



Unija poslodavaca  
Crne Gore

MONTENEGRIN EMPLOYERS FEDERATION

## Communication On Engagement (COE) of Montenegrin Employers' Federation (MEF)



**COE of MEF**

Period covered: January 2022 - December 2024



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MONTENEGRIN EMPLOYERS FEDERATION

## COE OF MONTENEGRIN EMPLOYERS' FEDERATION (MEF)

*For period: January 2022 – December 2024*

### Statement of Continued Support

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,

Mr. Slobodan Mikavica

President of MEF

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## 1. ABOUT THE MONTENEGRIN EMPLOYERS' FEDERATION (MEF)

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

*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, MSMEs, large economic systems, as well as business associations formed at the sector and local level. MEF founded a Business Women Association of Montenegro and helped the foundation of other employers' associations (that exist at the level of municipalities and economic branches). MEF has signed cooperation agreements with all umbrella employers' organizations in the region, as well as numerous organizations in the EU and the world.*

*MEF is a member of International Organization of Employers (IOE) and BusinessEurope, and the co-founder of Adriatic Region Employers Centre (AREC) and it is the first signatory of UN Global Compact in Montenegro. MEF works closely with the International Labor Organization (ILO) and since its establishment has been operating in accordance with the principles and standards of the ILO.*

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

**MEF Mission:** *MEF represents the interests of employers, improves business conditions and promotes responsible business practices, in order to create a modern, competitive and strong economy and a prosperous state of Montenegro.*

**MEF Vision:** *The leading employers' organization in the country, dedicated to building a business environment that is enabling for the development of sustainable companies and permanent, stable employment.*

**MEF Values:**

- *Independence*
- *Transparency*
- *Equal treatment of members*
- *Social responsibility*
- *Ethical, professional and lawful operations.*

## 2. POSITION OF MEF

**Montenegrin Employers' Federation (MEF) has been a first signatory of the UN Global Compact initiative in Montenegro (2008).**

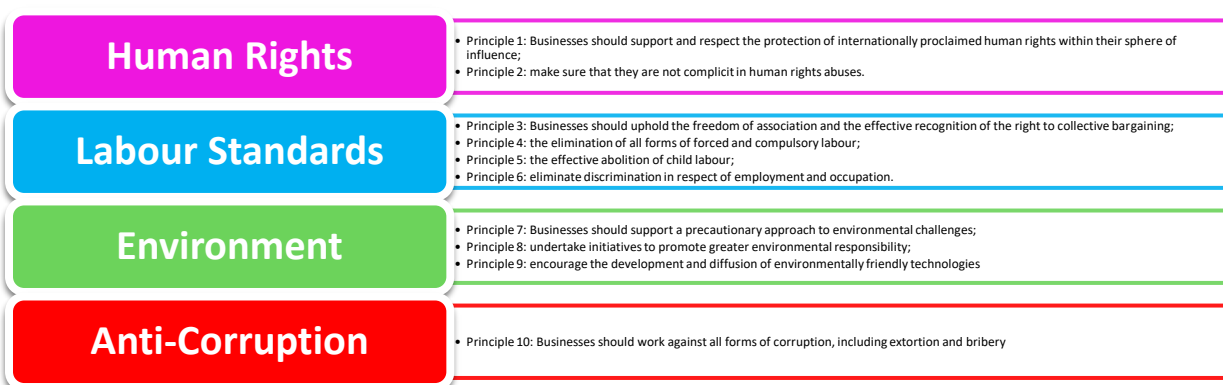
**MEF was one of the initiators and organizers** (together with the UNDP Office in Montenegro, the National Directorate for SME Development and the Centre for Development of NGOs) **of the Launching Conference of the Global Compact in Montenegro** in December 2010. In addition, since 2007, **MEF also 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, the most relevant to the private sector is *SDG 8: Decent work and Economic growth***, as it calls for the promotion of sustainable and inclusive economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.

SDG 8 is the main focus of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), but also for MEF and the business community as a whole.

### Sustainable Development Agenda 2030



The Ten Principles of the UN Global Compact (in the areas of human rights, labour, environment and anti-corruption) derived from:

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- The International Labour Organization's
- Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work
- The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development
- The United Nations Convention Against Corruption.

### 3. MEF ACTIVITIES IN THE PERIOD 2022 – 2024

This part of the Report contains a brief overview of selected events and a part of the implemented activities, which provide insight into the activities of the MEF in the field of CSR as well as providing support for its further development in Montenegro.

#### MEF receive Award for contribution to the development of safety and health at work

In 2022, the Safety at Work Association of Montenegro (SWAM) awarded the Montenegrin Employers' Federation (MEF) an annual award for its contribution to the development of occupational safety and health. On behalf of MEF, the award was received by the then President Mr. Predrag Mitrović.



SWAM assessed that MEF represents an organization that has made an immeasurable contribution to the development of occupational health and safety in previous years, as well as raising the awareness of employers in this area. In addition to organizing numerous round tables and seminars, MEF has also contributed through the participation of its representatives in the Working Groups for the Development and Improvement of National Regulations and Strategic

Documents in this Field. Also, it was pointed out that MEF has always provided selfless support to SWAM's activities.

The SWAM ceremony was held on April 28, 2022, as part of a Conference organized to mark the World Day for Safety and Health at Work.

#### MEF Annual CSR Awards Ceremony

Since its establishment, MEF has been strongly committed to promoting the role and importance of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) among the business community in Montenegro. This is confirmed by programs of education, affirmation of successful business initiatives, and education and animation of employers to adopt policies, establish procedures and integrate social, ethical and environmental issues into the regular practice of their companies. In addition to the above, an activity that particularly stands out and attracts a lot of attention from the media and the entire Montenegrin public is the announcement of the prestigious prizes known as the MEF CSR Awards.

The CSR Award Ceremony is a national event organized annually by the MEF. With this act, the MEF continues the practice it started in 2014, with the aim of promoting excellent examples of CSR in Montenegro, as well as companies that have designed and implemented such practice.

#### Application Guidelines

- All companies belonging to the categories micro, small, medium-sizes and large enterprises, and registered in Montenegro, can apply for the MEF's CSR Awards.
- MEF CSR Awards for companies are given in **three categories**: 1) Care about Employees, 2) Care about Community, 3) Care about the Environment. MEF also announces a special laureate who receives the **Main CSR Award**. It is the company that has implemented the principles of CSR in all three categories.
- The main criteria for awarding the prestigious *MEF CSR Awards* are sustainability, innovation and achieved impact on all parties involved.

#### MEF CSR Awards for 2022

A gala ceremony featuring **MEF CSR Awards winners for 2022** took place in Hotel Hilton, in Podgorica. The event was held in December 2022, as part of the ceremony by which MEF marked 20 years of its existence and successful work.



Laureates of MEF's CSR Awards for 2022 – Hotel Hilton, Podgorica

The MEF's Main Award for 2022 went to the company CEROVO (for CSR in each of the three categories), while the winners of the Awards in three CSR areas were: ERSTE BANKA (category "Care about Employees"); IEC TEHNOPOLIS, KALAMPER, SAVA OSIGURANJE, ONE, CEDIS (category "Care about Community"); NEST COWORKING (category "Care about the Environment").

At the end of the ceremony, the special MEF Recognitions were given to: ICT Cortex cluster (Recognition for business policy that connects CSR and ICT and applies them in practice), company Terna Crna Gora (Recognition for contribution to the strengthening of economic and social ties between Montenegro and Italy), Investment and Development Fund of Montenegro (Recognition for the contribution to the development of MSMEs and women's entrepreneurship in Montenegro). A special Recognition from the MEF was also presented to its Secretary General, Ms. Suzana Radulović (for her contribution to the overall development and positioning of the MEF).



### MEF CSR Awards for 2023

At a gala ceremony in December, the companies - **laureates of the MEF CSR Awards for 2023** were presented to the Montenegrin public. This event was held at the CUE hotel in Podgorica, in the framework of the Conference "A decade of building an environment for sustainable development of enterprises: Where is Montenegro today?" that was organized by the MEF, and with the support of the ILO.



Laureates of MEF's CSR Awards for 2023 – Hotel CUE, Podgorica

The MEF's Main Award for 2023 went to the company ONE MONTENEGRO. On other side, the MEF also announced the CSR Award winners by category: ECONOMIC TEAM, CRNOGORSKA KOMERCIJALNA BANKA (category "Care about Employees"); ENTEXT, CRNOGORSKI TELEKOM (category "Care about Community"); MONT WAY, NEREGELIA (category "Care about the Environment").

MEF has announced the competition for the CSR Awards for 2024. Applications are due until January 16, 2025, and the award ceremony for the prestigious MEF Awards will be held in early 2025.

### **Annual Awards Ceremony for the "Best Women Managers in Montenegro"**

The "Best Women Managers in Montenegro" awards ceremony is a traditional activity of the MEF, which has been organized since 2018. The selection of laureates of the MEF awards is made on the basis of a public competition that is announced once a year. After the selection process, MEF annually announces equal winners in four categories: Economy, Public Sector, Civil Sector, Media.

With these awards, MEF contributes to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals and building a democratic society that encourages women's economic empowerment, gender equality, and equal representation of women and men in key leadership positions - in all segments of society.

As part of activities aimed at promoting successful business women who confirm the power of female leadership and the importance of greater representation of women in management

positions, the MEF organized two annual ceremonies during the reporting period. On this occasion, the MEF announced the laureates of these prestigious awards for 2023 and 2022.



"Best Women Managers in Montenegro" awards for 2023

The Ceremony **Awards for 2023** was held in March 2024, as part of the Conference "Women in Management - The Power of Change and Economic Progress" organized by the MEF, in partnership with the Assembly of the Capital City of Podgorica and the ILO. On this occasion, the MEF announced a total of eight laureates who were presented with the annual "Best Women Managers in Montenegro" awards for 2023 (two female managers were awarded in each category).



This Conference was opened by the President of MEF, the President of the Assembly of the Capital City of Podgorica and the National Coordinator of the ILO. After the introductory speech of the Governor of the Central Bank of Montenegro, a panel discussion was held on the topic "Women in Management in Montenegro: Status and Perspectives", in which the Minister of Labor and Social Welfare, a representative of the Ministry of Economic Development, the National Project Coordinator of the ILO and

the President of the Association of Business Women of Montenegro participated.

As part of the **2022 Awards Ceremony**, ten successful female leaders in companies, public institutions, NGOs and the media were declared laureates of the MEF awards "Best Women Managers in Montenegro". This MEF event was held in December 2023, at the CUE Hotel in Podgorica.

**In the period from 2018 to 2024, these prestigious MEF Awards have been given to 50 exceptional women.** Bearing in mind their business results and achieved successes, it can be said that MEF's laureates represent ambassadors of both current and future female leaders in Montenegro.

## Support for the humanitarian exhibition of children's works "From Children to Children"

In July 2023, a large humanitarian exhibition of children's works "From Children to Children" was held at the City Square in Nikšić. The event was organized by the Art Center Nikšić, in cooperation with the Center for Social Work and the Secretariat for Culture, Sports, Youth and Social Welfare of the Municipality of Nikšić.

As a socially responsible organization, MEF supported the organization of this event and was an institution that is an *Official Friend of the Exhibition*.



The exhibition presented the works of over a hundred children from all art schools in Nikšić. The charity exhibition was an auction event, and the money from the sale of works was donated to socially vulnerable families with four or more children. All participants pointed out that the exhibition had a noble goal and that it showed how art can connect the community and help those who need support the most.

The exhibition was supported by the Municipality of Nikšić and a large number of private and public companies.

## Big humanitarian event "HEART for Children"

In December 2023, a large humanitarian event "HEART for Children" was held at the Independence Square in Podgorica, organized in partnership by the *portal I Love Podgorica*, the Capital City of Podgorica and the Montenegrin Employers' Federation, with the support of the Ministry of Sports and Youth. The organizers said that the goal of the event is to affirm social responsibility, solidarity and togetherness, and to draw public attention to children and young people who need the support of society.

More than 400 children from the most socially vulnerable families in Podgorica, as well as several dozen excellent and talented pupils from primary schools, rejoiced together with many fellow citizens who attended the great humanitarian event "HEART for Children".





The Mayor of Podgorica, the Deputy Prime Minister for Demography and Youth and the President of the Assembly of the Union of Employers of Montenegro sent messages that they are united in their intention to provide children with the best conditions for growth and education.

The children were especially pleased to socialize with famous athletes from the Football Association of Montenegro, the Basketball Club "Budućnost", the Basketball Federation of Montenegro, as well as the men's handball team. The famous motorist Filip Kunčer came to the Square with his racing car and delighted the youngest. The event was embellished with songs by the famous children's entertainer Šanta Panta, the children's choir "D-mol" and children from the dance club "Jet Set".



Montenegrin athletes distributed more than 1,000 sports balls to children. Also, the organizers of the event provided about 600 New Year's packages for children from socially disadvantaged families, while 30 excellent students received mobile phones and a one-year subscription to packages for young people.

The main sponsors of the event were *the company Domaća trgovina, Aroma, Conto and City markets* and the company *M:TEL*. Friends of the event were the Association of Managers of Montenegro, Red Taxi Podgorica, Cedis, Monteput, Beneton, Double L, NLB Bank, Neregelija, A shop, Agency "Good Voice", 7. August, Euro Petrol, Tina Time Bar, Dance Club Jet Set, KUD "Mladost", Choir "D-mol", Shanta Panta, as well as many others.

## Decent Work Country Program 2024-2027

Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of Montenegro, social partners and the International Labor Organization (ILO) on the Decent Work Country Program (DWCP) 2024-

2027 was signed on September 2024, in Podgorica. This is the third DWCP for Montenegro (the first DWCP was signed for 2015-2017, and second for 2019-2021).



The new DWCP for Montenegro is a result of a social dialogue and tripartite consultation between the Government, the Montenegrin Employers' Federation (MEF) and trade unions (Confederation of Trade Unions of Montenegro and the Union of Free Trade Unions of Montenegro), with support from the International Labour Organization.

The two priorities for the DWCP 2024-2027 programme are: 1) Promoting inclusive and productive employment; 2) Improved working conditions for all employees in Montenegro.

As part of this programme, the Government of Montenegro, in cooperation with the social partners and the ILO, will work to achieve the following outcomes:

- Improving the performance of the Employment Service of Montenegro
- Improving the company's support program
- Strengthening the digital capacity, inclusiveness and responsiveness of skills development and lifelong learning systems
- Aligning the new labour legislation with international labour standards and the relevant EU acquis
- Introducing new mechanisms to combat violence and harassment in the world of work and promote gender equality in the workplace
- Strengthening employers' and workers' organizations
- Strengthening the capacity of institutions to respond to informality.

### **Interview with the MEF President in the magazine „Leaders who care about the community“**

For two decades, MEF has been strongly committed to promoting the role and importance of CSR among the business community, so that it is recognized by the domestic and international public as one of the pioneers of social responsibility in Montenegro.

MEF provides timely and useful information for member companies, organizes thematic conferences and special trainings for employers and managers, conducts awareness raising campaigns, organizes the awarding of national CSR Awards, creates and publishes business guides and informative publications, conducts research and surveys among companies, etc. Some of these activities were the topics of a great interview with the President of the MEF, Mr. Slobodan Mikavica, which was published in a special magazine *Leaders who care about the community*, on five pages. The magazine was published by the daily newspaper *Vijesti*, in May 2023.





## New MEF Report on Enabling Environment for Sustainable Enterprises

During 2023, as part of a project supported by the ILO, MEF conducted a new, comprehensive assessment of the business environment in Montenegro in line with the ILO's Enabling Environment for Sustainable Enterprises (ESEE) framework. On this occasion, MEF and the ILO organized a Conference in December 2023 at which MEF launched its new Report on Creating a Favorable Environment for Sustainable Enterprises.

Introductory presentations were given by President of MEF, Mr. Slobodan Mikavica, and Employers' Organizations Specialist in ILO, Ms. Iulia Drumea.



Afterwards, Mr. Filip Lazovic, MEF Deputy Secretary General, presented the key results and recommendations of the new ESEE Report. He pointed out that the MEF's goal was to assess the progress achieved in relation to the first ESEE study that was published ten years ago, as well as to identify priority areas for reform to further enhance enterprise growth and competitiveness.



According to data from the Report, almost half of the surveyed companies expressed the opinion that the business environment in Montenegro has improved in the past decade. Also, the MEF document showed that the most significant progress has been made in the area of digital infrastructure (46% of respondents), followed by improvements in labour regulations (37%) and access to finance (32%).

It is important to note that this MEF Report covers 10 areas of enabling environments, including *Responsible Environmental Management*. When it comes to future activities in this area, the Report proposes the following:

„Support and encourage companies to develop energy and material efficiency strategies: These strategies can bring significant environmental benefits, including reduced pollution and emissions. It can also help reduce demand for natural resources such as water, while also reducing demand for electricity and other public services – bringing additional environmental and economic benefits. Businesses that implement energy and material efficiency strategies can also benefit from reduced costs, increased productivity, and improved public perception.”



The Conference also held a panel discussion entitled "How to achieve a more favorable business environment in Montenegro?".



In addition to the President of the MEF, the participants of the discussion were the Director of the Directorate for Access and Labor Market Policy at the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, the State Secretary at the Ministry of Finance, the State Secretary at the Ministry of Economic Development, as well as an economic analyst and owner of the Business Montenegro portal.

The data and guideline from the EESE Report will be used to develop a new Business Agenda of the MEF, which will contain proposals for necessary economic and other reforms that can contribute to the sustainable economic development of Montenegro in the coming period.

### Support for Women's Economic Empowerment

In 2022, the Montenegrin Employers' Federation (MEF), with the support of the ILO, implemented the project "Young Women Entrepreneurs," through which it organized a series of free entrepreneurial trainings for young unemployed women. The project was carried out within the framework of the program "Activate! Integrated Social Protection and Employment to Accelerate Progress for Young People in Montenegro" funded by the United Nations Joint Fund for Sustainable Development (Joint SDG Fund). MEF's partners in one part of the project activities were the Employment Service of Montenegro, IEC Tehnopolis and the Municipality of Kotor.

All MEF trainings were held in three cities (Podgorica, Kotor, Nikšić) in duration for five days each, and implemented according to the ILO GET Ahead methodology, which provides participants with comprehensive training for acquiring knowledge and skills necessary to start and develop their own business.



The target group of MEF were young unemployed women (age: 25-34 years) who are on the records of the Employment Service and are interested in starting their own business. Young women who belong to vulnerable categories (people with disabilities, mothers of children with special needs, women who live outside urban areas, women who operate in the gray zone and



want to register or legalize their business) are especially encouraged to participate in entrepreneurial trainings.



After completing the training program, MEF provided mentoring support from trainers for a number of training participants, in order to help them more easily overcome the challenges they may face in the initial phase of business.

The training program was **completed by 46 women**, of which the **6 most successful received grants for starting and developing their businesses, worth 3,333.00 euros each**.

All activities within the MEF project "Young Women Entrepreneurs" were promoted through MEF's social networks (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn), as well as through six short videos that MEF recorded for promotion in the country and abroad.

### Youth employment support as a measure of social responsibility

Based on the successful cooperation from the previous period, MEF was a partner of the student organization EESTEC LC Podgorica (European Association of Electrical Engineering Students - Local Committee Podgorica) in the organization of the second (2022) and third (2023) "Job Fair" for students, which were held at the premises of the Sports and Cultural Center of the University of Montenegro, Podgorica.



The "Job Fair" contributes to the reduction of unemployment in society, especially among students who have the opportunity to be in direct contact with representatives of Montenegrin companies to be informed about the desired job, internship or professional training, as well as to submit their CVs to future employers. Previous practice has confirmed that the Fair is a place for creating opportunities for employment and the development of a successful career of these young people, but also a place where companies can more easily find quality staff.

The events held in 2022 and 2023 were intended for students of the University of Montenegro (Faculty of Electrical Engineering and ICT majors at the Faculty of Science), as well as students of the Mediterranean University and the University of Donja Gorica (ICT majors).

## Employment fair for people from Ukraine

In cooperation with the United Nations Refugee Agency in Montenegro (UNHCR), the Embassy of Ukraine, the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, the Montenegrin Employers' Federation and the Chamber of Commerce, an Employment Fair for persons from Ukraine under temporary protection in Montenegro was organized.



A two-day event was held in Budva, on June 15 and 16, 2023.

Data shows that the influx of people from Ukraine seeking refuge in Montenegro has increased since 2022. That is why this fair was an opportunity to find a way to overcome obstacles to the effective exercise of the right to work, in accordance with the temporary protection regime.

The main goal of the fair: to create a more inclusive and prosperous future in which employment becomes a catalyst for the life and integration of Ukrainian refugees in Montenegro, so that these people are then able to contribute to Montenegrin society.

## Cooperation in the field of environmental protection and empowerment of women and youth

In the period 2022-2024, MEF concluded cooperation agreements with a significant number of institutions and organizations from the public and civil sectors. However, in order to provide insight into the planned framework of future activities and projects of MEF that are important for the promotion and further development of CSR in Montenegro, we highlight only a small part of the concluded agreements.

### Cooperation with the Environment protection Agency of Montenegro

In May 2024, the President of the MEF, Mr. Slobodan Mikavica, and the Director of the Environment protection Agency of Montenegro (EPA), Mr. Milan Gazdic, signed a Memorandum of Cooperation between the MEF and the EPA.



The intention of the signatories is to enable the implementation of joint programs and projects for the development of entrepreneurship through future cooperation, as well as to promote environmental responsibility among companies, encourage the development of the circular economy and green jobs, and strengthen the contribution to environmental protection, conservation of natural resources and sustainable development.

According to the Memorandum, some of the planned forms of cooperation between MEF and EPA will be:

- Promotion of the new Law on Waste Management, Environmental Responsibility and Environmental Protection among the business community and other publics.
- Implementation of joint projects in the field of circular economy, waste management, environmental protection and sustainable development.
- Realization of educational programs, organization of business events and joint work in the field of publishing (publications, business guides, flyers...).
- Exchange of business information that encourages further work of MEF and EPA and contributes to their mutual cooperation.
- Joint application for EU funds.

#### Digital platform for online education and regional networking of women entrepreneurs

In the period 2023-2024, a large number of **free online trainings for women entrepreneurs** operating in the countries of this region were organized through the digital platform “Women and Dot HUB”.



This activity is the result of the Cooperation Agreement signed in December 2022 by the then President of the MEF, Mr. Predrag Mitrovic, and the President of the Croatian Chamber of Economy (CCE) - County Chamber of Otocac, Mr. Joso Brajkovic. The goal of these organizations is to develop and strengthen economic and development cooperation and other business ties, especially in the field of women's entrepreneurship.

The trainings were led by experienced lecturers from Croatia, Montenegro and Slovenia. The Otocac County Chamber is the holder of the platform “Women and Dot HUB”, while MEF and ValoreSchool from Slovenia are partners in the preparation and implementation of the online education program.

Online education organized through the digital platform “Women and Dot HUB” is primarily intended for women, but it can also be attended by men.

In the reporting period, the following results were achieved:

- In 2023 – 10 free online trainings, with 134 participants (96% of women)
- In 2024 – 9 free online trainings, with 204 participants (96% of women)

Users of the "Women and Dot HUB" platform can be all persons from Croatia, Montenegro and other countries in the region who are interested in starting/improving their business, which gives them the opportunity to attend flexible training, mentoring and joint learning programs.

### Cooperation agreement signed with the Center for Youth Education

In 2023, the MEF Secretary General, Ms. Suzana Radulovic, and Executive Director of the NGO Center for Youth Education, Mr. Jugoslav Radovic, signed a Cooperation Agreement with the aim of creating a better social environment for young people in Montenegro.



It was announced that the future cooperation between MEF and COE will be realized through activities that contribute to the promotion and development of non-formal education, social entrepreneurship, science and innovation among young people. Attention will also be paid to the promotion of the European Youth Card (EYCA), supported by the Ministry of Sports and Youth, which allows citizens aged 13-29 to use numerous discounts in Montenegro and Europe.

The MEF will promote the EYCA among MSMEs and large companies that are socially responsible, which will enable their products and services to be even more accessible to young people from Montenegro.

### **Membership in the Board of Directors of the Association of Women Leaders of Montenegro**

The Secretary General of MEF, Ms. Suzana Radulovic, has been elected as a member of the Board of Directors of the Association of Women Leaders of Montenegro, which brings together women leaders from various sectors. With the constitution of the Board of Directors in November 2024, the Association officially began its work.





The Association's launch was marked by a panel discussion on "Women's Leadership on the Path to the EU - Challenges and Opportunities", which discussed key topics related to gender equality, women's leadership, and the obstacles women face in their environment on their way to leadership positions. It also discussed ways in which different organizations and institutions can contribute to achieving gender balance in leadership positions.

The aim of the Association is to contribute to greater representation of women in business, political and public life, to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women's leadership in all spheres of society, as well as to the promotion of women leaders, the improvement of gender policies and the implementation of strategies for the empowerment of women in leadership positions.

### MEF professionals received ILO coaching licenses

At a ceremony held in November 2022, as part of the event marking the International Women's Entrepreneurship Day, Montenegro received the first 13 trainers licensed to implement the ILO Global Entrepreneurship Training Programme for Women "Gender and Entrepreneurship Together" (GET Ahead). Among them are two MEF representatives, Ms. Zvezdana Oluic and Ms. Marina Jovanovic. In the process that preceded obtaining the license, trainers organized and successfully held a large number of free entrepreneurial trainings in several cities in Montenegro, which were attended by 180 women, of which as many as 39 started their own businesses.



In addition to MEF professionals, coaching licenses were also granted to representatives of four local self-governments (Bar, Herceg Novi, Kotor, Ulcinj), the Faculty of Tourism and Hotel Management, the Employment Service of Montenegro, the Business Start-up Center Bar, the ILO office in Montenegro. They were presented with diplomas by the British Ambassador to Montenegro, Ms. Karen Maddox.

GET Ahead is a global program that the International Labour Organization (ILO) has been successfully implementing for years in the countries of Europe, Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Middle East.

*The GET Ahead training program in Montenegro was implemented through ILO projects financially supported by the Good Governance Fund of the United Kingdom Government and the UN Joint Fund for Sustainable Development, and implemented by the MEF and Local Employment Partnerships formed at the level of the municipalities of Bar, Herceg Novi, Kotor and Ulcinj.*

## Participation in the ILO Master Training in EBMO Management

In 2024, four professionals from Employer and Business Membership Organizations (EBMOs) in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and North Macedonia completed the Master Training in EBMO Management — the only postgraduate course of its kind. Among the participants were professionals from the MEF, Ms. Marina Jovanovic and Mr. Djordjo Borovic.



The training included 40 hours of distance learning and four days of hands-on training at the International Training Center of the ILO (ITCILO) in Turin, Italy. This enabled the participants to acquire critical knowledge and skills in virtually all areas of modern management, such as: good governance, strategic advocacy through effective social dialogue, membership development, service delivery, communication, and financial sustainability.

In the coming period, MEF professionals will have the opportunity to create plans and implement activities that can contribute to the promotion of the role and importance of CSR in the business community and greater implementation of CSR principles by companies in Montenegro.

The participation of EBMO representatives in the master training was jointly supported by the ILO Bureau for Employers' Activities (ACT/EMP) and the Decent Work Technical Support Team in Budapest (DWT/CO-Budapest).

## Improving Digital Skills in the Private Sector

As part of the ILOFORDIGITAL project, MEF organized the conference "Improving Digital Skills in the Private Sector" which was held in September 2024, at the Science Technology Park. The focus of the conference was on empowering small and medium-sized enterprises through cooperation with institutions that support innovation and digital skills.



Representatives of the Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation of Montenegro, the Innovation Fund of Montenegro, the Science Technology Park of Montenegro and the Innovation and Entrepreneurship Center Tehnopolis, as part of the first panel, spoke about the role and development of innovative ecosystems as well as models of support provided by the state and the public sector to the economy in this area.

The implementation of advanced digital training programs, the strengthening of digital skills in the Montenegrin workforce and the use of artificial intelligence in business were the topics of the second panel in which representatives of the Logate Academy, ICT Cortex and the Montenegrin AI Association participated.

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