Podgorica

Montenegro is convinced of the bright future of the Western Balkans

Editorial / Since renewal of its independence, Montenegrin diplomacy has been based on the three key pillars of foreign policy. Membership in NATO, which took place after a serious and deep reform of all segments of the society, contributed to strengthening the perception of Montenegro as an anchor of regional stability and a generator of confidence in the Western Balkans… Read on pages 2-3

Popova Sapka

First "Birds Without Borders" camp held in Macedonia

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Nis

“Dodji na Amfi” Street Festival successfully organized

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Prizren

Young people from around the Western Balkans gathered to speak about the history

"Challenge History 2 - REACT for the Future" summer school kicked off on July 22nd 2018 in Prizren with 23 participants from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia and Serbia.

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Tirana / Albanian Parliament ratified the HCA signed between WBF and Albania

On July 19, 2018, the Albanian Parliament during a Plenary Session, ratified the Host Country Agreement (HCA), signed between Western Balkans Fund and the Republic of Albania.

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Montenegro is convinced of the bright future of the Western Balkans

By Mr. Ivan Ivanišević

Since renewal of its independence, Montenegrin diplomacy has been based on the three key pillars of foreign policy.

Membership in NATO, which took place after a serious and deep reform of all segments of the society, contributed to strengthening the perception of Montenegro as an anchor of regional stability and a generator of confidence in the Western Balkans. By joining the Alliance, Montenegro has clearly laid the foundations for further development on the values promoted and brought together by today’s most significant military alliance.

Along with the process of joining NATO, negotiations on membership in the European Union were also underway. The good dynamics of opening the negotiating chapters was followed by strong commitment to adopt common EU acquis and to permanently shape up the society based on the values of human rights, freedoms, democracy and inclusiveness, through effective implementation of action plans. In this respect, a special emphasis was put on the success of so-called "new principle of negotiation", during which the negotiation chapters 23 and 24 remain open from the outset until the final membership.

The EU integration successes of Montenegro have been facilitated by the openness to take into consideration and use for the process the experiences conducted by the friendly countries from the "big enlargement" in 2004, but also on the experiences of the states that became members at a later date - Romania, Bulgaria and Croatia.

It is precisely the good cooperation in this field that opened the door for development of bilateral relations with these countries.

NATO membership and a quality EU membership negotiation were followed by the process of implementation of the third pillar of Montenegro's foreign policy - dynamic regional cooperation based on mutual confidence and support.

Exactly in this segment Montenegro achieved the greatest results since its renewal of independence. Numerous meetings have been organized in Montenegro with the aim to promote trust and dialogue as a basis for cooperation in the region. Montenegro has participated in over thirty regional mechanisms, initiatives and organizations, and Montenegrin presidencies have always been marked by readiness for dialogue, compromise and understanding.
Aware of the fact that confidence is difficult to gain, and too easy to lose, all decisions made by Montenegro have been clearly and timely communicated and shared with the neighboring countries. Openness to conversation, readiness for coordination and wish to find solutions of common interest became a kind of Montenegrin brand. This is best confirmed by the fact that Montenegro has never failed to support the neighboring countries’ candidates in any of the elections for the international organizations.

Now, as a NATO member and the first next EU member state, Montenegro is determined to continue building its relations with its neighbors on sustainable partnerships, secure elections and permanent strengthening of awareness of interdependence in the Western Balkans. As the smallest country in the region, Montenegro allocates all of its capacities for the benefit of all, regardless of what is on the agenda, be it security, migration, sharing of EU negotiation experience or any other topic of significance for the bright future of the Western Balkans.

Since this year, Montenegro has the honor to promote trust-based cooperation through its presidencies of the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative (AII), EU Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian Region (EUSAIR) and within the framework of presiding over Article IV of the Dayton Peace Accords on Bosnia and Herzegovina. In all these processes, we are pleased that all partners are aware of Montenegro's good intentions, its readiness to take into account the wide interest of all sides and make decisions aimed at the common good. We are also pleased that, within the framework of new regional initiatives such as the Western Balkans Fund (WBF) and the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO), we can contribute to implementation of the ideas on which is based perhaps the most visible mechanism for promoting regional cooperation - the Berlin Process and Western Balkans Six, which were launched in that format exactly by Montenegro, and to which Montenegro has been unreservedly dedicated.

Convinced that we, in the region, work best whenever we work together and for the same goal, Montenegro took the position that making the regional cooperation effective, through concrete project mechanisms, is the key for deepening relations between the states and nations that have been sharing the Western Balkans territory for centuries. All of our numerous differences are important; they make the coloration of this part of Europe irresistible. Nowhere else is the touch of the worlds and various civilizations as loud as in the Balkans. Montenegro sees this as the best chance for joint progress. United in diversities, towards the new horizons of success.

Mr. Ivan Ivanišević is the Director General for Multilateral Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Montenegro
Albanian Parliament ratified the Host Country Agreement, signed between Western Balkans Fund and the Republic of Albania

On July 19, 2018, the Albanian Parliament during a Plenary Session, ratified the Host Country Agreement (HCA), signed between Western Balkans Fund and the Republic of Albania. This development represents an important stage for the WBF, not only from the political and strategic support point of view, but also, because through this Agreement, the host country provides the Fund with the functional conditions for the daily operations. This represents a fulfilled commitment by the Albanian side, not just to Western Balkans Fund Contracting Parties, but also to the partners involved in the Fund’s creation and development. Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of Albania, Mr. Ditmir Bushati, during the discussions in the Parliament underlined that: “We strongly support this initiative! Increased presence of regional headquarters in Tirana clearly shows the maturity of Albania and its growing role in the region, in terms of foreign policy.” The HCA will officially enter into force 15 days after its publication to the Official Gazette. For more please click:


**MP Mr. Ervin Bushati - For Albanian Telegraphic Agency**

“The creation of the Western Balkans Fund is more than welcomed by Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia and Montenegro. We support it, because the aim of the Fund is to encourage the collaboration between the members in our region, the promotion of common values between citizens, civil society and institutions, and promoting people to people contacts.”

**MP Mrs. Elona Gjebrea - The speech in the Albanian Parliament**

“Regional cooperation is a vital necessity for all the countries of the Western Balkans. Western Balkans Fund will finance small and medium projects, with aim an growth in regional cooperation, cross-border cooperation, and strengthening the regional cohesion, in this fields: education, environment protection, human rights, culture, cross-border and youth cooperation.”
“Dodji na Amfi” Street Festival successfully organized in Nis, Serbia.

The sound of hip-hop music, graffiti spray paints, street basketball games and days of young people dancing in the festival branded t-shirts are gone; the celebration of the street-art culture is over, now that yet another “Dodji na Amfi”, the eclectic street-art festival held last week in the Nis, has wrapped up for the year.

However, for us from the Western Balkans Fund the festival does not recede into the past as we have witnessed something truly remarkable: “Dodji na Amfi” has grown out of its local confines and became regional event. With the support of the Western Balkans Fund tens of young artists from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Macedonia have taken part in workshops, master classes, competitions, and performances.

In other words, the festival may have ended, but for the Western Balkans Fund and our partners, the true challenge begins as we have witnessed regional cooperation at its best and are now responsible of making this public.

There is more to it than just the figures although figures speak quite well on their own: Over 10,000 visitors to the festival, 70 young people taking part in various competitions (dance, graffiti, singing, basketball, etc.); 25 young artists from the region; 12 masterclasses in audio production, video, photography, graffiti art, etc.

Young Albanian artist, Ms. Livia Gjonaj has performed at the festival along her Serbian friends. She was performing in Albanian and English, and caused the eruption of ovations after being introduced as Albanian artist to the Serbian audience in Nis. For us in the Fund it is much more than a “great performance”, it is a testament of our true purpose. A clear evidence that ground realities are not necessarily reflected in a dominant political discourse. Simply put, the region is doing well, it is now up to the politics to catch up.

This is maybe best articulated in the Instagram post of the young Bosnian artist Anel Besic who has taken active part in the festival: “At least in the Balkans, this kind of event is a tutorial for a better life. Life made of music, dance, sports and friendships that don’t break because of differences in our passports.”
"Challenge History 2 - REACT for the Future" summer school organized in Prizren

"Challenge History 2 - REACT for the Future" summer school kicked off on July 22nd 2018 in Prizren with 23 participants from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia and Serbia. The group was welcomed by the Mayor of Prizren Mr. Haskuka, Dafina Beqiri from the Western Balkans Fund and Sister Spaqi from the Loyola school, UWC Mostar forum ZFD - Bosnia and Herzegovina Democracy Plus Center for Peace and Tolerance, Helsinki Committee for Human Rights of the Republic of Macedonia Civil MK Helsinki Committee for Human Rights of the Republic of Macedonia. Curricula of the Summer School was carefully tailored to explore more ideas of youngsters by including interesting lectures and workshops on history teaching and learning in the Western Balkans, critical analyses of national historic narratives and what a multi/perspective approach to history means in today's context.

Additional important aspects of remembrance, starting with the representation of women in history of the Western Balkans and participants got to engage in the "Memory In motion" pedagogical tool on inclusive culture of remembrance and discussions related to questions of identity and what social elements influence the construction of our identities, including our community, parents, friends but lately also social media. Youngsters had the possibility to debate on the impact that courage, social activism, stereotypes and standing up for the right values have in the process of reconciliation. In order to better understand the whole scope of the summer school youngsters had a chance to visit Prishtina and Gracanica Monastery.

Western Balkan region is very unique, WBF is happy to continue strengthening our good neighborly relations which are essential to underpin and enhance reconciliation in a Western Balkans, a region that suffered conflicts in the recent past. It is important to remember that youth plays a crucial role in the ongoing reconciliation processes in the region, without your active involvement will be impossible for all of us to have a joint common future.

Together with CPT, WBF believes that in the future will be more opportunities that will support the intercultural dialogue and learning with these methods, because this is the right approach to increase awareness of young people how to cooperate and debate with each other. Furthermore, WBF is convinced that our approach to support regional initiatives makes a valuable contribution to our communities on local and regional level.
First "Birds Without Borders" camp held in Macedonia

Representatives of Center for Protection and Research of birds participated at the first cross-border research camp "Birds Without Borders" camp organized on Popova Sapka in Macedonia and hosted by the Biology research student association. Participants of the camps participated in the research of flora and fauna of Shar Mountain, and also shared experiences with the colleagues from the region.

The camp was organized within the project "Birds Without Borders" which is jointly implemented by Center for Protection and Research of birds, Preservation and Protection of Natural Environment in Albania, Macedonian Ecological Society and Ornithological society „Naše ptice" with the aim to empower and strengthen cross-border cooperation of environmental civil society organization working on birdlife protection in the Western Balkans.

This project represents the continuation of the cooperation of the organization working jointly for many years on the Adriatic Flyway, the corridor which millions of migrating birds use during spring and autumn during migration.

The project is supported by the Western Balkans Fund, aiming to boost cooperation between Western Balkans 6 members, to strengthen relations and regional cohesion, to advance integration into the European Union.

For more information, please click on the links below:

- [https://www.facebook.com/pg/czip.cg/photos/?tab=album&album_id=2082208835122451](https://www.facebook.com/pg/czip.cg/photos/?tab=album&album_id=2082208835122451)

Please click here for information related to this project, in Montenegrin language:

WBF EVENTS AND MEETINGS

Plav / Green Step meeting on the project "Importance of the Protected Area for Economic Development"

The Western Balkans Fund representatives participated to the meeting which officially initiated the implementation of the project "Importance of the Protected Area for Economic Development". A kick off meeting among partners Green Step from Ulcinj, Triton from Plav; ERA from Peja; and Toka from Valbona took place in Plav, Montenegro.

Tirana / Monitoring visits organized related to the grant awarded projects

WBF Secretariat representatives had a meeting with European Movement Albania, a granted organization of the Fund, related to the implementation of the project “Creating synergy in WB for strengthening education, research and science”. Also, a meeting was conducted with the Social Contract Institute related to the project “Balkan Girl Power”, which is expected to start the implementation during August 2018. For more info please click here:

https://web.facebook.com/bvacouncil.org/photos/a.1874922169391147.1073741828.1849453265271371/2089035181313177/?type=3&_rdr=1&_rdr

Budapest / WBF represented at A.J. Summer School

Mrs. Antoaneta Ivanova represented WBF at the Antall József Summer School. Launched in 2013, the Antall József Summer School is a twelve-day programme focusing on one of the most important regional partnerships of Europe, the Visegrad Cooperation.

Green Patrol, documentary about Serbia coming soon!

Yet another truly insightful documentary on dismal effects of human actions on the environment. “Green Patrol in Action” inquires effects of mini-hydro power plants in Serbia and gives close picture of communities struggling to protect their rivers.

News related to WBF (Please note that these articles in the languages of WB6)

- http://balkans.aljazeera.net/vijesti/uoci-samita-u-londonu-sta-berfinski-
proces-znaci-za-balkan
and-the-Berlin-Process.pdf
- https://www.studnel.com/zabava-i-muzika/muzika/item/943-
dodji-na-
amfi-vol-7
- http://www.mapo.al/ervin-bushati-ballkani-duhet-trajtuar-si-nje-
pakte-
e-vetme-turistike/
- http://elbasaninews.al/fondi-i-ballkanit-bushati-nxitje-e-bashkepunimit-
dhe-promovim-i-vlerave-te-perbashketa/
- http://www.parlament.al/News/Index/6773
- https://www.faxweb.al/bashkepunimi-ndermjet-venede-te-rajonit-
bushati-krijimi-i-fondit-te-ballkanit-perendimor-eshte-mese-i-mirepritur/
- http://www.jutarnjiglasnik.info/drustvo/ekologija/crna-gora-
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Projections of activities for the upcoming months

- Ongoing - Monitoring the implementation of WBF projects, all over the region;
- Ongoing - Collaborative visits to WBF partners in the WB6 Region;

NOTE: In our web page at the Calendar section you may find the latest information regarding the timing of the concrete activities of WBF projects, as they are updated accordingly.

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