

**58 JOINT MEETING
CEB
MINISTER OF FINANCE SPEECH**

Esteemed Secretary General of the Council of Europe,
Esteemed President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe,
Esteemed Governor of the Council of Europe Development Bank,
Dear guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great honor and privilege to welcome you, on behalf of the Ministry of Finance and the Government of Montenegro, to the 58th Joint Meeting of the Governing and Administrative Boards of the Council of Europe Development Bank. I am particularly pleased that this important gathering is taking place here in Montenegro, providing us with the opportunity to discuss a topic of fundamental importance for our future—education.

Montenegro's strategic objectives are clearly defined and fully aligned with European Union policies. We are witnessing rapid progress in fulfilling the requirements for EU membership, alongside intensive reform processes that include investments in key sectors—education being at the very core. Montenegro has recognized that education is the most valuable resource of a modern society— an investment that brings multiple positive effects, both for economic growth and for social cohesion and sustainable development.

A citizen equipped with knowledge and skills tailored to the needs of the European and global labor markets represents the most valuable asset of any economy. With this in mind, the Government of Montenegro, together with the Ministry of Finance and other relevant ministries, is dedicated to enhancing our education system—from early childhood and preschool education to the highest levels of academic qualifications.

Accordingly, budget allocations for education have been increasing year after year. In the past year, we have secured substantial funding for key projects, including:

- The construction and reconstruction of preschool institutions and kindergartens, as early childhood development is the foundation of future academic and professional success.
- The modernization of school infrastructure to ensure that all students have access to better learning environments and opportunities.
- The advancement of higher education and research initiatives, with the aim of positioning Montenegro as a regional hub for knowledge and innovation.

Furthermore, through the Reform Agenda and the Growth Plan for the Western Balkans, Montenegro has been allocated 383.5 million euros in loan and grant support, a significant portion of which is dedicated to improving human resources and developing a lifelong learning system. This support represents a strong incentive for the implementation of reform goals and improving both education and the competitiveness of Montenegro's workforce, aimed at the development of preschool infrastructure, social housing and employment support.

This support has enabled the construction and reconstruction of numerous kindergartens across the country, expanding capacities for thousands of children and raising standards of education from the earliest age. These projects are not only a reflection of our commitment to social inclusion and education, but also proof that Montenegro has reliable partners who recognize its development potential.

In the 2025 budget, we are continuing our strong investment in the education system, planning new projects, including capital investments estimated at around 200 million euros. These funds will be used for the construction and reconstruction of schools and kindergartens, the modernization of university facilities, and improvement of digital infrastructure in education.

I extend my sincere gratitude to the Council of Europe Development Bank for its continuous support and strong partnership. I am confident that we will continue to work together on projects that have a lasting and positive impact on our society.

Allow me to take this opportunity to highlight another significant role that Montenegro will take on in November 2026—the Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. This responsibility comes at a time when we anticipate being in the final stages of EU accession negotiations. We will use this opportunity to present ourselves as the most advanced EU candidate country, demonstrating our capabilities to contribute to shared European stability and development goals.

Montenegro remains committed to strengthening multilateral cooperation, and today's gathering is yet another confirmation of our dedication to dialogue and partnership with institutions that contribute to social progress.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Education is the foundation of every prosperous society. It is the guarantee of stability, development, and competitiveness. That is why we will continue to invest in knowledge because, as Benjamin Franklin said: "An investment in knowledge pays the best interest."

With the support of our international partners, such as the Council of Europe Development Bank, Montenegro will continue to invest in education, firmly believing that only through continuous efforts in knowledge, innovation, and human capital development can we ensure a prosperous future for the generations to come.

Thank you for your attention and I wish you successful meeting and a warm welcome to Montenegro!