UPCOMING WESTERN BALKANS CIVIL SOCIETY SUMMIT

Aiming to promote people-to-people links through fostering dialogue between the relevant regional CSO actors and increasing awareness on the importance of nurturing reconciliation and regional cooperation, the WBF, with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan will organize the Western Balkans Civil Society Summit, 27-29 February, in Tirana.

The Summit objective is to provide an opportunity to participants from grassroots Organizations in the Western Balkans, to share and to learn about the challenges that influence regional cooperation in WB. Additional expected result of the Summit entails direct involvement of participants in developing recommendations and tools that will further deepen and strengthen cooperation toward reconciliation processes in the region.

EUROPEAN INTEGRATION OF THE WESTERN BALKANS: MAKING A REALISTIC PERSPECTIVE OUT OF A SHIFTING TARGET

In conclusion of a joint project on the European integration of the Western Balkans powered by the Western Balkans Fund........

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WBF MEETING AMONG FORMER AND CURRENT WBF CHAIRMANSHIP IN OFFICE - MFA PODGORICA AND MFA PRISHTINA

We are intensifying our work in a regional level and make WBF’s work continue effectively responding to regional challenges ......

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**WBF: Which can be highlighted as some of the achievements of the WBF for the work done so far?**

**Directorate for Regional and Other International Organizations:** WBF is a mechanism with clear regional ownership that strengthens cooperation and ties between WBF Contracting Parties; it promotes common values of the region and brings practical benefits for its citizens and societies. Effective and successful implementation of the two Regional Calls for Projects and support to 43 grantees so far, demonstrate a strong willingness of WBF Contracting Parties to work together and create a more prosperous region. Concrete and innovative regional projects have encouraged closer collaboration and contributed to sustainable development and growth, but have also promoted WB6 region at a European level. Along with political willingness of our leaders, professional engagement of the WBF Secretariat team greatly contributed to all that is accomplished. With the high number of applications for the Third Call, Fund proved to be “fir for purpose” - relevant regional actor able grow and encourage regional cooperation.

**WBF: Montenegro’s active role, engagement and constructive contribution to the reinforcement of regional cooperation?**

**Directorate for Regional and Other International Organizations:** Regional cooperation and fostering good neighborly relations remain one of our main foreign policy priorities. Montenegro is an active member of over 30 regional organizations and initiatives. We are holding presidency over Multinational Advisory Group of the Center for Security Cooperation (MAG RACVIAC), South-Eastern Europe Health Network (SEEHN) and Regional School of Public Administration (RESPA). Along with the WBF Chairmanship, 2020 will be marked with our Presidency over the largest regional organization in Central and South-Eastern Europe – Central European Initiative (CEI). Also, starting from June 2020 Montenegro will hold Presidency over the Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative (MARRI). In performing these challenging tasks, Montenegro will invest its full capacities to promote good neighborly relations, cooperation based on mutual dialogue and understanding, principles of regional ownership and project-oriented cooperation. We are also determined to work on creating closer ties between different actors of regional fora, improving synergies among them in order to make regional activities more consolidated and efficient.

**WBF: Main goals to be accomplished and expectations of the WBF 2020 CiO?**

**Directorate for Regional and Other International Organizations:** During our WBF Chairmanship we will continue to actively support the Fund, its activities and projects aimed at further strengthening of regional cooperation in areas of common interest. People to people contact in the fields of culture, science, youth exchange, sustainable development will be in our focus and these are the fields where joint actions are of key importance. Having in mind the important role of the Council of Senior Officials, we are determined to have this body fully engaged in guiding and supporting the Secretariat in the achievement of the Fund’s mission. Also, we will support actions aiming to reinforce expertise and knowledge of Secretariat’s staff and conduct high quality programs. We are fully convinced that further investments in the strengthening of the Fund will result with a highly effective, efficient and accountable organization with a growing visibility. Since Montenegro presides over two regional initiatives whose work is focused on project-related activities, we will give our best to encourage organizations from the region to apply for available grants and raise awareness on the importance of regional project synergy.
MEETING WITH KOM018 AND THEIR REGIONAL PARTNERS

On February 24th – the WBF hosted young people and CSO representatives from Serbia, BiH, North Macedonia, Croatia & Italy, with the aim to be introduced with the WBF – a regional cooperation & reconciliation instrument, which contributes to sustainable development of the region.

The visit was organized on the occasion of the youth safety training conducted in Tirana over the course of 21-28.2020, under the Erasmus+ project realized by the KOM018 CSO from the City of Nis and in consortia with youth CSOs.

The WBF was glad to share examples with participants on how WBF fosters relations among youth people in the region, which ultimately leads to a safer environment in the region.

WBF MEETING AMONG FORMER AND CURRENT WBF CHAIRMANSHP IN OFFICE - MFA PODGORICA AND MFA PRISHTINA

WBF started the year 2020, with an important meeting among former and current WBF CiO. WBF Executive Director Dr. Gjergj Murra and Mr. Valdet Sadiku MFA Prishtina conceded duties to the next CiO MFA Podgorica as an additional step that intensifies the commitment on improving regional cooperation and making WBF’s work continue effectively responding to regional challenges.
In conclusion of a joint project on the European integration of the Western Balkans powered by the Western Balkans Fund, the Albanian Institute for International Studies (AIIS), the European Movement in Serbia (EMinS) (Evropski pokret u Srbiji) and the European Policy Institute Skopje (EPI) (Институт за европска политика (ЕПИ)/European Policy Institute - EPI) organized the conference: EUROPEAN INTEGRATION OF THE WESTERN BALKANS: MAKING A REALISTIC PERSPECTIVE OUT OF A SHIFTING TARGET

All three think tanks have produced a policy paper that examines the impact of the developments last year on the enlargement perspective including the EU Parliament elections and Brexit.

Talking about the European integration process, its feasibility and the commitment of the EU institutions to keep up the perspective for the aspiring contracting parties of a paramount importance!

Western Balkans Fund is supporting a great project through Foundation “Jelena Santic” which have launched a competition for the “Best Initiatives Award” from the Western Balkans, with the aim of expanding support and promotion of women activist practices!

The main goal of the project Western Balkans Women Peace Talks is to expand the space for regional dialogue about peacebuilding and conflict resolution from women’s perspective and initiate of encounters and exchange between women peace activists.

The Regional “Jelena Santic” Award Call for applications for brave steps is open by February 10, 2020 by 7pm.

Link to apply: [http://fjs.org.rs/konkurs-za-regionalnu-nagrady-jelena-santic/?fbclid=IwAR3R4Ue4gdBvcPc4ut_YUqG5gDnJOTQr23kSn2Gng80yZGA41Zu_VylYVq8](http://fjs.org.rs/konkurs-za-regionalnu-nagrady-jelena-santic/?fbclid=IwAR3R4Ue4gdBvcPc4ut_YUqG5gDnJOTQr23kSn2Gng80yZGA41Zu_VylYVq8)
Aiming to increase awareness and knowledge about the Roman heritage presence in the Western Balkans, in the Archeological Museum of Durres was organized the project promotion "Roman Heritage In the Balkans".

“Roman Heritage in the Balkans” is a WBF Funded Project implemented by DIGI.BA in cooperation with Association for the Promotion of Italian Culture in BiH „Dante Alighieri”, UET CENTRE, Institute of Archaeology Belgrade – IAB and Montenegrin Association for New Technologies - MANT

A very dynamic start of the year for the WBF Secretariat! After completing the archiving and eligibility check of 295 applications received, our team of experts is now fully involved in the assessment phase of project applications.

We are going through every project very carefully and by the end of March 2020 we will publish the final results!

We remain committed to guarantee an accountable and transparent process!

We are happy to report that the WBF 2nd Call Projects are approaching successfully in a closing phase!

Until now we have 12 Projects which are fully implemented with a great impact in the Regional Cooperation in Western Balkans!

The remaining projects are soon to be completed by April-March 2020 period.
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