Western Balkans Fund
Conference of Ministers of Foreign Affairs

The most important political event of the Western Balkans Fund, the third WBF Conference of Ministers of Foreign Affairs was organized in Warsaw, Poland on April 12th, in the framework of Pristina Chairmanship-in-Office and as a side event of the Berlin Process. The Conference underlined with appreciation the positive results achieved by WBF, in accomplishing its core objectives.

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Ministers appreciate positive results achieved by WBF

During the third WBF Conference of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, ministers discussed social projects aiming at bringing our region closer to EU. Full support to approved projects for stronger regional cohesion in WB.

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Western Balkans Fund Council of Senior Officials reiterate their full support to the Fund’s activities

On March 26-27, the Western Balkans Fund Council of Senior Officials (CSO) convened in Tirana for the first time in 2019 to analyze, discuss and endorse the List of the recommended Projects during WBF Second Call.

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Ministerial Conference on strengthening the regional and Adriatic-Ionian cross cooperation

WBF Executive Director, Mr. Gjergj Murra attended the Ministerial Conference on strengthening the regional and Adriatic-Ionian cross cooperation in the field of youth, organized on 4-5th April in Budva, Montenegro.

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The Conference underlined with appreciation the positive results achieved by WBF, in accomplishing its core objectives: enhancing regional cooperation and good neighbor relations, by supporting human mobility, “soft connectivity” and strengthening people-to-people contacts in our region. The Ministers, considered very positively the high number of organizations involved in the WBF Calls, as a clear sign of the readiness, maturity and willingness of our region to further cooperate, and noted with satisfaction that Western Balkans Fund, through the Call for Proposals, is creating broad and vivid networks covering every angle of the region.

The Conference adopted a Joint Statement and approved the List of 24 projects, Winners of the WBF Second Call for Regional Projects Proposals.


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The most important political event of the Western Balkans Fund, the third WBF Conference of Ministers of Foreign Affairs was organized in Warsaw, Poland on April 12th. Ministers discussed social projects aiming at bringing our region closer to EU. Full support to approved projects for stronger regional cohesion in WB. Below you will find some citations of the WB6 Ministers about the Fund’s work during their speeches:

“When we established WBF few years ago, no one could envisage that in a relatively short period, this organization will become an active regional actor, focusing on fostering good neighborly relations, enhancing regional cooperation and promoting "Soft Connectivity". Just to mention that in such a short time the WBF has launched two Project Calls and received about 600 project applications with approximately 2,300 organizations participating. This is a success story. It is our success story.”

“Last year at our Ministerial conference in Sarajevo, we decided to double our contributions to the budget of the Fund. It was an important decision and our common signal concerning the importance that we all attach to the civil society activities in our region. This increasing of the contributions will allow us to increase the number of the granted projects in the second call. The start of its operations proved that the WBF has become an important tool in order to strengthen relations and promote common values among citizens and civil society by bringing people from the whole of our region to know each other and to exchange through different projects in their common interest.”

“We all knew that setting up the WBF would not be an easy process; but we knew better that the Fund is part of what we all need, to bring our people and societies together. For this, we must build on this spirit and commitment and make the WBF our common success story. The Fund in a short period of time and it is important to say relying almost entirely on our own forces, of the contracting parties, and relatively small but very efficient secretariat led by Dr. Gjergj Murra to whom we are all grateful for his great work and very proactive approach, managed to identify and address issues of main concern for our region.”

“We express satisfaction of the work of the WBF so far. The successful realization of the two calls for projects support is the best example of the European value of this regional instrument, which involved a large number or representatives from the NGO sector, education and local self-government in joint project activities with their neighbors.”

“WBF is one of the most active elements of our successful cooperation and understanding in the region. For the first time in the recent history of the region, this mechanism, with clear regional ownership, has opened a path of cooperation in the field of culture, science and research, youth exchange and the promotion of sustainable development, in a manner similar to how other European regions have merged and strengthened cooperation at one point.”

“In the two years of its existence the Fund has demonstrated and proven itself as a unique cooperation mechanism and a good example to other initiatives of how to put the needs before differences in pursuit of a common, overarching goal. In these two years, the WBF has gone a long way and asserted itself as one of the most effective instruments encouraging cooperation in the region, including in the most important element of cooperation – the people to people contact through personal relationship.”

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence
The Western Balkans Fund Council of Senior Officials (CSO) convened in Tirana for the first time in 2019 to analyze, discuss and endorse the List of the recommended Projects during WBF Second Call. Mr. Valdet Sadiku on behalf of the WBF Chairmanship in Office on his opening remarks highlighted the good job of the Secretariat and reiterated their commitment to promote the WBF activities in the future.

The meeting preceded with WBF Secretariat team in providing info to the CSOs representatives about WBF Second Call for Regional Projects with the focus on the assessment procedure: eligibility check, assessment phase, evaluation panel, but also on WBF fundraising activities and relations with partner organizations.

During the Second Call, the Fund received approximately 250 project applications, but only 24 of them were part of the endorsement List. Along the meeting the CSO members discussed in principle about the proposed List and their general conclusions were that it contains a well-balanced and comprehensive group of projects that will positively influence enhancing regional cooperation, neighborly relations and especially people to people links in the region.

By endorsing in principle the proposed List of the recommended projects, the WBF CSO opened the way for the final decision of the WB Conference of Ministers of Foreign Affairs to approve the eventual List.

This will open the way for starting the concrete activities of the Secretariat for negotiating, contracting and awarding ceremony, and for implementing the projects and activities financed by WBF Second Call for regional Projects.

The CSO meeting was another positive message of the good cooperation spirit between WB Contracting Parties, of their willingness to continue supporting WBF, this important and ground-breaking initiative.
The WBF Programme and Grant Manager Miss. Dafina Beqiri participated at the 7th Western Balkans Civil Society Forum held in Tirana on 16-17 of April. The role of civil society organizations in promoting regional cooperation (trade and investment, connectivity and people to people relations), the state of social dialogue, as well as enabling civic space in the Western Balkans were some of the topics discussed at the Forum.

In her speech Mrs. Beqiri said that WBF being established by the governments of WB6 gives a lot of acknowledgement to strengthening regional cooperation but also promoting people to people links in our region, it is at crucial importance to keep the dialogue open in our region and that initiatives continue being regionally owned in order to help our societies understand better our common values. Approximately 150 participants, including a broad range of civil society representatives from EU and WB participated at the Forum.
Ministerial Conference on strengthening the Adriatic-Ionian cooperation

WBF Executive Director, Mr. Gjergj Murra attended the Ministerial Conference on strengthening the regional and Adriatic-Ionian cross cooperation in the field of youth, organized on 4-5th April in Budva, Montenegro.

As #WBF one of main objectives is to increase cross border and youth cooperation, Mr. Murra stressed in his speech that “we should continue to jointly work for the youth of our Region, for better quality education, strengthening the link with the needs of the private sector and ensuring development of highly skilled youth, ready to support and lead the progress of WB towards the EU integration”.

The Conference served to promote the dialogue with the aim to search for new opportunities and solutions to improve the position of Youth in the context of European integrations.

Infosession with representatives from DG NEAR

A delegation from Directorate-General for Neighborhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR) from European Commission (EC) in Brussels composed of Mrs. Liselotte Isakson and Mrs. Jutta Pomelle-Segurola was received today by Mr. Gjergj Murra Executive Director of Western Balkans Fund. During the info session the guests were thoroughly briefed by the Secretariat staff on #WBF activities since its establishment to the present day. It was a constructive meeting were all the questions put forth by EC representatives were given the proper explanation from the WBF Secretariat team.
Meeting with ALDA - European Association for Local Democracy

On April 10th, the WBF Executive Director, Mr. Gjergj Murra, was received by Mrs. Antonella Valmorbida, Secretary General of ALDA-the European Association for Local Democracy with headquarters in Brussels, Belgium. Both parties discussed on the ways to promote joint activities in the areas of mutual interest with the focus on strengthening the cooperation of local authorities with civil society organizations in the WB region.

Meeting with SwissAgency for Development and Cooperation

On March 25 the Western Balkans Fund Secretariat received Mr. Andreas Gerrits, Deputy Head of Western Balkans Division from Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and H.E. Adrian Maitre, Swiss Ambassador in Tirana. During this info session the guests were briefed about Fund’s Secretariat activities since its establishment to present day.

The discussion was also focused of the on the two Calls for Regional Project Proposals launched by the WBF, the First almost being over and the Second one on the verge of starting point. They were informed about the project guidelines, evaluation criteria, implementation process etc.
“Open door days” for students at WBF Secretariat premises

Marin Barleti University

On March 28 the WBF received in the premises of the Secretariat a group of students from “Marin Barleti University”, in Tirana. The meeting was a good opportunity to inform them about the Fund’s mission and activities, but also to listen to their questions and ideas about communication and PR strategies, for reaching wider audiences and stakeholders in our Region.

Tirana Business University College

The WBF Secretariat office was visited by students from various universities. On 29 March it was a group of undergraduate students from “Tirana Business University College” who had the opportunity to meet with the Secretariat staff and get informed by them about the Fund’s mission and activities. Education and Youth are two key areas were WBF activities are focused, so during the meeting the students got answers to their questions, equipping them with the right knowledge and guidelines to become potential applicants on the next WBF Call for Projects.
We are glad to share with you the fact that WBF on Facebook official account has reached the quota of more than 7 thousand followers. Thank you for being with us in every step of our journey.

Have you already checked out our new web page? WBF has designed a more user friendly, practical and accessible web page.

www.westernbalkansfund.org

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