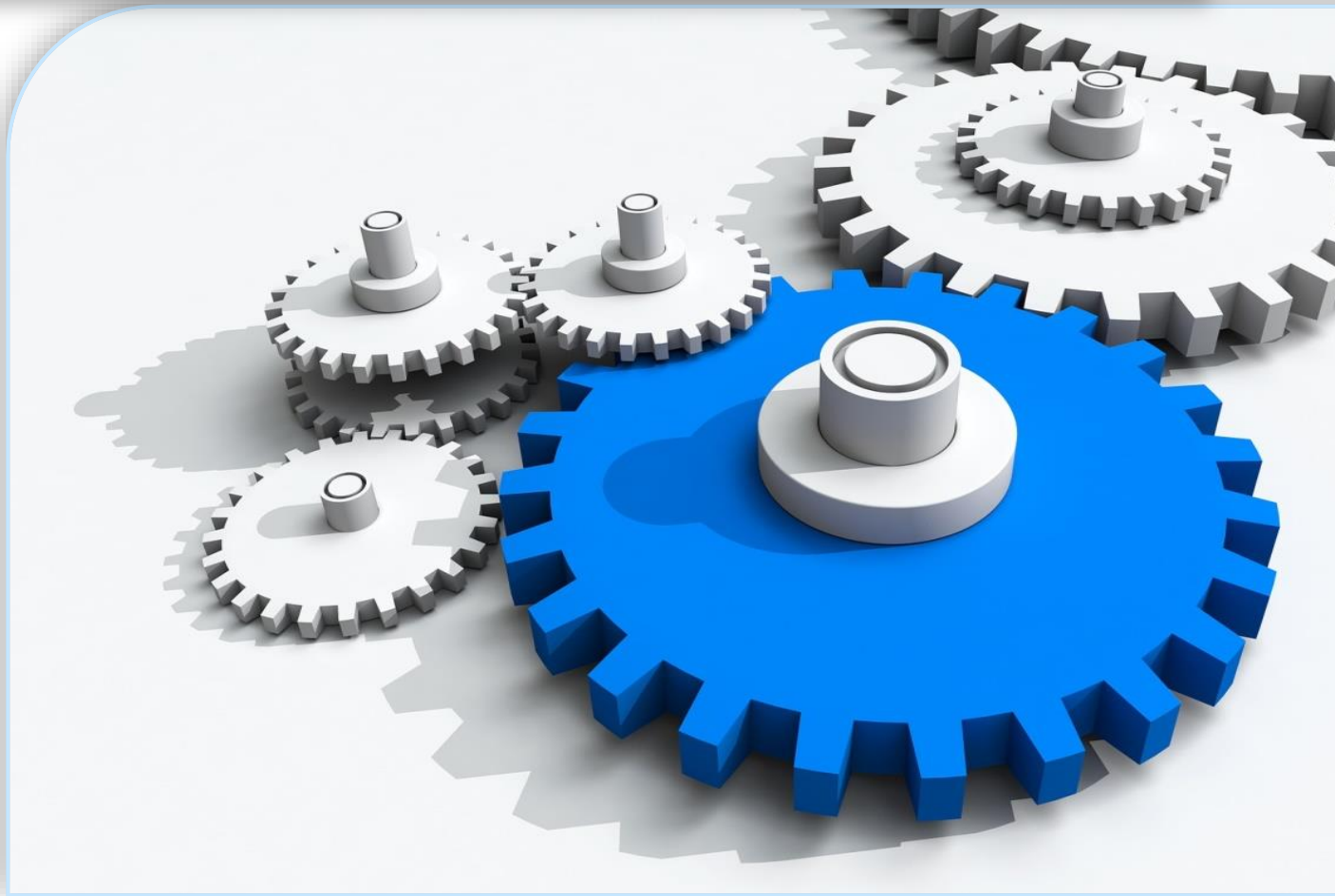




UNIJA POSLODAVACA
CRNE GORE
MONTENEGRIN EMPLOYERS FEDERATION

COMMUNICATION ON ENGAGEMENT (COE) OF MONTENEGRIN EMPLOYERS' FEDERATION (MEF)



COE of MEF

Period covered: 2018 - 2019



COE OF MONTENEGRIN EMPLOYERS' FEDERATION (MEF)

Period covered: from January 2018 to December 2019

Statement of Continued Support

15th January 2020

To our stakeholders:

I am pleased to confirm that Montenegrin Employers' Federation (MEF) reaffirms its support to the United Nations Global Compact and its Ten Principles in the areas of Human Rights, Labour, Environment and Anti-Corruption. This is our Communication on Engagement with the United Nations Global Compact. We welcome feedback on its contents.

In this Communication of Engagement, we describe the actions that our organization has taken to support the UN Global Compact and its Principles as suggested for an organization like ours. We also commit to sharing this information with our stakeholders using our primary channels of communication.

Sincerely yours,

Predrag Mitrovic

President of MEF

Contents

About the Montenegrin Employers Federation (MEF).....	3
Position of MEF.....	4
Description of Actions of MEF.....	6



About the Montenegrin Employers Federation (MEF)

MEF Mission: *MEF protects the interests of employers improves business climate and promotes entrepreneurship and responsible business practice with an aim of creating strong economy and prosperous Montenegro.*

MEF Vision: *“A business environment where all citizens will have the opportunity for permanent and stable employment.”*

MEF Values:

- *Independence*
- *Complete transparency of actions*
- *Equal treatment of members*
- *Social responsibility*
- *Ethical, professional and legal business*

Montenegrin Employers' Federation (MEF) is an independent, non-governmental, non-political and not-for-profit organization based on voluntary membership. MEF was founded in 2002.

In 2005 MEF was granted the status of representativeness whereby it became an umbrella employers' organization in Montenegro representing as such an independent voice of business at national and international level. Having signed the National Tripartite Agreement in December 2006, MEF became a social partner – an official representative of employers in relation to Government and trade unions

MEF membership comprises entrepreneurs, SMEs, large economic systems, employers' associations at local and sector level as well as NGOs. MEF founded a Business Women Association of Montenegro and helped the foundation of other employers' associations at local and sector level. MEF has signed cooperation agreements with the umbrella employers' organizations from the region and wider as well as international institutions and organizations.

MEF is a member of International Organization of Employers (IOE) and Business Europe, it is one of the founders of Adriatic Region Employers Centre (AREC) and it is the first signatory of UN Global Compact in Montenegro. MEF closely cooperates with International Labour Organization (ILO) - it was founded with their support and acts in accordance with their conventions and recommendations.

MEF actively contributes to improvement of business climate and elimination of business barriers providing a wide variety of services to its members.

Position of MEF

MEF has been a signatory of Global Compact initiative since 2008, and was one of the initiators and organizers (together with the UNDP Office in Montenegro, the National Directorate for SME Development and the Centre for Development of NGOs) of the Launching Conference of the Global Compact in Montenegro in December 2010. In addition, since 2007, MEF also actively promotes the concept of corporate social responsibility, which is an inseparable part related to the ten principles of the Global Compact.

MEF promotes and encourages the responsibility of enterprises in the area of their impact on society through the establishment of procedures for integrating social, ethical, environmental issues, human rights and consumer protection in its business activities. In this area numerous activities were performed in the previous period. As a membership-based institution and a social partner, MEF has very good relationships both with the private sector and the public and governmental institutions.

At the public level, MEF has an opportunity to act as a voice of business in creation of all business related regulations, strategies, action plans that create good business environment, and at the business level it has a mandate and obligation to promote fair business behavior, compliance with laws and best practices in order to enable sustainability of companies at all levels.

MEF has an *Employers' Code of Ethics* (since 2005) which binds all members to respect the principles of the UN Global Compact and the UN Millennium Development Goals.

The 10 Principles of UN Global Compact



Out of the 17 goals of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, SDG 8 is the one that is most relevant to the private sector, as it calls for the promotion of sustainable and inclusive economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.

This goal is the main focus of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), but also for MEF and the business community a whole.

Sustainable Development Agenda 2030



Description of Actions of MEF

MEF Awards for CSR (2018, 2019)

At gala ceremony organized by MEF, Montenegrin companies received MEF annual awards for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). With this act the MEF continued the practice initiated 2014 aimed at public promotion of good practices examples of corporate social responsibility in Montenegro and those companies that have established and implemented such practice. Prizes are awarded in three areas (“Care about Employees”, “Care about the Environment”, “Care about Community”) to companies in three categories (small, medium-sizes and large enterprises). Also, for the most consistent implementation of CSR policies in its business operations (in all three categories), the one company is awarded by the MEF's Main Award.

The MEF's Main Award for 2018 (for CSR in each of the three categories) went to the company TELENOR, while the MEF's Main Award for 2019 went to the company SAVA MONTENEGRO.

A gala ceremony featuring MEF CSR awards winners for 2018 took place in hotel Hilton, in the framework of the conference “Strong Economy – Successful Montenegro” that was organised by MEF, with support of ILO.

December 2019 – Hotel Hilton, Podgorica



October 2018 – Hotel Hilton, Podgorica



MEF Awards for “The Best Women Managers in Montenegro” (2018, 2019)

With the aim of promoting successful business women who hold responsible and professional attitude in performing their work and thus confirm the power of women leadership and larger representation of women at management positions, MEF awarded “THE BEST WOMEN MANAGERS in Montenegro” prizes for 2018 and 2019.

At the first and second MEF events, twelve equal awards were given to female managers for the results accomplished in previous years, in four categories: (1) economy (private sector), (2) public sector, (3) civil society sector, (4) media. This means – 3 female managers in each of the 4 categories. Also, two women managers - representatives of private and public sector were awarded with *MEF Plaques* for special contribution to economic empowerment of women in

Montenegro (2018). In 2019, *MEF Plaque* was given to Business Woman's Association of Montenegro that marked 10 years since its founding.

The ceremony organized in 2018 was a part of the final conference of the project “Women in Management in Montenegro: Support to Leadership and Professional Development of Women in Montenegro, implemented by the MEF with the support of the International Labor Organization (ILO). The ceremony in 2019 was organized in partnership of MEF and Business Women Association of Montenegro (the Association was founded by MEF, in 2009).

December 2019 – Hotel CentreVille, Podgorica



March 2018 – Hotel Hilton, Podgorica



MEF's actions during 2019

27 February - Business Advisory Centre for women and young people - Representatives of Bureau for Economic Development and Support to Business Community of the Capital City Podgorica, Business Women Association of Montenegro (BWAM) and MEF held a press conference to announce the new cycle of work of Business Advisory Centre for women and young people. The Centre represents one of the activities that was realized in past year too, with a purpose to enhance the development of women and youth entrepreneurship in the Capital, through provision of free of charge advices on how to start and develop the business. Consultations at the Business Advisory Centre will be held in MEF's Competence Center Podgorica, 4 times a month. Advisory services regarding finances, marketing, leadership and motivation will be free of charge and provided by members of BWAM and MEF representative.

8 March - Decent Work Country Program 2019-2021 – At the high-level event in Podgorica, the Government of Montenegro, social partners and the International Labor Organization signed the Memorandum of Understanding on Decent Work Country Program (DWCP) 2019-2021. On behalf of the Government of Montenegro the Memorandum on DWCP was signed by Minister of Labor and Social Welfare, on behalf of the ILO by Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia, on behalf of Montenegrin Employers Federation (MEF) by President, on behalf of Confederation of Trade Unions of Montenegro (SSCG) by Secretary General and on behalf of the Union of Free Trade Unions of Montenegro (USSCG) by Secretary General. The key challenges addressed by the DWCP are high long-term unemployment, elevated levels of youth unemployment and inactivity, high informality, and continued emigration. The key issue in the area of social security is the unsustainable pension system. The programme addresses these decent work deficits by strengthening social dialogue mechanisms and collective bargaining, creating favorable conditions for employment and sustainable entrepreneurship, and through formalisation of the

informal economy. Through the programme ILO also supports the EU accession negotiations of Montenegro, especially on chapter 19 covering employment and social policies.

8 March - Speech at the session of the "Women's Parliament" in the Parliament of Montenegro

- At the invitation of the Committee on Gender Equality of the Parliament of Montenegro, a representative of MEF - Advisor for Women's Entrepreneurship Zvezdana Oluić, participated in the work of the 10th session of the "Women's Parliament", which was devoted to discussing the situation of women in the Western Balkans, in the context of the adoption of the Resolution on Women's Rights in the Western Balkans at the session of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM) of the European Parliament. In her address on women's entrepreneurship, the MEF representative said that support for women's economic empowerment processes is a particularly important segment of the overall work of the MEF. "The time we live in recognizes entrepreneurship as a sustainable career choice for women, and this requires that we promote and strongly encourage and support it. Women's business is an important source of economic growth, competitiveness and innovation" she emphasized, and concluded that an economically empowered woman also means an economically empowered society. The work of the 10th session of the "Women's Parliament" was opened by the President of the Parliament of Montenegro and the President of the Committee on Gender Equality. The session was attended by: Deputy Protector of Human Rights and Freedoms, President of the Supreme Court, Minister for Human and Minority Rights, as well as members of the Government of Montenegro, members of women's associations of parliamentary parties and other civil society segments and representatives of the Western Balkans parliament. The whole session was broadcast live by national television RTCG.

10 May - Consultation on the new Law on Foreigners - MEF organized a consultation for employers - members of the MEF, on practical application of the new Law on Foreigners. The meeting was opened by Suzana Radulovic, MEF Secretary General. In continuation of the work, the participants were introduced to the new legal solutions in the Law and By-Laws Act presented by the Director General of the Directorate for Civil Status and Identity Documents in Ministry of the Interior (MI). The event was also attended by the Head of the Directorate for Aliens, Migration and Readmission at the MI, as well as representatives of the Tax Administration. In the ensuing discussion, solutions regarding the simplification of procedures for the issuance of temporary residence and work permits were particularly welcomed. At the meeting it was agreed that the practical implementation of the law by the regional units and branches of the MI would be uniform, in order to avoid possible complications caused by the uneven application.

15 May – Job fair for electrical engineering students - European Association of Electrical Engineering Students - Local Committee Podgorica (EESTEC - LC Podgorica), in cooperation with MEF, organized the first "Job Fair" for electrical engineering students, which was held at the premises of the Sports and Cultural Center of the University of Montenegro, Podgorica. As part of the opening ceremony, the MEF representative – assistant in the PR and Marketing Department emphasized that youth employment is an important, socially responsible process in which employers play a special role. "Therefore, a better synergy between the world of education and work is needed, as well as a greater interest of young people in the opportunities offered by practical work and professional practice. Through quality interaction between employers and students, companies will be able to easily select the necessary staff and students will have an opportunity for easier employment", she concluded.

13 June - Reducing employer health insurance contributions - At its session held on 13 June 2019, the Government of Montenegro adopted the Bill amending the Law on Compulsory Social Security Contributions, which provides for the reduction of health insurance contributions at the expense of the employer from 4.3% to 2.3%. It is also foreseen that the reduced rate of this contribution will be calculated from 1 July of the 2019. This decision of the Government is the outcome of the consensus of the social partners (at the tripartite level - Government, MEF, trade unions), which also implies an increase in the net minimum wage. With this act, the MEF once again, as a responsible social partner, proved its commitment to combating the gray economy and unfair competition, believing that this measure would contribute to improving the economic and social position of Montenegrin citizens.

15 June - International conference of women entrepreneurs - At the invitation of the organizer, a representative of the MEF - Head of the PR and Marketing Sector and Advisor for Women's Entrepreneurship, participated as a panelist at the 3rd International Professional Conference "Business on the Heels", aimed at promoting, educating and networking women entrepreneurs, as well as promoting women's entrepreneurship in countries region. The conference was held in Novi Sad, Serbia, organized by entrepreneurs of the Union of Business Women of Vojvodina, with the support of the City of Novi Sad, the Serbian Chamber of Commerce, the Novak Djokovic Foundation and many others.

26 June - Continued validity of the General Collective Contract - Minister of Labor and Social Welfare Kemal Purišić, President of the MEF Predrag Mitrovic, Secretary General of the Union of Trade Unions of Montenegro Dusko Zarubica and Secretary General of Union of Free Trade Unions of Montenegro Srdja Kekovic, have signed the General Collective Agreement on Amendments to the General Collective Agreement. By these amendments, the signatories agreed to extend the application of the General Collective Agreement until 31 December 2020.

23 July 2019 - Free trainings for SMEs and the unemployed - The MEF organized the Certificate Ceremony for 35 students of two training programs: "Marketing and Marketing Tools" and "Project Cycle Management". The training was free of charge, comprised of theoretical and practical parts, and lasted 80 hours (school hours) in the period June - July 2019. Both training programs were held on the premises of the Competence Center Podgorica, which was opened in cooperation with the MEF and the Municipality of Podgorica. The training was intended for employed persons (regardless of their job position), managers of small and medium-sized enterprises, as well as persons who are unemployed and wish to improve their business skills and knowledge in the subject areas. The above represents the activity of the cross-border project "competenceNET" with MEF as a partner from Montenegro and implemented within INTERREG IPA CBC Croatia - Bosnia and Herzegovina - Montenegro 2014-2020.

26 July - Conference on parafiscal burdens in Montenegro - In co-operation with the ILO, the MEF organized a conference "Parafiscalities, as public revenues, and the unburden of the economy: How to find a balance?". The main objective of the Conference: Insight into the current state regarding parafiscal burdens, as well as the promotion of results achieved by the MEF in the period after the publication of the second MEF's Report on parafiscalities in Montenegro. The event was opened by MEF President Predrag Mitrovic, ILO Representative - Senior Specialist for Employer's Activities Iulia Drumea, as well as Director General of the Financial System and Business Environment Improvement Directorate at the Ministry of Finance, Bojana Boskovic. *"Through two MEF strategic Reports (published 2017 and 2018), created with the support of ILO, we have analyzed the state, causes and consequences of numerous parafiscalities that exist at the*

national and local levels. We are encouraged by the fact that policy-makers and decision-makers shows their understanding for certain MEF recommendations that, in the meantime, have led to certain concrete, positive changes”, said MEF president and concluded: “MEF has put all its activities into service to provide full contribution to the fulfillment of the key goal of the 2030 Agenda for SDG. For MEF, it is Sustainable Development Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth.” Within the opening ceremony, a representative of the Ministry of Finance Ms Bošković praised the MEF and its work in the past three years, which was dedicated to the issues of parafiscal burdens in Montenegro. She said that the Ministry of Finance, when drafting two new laws, sought to abolish, reduce and limit the amount of taxes and fees. *“Under the Law on administrative taxes, we have reduced 72 taxes, i.e. 11 percent of the total number, and abolished 49 taxes or 7 percent of the total number, while no other tax is not increased. Nine grounds for determining local utility taxes were abolished by the Law on Local Utility Taxes, while it has been introduced that prior approval of the Government is required to determine local decisions”, she explained.* In the working part of the conference there was a panel discussion on the topic: *“Creating an enabling environment for business sustainability by removing local business barriers: Is Montenegro on the right track?”*.

At the end of the event, participants were shown a thematic [infographic video](#) (six-minutes-long) recorded by the MEF, with the support of the ILO (for the purpose of this event). Through the content of this video, MEF further highlighted the role of entrepreneurship, the importance of sustainable businesses and the need to intensify the processes that aim to develop the business sector.

12-13 September - Annual Meeting of IOE Members from Europe and Central Asia - At the invitation of the International Employers Organization (IOE), a representative of the MEF participated in the annual meeting of employers' organizations - IOE members from Europe and Central Asia, in Rome. The event was hosted by CONFINDUSTRIA - an IOE member from Italy. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss issues related to the development of social and economic policy, as well as the role played by national employers' organizations in this field. The two-day event began with a central session on national policies in the context of globalization and the multilateral trading system, followed by thematic sessions (Challenges of employers' organizations; ILO Centennial Declaration 2019; Digital Transformation of Labor and its Challenges - changes in Business Models, Industrial Relations and Skills Prediction). Two separate sessions were organized where representatives of IOE, ILO and employers' organizations of Montenegro and other countries from region (Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Northern Macedonia) discussed about the further work of AREC (whose founders), the ILO-European Commission project on industrial relations "Strengthening the role and capacity of social partners and social dialogue in the new world of work", and planned project activities in terms of the needs and expectations of employers' organizations from the Balkan region.

20 September - Conference "Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights" - The MEF representative was a panelist at a conference "Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights" in Skopje, organized by the Business Confederation of Macedonia and the Association Konekt, within the EU-supported project "Fostering Business and Human Rights". The focus of the event was a concept developed through the UN "Protect, Respect and Remedy" framework and Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights, which defines: 1) the state's obligation to provide protection against human rights violations by companies, 2) the obligations of companies to respect human rights; 3) access to effective remedies for victims of human rights violations. *“The responsibility of the business community to respect human rights is a global standard and as such represents the expected behavior that applies to all companies - regardless of their size, activity,*

sectoral affiliation, form and ownership structure. That is why it is especially important to point out the role and importance of political dialogue, as a special type of partnership between the Government and the business community”, said the MEF representative in her presentation.

2 October - Teaching kids to code - Within the *Open Science Days*, implemented by the Ministry of Science under the slogan "Technologize yourself!", MEF provided the space of its Competence Center Podgorica to host the presentation of the *Igramiranje.me* project, intended for children aged 8-13 years. On this occasion, animations and video tutorials of the small developers were presented, organized a programming workshop in the Scratch programming language, followed by a graduation ceremony for children who successfully completed the first series of programming workshops. The *Igramiranje.me* project is being implemented by the NGO Tinker and the companies ZZi and Archimedes, and their partners were the Association Parents, MEF and the Municipality of Podgorica.

22 October - Regional Conference "Keeping up with the new era" - The Women's Entrepreneurship Advisor at the MEF was a panelist at a regional conference held on the topic of women's entrepreneurship in the process of Montenegro's accession to the European Union and the exchange of positive practices and experiences in the region. The event was organized by the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights, in cooperation with the Chamber of Commerce of Montenegro (CCM). The event was opened by the Head of the Committee on Gender Equality at the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights, the Chief Negotiator of Montenegro and the Vice President of the CCM. Thereafter, three thematic panel discussions were held: "Women's Entrepreneurship Development Policy", "Women's Entrepreneurship Support Funds", "Women in Business". The MEF representative announced that in order to support the development of women's entrepreneurship, the MEF will soon submit an initiative to introduce tax incentives for women entrepreneurs (in the first years of business). On this occasion, she invited employers' organizations and women's business associations to join the MEF and, through a joint appearance, support the said initiative. She insisted on up-to-date statistics that would have gender-disaggregated data, and emphasized the importance and role of greater participation of women in management and leadership positions as well as the need for their promotion in public. She also noted that in order to address the problems that accompany women's career development, more attention should be paid to activities to promote the economics of parenthood and the role of fathers in child rearing. All the initiatives and remarks of the MEF representative were adopted within the official conclusions of the conference.

25-27 November - SME Assembly 2019 in Finland - At the invitation of the European Commission and Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland, a MEF representative participated in the annual SME Assembly in Finland. As emphasized by the organizers, climate change threatens everyone's prosperity and security. Combatting climate change requires big changes in behavior, not only from individual citizens and governments, but from entrepreneurs too, whether they are at the helm of small or big companies. The SME Assembly was focused on actions to be taken over the next five years to turn the climate change challenge into an opportunity for Europe's SMEs, and foster a more inclusive approach to work and a sustainable method of consumption. The SME Assembly was explored how to direct innovation towards a sustainable, competitive and simultaneously carbon-neutral economy. Also, it was discussed on the competitive advantages of the circular economy; how to finance the value economy; what skills and employment policies do we need for tomorrow's world of work; or how to integrate AI into SMEs. Core issues such as access to markets and finance, innovation and skills, starting and scaling were re-examined from a sustainability point of view.

25 November – Conference on workers' participation in management - The MEF has organized a closing conference within the project "WIM3 - Workers' involvement in management". Event attendees are presented with a new publication "WIM3 - Workers' involvement in Management - Awareness, Experiment, Monitoring" which presents the sublimated comments of each project partner on the workers' councils as a form of social dialogue, as well as their experience after the project activities. The event was an opportunity for participants, especially those representing social partners, to exchange views and their views on the possibility of establishing works councils in our legal system, that is, whether this institute has elements that would positively affect the state of social dialogue. The project was implemented in period December 2017 - November 2019, in cooperation with employers and trade union organizations from Montenegro, Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Albania, Bulgaria and the Republic of Northern Macedonia, with support by the European social partner organization BUSINESSEUROPE as well as Confederation of German Employers' Associations (BDA) as an supporting partner/external expert.

MEF's actions during 2018

With activities realized within the project "Women in Management in Montenegro: Support to Leadership and Career Development of Women in Montenegro" (2017-2018) and by promoting successful women managers, their potential, role and importance, the MEF supported the processes of strengthening gender equality (eliminate discrimination and promote equality at the workplace) and raising the awareness about the necessity of investment in the creation an enabling environment for women's economic empowering. MEF believes that it is the way towards building gender-equal society in Montenegro, specifically from the aspect of women and man as equal players that have equal opportunities for leadership and decision-making roles in all fields and spheres of work. The effects of the implementation of MEF's project are confirmed by the great results. Some of them are listed below:

- The MEF's publication "Report: Women in Management in Montenegro" provided the unique text with the content that will serve as a starting point for all future researches and different processes that are to be realized in the coming period in Montenegro. Namely, its contents and survey findings and subsequent conclusions and recommendations in particular, will contribute to better comprehension of the current situation, to taking up initiatives and implementation of concrete activities that lead to elimination of the existing barriers and greater representation of women in leading and top management positions in Montenegrin companies.

- The project provided support to raising public awareness on women in management in Montenegro. This is confirmed by the great visibility and the success of the MEF's awards for "THE BEST WOMEN MANAGERS in Montenegro" (in four categories: 1. economy/private sector, 2. public sector, 3. civil society sector, 4. media).

- The MEF [documentary film](#) (twelve-minutes-long) on women in management in Montenegro. As the first film made on this subject in Montenegro, its content point to the current status of women's management in all segments of the society (in companies, banks, in the executive and legislative authorities, in NGOs, media...) represents all the MEF laureates and provides powerful messages about leadership potential, positive role and the importance of active participation of women in management structures and bodies of the organization.

- The MEF database of business women in managerial positions (in the private, public and civil society and media in Montenegro) created as a list which contains the main information on women managers, further points to the female talent pool as well as economic strength and potential of women for leadership roles.

- The MEF document "Policy for companies" (with the content that companies can adapt and adopt, thereby confirming that they recognize and indicate the leadership potential and importance of active participation of women in management structures and bodies).

MEF Report

MEF Publication

MEF Database

MEF Policy for companies



This MEF project was implemented by the MEF with the support of the ILO, within a regional project “Promoting Inclusive Labor Market Solutions in the Western Balkans” jointly realized by the ILO and the UNDP, and financed by the Austrian Development Agency (ADA).

31 January - The regional conference “Boosting the social dimension – the contribution of economic governance to decent work and life in the Western Balkans and Turkey” - The conference aimed to support joint governance efforts by the EU and enlargement countries on reforms for improving the economic and social situation of all citizens in the Western Balkans and Turkey. As the economic governance process for EU enlargement countries is entering its third year in 2018 and reform implementation is advancing, the conference took stock of the achievements and experiences gained so far all aimed to further strengthen and accelerate the delivery of reforms beneficial to work and life of all citizens in the region. Conference participants came from administrations of enlargement countries, national and EU Social Partners, EU Member States, academic experts and regional and international organizations. MEF representative - a Head of Department for Education and Members Support, was one of the panelists in the thematic session on *Promoting Access to Employment for All*.

5 February - Public debate on free movement of workers - At the invitation of the Ministry of European Affairs, MEF President Ms Svetlana Vuksanovic, took part in public debate *“Montenegro and the EU: free movement of workers”* organized in Podgorica, within EU4ME project financed by the EU and implemented by UNDP. It is said thereby that Montenegro had done a great deal in the area of free movement of workers and that the accession to EU would have positive effects on employment in Montenegro providing an opportunity for improvement of livelihoods and business environment for its citizens.

14 February - VII regular Social Council session – Following the Initiative to negotiate minimum wage increase, labor costs reduction and introduction of nontaxable wage limit, MEF representatives (as social partner) participated in Social Council session chaired by the Minister of Labor and Social Welfare. Once the arguments regarding the Initiative were shared by each constituent of the Social Council (MEF, two Trade Unions, government), it was concluded that there is a need to establish a working group which, in cooperation with the Ministry of Finance, will make the analysis aimed to consider the increase of minimum wage and its accompanying effects, labor costs reduction and introduction of nontaxable wage limit. The Social Council gave positive opinion to the Draft Law on the Amendments to the Law on Occupational Health and Safety. Apart from the Initiative, the Social Council considered and gave opinion on the Draft Law on the Amendments to the Law on Occupational Health and Safety and the Draft Labor Law.

Session was attended by the Minister of Finance and the State Secretary at the Ministry of Finance.

27 February - Regional conference on social dialogue - MEF organized the conference “Transparent Social Dialogue as a Prerequisite to Healthy and Sustainable Economic and Social Development in the Region”, that gathered social partners from the region (Serbia, Albania, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the Republic of Srpska) as well as representatives of International Organization of Employers (IOE) who sent their video messages. At the conference was stated that all countries of the region face the same problems when it comes to social dialogue, and in order to improve the situation it is necessary to ensure greater involvement of the Social Council into decision-making that has direct impact on both workers and employer. The event in Podgorica ended with the conclusion that a Joint Declaration on improvement of social dialogue in the Region should be adopted and sent to regional governments as well as other relevant stakeholders at European level.

31 March - Final conference of MEF project on women leadership and management in Montenegro - MEF and International Labor Organization (ILO), in cooperation with the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, the Ministry of Economy, the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and Business Women Association of Montenegro, hosted a final conference of the MEF project “Women in Management in Montenegro – Support to Leadership and Professional Development of Women in Montenegro”. Within a working part of the conference, there was a first public presentation (at a global level) of ACT/EMP Report “Women in business and management: Gaining Momentum in Eastern Europe and Central Asia”, which put Montenegro in the focus of regional developments. *“If women were to participate in the economy at the same rate as men, Eastern Europe and Central Asia could see as much as a US\$1.1 trillion boost to gross domestic product (GDP), or an additional 23 per cent of annual regional GDP”*, Kristina Crnjanski Vljacic, a manager of the regional project, pointed out as one of the key findings of the report which includes Montenegro as well. Svetlana Vuksanovic, MEF President, emphasized the activities MEF realized within the named project: *“We met and linked many successful business women, founded a team of trainers and delivered a training program for women managers, created contents which can help employers develop policies aimed at higher representation of women. We founded a Women Managers Network, created a Business Women Database which will be developed further and conducted a second MEF survey on participation of women and men in management structures of Montenegrin companies.”* The MEF conference was a part of the project “Women in Management in Montenegro: Support to Leadership and Career Development of Women in Montenegro” implemented by the MEF with the support of the ILO, within a regional project “Promoting Inclusive Labor Market Solutions in the Western Balkans” jointly realized by the ILO and the UNDP, and financed by the Austrian Development Agency (ADA).

4 April – Cooperation Agreement with Union of the Blind of Montenegro - After the meeting held at MEF, the Cooperation Agreement between Union of the Blind of Montenegro (UBM) and Montenegrin Employers Federation, as one of the first friends of the UBM's zaposliosi.me portal, was signed by Goran Macanovic, Executive Director of the UBM and Svetlana Vuksanovic, MEF President. The objective behind the portal www.zaposliosi.me is to connect employers with unemployed persons with disabilities ultimately aiming at employment of as many persons with disabilities as possible. Another purpose of the portal is to mitigate societal prejudices on PwD, highlight their professional qualifications and potentials and support their employment by connecting them with employers and available workplaces.

18 June - Workshop on informal economy - MEF and ILO, in cooperation with trade unions, hosted a workshop “Informal Economy in Montenegro” within a project “Promote moving from informal to formal economy in Montenegro” funded by the ILO. The objective of the event was to present position papers produced by social partners concerning tackling informal economy (thus contributing to economic growth and formal employment) as well as to present a promotional campaign to be implemented within the project. These position papers will contribute to strengthening the role of social partners in the process for tackling informal economy as well as greater inclusion of both trade unions’ and employers’ representatives into decision making process concerning tackling informal economic activities.

29 June - Presentation of MEST ISO 20400 on sustainable procurement - MEF representative, as member of Technical Committee 007 (Social Responsibility) of Montenegrin Institute for Standardization, took part in the round table “Sustainable procurement – role of standards in sustainable development” hosted by the Institute in cooperation with the Public Procurement Administration. The aim of the event was to present the most recent Standard MEST ISO 20400, Sustainable Procurement – Guidelines. This Standard is intended for organizations of all sizes in both private and public sector since it is applied to every decision on procurement and it is a useful tool for strengthening productivity, optimizing costs and supporting innovation at the market.

3 July - Cooperation with the Parliament of Montenegro’s Gender Equality Committee - MEF representative took part in 20th session of the Parliament of Montenegro’s Gender Equality Committee, chaired by President of the Committee. As per the agenda, the Committee considered the Action Plan for Implementation of the Strategy of Women Entrepreneurship in Montenegro 2015-2020 for 2018 as well as the Report on Realization of the Action Plan for 2017 adopted by the Government and prepared by the Ministry of Economy. Among the rapporteurs of the above listed documents was MEF Adviser for Women Entrepreneurship.

17 July - Stakeholders’ cooperation - Progress made in chapters 2 and 19 on free movement of workers and employment and social policy as well as the state of affairs in civil society in Montenegro was discussed at the 11th meeting of Joint Consultative Committee between EU and Montenegro. MEF was represented by Secretary General Suzana Radulovic, as well as Head of MEF Department for International Cooperation as JCC members, and Head of MEF Department for Legal Affairs and Social Dialogue (as WG member for chapters 2 and 19).

4 September - Prolonged validity of Collective Agreement for Telecommunications Sector - A Branch Collective Agreement on the Amendments of Collective Agreement for Telecommunications Sector was signed by the president of Trade Union for Telecommunications and the president of MEF. Parties agreed to prolong the validity of Collective Agreement for Telecommunications Sector whereby it shall remain in force for three more years i.e. for the exact period of time it was in force once it was signed back in 2015 – until October 8, 2021.

1-2 October - MEF at Global Business Forum on SDGs - At the invitation of International Organization of Employers (IOE), MEF representatives took part in *Global Business Forum on SDGs* held in Madrid, Spain, an event hosted by IOE and its member federation – Spanish Employers’ Organization (CEOE), with the support of the European Union. A working part of the Forum saw fruitful reflections and discussions leading to a conclusion that only successful and sustainable enterprises can contribute to development and prosperity of nations and global community. Although the accomplishment of UN Agenda 2030 is a responsibility of the states, it would not be possible without private sector engagement. It is the IOE intention therefore to

support its member organizations (MEF and other employers organizations globally) realize the activities aimed at SDGs accomplishment at national level.

2-3 October - Conference “Labor Market Reforms in the Western Balkans and Turkey” - This event, held in Budva - Montenegro, was organized by European Commission. MEF Legal Affairs Adviser was one of the panelists discussing undeclared work and informal economy pointing out to a number of challenges faced by employers and Montenegrin economy in general. This two-day event hosted Government and social partners’ representatives from the region as well as the representatives of ILO, ETF, OSCE and other international organizations. Montenegrin delegation consisted of the minister of labor, the director of the Employment Agency as well as the representatives of MEF, UFTUM and CTUM.

12 October - CEELAB final conference - MEF representatives took part in the final conference of the two-year long project CEELAB that was held in Budapest. This project resulted in the Report on Social Dialogue and Labor Market Reform during a Global Economic Crisis Affecting Central and Eastern Europe, as well as to activities of the social partners related to labor market reforms (each country participating in the project got its own national report). A presentation of the above mentioned Report was followed by a panel discussion “The Future of Social Dialogue in Central and Eastern Europe” with MEF representative as one of the panelist. CEELAB project was implemented by Business Hungary as a lead with partners: MEF, ZDS, ELTE and PRAVRI.

19 December – MEF has established the Competence Center Podgorica - As part of the program marking the Liberation Day of Podgorica, MEF President and Mayor of Podgorica inaugurated a Competence Center Podgorica. The establishment of the Center was an activity of the cross-border project “competenceNET” with MEF as partner from Montenegro and implemented within INTERREG IPA CBC Croatia – Bosnia and Herzegovina – Montenegro 2014-2020. The Competence Center Podgorica provide support to micro, small and medium sized enterprises, through activities that include training and mentoring programs for MSME and unemployed youth in the area of business skills, introduction of new technologies and innovative solutions into business operations (via smart cooperation programs). The Center thus support strengthening of entrepreneurship, small and medium sized business, at the same time encouraging young people’s creative approach to business ideas development. The Competence Center activities are based on cooperation between private, public and science-research sector, a framework to be further developed in the future both Montenegro and other countries participating in “competenceNet” project.

Montenegrin Employers Federation (MEF)

Cetinjski put 36
81 000 Podgorica, Montenegro
T: +382 20 209 250
F: +382 20 209 251
E: office@poslodavci.org
W: www.poslodavci.org

Montenegrin Employers Federation (MEF)

Cetinjski put 36
81 000 Podgorica, Montenegro
T: +382 20 209 250
F: +382 20 209 251
E: office@poslodavci.org
W: www.poslodavci.org