

Civil Society Forum of the Western Balkans Summit Series

Key Recommendations

The following are the key policy recommendations as results of the Civil Society Process of the Western Balkans Summit Series in preparation for the Civil Society Forum and Western Balkans Summit in Trieste on July 12, 2017.

The policy themes selected are in line with the priority topics of the Trieste Summit and were developed in consultation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Italy, as hosts of this year's Summit:

- Business Environment and Innovation
- Rule of Law
- Youth Cooperation
- Regional Cooperation and Bilateral Issues
- Environment, Energy and Climate Change
- Communicating the Berlin Process in the Time of Rising Populism

The recommendations were prepared during an expert meeting (Civil Society Forum in Tirana, April 2017), and with inputs provided through an online consultation process with the involvement of a wide circle of CSOs from all over the Balkans.

The recommendations are to be presented at the policy event of the Civil Society Forum Trieste on July 12, 2017.

Business Environment and Innovation

1. The WB6 should initiate a Social Economy Agenda for the WB6, modeled on the Social Business Initiative in the EU;
2. The WB6 should foster associations of professionals and micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and give them a voice in policy-making;
3. Venture capital and ethic banking for innovative forms of businesses to acknowledge their special purpose and mission should be promoted by the WB6;
4. The EU should make WB6 target countries in applications for relevant framework programs (such as H2020) to encourage the participation of the WB region;
5. The WB6 and the EU should promote success stories and networking of entrepreneurs in the region, especially on a cross-country basis.

Rule of Law

1. EU should intensify communication with CSOs within the new reporting cycle and prior to preparation of the country reports and improve two-way communication and the simulation of reforms on the ground should be highlighted in the EC reports.

2. Civil Society should have more influence over content of the EC reports, better benchmarking system and increased participation in the monitoring and evaluation of the rule law.
3. Governments should present required information using accurate, reliable and accessible data. This will lead towards greater citizens' participation and transparency of the process;
4. An alternative regional benchmarking system on specific issues should be developed and conducted by the CSO in the WB6 including tracking of the specific corruption cases at the regional level; Upon this template countries should report to the next summit;
5. Regional cooperation on data exchange in specific segments of anticorruption such as assets disclosure and conflict of interest should be strengthened. Governments should adopt the regional instrument on data exchange which will be prepared by the Regional Anticorruption Initiative (RAI) with the support of the ANAC and civil society.

Youth Cooperation

1. Mobility within the WB6 region and with the EU28 should be increased by abolishing visa regime within WB6 and between WB6 and EU28 and by mutual recognition of diplomas in the region.
2. WB6 and EU member states taking part in the Berlin process should commit themselves to increase, encourage and promote knowledge of kindergarten, primary and high schools children about other countries in the region (intercultural learning), the WB6 should make their education more transparent and more outcome oriented through taking part in OECD's PISA and TIMMS studies and implement the 2015 "Roadmap to a sustainable apprentice system" and focus on improvement of vocational training and skills.
3. Develop the network of youth research institutions in order to increase a region-wide research of the youth population including economic, social, cultural, public health and migration (brain drain) issues and the RCC (in cooperation with RYCO) conducts regional public opinion survey about situation of the youth.
4. RYCO requires support to: a) develop intercultural competences and skills and develop content of exchange programs; b) include disadvantaged youth groups and reach out towards young people in the EU originating from the region; c) select the Regional Youth Capital in 2020 inspired by experience of Novi Sad as the European Youth Capital in 2019.

Regional Cooperation and Bilateral issues

1. WB6 should reaffirm their commitment to work together in the spirit of the Vienna Declaration and to abstain from misusing outstanding bilateral issues in the EU accession process, and reiterate their invitation to neighboring EU member states to join this commitment. The WB6 should intensify their efforts to resolving bilateral issues and the work of the respective Inter-State Diplomatic Commissions dealing with border demarcation, as well as to regularly follow up on their commitment to deliver annual reports on progress made.
2. The EEAS and EU Member States increase their involvement in tackling outstanding bilateral issues between countries in the region, on a permanent and continuous basis.
3. The donor community is encouraged to support and encourage cross-country collaboration of civil society organizations and think tanks focused on particular bilateral issues, and facilitate

dissemination in respective local communities, as well as to build alliances and cooperation with European SCO and think tank community in this field.

Environment, Energy and Climate Change

1. Energy poverty eradication through increased residential and overall energy efficiency and improving air quality by fighting against air pollution as the major threat to the economy and health of the citizens of the WB. Energy poverty, energy inefficiency, combined with air pollution, are the most pressing issues in all WB countries.
2. Promoting and focusing CSO resources on direct action, stimulating and inspiring a stronger link between think tanks and grass root groups, in parallel to policy making.
3. Adopt and promote circular economy and renewables in WB6, ensure full and unobstructed implementation of national environmental legislation, work on fiscal reform, remove harmful subsidies, promote innovation and R&D policies and address topical issues of relevance.

Communicating the Berlin Process in the time of rising populism

1. The communication of the Berlin Process should be understood and employed as an instrument to support the Process's efficiency, which requires expert approach and strategic planning.
2. In order to inspire the use of communications as instrument that contributes to achievement and consolidation of the Berlin Process goals, launching of a mechanism that would streamline and boost strategic communications of the Berlin Process, through help of think-tanks and policy-oriented CSOs, resourceful and long-experienced in promoting European values and committed to regional cooperation, essential to the Berlin Process.
3. This mechanism is best set within the framework of the Civil Society Forum, as a small-sized office that would provide technical and consultative support in communications and provide impetus and technical backing to the regional civil sector to more forcefully engage in promotional campaigns necessary for attainment of the Berlin Process goals, as well as in proliferation of information through third sector media, and in raising awareness and debunking of propaganda and fake news.
4. The regional nature of the mechanism is secured through a regional roster of civil society experts that would provide support to governments, regional projects the office would yield, and through the structure of the executive and advisory boards that would bring together representatives of governments and civil society of the Western Balkans Six.