



# Civil Society Forum

of the Western Balkans Summit Series



## Civil Society & Think Tank Forum I

### Road to Berlin

June 01-02, 2021 | Digital Conference



Western  
Balkans  
Summit  
**Berlin**  
2021

Supported by:



Federal Foreign Office

## Day 1: Tuesday, June 01, 2021

### 09:00 – 09:30 Welcoming Remarks

Hansjörg Brey, *Executive Director, Southeast Europe Association*

Valeska Esch, *Deputy Executive Director, Program Director Europe, Aspen Institute Germany*

Video Message by Minister of State for Europe Michael Roth, *German Federal Foreign Office*

### 09:30 – 10:30 Panel Discussion I

#### **Eight Years of Berlin Process: Achievements and Outlook**

The panelists will review the intentions and expectations of the Berlin Process before assessing its track record throughout the last eight years. They will also reflect on the upcoming summit as well as the future of this process.

Speaker: Alexander Jung, *Deputy Head of Division 212 Bilateral Relations to the Countries of Central, Southeastern and Eastern Europe, Southern Caucasus and Central Asia, German Federal Chancellery*

Michela Matuella, *Acting Director Western Balkans, DG NEAR, European Commission*

Tanja Mišćević, *Deputy Secretary General, Regional Cooperation Council*

Aleksandra Tomanić, *Executive Director, European Fund for the Balkans*

Moderation: Zoran Nechev, *Head of the Center for EU Integration, Institute for Democracy Societas Civilis Skopje, BiEPAG*

### 10:30 – 10:45 Short Break

### 10:45 – 11:45 Panel Discussion II

#### **Enhanced Cooperation: A Way to Strengthen Regional Confidence Building and Reconciliation?**

Enhanced cooperation is often cited as a means to support regional confidence building and reconciliation processes. The panelists will scrutinize the dynamic between these concepts both as prerequisites and consequences of one another and explore best practices of enhanced cooperation as well as areas for potential future cooperation.

Speaker: Egzona Bokshi, *Project Officer, “Empowering Youth for a Peaceful, Prosperous and Sustainable Future in Kosovo”, UN Secretary-General’s Peacebuilding Fund*

Nataša Kandić, *Coordinator, RECOM Reconciliation Network*

Frank Morawietz, *Special Envoy for Southeast Europe, Franco-German Youth Office*

Moderation: Florian Bieber, *Professor, Centre for Southeast European Studies, University of Graz, BiEPAG*

### 11:45 – 12:00 Short Break

**12:00 – 13:00 Panel Discussion III**

**The Green Agenda: Committing to a Sustainable Europe**

The European Green Deal sets an ambitious agenda for the EU in moving towards a more sustainable Europe. This panel will consider the cross-border nature of environmental issues in the pursuit of converging (environmental) standards relating to the quality of life within the EU and the region. The challenges and opportunities of the Green Deal and Green Agenda will also be highlighted.

Speaker: Vladimir Đurđević, *Associate Professor, University of Belgrade*  
Samir Lemeš, *President of Steering Board, Eko Forum Zenica*  
Sonja Risteska, *Project Manager Southeast Europe, Agora Energiewende*  
Guillemette Vachey, *Policy Officer Environment and Climate Change, DG NEAR, European Commission*

Moderation: Walter Kaufmann, *Head of Division for East and Southeast Europe, Heinrich Böll Foundation*

**13:00 – 14:00 Lunch & Networking Break**

**14:00 – 15:30 Working Groups I:**

**Strengthening Civil Society Cooperation and Sharing Best Practices**

In parallel working groups, experts and activists will discuss and elaborate on how to strengthen regional cooperation between civil society organizations. The idea is to facilitate an exchange of best practices for approaching the following issues:

**A. Addressing Legacies of the Past and Regional Confidence Building**

With nationalist and revisionist rhetoric on the rise, the societal climate has become increasingly polarized across the region. This working group will deliberate on how to address legacies of the past and advance reconciliation processes in the region.

Facilitator: *Youth Initiative for Human Rights*

**B. Acceptance and Social Inclusion of Minorities in the Western Balkans**

The acceptance and social inclusion of minorities in the region continue to pose a challenge. The focus of this working group is finding a regional approach for enhancing social inclusion of Roma and other minorities, who currently face discrimination in the form of limited access to political representation, economic opportunities, education, healthcare, and other essential service.

Facilitator: *Institute for Research and Policy Analysis - Romalitico*

**C. The Role of the Civil Society in Strengthening Democracy**

Strengthening the rule of law and conducting democratization reforms are a substantial part of the EU accession process and the performance of governments throughout the region is scrutinized in this regard. This panel will discuss the role of civil society and its potential to support for advancing these processes.

Facilitator: *Institute for Democracy Societas Civilis Skopje*

**D. Countering Disinformation and Strengthening Media Independence**

It is typically election periods but also the COVID-19 pandemic that highlight the role of the media in public discourse. The state of and challenges to the media's vital freedoms and liberties lies at the core of this working group, while the phenomenon of (targeted) disinformation will be put under scrutiny.

Facilitator: *Center for Contemporary Politics*

**E. Green Agenda: Energy Transition**

As one of the three working groups focusing on the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans, this group will discuss the region's transition from coal and other fossil fuels to renewable energy sources as well as its potential and strategies for enhancing energy efficiency.

Facilitator: *Regional Center for Sustainable Energy Transition*

## **F. Green Agenda: Air Pollution**

Another dimension of the Green Agenda with a direct and significant impact on the everyday lives of those living in the region, especially in its capitals and larger cities, is the reduction of air pollution. This group will take stock of the problem and focus on current efforts to tackle the root causes and mitigate its consequences.

Facilitator: *European Fund for the Balkans - Balkans United for Clean Air Network*

## **G. Green Agenda: Biodiversity and Nature Conservation**

The protection of biodiversity and nature conservation in the region is a cross-cutting interest that feeds into every aspect of the Green Agenda. Therefore, this group will assess the situation and deliberate on ways to protect vital ecosystems and landscapes throughout the region.

Facilitator: *Center for Environment*

## **H. Enhancing Integrity Compliance in Infrastructure Projects**

The low rates of completion in the region's connectivity agenda are a source of frustration to many observers, especially since alternative infrastructure projects are procured simultaneously with a lack of transparency and little oversight. This working group will address the preconditions for integrity compliance and tools to avoid corruption and enhance transparency in infrastructure projects.

Facilitator: *Cooperation and Development Institute*

## **I. Digitalization in Public Services: Enhancing Transparency, Securing Data Protection**

While the digitalization of public services can curb corruption in this sector, it also raises concerns relating to data protection. Against the backdrop of regional deficiencies in the rule of law, this working group will focus on the protection of citizens' data from abuse while reaping the benefits of digital services.

Facilitator: *SHARE Foundation*

## **J. The Future of the EU in the Western Balkans**

The lack of progress in the accession process, the COVID-19 pandemic, and increasing national / geopolitical competition over historical narratives in the region are undermining the EU's role in the Western Balkans. This group will focus on ways of reinforcing the enlargement process and the reform agenda in particular.

Facilitator: *Think for Europe Network*

**15:30 – 15:45** *Short Break*

## **15:45 – 16:45 Panel Discussion IV**

### **Taking Stock of the Connectivity Agenda: Achievements and Challenges**

Connectivity has been a focus of the Berlin Process since the very beginning. Yet, there is widespread disappointment regarding the lack of tangible results in the region. Recognizing this frustration as well as competing projects with an increased engagement of external actors, such as China's 17+1 initiative, the panelists will discuss the Connectivity Agenda's challenges and potentials.

Speaker: *Ardian Hackaj, Research Director and Coordinator of Tirana Connectivity Forum, Cooperation and Development Institute*

*Michael Vögele, Head of Section Western Balkans Investment Framework, DG NEAR, European Commission*

*Matej Zakonjšek, Director, Transport Community*

Moderation: *Ana Krstinovska, President, Estima*

**From 16:45** *Networking & Informal Brainstorming on the Conference on the Future of Europe*

*Venue: Café in Online Platform*

## Day 2: Wednesday, June 02, 2021

### 09:30 – 10:30 **Panel Discussion V**

#### **Strengthening Economic Cooperation in the Western Balkans**

Especially against the dire backdrop of COVID-19's economic consequences, regional economic cooperation has become more important than ever. This panel will explore the potential of the Common Regional Market as a catalyst towards deeper regional economic development and integration.

- Speaker:           Majlinda Bregu, *Secretary General, Regional Cooperation Council*  
                          State Secretary Claudia Dörr-Voß, *German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy*  
                          Silvana Mojsovska, *Professor, Institute of Economics, University of Ss. Cyrils and Methodius - Skopje*
- Moderation:       Richard Grieveson, *Deputy Director, The Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies (wiiw)*

### 10:30 – 12:00 **Working Groups II: Recommendations**

Mirroring the setup of the previous working groups, experts will build on the discussions of regional cooperation among civil society organizations and develop policy recommendations for each of the topics at hand. These will be presented during the closing panel of this forum.

- A. Addressing Legacies of the Past and Regional Confidence Building**
- B. Acceptance and Rights of Minorities in the Western Balkans**
- C. The Role of Civil Society in Strengthening Democracy**
- D. Countering Disinformation and Strengthening Media Independence**
- E. Green Agenda: Energy Transition**
- F. Green Agenda: Air Pollution**
- G. Green Agenda: Biodiversity and Nature Conservation**
- H. Enhancing Integrity Compliance in Infrastructure Projects**
- I. Digitalization in Public Services: Enhancing Transparency, Securing Data Protection**
- J. The Future of the EU in the Western Balkans**

12:00 – 12:15 *Short Break*

12:15 – 13:15 **Info Session**  
**EU Funding Opportunities for CSOs and Think Tanks in the Region**

13:15 – 14:00 *Lunch & Networking Break*

**14:00 – 15:30 Panel Discussion**

**Expectations for the Berlin Process Summit 2021**

During this final panel, the working groups' policy recommendations as well as their expectations for this year's Berlin Process Summit will be presented by designated rapporteurs and discussed with high-level decisionmakers, ahead of their respective deliberations at the Summit.

Speaker: State Secretary Miguel Berger, *German Federal Foreign Office*

Rapporteurs from Working Groups

Moderation: Hedvig Morvai, *Director of Strategy and Europe, ERSTE Foundation*