

NEWSLETTER

Sarajevo

WBF Conference of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs

On March 16th 2018, within the framework of the Bosnian Chairmanship of the Western Balkans Fund, the Second WBF Conference of Ministers of Foreign Affairs took place in Sarajevo. WBF was considered as a unique cooperation mechanism, which can help bring about tangible positive changes.

Read on page 2



WB6

Information on the First Call for Regional Project Proposals

On November 15th 2017, WBF has announced the First Call for project proposals. Deadline for submission of Project Proposals was 22 December 2017. The objective of the Call was to contribute to regional cooperation and strengthen regional cohesion in the WB6.

Read on page 3

Vienna

WBF presented to the board of the Peace Nexus Foundation

On March 9th 2018, the Western Balkans Fund was invited to the Meeting of the Board of the Peace Nexus Foundation (PNF), which convened in Vienna.

Read on page 5

Tirana

The Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs of Slovakia, H.E. Mr. Ivan Korcok visited WBF

The Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovakia, H.E. Mr. Ivan Korcok, during his official stay in Albania, visited Western Balkans Fund premises in Tirana and was informed related to our activities.

Read on page 5



Message from the Executive Director

We are very happy to share with you our first Newsletter, a product of WBF Secretariat, which aims to better inform our stakeholders, organizations, public institutions and Media across Western Balkans on the Fund's most recent activities and objectives...

Read on page 6

For the latest information related to WBF please visit anytime our official page www.westernbalkansfund.org

WBF CONFERENCE OF THE MINISTERS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS IN SARAJEVO

On March 16th 2018, in the framework of the Bosnian Chairmanship of the Western Balkans Fund, the Second WBF Conference of Ministers of Foreign Affairs took place in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Ministerial was part of the Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of WB6, which had a broader agenda. The WBF Ministerial Conference was focused on the topics covering the most relevant achievements of WBF in the last five months, including the results of the WBF First Call for Regional Projects. The Conference also highlighted the vision of WB6 Ministers regarding the future activities of the WBF, including the possibility of increasing its financial resources for better serving the implementation of its objectives and mission.

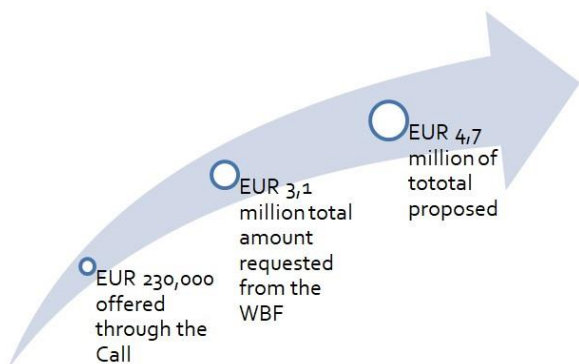
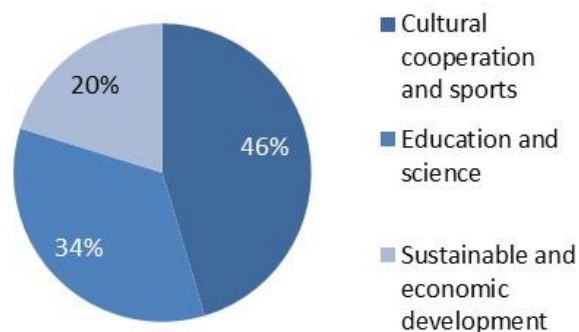
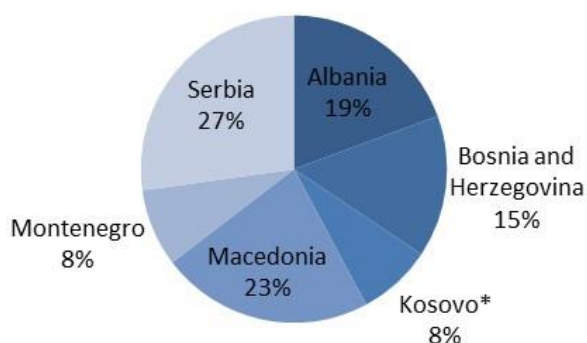
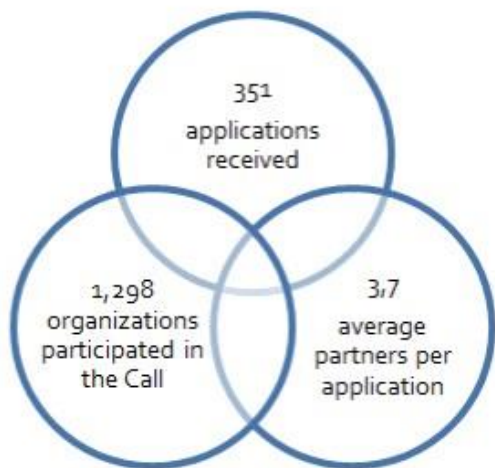
The Conference adopted a joint Statement, and based on the statutory provisions of the WBF, approved the necessary decisions, opening the way for the approval of the Winning Projects' List, aiming to connect people and improving mobility in our region. Two decisions of the Ministerial are as follows:

1. Ministers welcomed the Executive Director's Report on the First Call Regional Project Proposals and instructed the Committee of Senior Officials to establish the list of winning projects for the final approval by the Conference of Ministers of the WBF, by correspondence, by the end of March 2018.
2. Ministers have agreed, in principle, following the statutory provisions of the WBF, Article 39, to double the Annual Contribution to the Western Balkans Fund budget (from 30000 EUR to 60000 EUR), towards the funding of projects, aiming to extend and strengthen this genuine and extremely relevant initiative of ours, subject to the conclusion of the internal procedures of each Contracting Party

For more information please visit this link:

<http://westernbalkansfund.org/wbf-document/>





Information related to the WBF First Call for Regional Project Proposals

On 15 November 2017, WBF has announced its first Call for regional project proposals. Deadline for submission of Project Proposals was 22 December 2017. The overall objective of the WBF first Call was to contribute to regional cooperation and strengthen regional cohesion in the WB6 region.

The Call has foreseen three main areas of intervention through which, applicants could have submitted their applications:

1. Cultural cooperation
2. Education and scientific exchanges
3. Sustainable development

Any grant requested under this Call for Proposals should have not exceeded EUR 12,000.

The project partnership represented the central requirement of the Call. Project partnership was acceptable if it consisted of the lead-applicant and minimum two project partners. Partnership parties must come from at least three different WB6 Contracting Parties.

The institutions eligible to apply under the 1st Call for Proposals are: Civil society organizations (NGOs); Local or regional public entities such as municipalities or regional development agencies, etc; Business associations; Educational institutions; Institutions of culture or sports.

Through the 1st Call for Proposals, Western Balkans Fund has received 351 project applications. Our assessment indicates that 1,298 organizations have participated in this call either as a lead-applicant or as the project partner. The total amount requested from the Fund through the 1st Call for Proposals is more than EUR 3.1 million EUR, while the total value proposed for implementation is EUR 4,7million.

The project evaluation process commenced on 22 December 2017, upon the deadline for the submission of the project proposals. The WBF Secretariat has created a shortlist which is currently being approved by the Council of Senior Officials of the WBF.

It is expected that the implementation of projects starts in April 2018.



Some of the meetings and activities of WBF

The UK Minister for Europe, Sir Alan Duncan visits Western Balkans Fund

During the official visit to Albania Sir Alan Duncan, the United Kingdom Minister for Europe paid a visit to the Western Balkans Fund premises in Tirana. Sir Alan Duncan stated that WBF is a great initiative. “The fact that this initiative is grown from inside Western Balkans is strategically important. I have words of encouragement. This is exactly what we are expecting from the Western Balkans and we want this to be successful.”



WBF Participates to the Presentation of Swiss Cooperation Strategy for Albania

WBF was part of the launching event of the Swiss Cooperation Strategy Albania 2018 – 2021. It was an honor to meet with Mrs. Marie-Gabrielle Ineichen-Fleisch, State Secretary and Director General of SECO and Ambassador of Switzerland to Albania H.E. Mr. Christoph Graf. Switzerland remains an excellent partner and supporter of the Western Balkans.



WBF meets the Deputy PM of Albania, Mrs. Mesi

Insightful and productive meeting among WBF representatives and the Deputy Prime Minister of Albania, Mrs. Senida Mesi. WBF provided keen insight into the most important achievements of the Fund with the emphasis on the First Call for Regional Project Proposals. Potential for cooperation were discussed, also fostering people to people contacts and good neighborly relations in the Western Balkans was recognized as opportunity for the future developments of the Fund.



WBF visits European Commission

WBF had a pleasure to meet in Brussels with Mr. Colin Wolfe, Head of Western Balkans Regional Cooperation & Ms. Stine Andersen, Head of the Secretariat, WB Investment Framework, Directorate - General for Neighborhood & Enlargement Negotiations, at the European Commission. WBF had a very good exchange of information and inquiring about possible models for cooperation in the future. WBF welcomes EU support.

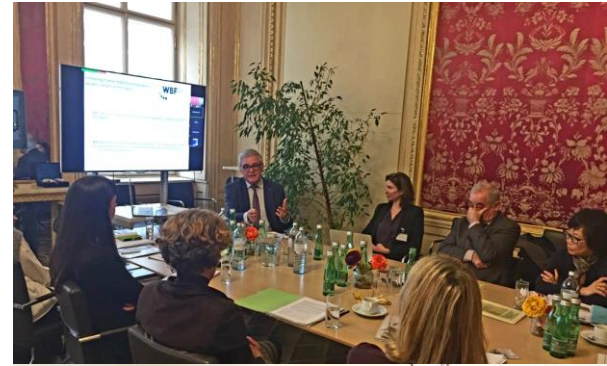
WBF visits Municipality of Tirana, received by the Mayor, Mr. Erion Veliaj

Regional cooperation among Capitals contributes to the WBF vision and mission. WBF team elaborated its activities at the meeting with the Mayor of Tirana Mr. Erion Veliaj. WBF appreciated warm welcome from the Mayor Veliaj and looks forward for fruitful future cooperation between WBF and the Municipality of Tirana, second biggest in the Western Balkans.



WBF Executive Director Dr. Murra presented the Fund to the Board of the Peace Nexus Foundation

On March 9th 2018, the Western Balkans Fund was invited to the Meeting of the Board of the Peace Nexus Foundation (PNF), convened in Vienna. The WBF Executive Director Dr. Gjergj Murra presented the mission, vision and recent activities of the WBF and informed the members of the PNF Board regarding the future plans of the Fund, in the context of the enhancement of the regional cooperation and people to people contacts in Western Balkans region.



Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs of Slovakia H.E. Mr. Ivan Korcok visits WBF

The Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs of Slovakia, H.E. Mr. Ivan Korcok, during his official stay in Albania visited Western Balkans Fund premises in Tirana. Minister Korcok has been touring the Western Balkans capitals immediately after the publication of the new enlargement strategy of European Union for the WB. His visit to the Region is an expression of the support of Slovakia and V4 Group countries for the development and integration of the Western Balkans.



The Ambassador of United Kingdom to Albania Mr. Duncan Norman visited the WBF

On March 19 WBF had a pleasure to welcome the British Ambassador to Albania H.E. Mr. Duncan Norman. WBF had a good sharing of information on WBF activities also in the framework of the London Summit for the Western Balkans, in the context of the Berlin Process. WBF was encouraged to seek possibilities for future cooperation.



Interview of Dr. Murra for National News Television of Bosnia And Herzegovina, Tv1.

In the sidelines of the WBF Ministerial of Sarajevo, the interest of the media on WBF was high. The Executive Director of WBF had the pleasure to give an exclusive interview to the TV1. The interview (in Bosnian Language) could be watched here:

<http://tv1.ba/video/ekskluzivno-za-tv1-murra-o-projektima-fonda-za-zapadni-balkan/>



WBF Delegation meets V4Group Ambassadors in Brussels

During the official visit in Brussels, the WBF Delegation met with V4 Group representatives. Dr. Murra thanked Hungarian mission to EU for hosting and organizing the event and also for the help and support of the International Visegrad Fund for the Western Balkans Fund.



Message from the Executive Director



Dear Friends,

We are very happy to share with you our first Newsletter, a product of Western Balkans Fund (WBF) Secretariat, which aims to better inform our stakeholders, organizations, public institutions and Media across Western Balkans on the Fund's most recent activities!

Established in Prague, on 13 November 2015, during the Annual Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the V4 Group and WB6, the creation of Western Balkans Fund is considered an important political initiative and also, a significant positive mark of the new cooperation spirit taking roots in the Balkans.

WBF purpose is to boost cooperation between its members, to strengthen relations and regional cohesion and to advance integration into the European Union by promoting common values among citizens, civil society and regional actors and by strengthening and providing a concrete approach at the “people-to-people” level.

The Fund aims to achieve these goals by **supporting common regional projects** and by bringing people to share mutual experiences and be aware of their respective values, traditions and culture.

Officially launched by the First WBF Conference of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, on 5 September 2017, Western Balkans Fund is now a reality, a well-functioning regional institution that is delivering on its strategic objectives: enhancing regional cooperation by supporting collaboration, mobility and strengthening people to people contacts in the Western Balkans Region.

In this issue of our First Newsletter you can find some information's regarding our activities, with a special focus in WBF First Call, and also, about the WBF Conference of the MFA, Sarajevo, 16 of March 2018.

Looking forward to share with you WBF's future achievements!

Dr. Gjergj Murra

Projections of activities for the upcoming months

March - April 2018, Negotiation and contracting phase of the 1st Call for the WBF proposals.

April 2018, Official Promotion of the first WBF Grantees

April-May 2018, Start of the WBF projects implementation period

May 2018, WBF Monitoring Guideline will be promoted - a technical document outlining the procedures for the project monitoring.

May-June 2018, Preparation of three years WBF Strategic Development document

June-July 2018, Monitoring visits of the WBF projects in the region

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<https://www.visegradfund.org/>

Visit us:

Western Balkans Fund
Address: Rruga "Skënderbej"
No. 8, Kati IV, Ap. 35/36.
+355 42400420
Tirana, Albania

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