



**BALKAN
MONITORING
PUBLIC
FINANCES**

Auditing the debt economy and ecological debt in SEE: Regional alternatives in public finance and infrastructure in the Balkans

20 March 2019, from 9:00 – 14:00

European Environmental Bureau, Rue des Deux Eglises 14-16, Brussels

The spectacular growth in public debt in SEE is usually presented as a problem of excessive state spending caused by a lack of business-friendly environments for foreign investors. The question of whether reforms promoted under EU accession agreements or IMF Stand By Arrangements are making the region more dependent in the long term on foreign borrowing, whilst placing a strain on public finances in the short term, is rarely asked. In the same way, the EU is promoting debt financed infrastructure projects, primarily through the enlargement of the Transport and Energy Communities, where finance is conditional on public-private partnerships. Neither the public nor CSOs are consulted about whether investment in energy exports is ecologically or financially sustainable, or whether the chronic overdependence on road transport should be encouraged. This conference presents an opportunity to discuss CSO perspectives from the region and alternative models of public finance.

This conference presents innovative research from the CSO sector in SEE on the interlinked crises of public debt, infrastructure and the environment in the region. Public debt is seen as a consequence of a failed model of finance led growth and as a socialisation of private debt. Increased public borrowing from the IFIs transfers the costs of private debt to citizens in the form of austerity and cuts in public services. Under the terms of conditionality, regional states are obliged to taken on further debt to finance investment projects that are financially unviable and environmentally degrading, and benefit no one but the private corporations that will manage these lucrative concessions. There is no economic benefit to these projects in terms of employment or public revenue, merely an intensification of the circuit of financial (out)flows, and a deepening debt bondage of the region.

The conference also presents policy alternatives to the models of financialisation, mega-infrastructure and predatory extractivism in the region. These alternatives do not see public borrowing as a problem in and of itself, but as a means of promoting sustainable development and social justice. Public participation is identified as a means of auditing and monitoring public finance to ensure that it meets social objectives, is financed by progressive taxation and financially sustainable, and is directed to investment in public employment and infrastructure that is sustainable and increases employment.

The conference introduces the research and policy alternatives of the first SEE CSO network in public finance monitoring to European policy-makers, NGOs, experts and public. The regional perspective strongly supports the models of an independent and fair international debt resolution procedure of our European partners Eurodad, CADTM, the Bretton Woods Project and Counter Balance, who will also be represented among the panelists at the conference.



This event is prepared with the financial assistance of the European Union. The content of the document is the sole responsibility of the project partners and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the European Union.

The program

9.00 - 9.30	Registration
9.30 - 10.00	Framing the issue <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Luiz Fernando Vieira, Bretton Woods Project• Maria Jose Romero, Eurodad• Desislava Stoyanova, Za Zemiata
10.00 - 11.45	Public debt in Southeast Europe: Why public participation in finance should be enabled? Facilitator: Mark Perrera, Eurodad <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Eric Toussaint, economist and chairman of CADTM• Andreja Zivkovic, Krila Nade• Ajda Pistotnik, Enabanda
11.45 - 12.15	Coffee break
12:15 - 14:00	Public Infrastructure in Southeast Europe: In whose interest? Facilitator: Xavier Sol, Counter Balance <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Thomas Waitz, Member of the European Parliament• Zvezdan Kalmar, CEKOR• Ines Mrdovic, MANS
14:00 - 15:00	Lunch and networking

Participation in the event is free of charge, but for organisational reasons we welcome registration [here](#).

If you are interested to find out more, please visit our [project website](#) and our [Facebook page](#). To read more about debt and infrastructure in Southeast Europe, please see our regional reports on [debt](#) and [infrastructure](#), as well as the accompanying policy briefs ([debt](#), [infrastructure](#)).



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