We are happy to share with you the “Western Balkans Fund Strategic Development Plan 2020-2024” promotional video!!

Link: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TAU2ot6Lc44](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TAU2ot6Lc44)

**IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WBF PROJECTS**

One of the main challenges of WBF caused by COVID-19 pandemic is to mark the progress on the implementation of WBF funded projects always aiming for desired impact. On page 4-6 you can learn more about implementation phase of our funded projects.

**VISIT OF THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA, H.E. MR. BUJAR OSMANI, AT THE WBF SECRETARIAT PREMISES**

Honored to welcome at WBF Secretariat premises the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of North Macedonia!

**MEETING WITH THE SWISS AMBASSADOR IN TIRANA, H.E. AMBASSADOR MAÎTRE**

Read on page 3

**INTERVIEW WITH MR. ALBAN NIMANI, TULLA CULTURE CENTER DIRECTOR**

Read on page 5-6

**“IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON SUSTAINABILITY OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS IN THE WESTERN BALKAN REGION”**

Read on page 2
EVALUATION PROCESS OF THE “IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON SUSTAINABILITY OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS IN THE WESTERN BALKAN REGION” RESEARCH PAPERS

WBF Secretariat has progressed with the evaluation process of the “Impact of COVID-19 on sustainability of Civil Society Organizations in the Western Balkan region” research papers. Within the Evaluation framework, WBF organized regular evaluation panels where thoroughly were elaborated each Research Paper. During the third week of February WBF organized an induction workshop with Experts and Secretariat Team aiming to contribute to the shared vision on the regional extensive report outline and content of the project.

WBF received impressive research papers that shows the analytical potential within our region!
Visit of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of North Macedonia, H.E. Mr. Bujar Osmani, at the WBF Secretariat Premises

WBF had the pleasure to host at Secretariat premises the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of North Macedonia, H.E. Mr. Bujar Osmani.

Within the framework of Republic of North Macedonia 2021 WBF Chairmanship-in-Office, Minister’s visit on February 4th served as a great opportunity to share views for related to further expansion of regional cooperation in WB region but at the same time to enhance the support to Civil Society Organizations and people-to-people links in our region.

Meeting with the Swiss Ambassador in Tirana, H.E. Ambassador Maître

On February 12, WBF Secretariat was visited by Swiss Ambassador in Tirana, H.E. Ambassador Maître, accompanied by Mrs. Chantal Nicod and Mrs. Erisa Lame.

Purpose of the meeting was to discuss and share views on recent situation in the region related to health pace of work and more specifically related to potential joint plans and activities that further contribute to strengthening mutual cooperation, for better supporting regional cooperation actions in the Western Balkans!

Meeting with Albanian National Youth Agency General Director

On February 11, WBF welcomed to an introductory meeting newly appointed Director General of Albanian National Youth Agency to discuss potential ways of cooperation. WBF emphasized the readiness to provide soft support in grant making since it is one of the key pillars that ANYA is going to have.

Consultation on the Guidelines for EU Support to Civil Society in the Enlargement Region for the period 2021-2027

On February 25, WBF was part of the meeting organized by TACSO 2 on Consultation on the Guidelines for EU Support to Civil Society in the Enlargement Region for the period 2021-2027. WBF finds thus consultation very useful for civil society actors and policy-makers in the Region, moreover to know the standards towards which DG NEAR is working and aspiring in terms of their capacity, effectiveness, resilience, independence and accountability, stimulating participatory democracy and civil society involvement in public-policy making and the EU.
The young composers of the Youth Jazz Orchestra coming from all over the Balkans, have been selected!

We are happy to introduce you with Vladimir Botev, Sebastian Burneci, Ivan Jovanović, Damjan Jovičin, David Mastikosa, Mak Murtić, Rok Nemanič, Nevena Pejčić, Gordan Spasovski and Simona Strungaru.

Their recent and new artistic works will be performed by the Balkan Youth Jazz Orchestra on 29 and 30 April this year in Podgorica and Cetinje.

Another activity of the project “Regional Green Youth Charter” is currently happening on the Tara Mountain. Through the seminar, from 25 to 28 February participants from the WB Region will have the opportunity to improve their knowledge of the economic and environmental benefits of the transition to renewable energy production, as well as to learn how to successfully advocate for change in their community.

During the training seminar, the participants will, in addition to the online platform, draft a Regional Green Youth Charter, which will present concrete measures for setting more ambitious programs to reduce greenhouse gases, as well as their implementation in practice. In support of experts, the Project foresees conducting a training and mentorships to 16 students on economic & environmental benefits of clean energy transition, accompanied with the development of Regional Green Youth Charter (RGYC). The RGYC will be finalized in consultation with a broader coalition of CSO's active in this field along with relevant stakeholders on a national and regional level. The RGYC will drive actions and advocacy measures realization that will be launched with this project, while the follow up on the advocacy initiatives will be additionally supported via the RGYC online platform which will be created during the project lifetime.

The aim of this project, supported by the Western Balkans Fund and implemented by the European Movement in Serbia with partners from the Center for Ecology and Energy in Tuzla, the Democracy for Development organization from Pristina and the ALFA Center in Niksic, is to empower students to take a more active role in their local communities in the context of a fair transition to renewable energy production, while advocating greenhouse gas reductions and the transition to renewable energy production among decision makers in the Western Balkans.
How important is for you and your partners is a regional perspective and how effective is the cooperation among your partners?

MR. A.N: The project TullanoiseLAB came as result from the demand we received from youth in Albania to diversify the employment skills. As a pilot project managed to successfully provide youngsters from Albania, Kosovo* and North Macedonia with professional courses on music recording, visual arts and production. Within two weeks’ program trainers from the region and Europe unfolded the knowledge and skills needed in the industry. The partnership with organizations from the region provided a tangible impact to the overall project implementation, together with our partners we have identified experts and participants, during the application process we have received a huge number of applications from very talented musicians coming from Western Balkans. The cooperation with our partners didn’t start with this project, we have cooperated in the past in numerous initiatives and this was a continuation in a very specific initiative in our region. Anibar from Kosovo* is very successful organization also Kontrapunkt, and both of the partners are established organizations with a big regional network.

How deep are your connections to other organizations in the region?

MR. A.N: The fundamentals and the mission of Tulla is to promote international exchange in the field of culture, arts and humanities, to contribute to the education and sensitization of the public for acute social problems, paying special attention to the problems of vulnerable categories. In terms of cooperation, TULLA is very well positioned in the region since it has shorter-term and informal relationships based around an exchange of knowledge and intangible assets such as information, skills and ideas. We see it as vital importance to routinely engage in cooperative arrangements to increase our organizational efficiency and (sometimes) effectiveness. Moreover, TULLA continuously coordinates formal relationships on specific efforts or projects. As such, coordination requires a greater degree of commitment, time, and resources than cooperation, therefore TULLA remains committed to partnerships within the region and beyond.

How deep are your relationships with your community?

MR. A.N: For TULLA relationships are the building blocks for community organizing activities, meaning that the program of the TULLA - Culture Center is built on various activities and events in the fields of visual arts, music and drama. We also organize a lot of workshops, seminars, book promotions, performances, alternative theatre shows, host festivals. This has made us very connected with the community. For TULLA the relationships we have with our beneficiaries and stakeholders and even our adversaries are the means for achieving our goals. We believe that people don’t work in isolation, we need to be working together! It is our relationships all added together that are the foundation of an organized effort for change. We need lots of people to contribute their ideas, take a stand, and get the work done. It is also the people who motivate us to reach our goals. As cultural center in Albania, we care deeply about people and caring is part of our work. It is our caring for others that motivates us to work as hard as we do. TULLA believes that people learn the skills of establishing and maintaining relationships all the time, therefore for us nurturing our relationship remains crucial.

*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
When it comes to regional cooperation, where do you think the problem is, would you describe it more as a community approach or political?

MR. A.N: Youngsters from our region everyday are showing withdraw in everyday life, less and less involved in important engagements. This approach tells us that there is a lot of distrust in the systems. There are no adequate programs where they could be a good fit for youngsters or more specifically millennials. The governments of the region seem not to be interested to work with millennials, or maybe do not know how best to engage with this most emerging of generations.

The trouble is, right now, millennials across the region are not convinced that higher education is all that it could and should be. Above all, this generation is concerned that their present education will not match what they will need in the future and that a university may not even be the best place at which to develop the skills they seek most. In addition, they are divided as to whether adequate support and guidance is being offered by their education providers as they prepare for their ascent into the workplace. With this initiative we aimed to bring practical skills to millennials of our region, a platform from which they can air their views, collate opinions of 40 youngsters aged between 18 and 30 and together make a community change.

If you could describe the desired success of your initiative in a few words, what would you say?

MR. A.N: When it comes to supporting youth, TULLA remains committed to continue working with ‘millennials’ in helping make career decisions. Youth of the region are aware what is the market demand when it comes to employment and they are most eager to acquire them, however millennials’ aim to gain new skills practically and fast. TULLA finds millennials as left behind in our national and regional agenda and they should not be approached with the overriding impression that the millennial generation expects everything to be handed to them on a plate. Therefore, TULLA considers that it is about the changeover, and treats millennials as people who, having grown up with greater exposure to the troubles afflicting the world around us, tend to be instilled with a desire to seek greater purpose in their professional lives. TULLA doesn’t only provide programs for youngsters but also creative and fun working space and dynamic above all else.
WE ARE HIRING!

The Western Balkans Fund is looking for a responsible Program Coordinator (Serbian Citizen) to administer and organize all types of projects, from simple activities to more complex plans and activities within four specific areas/programs, as defined in the Statute of WBF.

Call for Vacancy: WBF Program Coordinator (SERBIAN CANDIDATES)

Western Balkans Fund launched the Call for Vacancy for the position of Program Coordinator. WBF Secretariat is looking for a candidate coming from Serbia to fill the current gap in the WBF Secretariat. Interested applicants from this WBF Contracting Party are encouraged to apply to join the Secretariat in Tirana.

You can find more about the job description, ToR and application procedures at:
http://westernbalkansfund.org/.../call-for-vacancy...
or:
http://westernbalkansfund.org/.../Call-for-Vacancy...