



**Regional meeting on International Treaty on Exchange of Data for the  
Verification of Asset Declarations**

Podgorica, Montenegro, 20 December 2022

**MEETING MINUTES**

**Opening statements:**

**H.E. Mr. Karl Michael Müller, Ambassador, Austrian Embassy in Montenegro**

**Mr. Yngve Engstrom, Head of Cooperation Section, EU Delegation to Montenegro (EUD)**

**Ms. Desislava Gotskova, Head of Secretariat, Regional Anti-Corruption Initiative (RAI)**

**Ms. Jelena Perovic, Director, Agency for Prevention of Corruption Montenegro (APC)**

**Mr. Momcilo Radulovic, President of the Council, Agency for Prevention of Corruption Montenegro (APC)**

President of the ASK Council, Mr. Momcilo Radulovic, opened the event and briefly presented the competencies of the Agency, with an overview of the reform activities undertaken since the election of the new convocation of this body in July 2019. Closer regional cooperation in the exchange of data to check reports on income and assets aims to apply the standards of the European Union in this area, concluded Mr Radulovic.

Speaking about the International Treaty, Mr. Yngve Engstrom, Head of the Department for Cooperation of the EU Delegation in Montenegro, highlighted that it is necessary for the authorities of the three signatory countries to transpose the Treaty into national legislation and provide concrete rules for implementation and procedural settings to enable its implementation.

H.E. Karl Müller, Ambassador of Austria to Montenegro stressed that tracing and identifying the source of assets is one of the primary duties and activities in the fight against corruption. This is why Austria remains committed to curbing corruption in Southeast Europe.

ASK Director Ms. Jelena Perovic urged that the Treaty has not yet been ratified and called on decision-makers to complete that process, as well as representatives of other countries of the Western Balkans to join in signing it, with the aim of strengthening the preventive anti-corruption system in their countries and further improving regional cooperation.

On behalf of the organizers, the Head of the RAI Secretariat, Ms. Desislava Gotskova, stressed that the International Treaty is one of the key elements in the fight against corruption in the region, and it has the potential to be recognized as an extremely useful anti-corruption tool in the wider European area.



### **Introductory Session:**

#### **GOOD PRACTICES AND RESULTS OF THE AGENCY FOR PREVENTION OF CORRUPTION IN VERIFICATION OF REPORTS ON INCOME AND ASSETS OF PUBLIC OFFICIALS**

***Presenter: Ms. Jasmina Maras, Head of Section for Verification of Reports on Income and Assets of Public Officials, Agency for Prevention of Corruption Montenegro***

During the introductory session, the representative of the Agency for the Prevention of Corruption of Montenegro, Ms. Jasmina Maras, presented the best practices and results achieved by the APC regarding the verification of asset declarations of public officials. She stated that APC conducts three types of checks: administrative-technical, a complete and additional check of the data from the report. The number of verified reports in terms of accuracy and completeness was exceeded by 111%, and additional verification was performed for 20 persons. Based on the checks, 403 administrative procedures were initiated. She added that APC currently does not have the ability to check the assets of public officials abroad.

#### **PRESENTATION OF THE POTENTIAL WAY FORWARD – THE BLUEPRINT AND INFOGRAPHICS**

***Presenter: Ms. Anja Suvalija, Project Officer, RAI Secretariat***

The RAI Project Officer Ms. Anja Suvalija spoke about potential further steps in order to establish cooperation, which includes raising awareness about the International Treaty and supporting the countries to introduce and utilize the Treaty. To this end, RAI Secretariat will employ a number of communication tools such as infographics, articles, posts on social media,

and events like the one today. In the coming three to five years, RAI will conduct an in-depth assessment and development of a detailed plan for the future:

- a BLUEPRINT to serve as a basis for establishing a way forward.
- two regional clinics where RAI together with countries intends to test certain elements of the Treaty in practice.



## II Session:

### THE KEY CHALLENGES TOWARDS EFFECTIVE AND INDEPENDENT ASSET DISCLOSURE SYSTEMS

**First Presenter: Ms. Natasa Novakovic, President of the Commission for Resolution of Conflict of Interest, Croatia - Asset Declarations as prevention of corruption tool in relation to Data Protection**

Ms. Natasa Novakovic spoke about the competencies of the Commission and the way of checking data on the assets and income of public officials through preliminary and regular checks. Ms Novakovic presented the challenges the Commission is facing in this respect such as not having the possibility of checking the income of Public Officials in sub-contracted banks and challenges in terms of new legal solutions in Croatia.

**Second Presenter: Mr. Lilian Chișca, Vice-president of the National Integrity Authority of the Republic of Moldova**

**Realities and progress of declaring assets and personal interests' system in the Republic of Moldova (e-Integrity Automated Information System)**

Mr. Lilian Chisca presented the competencies of the institution, and legal solutions regarding the verification of income and assets. NIA is responsible for integrity in the performance of

public functions and the prevention of corruption through the implementation of asset control and compliance with the legal regime of conflicts of interest, incompatibilities, and limitations in the performance of public functions. Mr Chisca added that NIA has an e-platform (interface) through which public officials submit reports on income and assets and through which data is automatically compared with other authorities that have official records related to income and assets.



### III SESSION - SHARING THE BEST PRACTICES

The third session of the meeting was dedicated to the best practices, sharing experiences and proposals on how to strengthen cooperation in the part of data exchange in accordance with the International Treaty on Exchange of Data for the Verification of Asset Declarations.

The delegations of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia and representatives from Kosovo\* were invited to share their experience and present proposals on how to foster regional cooperation regarding the asset disclosure process under the International Treaty.

The representative of the High Inspectorate of Declaration and Audit of Assets and Conflicts of Interest of Albania, Mr. Emiliano Kondi, said that the institutions in that country did not take concrete steps regarding the signing of the International Treaty. He explained that no

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\* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence

institution has been recognized that would take such an initiative and be responsible for the implementation of the International Treaty.

The representative of the National Anti-Corruption Centre of Moldova, Ms. Oxana Budeci, said that the Treaty has been circulated among relevant institutions for commenting in that country and it is expected to be forwarded to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration and the Presidency for approval and subsequent signature.

The Director of the Agency for the Prevention of Corruption of Kosovo\*, Mr. Yil Buleshkaj said that the Agency is not competent to initiate the signing of the Treaty. Nevertheless, the Agency initiated the signing process from the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and expects that the initiative will be accepted and that there will be more concrete steps in this regard during 2023. Mr. Buleshkaj added that Kosovo\* uses the so-called Open Intelligence Source, through which they reveal the assets of public officials in other countries, as well as that so far one such case has been submitted to the prosecutor's office. He also said that the problem could arise with regard to the greater workload of certain institutions when it comes to requests for the delivery of data from other countries. As an example, he cited the fact that a greater number of persons from Kosovo\* own property in Albania which would open up additional work and slow down data sharing. In this regard, Mr. Buleshkaj proposed that the next regional project would be dedicated to capacity building in order to effectively implement the Treaty.

The President of the State Commission for the Prevention of Corruption (SCPC) of North Macedonia, Ms. Biljana Ivanovska, said that the Treaty has been submitted to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and it is expected to be sent to the Parliament for ratification very soon.

Ms. Ivanovska stated that the SCPC has good cooperation with related institutions in Montenegro, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina and she further stated that a memorandum on cooperation with the Kosovo\* Anti-Corruption Agency will be signed soon. There has been no specific exchange of data between institutions so far.

Mr. Vladimir Georgiev from SCPC reminded that all the countries with whom the Treaty was discussed at the beginning were willing to sign it, but that in the end Bulgaria and Romania declined to participate in its drafting and signing. He said that the question arises why most countries did not sign the Treaty, and none ratified it. He believes that the fact that three countries have signed the Treaty is not enough for it to be put into force. Mr. Georgiev proposed the development of a special platform within all institutions from the region that would share documentation, best practices, and lists of public functions.

The Director of the Agency for Prevention of Corruption and Coordination of the Fight Against Corruption (APIK) of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr. Elvis Kondzic, emphasized that a new leadership of this institution was elected four months ago and that the primary goal is to establish cooperation and overcome challenges internally, and after that strengthen cooperation with related parties in the region.

Mr. Kondzic added that the APIK has a plan to organize a regional event where concrete steps for establishing cooperation at the operational level will be discussed.

Regarding the Treaty, Mr. Kondzic, is not aware whether an administrative issue or a political decision postponed the signing of the Treaty. Mr. Kondzic pledged that the APIK will ensure overcoming the obstacles and initiate the signing of this important document.

Ms. Damirka Mioc, Deputy Director of the APIK, pointed out the need to establish a single register of public functions, in order to facilitate the sharing of data. She explained that national institutions can act only when it comes to persons who are considered elected, or appointed, in accordance with their national legislation, and that it may happen that a person who, for example, is considered appointed in Montenegro, is not considered appointed in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Concluding remarks were presented by Mr. Alexandru Cladco, Anti-Corruption Expert in RAI Secretariat.

