WESTERN BALKANS CIVIL SOCIETY SUMMIT SUCCESSFULLY CONCLUDES ITS 3- WORKING DAYS WITH RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE GOVERNMENTS

For 3-day long in Tirana, 27-29 February, the Western Balkans Civil Society Summit took place, where more than 100 civil society representatives gathered together to discuss about the future development of the region and the civil society sector to better enhance the regional cooperation.

During these days many panels were held with high representatives from the governments and also high representatives of international and regional organizations in the region, to discuss regional cooperation and which are some of the challenges and success until now ...

ANNUAL MEETING OF THE MINISTERS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE VISEGRAD GROUP AND THE WESTERN BALKANS

Western Balkans Fund Executive Director, Dr. Gjergj Murra, participated to the annual meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Visegrad Group and the Western Balkans partners in Prague ...

WBF FUNDED PROJECT, “REGIONAL EXPORT PROMOTION” FINAL EVENT IN PRISTINA

Western Balkans Fund participated in the Joint Workshop organized by the Chamber of Doing Business in Prishtina in cooperation with Economic Chamber in Skopje and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry Tirana ...

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For 3-day long in Tirana, 27-29 February, the Western Balkans Civil Society Summit took place, where more than 100 civil society representatives gathered together to discuss about the future development of the region and the civil society sector to better enhance the regional cooperation. During these days many panels were held with high representatives from the governments, from different sectors, and also high representatives of international and regional organizations in the region, to discuss with the representatives which are some of the challenges and success until now.

Western Balkans Fund organized for the first time this summit in Tirana with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, making this event and important milestone in the regional cooperation process. Preparations have started months before, and concluded successfully 3-working days, where some of the most important topics were debated and discussed to conclude with recommendations for the governments. Participants came from all over the region, people who were experienced in the field and which were selected in a very rigorous process by WBF. They gave a great contribution to the summit bringing their best experiences and also challenges which our region has to deal with.

Important representatives from governments, international organizations and civil society organizations had their discussions in the panel. In the first day to greet the Summit the special guest was Mr. Seiichiro Taguchi – Director, Central & South-Eastern Europe Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, but also different politicians had their speech, like Mr. Nenad Koprivica – Director General, Ministry of Sports and Youth, Montenegro, Mr. Zoran Popov – Secretary of State, MFA North Macedonia, Mrs. Mimi Kodheli – Chair, Foreign Affairs Committee, Assembly of Republic of Albania and Mr. Andor F. David – Executive Director, International Visegrad Fund.
We had as well some important representatives form regional organizations having their discussion Fatos Mustafa – Deputy Secretary General, RYCO, Juliana Hoxha – Executive Director, Partners Albania, Bojana Dujkovic – Board Member, EUROCLIO, BiH, Uranik Begu – Executive Director, Innovation Centre Kosovo* (ICK) and Irina Ljubic – Executive Director, Jelena Santic Foundation. Part of the Western Balkans Civil Society Summit were as well Jelica Minic – Vice President, European Movement in Serbia, Bardhyl Jashari – Executive Director, Metamorphosis Foundation, Mirela Rajkovic – Executive Director, SEEYN, Igor Milosevic – Programme Manager, ADP ZID, Montenegro.

The second day of the summit was dedicated to the working groups, giving a full attention to participants to discuss among each other what should be some recommendations for the governments to improve the regional cooperation and tackle some of the most important challenges. There were four working groups during this day focusing on the topics which are key priorities for WBF like Education & Scientific Exchanges, Cultural Cooperation, Sustainable Development and a working group with representatives from Think Tanks. In the end, working groups came out with their recommendations which were presented to the representatives of the governments and will be published. To hear and also discuss the recommendations which came out of the working groups in the summit were present Mr. Oltion Rrumbullaku, Deputy Minister of Education, Sports and Youth of Albania, Mr. Almir Sahovic, Assistant Minister–Ambassador, MFA-BiH, Mr. Pavle Jankovic, Head of Department for Regional Initiatives, MFA Serbia, Mr. Sokol Dedja, Deputy Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of Albania and H.E. Makoto Ito, Ambassador of Japan in Albania. They listened the recommendations and also took commitments to have a much supportive approach from their governments to work together with the Western Balkans Fund in enhancing regional cooperation.

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICI Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.
Western Balkans Fund Executive Director, Dr. Gjergj Murra, participated to the annual meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Visegrad Group and the Western Balkans partners in Prague.

WBF’s progress, achievements and the plans for the way ahead were presented during the meeting. The Ministerial had a special importance also in the framework of formalizing the continuation of the cooperation between International Visegrad Fund (IVF) and WBF, through the signing of the Second Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) by the two Fund’s Executive Directors, additional sign of enhancing regional cooperation within WB and beyond.

The Joint Statement of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the V4 countries on the Western Balkans

The meeting in Prague provided the V4 ministers with the opportunity to express their long-term and unequivocal support for the efforts of the Western Balkan partners to join the EU. The V4 remains committed to preserving and reinforcing the credibility of the EU enlargement process that is the best tool for ensuring stability, security, and prosperity in the region. EU membership of the Western Balkan countries is a joint strategic goal of the region and the EU.

The V4 ministers welcomed the European Commission’s Communication on enhancing the accession process. The V4 fully supports the intention to make the accession process more effective and credible by allowing the Western Balkans to move forward based on real progress in fundamental reforms. The V4 ministers commended the governments in the region for accomplishing significant achievements over the past years. At the same time, they expressed hope that the Western Balkan partners would fully embrace the adjusted accession process and make the most of the opportunities it offers while addressing the shortcomings that are hampering their efforts to integrate into the EU. Making headway in the reform areas set out by the Commission and gradually aligning with EU policies is essential.

The participants in the meeting were briefed by the Executive Directors of the International Visegrad Fund and the Western Balkans Fund on projects aimed at strengthening civil society in the region and on the ongoing cooperation between the two institutions. Furthermore, the ministers took stock of the achievements and plans for the future development of the Western Balkans Fund that is a unique institution of regional cooperation based on the successful model of the International Visegrad Fund. The V4 remains committed to supporting the Western Balkans Fund and its mission in the region. In Prague, the V4 ministers and the partners witnessed the signature of a Memorandum of Understanding that will allow the technical assistance provided to the Western Balkans Fund via the International Visegrad Fund to continue in the period ahead.
WBF official visit in Pristina

Executive Director of WBF Mr. Gjergj Murra and Senior Program Manager Mrs. Dafina Beqiri, in the framework of a working visit in Pristina, met the Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr. Glauk Konjufca and Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth Mrs. Vlora Dumoshi!

Good discussions regarding regional cooperation and the role of Western Balkans Fund as a key actor in the field!

WBF ED meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs of BiH, Mrs. Turković

On 27 February 2020, in the framework of V4 and WB6 MFAs Meeting, the Executive Director of the Western Balkans Fund, Dr. Gjergj Murra, met with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mrs. Turković.

In the meeting were discussed the achievements of the Western Balkans Fund so far and its role in strengthening the capacity of civil society in the Western Balkans.

CSO representatives meeting at Czech Embassy in Tirana

On February 20th, WBF took part in a meeting at the Czech Embassy in Tirana with a group of civil society representatives and Ms. Janina Hrebickova, Special Envoy of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Czech Republic for Western Balkans.

God discussion and exploring possibilities to enhance the role Western Balkans Fund in the regional activities and future development!
**Courtesy meeting with the German Ambassador in Albania**

On 2\textsuperscript{nd} of March, WBF Executive Director had a fruitful meeting with the German Ambassador in Tirana, H.E. Mr. Peter Zingraf.

Good discussion about Western Balkans Fund role and future collaboration with German Embassy regarding regional cooperation!

**MEFA Albania young diplomats visit at WBF Secretariat Premises**

A very special visit from a group of young diplomats from the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs of Albania at the WBF Secretariat premises!

Fruitful exchange of ideas and happy to share with them our experience and activities in the field of regional cooperation. The future diplomats expressed high interest for our work and mission and also considered the visit and the provided information as very useful for their future professional activities!

**Visit of Mr. Hannes Swoboda and IPP at WBF Secretariat Premises**

We were glad to have in our premises for a visit the President of International Institute for Peace and Former Member of EU Parliament, Mr. Hannes Swoboda, and a group of young leaders from Western Balkans!

They were in Tirana for a two-day visit to participate in the event "Young Generations for the New Balkans 2030 - Toward Alternative Horizons".

We talked about the future of our region, role of WBF in Regional Cooperation processes and inclusion of civil society in it!
On the framework of WBF 2nd Call funded project “Regional Export Promotion”, Western Balkans Fund participated in the Joint Workshop organized by the Chamber of Doing Business in Pristina in cooperation with Economic Chamber in Skopje and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry Tirana.

WBF Executive Director addressed the audience underlining the importance of enhancing regional cooperation, which also enables economic development as a key instrument to better enhance people to people links in Western Balkans.

On February 10th, in Podgorica, under the WBF 2nd Call funded project "Rewrite the Change" was presented the book written by young writers from Western Balkans.

We are very happy to have supported the project who established a network of young writers from our region!

They collaborated with each other to develop new approaches in writing as a platform for dialogue between nations and promotion of collective cultural heritage.

After completing the archiving and eligibility check of 295 applications received and assessing every project-proposal very carefully, from 4th to 5th of March, at the WBF Secretariat premises took place the WBF 3rd Call Evaluation Panel.

We remain committed to guarantee an accountable and transparent process!
ARTICLES RELATED TO WBF

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a4E4cdCe2-A&t=31s&fbclid=IwAR2AQRU_T3s7yjZoB4xgA3Raa_LvcoV922FVsEU9HivTbX4zJOlqvBi_cU
- https://www.tiranatimes.com/?p=144317&fbclid=IwAR1k5ezYkZ1HRr2dwr8jFz14gl8pWTbI4B0XuGjkKiC-9WbUSDfUPuATzYQ
- https://www.facebook.com/zeriamerikes/videos/1439741469538054/
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- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=77dsc7m4Plk&feature=share&fbclid=IwAR3fNisdpmBuF3hNybt67-S-kjnVoQWdsZ03ZhoPeAMamEfSinEGGw2ZMkw

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