



INNOVATIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL SOCIETIES

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Interviewee: Dr. Milica Delevic

Interviewer: Michael Scharff

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SCHARFF: This is Michael Scharff, the date is June 26, 2014. I am at the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development talking with Ms. Milica Delevic, and we're reflecting on the experiences of her work with the Serbia EU (European Union) ascension process. Thank you very much for taking the time to speak with me today, I really appreciate it.

As you know, and we discussed, ISS (Innovations for Successful Societies) case studies are designed to help aspiring reform leaders to learn from people who have built institutions. This case study that we're developing is part of a series on strategy development. As we mentioned, if you do wish to you will have the opportunity to review and clear the transcript, and particular quotes.

I'd like to just start us off by helping the listener to sort of frame the picture, and set the scene if you will. If we step back a bit and talk about the period just before EU ascension began, I assume there was discussion about how do you define national aspirations and a new identity. Was this the case? Would you tell me more about the different views and concerns that people were articulating?

DELEVIC: *When you talk before the EU ascension started do you mean before Serbia embarked--?*

SCHARFF: Embarked on this journey.

DELEVIC: *That was a long time ago, that was probably when the new government when (Slobodan) Milosevic regime was overthrown in September 2000. I guess that there was no discussion as such, because the wish to join the EU was probably one of the best supported goals for the new establishment. I would say it was probably the only positive consequence of the years of isolation and sanctions before. People just knew that they didn't want to be isolated, and they wanted Serbia to be part of the world, and part of Europe, and to be able to influence decisions that ultimately are affecting it.*

So I think in the view—it needs to be seen in conjunction with what happens with Serbia before it embarked on its road towards the European Union and that was international isolation and sanctions. So somehow the wish to join the European Union came naturally.

SCHARFF: Who were the prime movers in the lead up to that process who were really sort of pushing this new vision?

DELEVIC: *I would probably say that it came to be epitomized by the then prime minister, Zoren Đinđić. He was heading a government which was supported by a coalition of many parties, so therefore you had lots of actors in the government and he was not—his party was not as strong. Basically, he was riding the wave of support for the then President of what was called Yugoslavia, Vojislav Koštunica. Even if Vojislav Koštunica and Dindic did not share political vision, as became obvious really soon, and as somehow started stalling our EU integration early on. But he was a strong political actor, but he didn't enjoy a very strong—his party at that time didn't enjoy very strong political support. But as an actor he was skillful, he had strong political idea, and strong vision. And that vision was Serbia in the European Union, and [a] vision of a reformed and modernized Serbia. Somehow he was managing to push this vision through and it came to be associated with him.*

SCHARFF: If you could put—sorry to interrupt you.

DELEVIC: *There was an interesting quote. 'At some point,' he said, 'well if now we don't make progress towards the European Union, there would be a funny government in ten or so years that would say its wish is for Serbia to join the European Union.'*

SCHARFF: If you could put yourself in the Prime Minister's shoes at the time, what sorts of challenges do you think the Prime Minister figured he may come up against in advancing this vision of his?

DELEVIC: *I think he had a very tough task furthering European Integration agenda on which there was a consensus among people. As I said, this was the best supported goal of the government; people wanted Serbia to join the European Union because they thought that we wouldn't be isolated, people would be able to live better, they would be able to travel freely, and to seek jobs, and to improve living standards. But, at the same time, conditions that needed to be satisfied for Serbia to move towards the European Union were polarizing.*

The goal was uniting people, but the conditions were polarizing. These conditions were first clarifying Serbian and Montenegro relationship in what used to be the common state, Yugoslavia. Then second dealing with the recent past, the conflict from the '90s. This came to be exemplified in the need for Serbia to cooperate with ICTY (International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia). This was also polarizing, and the third one was the status of Kosovo.

In a way, in order for Serbia to move towards the EU, which was very well supported by the citizens, he needed to tackle some issues which for the same citizens were extremely divisive. So that was a catch-22 situation where you then use the European Union as a vehicle to try and overcome the divisive issues. As a result you don't talk about the divisive issues as something that needs to be resolved as such, but you rather talk about them as something that needs to be resolved in order for the country to move towards the European Union. Therefore the European Union becomes sort of a scapegoat and the people say well, you know, we don't want to go towards the European Union if they are making us lose Kosovo, or if we need to extradite people to satisfy international justice which is not really functioning as justice in other cases, or is not particularly just towards the Serbs or Croats or whatever.

In a way I would say it was a catch-22 situation, so that people wanted Serbia to move very fast, but in order for Serbia to move fast you needed to do some things which people basically didn't want to do. They wanted to keep a lid on those problems for as long as possible.

SCHARFF: Was there a moment or certain circumstances that provided an opening?

DELEVIC: *I think basically what Đinđić did in the beginning--I mean the first thing that he had to deal with was ICTY. The first driver of conditionality was basically the US (United States), which was conditioning its bilateral assistance. In the beginning we were not close to having a contractual relationship with **far away from** the European Union, so the fact that the European Union was unhappy about*

something didn't really mean a lot. At that time we were denied certification of US bilateral assistance at some point and that was rather something that mattered.

The first thing that Đinđić had to deal with was ICTY in the context of the former prime minister—President--the face of the former regime Slobodan Milosevic. In the face of the opposition of the Montenegrin party, which was participating in the then federal government, he had to make an executive decision and first arrest Slobodan Milosevic, and then extradite him. Only when this happened--and he happened to have been extradited on the 28th of June 2001, which is St. Vitus day and therefore a very important date for Serbs, which is the anniversary of the Kosovo battle being lost in 1989--that happened to be the day on which Milosevic was extradited to ICTY, and which then paved the way for the successful donors' conference to be organized in Brussels.

So the first thing that he had to deal with was the Hague, arresting and extraditing Milosevic, and then making sure that the rest of indictees are—first that there is a law which codifies cooperation with ICTY, and then that slowly indictees are being arrested and extradited to the tribunal. That was a tough thing for him to do but he managed to move on this one.

The second thing that he needed to deal with was Montenegro, and the relationship with Montenegro. Serbia and Montenegro were very different. Montenegro was a small economy, Serbia—if you compared them in the former Yugoslavia, they were as diverse as you could possibly have. One was bigger, the other was smaller, and during the '90s Serbia and Montenegro basically pursued different paths, which made harmonization which was necessary in order for the agreement with the European Union to be signed even more difficult.

If you wanted to have a fair relationship where one is not dominating the other, it was very difficult to build such a relationship because a) the countries were different and b) they pursued different paths which aggravated—if you wanted harmonization it made it extremely difficult. Again, it was a peculiar situation.

Government in Montenegro didn't participate in the federal elections that toppled Milosevic on September 2000. As a result they did not participate in the federal government that was running Yugoslavia at the time. So when we were at that time talking to the European Union, we had a number of actors around the table most of which did not recognize each other. We had Montenegrin government sitting around the table but the Montenegrin government recognized the Serbian government, [it] did not recognize the federal government.

The federal government, in which you had Serbian government and parts Montenegrin pro-Yugoslav parties, about which the Montenegrin government was not happy and therefore they did not recognize the Montenegrin government. Then you had UNMIK (United Nations Mission in Kosovo), who was sitting there on behalf of Kosovo. On the other side we had the European Commission. So it was like group therapy without a therapist, or group sex with yourself--however you want to call it. It illustrates that basically the European Integration, if you wanted to make a contractual relationship what the European Commission needs to know [is] who is in charge, who would be in charge of honoring obligations that would emanate from such a contractual relationship, and what would be the territory on which this contractual relationship would be valid.

In the case of the then Yugoslavia, it was a very difficult question to answer. If it is Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, who then takes care—how do you make sure that Serbia and Montenegro are harmonized sufficiently for this contractual relationship to be signed? Who takes care of Kosovo and how this whole thing is put together?

The condition then became to harmonize our sort of trade regime towards the external world, and our custom duties between Serbia and Montenegro. Serbia and Montenegro tried an effort to harmonize, but they didn't manage to harmonize custom duties on—I think 44, or 54, or 53, agricultural products—which is not impossible to understand because basically Serbia is an agricultural producer, wants to protect its agriculture. Montenegro is a country which basically imports agricultural products, has no reason whatsoever to protect agricultural producers. It wants to protect its consumers. So basically as I said you have very diverse economic interests and these 53 or 54, I really can't remember, agricultural products became a bone of contention.

The European Union didn't know what to do and didn't know how to sign a free trade agreement with basically a country that had two different trading units, which among themselves had customs which was not harmonized. So in the end the European Union did what the Serbian political actors were constantly saying it needed to do, and this was to recognize that Serbia and Montenegro were a specific case. It decided to offer Serbia and Montenegro what was then called a twin-track approach. That basically meant that two agreements would be negotiated with a joint preamble. This was basically a decision—I would say it was an understanding, an implicit, or rather an explicit understanding that the process of the solution was well underway, but in a way releasing the pressure was the hope of the Union and the Commission that maybe if there is no pressure on actors that maybe over time they would manage to overcome the problem.

Unfortunately it didn't happen, and the process of the solution continued, and in the referendum that was organizing Montenegro in 2006 citizens of Montenegro voted for Montenegro to become an independent state. And then basically two different mandates were negotiated and given to the Commission; basically negotiation of two completely separate Stabilization Association Agreements started. Montenegro was faster to finish negotiations than Serbia because Serbia's process was stalled with cooperation with ICTY.

As I said first was ICTY, then was relationship with Montenegro—and I mean relationship with Montenegro you need to see in very practical terms. It is just the Commission and the European Union needed clarity when it came to who is going to respect the obligations that would emanate from this contractual relationship. What would be the territory on which the agreement would apply?

SCHARFF: Yes.

DELEVIC: *This, for the actors in Serbia and Montenegro this was a very difficult question. Ultimately it was resolved by Montenegro becoming an independent state.*

From then on, from Montenegro becoming an independent state, Serbia continued to be haunted by the needs to cooperate with ICTY, and increasingly with the Kosovo issue. ICTY--Serbia is, I'm sure many people whom you have

interviewed must have told you--was very often praised by the European Union for having excellent administrative capacities and was proving competent in the negotiation process. But it was very difficult to capitalize on these administrative capabilities while political pre-conditions were lacking, in the sense that sufficient level of cooperation with ICTY was lacking, which made it impossible to have a consensus among member states for Serbia to take the next step.

SCHARFF: So given that there was this lack of consensus, am I correct to say that there was never really a comprehensive strategic action plan for how to go about ascension and if this was the case—?

DELEVIC: *There was a strategy, an interesting piece of strategic work, which was called Strategy of Serbia for Serbia and Montenegro joining the European Union. I was coordinating the work on this, and this must have been 2005. I think it was presented in 2005. And I think everybody understood the need for a strategic approach, but in a way it became an effort which you do, but at the same time you are aware that this effort is not going to deal with the most important issues which are in the Serbia-Montenegro relationship. At that time Koštunica government though we needed to have this common state with Serbia and Montenegro so this was not discussed in the strategy paper, and ICTY--you can think of a strategy, but the strategy first needs to understand what is the reality. The reality is we can't move unless we cooperate sufficiently with ICTY, and cooperate sufficiently means prosecutor delivering positive report to the UN Security Council and all of the member states, the Netherlands included, agreeing that this was sufficient.*

SCHARFF: So there was a strategy on paper.

DELEVIC: *There was a strategy.*

SCHARFF: But your efforts really couldn't—the strategy couldn't move forward unless these bigger issues were dealt with first.

DELEVIC: *This is precisely the case which I mentioned at the beginning. Everybody agrees on the European Union, but nobody agrees on what is due to move faster on ICTY and on Kosovo, or Montenegro. I remember once on a talk show I said this became very widely quoted, that Serbia wants to join the European Union on its terms, not upon the terms that the European Union is giving us, but we have our own terms and why do you bother imposing yours.*

So there was an understanding that some strategy was needed there, but that was probably a frustration about lack of consensus, how to deal with the big political issues which were preventing Serbia from moving fast.

SCHARFF: In what ways then did the government, which came to power in 2008, perhaps chart a new path for integration? I mean did it have to win legal mandates from the legislature to proceed?

DELEVIC: *The government which came to power in 2008—I think first the elections in 2008 were a very positive surprise. They happened three months after Kosovo unilaterally declared independence and basically the then prime minister, Vojislav Koštunica decided to return the mandate to the people, and everybody was afraid that against the background of this unilateral declaration of independence it would actually support nationalist forces, and it would be even more difficult to*

move towards the European Union. This was the time when the European Union decided to support pro-European forces in the elections by allowing them to sign the Stabilization and Association Agreement, despite the Dutch opposition, because they were not happy for what they perceived to be lack of cooperation with ICTY on which they were right. But it was an interesting development because Serbia signed the Stabilization and Association Agreement, but was immediately informed that it would not enter into force.

It was in effect frozen immediately after signature; it was a signal of support for pro-European political forces, but in a way it was like you had bought something on credit, and then you needed to deliver later on. So the new government once it came—first the election results were rather positive, a pleasant surprise, because everybody expected that this would be a tough election after Kosovo declaration of independence. Actually pro-European parties won, and they were able to form government together with the Socialist party, which was the first major step to bring in the socialist party of Milosevic in from the cold.

Very early on the government arrested and extradited the former Bosnian Serb political leader Radovan Karadžić. It happened I think in July 2008 and it was seen as a very positive step.

The government then decided to start unilaterally implementing Stabilization and Association Agreement. Basically then there was a lot of discussion in public whether this would be hurting Serbia, and whether we really needed to do this. I saw it as—we were encouraged also by the then commissioner, - a way of building track record, to venture into this because we thought if we start implementing we would prove we had administrative capacity to move forward.

SCHARFF: Interesting.

DELEVIC: *Anyway, the European Union had given us autonomous trade preferences in late 2000, so basically we had an asymmetric—we were enjoying an asymmetric trade relationship with the European Union to our benefit until that point, eight years. So basically unilaterally applying SAA meant slowly opening Serbia's market and making it more symmetric.*

However, slowly opening your markets also meant that you would be foregoing some customs' revenue, because if you start reducing custom barriers in the end it means that you get less custom's revenue. As it happened that the global economic crisis hit hard this became quite an argument. We in the European Integration Office then started comparing: what is it that the Serbian exporters are gaining because of the European market being open to them. On the other hand what is it that the Serbian budget is giving up because of our customs coming down? It proved that the benefits of the European market being open to us were five times higher than the costs of bringing customs down.

In a way the opportunity cost of foregoing the relationship would have been much higher. So it was a very—for us, I remember, we started doing a number of papers where we tried to quantify the benefits of free trade relationship. And then I remember explaining very often that every free trade agreement is a cost/benefit thing, where you enter the cost for going custom revenues in order to secure market for your exporters. It is a good decision as long as benefits outweigh costs.

For Serbia it is extremely important, it was extremely important, because half of its market, more than half of its market—both in terms of exports and imports—was the European Union. And if you include what we used to denote as future European Union which is FEFTA CEFTA (Free Central European Free Trade Association)—these are basically countries on their way to the European Union, it becomes 80%, which means that you have no alternative to adopting standards which allow you to export to these markets. If these markets are regulated by certain agriculture, food, veterinary, [Indecipherable 00:25:32] sanitary standards, then you might make sure to implement these. Otherwise you cannot export even your milk to Bosnia and Herzegovina, because they are also seeing to implement the standards.

So I think for the European Integration Office, which I was heading at the time, it was a very interesting period because we were trying on one hand to quantify the benefits of the contractual relationship with the European Union so as to provide arguments in the public discussion and, on the other hand, we were pursuing a parallel tract which was to quantify why for the European investors like FIAT for instance, investing in Serbia or in the region, why it would be extremely important that the Stabilization and Association Agreement is implemented. Once you start implementing the Stabilization and Association Agreement, you qualify for a very technical thing which is called the Diagonal Accumulation of the Rules of Origin.

SCHARFF: Were you trying to help them understand the importance so that they could help to perhaps talk to their contacts in government and push for this?

DELEVIC: *Yes, we had a very important meeting in the summer of 2009 with the Dutch representatives. I remember I headed the delegation to travel to The Hague, because they said, you know, if you are implementing unilaterally Stabilization and Association Agreement, and we are unilaterally having these autonomous trade preferences, in effect we are having a bilateral free trade agreement. So why are you complaining? It is just a political pressure from our side not agreeing to implement it, but it is basically we are having in effect two sets of unilateral measures amounting to a bilateral relationship.*

Then we tried to explain that in reality it is not so, it doesn't happen like this. Because, first, whenever you have two unilateral things, you don't have predictability or certainty. Either side can backtrack from unilateral declaration of good will. So you need some certainty. Secondly, there are certain things which result only from the agreement being properly implemented and one of these, the most important of these, is the Diagonal Accumulation of the Rules of Origin.

Then we worked with the Serbian Export Promotion Agency, and with the Chamber of Commerce interviewing investors, why they thought that this Diagonal Accumulation of the Rules of Origin would be important for them. Then FIAT said, it is important for us because if we are producing this FIAT car in Serbia, the Diagonal Accumulation of the Rules of Origin would make it possible for us to produce steering wheel in Bosnia, I don't know, tires in Macedonia, and then the whole product could be seen as made in the region so to speak, by accumulating origin.

SCHARFF: Fascinating.

DELEVIC: *So for them it made—we tried to rely on European investors to make the case. Then we also tried to explain, the same way we were explaining the benefits to*

the Serbian public, we were explaining the cost to the European public. They didn't understand that unilaterally implementing it meant a cost to the Serbian budget. The cost was lower than initially expected because imports—we imported less because of the crisis. So in a weird way crisis supported the argument of 'oh it is not so costly,' because if you are—basically your importers are hit by the crisis and they are importing less, and therefore you are losing less customs revenues than you could have used had they imported more, which we suppose would have happened had the economic situation been better.

SCHARFF: Because of these conditions—these are nuanced and somewhat complicated issues, and that the average Serb might not necessarily grasp or just simply doesn't have access to all the information that you have access to sitting in your position. So I wonder, because you need public opinion on your side, is there a strategy at the time for communicating these messages in a very easy to tell—do you have a PR (public relations) marketing campaign?

DELEVIC: *We were having strategies one was adopted in I think 2005 and one was adopted in 2011 or '12, I'm not sure. Basically you can't have a strategy as long as main political actors are doing messages on their own. You would need to coordinate messaging with PRs of main political actors. Currently in Serbia it is probably easier because you only have one strong political actor, overshadowing others. So he sets the tone. and that political actor is Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić so basically nobody else. Nothing else. So whatever he says—.*

SCHARFF: Goes.

DELEVIC: *Goes. But I wouldn't say it is something that you would hope for. You would hope for a bit more plurality. Coordination is good, but unison is not. You don't want Soviet-style coordination. So what we did in 2012, we did a public hearing on the European integration in the parliament, in plenary. That, for that, the European Integration Office, we produced a paper which I believe you can find on the website, I'll try it now. I still think that it was one of the best papers that we produced, because it tried to quantify the benefits, in various aspects, of Serbia-EU relationship.*

First trade: why it is relevant for us, and proving that it is not detrimental. Because you have this strong argument that the EU is robbing us, and there is this deficit. Especially you have to counter the argument that it is bad for agriculture, whereas we were in effect showing very strong export capacity even in agriculture. So first we were dealing with aspects of trade. Then we dealt with aspects of assistance, and what is it that we have received so far, and what is it that we can hope for when we become members. What is the opportunity cost of not being a member now, and we took Bulgaria as a reference point being a country of the same size, similarly, I mean roughly similar to Serbia. Even if Bulgaria is not successfully using all of its structural funds to which it is entitled due to its EU membership.

Then we also calculated, sort of explained, the reform effort that the European Union is making us do by sort of adopting certain systemic laws. Then finally we quantified tried to quantify benefits of visa-free travel. That was interesting, sort of comparing the number of people who had passports before 2009, when visa liberalization was introduced, and afterwards. Then we also sort of calculated the number of citizens traveling to the European Union before, and after. We also calculated how much these citizens would be paying if visas were still in force.

So it was a very comprehensive paper. Nobody in the parliament—what was interesting—you had no participation in this public hearing from the Serbian Progressive Party, which is heading the government now.

In effect, this was the election year, 2012. I think that they had already crossed the Rubicon in terms of wanting to be a European party, but they didn't really want to annoy their voters.

SCHARFF: In the lead up to the election.

DELEVIC: *Yes. So in a way their voters didn't vote for them hoping that they would do what they're doing now. I would say it must be a very complicated thing for them; they must be seriously confused at the moment.*

SCHARFF: I want to talk just a little bit about the work you specifically did, and your role as Director of the European Integration Office.

DELEVIC: Yes.

SCHARFF: When you first become head in 2008, how would you describe the morale in the Office?

DELEVIC: *I would say probably 2008--what made the government in 2008 different was that the role of the Office before 2008, and especially the Director of the Office, was in a way a guardian of the European Integration, the guardian of the flame. The Prime Minister and the government were not really subscribing to the EU idea. In 2008, the government was clearly subscribing to the European Union idea, to the European Integration idea. So the role of the Office and the Director of the office was not to sell this idea to the public, but to deliver on this.*

Whereas if you're comparing the Koštunica government, very often the Director of the Office would be the only one who would say we need to cooperate with ICTY, this is a condition. To present things clearly in 2008, the role of the Director of the Office clearly became get your ministries, get your act together, deliver, move, coordinate, deliver first on visa liberalization, then on—. In order for this to happen I had to change the organization of the Office.

SCHARFF: Interesting, can you help me and explain that?

DELEVIC: *When I came to the Office I remember at that time we had a bit less than fifty people. As I was meeting the people everybody was telling me, oh there will be new internal organization and according to the new internal organization, I'm sitting here, or my title is this. This will happen once we have ninety people. Very early on, it was 2008, and the Lehman Brothers has already collapsed and everybody in the government understood that there will be no ninety people given to me in the Office.*

I had first to introduce a bit of order, and clarity, in terms of whose title, who is entitled to what position, what title, and to make sure that this is transparent and accepted by everybody. So it took me a while to do this because—.

SCHARFF: You must have ruffled a few feathers along the way in doing so.

DELEVIC: *I think people were in the beginning afraid that they were going to be hurt in this process, but I think in the end they appreciated it. It was clear, it was transparent. I tried—probably I did a couple of mistakes, but I think in the end it was more stable than before.*

SCHARFF: What made it transparent and how did you decide who went where?

DELEVIC: *I had to say in the beginning that I needed to rely on people who want to be ultimately public servants. You don't want to have a nucleus of politicians. We are public service and we want to rely on people who want to be public servants, civil servants in the longer period of time. You need to be able to sort of promote people on the basis of their working experience. Also—then I remember I had at that time said, whoever has a foreign diploma needs to get his or her diploma recognized. In a way, if I'm—if you have think, you have a new government in 2012, and the new government is sending an auditor to the Integration office. You say oh, these people are actually employing students whose diplomas are not recognized, and they are hiring private doctors for medical examinations. So first you need to make sure that you are playing by the rules, that you're employees understand the rules, and that they see them—they might be annoyed by the rules sometimes, but they see them equally enforced towards everybody, and they don't see it as personal in this process.*

SCHARFF: Did you rely on outside assistance—?

DELEVIC: No.

SCHARFF: To come up with—did you have to formulate new job descriptions?

DELEVIC: *Basically what I did, I think it was clear what needed to be done. There is a part of the job that is related to coordination of the accession process, that was clear. There was another part which was related to communication and information campaign which was not the core job but which was a support activity. There was a part that needed to be developed, which was the translation. Then there is the part that every state organ needs to have, which is dealing with administrative and legal issues.*

So basically you had the outlines of the structure. It took a bit of skill, and a bit of probably political capital to make sure that you can have certain number of assistants and a certain number of titles, so to try and make people happy both in terms of how they're called, how they're titled, the sound of their titles. Also for them it means increases in their salary. But I think the maneuvering space was limited by rules. You could try and tweak it a bit, but not a lot.

SCHARFF: By existing civil service rules?

DELEVIC: *Yes, by existing civil service rules, and the government needs to approve your internal organization. But what basically happened when I joined the office, I was like—I am—my title is head of unit, but I'm not in this unit I'm in the other unit and I was made the head of this unit in order for me to be promoted and not leave. That made the people in this unit annoyed, and the people in the other unit, so there are difficulties for everybody. Basically I think people appreciated having clarity and knowing where they stand.*

SCHARFF: You didn't—.

DELEVIC: *It might not have made all of them happy but it made things clear and transparent, and everybody knew who the heads of unit were, who the assistants were and I think it was—. I said, "you need to get these diplomas recognized". There would be—it needs to be very clear. It is the eighth year of transition; basically you're working as civil servants and the salary is the one for civil servants. I can help incentivize you by sending you to training travels, but I cannot provide salary toppings.*

If you see now, it is one of the things that people went to jail for. It was a practice in the Serbian Integration Office too, and I think it was supported by UNDP (United Nations Development Program) at the time, because everybody is like 'we need to support those young people because they believe in it.' But at some point the situation needs to become regular and you need to start relying on people who understand that they are part of the civil service and to improve the whole, the lot of civil servants as a whole, rather than creating islands of positive deviation in the area of European integration or foreign investment or others. Then they are hated by the rest of the administration. How can you possibly coordinate the rest if they say well, these young chaps are anyway paid way beyond my pay and they are selling me experience which they don't have, and I need to work my ass off? You need to make them properly part of the administration, and then work to improve administration as a whole rather than pockets of it.

SCHARFF: So you didn't get your ninety; how many did you get?

DELEVIC: *I didn't get my ninety—I ended up with one hundred. In 2010 part that was dealing with pre-accession assistance was made part of the Serbian European Integration Office, and this brought us new people. I thought it was a very good thing, because if you are coordinating and are not seen as being able to throw some money behind this coordination, it is effectively a rather toothless coordination. So if you are seen as coordinating money too it helps.*

SCHARFF: So that was a hundred up from how many when you took over in 2008?

DELEVIC: *When I took over in 2008 nominally 53, but in reality 35. So when I left it was ninety-something.*

SCHARFF: And all or most were actual civil servants by the book?

DELEVIC: *I think by the time I left most were civil servants.*

SCHARFF: You mentioned early one of the big challenges was getting your ministries in line. This is a common challenge we see across various center of government units. Can you help us to understand what that looked like?

DELEVIC: *First, whenever you're coordinating you need to understand, you need to make sure that success belongs to everybody and not just you. The more they see you jumping on this success, the less ready they are to deliver because they—you know—why would they be working if you would be the one seen in the press.*

The other thing is try and avoid naming ministries in the public, in the beginning. First you give them warning. We introduced—there needs to be—you need to rely on the government as a mechanism. So we created this—when I joined the

government, at every government the European Integration was discussed and then Deputy Prime Minister was discussing it and it annoyed a lot of ministers because they saw it without written information, without agenda and Vučić could be extensive, so he could be rather talkative. It could turn into I've met this person and that person which—all the other ministers were like he's important and I'm not important.

SCHARFF: Just for our listeners you have had the unique experience of prior to the Integration Office of having been in the ministry as Deputy Minister in Foreign Affairs so you've seen the coordination.

DELEVIC: *I've seen the coordination but that being said the foreign ministry is not the most active one in the European integration process. But at the same time I understood that you need to rely on the government; you cannot rely on oral information being provided by anybody. So what we did is I agreed with the Office of the Prime Minister, we will have written information once monthly at the government session. In this written information we provided an overview of the situation, analysis of the implementation of the Stabilization and Association Agreement, major laws that were in the procedure and current problems.*

This would be a forum for me, and for the deputy prime ministers to say okay, we are having these issues in terms of for instance the European Union is—the Commission is expecting these laws, I'm facing delays. I need at this moment to say that I would need your help.

Then the minister would say, oh yes, it is in the procedure it would happen, or these projects related to pre-accession assistance are stuck. There will be no funding if we sort of unblock what is necessary. So you need to have a platform but on the basis of written information—you need to rely on certain procedures, rather than just European integration is nice and we need to discuss it.

Once you have established mechanisms and once you have raised issues in the government, then—and once you have established yourself as an honest broker of the process, then you can allow yourself, in your public appearances, to try and raise some issues in a rather cautious way. I was not seen probably as a spokesperson for the government, because I was not among the sort of ready, usual suspects who support the government. I had a way of distancing myself from what I thought would be a stupid issue.

For instance, when the information, when the media law was being adopted in 2009 – the Office did not have much time to comment on it, but we still did managed to provide some comments reflecting concerns about the law.—this was probably one of the more stupid laws that then government adopted. It was adopted in the face of opposition from the Commission, and they provided us with very little time to do opinion for this law. Normally the European Integration Office has to provide an opinion on every law, making sure that the Ministry went through the process of harmonization. So you as an Office might not be able to say what is wrong with the law, but you would say, 'okay, we see that these guys went through the process,' and we might be able to spot major flaws, but at least you need to make sure that the process has been respected.

For this one they've left us one day, and I remember calling a friend who was a lawyer and saying I know that the law is flawed, can you provide me with at least two comments so that we have a face-saving; I don't want to be seen as not

having commented on this law at all. I mean, the comments were overruled at the government session, and later adopted by the Parliament, the ones that we made.

But what I see now is often squeezed to provide comments supportive of the law, even if the harmonization process didn't really take place.

SCHARFF: Fascinating. Did you have to coordinate with your ministers to help them develop an economic competitiveness strategy?

DELEVIC: *Not economic competitiveness, but very often we were seen as working with them on certain laws and on structures relevant for European Integration. But it is important for them to understand that you are not the representative of the Commission, but that you are helping them implement the recommendations of the Commission. You are on their side, but trying to make sure that the Commission demands are met.*

In a way if they only understand you—you cannot say to the Commission, 'go to hell we won't implement this.' At the same time you cannot go to the ministry and say, 'I really have no respect for your views, what you're saying makes no sense. This is what the Commission expects, go for it.' It cannot happen like this. So it is a fine balance that you have to take.

Basically it is about putting procedures in place, making sure that you are part of the administration as a whole, rather than being seen as being some sort of super add on which everybody hates. Trying to be supported by political actors, ideally [the] Prime Minister who has an oversight of the whole agenda, but at the same time having some degree of autonomy to pursue things. You can never be an effective coordinator if you are not seen as empowered by political actors. I wouldn't say that this is happening now—.

SCHARFF: Not just empowered by any political actors, empowered by the head of state essentially.

DELEVIC: *Essentially you need to be seen as respected by actors who matter. If you—say for instance if state secretaries knew that if I raised something, that it would be raised ultimately by the prime minister's and eventually the President's office. So for instance, I don't know, either [Surgon? Or Tanya] or somebody now raising it in the office—I'm not sure. Not sure how it works now - You might have State Secretaries being able to make a stronger case with the prime minister than they would. So it is a way of publicly you are there it is important to be a public face but it is even more important to be able to make the government move. but can you make the government move. You need a certain sort of political backing and political role to be able to do this.*

SCHARFF: Did you have a system in place in the office to monitor implementation?

DELEVIC: *No, we didn't. To the extent that this National Program for Integration which was an instrument with which we measured adoption of laws and we measured also adoption of bylaws and decrees. What was systematically lacking was bylaws and decrees. This was an indicator of implementation not being great. So we were good in implementing.*

If you think of the four years of this government, it adopted an enormous number of laws but it was not as good in bylaws and decrees and regulations which indicated that there were problems with implementation. everything that needed to do sort of trickled down and implemented didn't happen.

SCHARFF: To what degree did your office consult with civil society, business, media, to sort of ensure that their goals were on the agenda?

DELEVIC: *We tried to consult as much as possible with civil society. These consultations we tried to—that's a tricky one. You need to find a way of consulting without becoming a vehicle for specific business interests – business or professional associations or any other. I remember, I was probably one of the few who has never attended business, annual business gatherings. I have never attended any party of any individuals, I don't have [Indecipherable 00:52:03] with [Miscovitz?] and I don't have—. For instance, when the current government and the current prime minister attended these receptions given by this club that was gathering sort of prominent business people and unlike them I don't have [Indecipherable 00:52:19].*

I thought it was important to have a system but not to be seen as close to business people any particular group. We, for instance, when we were working on the questionnaire we really did a very thorough consultation process internally and with the Chamber of Commerce. You have to have an umbrella body with which you can sort of freely work, like trade unions, either Chamber of Commerce or something, but you cannot be seen as pandering to special interests, particular interests be it trade unions or a particular business group or what. You need to make sure that these views are reflected but at the same time you cannot become enslaved by them.

What we also did, I think the law on free access of information, information of public importance is really a very strong tool. A lot of organizations were relying on this tool when we were answering questionnaire to get information. I was really providing everything. The Network for Restitution was using it very actively, for example. At some point the Network for Restitution—they were really aggressive—we want to know who met whom when, where. Then I called the commissioner and I said, could you sort of please be more specific with us; we're in the middle of this work. Could you sort of narrow it down to a particular request? They said no.

Then I talked to the Commissioner—they wanted everything. I talked to the Commissioner for Protection of Public Data and he said if they are unable to sort of narrow it down then you make sure that you deliver your answer in time but you can take all of the time you are provided by the law to send an answer.

I would say that NGOs were faster to pick on opportunities provided by the law on access to information on public importance than for instance business people. I remember business people once, somebody came and said I came to tell you we will hire a lobbying firm to fight a certain law which we don't think is in line with European standards. I said you don't basically need to see me all you need to do is file a request and I will provide you with everything stipulated under the law. . It surprised the person who was sitting in the government—this person was sitting in the government during the '90s. You should know this because NGOs are sometimes faster on understanding options than you are.

So basically you need to make sure that avenues of cooperation are open. There are certain things which the public sector doesn't do. So there is no secrecy but at the same time you need to make sure that the business is sufficiently run and that first things come first. Then the job is done and you are servicing the Request for Information, that they come, but taking into account the time which is given to you. So there we even did this questionnaire I remember, we did it with B92 sort of '92, with their web team. We did sort of questionnaire for the citizens.

We selected 92 people, a certain number of questions for the questionnaire and they were posted on the web site and answers were collected. So we translated all of this and provided the Commission with answers [Indecipherable 00:55:38]. Some were funny but some were illustrative especially on questions like corruption—sometimes the questions that the Commission is asking are just—appear to be too technical, were amusing for people and they were providing funny answers. So I think the process, everything was on the website as soon as the answers were given to the Commission they were immediately on the website. I said probably there are mistakes in there but what I tried to ensure there is no deliberate covering of something that was wrong. It is better to do a mistake than to do a deliberate cover up if you need to, if something needs to happen. But I think this was probably one of the biggest successes that we this coordination of the questionnaire process.

SCHARFF: Sometimes strategy units have too many priorities. I wonder, did this happen? Were there too many priorities to be practical?

DELEVIC: *I wouldn't say so because what happened with us was—.*

SCHARFF: Since not, then what helped focus your attention on just a few priorities.

DELEVIC: *Unlike this government—.*

SCHARFF: The current government.

DELEVIC: *The current government. The prime political actors were concentrating on political things and they were letting us deal with technical things. Therefore we became really the strongest actor in running the technical agenda. So we would then report to the political level what were the problems that needed to be resolved for the political agenda to be able to capitalize on technical progress.*

I was never part of the discussions on Kosovo and I haven't been part of political discussions. I was seen, however, as being empowered to drive the technical agenda. I would say that currently it appears that political actors are more interested even in technical process, which is good, but only if actors driving it are sufficiently empowered do it in a right way – and even remind the government of rules sometimes, public debate for laws etc. what currently is happening is an attempt from political actors to drive everything and it cannot be successful. From finance and the economy to [Indecipherable 00:57:48] integration you need to have actors who are seen as driving their own things.

Also, you need to be seen as pushing the government to be respectful of rules – public debate for laws etc. Normally I would say well it is outrageous to have laws adopted without a public debate. I would say as the head of the office now nobody dares say it. So you need to be able to have corrected within the government. If you don't have it within the government—.

SCHARFF: We talked a little bit before—.

DELEVIC: *I need to go for a meeting very soon.*

SCHARFF: How many more minutes do we have?

DELEVIC: *Five.*

SCHARFF: Thank you for your time it has been really very helpful and I really appreciate it. We talked a little bit earlier about the coordination with the ministries. Just to clarify, did individual ministries have action plans that fed into specifically what the Integration Office was trying to do or the accession process?

DELEVIC: *Basically what we used, we had this action plan for Serbia to become candidate status which indicated what needed to be—we took the progress reports from 2010 and turned it into action plan and said okay, this is what needs to be delivered on and this is like an action plan for the whole government. Apart from that we had the National Program for Integration where the ministries imposed on themselves obligations in terms of in this quarter I want to do this and in that quarter I want to do that. So we were monitoring it say a month before the results type—I would do a sneak preview and go to the ministries or at the government sessions and say as things stand now we have a success rate of 20%. The least compliant ones are duh-duh and you have a month to get back. If you need any help please let me know. It would serve as a wake-up call and they would normally deliver.*

SCHARFF: Three very quick questions if I may just before we end. Looking back over the entire time you were director of the office, were there any unexpected problems that arose and how did you deal with them? So these would be problems that you couldn't have foreseen or didn't foresee when you set out but that suddenly cropped up and that you had to mount a response to?

DELEVIC: *I think financial problems obviously because at some point the government was cutting down on the number of employees and it said contracts that you could sign with people who are outside of the administration can amount to 10% of your overall number of employees. That would kill the translation process which was basically done by hiring external experts. So then we had to fight on this.*

Basically what I didn't expect—and I remember the lady who was dealing with the legal issues. She said in your three or four years that you were in the office you faced the toughest budget period. Previously whatever was coming from the office was mostly approved as times were not as tough – and also as the then government was not at this level creating difficulties for the work of the Office. As the European integration automatically approved because you were the darling by being the European Integration. Even if the government was not supportive of the cause, it was basically throwing money into it.

When I came to the office all of a sudden you had to fight; you had to fight for budget. That was sort of where the relationship with the Office of the Prime Minister really was very, very crucial.

SCHARFF: Was key.

DELEVIC: *I would say financial constraints were probably more challenging than earlier and at some point you had Another challenge was to balance probably transparency and openness with—for instance, we were in the process of answering the questionnaire. We were—NGOs, we opened it even for some NGOs which were highly critical of the government. Some were saying, for instance, like Doctors Against Corruption were sending us accusations of corruption in the ministry and in the health sector in general. I said, well, it might be. At some point—I was first sitting on this for a while and then they asked, did you forward it to the Commission. I said basically I am not an investigative organ.*

If you are raising concerns about particular people it is better if you send it to the Commission directly. I don't have investigative capacity. You are raising serious concerns but it is better if you transfer it yourself. Basically they did. I don't think—either you need to do it through the Serbian system, raise it through the Serbian system so it comes via the system, the judiciary is letting it be known that certain concerns have been raised. But I cannot transfer just an allegation of corruption without any—.

Somehow trying—we really opened it up to everybody. At some point you have to make sure that this drive toward being transparent is not a drive towards accusing people, by transferring these data, without previous investigation being conducted. You need to strengthen the system rather than destroying it. So we included all the data on processes under investigation and advised NGOs to send the other directly to the Commission. So if there are concerns they should be addressed through the system. We therefore advised that these concerns be sent directly to the Commission rather than taking it on us to send or investigate the matter, rather than being sent to me as sort of teacher, "teacher can you please send this".

SCHARFF: Second to last. Briefly, how did you measure the success of the European Integration Office?

DELEVIC: *First to the extent it was relied upon by other actors and other ministries and our involvement in governmental activity as a whole. We were really seen as a partner to the Office of the Prime Minister. I wouldn't say there was eventually—there hasn't been on EU integration with external actors that would not involve the office. We were seen as partners by line ministries so that they were really turning to us. Either field these - for example, preparing statement of compliance with the EU legislation or preparing inputs for Progress Reports or just work in progress.. We were really seen as part of the administration and we were seen as an honest broker and we were seen as a good interlocutor by the Commission.*

So not they are European, they are ours and we need to support them, but they knew that if they turned to us, eventually we will do something about it. We will come up with an answer which might not be the answer that the commissioner would always like to have, but it the query wouldn't get lost in the system and would be as accurate as possible. We were part of the system seen as the Commission is delivering and trying to help make the system in general more functional.

SCHARFF: Finally, if you could go back and do one thing differently, what would it be and why?

DELEVIC: That is a difficult thing to say. Probably I would say—I don't think I would have done—I would do many things differently. It is difficult to say. Now I'm idealizing because you should have asked me when I was there. Now with nostalgia I probably would say nothing.

SCHARFF: Thank you very much for your time. It is a pleasure meeting you and speaking with you and thank you for your candid thoughts.

DELEVIC: I hope it helped and would be interested in reading it once it is over, the whole study.

Part Two of Interview With Milica Delevic

SCHARFF: I wanted to ask about—I heard about this sort of so-called friends of the SEIO (Serbian European Integration Office) that were put together to sort of bring you and recruit you. I was curious who these friends are and what traits—.

DELEVIC: You mean after, currently?

SCHARFF: In the past they were responsible for recruiting you and helping to bring—coming to a unanimous decision to appoint you as the head. I guess I'm curious—.

DELEVIC: I don't know that it was Friends of SEIO. I think friends of the office were a group of people with a certain weight in international relations, and seen as active promoters of an idea of Serbia as a European country and Serbia European integration. And we were gathering with them fairly often to exchange ideas and make sure that they are updated on things which they could share with their interlocutors in their interactions.

When it comes to recruiting me I have to say I had to fight very hard. I don't think the friends would have helped. They were probably supportive—but I had to find an arrangement with the then Foreign Minister to whom I was Assistant Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister and the then President. And it was a rather complicated thing. So it was much more internal politics than anything else and sort of the makeup of—.

SCHARFF: So would it be fair to characterize your appointment as a unanimous decision?

DELEVIC: By whom? By the government?

SCHARFF: Who would have at the end of the day had the final say?

DELEVIC: Director of the Office is appointed by the government, so the government had the final say. The government appointment, the government appointed me and it was the proposal which was coming I think from the deputy prime minister from Prime Minister (Zoran) Dindic. So I think the friends didn't have a role in this process. They probably supported the idea, but it was internal. It is a very formal process of government appointment.

SCHARFF: Were there people within the SEIO who would have opposed—who did oppose your appointment?

DELEVIC: *No, I wouldn't say so. At that time what was difficult, because the then Foreign Minister to whom I was Assistant Foreign Minister for European Integration basically wanted to keep a stronger European profile of the foreign ministry which he thought he would get if I stayed there. Probably he himself didn't—he was not very attentively listening when I sort of mentioned it earlier on. So it was a bit of an internal political fight rather than anything else—.*

SCHARFF: So at the end of the day it was Deputy Prime Minister Djelic who really had the final say?

DELEVIC: *Deputy Prime Minister supported the idea but it had to go through the government. No, it is the government; the formal process that the government appoints you. But the final say is, as always, with the prime, political power, which at that time was the President who had to mediate between me, Djelic and Vucurevic.*

SCHARFF: Okay, fair enough. The last time we met you mentioned that your team implemented the trade agreement unilaterally—.

DELEVIC: *The government.*

SCHARFF: The government implemented it unilaterally. Can you help me to understand how the trade agreement fits into the broader accession process?

DELEVIC: *The Stabilization and Association Agreement, 80% of that is trade agreement. It is an agreement aimed at establishing free trade zones between Serbia and the European Union, which the European Union basically established unilaterally end of 2000 by providing autonomous trade measures for five years to the region, and which were then extended for another five years in which we undertook to sort of reciprocate by agreeing the dynamics of liberalization of our markets. The essence of the Stabilization and Association Agreement is that—of course dealing with harmonization of legislation, sort of announcing membership, defining goal. But the essence of the SAA is a free trade agreement, establishing the free trade zone in between Serbia and the European Union member countries.*

SCHARFF: Thanks for that. I'd like to ask you a little bit more detail about your relationship and the SEIO's relationship with the ministries when it became to the NPI (National Programme for Integration) and the EC's (European Commission) questionnaire. Broadly speaking, how did you win the cooperation of the ministries in filling out the questionnaire?

DELEVIC: *It was not us filling out the questionnaire. We were organizing the work, and the questionnaire had to be filled out by ministries in charge of certain questions. Given that we'd already worked together in producing the NPI in various other fora, we worked as a team. So it was not up to us. What came to us was to organize work, to chair sort of meetings, to mediate between—make sure the civil society was included—to mediate when there are overlapping authorities and conflicting approaches, which very often was the case. I think by that time we already had an image of a very honest broker so I think it worked very well.*

SCHARFF: Was there anything at the very beginning where you were able to sort of set the expectations, particularly with ministers who you knew might have reason to drag their feet or to oppose this process outright?

DELEVIC: *I think I told you last time we had a way of informing the government once a month about the European integration process. We used this to explain the whole questionnaire process to ministers, and we had meetings with state secretaries to agree on how best to proceed. Everybody understood that if things goes wrong it is not something that they have nothing to do with, it is somehow bad image for all of us. The questionnaire had in-built deadline because we were also preparing answers on the basis of questionnaires received by other countries in the region like Montenegro and Albania.*

The Commission, knowing that we were doing preparatory work, set a deadline, which was rather tight. I think what was important was that everybody in the government to understand that this was a joint enterprise, and we can only deliver it if everybody understands it.

SCHARFF: In your opinion did the integration units that were within the ministries have the right people to do the job?

DELEVIC: *I think you could always hope for either more people or more expert people, but on balance I think it was fairly okay. What was important is there was a process of institutional coordination on one hand, with the government being formally briefed on the matter, and on relevant units being empowered by their bosses to do the work. Obviously ministers wanted to read it through; everybody knew that it would be public. So if you put something entirely stupid in this, you could face it in newspapers and being reprinted everywhere. So I think ministers took it seriously. It is a huge exercise, which exposes internal weaknesses where you had them.*

SCHARFF: What would have accounted for the differences in the quality and competency of integration units between ministries?

DELEVIC: *Obviously the inherited situation; governments were changing, as governments were changing all the time some people were staying behind, some were moving on with the new government as the older government was leaving. Very often the composition of the government was changing and certain portfolios were combined in different ways. Obviously some areas are much more politically delicate than the others, so you can have competent people but the political process is not delivering. So it is various combinations.*

SCHARFF: Can we talk about what ministries' units performed best, and which ministries' units performed at a less than ideal standard?

DELEVIC: *It is difficult for me to remember it now. The thing is when we were doing measurements in the National Programme for Integration very often you would see that the ministries that were burdened the most would have difficulties achieving it—like agriculture or environment. But it is not because of lack of—it is just the sheer amount of work. These are areas where funds are required, where implementing standards takes time. So I wouldn't say that it is possible to put it down only to European Integration Units in the ministries. You would need to see it in the context of the workload, and in the context of political feasibility of a particular thing at a particular time, and obviously economic price of it.*

SCHARFF: One of the consequences of these ministries that weren't performing so well and that were overburdened is that the SEIO often shifted the work away from the

ministries, and actually contracted out that work. Now personnel in the Integration Units will point to this and say this is an example of where by shifting the work out of the ministries it actually created a gap in terms of enabling the ministries to build their own capacity. Do you think that that criticism is warranted?

DELEVIC: *By moving the units out of the ministries?*

SCHARFF: I'm sorry, by moving certain functions and projects and taking them—essentially taking them away from the ministries that weren't performing well, like the Ministry of Agriculture and the SEIO saying, 'we'll do it ourselves or we'll contract it out.' That that contributed to—that had a detrimental effect—.

DELEVIC: *We didn't have the authority to do that, at least during my time. We never—I mean you could see that the ministries were having difficulties, and you could tease it out at the government session and you can then force the minister to deal with it in another way. We didn't have the capacity to propose laws and by-laws, therefore it wouldn't be possible for us to take something out of the ministry and decide whether to outsource or not. So it was the decision of relevant ministers, whether they thought it better to hire external people or not.*

I think basically—I think we discussed it earlier—you need to build solid administration, not trust in the European Integration Unit but create a system for the whole administration, across the board. You don't want islands of positive deviation; you want the same standard across the board. You don't want people working in the European Integration to be perceived as darlings, in the sense of being over emphasized in terms of salary, possibility to travel... This is the exercise which really needs to involve everybody. So in this regard, I would say across the board strengthening of state administration is the best thing. Obviously there would be things that couldn't be done by state administration only, and for which you would have to outsource, but not just focus on European Integration Units.

Sometimes it was not the unit, you would know a certain assistant minister was in charge of it or a certain person in the cabinet of the minister was in charge of it, so you just had to find a solution that works in a particular setting. If it is an adviser within the cabinet of the minister that's fine, as long as he has the ear of the minister, and as long as he could deliver. But, these actors also need to understand that they need to empower the people working on it because if they decide to control pretty much everything they won't be able to deliver which I think is the case now—.

SCHARFF: You run into problems. Do you remember the average number of people in a single integration unit in a ministry?

DELEVIC: *No, I really don't.*

SCHARFF: Roughly speaking how large were these integration units?

DELEVIC: *I really don't know.*

SCHARFF: Dozens, just a dozen people?

DELEVIC: *I really don't know.*

SCHARFF: Do you know where the legal authority came to set up these integration units?

DELEVIC: *It started as a process, I think, back in 2003, 2002, where sort of they started appointing EU contacts within the ministry. Ministries, or some, were putting it in parts of the ministry dealing with normative, with laws.*

SCHARFF: At some point the SEIO began putting some of the Commission's questions on a website for civil society organizations and the public to answer. Do you recall when this was?

DELEVIC: *This happened in the context of preparing answers to the Questionnaire. The whole process lasted between 24th of November 2010 and 30th of January 2011. It must have been within this period and questions were not on the website for the NGOs. (non-government organizations). I told you earlier that for the civil society organizations we did a joint exercise with the Radio '92 in cooperation with one NGO, Belgrade Center for Human Rights. So they sort of selected certain questions which were put on the website and to which public could send in answers. And for NGOs we invited NGOs that were members of the Federation of Nongovernment Organization on Serbia, and we sent it to them. They distributed it to their members.*

There were some who decided that this is an exercise for the government. and they don't want to be involved. And some provided their answers which we sent to the Commission irrespective of the fact that they were not always (or mostly) flattering to the government.

SCHARFF: As far as the public answers were concerned do you have any idea how many responses you may have received? What was the scale?

DELEVIC: *It must have been huge because this is the best visited website in Serbia so the responses were—it was very—interactive.*

SCHARFF: Did you therefore need to create any kind of dedicated team or have somebody who was the point person?

DELEVIC: *We partnered with the Belgrade Center for Human Rights, and the Belgrade Center sort of selected the answers in terms of either the most illustrative, or the funniest, or... because they thought answers might be illustrative for some areas, some questions were on corruption for instance. Some were to make you laugh, especially interaction of the public with very bureaucratic and stiff language of the Commission. So they were with B92, and asked the partner they were providing. So I think altogether it was fifty pages which we provided the Commission with.*

SCHARFF: Is there a way to directly link outcomes to the feedback that the public provided?

DELEVIC: *I think if you talk to Ivana Duric from the Office for European Integration, she might be able to know.*

SCHARFF: I just want to wrap up with understanding a little bit about these reports that were being published publicly about the ministries' progress. You had discussed a little bit earlier in our first conversation about how you would sort of go to the ministries ahead of time and sort of prepare them for what was about to come out. But I wonder, did you suffer at all yourself from the backlash?

DELEVIC: *The first time, yes, because nobody really paid attention. I mean normally people don't read these reports very diligently. But once they realized that they were on the list of achieving zero or 29% or something like this they say, 'why did we publish this? Who was the one idiot doing this?' I think from then on nobody wanted to be seen as nonperforming.*

SCHARFF: Do you agree with the decision to publish?

DELEVIC: Yes.

SCHARFF: Why?

DELEVIC: *To create peer pressure.*

SCHARFF: Is there a chance also that that peer pressure could have a backlash, and cause ministers to further close their shells rather than have quiet conversations behind the scenes?

DELEVIC: *There is nothing in the legal process which could be quiet and behind the scenes. It needs to be transparent and there needs to be a public debate. Once they did this plan, they committed themselves to delivering and next time when they were doing a plan obviously they were more cautious when they were putting things forward. Still, they were to an extent ambitious. So you need to find the process going, and what I found disappointing is that people were delivering on the laws but not on the by-laws and regulations, which is implementation of laws.*

SCHARFF: Just very briefly to wrap up--whose decision was it to unilaterally answer the EC Questionnaire?

DELEVIC: *Beforehand, I think the idea came from the then Deputy Prime Minister as he wanted to keep the administration concentrated on the European agenda.*

SCHARFF: Why do you think that decision was taken?

DELEVIC: *He proposed it. I don't think that there was a government—there wasn't a government decision to do it. I think he probably—he is probably better poised to answer it. I think he just used the example of the implementation of the Stabilization and Association Agreement, and thought it might be a useful way to put pressure on our European partners to move but also on our administration to deliver. They wanted to put pressure on the Commission because we were not moving and we implored the administration. At the same time, everybody knew that there would be a moment when the real questionnaire would come and it would be different—but it was still a useful exercise.*

SCHARFF: Though I imagine that decision did create some sort of backlash from the ministries.

DELEVIC: *Not backlash. They understood that they would have to repeat the work once the real questionnaire comes, but they also to an extent understood it as an exercise that was preparing them to do it.*

SCHARFF: Great. Finally, I wonder if there is anything that we haven't discussed in our last two meetings that you think is really important to convey, either your personal efforts and your work or the work of the SEIO or others in this process. Important lessons, or learning, or facts, or questions I haven't asked. Is there something that you think is critical to insert into this case study that gives future readers the understanding?

DELEVIC: *The only thing that I can say is really the government— that it is important not only for the government, the high political levels to say to this Committee for European Integration, that it is important to be committed to respecting institutional arrangements, strengthening administration and empowering people who deal with this. If one person is seen as solely responsible it is not going to bring a good result. If anything, the European integration process needs to be an inclusive one and not just the process where you talk about European Integration. You should really talk about laws, bylaws, processes, what is changing. I think after a certain time it becomes a vague general thing, an empty mantra, which nobody is interested in any longer if it is not concrete, and if they don't perceive it as something which is influencing their day-to-day lives.*

SCHARFF: Thank you very much for your time again.