WBF Secretariat holds in Tirana the Grant Awarding Ceremony for Winning Projects

On 24th of May, the Western Balkans Fund Secretariat organized in Tirana the Grant Awarding Ceremony of the 24 Winning Projects (4 from each WB6 contracting parties) from the WBF Second Call.

WBF Organizes Partnership Workshop in Tirana

On 23rd of May, in Tirana was held the Partnership Workshop. The aim of the Workshop was to fine-tune the upcoming processes in order to ensure a smooth cooperation while implementing WBF supported projects because these activities are dedicated to the people of the region, aiming to bring them together and strengthen synergies through mutual efforts.

Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Visegrad 4 and Western Balkans 6

The WBF Executive Director, Mr. Gjergj Murra attended the Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of V4 + Western Balkans held in Bratislava, on the framework of the Slovak Presidency 2018/2019 of the Visegrad Group aiming to discuss on the possibilities of the cooperation and the European prospective of the WB6.

IVF Executive Director, Mr. Andor David, and Mr. Pavol Demes, pays official visit at the WBF Secretariat Premises

Mr. David said that the region needs an organization like WBF that aims to enhance regional cooperation and people to people links in the WB. By supporting multilateral cross-border and civil society initiatives, WBF has a strong impact to the reconciliation processes and good neighborly relations.

Cooperation between V4 and the Western Balkans – what role for think tanks?

The conference aims to reflect on the activities of the Visegrad Group and Slovakia’s V4 Presidency in particular, in the Western Balkan Region, on the possibilities of cooperation between V4 and WB think-tank networks.
Western Balkans Fund Secretariat organized in Tirana the Grant Awarding Ceremony of the 24 Winning Projects (4 from each WB6 contracting parties) from the WBF Second Call.

In the presence of high officials from WB6 MFA-s, representative from diplomatic missions, civil society organizations, partners and collaborators, the WBF Awarding Ceremony started symbolically the implementation phase of WBF Winning Projects of the Second Call, aiming to enhance regional cooperation and people to people contacts in our region by implementing relevant actions and strengthening synergies through mutual efforts.

“We at WBF, believe that in our beautiful region we have many common values that brings us together, that needs to be exposed and shared. Knowing better each other and our neighbors, working together towards the same goals, is the right path for creating and enriching our regional identity and building our joint European future,” said Mr. Gjergj Murra, Executive Director of Western Balkans Fund, on his opening speech.

Mrs. Rejhan Vuniqi, Deputy Minister, on behalf of WBF 2019 Kosovo* Chairmanship-in-Office, pointed out their strong commitment of WBF in promoting regional cooperation in WB. “As Chairmanship in Office we come here today with a clear message: “We believe that regional cooperation in Western Balkans is possible and we should continue nurturing it”, said Vuniqi.

While Mrs. Mimoza Halimi, General Director for Political and Strategic issues at the Albanian Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, underlined the importance of building good neighborly relations in the WB. “The prospective of cultivating good neighborly relations between the WB6 should be an inducement to provide a long-lasting stability and progress in the region as well as to accelerate the EU integration route,” said Halimi.

Speaking on behalf of Slovak V4 Presidency, Mr. Peter Spisiak, Ambassador of the Slovak Republic to Tirana, reiterated that they pay particular attention to supporting Western Balkans and keeping regular political dialogue with their partners. Slovakia will continue to provide a strong political support to the activities and projects of the WBF, said Ambassador Spisiak.

The winning projects represent a wider regional drive, since more than 85 organizations from civil society organizations, universities, schools, associations of culture, arts, sports all over the WB6 will cooperate during the implementation phase of the project. Thus, a big number of organizations from the WB will come together for sharing their vision related to regional cooperation activities.

* 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.
Nearly a year ago the WBF Secretariat in Tirana held the same event with 18 winning projects from the First Call, while this year the Fund is supporting 24 projects from WB6. This is another proof that shows our stakeholders appreciate the WBF as trustworthy organization, created by the region and for the region.

We at WBF will continue working closely with our partners to make reality their vision and ideas, and we are confident that, based on the experience and the dedications of our Grantees, this will be another successful period of implementation of projects, all over our beautiful region, aiming to enhance regional cooperation and people to people links in WB Region.

WBF Organizes Partnership Workshop in Tirana

Western Balkans Fund Secretariat organized in Tirana the Partnership Workshop with Grantees from 24 Winning organizations of WBF Second Call. (4 from each WB6 contracting parties).

The aim of the Partnership Workshop was to fine-tune the upcoming processes in order to ensure a smooth cooperation while implementing WBF supported projects because these activities are dedicated to the people of the region, aiming to bring them together and strengthen synergies through mutual efforts.

In his opening speech the WBF Executive Director Mr. Gjergj Murra said: “Today we are starting a joint friendship, that will be reinforced and consolidated in the following period with your 24 organizations. We think that these events are a unique opportunity for all of us to know better each other and make friends from all over the region.”

During the Workshop representatives of the winning organizations from the region were divided by areas of intervention that their projects will be implemented like: cultural cooperation, education and scientific research and sustainable development, and were instructed by WBF team who provided them with all the necessary information needed during the implementation phase, as monitoring, reporting, timeline and financial/budgetary procedures.
Grantees, we look forward to a great cooperation and new partnerships in our region

During and after the WBF Secretariat Partnership Workshop on May 23rd with Grantees from 24 Winning organizations of WBF Second Call, the participants from all WB6 Contracting Parties took advantage of this unique opportunity to know better each other and make new friends from all over the region.

Mrs. Kaltrina Ajeti from the lead organization in Pristina, IKMK, said: “The workshop was a good opportunity for cooperation and exchange of experiences taking into consideration the challenges our region is facing in the media industry. I believe that through these projects, which are going to be implemented in the WB, of course we will intensify our cooperation among the organizations in the region and in the long run our societies will benefit from it as well.” This project will be implemented in cooperation with two other partner organizations from Podgorica and Prilep.

While Mrs. Irina Ljubic from the lead organization in Belgrade, Jelena Santic Foundation, though it was her first visit in Tirana, appeared quite relaxed when she said: “This workshop highlighted all our joint energy to bring changes and improvements in the Western Balkans. Everybody was friendly and opened for discussion. I have met initiatives that will change the perspective of regional cooperation and put an end to stereotypes that we face in the region.” This project will be implemented in cooperation with two other partner organizations from Pristina and Sarajevo.

More at ease looked Mr. Darko Nabakov from the lead organization in Skopje, Asso- ciation for Creative Documentary Film Promotion MAKE DOX, on his second visit to Tirana, said: “Once again during the workshop we realized that we are sharing the same stories, problems and needs, and that is why it was simple to understand each other and inspire each other at the same time for more success stories.” This project will be implemented in cooperation with two other partner organizations from Tirana and Belgrade.

Mr. Milos Mracevic from the lead organization in Podgorica, SWC Jadran, said: “This workshop was excellent. It was a new experience for us but at the same time it will help a lot in the running of the project during its implementation phase. It was also an excellent opportunity to meet new people from our region, as well as people from the Western Balkans Fund Secretariat and from now on we are looking forward to a great cooperation and new partnerships in our region.” This project will be implemented in cooperation with three other partner organizations from Skopje, Vojvodina and Banja Luka.

While Mrs. Ivona Ivkovic from the lead organization in Sarajevo, Association for Digitalization and Informatization of Cultural Heritage DIGI.BA, said: “It was a pleasure to meet with all these colleagues from the region. We are very happy to be one of the grantees from Sarajevo, and we hope that this will be the start of one permanent and successful cooperation. We are looking forward to working with regional partners on this project and share our experience and ideas among each other”. This project will be implemented in cooperation with three other partner organizations from Tirana, Belgrade and Podgorica.
Mr. Ledion Krisafi, from the lead organization in Tirana, Albanian Institute for International Studies, said: “The workshop was excellent. Not only to know more about the guidelines and the implementation of the projects, but most of all to get to know more each other, to share experiences, ideas, possibilities for cooperation. In this regard, the workshop was a very good opportunity.” This project will be implemented in cooperation with two other partner organizations from Skopje and Belgrade.

The 24 winning projects represent a wider regional drive, since more than 80 organizations from all over the region will cooperate during the implementation phase of the project. Thus, a big number of organizations from the WB will come together for sharing their vision related to regional cooperation activities aiming to enhance people-to-people contacts in our region.

Signing of Contracts

After the Partnership Workshop with the 24 awarded organizations, on the 23rd of May, the signing of contracts was held at the WBF Secretariat premises. This momentum signs the symbolic starting point of the implementation phase of the Second Call for Proposals. We wish good luck to all our grantees and partners.

WBF Projects of 1st Call concluded successfully the implementation phase

Western Balkans Fund Secretariat is pleased to announce that 18 awarded projects during the WBF First Call for Proposals, (3 projects for each WBF contracting party), have been successfully finished. The effective implementation of the rewarded projects was followed closely, and more than 60 monitoring activities were conducted by the Secretariat staff.

This is a great achievement of the Fund, which is constantly striving through its activities to enhance regional cooperation and good neighborly relations. Soon the WBF Secretariat will draft a full comprehensive Report on all implemented projects during the First Call. Using this opportunity, the Secretariat expresses its gratitude to all its partners for their ongoing support and encouragement towards WBF, as a trustworthy organization in the WB region.
The WBF Executive Director, Mr. Gjergj Murra, attended on 28th of May the Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of V4 and Western Balkans held in Bratislava, on the framework of the Slovak Presidency 2018/2019 of the Visegrad Group aiming to discuss on the possibilities of the cooperation and the European prospective of the WB6.

“These joint political formats are a clear indicator of the excellent partnership relations between our two neighborly regions and a formalization of the long-standing commitment that the V4 Group have shown towards the Western Balkans (WB) supporting cooperation, stability, development and the European perspective of the WB region,” said Mr. Murra in his speech. WBF was created and perceived following the model of the IVF, as a success story of cooperation, with 19 years of history. The vision of the WBF is to progressively grow and to continue contributing to increase mobility, collaboration, people-to-people contacts and to the maturity of the civil society in the region, directly investing in the networking and developmental capacities, said Mr. Murra.

The WBF Director Mr. Murra in his speech thanked again the VG and the IVF for their continued support, encouragement and ongoing commitment to the Fund.

IVF Executive Director, Mr. Andor David, and Mr. Pavol Demes, Former Minister of International Relations of the Slovak Republic, pays official visit at the WBF Secretariat Premises.

Western Balkans Fund (WBF) Executive Director Mr. Gjergj Murra received on 22nd of May in Tirana Mr. Andor David, Executive Director of International Visegrad Fund (IVF) and his team. IVF is a great supporter of WBF since its establishment and Mr. David is touring the capitals of the WB6 contracting parties lobbying for their financial support towards WBF to be increased.

Mr. David said that the region needs an organization like WBF that aims to enhance regional cooperation and people to people links in the WB. By supporting multilateral cross-border and civil society initiatives, WBF has a strong impact to the reconciliation processes and good neighborly relations. While, Mr. Pavol Demes, ex Minister of International Relations of the Slovak Republic praised the work done by the WBF considering it “as the best tool for enhancing regional cohesion through joint project and activities”. Executive Director Mr. Murra said that the WBF, through its funded activities, is trying to do something that goes to the people of the region by strengthening civil society and enhancing people to people contact, because we have more things in common, than things that divide us.
Cooperation between V4 and the Western Balkans – What role for think-tanks?

On 27th of May, in Bratislava, Slovakia, the WBF was present at the fourth Think Visegrad Mid-Term Conference “Cooperation between V4 and the Western Balkans – What role for think-tanks?”

The conference aims to reflect on the activities of the Visegrad Group and Slovakia’s V4 Presidency in particular, in the Western Balkan Region, on the possibilities of cooperation between V4 and WB think-tank networks and on the possibilities of the common grounds between the V4 and Berlin Process.

From WBF Secretariat present in this Event were Mr. Gjergj Murra, Executive Director as one of the key speakers of the Conference and Mrs. Defina Beqiri, Programme and Grant Manager, one of the speaker of the second panel, which focused on the different stakeholders' perspectives.

Lecture on Ex-Ante and Ex-Post Evaluation

WBF as a grant giving organization applies different evaluation methods always seeking to make its work more accountable and transparent toward its grantees. Our Programme & Grant Manager Mrs. Dafina Beqiri shared her professional knowledge and experience on Ex-Ante and Ex-Post Evaluation with Tirana Business University students of Master Level.

How to better respond to European aspirations of the young generation in the Western Balkans

WBF Project Coordinator Mrs. Dijana Spalevic attended the Conference entitled “How to better respond to European aspirations of the young generation in the Western Balkans?” organized by the Romanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union in Bucharest on May 28-29.

The two-day Conference gathered over 200 young people and decision-makers from the EU and the region who explored creative ways to inspire and empower young people in finding and improving their professional prospects in their societies while restating the support for the European perspective of the Western Balkans.

Youth is an important component to WBF strategy and future planning because youth are the most important resource of the region and the one that will change the present and future of WB.
The WBF Partnership Workshop and Grand Awarding Ceremony received wide media coverage from all WB6 news agencies, newspapers, TV stations, web portals etc. Below you can find some links pertaining to the events.

**Tirana**

**Skopje**
- [https://m.makpress.mk/Home/PostDetails?PostId=290977](https://m.makpress.mk/Home/PostDetails?PostId=290977)
- [https://ovhrid1.com/archives/10925](https://ovhrid1.com/archives/10925)
- [https://vesti.mk/read/article/https%3A%2F%2Fmakpress.mk%2FHome%2FPostDetails%3FPostId%3D290977](https://vesti.mk/read/article/https%3A%2F%2Fmakpress.mk%2FHome%2FPostDetails%3FPostId%3D290977)

**Sarajevo**

**Podgorica**
- [https://radiohercegovi.net/pvk-jadran-novi-ambasador-fonda-za-zapadni-balkan/](https://radiohercegovi.net/pvk-jadran-novi-ambasador-fonda-za-zapadni-balkan/)
- [https://m.cdm.me/sport/vaterpolo/jadran-ambasador-fonda-za-zapadni-balkan/](https://m.cdm.me/sport/vaterpolo/jadran-ambasador-fonda-za-zapadni-balkan/)
- [https://www.dan.co.me/?nivo=3&rubrika=Sport&clanak=697757&datum=2019-05-26](https://www.dan.co.me/?nivo=3&rubrika=Sport&clanak=697757&datum=2019-05-26)
- [https://theworldnews.net/me-news/jadrans-ambasador-fonda-za-zapadni-balkan](https://theworldnews.net/me-news/jadrans-ambasador-fonda-za-zapadni-balkan)

**Pristina**

**Belgrade**
WBF Partnership Workshop Highlights

We are happy to share with you some moments from WBF. Representatives of the leading organizations were instructed by WBF team for the necessary information needed during the implementation phase. The winning projects represent a wider regional drive, since more than 80 organizations from all over the region will cooperate during the implementation phase of the project.

Deep gratitude to our grantees for the time and effort, valuable inputs and collaborative spirit.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YZdFh3qCs80