SWITZERLAND PROVIDES SUPPORT FOR STRENGTHENING COOPERATION IN THE WESTERN BALKANS!

Through an agreement signed on July 1st in Tirana between Swiss Ambassador Adrian Maître and Executive Director of the Western Balkans Fund, Dr. Gjergj Murra, the WBF receives Swiss funding to boost cooperation and increase exchanges in the region. Through this new agreement the Western Balkans Fund (WBF) will be enabled to strengthen its capacities, expand its projects, and increase people to people exchanges and ties in the Western Balkans ...
Switzerland provides support for strengthening cooperation in the Western Balkans!

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“To achieve peace, stability and prosperity in the Western Balkans, the first condition is that the whole region and its citizens cooperate, build bridges and exchange. The Western Balkans Fund adds value to regional cohesion and contributes to the EU integration”, said Swiss Ambassador Adrian Maître.

“We will cherish and treasure this partnership as very valuable. And I can assure you, that the Western Balkans Fund, representing the 6 Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the Region, has all the will and motivation to be a serious and reliable partner in this process as we commit to our people-to-people approach in the region for the benefit of all”, said the Executive Director of WBF Gjergj Murra.

On behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of North Macedonia, the Ambassador Dancho Markovski, – representing the chair of the Conference of Foreign Ministers which governs the Western Balkans Fund – said:

“We are thankful for this support, which indicated how steadily the partnership has grown in the Western Balkans Fund, to the point of transforming it into a long-term cooperation. On behalf of all 6 contracting parties, we assure our full commitment for the benefit of all people in the Western Balkans”.

Through this new agreement the Western Balkans Fund (WBF) will be enabled to strengthen its capacities, expand its projects, and increase people to people exchanges and ties in the Western Balkan region.

In addition to enhancing the Fund’s organizational structure and management, the Swiss support will go towards a more effective funding of common projects and initiatives in the region.

The support, in the amount of 950,000 CHF, will also enable WBF to proceed with the strategic plan for the upcoming 5 years.
Meeting with French Ambassador in Tirana, H.E.Mrs. Elisabeth Barsacq

On July 21st, Director Murra had a friendly and fruitful working coffee with Mm. Elisabeth Barsacq, French Ambassadore to Albania.

Open exchange of ideas and details about the WBF significant work with people in the Western Balkans. A pleasure to share our results and be the voice of our team and people from all our beloved region.

RYCO 5th Anniversary

On July 7th, WBF Team members were part of the reception organized by Regional Youth Cooperation Office on the occasion of their 5th Anniversary. We are pleased to see RYCO active and successful with young people in the Western Balkans. We wish them to keep up the excellent work!

WBF 3rd Call Close-Out Phase

We took you to unique exploratory trips as we cycled the region; We’ve witnessed university exchanges and joint research; Enjoyed discovering the shared cultural heritage; Danced and clapped togetherness via music festivals; We brought each other closer via tourism promotion; Worked to enable more qualitative life to our grandparents; gave the deserved space and attention to nurses; opened the doors wide open for internships for students from universities in Western Balkans, away from home, and yet, feeling at home in the region.

All these were part of the initiatives that bring people together, ideas on the same page and cooperation spirit at the same level.

In the heat of the summer, WBF staff is dynamically working to shape the results of our projects, which have enthusiastically been dedicated to our "people-to-people" approach. 23 organisations in the region were involved to help us achieve this inclusive aim, as they worked in joint projects in the region, financed by WBF.

The WBF is Grateful to its grantees for the excellent ideas, hard work and devotion in making our Region better!

We believe in our region; therefore we want our grantees to feel confident that their ideas in fostering regional cooperation are more than welcome to knock in WBF’s door.
As we conclude a hectic period of the year with projects, planning and strategic moves, we’re also happy to share highlights of the projects ending this summer. Here’s an inspirational throwback from regional University Cooperation efforts to improve business collaboration using creative and academic ways, organized by four universities in the region: Luarasi University Albania, FON University in North Macedonia, University of Zenica in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Donja Gorica University.

High level forums and conference were part of the project “Strengthening Regional Academic and Research Exchange” between the four universities, their staff and students. A great opportunity from Western Balkans Fund to allow everyone to reach a large number of participants from academia, researchers, junior researchers, and many professionals in the area.

In the picture, preparation meetings between the academic staff of universities, as events were under way for this unique opportunity to all the academics and researchers from the fields of Philosophy & Law, Economics, Information Technology & Innovation, Engineering, and others.

https://www.balkanweb.com/universiteti-luarasi-zgjeron-bashkupunimin-me-universitetin-zenica-mundesi-shkembimi-per-studentet-permes-erasmus/?fbclid=IwAR12HA49EKiUnBTlaCETlWmrmbQHu2FCqZyFqdvAQqUbYsDwFyW4SeszoUA

The path for another important tool was just made available for our Fund. Congratulations to GoEasy, the company selected to develop the solution for our Online Grant Management System (OGMS).

This important tool will help us to better accommodate the needs of the future applicants and for more professional, transparent and accountable implementation of our grant programs. The OGMS will incorporate online application and grant tracking functionality and that will assist the Fund manage its grant making process through the entire grants lifecycle.

The Agreement for the development of the Online Grant Management System (OGMS) was signed in Skopje on July 30th by WBF and GoEasy!
Siendrra Mehmeti, a young talented professional coming from North Macedonia, recently concluded her Internship Program at WBF. When asked about her 3-weeks experience working closely with WBF Team and on her perception of regional cooperation through grant-giving and support towards civil society organizations, Siendrra answered through an article, which we are happy to share with you.

I recall filling out the application form for the Internship Program, and one of the questions was:

“Why are you motivated to network in a regional level?”, I continued by answering:

“Through my experiences this far, I have come to realize the obstacles and challenges that the Balkan Region in general face with many social issues. Because as a region we share similar struggles, it only makes sense to also share initiatives for finding similar solutions. Through regional network we can come together to share experiences, exchange knowledge, improve our professional skills, provide better conditions for those in need, invest in the well-being of youth with the development of efficient programs to be implemented across the region and many more.”

Looking back at it now, I stand by what I said. Furthermore, my time at an inter-governmental organization, such as the Western Balkans Fund and being surrounded by people of the WB6, has made me realize more than ever before, of just how similar we are, and how by gathering our experiences and knowledge in one mutual space, without pointing out our differences, creates an environment for growth and progress.

If we can compare the Western Balkan to a neighborhood, it would make each country a neighbor to the other, and no neighborhood can function smoothly without reciprocity, respect, integrity and all-inclusiveness – all core values that WBF continuously promotes.

I consider my time near the WBF premises as being fruitful and eye-opening. From a professional stance, I was able to see the process from a different point of view. Until now, I was on the side of writing projects and implementing them, meanwhile, during my internship, I was able to see how projects are evaluated and which project proposals are approved. This helped me better understand of what makes a good project, what key points I should focus on, as well as learn from my mistakes in previous works and what I can improve in the future.
The WBF Team is expending and we are happy to announce the open vacancies for the positions of **FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION OFFICER, PROJECT MANAGER, FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION OFFICER/ACCOUNTANT**

ToR, submission of the applications and more on the following links:


WBF is committed to pursuing its organisational development and strengthening, supported by the PeaceNexus Foundation. Now, WBF is scaling up in terms of staffing and budget, and will have to report to different funding partners, the Fund is looking to develop a comprehensive and robust **FINANCIAL POLICY & MANUAL WITH THE SUPPORT OF AN EXTERNAL EXPERT**.

This assignment should lead to the development of overall financial regulations, which all staff understand and apply, and which do not place an undue burden on WBF’s grantees.


**EXTERNAL LEGAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES CONSULTANCY**

To best prepare for growth, WBF is looking to strengthen its key internal systems, including on human resources rules, policies and management. This process of strengthening shall be integrated as per recommendations deriving from audits, organisational assessment and analyses and aligned with a wider organisational development agenda that WBF is committed to. Until now, WBF operated largely with its core budget provided by its Contracting Parties (CP), and all WBF’s staff have been paid from the CP contributions. With new donor support WBF will have project-based staff as well, the organisation is looking to further develop its human resources management, harmonize the related rules and procedures, and clearly delineate roles and responsibilities across its team.

This assignment is meant to lead towards the definition or improvement of the contractual modalities for all WBF’s staff and to the development of an organisational HR policy.


WBF is in the preparatory period of launching the 4th Call for Project Proposals in cooperation with European Union and is seeking for External Expertise who will assist the team in improving grant making procedures in order to harmonize the existing procedures with donor requirement. This assignment should lead to the **DEVELOPMENT OF APPLICATION AND EVALUATION GUIDELINES** according to EU practices, which all staff understand and apply, and which do not place an undue burden on WBF’s grantees.

For us at WBF, as for most of you, 2020 was a year of unprecedented challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the pandemic challenges, our Secretariat kept regular communication with all the grantees, discussing alternative solutions for each project, according to new measures and rules that entail physical meetings, in some cases adopting necessary adjustment and identifying tailor-made solutions. Day by day, we learned and got more prepared in actively communicating with all the partners. Today, we are happy to see tangible impact from the Projects and soon you will learn more about them through our 2020 Annual Report!

For more information related to this Newsletter, please contact us: info@westernbalkansfund.org

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