



Briefing

Political Trends & Dynamics

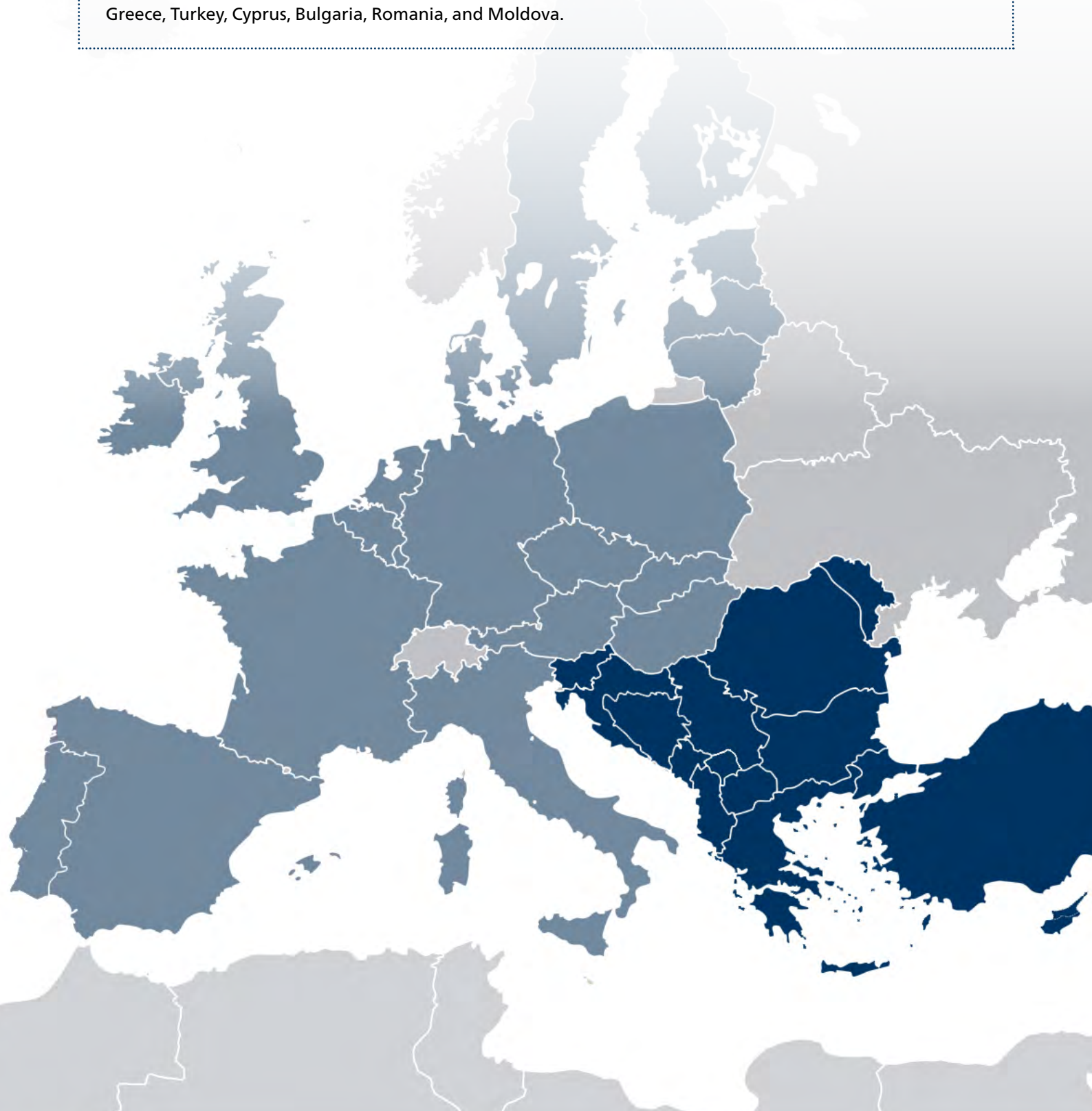
Ecology and Justice in Southeast Europe

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Political Trends & Dynamics in Southeast Europe

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Peace and stability initiatives represent a decades-long cornerstone of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung's work in southeastern Europe. Recent events have only reaffirmed the centrality of Southeast European stability within the broader continental security paradigm. Both democratization and socio-economic justice are intrinsic aspects of a larger progressive peace policy in the region, but so too are consistent threat assessments and efforts to prevent conflict before it erupts. Dialogue SOE aims to broaden the discourse on peace and stability in southeastern Europe and to counter the securitization of prevalent narratives by providing regular analysis that involves a comprehensive understanding of human security, including structural sources of conflict. The briefings cover fourteen countries in southeastern Europe: the seven post-Yugoslav countries and Albania, Greece, Turkey, Cyprus, Bulgaria, Romania, and Moldova.



Editorial

Felix Henkel, Jasmin Mujanović & Alida Vračić

Though rarely a topic of public debate, addressing the challenges of climate change is a particular issue for Southeastern Europe, owing to the region's combination of post-communist and post-conflict governance concerns. Policy regimes which do not address the region's specific needs — in particular those rooted in ongoing concerns about unemployment, poverty, inequality, and social justice more broadly — threaten to exacerbate the region's already pronounced social malaise.

Despite enormous challenges, Southeastern Europe is hardly ever the subject of international climate policy either. The 24th session of the Conference of Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP24) in Katowice, Poland, however, presents an opportunity for regional and European policymakers and activists to hash out a vision for a just post-carbon transition in Southeastern Europe. Indeed, the social costs of not addressing climate change in the region are already clear: Southeastern Europe has the worst air quality on the continent. Next to inefficient heating, automobile exhaust and emissions from heavy industries, the region's continued reliance on coal power is the main culprit. Indeed, a [recent report](#) notes that Southeastern Europe's "newest" coal plants were built in 1988, before the breakup of Yugoslavia, and while governments have pledged to modernize these over the coming decade this still represents reliance on a harmful, and – due to stricter regulation on the horizon – also economically non-viable source of energy.

However, both governments and industry lobbyists have successfully pushed for the expansion of coal power infrastructure, further delaying and complicating the prospect for a green realignment and, arguably gesturing at a familiar problem with good governance in the region. Moreover industrial lobbyists from the outside and the local ones, in fact rely on a weak governance structure to pursue their corporate goals.

According to a 2016 RCC study, between 2016 and 2035 mean annual temperatures are expected to rise between 0.5 to 1.0°C, in addition to an increase of approximately 1.5°C due to global Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions. These shifts will directly impact upon the health, safety, and overall security of citizens in Southeastern Europe. This reality also touches on the uneven distribution of the social costs of (unaddressed) climate change. Rural areas are most vulnerable, for instance, so these changes will devastate, most of all, the region's already impoverished and struggling agricultural workers. 2014 saw catastrophic flooding and landslides across Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Croatia, affecting especially the agricultural heartlands of the Krajina and Vojvodina regions. Smaller flood events have become a seasonal phenomenon, but the effects are seemingly worse each year. All the available data suggests our winters will see more extreme rainfall, an alarming loss of snow pack, while summers shall be marked by extreme heat and drought. Rural communities across the region will be devastated by these shifts, and as the country suffers, the economic and social costs will soon barrel over the towns as well, creating yet another push-factor for emigration.

Worse yet, current strategies to tackle the problem are flawed. While continuing the expansion of coal power on the one hand, governments across the region have pledged to build some 2,800 hydropower plants, from Slovenia to Greece, including in protected wildlife areas and largely without engaging local communities. While hydro power does represent a renewable source of energy for the region, current planning, construction, and execution efforts do not appear to be taking full stock of the overall ecological and social impact of such projects. Moreover, the astonishing potential of other renewable sources of energy (solar, wind and biomass) is not appreciated enough. Rural communities would directly benefit from decentralized production models; through such a 'democratisation' of energy production, oligarchical structures dominating the energy sector could be dismantled; finally, the geographical diversity, short distances as well as the existing grid from Yugoslav times offer considerable potential for the joint development and use of renewables – if governments chose to cooperate with each other.

Activists from Bosnia to Montenegro, and Croatia to Macedonia have responded with local initiatives meant to crystallize the consequences of continuing the current development model and to demand greater participation. Their activities are expanding the spectrum of what we traditionally consider as “green politics” and offer tantalizing glimpses of the emerging coalitions necessary for a proverbial “New Green Deal” for Southeastern Europe and the continent in its entirety.

A just transition can only be successful if it brings all affected groups to the table. Workers in the fossil industries and their families and communities are at the front line of the transition away from fossil fuels towards renewable energies. Their interests need to be considered in the process. But the question remains: will their voices and, more broadly, the social dimensions of climate change take center stage at Katowice and beyond? Clearly, existing and emerging EU frameworks in the region must challenge existing power structures to the benefit of citizens. They should also provide avenues for concerned social groups to urge governments to more seriously address climate change; as an ecological, social, economic, and, ultimately, democratic concern. The essays in this issue of our Political Trends & Dynamics newsletter examine emerging patterns of climate change activism and policy debate in the region and, by comparison, in Germany. They are a valuable survey of the working already being done, and the work remaining — with precious little left before the effects of climate change create truly new realities on the ground.

Energy Transition and Environmental Protection in the Western Balkans

Vedad Suljić, Heinrich Böll Stiftung Bosnia Herzegovina

It is no secret that the environmental protection and energy transition in the six West Balkan (WB) countries is in its infancy. This is especially true for the political parties and the political leadership that fail to place these issues high up on the agenda, in spite of the consequences the region is already facing, but also in a relation to the forthcoming EU accession requirements related to the environment. In an effort to make the current barriers as visible as possible but also to present possible remedies to the decision makers in the region, the Civil Society Forum of the Western Balkans, in collaboration with the Heinrich Böll Foundation Offices in Belgrade and Sarajevo, and leading civil society organizations in the field from across the region published a report elaborating on topics they considered most important in this regard and offering policy recommendations. These were grouped into three parts: #Clean Mind, #Clean Energy, and #Clean Air. With their permission, we once again circulate this critical analysis in a slightly shortened version. The original can be found [here](#).

The six West Balkan (WB6) countries are faced with severe problems on their EU path with regards to energy transition and environmental protection. The environment was never placed on the agenda of party elites and political authorities, a conscious decision that meant that the environment did not matter politically. The political marginalization of environmental issues is reflected in the latest EU strategy for the Western Balkans, which fails to address the environment, even though it is considered one of the core areas for the EU. This will considerably undermine future efforts to make environmental concerns political priorities in the WB6, given the role of the EU and relevance of the requirements of the accession process for national agenda-setting.

#CLEAN MIND

Local governments tend to view the topic of environmental protection as the exclusive purview of environmental ministries, and are unaware of EU climate policy mechanisms, such as the EU ETS, and funds for climate change mitigation and adaptation. The majority of regional decision makers consider EU climate policy as a threat to the traditional economy (especially to the coal sector) as opposed to an opportunity for sustainable development.

Such a lack of knowledge often leads to neglecting the contribution and responsibility of all other sectors affecting the issue. Carriers of power and energy users (construction industry, industry in gen-



Suljić is the director of the Regional Education and Information Centre for Sustainable Development in South-East Europe.

eral, and traffic), often do not understand what energy efficiency stands for exactly; it is not clear that energy efficiency is the conversion of purchased energy to the energy service market. There is no awareness that even minute organizational and technical measures can achieve significant financial effects and that investment return time is very short – from several years to several months.

There is no accepted definition of the problem with energy poverty and no strategy on how to deal with it. For instance, energy poverty in Montenegro is often equated with social vulnerability, without any plan or document tackling solely this phenomenon. The consequence of the above is a lack of cooperation and communication between different sectorial ministries (energy, agriculture, forestry, water management, spatial planning, environment, tourism, etc.), and development of strategies, plans and programs without taking into account an inter-sectorial approach.

The countries do not have a legal framework which enables introductory climate policy mech-

anisms such as carbon pricing. The existing feed-in tariffs for renewable electricity generation are not climate-sensitive, meaning these tariffs do not include climate mitigation and/or adaptation impacts. Green procurement is not introduced, and there is no inter-sectoral approach to climate change issues. Moreover, such an approach has resulted in the implementation of various projects in the region, predominantly for small HPPs² located in protected areas, national parks, nature parks, etc. in violation of laws in effect. The reason was mostly the non-existence of spatial planning documentation, or its inadequate development, and even not taking into account relevant strategies, plans, and legislative requirements. Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) was done for some of the projects/programs but mainly to satisfy the legally required procedures. Instead, SEAs should prevent illegal construction in the first place, which is one of the biggest problems faced in urban areas.

Doing business in a rapidly changing environment, which the energy transition towards clean energy will definitely impose, will ask companies to change working habits and find new niches. Further liberalisation of the energy markets will allow their penetration by various international companies, and only flexible companies with diversified services will be able to respond to market demand. In the WB countries, large public utility companies (power and gas) have no plan to adapt their business models to a changed market environment. The majority of public enterprises and utility companies do not have a strategic vision of development in compliance with relevant EU policies and do not diversify their services. Such behaviour could have dramatic consequences in terms of market and financial loss, but can also lead to social problems due to job loss (in the long run). For this reason, their energy is not competitive and affordable to some citizens, and compels them to use dirty alternative fuels for heating. This causes severe air pollution in some urban areas. Moreover, state strategies (e.g. BiH's draft Energy Strategy) do not consider future trends in the energy sector and consider sustainable development only in a superficial manner.

We recommend educating utility companies on the EU's strategic vision for these fields and promote diversifying risks and keeping jobs. Compliance with environmental obligations is one

of the most important sets of obligations the countries must fulfill in the process of joining the European Union. This requires deployment of significant human and material resources. Enforcement of the legal framework is essential for the success of energy efficiency improvement. Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) should enable planners and decision makers to foresee the effects of their policies, plans and programmes on the environment and evaluate the links with the economy and society.

Work on the Paris Agreement should be started as soon as possible, including the development of Strategic Energy and Climate Action Plans (SECAP). Supporting mechanisms should be improved to stimulate resource efficiency, introduction of energy labeling, and green procurement. Other recommendations are:

- Establishment of an institutional system and capacities for monitoring, reporting and verification of greenhouse gas emissions;
- Monitoring the implementation of NDCs (National Determined Contributions);
- Harmonization of spatial planning documents on various levels in the countries;
- Strengthening cooperation and collaboration on all management levels to improve strategic planning, and create comprehensive investment policies to enable its efficient implementation;
- Conduct procedures of SEA in a proper and timely way (for any plan, program, legislative act, or similar), to ensure a quality background for future projects and assessments of their environmental impacts (EIAs);
- For relevant countries, it is necessary to sign and ratify the Protocols under the LRTAP (Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution) Convention;
- Stimulate the introduction of a system of energy management in the economy and households, through appropriate projects in the region, including comprehensive education;
- Environmental protection should be given high priority within future EU Strategies for the Western Balkans.

#CLEAN ENERGY

The WB6 have a continued dependence on fossil fuels and low deployment of renewable energy. At least nine new lignite power plants are being planned in WB countries (except in Albania). Apart from adverse environmental and health impacts, they cause rising CO₂ emissions and increased costs – as environmental standards become stricter and more demanding, there are additional costs for pollution control equipment. In addition, once the ETS is applied, significant additional operating costs in the form of emissions allowances will impact the electricity price and sustainability of power plants. The plans for most of the new coal plants were made when the situation was quite different and failed to take into account the massive changes in the electricity sector that have happened since. Taking CO₂ payments and technology improvements into account, it is highly unlikely that any of the plants are economically feasible.

The WB6 countries are attempting to solve problems in power generation sectors through increased coal production by subsidizing coal mines. In many cases, concessions for exploitation of coal are not paid, while conversely, concessions for renewables are paid almost regularly (even concessions for wind are required). In BiH, there were cases when years-of-service contributions for coal miners were paid from public budgets. Due to such subsidising, the price of coal for power generation becomes much cheaper for other consumers (industry, district heating etc.), and the expansion of natural gas networks is supported by public budgets without any requirement of energy efficiency by new users. This results in useless infrastructure, with the coal mine sector paying just a minor part of external costs (e.g. part of costs for air pollution and land damages).

Liberalization of the energy market (electricity and natural gas) is one of the main requirements of the Energy Community Treaty. Some progress has been achieved, especially in the electricity sector; however, this progress has been slow in the last several years. The consequences are the subsidizing of electricity generated from fossil fuel, which is the main barrier to higher penetration of renewables and the increase of energy efficiency (due to the low price of electricity for final users). In the natural gas sector, the consequence is the relatively high price of natural gas and very limited development of the network, while public companies maintain concessions for new power

plants in non-transparent processes. Investing in renewable energy projects in the region is both a very protracted and tiresome process due to a complex administrative permitting procedure, especially in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is estimated the investor needs to obtain approximately 50 different permits, at different administrative levels. Permitting procedures are usually conditioned, one permit being a precondition for another one; and moreover, permitting procedures are not always clear, requiring investors to revisit authorised institutions several times. The permitting process lasts up to three years.

In addition, the supporting schemes set in place in all WB countries, especially feed-in tariffs, favour private investors and do not provide any privileges for community thus hindering wider deployment of renewable energy. The energy transition in WB countries towards renewable energy is severely hindered, sometimes stopped, due to non-acceptance of projects by the local community. The current investment model, strongly supported by international financing institutions, prefers privately owned investors, which are very often closely linked to ruling political parties. Rarely are the local communities included in the decision-making process, or have an opportunity to invest, and thus receive financial benefits from the project. Poor local community engagement has led to a significant number of projects which were subject to disputes and faced severe problems in project implementation or were abandoned. As a rule, communal interests and public participation in decision-making processes are all but being neglected, as is very often highlighted in local communities protesting against the construction of small hydroelectric plants. In many places local communities have resorted to patrols and vigils in order to keep construction companies away from their resources (e.g. rivers).

We recommend preparing a plan for the gradual reduction of subsidies for energy. In parallel, preparation of back stop technologies for the creation of jobs which will be lost in the traditional energy sector should be initiated. Establishment of supporting mechanisms for energy efficiency should be initiated in order to make energy bills affordable to the citizens. Promotion of an electricity market for final users should be initiated. The local communities ask for collaborative decision-making, opportunities for employment, involvement in management and/or ownership, building mutual trust, and risk sharing. Active involvement of

the public (civil societies, citizens, interested NGOs, etc.) in all phases of the project development and implementation means not only informing them about the activities, and the process, but talking to them, analysing their comments and feedbacks, and elaborating on the reasons for any rejections.

Given the current popularity of energy-efficiency projects in the WB, all this potential should be used to guide the strategic approach to planning and implementation of other innovative initiatives observing novel approaches to design, construction works, production of building materials and elements, monitoring and certification, waste management, clean technologies – an interdisciplinary approach which would create the conditions to open many new, green jobs throughout the region. Unemployment, as a huge problem in the whole region, can be resolved through a strategic approach to the sector of energy efficiency by recognition of this sector not only as a social but as a very big economy driven sector. This sector is the one that can create the so-called green jobs through engagement of existing unemployed labour force (local experts and engineers, building companies, local producers of the required construction materials, farmers). It is necessary to develop local potentials, especially local clean and sustainable production through the utilization of local natural, sustainable raw materials such as wood, wool, clay, lime, straw, and other construction waste materials that, aside from a thermal effect, have a strong impact on the protection of the environment, reduction of CO₂, rural development, agriculture development, employment, and the provision of healthier and quality living conditions.

#CLEAN AIR

In the countries of the Western Balkans, air quality depends on several factors. One of the impact factors is the intense usage of fossil fuels (primarily poor quality coal with significant sulphur content) for industrial purposes, for energy purposes, and for household heating purposes. Continually, the usage of other solid fuels (primarily wood) for heating of households significantly impacts the air quality in the cities. A high unemployment rate and a low social standard is one of the causes for inappropriate heating in households. People are forced to buy cheap, low-calorific fuel for home heating; this has a significant influence on air quality. In addition, one of the problems that affect air

quality is the lack of inspection, and the lack of implementation of emission reduction measures.

One of the most significant factors impacting the air quality is low traffic development caused by underdeveloped public transport with an average vehicle age of 10–15 years (not meeting EU emission standards), and the low priority development of rail transport. Air quality management in most WB countries is typically scaled down to individual measurements of air quality, without any statistical data processing and analysis, including research which differs from country to country. Essential PM4 source apportionment studies have never been done in the region. The large amount of data that is used should be replaced by a management system model using tools necessary for emission inventories, for instance. There is no air quality management model in the region, which introduces indicators enabling the comparison between different cities and monitors the effects of the measures taken.

We recommend that large combustion plants implement all feasible techno-economic measures to reduce emission into the air (e.g. investments in desulphurization). Given the energy efficiency sector's enormous potential for comprehensive and sustainable socio-economic growth of the country, its development must be approached strategically.

Every area with evidently poor air quality should conduct measures depending on local circumstances and causes. Some measures are solely applicable for a single city/municipality while others are generally applicable. Therefore, it is necessary to develop air quality protection action plans for all affected areas, conceived in a way so as to make their implementation possible and to create win-win outcomes as much as possible, e.g. to implement measures which reduce air pollution and contribute to employment. In terms of mobility, projects related to increased transport effectiveness should be prioritized.

Action plans also have to enable local authorities and authorities at other levels to establish an efficient system of air quality management. This system has to be efficient and effective, especially during episodes of poor air quality -- also, it has to enable the achievement of long-term goals regarding air quality. Finally, it should contribute to a greater accountability of relevant authorities when it comes to air quality.

Climate change is shouting. Who is listening?

Stevan Petrović

The concept of climate change is very well known, but very little embedded in public discourse in Western Balkans. Academia, scientists, or universities do not take a forefront role either in leading or moderating the debate from a pure climate or intersectional perspective.

As a result, climate change policy in the region is at the developmental stage, while relevant sectoral policies, first and foremost energy policy, recognize climate changes only on a declarative level, while relying on fossil fuels as crucial long term resources. The public in the region rarely addresses climate change as a concept in its discussions, and when it does it certainly does not address it with the importance and sense of urgency that it carries.

Being the immense, comprehensive, and incredibly challenging problem it is, climate change already has significant impact on socio-economic development in the region, causing social and civil unrest, economic damage, and changes of public and political discourse. In fact, climate change has become an integral part of our lives and our social and political developments without being accepted and recognized as such.

In the last several years, worsening air pollution has spurred protests in several countries, while posing a serious health and environmental risk in the whole region. At the same time, the causes of climate change remain unaddressed, and air pollution is rarely linked to climate change more broadly. Floods, storms, droughts, and fires have caused significant damage in last ten years across the region. The aftermath of these natural disasters shifted political powers, destroyed communities, and occupied public discourse. Yet it too has failed to bring about a serious debate about climate change. Local governments instead deal infrastructure development and raising capacities to act responsibly and appropriately to natural disasters – but are not addressing climate change in relation to weather instability.

One of the several superficial reactions of policy-makers in energy sector is to give hydropower development more attention. Proposed hydroelectric dams have drawn the ire of local commu-



Petrović is an activist and project manager of several environmental NGOs from Serbia and international networks and federations. He started in the youth sector, and established a network of non-EU Young Greens from Eastern Europe, becoming a Secretary General of European Young Greens. He worked on environment, energy, and climate policies in context of European integration of Serbia in the Belgrade Open School.

nities across the region and led to protests aimed at protecting local. The negative social and environmental consequences of such projects have caused debate, contestation, conflicts, protests, and lawsuits in the region. Yet somehow even such popular movements or legal actions did not produce a fruitful ground to discuss how do we approach climate change and make priorities accordingly.

Paradoxically, the social dimension of the impacts of climate change has been far-reaching, devastating, and immobilizing, without climate change as such even being a topic and recognized phenomenon.

Local Communities and Citizen's Responses to Chaotic and Unclear Measures and Plans

In late autumn and early winter, annual protests are held across the region related to air pollution, which worsens significantly around that time (rivalling the air quality of Beijing and New Delhi). While states and local municipalities rarely and randomly measure air quality, the little evidence there is shows an alarmingly unhealthy level of pollution each winter – with no adequate response by the authorities.

Air quality worsens in winter due to the added stress that household heating puts on the atmosphere – apart from coal power plants and transportation, clean energy to heat homes is often out of reach of most citizens. People therefore heat their homes with wood or coal, which produce more pollution and are not energy-efficient.

Yet the responsibility for pollution does not lie with the individual citizens who cannot afford clean energy. The change that is needed is comprehensive and requires a complex campaign that utilizes the expertise of academia, politicians, and relevant policy, industry and business sector representatives, as well as civil society. At present, the problem is scarcely recognized – a public and factual conversation could be a start.

People walk in the street in haze in Sarajevo on December 25, 2017.



The dynamics behind new hydropower capacity has been intense in last couple of years. With a need to raise the total amount of electricity produced, and under pressure to reach set targets of the renewable energy, policymakers across the region invited investors to finance new hydropower capacity – feed-in tariffs to promote renewable energy were set. Although this was done in the context of a climate change policy framework, the whole process had little respect for environmental or democratic arguments. The reaction of the local community has been strong and decisive.

In Albania more than twenty cases of ongoing social conflicts and protests have happened in the last five years. In Serbia, after years of struggles, the voices of the local communities finally reached the Ministry of Environment. Interestingly, in one example, the Ministry of Environment initiated a court process to cancel the project license. In Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro, similarly strong reactions have been made by local communities in defense of the rivers in their surroundings.

These projects have resulted in social unrest, further diminishing the credibility of institutions, and causing financial losses as well as environmental damage. However, treating rivers as a resource for hydropower while ignoring their value for the local community leads to further conflict. As long as the dialogue between citizens, activists, investors, and authorities is on a case by case basis, on a *not in my back yard* principle, everyone loses.

One of the important segments of climate change policy on a local level are energy-saving measures, which reduce both costs and pollution. Testimonies of some successful municipal energy managers have emphasized cooperation with janitors in schools, teachers, and concierges as crucial elements for implementing these measures. Some facilities have begun to automate heating, and it is up to janitorial staff to ensure the functioning of such systems. Their training is crucial – not only technical training, but cultural as well. The results of these energy-saving measures can be immense in terms of costs saved and pollution avoided.

The Conscience Is Shouting But Is Not Heard – Civil Society Response

To summarize the local discourse: the devastating results of natural disaster – floods, droughts, storms – have forced us to develop some climate change adaptation mechanisms. Yet we fail to call it climate change adaptation and we will certainly not address the causes of climate change. If that does exist, it is global phenomenon – one that does not concern us.

The only sector that has been alarmed and engaged is civil society and its environmental sector. The civil society organizations (CSOs) have been vocal about climate change and its causes and effects. However, civil society organizations are strategically oriented towards policymakers rather than towards local community. Unfortunately, the public discussion that is being led by civil society has so far had a limited scope. Still, some of the social protests mentioned above have been supported by CSOs and do have role in some successful cases. There are several initiatives worth mentioning.

Several regional CSOs initiated a Network of Good Energy, aimed at boosting and support-

ing the development of systems and measures in public buildings that cause energy savings, supporting the development of a vocational community of energy managers and professionals in the field, as well as to be a resource point for citizens. The initiative gathers field experts from municipalities, organizations, and companies in dialogue about the best technology, effective measures, methods of communicating, etc., all in order to save energy.

A man reads a newspaper near a stall as heavy fog and smog cover the city in Skopje on December 14, 2017.



With the slogan “Energy in the hands of citizens,” the Green Energy Cooperative (*Zelena energetska zadruga*) in Zagreb is supporting citizens in developing, investing, and using renewable energy sources. One of their results was the development of solar power plant on the roof of the Technology Development Center building in Križevci. According to them, the knowledge and capacities for such project are not as challenging as having effective and productive communication with citizens. Another of their projects is the development of a digital platform for financing renewable sources, which will connect projects and citizens that will invest in those projects.

In Conclusion

The production of energy is costly – financially, socially and environmentally – especially in our region, while the prices of electricity are by far the lowest in Europe. The price that we are already paying because of climate change is very high, while it is very common to say that renew-

able energy is still very expensive and that our poor countries can’t afford it.

Long term plans of the energy sector continue to rely on coal for energy production and leading policy, regulatory, and business actors avoid public discussion on climate change. Environmental taxation is being avoided by all means by the countries of the region, and the ‘polluter pays’ principle is not implemented. Their core methods are to rely on EU and bilateral funds while capacities are not adequate to raise funds and implement projects.

Meanwhile, climate change is rarely studied in universities across the region, leaving professionals to find their own way for contemporary education in the field. This undoubtedly affects the state of the social dialogue about climate change, which at present does not center expertise and knowledge, nor does it give citizens the space or framework to state their needs and priorities. Lastly, policymakers must listen to these concerns and make responsible decisions. Effective climate change policy needs political will, financial resources, relevant expertise, as well as input from local communities in order to make the sorely-needed changes to protect the region from the worst effects of climate change.

“Real” Prices and False Solutions: How to Make Climate Justice Even Less Relatable to the Citizens of SEE

Iva Marković

Even though the governments of the countries in Southeast Europe tend to diminish our pollution rates and present our contribution to global GHG emissions as irrelevant, anyone who is dealing with climate change can tell you that every country and every metric ton in the Paris Agreement counts. So what can be done to lower our footprint? Our governments have got one thing right – the first one they blame for emissions is the energy sector.

In the rare occasions when the public is informed about local policies for the mitigation of climate change, one can often hear that the electricity prices in the region are among the lowest ones in Europe. Namely, we are dealing with so-called *social* instead of *real* prices of energy, where implicitly, the rational solution should be hidden in increasing bills, in other words, higher costs of living for everyone equally. Even some parts of civil society that are dealing particularly with environmental issues have adopted this logic, advocating for higher prices for the final users as a bitter but effective remedy for emissions.

To momentarily leave aside the discussion about what on earth real prices are in a speculative market economy, this discourse leaves out another, more dramatic statistic – the SEE average income (for the ones lucky enough not to fall under the grave unemployment statistics) is in even larger discrepancy with the European normal. The average salaries in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and Macedonia, all falling below 450 EUR, are the lowest in Europe. This correlates with air pollution data showing that the capitals of Skopje and Sarajevo are the most polluted urban areas in the region. The calculus is simple: if electricity or heating bills are too high for a household's budget, people turn to other, even dirtier/less efficient/non-regulated energy sources. To the surprise of many NGOs, no awareness campaign has ever beaten the materialist analysis. One can hardly imagine an average family from the SEE region investing on their own (without serious subsidies or structural support) in solar panels and wind turbines. Poverty



Iva Marković is a researcher in the field of political ecology and an activist from Belgrade. Her interests are in degrowth, commons, social impact of the climate change, natural resources management, and ecofeminism. With background in Green politics, she is today an active member of the Left Summit of Serbia, a co-founder of Organization for political ecology – Polekol, and a member of the platform for the theory and practice of the commons Zajednicko.org.

is not a simple lack of means – it is also a narrow scope of choices and the structural impossibility of long-term planning.

Another story the dichotomy between social and real prices of energy is not telling us is that because of misgoverning and poor investing in the existing grid, internal losses in the distribution network are huge. In Serbia it is as high as 15 per cent! And when the 85 per cent of produced energy finally arrives at the point of use, it is used in tragically inefficient technologies due to the high poverty rate in private households on one hand, and corrupted implementation of policies that supposed to encourage/force the companies to use new technologies, on the other.

If we take even a lightly holistic look at the dynamics of this vicious circle, it is obvious it can only be overcome with a drastic turn: improving energy efficiency, solving network malwares and investing in real renewable sources (unlike small-hydropower plants!), claiming democratic control over the energy companies, increasing responsibility of the private industry, and fighting poverty. Further threats to the living standards of citizens, under the excuse of lowering the carbon footprint of the country are far from helping. Perhaps even bigger damage than bigger bills in a poor society is the damage caused by the alienation of the lower classes from the struggle against climate change that is inherently their cause, as they've proven to be the first in the line of fire ... or rain.

The background is a blue-tinted photograph of a building's exterior. In the upper left, a white dove is captured in flight against a textured wall. In the lower right, a large, intricate decorative pattern, possibly a traditional textile or wall art, is visible. The pattern features a central floral or geometric motif surrounded by smaller, repeating elements. The overall composition is clean and modern, with a strong emphasis on the color blue.

POLITICAL TRENDS & DYNAMICS

OVERVIEW

THE AIM OF THIS SECTION IS TO BROADEN THE DISCOURSE ON PEACE AND STABILITY IN SOUTHEAST EUROPE AND TO PROVIDE ANALYSIS THAT INVOLVES A COMPREHENSIVE UNDERSTANDING OF HUMAN SECURITY, INCLUDING STRUCTURAL SOURCES OF CONFLICT. THE BRIEFINGS COVER FOURTEEN COUNTRIES IN SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE: THE SEVEN POST-YUGOSLAV COUNTRIES AND ALBANIA, GREECE, TURKEY, CYPRUS, BULGARIA, ROMANIA, AND MOLDOVA.

Two bilateral disputes, two very different trajectories. This might be the most succinct way of summing up the different directions in which two long-running disputes in the region – between **Greece** and **Macedonia** on the one hand and **Kosovo** and **Serbia** on the other – are heading.

Although the referendum on the ‘name’ agreement between Athens and Skopje did not meet the legal threshold for being considered a success in terms of voter turnout, the government in Skopje argued that the 91 per cent vote in favour of the agreement gave it the mandate to press on with changing the constitution, as well as the country’s name, to the Republic of North Macedonia. After much political suspense and a cliff-hanger vote – where it remained uncertain until the last minute whether the government would secure the two-thirds majority needed to start the procedure to change the country’s constitution – on October 19 the Macedonian Parliament backed the necessary motion with 80 votes in favour and 39 against. This breakthrough was achieved thanks to the fact that eight MPs from the opposition VMRO-DPMNE decided to lend their support to the motion, going directly against the will of their party leadership. Much speculation erupted about what had motivated these MPs to vote in favour of the agreement, with the police reported to be providing them with protection.

Opposition members of parliament stand to boycott the vote as Macedonia’s MPs vote to start changing constitutional amendments to rename the country North Macedonia during a parliamentary session, in Skopje, Macedonia on October 19, 2018.



On the back of this, the government submitted four draft constitutional amendments to the

Macedonian Parliament, which will take the process to the next stage. They are, at present being debated, with a vote due to take place in early December, requiring only a simple majority. After this hurdle is surmounted, the government will submit final drafts of the constitutional amendments to Parliament, whose passage will again require a two-thirds majority. It should be possible to complete the entire process by the end of December or early January.

The entire deal is far from being out of the woods of course. Not least, even if all the remaining hurdles in Skopje are surmounted, it remains to be seen whether Athens will be able to follow through on its side of the bargain and ratify the agreement in the Greek Parliament.

Despite this, the prospects for resolving the Greek-Macedonian dispute look far more rosy than the prospects of resolving just about any dispute between Belgrade and Pristina at the moment. For much of the spring and summer, officials in Belgrade and Pristina stoked talk of land swaps and territorial partition as a way of resolving their mutual disputes. While many wonder(ed) whether such talk was just intended to distract attention from the Brussels-mediated dialogue on normalising relations, others are now wondering whether the idea has withered away just as public flirtation with it has, or whether it is still being discussed in secret?

Whatever may, or may not, be going on behind the scenes of relations between Belgrade and Pristina, in public they are going from bad to worse. On November 8, Hashim Thaci and Aleksandar Vučić met in Brussels for another round of the dialogue mediated by the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs. By all accounts, it was a bad tempered affair, coming as it did a day after the government in Pristina decided to impose a ten per cent tariff on Bosnian and Serbian goods, claiming this was retaliation for Belgrade’s actions to thwart, or even reverse, Kosovo’s international recognition.

Despite calls from Mogherini to refrain from words or actions contrary to the spirit of normalisation, relations continued to slide towards the paranormal. The next flashpoint occurred

on November 20, when Kosovo failed to secure enough votes to join Interpol at the organization's General Assembly in Dubai. Serbia (and its backers) had campaigned vigorously against the efforts of Kosovo (and its backers) to be admitted. Angered by Serbia's campaign, the day after the failed vote, Kosovo's government decided to increase the tariff on Bosnian and Serbian goods to 100 per cent.

Kosovo Serbs stage a protest against Kosovo's decision to impose a 100 per cent tariff on Serbian and Bosnia-Herzegovinian imports in front of the EULEX building in the northern town of Mitrovica, Kosovo on November 27, 2018.



A war of words exploded between officials from Belgrade and Pristina, which quickly fanned out into a media war on both sides. Meanwhile, ordinary consumers were the most directly affected. The new measures created a particularly difficult situation in Serb areas of Kosovo, which rely not just on Serbian commercial goods, but also medicines. That tensions could easily escalate further was illustrated by a raid into north Mitrovica by a Kosovo special police unit in the early hours of Friday morning. Four individuals were arrested as part of the investigation into the murder of Kosovo Serb politician Oliver Ivanović, but many local Serbs felt that the timing of the night raid was more a show of force in the context of the latest standoff with Belgrade than a genuine attempt to bring to justice the killers of Ivanović.

What the next twist or turn in this spiral of escalation will be is anyone's guess. Unfortunately, at present it seems that it would take an even wilder guess to predict how Belgrade and Pristina can be returned down the track of continuing to normalise their relations.

ELECTIONS

Voters in **Bosnia** went to the polls on October 7 to elect their representatives at national, entity and cantonal levels of government. On the whole, the elections did not produce many surprises, but also produced little that could give observers grounds for optimism that Bosnia could become a better governed country over the next four years. The race for the country's central presidency saw the election of Milorad Dodik, the outgoing RS President and a man who openly campaigns for the independence of the entity from which he hails. Perhaps even more controversial was the election of Željko Komšić to the Bosnian Presidency – while elected as the representative of Bosnian Croats in the Federation, Komšić appears to have largely been elected thanks to Bosniak votes. Not surprisingly, the main parties representing Bosnian Croats were up in arms, as were, albeit to a lesser extent, officials in Zagreb. Least surprising was the election of SDA candidate Šefik Džaferović as the Bosniak representative on the Presidency.

A woman casts her vote at a polling station during the general elections in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina on October 07, 2018.



In the Federation entity's Parliament, the SDA retained its position as the leading party representing Bosniaks – despite significant defections from the party ahead of the elections, it won 27 seats, down from 29 in the previous Parliament. Meanwhile, SBB BiH, the other major party representing Bosniaks, saw its number of seats halved to 8. The more civically minded parties in the Federation also saw some signs of recovery – together, the SDP, DF and Naša Stranka won 32

seats, compared to a total of 28 seats in 2014. Among the parties representing Bosnian Croats, the coalition around the HDZ increased its share of seats from 12 to 16, mainly at the expense of its main rival, HDZ 1990, which saw its seats decline from 4 to 2.

Meanwhile, in the RS voters delivered a clear victory to Dodik's ruling SNSD and its coalition partners – the DNS and SP - who won 47 seats out of 83 in the new RS Assembly compared to 42 in the previous one. The main opposition block around the SDS won 29 seats, seven less than in the previous RS Assembly elections. The main opposition party, the SDS, did particularly badly, winning eight seats less than in the 2014 RS Parliamentary elections. Dodik's loyal ally and outgoing Prime Minister Željka Cvijanović was elected as RS President.

GOVERNMENTS

Across the region, governments experienced only modest instability.

In **Greece**, Foreign Minister Nikos Kotzias resigned in mid-October. Media reported that he had verbally clashed with Syriza coalition partner and Defense Minister Panos Kammenos. Their dispute appears to have been tied to the 'name' agreement with Macedonia, which Kotzias steered and is opposed by Kammenos, who apparently also challenged Kotzias over the spending of Foreign Ministry funds. Kotzias appears to have been most angered by Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras' failure to defend him during the meeting and challenged the government to publish his resignation letter. Tsipras took over the Foreign Ministry portfolio personally, vowing to see through the agreement with Macedonia.

Controversial **Bulgarian** Deputy Prime Minister Valeri Simeonov resigned from the government in mid-November, after more than a month of protests by mothers of disabled children, who had been incensed by his remarks about them and their children earlier in October. True to form, Simeonov blamed his departure on a media campaign which had been directed against him.

As **Romania** prepared to take over the Presidency of the European Council in January, the coun-

try's EU affairs minister, who is also the coordinator of preparations for the EU Council Presidency, resigned from his post on November 10. The motives were not immediately clear, but media reports indicated colleagues had questioned him on Romania's preparedness to take over the rotating European Council Presidency. Regardless, the move raised serious questions about Romania's preparedness to manage the Presidency.

At the end of October, **Albanian** Interior Minister Fatmir Xhafaj resigned from his post. No explanation was given for his resignation, but opposition parties had campaigned for his resignation due to the fact that his brother, Agron Xhafaj, has been convicted for drug trafficking in Italy, where he is currently serving a jail sentence.

Following **Bosnia's** Parliamentary elections in October, the real challenge now begins – forming governments at the national, entity and cantonal levels. Bosnian parties will begin the long and drawn out process of haggling over who gets control over which ministries, public companies and other state resources or forms of patronage. The situation is perhaps simplest and most clear cut in the RS entity, where the coalition around the ruling SNSD has a clear majority and will likely be able to form the government before the end of the year. It has even put out feelers to some of the opposition parties and their individual MPs. Outgoing RS President Milorad Dodik declared that he would propose Radovan Višković, the head of the SNSD parliamentary group, for Prime Minister.

In the Federation entity, the situation remains much more uncertain. To begin with, the current broken election law poses a major challenge for the formation of the Federation Parliament's House of Peoples. Until a way is found to form this upper chamber of the Parliament, no government can be voted into existence in the Federation, but if and when the problem will be resolved remains far from clear. Indeed, it is not even clear who has the authority to resolve how the House of Peoples will be formed. And even if this hurdle is jumped, it is unclear who will form the ruling coalition in the Federation. The SDA and HDZ look like the most logical parties to form the next government, but the HDZ has said it will demand changes to the electoral law that

would ensure that the Croat representative on the central presidency is elected strictly by ethnic Croats. It is hard to see how other parties in the Federation could meet such demands.

THE LONG ARM OF THE LAW

Stories and themes to do with justice sector reforms, the rule of law and cases relating to senior politicians played an unusually prominent role in the local media over the last two months.

On November 13, the European Commission published its latest monitoring reports on **Bulgaria** and **Romania** under the Cooperation and Verification Mechanism, established to track rule of law reforms in the two countries after accession. The report on Romania was considered to be one of the toughest on the country so far, with the Commission requesting that the government in Bucharest cease with modifying justice legislation and show its commitment to maintaining an independent justice system. On the same day, the European Parliament also adopted a resolution in which it laid out its own concerns about the rule of law in Romania.

The timing of the reports was embarrassing, coming as they did less than two months before Romania assumes the Presidency of the European Council. Romania's government responded by saying that it was considering suing the Commission over what it perceived as a highly unjust report. In what must have only added insult to injury for the Romanian government, the Commission's report on neighbouring **Bulgaria** was fairly positive, with Frans Timmermans, the Commission Vice-President, even suggesting that if Bulgaria kept up progress, the Cooperation and Verification Process could be concluded before the end of the mandate of the current Commission. Many experts and analysts on the judiciary and rule of law in Bulgaria begged to differ with the Commission's assessments.

In **Serbia**, too, the government, EU, Council of Europe, professional associations and legal experts were all embroiled in a protracted battle over the country's own rule of law reforms. In late October, a Ministry of Justice official claimed in a statement to the media that draft amendments to the Serbian constitution, which would

supposedly limit political interference in the judiciary, had been approved by the Council of Europe's Venice Commission. Experts and legal professionals claimed that the draft constitutional amendments would do little to limit political interference in the judicial system and disputed that the Venice Commission had signed off on them. All in all, it seemed that the Serbian government was far more interested in simulating reforms in the judicial sector than in really implementing them.

Yet the most sensational news this month was the rather spectacular flight of **former Macedonian Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski** from Macedonia to Hungary, just as he was due to begin serving his two year jail sentence regarding the illegal purchase of a car with official funds while in government. Gruevski fled Macedonia on November 11; Macedonian officials only issued an international warrant for his arrest on November 12, when it appeared clear that Gruevski had already fled. Albanian police reported that Gruevski had travelled through Albania in a car belonging to the Hungarian embassy in Tirana, apparently passing on to Montenegro and Serbia before reaching Hungary. Once in Hungary, Gruevski claimed asylum, claiming that he had been politically persecuted in his home country and that the government had plotted to murder him once in jail. Hungary appears to have granted him asylum. Meanwhile, Macedonian authorities made it clear that they expected Gruevski to be extradited. Despite this, many in Macedonia wondered if Gruevski had simply been allowed to escape by the government, as part of a murky deal to ensure the support of some VMRO-DPMNE MPs for the 'name' agreement with Athens.

Gruevski is not the only Balkan politician or official on the run from the law. At the beginning of October, it was revealed that police in **Costa Rica** had arrested Elana Udrea, the former **Romanian** tourism and development minister from 2008 to 2012, along with former organized crime chief prosecutor Alina Bica. Both have been sentenced to prison back in Romania.

Politicians in other corners of Southeast Europe also received the odd conviction for corruption or involvement in organized crime. Thus, former **Croatian** Prime Minister Ivo Sanader received a

two and a half year jail sentence for war profiteering on October 22. In neighbouring **Bosnia**, a court sentenced former Federation Agriculture Minister Jerko Ivanković Lijanović to a 12 year prison sentence for involvement in organized crime, money laundering and tax fraud.

In other cases, politicians of various shapes and sizes faced arrest and/or investigation. On October 22, Albanian police arrested two former Socialist Party MPs on suspicion of involvement with corruption and organized crime, part of a wider crackdown on drug traffickers. In **Bulgaria**, over 20 people were arrested on October 29 for allegedly having taken part on a citizenship selling scam. Among them was the head of the State Agency for Bulgarians Abroad.

Yet despite all of these, and other, ongoing investigations and prosecutions, it was still hard to escape the conclusion that cases of battling organized crime and – in particular – high level corruption were the exception rather than the norm in the region.

AGROKOR

Another small sensation in the region came with the extradition, at long last, of fugitive **Croatian** businessman **Ivica Todorčić** to his home country of Croatia from the UK. Todorčić is wanted for questioning over fraud allegations relating to the (mis)management of his Agrokor empire. Upon his return, Todorčić was taken before the Zagreb County Court and released on a bail sum of one million euros to await an indictment and possible trial. As ever, Todorčić was in a fighting mood, claiming that he would even run for president of Croatia.

MIGRANTS

As winter drew near, the plight of migrants and refugees from the Middle East travelling through the region came into sharper focus. The situation was most dramatic in and around the town of Bihać in the north-western corner of **Bosnia**, where several thousand migrants remain stuck, unable to enter Croatia and move on further into the EU. Many are sleeping in the open or in inadequate accommodation. On October 24,

one of the border crossings between Bosnia and Croatia was closed after migrants seeking to enter Croatia blocked the main road; police and migrants ended up clashing.

Migrants continue their waiting around the border crossing between Bosnia and Croatia, to cross into neighboring Croatia, a member of the European Union, on October 27, 2018.



Meanwhile, in the town of Bihać itself, townspeople organized protests, demanding that migrants be rehoused outside the town centre and the government prevent a further influx of migrants.

In related events, the UN's Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration faced growing uncertainty as **Bulgaria** became the latest European country to back out of supporting it in November. It joins other countries, such as Austria, Croatia, Hungary, Poland and, not least, the US, in this decision.

CENTENARY

Differing views of the past were once again on display as the region joined commemorations to mark the centenary of the armistice which brought the **First World War** to an end, a war during the course of which the Balkans had an unusually centre-stage role. The end of the Great War was perhaps most extensively marked in Serbia, one of the Balkan countries which played a significant role in the war. Official commemorations, exhibitions, military parades and salutes were all used to mark the end of a war which had wrought huge loss of life and destruction of property on the country, yet after which Serbia

and Montenegro were united with other South Slav parts of Austria-Hungary in what was the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, and later became the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.

In neighbouring Montenegro, there were no official celebrations or commemorations, despite the fact that the country was on the side of the winning Entente powers. However, in many corners of the country, pro-Serbian political parties and organizations marked the liberation of the country and its union with Serbia. The events were overshadowed by a diplomatic spat between Belgrade and Podgorica over the decision of Montenegrin authorities to ban the attendance of several speakers from Serbia.

Bosnia did not mark the anniversary in any meaningful way, other than at the local level, primarily due to the fact that the three main ethnic groups have very different interpretations over the war and its legacy. The same was the case in Croatia, as well as in Macedonia, which, although an important theatre in the war, was not an independent country at the time.

Apocalypse cancelled! How Social Democrats Can Promote a Social and Ecological Transformation

Matthias Jobelius and Jochen Steinhilber

*Attempting to set straight its poor emission reduction record, Germany set up a commission tasked with managing the phase-out of coal-fired power production in July of this year. Representatives from the government, civil society, business, and the labor unions have since been discussing socially acceptable ways to phase out coal and identify venues for a just transition. The commission's original schedule fore-saw the publishing of a final report before COP Katowice. This date was recently pushed to January 2019, however, due to a last-minute intervention of several German states with large shares of lignite mining. The government had hoped to present the commission as an inclusive 'societal innovation', which may be emulated in other countries. With no final outcome in hand, Germany's negotiating position in Katowice now seems severely hampered though. Against this backdrop, it may be interesting to take a closer look at a debate within the German Social Democratic Party (SPD), which, traditionally worker-affiliated, has been wary to adopt green policies for fear of betraying loyal voter groups. The following article was first published in *International Politics & Society* at www.ips-journal.eu on November 15, 2018.*



Matthias Jobelius heads the Central and Eastern Europe Department of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung. Following his work at the FES office in India, he served as country representative of the foundation in Romania and the Republic of Moldova as well as in Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. He studied Political Science and Development Studies in Berlin and London.



Jochen Steinhilber heads the department for global politics and development at the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung's (FES) headquarters in Berlin. Previously he was director of the FES office in São Paulo and also worked on the project 'dialogue on globalization'.

The German Social Democratic Party (SPD) has embraced its mission of shaping the digital revolution. Rightly so, as digitalisation will fundamentally change the economy and society. It affects classical social democratic policy areas such as work, justice, participation and the protection of civil liberties. Nobody would even think of writing off this issue as merely postmodern gimmickry which won't impact anyone beyond the digital avant-garde. It's therefore all the more surprising how half-heartedly the SPD is handling the second major transformation issue of our time, the global climate and environmental changes. Again and again, the party erects conflict lines between work and the environment, prosperity and climate protection. It often sees climate and environmental policy issues as green 'feel-good' topics which won't help the fight for the 'hard-working middle-class'.

Some social democrats are making this misjudgment precisely at a time when environmental awareness is changing among both its own mem-

bership and those groups of voters which the SPD must win over. Global warming, extreme weather incidents, heat waves, droughts, species extinction and other knock-on effects of climate change have caused environmental issues to lose any semblance of being 'avant-garde postmodern'. They have long been firmly embedded within the values system of core social democratic constituencies. The polls are clear: a large majority of the population expects answers from their policy-makers as to how the economy, work and society can be reshaped to preserve natural resources, fight climate change and hold society together.

Ecology As a Question of Social Justice

Social democracy used to be further ahead. In the Berlin programme of 1989, the SPD did what it's missing today: the party intertwined social and ecological concerns into a social democratic narrative of progress for industrial Germany. *'The ecological reorganisation of our industrial*

society has become a question of survival', one can read in extensive remarks on 'ecologically and socially responsible economies.' And again: 'Nothing is sensible for the overall economy that is not sensible in terms of ecology. Ecology is not an add-on to the economy.'

It's high time for the SPD to take up this programmatic tradition once again. For as with digitalisation, climate change confronts us with the fundamental question of how we want to work, live and do business. This presents social democracy with the chance to bring together core issues such as digitalisation, good work, social cohesion, economic development and innovation policy into a new, progressive, socio-ecological project.

The global environmental changes are already causing a noticeable increase in conflicts over the distribution of resources. The emissions-intensive behaviour of one person increasingly undermines the right to exist of others. With consequences such as soil degradation, air and noise pollution and the spreading of diseases, climate change has already become the 'invisible hand' behind many social upheavals today.

All of this raises numerous fundamental questions of justice: how can we give particular support to those who are most severely affected by environmental damage?

On the other hand, how can we prevent eco-political decisions from deepening social divisions? What should continue to grow because it contributes to the common good?

What must be dismantled because it is socially and ecologically detrimental? How can this kind of change be implemented in a socially just manner? How many resources is an individual entitled to use in exercising his right to an individual way of life, without curtailing the rights of others in so doing? How do we prevent the ecological costs of private sector decisions from being shifted onto the general public?

Trade Unions Need to Be at the Forefront

We need a political debate about how ecological justice can be implemented in practice. This requires attractive and concrete visions of the

future – beyond crisis rhetoric and moral appeals – which can show that a socio-ecological transformation can, instead of sacrifice, offer prospects for a better life.

New concepts of mobility, liveable cities and communities, a clean and decentralised energy supply, good nutrition and landscape conservation, as well as communal participation and co-determination in the workplace – all of these things occur tangibly in people's daily lives and are directly linked to socio-ecological transformation.

In the coming years, it will be particularly important to develop a socio-ecological understanding of work. A modern concept of work discusses the conditions for the regeneration of human and natural resources. Just as Marx spoke of not one, but two 'sources of wealth', namely the 'earth and labour', both are subject to the dangers of over-use and exploitation and must both be organised according to sustainability criteria.

For the SPD this presents the opportunity to work hand in hand with trade unions on a socio-ecological progress model. Not only are the trade unions among the key players in many fields of transformation (energy, industry, construction, transport, public services). Like the

SPD, trade unions have put forward socio-ecological alternatives for leading sectors in German industry in the 1990s, but did not pursue the debate up until the end.

For both the SPD and trade unions, the ecological reorganisation of emissions-intensive industry sectors should become one of their most central tasks. The common goal of social democracy, to reshape the German economy to be almost greenhouse gas neutral by 2050, offers opportunities for new industrial jobs in forward-looking lines of business as well as technological innovations which could help to gradually decouple value creation and the use of resources.

The Party of Progress, the Party of Justice

From a socio-ecological perspective, the concept of 'Good Work' means contributing to sustainable value creation processes in the econ-

"We need a political debate about how ecological justice can be implemented in practice."

"Today 'Good Work' can, given global supply chains, only mean 'Good Work' globally."

omy and society – in a meaningful and secure occupation. It includes growth in sustainable sectors that translates into jobs, as well as education, learning and qualification campaigns to accompany this transformation. It emphasises working time models and mobility concepts that enable a sustainable way of life. And: today ‘Good Work’ can, given global supply chains, only mean ‘Good Work’ globally. It’s absolutely necessary to take into account the social and ecological working conditions of foreign suppliers as well.

Many workers have, however, experienced and suffered from the fact that different structural changes of the last four decades have mostly been implemented without their say and against their economic and often existential interests. Therefore, a socio-ecological concept of work always also means taking seriously the idea of ‘just transitions’ as established by the trade unions in the Paris Agreement on climate change.

This means evaluating the social and employment-related consequences of transformation processes at an early stage, pursuing an active labour market policy and taking social protection measures for those directly affected. We need massive long-term public and private investment for innovation and structural change, as well as a proactive state that directs the transition to sustainable value creation processes by means of regulatory policy.

And finally: every substantial socio-ecological alternative will take on established systems with powerful interests. Changing these systems will

“Every substantial socio-ecological alternative will take on established systems with powerful interests.”

produce winners and losers. Questions of a just transition will largely be decided upon in political discussions. It’s a prerequisite for implementing socio-ecological work to democratise the economy, that is to say increase participation and co-determination in the workplace, and to use the state’s ability to implement social decisions regarding economic players.

For the SPD in particular, it will be important not to make these changes in a top-down way.

In order to regain competence and allies as well as credibility and trust, they must make the socio-ecological transformation a theme in people’s local area: in the neighbourhood, the community, the region and in the workplace. The SPD can strengthen their social networks again by coming into close contact with people impacted by these changes and also with those who are already working on local socio-ecological solutions and pioneering the establishment of new cultures of cooperation and participation.

The socio-ecological transformation certainly makes for one of the most complex issues in politics today. These include both political strategies for the here and now as well as long-term ideas and plans that express the will to change and the possibility of a different, better, just society. Social democrats have been successful when they, as the party of justice, have known how to configure this progress in such a way that it led to greater social cohesion. These kinds of progress parties are needed today, ones that combine justice, prosperity and sustainability in keeping with the times – and that make this their primary policy objective.

The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in Southeast Europe

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Orders / Contact: info@fes-soe.org

Responsible: Felix Henkel, Director, Dialogue Southeast Europe
Project coordinator: Ana Manojlović-Stakić, Denis Piplaš

Managing Editors: Felix Henkel, Denis Piplaš
Editors: Alida Vračić, Jasmin Mujanović
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