Tirana

WBF, a pioneer of regional cooperation

The Western Balkans Fund, is working on the implementation of 18 regional projects, which involve 84 organizations from all around Western Balkans region. We prepared a video-clip that summarizes our work and activities in the field of regional cooperation during this successful year.

Please visit WBF video presentation here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZqVClIZUOr

Ulcinj

Third ornithological camp "Birds Without Borders" held in Montenegro

Third “Birds Without Borders” camp was organized from 10th until 14th September 2018 in Montenegro. The event was organized also with the participations and contributions of experts from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia and Albania. During the fieldwork, more than 2060 individuals from 35 bird species were registered.

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Pancevo/Sarajevo/Belgrade

A film festival, bringing experts of cinematography and young people together in the Western Balkans

As the master of cinema, Fellini says: “There is no end. There is no beginning. There is only the infinite passion of life.” Yes, cinema could bring people together in an infinite passion for the life and living together. And, it is so needed in the Western Balkans. Colleagues from partner organizations of DOKUFEST, shared with us their experiences related to the festivals in Prizren and Pancevo.

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“Accursed Mountains”

Working together for protecting “Accursed Mountains”

On September 13th and 14th Accursed Mountains, as protected area covering three WBF Contracting Parties were main topic of discussion of the regional conference for its impact in economic development hosted by Green Step a WBF grantee. Our region should continue to attach the greatest importance & to promote nature based tourism as one of today's great regional challenges.

Read on page 7

Skopje / There could not be successful regional cooperation without involving the young talents

Interview/Regional cooperation could be incomplete without the involvement of business organizations and exchanges and participation of young talents. We interviewed Mrs. Biljana Markovic Stamenova, the Executive Director of Macedonia2025.

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Third ornithological camp "Birds Without Borders" held in Montenegro

Third “Birds Without Borders” camp was organized from 10th until 14th September 2018 in Montenegro. The event was organized by Center for Protection and Research of birds together with Ornithological society „Nase ptice" from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonian Ecological Society (MES) and Protection and Preservation of Natural Environment in Albania.

At the event participated 11 specialists which conducted the monitoring of bird migration on the Niksicko polje, Krnovo, Ulcinj salina and canyon of river Cijevna. During the fieldwork, more than 2060 individuals from 35 bird species were registered.

The camp was organized within the project "Birds Without Borders" which is supported by the Western Balkans Fund, established with the aim of improving the cooperation of the Western Balkans countries and accelerating integration into European Union.

The last camp within the project will be organized in Albania (Karavasta Lagoon) at the beginning of October.

For more information please click here:

For more events from this project please click here:
http://www.czjp.me/en/
Interview / There could not be successful regional cooperation without involving the young talents of our region

Regional cooperation could be incomplete without the involvement of business organizations and exchanges. This is the moto of Macedonia2025 initiative, which aims to bring closer the business communities and young entrepreneurs in the Western Balkans. We interviewed Mrs. Biljana Markovic Stamenova, the Executive Director of Macedonia2025. This year, Leader project is supported by WBF.

➢ Ms. Markovic, Macedonia2025 initiative organized Regional Business Forums from Skopje, to Belgrade and Sarajevo. How could your project promote and develop regional cooperation?

The Leader Project is an initiative from the Richard Ivey School of Business from Canada. This School sends teams of instructors to different countries around the world to conduct a 2-week MBA-style workshop for young entrepreneurs who want to start a company. Macedonia2025 has been implementing this program since 2007 and the young entrepreneurs who have been through this training have provided us with great feedback. They learn how to develop their business plans from a number of different aspects, such as marketing, finance, business strategy, presentation skills, etc. The participants can then take those pitches and use them to get financing.

In the past few years we wanted to expand this program in the region and we initiated discussions between similar organizations in Serbia (CANSEE) and Bosnia (RESTART) to be the local organizers. We were very happy that the Leader Project was expanded in the region and last year we wanted to take it to the next level – to organize pitching and networking between the participants of this project in the three countries.

With assistance of WBF, we were able to implement a joint program this year with CANSEE and RESTART that enables the winners from Macedonia, Serbia and Bosnia to travel to the three locations and to present the business pitches to a variety of jury members. In the meanwhile, they work with mentors to improve their business pitches with the input that they receive from the judges. However, the most valuable of all, are the networking opportunities that are organized around each pitching. The high profile guests that attend the events are potential investors or partners of the young entrepreneurs. Additionally, the young entrepreneurs exchange ideas, share know-how and connect with each other for future collaboration.

Continues in the next page…
There are not many business trainings offered in these three countries that use the case study method to transfer knowledge in the entrepreneurship area. A short and intensive MBA training, provided by one of the best business schools in the world is an opportunity for all the entrepreneurs to invest in their knowledge and businesses, thus directly influence the three countries' economies. Our track record shows that the participants following the successful completion of the Leader Project significantly improve their day-to-day operations and profits. Also there are not many regional business pitches, so these events truly add value to the regional cooperation.

- **Could you share with us one of your experiences during the events?**

The overall energy and positive atmosphere around these events is always inspiring. The region doesn’t collaborate enough and there are mental boundaries among the people who live here in the sense that we are separated and distant from one another. However, at these events we learn how similar we are as societies and mentalities. We face the same difficulties, we all look for new markets far away from the region, while the regional collaboration is often neglected.

- **What could be done more for bringing together the business people and young talents and entrepreneurs in the Western Balkans?**

One of the key obstacles to dynamic private enterprise in the Western Balkans is the widespread aspiration of young people to secure stable public-sector jobs rather than to become entrepreneurs. Young people in the Western Balkans need encouragement by mentors and their peers to become successful entrepreneurs. This is why we think this project is a valuable tool to inspire and encourage young people to stay on the path towards personal growth.

The business people in the region need more events and platforms to connect, and they need to become aware that the possibilities for doing business in the region are underutilized. Generally, there are two facts that stand out looking at the Macedonian, Serbian and Bosnian commerce relations. Firstly, road vehicles and petroleum products top both Serbia and Bosnia’s imports. Secondly, Macedonia’s top three exports are the same to both countries: iron and steel, vegetables and fruit, and medicinal and pharmaceutical products. The smart industries, collaboration on research and development, software development, high-tech, etc., remain yet to be uncovered as opportunities.

For more info on this project click here:

http://www.macedonia2025.com/
A film festival, bringing experts of cinematography and young people together in the Western Balkans

As the master of cinema, Fellini says: “There is no end. There is no beginning. There is only the infinite passion of life.” Yes, cinema could bring people together in an infinite passion for the life and living together. And, it is so needed in the Western Balkans. Colleagues from partner organizations of DOKUFEST, shared with us their experiences related to the festivals in Prizren and Pancevo.

✓ Ms. Natalija Milojković, "Pančevo Film Festival", Niš
✓ Mr. Kerim Sefer, “Pravo Ljudski Film Festival”, Sarajevo
✓ Mr. Boris Simić, young filmmaker from Belgrade

➢ You participated to the DOKUFEST in Prizren and Pančevo. May we have your feelings about this regional cultural experience?

Natalija Milojković: First of all, I have to say that participation in this project and attending and jurying at these two festivals has been a great motivator, since I plan to study film directing. To meet a lot of people with similar interests, also to discover a lot of new filmmakers from the region, as well as further, was certainly very important and inspiring for me. Along with that, as these two festivals being international, I was able to meet people from around the world and learn about their cultures through their films.

Kerim Sefer: It is very important for young people to participate in such events because we embrace the change in the best positive ways. Many beautiful memories are going to stay right there, in the focus of Dokufest and Pancevo Film Festival 2018. We were able to meet another cultures that are very close to us and I am happy because we are sharing the same experiences with different people. For me, being a young juror was spectacular chance to watch new and inspirational short films, to discuss about it and share opinion on in the way we feel; whether we criticise some aspects or we simply adore some scenes that can send general message. Overall, amazing experience, it's all about building connection and celebrating diversity.

Boris Simić: It was fantastic! Prizren is a beautiful city and a whole new experience for me. Can't wait to see it again. Pancevo is like 50 km from my home so it was not something really new except for burek with smoked pork knee! It was best thing I tasted in my life.

➢ What did you find new in this Festival? What is the experience that it brings?

Natalija Milojković: Since I come from a city where events of this kind are not frequent, almost everything was very new to me. I was able to see the most diverse films on big screen, e.g. seeing experimental films was really something unique. Also, what was very important for me were the Q&As after films, from which I learnt a lot, as well as from conversations with my colleagues. Only after the festival I realized how much this experience helped me in many ways and how much it changed me.

Kerim Sefer: Dokufest is an amazing event with a huge audience all around the world. We were delighted to be the part of this festival where so many amazing artists and producers meet with the same goal: to win hearts of film lovers. The mission of this event is to bring people together in Prizren, multicultural city with stunning vibes of love, peace and uniqueness.

Boris Simić: It brought me friends from all over Balkans! We enjoyed learning about cities and each other at the same time. Beautiful experience. It also helped me cleanse from all the stereotypes that maybe I had had.

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How was your collaboration and interaction with the colleagues from the region?

**Natalija Milojković:** As for the communication within the youth jury, I would say everyone was very collaborative and down for compromise. Of course there were some different opinions, but as for making our final decision, there were no big problems. The most important thing was that, despite having different opinions, everyone listened and tried to understand each other. Also, since most of them are either studying or want to study something concerning film, we might even be working together later on. While we were basically living together during these two festivals, we had the opportunity to get to know each other really well and I believe that I will stay in contact with many people I've met here and that we will stay friends even after this.

**Kerim Sefer:** We became big team with the goal of deciding about which film caught our attention and which one sends general and motivational message to all young people today. With the most respectful words I can describe our collaboration. By introducing our opinions, we open new ideas and clues for every aspect of particular film. By refilling our deliberation with so many different arguments, we get to see clear picture and vision: best film that touched us, with unique message and strong bonds and relationships existing in every scene.

**Boris Simić:** Well it surprised me how similar our opinions about films were. It wasn't hard to decide. Also privately, we got along great with each other. We were together for the whole day and parties at night. For me it was experience I will remember my whole life.

What is your message to the people of culture in the Western Balkans? What they could do more?

**Natalija Milojković:** First of all, being open to new things and forgetting prejudices of any kind is very important for progress. Going through these festivals I realized people don't understand their importance. Events of this kind are very important for bringing cultures together, introducing them to one another and awakenig understanding between people. On the other hand, they support and inspire new and upcoming artists and promote art, in this case film, and are usually the only places one can see unconventional and noncommercial pieces of art. So, I would suggest to invest more into art and promote it, therefore encouraging young people not to be afraid to show their art, since we have much potential and talent, which can be seen from this kind of events.

**Kerim Sefer:** Do whatever makes you happy, use every chance to prove your abilities. Create something new, let people hear for your work and it will bring you inspiration and motivation to continue with your lifetime journey. You can do much more to improve your skills and knowledge, don't look back because, just in front of you, there are so many chances and possibilities waiting just for you. Love and be loved.

**Boris Simić:** MAKE MORE FESTIVALS! BRING YOUNG PEOPLE TOGETHER! It is the only way to solve problems that our fathers and grandfathers made. We shouldn't live on their mistakes but solve them and live in peace and be friends to each other. That is enough. We don't have to be comrades or brothers or one people. We should just be able to be friends with each other and live in peace!

For more info on the festivals please click here: [http://dokufest.com/](http://dokufest.com/)
WBF EVENTS AND MEETINGS

On September 6-7, 2018, the Western Balkans Fund Council of Senior Officials met in Tirana for the second time this year. The meeting analyzed and discussed about achievements of the initiative during this important period of its further development. Important decisions were taken aiming to design the Fund's activities for upcoming rest of the year. Highlighting the good results of the implementation of the projects under first WBF Call, the CSO members expressed their support to the steps aiming to further strengthen the strategic and organizational capacities of WBF. The plans for the near future, including the second WBF Call, were also argued.

On September 13th and 14th Accursed Mountains as protected area covering three WBF Contracting Parties were main topic of discussion of the regional conference for its impact in economic development hosted by Green Step a WBF grantee. Representatives of environmental organizations from three WBF Contracting Parties, shared ideas with the view of organizing joint activities, aiming to further protect and promote nature based tourism, as one of today's great regional challenges, but also opportunities.

WBF was invited and made a presentation to the Seminar on the Western Balkans organized in London by the British Group of Inter-Parliamentary Union, at the premises of UK Parliament. Considering the high importance that the Parliamentarians have in the regional cooperation processes, the event was an unique opportunity to present the Western Balkans Fund to the Members of Parliaments from the United Kingdom and Western Balkans.

WBF attended the farewell reception to the Ambassador of Slovakia in Tirana H.E. Mr. Milan Ciganik - one of the active supporters for the Western Balkans Fund. We express our best wishes for his diplomatic career, quite confident in his support in the future, as well.

News related to WBF (These articles are in English the languages of WB6)

Projections of activities for the upcoming months

- Fourth camp of "Birds Without Borders" project, Divjake-Karavasta, Albania. 1 - 5 October 2018
- Workshop, Association for Care and General Rights of Children “Nasa Djeca”, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 5-7 October 2018,
- 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.

Visit us for more information:

- www.westernbalkansfund.org