similar social circumstances in which they live".

THEY HAVE ALWAYS KNOWN WHO THEY ARE: "The problem of Egyptians is specific. Many deny our existence and are not able to define us as a nation, simply because they do not know much about us. After all, how can one objectively talk about my nationality, if they found me in this region after their own migrations", says **Mohammed Uković**, an Egyptian, whose ancestors have for centuries been present in Montenegro. He adds: "Fortunately, this society is undergoing democratisation, freedom of speech and expression of opinion are not prohibited, and finally the time is ripe for us, Egyptians in Montenegro, to start talking about ourselves and tell the truth about us that the public did not hear until now".

Egyptian **Fan Delija** says she always knew who she was. "We were always aware of our origin, this has been passed on from generation to generation. But what we have never done until now is talked publicly about our nationality".

Those we spoke to explain the reasons why so few in Montenegro identify themselves as Egyptians, while this population is considered to be larger in numbers.

"Given the stigma, stereotyping and marginalized position of these minorities, some individuals psychologically, socially and ethnically separate themselves from their original ethnic communities and identify with the more privileged ethnic groups in society", says Vesna Rasulić Delić.

Zemon explains the phenomenon of ethnic mimicry: "It has been observed that a large number of Egyptians suffer from an inferiority complex, which is based on several elements: lack of education, inability to explain one's own identity, physical appearance that differs from the majority, i.e. the darker skin colour. Egyptians, as a community/collective, are placed pretty low on the social scale, especially in more traditional environments. They still have a fear of humiliation, which prompts some of them to avoid such situations".

This is not without reason. Although they do not feel to be a part of the Roma community, Egyptians in Montenegro share with the Roma an equally difficult status. They are marginalised in the society and have high unemployment rate and a few of them are highly educated. Along with Roma, they are often discriminated against by the majority population.

Vesna Delić Rasulić: "Many Montenegrin Roma speak Albanian, besides their own Roma language. The essential difference between them and the Egyptians, which the Egyptians themselves cite, is that the Egyptians do not speak Roma and that they have adopted the language of the environment they live in"

Monitor, 26. 11. 2010.

Left to Fend for Themselves

Only in Podgorica, a dozen juveniles have been registered to be beggars for longer than 10 years. Although they have a responsibility to act in such cases to protect the children, the authorities turn a blind eye

I earn enough daily to buy food for my mother and my brothers", said a young Roma woman who has been begging for 18 years on the streets of Podgorica. "That's all I know how to do, and I have to take care of my family", she explained.

During nearly two decades of begging she has ended only once in a police station. „No one bothers me, everyone knows me. Long ago, police took me to their station and then released me straight away“.

WITH THE BLESSING OF THE INSTITUTIONS: She is not the only one begging undisturbed for years. In Podgorica, a dozen minors have been registered to be living and working on the streets for longer than 10 years. There is also an example of a family whose four children, aged three to 15 years, are involved in begging. Although their duty is to act in such cases and protect the children, the state institutions turn a blind eye.

"The policemen are great, they never trouble us", two 11 year old boys told *Monitor*. They explained that during weekdays, they go to school and at weekends they go with their parents to the city centre and beg. Their brothers are also there, a five year old and a boy who has just turned one. "Sometimes policemen ask us why we beg, and when we say that we must do it because we have nothing to eat, they leave us alone".

"I told my mother that I would not beg anymore because I was ashamed", told us a young girl. "My mother said that I had to join her one more time, and after that I would not have to do it again", explained the girl who is still begging in the street.

Isen Gaši, President of the *Roma National Council* believes that the issues leading to begging should be completely eradicated. He says that the Roma displaced from Kosovo and those who come from Serbia are the ones who are most frequently engaged in begging. This, he said, only confirms the well-known fact that these are the most vulnerable families without personal documents and as such they are left with few other options. He said that there was also one family of local Roma residents engaged in begging and that the Council was ready to support them financially.

The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child has noted, whilst monitoring the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in Montenegro, that a large number of children, mostly Roma, lived and worked on the streets and that they were particularly vulnerable when it came to human trafficking and the economic and sexual exploitation.

The Committee has also expressed concerns that, due to the low standards of living, a significant number of children and their families, especially from the Roma and Egyptian populations, experience a high level of social exclusion and

Tamara Ralević: "The Law treats as a misdemeanour both organising begging and coercing others to beg, but begging itself is not illegal. Police officers, therefore, have no legal powers to charge those engaged in begging"

they live in poverty, without access to basic services and equal opportunities.

THE VIEW OF THE OFFICIALS: **Tamara Ralević**, the spokeswoman for the Police Authority told *Monitor* that the police are carrying out an on-going operation called *The Beggar*. "Every day we implement measures and activities aimed at curbing begging in all municipalities in Montenegro", she stated.

According to her, in the first 10 months of this year, the police filed 13 requests for legal proceedings under the Law on Public Order and Peace, against adult persons who have organized begging and forced children to engage in it.

"In this period, 181 persons have been taken away from the city streets and intersections in Montenegro and all of them have undergone the identity checks and questioning", explained Tamara Ralevic. She said that the Roma who are residents of Serbia are most frequently engaged in begging in Montenegro, mainly during the summer months.

According to the local regulations, if minors are found begging without a parent or a guardian, the police, in cooperation with Social Care Service and the Community Police, would bring them to the police station in order to establish their identity and when appropriate, bring charges against the parents or the guardians. The Law clearly states that "A parent, adoptive parent, guardian or any other person who abuses a minor, or coerces them to excessive work or work unsuitable to their age, such as begging or performing other actions that are detrimental to the development of the minor, shall be punished by imprisonment for the period of three months to five years".

In the event of a child having no parents or guardians, they are placed in the care of the Centre for Children and Youth in Ljubovic in Podgorica.

Tamara Ralevic explains that the Law defines as a misdemeanour the acts of organising begging and the coercion to beg, but not the begging itself. "The police officers therefore have no legal ground to charge those who are engaged in begging". Changes in the law, she said, were expected next year.

The regulations require, however, that the authorities and the institutions from the social protection system, protect the children from all kinds of abuse and neglect including by the parents or guardians. Begging, in most cases, is a child protection issue which can ultimately lead to the denial of parental rights.

THE OTHER VIEW OF HOW THE THINGS ARE: How the police really acts, we heard from **Anita Zećiri**, who has participated as a volunteer in a special projects by the *Roma Scholarships Foundation* (RSF), dedicated to the prevention of juvenile begging.

"In most cases, the policemen are not well trained and they do not know what their job is. They do not always show up when one reports a case of begging and when they do, they are most likely to check the documents of us volunteers, as if we are criminals rather than the people carrying out their civic duty", she said. Another volunteer explained that the police officers often deal with the problem by ordering the children beggars to *clear off and get lost*, which drives them away temporarily.

Aleksandar Saša Zeković, a human rights activist, says that begging and kids living in the streets represent a serious problem. "The police and the social protection institutions must demonstrate professionalism and capability in addressing this. Police officers in the field should stop belittling and denouncing human rights activists, as is often the case, and treat responsibly every call and every report of begging. If they have a problem with securing the cooperation of the social workers, then they must say this publicly".

"The policemen are great, they never bother us", two 11 year old boys told *Monitor*. "Sometimes they ask us why we beg and when we say that we must do it because we have nothing to eat, they leave us alone"

Monitor, 24. 12. 2010.

Obstacles to Dreams Coming True

Out of the 103 Roma secondary school students who have passed the Roma Scholarship Foundation (RSF) programs between 2005 and 2010, some 25 percent had left school for the reason of an early marriage. Of those, 11 percent are married and still attending schools

I do not want to marry someone chosen for me by my family and especially not if they are very young. I want to finish school and make something of myself", said a young Roma woman attending high school to *Monitor*. It must be noted that our interviewee was one of a very few Roma benefiting from the high school education and the only one who openly opposed arranged marriages and the Roma tradition.

She told her mother and her brothers that she did not want to get married and they accepted it, but she worried about the pressure coming from the large extended family. She expressed strongly her confidence and trust in the *Roma Scholarships Foundation* (RSF) by saying "I knew I could always count on the *Foundation* and I thought of them first when a marriage was suggested to me". The President of the Roma Council **Isen Gaši** told us that he was in touch with the girl's parents and supported them in not insisting on the arranged marriage for their daughter.

Our interviewee has two sisters and five brothers, all of whom are married. She is the only one in the family who can read and write being the only one of them who attended school.

Out of the 103 Roma secondary school students who have passed the RSF programs between 2005 and 2010, some 25 percent had left school for the reason of an early marriage. Of those, 11 percent are married and still enrolled in schools.

Emrah Jefkaj: "Arranged marriages are still prevalent in the Roma communities. Boys and girls do not independently choose their partners. That decision is imposed on them by their parents. We are pleased to witness some generational shift and an increase in the numbers of high school Roma students resisting arranged marriages. They do not want others to decide about their lives"

The sociologist **Andrija Djukanović** believes that tradition plays an important role in the life of the Roma minority. It points to strong and long-term patterns of behavior that are passed on for generations, which still shape the life of the members of this population. He points out that it is important to emphasize the difference between tradition and traditionalism as the only way to overcome one's own negative legacy.

"Tradition has some positive features such as that it ensures that many traditional values are passed on from one generation to the next. On the other hand, traditionalism insists on respect for the old, ignoring change and new experiences and it can include discrimination and disrespect for human rights".

Roma traditions prescribe that huge amounts of money are paid for the future bride. A guy who wants to marry a girl is obliged to pay to her parents the sum of money the two families agree. Also, it is of utmost importance that the girl is a virgin. If it turns out that the girl is not a virgin, or if the groom's

family is not satisfied with the new bride, money paid for her must be returned and in some cases the amount is doubled.

The RSF Coordinator **Zdravko Cimbalević** explained that by working with the high school Roma pupils the RSF learned how their lifestyle was affected by tradition. He pointed out that the scholarship program did not make sense if it was not accompanied by intensive work with the pupils. "Empowerment, motivation strengthening and expansion of individual liberties are essential to the success of our scholars, particularly the women", said Cimbalević.

Scholarship recipients agree that the status of the girls in the Roma and the Egyptian communities is very unfavorable. Girls are rarely allowed to travel outside the places where they live and they have neither the freedom of movement nor the freedom to choose where they want to live. Parents are the key obstacle to the education of women. They typically forgo the education of girls in order to prepare them for marriage.

"Arranged marriages are still prevalent in the Roma communities. Boys and girls do not independently choose their partners. That decision is imposed on them by their parents. We are pleased to witness some generational shift and an increase in the numbers of high school Roma students resisting arranged marriages. They do not want others decide about their lives", said **Emrah Jefkaj**, a Psychology student and the President of the RSF Student Club. He added that unfortunately, there were still those who agree with the marriage partner choices made by their parents without questioning it.

Those who spoke to us told us about two 15 year olds who had a secret relationship and had no idea that their parents had arranged their marriages to others. The young man wanted to "steal" the girl but he could neither afford to pay for the girl nor to elope with her and settle elsewhere. A high school pupil told us that he had to marry a girl just because she was seen coming to his house. He tried in vain to explain that it was a simple visit of a friend. Since this is considered to be inappropriate behavior, his parents decided that these two young people must marry in order to avoid the "shame".

There are young people who do not mind the choice of marriage partners by their parents. One interviewee said that he would respect his parents' decision because, as he put it "if my parents are pleased with my wife, I will be pleased with her too". His opinion was shared by his brother, who believed that the elders were always smarter than the young people and that they make better decisions.

"High quality social integration requires a change in behavior and practice of customs. It is particularly important to insist on respect for the current legislation. Only a consistent application of the law, along with the appropriate conduct of the authorities, may improve the respect for the human rights of the Roma and the Egyptians", Djukanović said. He stated that in the current system of values, the individual loses the attributes of the subject and becomes an object abiding by the collective norms and values.

THE FACTS AND FIGURES

According to the police data, in 2009 eight offenses of illegal marriage with a minor have been recorded, while in 2010, three such criminal offenses have been noted and two criminal charges have been brought against 16 people.

According to the Criminal Code, an adult person who lives in a non-marital relationship with a minor shall be punished by imprisonment from three months to three years. The same Law

foresees the punishment of the parents, adoptive parents or guardians, who "allow a minor to live in a non-marital relationship, or who coerce them to do so".

According to the Prosecutor's Office data, in 2009 there were 18 charges related to such acts, two from the previous period and 16 reported in 2009. Of these, one charge was dropped, 16 people have been indicted and in one case a further investigation was requested.

Andrija Djukanović: "The tradition has some positive features, such as that it ensures that many traditional values are passed on from one generation to the next. On the other hand, traditionalism insists on respect for the old, rejecting change and new experiences and it can include discrimination and disrespect for human rights"

"It is a duty of the state to help those who want to build a fairer and more prosperous life", says Cimbaljević. He proudly notes that a group of high school pupils recently initiated talks with the *National Council of Roma and Egyptians*, seeking their mobilization to overcome outdated practices that hinder progress and human freedoms.

Emrah Jefkaj also stresses the importance of such a communication with the Council. "Pupils believe that this Council has both the influence and the desire to work on the internal changes in our population and its better integration in the Montenegrin society", concluded Jefkaj.

High school pupils were clear that they think that there was much in their tradition that needs to be changed. "The time has come that the Roma and the Egyptians, like other people in Montenegro, start giving priority to the requirements of law over the requirements of tradition. The time has come for us to break free from the negative tradition. Changing tradition and starting to accept the rule of law would promote children's rights, the right to education, women's rights, freedom of opinion and choice, free choice of partners and human rights in general", is the opinion of 13 high school pupils expressed in their letter to the *National Council of Roma and Egyptians*.

Monitor, 28. 01. 2011.

Existing on the Margins

Over two thirds of Roma women give birth to a first child between age of 15 and 18. Most believe that tradition is the key reason why they marry at such a young age and some 90 percent maintain that tradition must be honored unconditionally

My first husband kicked me out because I was sick and could not work. We had six children and all of them remained with him. He does not allow me to see them”, told us a 35 year old Roma woman.

“I got married a second time and I have three children. We women are damned. We have no rights except to suffer”, she said. She was 13 when she married the first time. All four of her daughters from her first marriage are now married. They got married at the age of 11 and 12 and that is not an isolated case.

JUVENILE MOTHERS: According to the ‘Center for the Roma Initiatives’ (CRI) based in Niksic, over two thirds of Roma women give birth to a first child between the age of 15 and 18. Of 209 Roma surveyed in Niksic, more than half are married, while 12.5 percent are divorced or widowed. Some 86 percent of them have no education and are not aware of their basic rights. Most believe that tradition is the key reason why they marry so early and almost 90 percent think that the tradition should be honored unconditionally.

“The Roma women are denied the right to their own opinion and decisions. They spend all their life following the instructions of their male family members”, said the CRI Coordinator **Fana Delija**. She explained that either the husband or the father is the “boss in the house” and they decide about everything. The Roma women take responsibility for the entire housework at the age of 10 or 11. In addition, they take care of their brothers and sisters in preparation for their own marriage.

“On the third day after marrying, my husband beat me up and said that this was done in order to make it clear who the boss in the house was”, a 32 year old woman told us. She married at less than 14 years of age and in the beginning her marriage felt like a “salvation”. Until then, she had to wait on her father and seven brothers hand and foot because her mother died when she was very young.

She now has eight children and her husband is unemployed. She has no choice but to cope and to use her skills the best she can, to put the daily food on her children’s plates. “I have to put up with him for the sake of the children, even though he beats me up every day. I understand that my children have the right to report him to the police, but I fear that he will kill me when they release him from prison”, she explains.

TRADITION: “Tradition imposes early marriage on the Roma women so that they would enter matrimony as virgins and thus not discredit their parents”, told us Fana Delija.

“It is better to be dead than to put such a shame on my nearest”, was the opinion of a young Roma woman. “If I brought shame on the family”, she said, “my parents would definitely marry me somewhere far away for someone who has many children and who is old”.

Our interviewee from Ulcinj knew only too well how important it was for the Roma women to enter the marriage as a virgin. She got married at the age of 13 and moved to live with her husband in Podgorica. When her husband realised that she was not a virgin, he sent her back to her parents in Ulcinj. Her now ex-husband said that he had to comply with the tradition and that he did not even consider a different option.

The research carried out in 2006 by the organization *SOS Telephone for Women and Children Victims of Violence*, which is based in Niksic, shows that among the majority of the Roma still persists a tradition which allows men to engage in polygamy. Roma women have to accept this because they are completely dependent on their husbands. If they want a divorce, they must abide by the common law which forces them to leave the children to the husband and his family. They also have a very high level of tolerance for the violence exerted on them by their husbands and fathers, but also by other male family members.

WITHOUT THE RIGHT TO FREE LIFE: "Roma women are stripped of the right to free life and to progress", believes **Behija Ramović**, President of the *Women's Network FIRST*. "They are completely invisible. The harsh reality of the women's position is not recognized by the Roma community or by the state. The authorities do not show enough sensitivity towards them".

Illiteracy and economic dependence are highly prevalent among the Roma women and this causes them to be totally passive in terms of opposing the will of the men around them, said Behija Ramovic. She thinks that the key barrier to the active participation of the Roma in the wider society is their traditionalist upbringing. She also counts as major barriers the hypocrisy of the Roma leaders and the failure of the national strategic documents to address the difficult issues the Roma are facing in society.

THE SILENCE OF THE STATE: **Aleksandar Saša Zeković**, Researcher of human rights violations, explains for *Monitor* that the state institutions, always hide behind the Roma and their common law when they want an excuse for own inaction or incompetence.

"This is confirmed by the position taken by the Center for Social Work in the town of Niksic, which based its official stance in the case of one particular divorce, on the common Roma law. The Center decided not to overturn the decision of the traditional Roma *Council of the Wise Men*, that the children should stay with the husband's family. The children's father took a new wife in Germany and instructed his relatives to return his first wife to her family in the town of Berane. Later, one of the children died from starvation", said Zeković, adding that this case is still in the hands of the State Prosecution Service.

"A lifelong submissiveness, obedience and loyalty, are the basic attributes expected of a Roma woman in marriage and in the family, regardless of the life situations she might find herself in", said the President of the *Executive Committee of the National Council of Roma and Egyptians* **Anita Zećiri**. She added that the Roma women had no awareness of their rights and that "all their life opportunities are destroyed by bad tradition".

"It is difficult to change the attitudes of people especially when they are not educated and live in extreme poverty. To them, suggestions that things could be better appear unrealistic", said Zećiri, who believes that some aspects of tradition, although negative, are being followed for a very long time and are deeply rooted.

Fana Delija: "Tradition imposes early marriage on the Roma women so that they would enter matrimony as virgins and thus not discredit their parents"

"The position of the Roma women cannot be improved by waiting for change in the attitudes of the Roma man. The state must take a more pro-active role in addressing their issues. It is unacceptable that the state remains silent when faced with incidents of violence, abuse, polygamy", said Zećiri.

She also commented on the Montenegrin Government document entitled *Strategy for Improving Position of Roma and Egyptian Population, 2008-2012*. Zećiri was of the opinion that this Strategy did not recognize women's needs and that it was not gender sensitive. "Documents that do not recognize gender equality and do not contain measures to achieve it, do not make sense", concluded Zećiri.

Anita Zećiri: "A lifelong submissiveness, obedience and loyalty are the basic attributes expected of a Roma woman in marriage and in the family, regardless of the life situations she might find herself in"

Monitor, 25. 02. 2011.

Homeless and Penniless

Municipalities of the towns of Nikšić, Bijelo Polje and Berane did not build by the set deadlines, a single apartment for their Roma and the Egyptian population, even though they received two years ago 390.000 euros for this very purpose

Two years ago Montenegrin Government allocated 390.000 euros for housing of the Roma and the Egyptians in Nikšić, Bijelo Polje and Berane. Municipality of Nikšić received 180.000 euros, municipality of Bijelo Polje 150.000 and Berane 60.000 euros. This was presented by the media at home and internationally as a great success and the step towards addressing this priority housing issue. But until now, not a single apartment has been built. The Municipalities have not returned any of the funds they were given for this purpose and the Minister in charge did not request that they do so.

Minister **Ferhat Dinoša** does not seem concerned that his 2009 election partners are not implementing the projects, inspite of receiving funds for the integration of the Roma and the Egyptians. Without any consultations, he singlehandedly decided to extend the deadline for the building of the apartments.

The member of the Government Commission for implementation of the *Strategy to Improve the Status of the Roma and the Egyptian Population, 2008-2012*, **Anita Zečiri** claims that nobody had contacted or consulted her about the extension of the deadline and that the Commission had not met for a long time.

"The Commission does not have a set of rules and procedures and it is not clear even if the Commission President could do that without the consent of its members. As a new member of the Commission, I was never told by anybody what we can and cannot do, the exception being selecting the projects by competitive tendering process", said Zečiri, who is also the President of the Executive Committee of the *National Council of the Roma and the Egyptians*.

Vaselj Beganaj, activist of NGO *Start*, is also a member of the Commission and he told us that he was not officially informed about the extension of deadlines or contacted on that occasion by the Ministry. Beganaj felt that the President of the Commission, Minister Dinoša, believed that he had the right to make all decisions independently.

"Roma leaders, for variety of reasons, but mostly of financial and political nature, are silent about numerous abuses and often they themselves participate in them".

They do not realize that the role of NGOs is to contribute to better decisions, procedures and transparency. They must not remain silent with regard to abuses by those who have the authority and power to manipulate the Roma", said **Ismet Kurti**, President of NGO *The Roma Heart*.

The National Coordinator of the Government of Montenegro for the *Action Plan for the Decade of Roma Inclusion* and the Assistant Minister for Human and Minority Rights, **Sabahudin Delić** said that the funds for the projects have been paid in by the state in mid-November 2009 and that the deadline for the projects' completion was one year from the date of receipt of the funds, which was on 11 November 2010.

"Last year, the Municipalities were in a difficult financial situation. They were deeply in debt and their accounts were blocked. The Ministry had understanding for this situation and agreed to extend the project deadline to June 2011", explained Delić.

According to him, the Municipalities have informed the Ministry about the issues impeding the implementation

Sabahudin Delić: "If the projects are not completed by June 2011, the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights will seek reimbursement of the total amount of funds we paid and we made sure the Municipalities in question are fully aware of this"

of the projects. He was not aware that the Municipalities have used this money for other purposes. However, he announced that the Ministry would ask that money is paid back if the Municipalities do not fulfil the undertaken commitments.

"If the projects are not completed by June 2011, the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights will, in accordance with the Article 5 of the Agreement, seek reimbursement of the total amount of funds paid in and we made sure the Municipalities in question were fully aware of this", said Delić.

Program Director of the 'Roma Scholarships Foundation, **Andrija Djukanović** says that this attitude of the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights does not improve the position of the Roma and the Egyptian population, but rather aggravates it in the long term.

"The Ministry for Human and Minority Rights refuses to permanently resolve the issues of education and employment. While on one side, it is argued that there are no additional resources for education and employment and on the other,

abuses in the area of housing are tolerated. This is unacceptable. In particular, it is not acceptable that nobody is held accountable. Denial of right to regular and quality education has already brought the young Roma and the Egyptians to the streets", says Djukanović.

Member of the Montenegrin Decade Watch Team, **Miljaim Delija** said that the Ministry noticed the missed deadlines and inappropriately spent money only after receiving public criticism and reactions of the NGOs.

"Nobody expected that the Roma and the Egyptians would eventually begin to think for themselves and take care of their own interests. No one is held accountable for the lack of housing. It is now clear to everybody that Municipalities are not reliable partners and that they do not have the capacity to use the budgetary funds", said Delija.

The Berane Municipality received 60.000 euros for the project called *We also need a home* from the Montenegrin Government in early October 2009. The Municipality was obliged to provide the location, prepare it for construction and build five residential units for the local Roma residents. In the meantime, as they say in the Berane Municipality, a different opportunity to spend this money arose which they did not want to miss.

"During the first half of 2010, the Municipality provided the location for the construction of the housing units, but in this period, a new opportunity emerged for the construction of six new residential buildings for the Roma and the Egyptians, in partnership with the organizations Caritas Luxembourg, HELP and the UNHCR and our required participation in this project was only 40.000 euros. Considering that we could not miss such a good opportunity, the Municipality of Berane decided to transfer the land earmarked for the Ministry project, to that of other donors and that project has been completed. Six Montenegrin Roma and Egyptian families have already settled in these apartments", they told us in the Office of the President of Berane Municipality.

Asked why they have not implemented to date the Ministry project *We also need a home*, the Municipality of Berane told us that the only reason was because "the Municipality has no other land available for the construction of the residential buildings, except in the immediate vicinity of the Refugee Settlement Riverside, where the Roma refugees from Kosovo live, and neither the indigenous Roma nor the Roma refugees want to be housed near each other due to frequent disputes".

The Roma and the Egyptian leaders emphasize that the responsibility for bad relations, falls on the Municipalities and the donors. All leaders agree that there is a sense of neglect of the needs of the Montenegrin Roma population. They believe that the needs of the refugee population are given priority which is the only reason why there are tensions and lack of working together. The activist from the

Ismet Kurti: "Roma leaders, for variety of reasons, but mostly of financial and political nature, are silent about numerous abuses and often they themselves participate in them"

NGO Rose from Berane, **Zena Dubović** said that programs which could enhance mutual trust and understanding were not being implemented. "There is a general lack of sensitivity and this will affect the success of integration", concluded Dubović.

Judging by the response from the Berane Municipality, it is already certain that they will not implement the project even by the new deadline. They will try, they said, to build the facilities, and if they fail, the money will be returned to the Ministry. This, they feel, would be a great pity.

Unlike the others, the Municipality of Bijelo Polje has carried out significant amount of work on this, but it is also not certain that they would finish the work within the given time.

According to the Director of the Bijelo Polje Directorate for Construction and Investment **Fekri Hajdarpašić**, the delay was due to problems with the selected site, "which was too near to the location which had been chosen for the waste water treatment plant".

At the recent protest of the Roma and the Egyptians in front of the Montenegrin Government building, one of the requests was to return the money paid for the projects which were not delivered.

Monitor, 25. 03. 2011.

Where is the Money Gone

In addition to the fact that the funds ring-fenced for the Roma inclusion projects have been used without any control and despite the warnings by the civil society organisations that numerous irregularities have taken place, much less money has been invested in that process than the Government had promised. Last year 2,277.240 euros should have been set aside and instead only 400.000 euros were made available

The *Strategy for Improving the Position of the Roma and the Egyptian Population* adopted by the Government in 2008 is counting its last months. Improvements this document had planned to introduce for the Roma were supposed to be achieved by the 2012, but this remained mostly wishful thinking.

This failed Strategy has shared the fate of the other similar documents which the Government adopted in order to improve the position of the Roma and the Egyptian population in Montenegro. In the early 2005, the Government joined the international *Decade of Roma Inclusion Program* and soon adopted the Action Plan for 2005-2015 with the following priorities: education, health, employment and housing. The Action Plan was not implemented due to the lack of the necessary conditions for achieving those ambitious goals.

By adopting this document, the Government, for example, pledged to aim to allocate each year 0.2 percent of its budget for the Roma and the Egyptians' integration.

In the first year, it was already clear that nothing would happen with regard to the aspirations of the Government. In the subsequent years, the funding allocation process became even more problematic.

According to the Strategy it was planned that in 2008 the sum of 2,574.400 euros would be set aside, as this amounted to 0.2 percent of that year's budget. Instead only 400.000 euros was made available. Similarly, in 2009, instead of 2,338.540 euros, only 600.000 were allocated and in the 2010, instead of 2,277.240 euros, only 400.000 euros have been assigned.

Teuta Nuraj, the member of the *National Decade Watch Team*, which operates within the *Roma Scholarships Foundation* (RSF), explained that "at this pace and taking into account how the responsibilities have been set, the affirmative action towards the Roma and the Egyptians will last one hundred years". She also added the following: "We are aware of the economic crisis and how other people live, but the results could have been much better if someone was held responsible for the deadlines not being met and the lack of implementation of the field programs, while the unspent allocated funds are not being paid back, or are used for other purposes".

Teuta Nuraj alleges that the whole process is accompanied by an alarming level of corruption "of which no one in the society is taking any notice".

Unlike in other countries, in Montenegro, the coordination of the Roma and the Egyptians' inclusion process was carried out by the civil servants. In all other countries, the coordinators are senior government officials, such as Deputy Prime Ministers or the Government Ministers, which symbolizes the importance of inclusion of those populations for the countries in question. Under the pressure in the late 2009, the role of the National Coordinator

of the *Roma Inclusion Decade* has been entrusted to the Assistant Minister in the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights **Sabahudin Delić**. The civil society's request that the Deputy Prime Minister **Svetozar Marović**, or the Minister for European Union Integrations **Gordana Djurović**, take on this role, was not granted.

The Ministry also provides administrative support to the Montenegrin Government Commission for the Monitoring of the Implementation of the Strategy for Improving the *Position of the Roma and the Egyptian Populations, 2008-2012*. The Commission is a great idea on paper. But judging by the number of sessions it held, the consultations it conducted or the site visits to the funded programs it undertook, the Commission has not lived up to its name. Attempts of the civil society to 'wake it up' have remained unsuccessful. The Commission had ignored the requests by the NGOs to be invited to some of its meetings, although this would have been fully in line with its rules and procedures. An impression was created that most of the members of this body were not interested in transparency and greater accountability in the allocation and spending of the money.

The Commission has funded all sorts of things. From the programs full of pathos and on the verge of being discriminatory, such as *The Roma also Want to be Clean*, through to the funding of party activities and the extensions of the homes of the Roma leaders, who coincidentally, are members of the Commission. This includes a grandiose project to count the Roma and the Egyptians for statistical purposes, while the newly acquired figures remain strictly confidential and are kept away from the public domain.

The Commission's work is characterized by numerous examples of the conflict of interest. The Chairman of the Commission is **Ferhat Dinoša**, Minister for Human and Minority Rights and its secretary is his brother **Fikret Ljuljanović**. From year to year, big projects headed by some of the Commission members have received the Commission grants. That is how approximately 150.000 euros have been approved for the projects for the procurement of textbooks for Roma children represented by **Vesna Vukadinović** who is a member of the Commission and also the Assistant Minister of Education. According to **Miljaima Delija**, an activist from Niksic, the Commission has funded the textbooks at the market prices without taking into account the discount to which all private bookstores is entitled, let alone the Ministry of Education and Sport, which procured several hundred sets of textbooks.

"Around the second month of the school year, it became obvious that half of the children were not given the textbooks, which prompted urgent calls on foreign donors and domestic philanthropists to get involved and save the situation", says Delija.

A Commission member is also **Veselj Beganaj**, who according to other NGOs, should have been the voice of reason and conscience. This reputation, nonetheless, has been publicly challenged and the Government did not do anything to address that. Beganaj himself, did not do much to respond to the qualifications of his colleagues and some Roma community members, that he is a *suitable* Roma, who stayed silent about numerous irregularities and abuses. It is important to note that Beganaj's appointment by the Government as the NGO representative on the Commission, was not in line with the agreed procedures and it was carried out without consultation with all relevant NGOs. The credibility and even the existence of the *Roma Circle Coalition*, whose representative has been co-opted into the Commission, has been widely challenged by all save the Government.

"When the Commission was constituted, the rules for selection of the NGO representatives for the working groups did not exist, so the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights sent an invitation to the NGO *Roma Circle* to choose its representative on this Commission. The selection of the NGO re-

The Commission has funded all sorts of things. From the programs full of pathos and on the verge of being discriminatory, such as *The Roma also Want to be Clean*, through to the funding of party activities and the extensions of the homes of the Roma leaders, who coincidentally, are members of the Commission. This includes a grandiose project to count the Roma and the Egyptians for statistical purposes, while the newly acquired figures remain strictly confidential and are kept away from the public domain

presentative was fully legitimate and indisputable”, said the Assistant Minister and National Coordinator of the Roma Decade Sabahudin Delić.

This year, the NGO sector urged the Government to issue an open and public call for the appointment of a Commission member from the civil society sector and the Prime Minister **Igor Lukšić** has forwarded this request to Minister Dinoša, who is exactly the person who civil society organisations complained about, for not doing this in the first place.

Andrija Djukanović, a member of the Council for Cooperation of the Government and the NGOs, proposed that the Council agrees to officially invite the Government to immediately start a public process for appointing the member of the Commission from the NGO sector. Before this Council initiative was finalized, the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights, somewhat hurriedly, opened up the public competition for the allocation of funds and the issues of legitimacy of the NGO representative and the transparency of the Ministry’s decision making, remained unsolved.

Only after the money was distributed, the Ministry published the call for the nominations of the candidates for the new Commission representative from the civil society. This seems to be in line with the “what’s the hurry approach” Dinoša has been known for.

The Roma are probably the only minority group who have to use the money allocated for their integration to pay for the training by the Montenegrin Employment Office. This is inspite of the fact that this Office has already been given 50.000 euros for the training of the Roma for the street cleaning jobs in several Montenegrin cities.

There is no end to unfulfilled promises. In 2009, the Municipalities of Nikšić, Bijelo Polje and Berane were given 400.000 euros for the construction of housing for the Roma and the Egyptians and the projects should have been implemented by November 2010. To date, no family has moved into this planned housing which is a subject of disputes and the Minister Dinoša did not inform the public if he planned to request the return of the money, as he said he would if the projects were not delivered. The Commission, which was responsible for monitoring those projects, has also failed to do its job.

Ministry for Human and Minority Rights has new worries. A working group has been formed to write a new strategy for the next four-year period. What happened in the past seems to be seen as just the water under the bridge.

Teuta Nura: “At this pace and taking into account how the responsibilities have been set, the affirmative action towards the Roma and the Egyptians will last one hundred years. We are aware of the economic crisis and how other people live, but the results could have been much better if someone was held responsible for the deadlines not being met and the lack of implementation of the field programs, while the unspent allocated funds are not being paid back, or are used for other purposes”

Monitor, 24. 06. 2011.

Freedom Is Far Away

According to the *Forum Progress* data, in the last few years dozens of Montenegrin citizens successfully sought asylum in the EU and the USA because of the poor treatment they experienced in Montenegro, due to their sexual orientation

As many as 57.3 percent of the participants in the recent survey by the *Center for Democracy and Human Rights* (CEDEM) would not like to have a homosexual in their neighborhood. The state and its institutions are making insufficient efforts to improve the overall position in the society of homosexuals, according to CEDEM's findings.

This research has confirmed what was already known – that in the “European” Montenegro, the treatment of LGBT people is vastly different from that in Europe. According to another survey by the *Center for Monitoring* (CEMI), 70 percent of Montenegrin citizens believe that homosexuality is a disease which is immoral and unnatural.

In addition to the social stigma, institutional homophobia is strongly present in the highest echelons of Montenegrin politics, the most prominent example of this being, paradoxically, the current Minister for Human and Minority Rights **Ferhat Dinoša**.

From the statement that he would not be delighted to hear that there are gay people in Montenegro, the Minister has evolved to a position that the LGBT people should neither be suppressed (or as he put it “choked”) nor accepted. And it is precisely this approach that the local experts and the NGO activists believe is the main obstacle to the long-term improvement of the position of this population.

Zdravko Cimbalević, the Executive Director of the *LGBT Forum Progress* and the first Montenegrin who publicly declared that he was a homosexual, says that protection of rights of LGBT people without the affirmative action is not possible and as such, it is meaningless in the long-term.

“The concept advocated by the Minister practically means that we will be given enough air to prevent our suffocation, but that we will remain where we already are - discriminated”. Such a policy by Minister Dinoša, given that it enjoys support of the Government, will in the long-term perpetuate the attitude that homosexuality is undesirable to such an extent that gay people will be forced to seek their future outside Montenegro”, he said.

According to the *Forum Progress* data, in the last few years dozens of Montenegrin citizens successfully sought asylum in the EU and the USA because of the poor treatment they experienced in Montenegro due to their sexual orientation.

A gay person contacted by Monitor said that they were the victim of violence on several occasions. “I have been robbed and my partner and I were beaten up, when we were spotted acting affectionately towards each other. This was followed by several months of harassment and blackmail. I did not report the perpetrators because that would mean that I would have to reveal to the authorities that I was gay. That would have killed my family”.

Sociologist **Srdjan Vukadinović** believes that Montenegrin society is not ready for a new system of values. “Because of such unwillingness, our society has been operating for a long time on a set of decaying values”, he said for *Monitor*. “There is a strong traditional, patriarchal and tribal grasp of the social issues and phenomena and

a considerable degree of unquestioning admiration of the leadership, as well as a very hypocritical and servile attitude towards various idealized persons. Only when the idealized persons express a clear and precise opinion on a particular phenomenon, the same could be expected from the wider population", he said.

Immediately after the adoption of the *Action Plan for Monitoring of the Implementation of Recommendations from the European Commission's Opinion on the Candidate Status*, the Government faced a number of initiatives and requirements regarding the LGBT population. All were rejected or ignored, according to the civil sector organizations. Not a single euro was allocated from the public funds for this population and the Pride Parade, scheduled for the 31 May this year, which failed to take place. The responsible Minister refused to participate in the Parade and the Parade organizers then approached the Government and obtained a promise of support from the Deputy Prime Minister **Duško Marković**. The Organizing Committee of the Parade was constituted but the Government appointed their representatives to this body which was supposed to engage in preparation of such an important and potentially risky event, four days before the scheduled Parade. Finally, the Parade had to be postponed due to the lack of real political support by the Government.

Tea Gorjanc Prelević, the Director of *Human Rights Action* and a member of the Organizing Committee of the Parade, believes that the Montenegrin ruling coalition finds it problematic to openly promote the respect and affirmation of the LGBT rights because it has in its ranks "a party whose President is a homophobe who has been known to practice discrimination."

She said to *Monitor* that it was very important that the Parade was held in Montenegro and she compared the gay population in Montenegro with the status that Jews had in the Nazi Germany. "Anyone who thinks that I am exaggerating should try to convince to the opposite the person who wrote in the 2009 questionnaire by the *Human Rights Action* that in Montenegro, he only felt safe in his own room.

This response should concern us all, but those in positions of power should certainly take a note that 30.000 of their citizens are de facto "in hiding from other Montenegrins", she said, adding that for the scheduling of the Parade it is important to know "that a senior political representative of the Government will walk with us and address the citizens of Montenegro."

Her colleague in the organization of the Parade **Daliborka Uljarević**, Director of the *Center for Civic Education*, said that the Government knew from the beginning what the profile of their representative in the Organizing Committee needed to be.

Zdravko Cimbalević: "Protection of rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) people without affirmative action is not possible and as such would be meaningless in the long-term. The concept advocated by the current responsible Minister practically means that we will be given enough air to prevent us from suffocating, but that we will remain where we already are - discriminated"

"The fact that the unsuitable persons were appointed and also very late in the day, indicates that the Government did not want the Parade to happen. The Government, in fact, did everything to obstruct it while supporting it verbally. This hypocritical approach is not a good base for building of trust in the institutions of the system and even less for developing a culture of human rights", she said, adding that the voters would withdraw support for the parties which promote the LGBT rights and Daliborka Uljarevic believes that this is crucial and defining factor in positioning of the local politicians with regard to this topic.

Marijana Laković, Deputy Ombudsman said that the Pride Parades are organized all over the world to highlight the daily violations of human rights, discrimination and violence against the members of sexual minorities. "Holding the Pride in our country is extremely important because Montenegrin society is traditional and tends to foster stereotypes and prejudices", she told *Monitor*. Last year, the LGBT community embraced the institution of the Ombudsman counting on it as one of their few but true friends.

"Education in Montenegro is in line with the existing political and social concepts, which ignore the LGBT people. The textbooks completely neglect their rights and existence, and consequently the education system produces a permanent intolerance and stigmatization of the LGBT population", said **Milan Šaranović**, Director of *Ekviste*, the NGO which has, together with the *LGBT Forum Progress*, filed the first complaint to the Ombudsman for violation of rights of the LGBT persons in Montenegrin textbooks.

The Ministry for Human and Minority Rights refused to comment on this topic. The Assistant Minister **Sabahudin Delić** said that this is a subject matter for a Ministry official who was on sick leave at the time, in spite of Delić being a Government representative on the Organizing Committee of the Parade.

People we spoke with, regarded as a positive development the Agreement between the Police Authority and the *LGBT Forum Progress*, concerning the future organizing of the public LGBT gatherings and ensuring of security of locations and venues where they hold their social activities. "We are especially keen to see that the violence against us is sensitively and promptly addressed, which has not been the case so far. Anyone could physically attack us in the street without a fear of ever being punished for that", said Cimbaljević.

Aleksandar Zeković, a member of the *Council for Citizen Control of Police Work*, considers the Agreement between the police and the only LGBT group in Montenegro to be historic, but notes that the Government should not misuse it and present it as the sole institutional support for the protection and development of the LGBT community. "Even without the Agreement, in the world today the institutional support for the Pride Parades is taken for granted. The state does not only have an obligation to refrain from restricting the freedom of peaceful assembly, but is also responsible to protect all peaceful demonstrations from violence by the third parties who are opposed to these gatherings", he said.

The Agreement is just the beginning.

Tea Gorjanc Prelević: "In the 2009 *Human Rights Action* questionnaire, a gay person wrote that in Montenegro the only place where he felt safe was his room. This response should concern us all, but those in positions of power should certainly take a note that 30.000 of their citizens are de facto in hiding from other Montenegrins"

Monitor, 15. 07. 2011.

Playing with Civil Society

The NGO sector argues that the Government continues to ignore persons with disabilities by abolishing the Council established for the care of these people and as things stand now, no one knows when a new body will be constituted

Montenegrin Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Justice **Duško Marković** stated during the opening of the Conference on the rights of sexual minorities in Danilovgrad, that the confirmation of successful dealing of the state with the challenges of discrimination would be the establishment of the governmental Council for the Protection against Discrimination. Government officials forgot to explain to the foreign diplomats and the wider public that such a Council was not in place in spite of being approved in July last year. The rationale and the effectiveness of the new Government approach and mechanisms have not been proven in practice, but the Government is already congratulating itself on the success. As things stand, this body will not be established soon. Therefore, the NGO sector claims that the Government continues to ignore the persons with disabilities.

“The organizations which support PWD were surprised when they learned from the media that, by establishing the new anti-discrimination Council, the Government actually abolished the former *Council for the Care of Persons with Disabilities*. The Minister of Labor and Social Welfare, who chaired it, did not consult on this decision with the members of the *Council of the PWD Movement*, a total of five of us, nor was such an epilogue in any way suggested”, said for the *Monitor* **Milan Šaranović**, the member of the Council.

The Association of the Blind of Montenegro also feels that the Government decision to abolish the Council for Care of the PWD is discriminatory. **Fadil Mučić**, the Executive Director of the Association, recalls that the Council engaged in the strategic and actual integration work, including social inclusion and education, vocational rehabilitation and employment, finance and other issues important for PWD and their organizations. Mučić believes that the Government should take into account the common position of the PWD organizations, because of their social and political significance, proven merits and results in the past.

“Without these organizations, in the absence of institutional care, in many sectors of vital importance people with disabilities would not only be discriminated against, but also completely neglected, forgotten, suppressed and consigned to oblivion, as a ballast and unwanted burden to the community”, said Mučić.

The NGOs which support the PWD have this time reacted with one voice more than ever in the past. All of them were involved, without exception, whether operating at national or local level, said **Aleksandar Popović**, the Program Manager of the *Association of Paraplegics of Montenegro*.

The Cabinet of the Prime Minister informed the PWD movement that the formation of the *Council for the Protection from Discrimination* will not mean the cessation of the best practice care for PWD, “considering that this Council will establish a special working group at its first meeting whose task and composition will be the same as those of the *Council for the Care of Persons with Disabilities* and which will be chaired by the Minister of Labour”.

A total of 75 PWD organizations conveyed to the Prime Minister **Igor Lukšić** that the new proposals of his Cabinet represented a degradation of the status of the PWD to a much lower level. The PWD movement is convinced that the proposed working group is not an adequate response to the need for improving the situation of the PWD and implementation of the *Strategy for Integration of Persons with Disabilities* in society, and its action plans, implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities and other regulations relevant to this population. According to the PWD Movement, the *Council for the Care of Persons with Disabilities* provided an opportunity to the PWD to participate through elected representatives in policy-making in the field of disability, by dealing with the overall position, promotion, protection and improvement of the status of PWD, and not only with the prohibition of discrimination against this population.

The PWD movement encountered a strong support by all reputable NGOs in the field of human rights, including the *LGBT Forum Progress*. They assessed that the Government decision to form the *Council for Protection from Discrimination* was made without consultation and that it represented a step backward in relation to the practice that was gradually developed between the Government and civil society. Consequently, they urged the Government to withdraw the decision.

In protest against the fact that the Government's controversial decision was adopted without a dialogue with the groups that support the PWD, **Andrija Djukanović** requested an urgent meeting of the *Council for Cooperation of the Government of Montenegro and the NGOs*, of which he is a member.

"The colleagues from the state bodies did not announce this decision which has created an impression amongst the members of the public, that this was a secret Government initiative intended to impress on the international community, in anticipation of the date of negotiations, that the Government is successfully coping with the challenges of discrimination", said Djukanovic for *Monitor*.

The President of the Council **Mirsad Bibović**, who is a Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, reminded Djukanovic, that a meeting was convened in mid-September so that the Council could adopt a position on an emergency procedure regarding the proposed decision to form the *Council for Protection from Discrimination*.

"This means that the Government actually withdrew its earlier decision from last July, to form the *Council for the Protection of Discrimination*. The Government has brought the process back to the beginning, recognizing a number of mistakes made in collaboration with civil society", Djukanovic said.

Leaders of the PWD movement learned very quickly though, that there was no place for complacency. Convinced that the Council for the *Care of Persons with Disabilities* was still in existence, the members of this body representing

A WORRYING MESSAGE

Sociologist **Marina Vujačić**, recently appointed Executive Director of the *Association of Young People with Disabilities of Montenegro*, said that in recent years a significant improvement of the position of persons with disabilities (PWD) has been achieved. However, she says, a continuous lack of consultation with the PWD about the processes and the policies that directly affect them, is still a major gap. She illustrates this claim with the following examples:

"Dialogue was nonexistent when the campaign against the discrimination, led by the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights, was planned. The opportunity was missed to invite the public to fight the discrimination against the PWD on the basis of, for

example, visual presentations of successful, real examples from our population. The ignorance continues with the Government's decision to abolish the *Council for the Care of Persons with Disabilities*. This act is in collision with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which proclaims the dialogue and the consultation as an imperative. For a whole two months the Government has failed to organise a promised meeting with the PWD movement. These are worrying messages".

Vujačić sees the current Government moves as the desire to achieve, as soon as possible, a new phase of EU accession, but without real positive changes and progress in the daily life of the PWD.

the NGO sector sent a request to the Minister of Labour and Social Welfare **Suad Numanović** to schedule a meeting. The answer they received was that the Minister cannot convene a session of a “non-existent body”.

After that, the NGO sector managed to withdraw from the agenda of the meeting of the *Council for Cooperation of the Government and the NGOs*, which was convened to deal with an emergency request by the Government, the consultation on the proposal to create the *Council for Protection from Discrimination*, until the Prime Minister completes the consultations with the representatives of the organizations dealing with PWD.

The researcher of human rights violations **Aleksandar Saša Zeković** confirmed to *Monitor* that he had very constructive talks with the Deputy Prime Minister Markovic and the Secretary General of the Government **Žarko Šturanović** on further development of the Government’s anti-discriminatory practice. The new draft proposal is much better than the previous version but he remains adamant that the key step which still needs to be made is restarting of an ongoing dialogue between the Government and the PWD movement”.

„The NGOs which support the PWDs are the most developed segment of civil society, and the Government should show them respect”, says Zeković.

In the new proposal by the Government, the participation of the PWD representatives has been increased and an affirmative measure was introduced for the representative of the NGOs bringing together the LGBT population and there is a planned presentation by the trade unions and NGOs dealing with human rights, education and gender equality and the participation of the Ombudsman. Also, the plans to set up a *Standing Committee for Care of PWD*, chaired by the Minister are in the pipeline.

But, all this being said, the Cabinet of the Prime Minister has still not contacted the PWD movement.

Monitor, 23. 09. 2011.

HE ABOLITION OF THE COUNCIL EQUALS DISCRIMINATION AGAINST THE LGBT

We Shall Cooperate but only with our NGOs

Why was the recent international Conference on the LGBT rights boycotted by the local LGBT community and the civil sector

The Government of Montenegro, in cooperation with the newly established NGO *Justice in the Balkans: Equality for Sexual Minorities*, has organized in early September an international Conference and training on LGBT rights entitled *To Europe - Towards Equality*. The event in Danilovgrad was attended by the entire executive and judicial sections of the Government, as well as all of the Prosecution Service, most of the diplomatic corps, part of the Legislative Service, as well as the LGBT activists and other distinguished guests from all continents. However, the Conference was not attended by the local LGBT community to which this event, lauded as historic and unique, was dedicated. The event was also boycotted by the entire Montenegrin civil society and a number of speakers, panelists and NGOs from the region and Europe, expressed their solidarity with their stance.

At the Conference, Government officials, more clearly than before, stated that the sexual orientation and gender identity are an integral part of the identity of each individual and must not be the basis for discrimination and abuse. It was underlined that this is the principle on which the Government's bases its anti-discriminatory policies. If one listened carefully to what the officials said, one could have concluded that the Government message to the NGO sector was that it did not intend to interfere with their work and their responsibilities.

Forty leading national organizations in the field of human rights did not take part at this Conference as a gesture of protest against the current attitude by the Government towards the local civil society organisations and the lack of concrete results in terms of improving the situation of the LGBT population. The Government's decision to ignore the NGOs when introducing policies or activities related to the enhancing of the position of the LGBT people is disturbing, said for *Monitor* **Ivana Vojvodić Vujović**, President of the Directors Board at *Juventas*, an organization that in the last two years has successfully coordinated a national coalition of the NGOs, the media and state institutions.

"We want to bring everybody's attention to the fact that the Government has not accepted the Action Plan to Combat Homophobia proposed by the *Coalition Together for the LGBT rights*", said Vujović.

On the eve of the Conference the NGOs sent to the Government five conditions for continuing further cooperation: the dismissal of the Minister for Human and Minority Rights **Ferhat Dinoša**; adoption of the *National Plan for the Fight Against Homophobia* on the basis of the draft prepared by the *Coalition Together for the LGBT Rights* and creation of conditions for its implementation in cooperation with the NGOs; political support for the Pride Parade with participation in the Parade by a high government official who would address the marchers and the public at the event; the establishment of institutional cooperation with the NGOs dealing with the rights of LGBT persons and pro-

viding assistance to them, and the prosecution of all instances of violence and hate crimes against LGBT people and the disruption of social life of the LGBT community.

It was high time for the Government to finally initiate cooperation with civil society and to manifest publicly its new political course. Instead, the Government has decided to endorse the activities of Prime Minister's Adviser **Jovan Kojičić** and ignore the efforts and achievements of the NGO sector. Without any consultations with the LGBT population and local NGOs, the Government decided to organize a Conference on sexual minorities. Her only partner from the field was the recently established NGO *Justice in the Balkans: Equality for Sexual Minorities*, which in contravention to the legislation was not even registered as an NGO when the invitations for the Conference started being mailed out. Subsequent information about the 'Justice in the Balkans' organization has caught the local and regional public and diplomatic circles by surprise.

"Nobody in the Government saw that there was a conflict of interest", says **Zdravko Cimbaljević**, Director of the *LGBT Forum Progress*, adding that: "the founders of the 'Justice in the Balkans' publicly claim that they formed this NGO at the invitation of the Prime Minister's Adviser Kojičić.

A few days after the scandal broke out, the media confirmed that this NGO decided to register in Podgorica and it consequently became a local NGO and a partner to the Government, which organized through it the international LGBT training Conference", said Cimbaljević.

DUŠKO MARKOVIĆ, THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND THE MINISTER OF JUSTICE:

NGOS HAVE MADE MISTAKES, NOT THE GOVERNMENT

MONITOR: Do you accept that there were some flaws in the way the Government organized the Conference "Towards Europe - Towards Equality"?

MARKOVIĆ: I think that it was wrong that some civil society organisations did not take part in the Conference. It is possible that there were some problems in understanding of the need for organising this Conference. I do not believe that there were omissions on our part and if there were any they were overshadowed by the fact that this is the first Conference organised by a Government on the territory of the Western Balkans and that renowned world experts in this field, led by the Williams Institute of the University of California's Law Department, participated in it and that it brought together teachers, lawyers, judges from the United States, Canada, Netherlands, Poland and Austria. None of the participants had any objections to the way the Conference was organised and nobody expressed sympathy for the civil sector which boycotted the Conference.

MONITOR: What are the Government, the Prime Minister and your Office currently doing in order to re-establish the trust and cooperation with the NGO sector?

MARKOVIĆ: The NGO sector is a strategic partner of the Government of Montenegro in the European integration process. The Government strengthens the cooperation with the civil sector in

the following ways: the Government has decided to publish the material from its sessions; the 'National Commission for Combating Organized Crime and Corruption' has opened its meetings to the public; a new legislation on NGOs, based on respect for the provisions of international instruments and jurisprudence of the European Court, has been adopted that will significantly improve the normative-legal framework for the development and operation of NGOs. The Ministry of Interior is in the process of developing regulations to set out the procedure for the cooperation between the Government bodies and the NGOs and regulations on the procedure for conducting public consultation on proposed legislation. Furthermore, the Ministry of Justice has prepared a draft Memorandum on cooperation with NGOs and we will start the consultation on that soon.

MONITOR: Which NGOs do you cooperate with and how satisfied are you with that cooperation?

MARKOVIĆ: Due to the nature of my position, as Deputy Prime Minister and President of the National Commission for the Fight against Organized Crime and Corruption, I work with one set of NGOs, and as Minister of Justice with another. There are NGOs that I communicate with in both capacities. In principle, I am satisfied with this cooperation, however, there is always space for improvements.

The Government announced that its partner was not a local but an international NGO of the same name. Shortly after the founders of the NGO in question admitted that they have created their organization at an invitation by the Prime Minister's Adviser Kojičić. When it was uncovered that the Government funding of the Conference was funneled through this NGO, the Prime Minister's Adviser confirmed that the organization was newly established, insisting that the Government was not behind it. He added in a statement for media that the registration of this NGO in Podgorica, "has long been the intention of all stakeholders".

The *LGBT Forum Progress* argues that *Justice in the Balkans* has not been set up in compliance with the existing administrative practice.

Ana Novaković, the Vice-President of the *Council for Cooperation of the Government and the NGOs*, believes that the Government should have avoided partnership with an NGO which has just been established. "The partnership was established without the clear criteria. Having in mind the amount of money the Government spent on the Conference they should have followed and open and competitive procedures for allocation of public funds and select the lead NGO that way", said Novaković.

Head of the Delegation of the European Union in Montenegro, Ambassador **Leopold Maurer** underlined in his speech at the opening of the Conference in Danilovgrad that the fight against discrimination and intolerance against the LGBT community must be strengthened. He urged the Montenegrin Government and the NGOs to engage in an ongoing dialogue so that a sustainable partnership can be established for the protection and promotion of these rights. The other European officials and the diplomats, including the international NGOs, such as the *Human Rights Watch*, had a similar message for the Montenegrin Government and the NGOs.

The NGO sector did not want its actions to be seen as an attempt to discredit the Government and the Cabinet of Prime Minister **Igor Lukšić**, but they insist on removal from the NGO register of *Justice in the Balkans*.

Cimbaljević believes that the Government will have to admit the manipulation and its attempts to use its institutional authority to hide its intentions. "We in civil society have extended a hand of cooperation to the Government, and we believe that we will soon shake hands and work together". Several NGO activists confirmed to *Monitor* that talks are being held with the Government that could soon be completed successfully.

Monitor, 23. 09. 2011.

Invisible in the Textbooks, Unwanted in the Society

According to polls, Montenegro is among the most homophobic countries in Europe

Following the decision to publicly state that he is gay, **Zdravko Cimbalević** is constantly exposed to risks. He is bold and determined to fight until the day when he will be able to wander around freely in his native Nikšić. Only public education, he says, can bring the arrival of such better days. It is a logical conclusion that for as long as pupils fail to learn in schools about the human rights of LGBT people, the prejudice and hatred towards homosexuals will continue to reside in the minds of two thirds of Montenegrin citizens.

According to the polls, Montenegro is among the most homophobic countries in Europe. The state has commissioned a survey in which homosexuals were included as one of the reference groups, which the *Center for Democracy and Human Rights* (CEDEM) conducted in May of this year. The results of this research, just like the findings of the previous surveys by the NGO *Center for Monitoring* (CEMI) and *Human Rights Action*, did not surprise anyone. The LGBT community claims that the research confirms the real mood in the society. Montenegrin citizens believe that LGBT people, along with the Roma and people with disabilities (PWD), are the most discriminated social group. After the PWD and the Roma, according to the survey, it is most difficult in Montenegro to be gay. A homosexual is the second least desirable neighbor after a 'drug addict'. The fact that the participants in the research, inspite of being mostly homophobic, believe that the political parties and state institutions do not support enough the rights of homosexual, has prompted an initiative by the *Center for the Civic Education* (CCE). By the end of the year, the research will be completed on how the political parties perceive and represent in reality the LGBT population and to which extent the human rights of LGBT people are present in the school curriculum and textbooks.

Monitor spoke with several members of the LGBT community. They agree that it is not easy to be gay in Montenegro. You are neither, they say, desirable as a friend, or a family member, or a neighbor, or a voter, or a party member. A young producer from Podgorica said that in Montenegro, calling someone a homosexual, is always used to put someone down. For example, in an discussion when the other side cannot produce an argument, this is always pulled as an ace from the sleeve.

"Political parties play a significant role in our society. Numerous examples, unfortunately, identify political parties as the dominant factors of decision making even in those domains where political influence is unacceptable, such as the judiciary and the police. One of the priorities of CCE is that the institutions finally obtain a chance to enforce the law and guarantee human rights. For these reasons, we have launched a joint project with the *LGBT Forum Progress*, with the support from the Canadian Embassy, through which we will try to strengthen the capacity of the state institutions to deal with the challenges of discrimination and violence against the LGBT people, but also to make the rights of sexual minorities more visible in the overall political discourse", said **Daliborka Uljarević**, Director of the CCE.

LESS IMPORTANT

"This makes the LGBT population passive and non-existent. Children are taught from childhood about homosexuality as something that is perverse and sick. Until that changes, and homosexuality is equated with a heterosexual orientation, we will be an invisible and undesirable minority", says a psychologist from Podgorica, also from the LGBT population.

Citizens, as many as 63 percent of them, are convinced that non-governmental organizations are the most powerful protectors of the rights of gay and transgender people. The first LGBT group, which represents actively the interests and rights of LGBT people, see this as a full recognition to the NGO sector. It is a disheartening fact that only 11 percent of citizens support the Pride Parade as a manifestation of the right to freedom of assembly. The President of the board of Progress believes that this is a warning to the system that claims to be based on democratic principles. It is also a signal to politicians that they have to stand up for the rights of LGBT people, stronger than before. "This fact justifies the expectation that leading politicians should be together with us at the Pride Parade. Such presence would send a strong message of support and acceptance", she said.

For the sociologist and professor **Srđan Vukadinović** "the treatment of homosexuality as a part of human diversity and not as a disease, is something that is difficult to change in the consciousness of the citizens of Montenegro and tradition is the key impediment in this matter. "Homophobes often find excuse for their behavior", he said, "by claiming that their rights are endangered when gay people publicly express their feelings". Vukadinović expressed a view that "one cannot speak about the rights of homophobes because they were in fact not jeopardized. Given that the rights of homophobes have not been threatened here, we have to conclude that this is about limiting choices of all citizens of Montenegro and especially those with different sexual orientation", said professor Vukadinović.

The Legal Team of the *LGBT Forum Progress* points out that the limited evidence from the legal system confirms the opinion of Professor Vukadinović and it also gives rise to the new justifications for the discrimination against the LGBT. At a recent hearing before the Municipal Court in Podgorica, a homophobe sued for discrimination, defended himself by claiming that the word "faggot" for him has a positive meaning and that he used it when he wanted to pay compliments to his friends, the children and the loved ones.

Stereotypes and prejudices are not easy to fight. In recognition of this the *Coalition Together for LGBT Rights* created an Action Plan to Combat Homophobia and proposed to the Government to start implementing it. The analysis of Montenegrin school programs and textbooks has shown that sexual minorities are completely invisible in Montenegrin educational policy and practice. Because of the complete absence of LGBT rights and persons in

The researcher of human rights violations **Aleksandar Zeković** believes that Montenegrin society can successfully fight against homophobia only through education. Zeković, the author of the survey of the textbooks, said to *Monitor* that the school programs were rather broadly defined and that gave textbook authors creative freedom to promote gender and sexual education and cover the other topics important for the development of rounded and tolerant young persons. However, he adds, not all authors of textbooks have put this freedom to the good use.

"Education and textbooks politics should not be viewed outside the overall context they exist in. Therefore, programs and textbooks, which accompany them, are not value neutral. LGBT rights are ignored in the overall political context. This is a topic that falls within the 'other', the 'miscellaneous' and the 'less important'. This approach is mirrored in education. If textbooks were written in a neutral and professional manner, they would be equally focused, with the adequate program contents which would ensure respect for all human rights and freedoms".

Zeković's analysis has shown that Montenegrin textbooks in general promote human rights and the development of democratic political culture among young people, but they neglect the discussion on many sensitive issues like the rights of sexual minorities, or topics such as different sexual orientations, same sex partners and families. The textbooks in Montenegro generally have no negative content about sexual orientation, but they ignore it. This has helped Montenegro, according to Zekovic, to present itself in a more positive light in comparison with some other countries in the region.

the textbooks for elementary and secondary schools, the NGOs *Ekvista* and *Progress* filed a complaint to the Ombudsman. These NGOs argue that the textbooks fail to comply with the declared aims of education and that they ignore the existence of LGBT people. "The education system is silent about existence and rights of LGBT people, which further contributes to stigmatization and long-term discrimination and intolerance", said **Milan Šaranović**, Director of NGO *Ekvista*, told *Monitor*.

Organising of the Pride Parade will be the test for the state to show that it is willing to take the risks and prove its commitment to guaranteeing basic human rights to all. Several European parliamentarians, such as Kacin and Lunacek, stressed the political significance of the Pride Parades in the emancipation of the LGBT population. The institution of the Ombudsman, which enjoys great trust of the LGBT population, supports the holding of the Parade.

"The Pride Parades are organized all over the world to highlight the violations of human rights, discrimination and violence that members of sexual minorities experience daily. We find it important to have a Parade in Montenegro, especially since Montenegrin society is traditional and tends to foster stereotypes and prejudice", said Deputy Ombudsman **Marijana Laković** to *Monitor*.

Monitor, 21. 10. 2011.
