

WE WORK TO CREATE A NEW VISION FOR THE BALKAN REGION

**Newsletter #4
2019**



THE BALKAN FORUM PROMOTES REGIONAL DIALOGUE, PARTNERSHIP AND COLLABORATION IN EDUCATION, ENERGY, TOURISM, LABOR MARKET, AND EU/NATO INTEGRATION.

In cooperation with political, business, media, diaspora, academia, youth and civil society actors we are: identifying opportunities for collaborative action, connecting diverse initiatives and stakeholders to maximize impact, fostering experimentation and innovation, amplifying progressive voices.

ENHANCING EXPERIENCE EXCHANGE, RELATIONSHIP BUILDING AND COOPERATION

Building a joint vision and civil society strategy for the Western Balkans (WB). The Balkan Forum, in cooperation with Albanian Center for Good Governance (ACGG) and OTTONomy, organized the first regional [Civil Society Platform for Democracy and Human Rights \(CSP\)](#), entitled "Civil Society Contribution in Berlin Process and EU Integration: A Positive Agenda Focused on Action", which took place in Tirana, Albania, in March 2019. As a result, a [Manifesto](#) representing a common civil society position in the WB Summit in Poznań was shared with key actors involved in the Berlin Process.

Strengthening connections. Joint efforts by The Balkan Forum, Human Rights 360 in Greece, Bulgarian Hub for United Balkans in Bulgaria, Alfa Centar in Montenegro, IDEA SEE in North Macedonia, and Center for Balkan Strategies in Romania, are resulting in enhanced relationship between civil society actors, media, academia, and youth in the Balkan region.

Creating new opportunities. We are building relationship with reputable diaspora individuals from the Balkans, and encouraging collaborative action with the aim of advancing democratic and socio-economic development of the region.

Regional cooperation of media. Our work in promoting regional cooperation of media, and coverage on successful regional economic cooperation models, is extending to include capacity building of young journalists in the Balkans, and co-productions that tackle fake news, hate speech, disinformation, nationalism, and corruption.

CONTRIBUTING TO KNOWLEDGE BASE

The role of WB diaspora. We commissioned research to look into the role of WB diaspora, the findings of which will inform an inter-diaspora roundtable which will take place in 2020.

Resource Bank. Our resource bank is being re-designed with the aim of becoming one of the primary sources that contains information on policies, laws, donors and funding, actors, research and analysis, statistics and projects on education, energy, tourism, labor market/human capital.

COUNTERING THE HARMFUL DISCOURSE IN KOSOVO

In August, we started a series of interviews with individuals in Kosovo and in diaspora, with the aim of shifting the election discourse from nationalist rhetoric and individual politicians/parties, to qualities, values, and credentials; leadership and political programs; diversity and inclusiveness; social and political cohesion and consensus.

CONTRIBUTION IN EVENTS HELD IN AUSTRIA, BULGARIA, KOSOVO, MONTENEGRO, POLAND AND ROMANIA

Multidisciplinary conference "Psycho-social Research and Intervention in Contemporary Society - Youth Participation", in Cluj-Napoca, Romania, May 2019. **Third Energy Community Sustainability Forum**, in Vienna, Austria, June 2019. **Western Balkans Summit**, in Poznań, Poland, July 2019. **REACT 2019**, in Montenegro, September 2019. **Common Kosovo Analysis**, in Pristina, Kosovo, November 2019. **"Western Balkans after Sofia Summit 2018"**, in Sofia, Bulgaria, November 2019.

PROMOTING THE WORK OF OTHER ACTORS

The Balkan Forum promotes successes of civil society, business and other actors in the Balkans, and regional initiatives on topics relevant to our thematic areas, through recording and sharing the information with our networks and through publication of their work in our social media. For example:

Philanthropy for Green Ideas (PGI), a collaborative effort by the Balkan Green Foundation (BGF), and six foundations in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia supported by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund (RBF), held in Tirana, Albania in July 2019.

Craft and Cultural Heritage.

Innovative and unique business ideas started by local producers were presented at the Fair which took place in Pristina, Kosovo, in July 2019.

Climate change. In October 2019, The Balkan Forum recorded a short video to contribute to a panel discussion (part of the Climate Diplomacy Week), with youth leaders on the crucial role they have in mitigating climate change.

Sustainable development.

Energy Community River, Sustainable Food Movement, and 100mentors in Greece, discussed innovative approaches to clean energy, education and sustainable gastronomy, in a series of webinars organized by The Balkan Forum in November 2019.

Volunteering. International Volunteer Day marked in Kosovo in December 2019, brought together volunteers, and representatives of national and international organizations and institutions who shared their insights on the role of volunteers and importance of volunteering for the society and in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

CHECK LINKS HOW WE PROMOTE THE WORK OF OTHE ACTORS



EXPLORING OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT AND CO-OPERATION

Following a regional visit in August, we published [A glimpse of the resource-rich WB region](#) which promotes local produce, environment-friendly projects, successful entrepreneurs, employment and tourism opportunities in less known areas of Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, and North Macedonia.



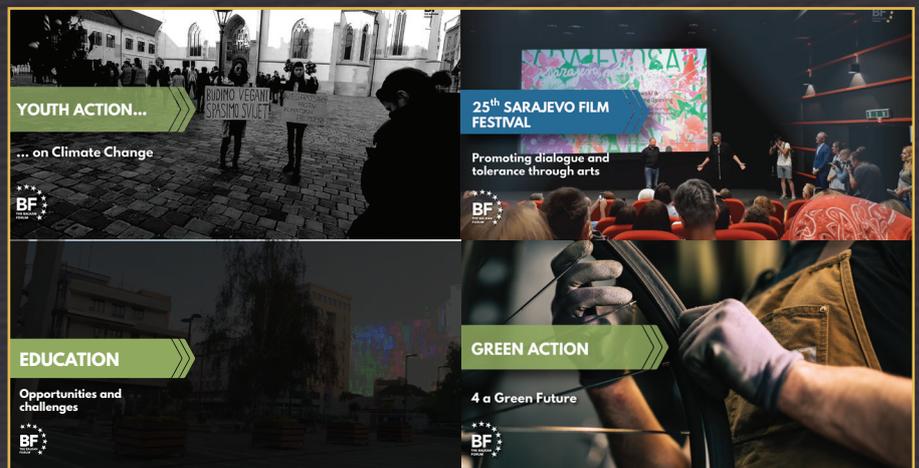
FACILITATING DIALOGUE ON EU INTEGRATION

In June, we facilitated webinars with academia, civil society actors, and journalists from Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia, to discuss about the "EU Parliamentary elections and implications for the WB region."



STRENGTHENING THE ROLE OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN WB.

We are providing young people from the Western Balkans six with an opportunity to contribute to public discourse on education, energy, tourism, labor market/human capital, and on issues affecting youth, cross-border cooperation and prosperity in the region. In 2020, we will provide seed funding for the initiatives which aim to enhance regional dialogue and cooperation of youth.



SUPPORTING DISABLED PERSON'S ORGANIZATIONS (DPO)

The Balkan Forum has been invited by HandiKOS to assist them with the design and facilitation of a workshop focusing on "Developing minimum standards for democratic governance of DPO's". The workshop held on 6-7 November 2019 has been attended by over 20 participants representing eight DPOs in Kosovo.





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