

Panel Discussion

20 Years Since the Referendum on Independence in Montenegro



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Date: Friday, 22 May 2026, 15:30 (CET)

Place: online via Zoom

Speakers

Claudia Laštro, PhD, University of Graz

Vesko Garčević, Boston University

Jelena Džankić, European University Institute, Florence

Moderation

Ramiza Bajrami, EU project manager / German Federal Police / Potsdam

About

Twenty years after Montenegro's independence referendum, we take a closer look at the political, social, and international developments that continue to shape relations between Montenegro and Serbia. The panel brings together Claudia Laštro (University of Graz), Vesko Garčević (Boston University), and Jelena Džankić (European University Institute, Florence). Vesko Garčević, together with Kenneth Morrison,

is the co-author of *Montenegro and Serbia: A Velvet Divorce?*, one of the first comprehensive analyses of Montenegro's political developments before and after the referendum.

The 2006 referendum, in which 55.5% of voters supported independence with a turnout of 86%, marked the final dissolution of the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro and the last chapter in the breakup of Yugoslavia. Today, Montenegro is considered one of the EU candidate countries with a realistic perspective of joining the European Union by 2030.

Against this backdrop, the discussion will explore political positioning before and after the referendum, the role of the DPS and the opposition, and the significance of the outcome for both domestic and international actors. It will also examine Montenegro's foreign policy positioning in an increasingly complex geopolitical environment. Bringing together perspectives from academia and practice, the discussion will be complemented by a first-hand account, offering personal insights into the events of 2006.

Biographies of the Panelists

Claudia Laštro is a postdoctoral researcher at the Centre for Southeast European Studies at the University of Graz and an editor at *Contemporary Southeastern Europe*. She holds a PhD in political science from the University of Graz and has previously worked at the Southeast Europe Association and Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich. Her research focuses on elite dynamics in authoritarian regimes in the Western Balkans and the South Caucasus. Her work has received multiple dissertation awards and has been published in leading academic journals.

Jelena Džankić is Programme Director for the Widening Europe Programme and the CIVICA Alliance at the European University Institute in Florence. She also serves as Director of GGP Southeastern Europe and Co-Director of the Global Citizenship Observatory (GLOBALCIT). She holds a PhD in International Studies from the University of Cambridge and has taught and conducted research at several leading European universities. She is the author and editor of numerous publications on citizenship, Europeanisation, and geopolitical developments in the Western Balkans.

Vesko Garčević is Professor of the Practice of International Relations at Boston University and a former Montenegrin diplomat. During his diplomatic career, he held key positions during the dissolution of Yugoslavia and Montenegro's democratic transition, including serving as Ambassador to NATO and the Benelux countries in Brussels, and to the OSCE and Austria in Vienna. His work focuses on geopolitical dynamics in the Western Balkans, particularly the influence of Russia and China. He is the co-author of *Montenegro and Serbia since 2006: A Velvet Divorce?* (2025).



Registration

This event will take place via Zoom. Please register at the following link:

<https://www.sogde.org/de/formulare/2026-online-discussion-montenegro-in-dependence/>

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