

## **Current Position and Role of Chamber of Engineers**

Dear guests,

I would like to extend my warmest welcome to all participants of 69<sup>th</sup> General Meeting of the European Council of Civil Engineers and let me take this opportunity to say a few words about the establishment of the Engineers Chamber of Montenegro.

The Engineers Chamber of Montenegro was established by the Law on Construction of Facilities, which came into force on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2000. The Founding Assembly of the Chamber was held on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2001, when it officially start working. The Engineers Chamber of Montenegro consists of five professional chambers: Professional chamber of civil engineers, electrical engineers, architecture engineers, mechanical engineers and engineers of other professions.

The Engineers Chamber of Montenegro is a member of the European Council of Engineers Chambers (ECEC) since 2003, the European Council of Civil Engineers (ECCE) since 2009, the World Federation of Engineering Organizations (WFEO) since 2011 and the World Council of Civil Engineers (WCCE) since 2017.

By establishing the Engineers Chamber of Montenegro, the engineers who work on the preparation of plan documentation, design and construction of facilities in Montenegro were obliged to provide, in the organizational system of the Engineers Chamber of Montenegro, conditions for the introduction and establishment of European quality standards in these activities.

Since its very beginning in 2001, all engineers who wanted to hold a license for further work in their profession were legally obliged to be members of our Chamber, and the Chamber issued licenses to its members for further work and it worked on their professional development, as which is the case in most of your countries. In 2008, the responsible state authorities, adopting a new legal solution, deprived the right of the Chamber to issue licenses, and gave it back conditionally in 2011 as a transferred authorization for different periods from 3 months to one year, until the latest legal solution passed at the end of 2017.

Since the drafting of the latest legal solution related to spatial planning and construction of facilities, the Engineers Chamber of Montenegro did not participate in the creation of this Law. Therefore, it can be stated that the profession, conceived and united around the

Engineers Chamber of Montenegro, was excluded from the drafting of a professional law, which is one of the most significant in terms of public interest.

By this Law, our Engineers Chamber has been prevented from issuing licenses or authorizations to its members, and the compulsory membership of engineers in this expert body has also been abolished.

The negative consequences of this legal solution are the following:

1. With the abolition of the obligation of engineers' membership in this body, the Chamber remained without the basic source of revenues from which it has to and wants, as before, to finance the obligations prescribed by the Law.
2. The license for the planners is abolished, and the spatial planning is completely centralized.
3. As the Engineers Chamber is obliged to promote and provide professional development of members, as well as to propose technical bases for drafting the regulations of this Law, the question arises - what financial resources shall we use for that than from the State Budget.
4. The number of members of the Chamber reduced by more than 60%, and those engineers who have remained members of the Chamber will have to comply with its Code of Ethics, while those who are no longer members will not have to do that.
5. The greater criminal liability of the engineers, members of the Chamber, is good, but the Law does not recognize the criminal responsibility of the engineers who are employed in the responsible institutions dealing with the issuance and control of the implementation of legal solutions.

I have to admit that the Chamber has not found the enough strength to the period prior than the end of 2017. to fulfill all its legal obligations, but taking into consideration such action, the purpose of the existence of the Engineers Chamber is questioned. To be precise, by abolishing the obligation of membership it follows that the members of the Engineers Chamber should be only engineers who are loyal to their profession, with a highly developed sense of ethics and public interest, specifically, those who have always ethically and professionally dealt with their own State and its territory, those for which the Law did not have to exist. Only those engineers will be in the future subject to the Code of Ethics of the Chamber, while some engineers, individuals who have proved themselves unworthy of their academic title or are insufficiently qualified, will be further exempted from the obligation of ethical and professional behaviour.

Nevertheless, the Chamber is obliged and will comply with this Law because the worst law is better than that which does not exist, and we will work on preserving and improving communication with the responsible institutions. Throughout the entire process of adopting this Law, the members of the Chamber gave a large number of remarks with detailed expert explanations, and even now, as we speak, delegated members of the Chamber write amendments to the Law and constantly participate in the sessions of the Assembly Committee, presenting their suggestions and remarks. So far, it gave little results. The Law has suffered already three changes for a year and a half, and we think that, in the future, there will be more of them.

While preparing for this topic, I heard a devastating fact. Namely, in the past year, the situation in some countries of the former Yugoslavia has also changed or is changing downward in terms of the importance of the chamber in society. The same or similar matrix for taking over the powers of the engineers chambers is now visible and in the Republic of Croatia, which is a member of the European Union, my colleagues will correct me if I am wrong, and especially in the Republic of Serbia. In Serbia, whose Chamber is a member of the European Council of Civil Engineers, a Law was recently adopted that enabled the responsible ministry to nominate, as I understood, half of the members in the Steering Committee and Regional Offices. Therefore, regardless of the problems that some Chamber has, the nomination of management structures in expert bodies from the ranks of the political sphere of influence is simply not a good solution. I am sure that such collapse of the engineers' chambers is not the European Union acquis, and if we do not react quickly, this will not be an exception, but a rule!

Strong Engineers Chamber is and will be a strong expert partner to all who show it trust and prove that they really want a partnership and transparent relationship. As a result of such work, we have the honor and pleasure to attend the 69<sup>th</sup> General Meeting of the European Council of Civil Engineers in Podgorica.

In the end, I would like to inform you that all bodies of the Chamber will continue to work hard on creating conditions for more organized and transparent work, on improving their professional and program capacities, training and improvement of their members, as well as on strengthening the partnership relations with the responsible Ministry, the Government and other institutions that are fighting and deciding on the fate of their citizens. The membership of the Engineers Chamber of Montenegro can and should be of the highest professional supports in preserving the public interest for the benefit of our citizens and the State, which in the end, represents our joint competence!

The purpose of this presentation of the representatives of the Engineers Chamber of Montenegro is to open a discussion on this topic as a regional issue, to convey to you and to hear from you the experiences and practices in your countries, and to make conclusions as to how to prevent further collapse of the profession, and do the opposite, work on its affirmation. We would like to know whether the European Council of Civil Engineers can and how to influence the awareness in the society and in their political circles, because the outcomes of such policies will lead to a collapse of the profession in the long run, which will initiate a chain reaction of complete collapse of the systems in these countries.

Thank you for your attention.