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Closing Event of the Twinning Project “Improving the capacities of the AFCOS System bodies in the field of irregularities management” Celebrates Remarkable Achievements in Montenegro

On September 15, 2023, Europe House was the setting for a momentous occasion as Montenegro celebrated the successful conclusion of the Twinning Project “Improving the capacities of the AFCOS System bodies in the field of irregularities management”. This groundbreaking initiative, led by the Ministry of Finance of Montenegro in cooperation with Greece and more specifically the Centre of International and European Economic Law (CIEEL) and the National Transparency Authority, marks a significant milestone in the ongoing partnership between the two nations.

Over the course of eight months, the project has achieved remarkable progress in enhancing the administrative capabilities of Montenegro's AFCOS system institutions, all while aligning with European Union standards for the protection of EU financial interests. With a budget of EUR 100,000, this project received crucial support from EU pre-accession assistance.

Ms. Agata Stasiak, Head of Finance, Contract and Audit Section at the EU Delegation to Montenegro expressed her continuous commitment to enhanced cooperation between Montenegro and EU.

H.E. the Greek Ambassador to Montenegro, Panagiotis Partsos, while expressing Greece's unwavering support for Montenegro's EU accession process, underscored the importance of continued cooperation between the two nations.

Mr. Miloš Medenica, the State Secretary of the Ministry of Finance, eloquently summarised the project's objectives, stating, *“The aim of the Twinning project is to ensure effective and efficient protection of EU financial interests in Montenegro, and to strengthen the capacity of the AFCOS system institutions in the area of irregularity management. We are very pleased that, finally, after 8 months, we and our Greek twinning colleagues have achieved the expected results of the project”.*

The collaborative effort between Montenegro and Greece has not only resulted in the acquisition of new knowledge but has also broadened perspectives on governance related to irregularities and fraud.



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This partnership has paved the way for the upcoming implementation of the TAIEX project. Through weekly missions of the Montenegrin office to the National Transparency Authority of the Hellenic Republic, this endeavor will further strengthen the foundation for the prevention, detection, and resolution of irregularities while safeguarding the state's financial interests.

As the project concludes, the Ministry of Finance reiterates its commitment to implementing European standards. Montenegro's growing knowledge base, experience, and cooperation with other EU Member States are poised to position the nation not only as a strategic partner but also as a nation known for its successful fight against irregularities and fraud.

Ms. Elli Tsitsipa, representing the Secretary of CIEEL and the European Projects Implementation Unit of CIEEL, conveyed her deep satisfaction with the project's outcomes and highlighted the exceptional working relationship established during the project's course. She expressed CIEEL's enthusiasm for future collaborations.

The Closing Event featured presentations by the Project Leaders, including Ms. Nataša Kovačević, Montenegrin Project Leader and Head of Department for Combating Irregularities and Fraud at AFCOS office, who lauded the active cooperation between Montenegrin and Greek experts, emphasising the significant contribution to the project's success. She believes the project will pave the way for improved administrative capacity in Montenegro, efficient utilisation of Anti-Fraud Funds, and robust management and control of irregularities and fraud. This will have a profound impact on the implementation of Chapter 32 - Financial Control and the broader process of Montenegro's accession to the EU. The Greek Project Leader, Mr. Konstantinos Pavlikianis, shared key conclusions from the project's activities.

Furthermore, short-term experts of the project, Ms. Tzin Tsisou and Mr. Giorgos Kasapas, presented the Ex-post evaluation of Montenegro's Strategy for the Fight Against Fraud and Irregularity Management for the Protection of Financial Interests of the European Union (2019 - 2022).

As Montenegro looks ahead to its European future, the Closing Event of the Twinning Project serves as a testament to the nation's dedication to progress, transparency, and collaboration in building a stronger, more resilient future.



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