



Regional  
Youth Compact  
for Europe



Funded by  
the European Union

# Regional Youth Compact for Europe

# PROJECT REPORT



B | T | D The Balkan Trust  
for Democracy  
A PROJECT OF THE GERMAN MARSHALL FUND







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CRTA:





# Regional Youth Compact for Europe: Project Report

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SPEAK ESL Training Center for Professional Development

**Dizajn i priprema**

Pozitiv MVP

**Štampa**

Grafolik, Beograd

**Tiraž**

1000 primeraka

Beograd, 2021.

This publication has been produced with the financial support of the European Union. Its contents are in sole responsibility of the Center for Democracy Foundation, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union. Opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent those of the Balkan Trust for Democracy, the German Marshall Fund of the U.S., USAID or the U.S. Government.

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# Introduction



The project Regional Youth Compact for Europe has started in spring 2018, when I met Stanka Parać, director of Local Democracy Agency Subotica who introduced me with the work of LDAs (Local Democracy Agencies) from the Western Balkans. During this meeting in Subotica, we agreed that a strong partnership between the CSOs with outstanding expertise in EU integration and the CSOs (Civil Society Organizations) with a long - standing experience in working with local communities could become a consolidating component for the creation of a new regional thematic CSO network. That is how the Center for Democracy Foundation was pleased to accept this invitation to be the lead partner and how CRTA from Serbia, Youth Act from Albania and SODEM from Turkey became partners. This is exactly how this eventful and above all, adventurous journey started in spring 2018!

The unique quality of this journey was evidenced at the kick-off meeting organized by the European Commission in Brussels in June 2018, attended by all the lead partners of the projects which the EU supported within the program Consolidation of Regional Networks. Whenever I was introducing myself or was presenting our project to EC staff members, they were saying, with astonishment, "Oh, that is you with 14 partners on the project!" Although numerous consortium also seemed to me a bit complicated to manage, their reaction scared me. "Is it really going to be so difficult?", I kept on asking myself.

However, it turned out it was not that much difficult. We in the Foundation learnt quickly that all our partners were experienced in working with different donors as partners. And we discovered to which extent they are committed to the cause of local democracy and to the mission of both their own organisations and that of ALDA, the network to which all LDAs belong and which transferred a lot of organizational culture to LDAs in the region. Of course, this organisational culture is practiced with more or less zeal by different organisations, but it certainly shapes LDAs work. So, we got to know each other and our joint work started.

We had identified two major target groups - CSOs, including our network members, and youth organisations. Our objective was to empower them, connect them and encourage them for greater role in monitoring reforms, in structured dialogue with governments, both on local and national level. We focused on two areas that are crucial for the citizens - the first one includes issues belonging to the chapter 23 (part of the EU accession negotiations on judiciary, fundamental rights) - democracy, rule of law and fundamental rights, and the second one which relates to social dimension of the EU integration process - employment, social policy and fight against poverty.

Our key activities were undertaken in LDAs communities, as well as on the regional level, such as Politeia School or Youth Fund "We have a Say". We advocated for acceleration of reforms, for inclusive dialogue among stakeholders, for active citizenry, and for regional cooperation. We promoted European values and presented EU assistance to the region.

The outbreak of the Covid19 pandemic happened in the second year of the project, when the most of our activities at local level were planned and when the project team had to react promptly in a well - coordinated manner. This meant that we started learning new skills and adjusting to the new reality of digital platforms and online events. However, along this turbulent times and waves of pandemic, we lost our dearest colleague and friend - Sasa Marinkov, Delegate of LDA Knjazevac.

In many ways, our three-year long journey became a life learning experience for all. His contribution to this project, his politeness and a coaching role he had in our personal lives will always be remembered.

Key achievements of this three-year project that all the partners would certainly agree on, are the following ones:

- CSOs in the Western Balkans were empowered to increase their participation in the reform process which will bring us closer to the European Union, to participate in a public dialogue and influence politics
- We brought the process of EU integration closer to citizens: Thousands of citizens on local level, in various parts of the region, were involved in debates, workshops, forums, conferences – benefiting from a variety of tools and channels for dialogue with policy makers, businesses, civil society organizations or they were approached by our products – newsletters, media appearances, social networks...
- Hundreds of young people from all over Western Balkans participated in the activities – learning a lot, debating even more, exchanging knowledge and practice, starting initiatives, creating projects...
- Local youth organizations from the Western Balkans received grants for their respective projects which brought valuable results to their local communities
- Politeia School became a regional program and a digital platform for development and education
- Balkan Network for Local Democracy was officially registered as a network and it strengthened its capacities and expanded its experience and outreach
- ALDA and its members have reiterated their presence in the Western Balkans.

These three years of our working together were certainly an empowering experience for all of us. The lessons learned and the experience collected will be the basis for our future endeavors. And, certainly, we will not mind big consortiums with such excellent members.

**Nataša Vucković**  
Executive Director of the Centre  
for Democracy Foundation



Center for Democracy Foundation is Serbian based a not-for profit, non-governmental and non-partisan organization which, along 27 years of operation, has had a remarkable impact in advancing resources for democratic governance and EU oriented reforms in Serbia.

Our MISSION is to encourage and mobilize citizens for building a democratic society based on solidarity and sustainable development, to advance economic, social and cultural rights and advocate for accountable and efficient institutions through research, education and public dialogue.

- CDF advocates for integration of Serbia into the EU, through strengthening of human resources and institutional capacities for democracy, rule of law and human rights.
- CDF is one of the leading organizations in Serbia in the socio-economic field working with a wide network of partners and associates, from trade unions to employers, and from academia to civil society.
- We bring together policy makers, experts, businessmen, journalists and social activists. Together we engage in debating key issues and search for common approaches in finding solutions.

CDF is a Chair of the Working group for monitoring Chapters 2 and 19 (Free Movement of Workers and Employment and Social Policy) within the National Convention on the EU (NCEU), the largest CSOs umbrella organization in Serbia.

CDF is member of ALDA and an observer-member of FEPS.

# Scope and Timeline

## Our journey in time 2018-2021 through key events



		February	<b>Annual conference, Tirana</b> <b>Regional Thematic Network Forum, Tirana</b>	
		March	<b>Workshop for Regional Youth Working Group, Mostar</b>	
		April	<b>Politeia goes Regional, Danilovgrad</b>	
		September	<b>Training for network members, Knjaževac</b>	
	June	<b>Project Team Kick Off Meeting, Belgrade</b>	November	<b>Workshop for Regional Youth Working Group, Prishtina</b>
	October	<b>Training for the members of the Network "Sharing Experience - Expanding the Network's Thematic Working Programme"</b>		<b>Regional Forum: Youth Regional Compact for Europe Network, Prishtina</b>
	November	<b>Study visit to the National Convention on the EU, Belgrade</b>	December	<b>Internship program for Students started</b>
				<b>Comparative study on youth published</b>





# Regional Youth Compact for Europe



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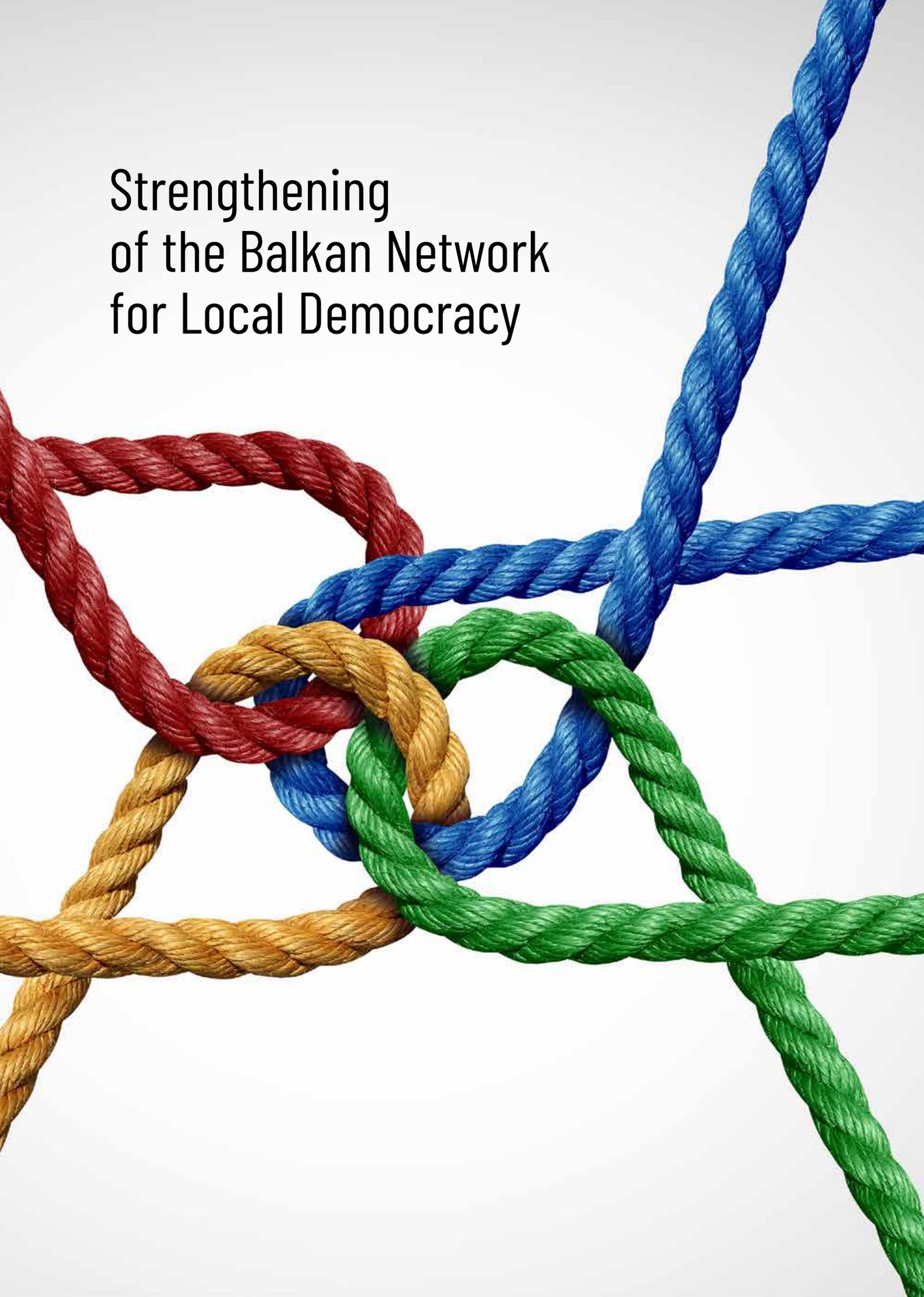
January	<b>Youth Fund: Call for Youth Organizations' projects is open</b>
June	<b>Constitutive meeting of the BNLD, Skopje</b>
July	<b>Youth Fund small grant implementation started</b>

January	<b>Politeia Institute platform is created</b>
March	<b>Second annual conference, Novi Sad</b>
May	<b>Politeia goes Digital, Belgrade</b>
	<b>Youth Fund grantees present their achievements, Belgrade</b>
June	<b>Workshop for Regional Youth Working Group, Subotica</b>
	<b>Desk research published</b>
July	<b>Final Conference: EU and the Western Balkans: Toward the Renewed Trust, Belgrade</b>
	<b>Regional Thematic Network Forum</b>

2020

2021

# Strengthening of the Balkan Network for Local Democracy





**Regional Youth Compact for Europe**



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**The “Regional Youth Compact for Europe” project has been very significant for the Balkan Network for Local Democracy.**

**Supported under the framework of the Civil Society Facility and Media Programme 2016 – 2017 Consolidating Regional Thematic Networks of Civil Society Organizations by the European Commission, the project lasted for 39 months, starting from April 2018.**

The project represents consolidate regional exchange platforms in order to foster participative culture of young people on local level, focusing its activities in the local communities hosting the LDAs. It was therefore created in accordance with BNLD development strategy and commitment to address existing challenges and regional development.

The project provided direct support to the Network, through capacity building activities, exchange platforms, research, and facilitating networks and connections between Civil Society Organizations and Local Authorities. Through the implementation of the project activities, BNLD has worked with local stakeholders to build regional engagement and active citizen participation. BNLD’s work in the region incorporated activities from capacity building of local action planning to development of local engagement strategies. In addition, the project brought significant change in the internal capacity and structure of the Network by providing capacity building for its members in forms of training, coaching and mentorship.

Throughout the “Regional Youth Compact for Europe” project, BNLD reinforced its commitment to support regional cooperation and EU integration processes in the Region as well as to promote local democracy and citizen participation as a precondition for local sustainable development.

The Regional Youth Compact for Europe project key aim was to strengthen the Balkan Network for Local Democracy.



# About BNLD



Balkan Network for Local Democracy (BNLD) is a regional network promoting active citizen participation, democratic governance principles, local development, and co-operation between civil society organizations and local public authorities in the Western Balkan Region.

BNLD is founded by the European Association for local democracy (ALDA) and the 7 Local Democracy Agencies (LDA) from Western Balkans aiming to support regional cooperation. BNLD action is based on the principle of partnership and multilateral decentralized cooperation.

BNLD has been initially functioned for several years as an informal network of Local Democracy Agencies, and since September 2019 it is established as an independent legal entity founded in North Macedonia.

**The vision** of BNLD is to contribute to good neighborhood relations, regional stability and prosperity based on good local governance, while supporting a culture of dialogue and respect of diversity in Western Balkans.

**The mission** of BNLD is to empower civil society and local authorities to jointly engage in democratic reform processes and local democracy principles, and to support regional cooperation and policy dialogue towards EU integration of the Western Balkans region.

## BNLD History

The origins of the Balkan Network for Local Democracy (BNLD) should be traced to the initiative of the Council of Europe for the creation of Local Democracy Agencies (LDA) as independent civil society organizations operating at local level across the Balkans and ALDA as their umbrella organization with the mission to enhance their regional cooperation.

Since their founding, LDAs established in the Western Balkan countries share an uninterrupted history of promoting European values of local democracy, good governance, and respect for human and minority rights in local multi-ethnic communities. Valuable expertise in these topics combined with civil society development practices have been accumulated over the past decades through collaborative designing and implementation of specific actions at the local, national, cross-border, and regional levels. LDAs have demonstrated both a dedication to working closely with the host city authorities and with diverse local stakeholders on one side, and a strong allegiance to building inter-municipal, cross-border and regional co-operation network on the other side.

After extensive work for more than two decades, back in 2010, both the LDAs and ALDA recognized the need for closer and more structured joint thematic regional cooperation on common issues identified within the countries of the Western Balkans. Creation of the Balkan Network for Local Democracy is the expression of maturity of the LDAs and ALDA who have demonstrated a substantial local expertise, and a firm commitment to elevating their operational and organizational capacity at a new level of functioning.

By the end of 2014, the European Union recognized our efforts and supported the 4 year-long project "Balkan Regional Platform for Youth Participation and Dialogue". It is through this project that the Balkan Network for Local Democracy (BNLD) has been created.

From 2015 and on, the LDAs and ALDA have been fully focusing on regional initiatives while at the same time building up the idea to officially establish a network that would promote local democracy and regional cooperation in Western Balkans. This extensive collaboration resulted with official registration of the Balkan Network for Local Democracy BNLD in Skopje, North Macedonia in 2019.

# BNLD Members



- European Association for Local Democracy – ALDA
- LDA Central and Southern Serbia (Serbia)
- LDA Subotica (Serbia)
- LDA Peja (Kosovo\*)
- LDA Mostar (Bosnia and Herzegovina)
- LDA Zavidovici (Bosnia and Herzegovina)
- LDA Prijedor (Bosnia and Herzegovina)
- LDA Niksic (Montenegro)
- ALDA Skopje (North Macedonia)

\*Kosovo under UNSCR 1244/99

## BNLD Values

- Promotion of the respect for universal human rights and equality principles;
- Development of inclusive society, participative democracy and social cohesion;
- Development of the culture of dialogue and intercultural understanding;
- Promotion of subsidiarity principles and good governance at local level;
- Respect of sustainable development and environment protection;
- Development and implementation of activities respecting the principle of partnership.

## BNLD Objectives

- Strengthen the role of CSOs and local authorities in adherence to principles of good governance at local level, and in anchoring the democratic reforms across society;
- Promote civil dialogue, active citizenship and participation of all sections of society and youth, in particular, in public policy and decision making at local level;
- Support the process of EU integration in Western Balkan region with enhanced regional cooperation of different stakeholders;

## BNLD Activities

- Support of policy making on local and regional level through research, monitoring and advocacy activities;
- Capacity building of stakeholders through different types of professional education, training activities and job shadowing;
- Organization of seminars, round tables, conferences, panels and other forms of discussions to support opinion sharing in policy making;
- Dissemination and information sharing through media content production and use of information and communication technologies.

# Project Team

## Where we worked



Our project team consisted of experienced activists, researchers, communication experts, managers, trainers and copywriters who all contributed that our planned activities came through. It was a dynamic team whose members praised and criticized each other, with clear objectives and high expectations. One activity was always a lead to another one, while lessons learnt were always incorporated in the challenges ahead.

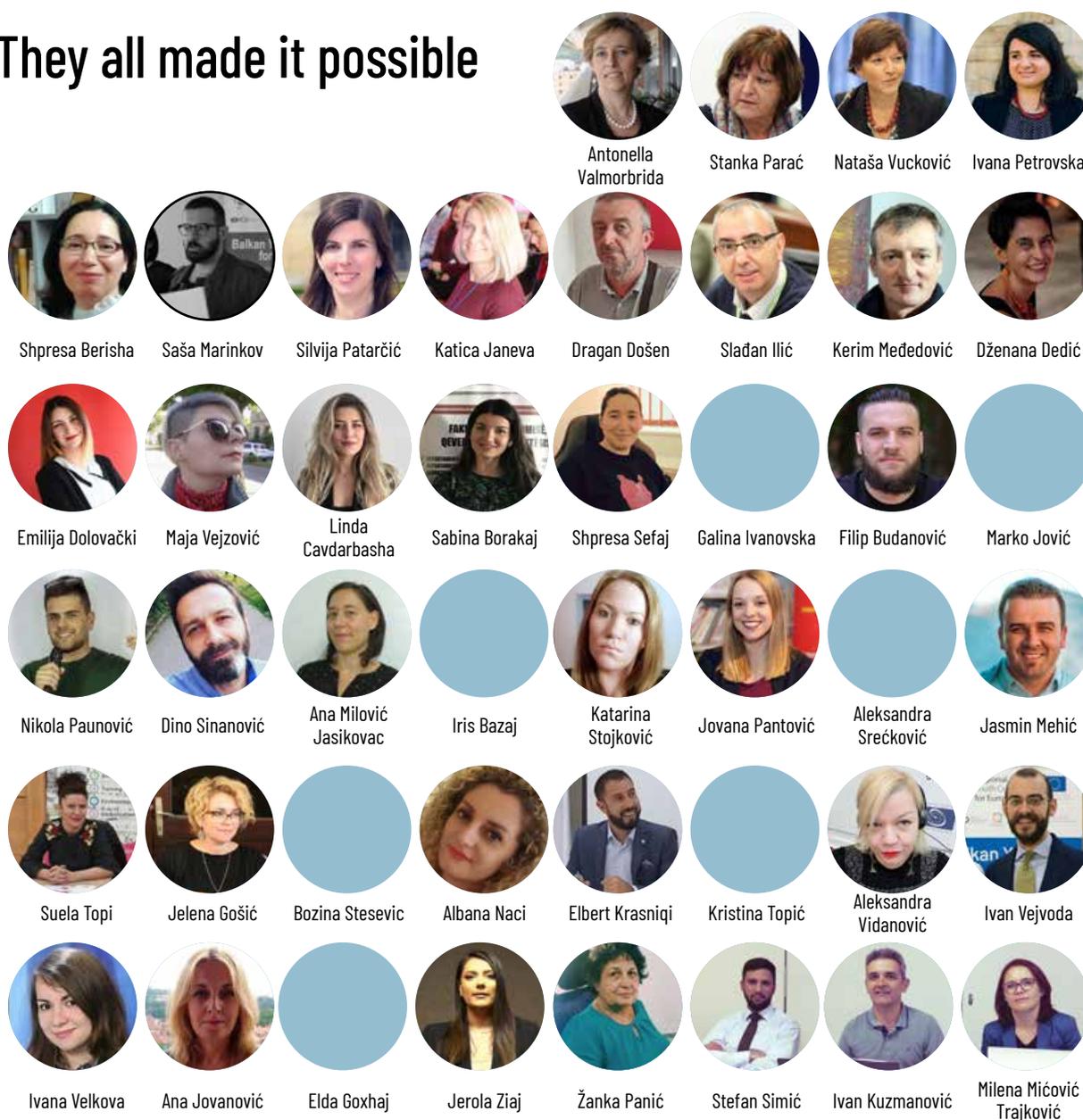


Regional Youth Compact for Europe



## TEAM MEMBERS 2018-2021

They all made it possible



On our meetings in Novi Sad, Belgrade, Tirana, Prishtina, and Knjazevac and our online meetings on Skype and Zoom, we developed, monitored and evaluated our internal management procedures, determined timeline of the activities, methodology and success indicators.

We exchanged experience and encouraged each other when needed.



# Strengthening CSOs Capacities

## OUR OBJECTIVE WAS

- To transfer the debates about reforms from the national to the local level and make them closer to citizens - with the support of the network of local democracy associations.
- To increase the knowledge of local CSOs for public policies analysis, for leading the structured dialogue and influence reform processes.
- To exchange good practices and lessons learned from the process of association and stabilization and accession negotiations so far.

# Trainings “Sharing Experience - Expanding the Network’s Thematic Working Programme”

## The First Training for the members of the Network

Novi Sad, October 20-21, 2018 • Organized by LDA Subotica

This training aimed to prepare the participants to advocate for establishment of dialogue within their local community and on the national level and to participate in drafting and monitoring of public policy documents, particularly those relevant for the chapters – 19, 23 and 24.

### Training sessions

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Western Balkans and the EU – a credible perspective of the reforms towards EU integration

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Negotiation chapter 23 - Judiciary and fundamental rights

---

Negotiation chapter 24 - Justice, freedom, and security

---

Negotiation chapter 19 - Social policy and employment

---

Public administration reform

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### Trainers

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Nataša Vučković, Center for Democracy Foundation

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Jovana Spremo, YUCOM

---

Bojan Elek, Belgrade Center for Security Policy

---

Sarita Bradaš, Center for Democracy Foundation

---

Miloš Đinđić, European Policy Centre

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## The Second Training for the members of the Network

Knjazevac, September 10-12, 2019

Organized by LDA CSS from Knjazevac, as a three-day event, this training aimed to up-grade capacity of the members of the Balkan Network for Local Democracy so as to foster participation on national level in structured dialogue with the government bodies and other stakeholders relevant for the implementation of reforms in the area of rule of law, fundamental rights, employment and public administration reform, as well as to initiate such dialogue on local level.

The focus of the training was on practical tools for monitoring, evaluation and evidence-based advocacy related to public policies at the local level, particularly those linked to Chapters 19 (Social Policy and Employment), 23 (Judiciary and fundamental rights) and 24 (Justice, freedom, and security).

### Training sessions

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The Methodology for monitoring and evaluation public policies/legal framework at local level

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Evidence-based advocacy on local level

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Local budgeting and youth policy

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### Trainers

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Dina Rakin, European Movement in Serbia

---

Nives Miošić Lisnjak, public policy consultant

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Lidija Kuzmanov, consultant for economic development

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Snežana Pavković, Timočki klub

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Bojana Jevtović, Ana and Vlade Divac Foundation

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Boban Stojanović, KOMS

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# Study visit to the National Convention on the EU

Belgrade, November 29-30, 2018

As a follow-up to the training, the study visit, organized by the CDF, provided direct insight in the functioning of a well-developed and structured dialogue between the civil society organizations and the Government of the Republic of Serbia, concerning the accession negotiations with the European Union. The opportunity was taken to make an official presentation of the RYCE Project to media.

**The introductory notes** were given by **Nataša Vučković**, Secretary General of the Center for Democracy Foundation and **Nicolas Bize**, Head of Operations Section 1, at the EU Delegation in Serbia.

**Additional aim:** Creating synergy with other organizations targeting youth in the region, through projects funded within the same EU program for consolidation of regional networks.

## Panel

### Consolidation of Networks in the Western Balkans from the prospect of Youth Related Programs in the Western Balkans

## Panelists

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**Marija Bulat**, Local Branch Officer Belgrade, Regional Youth Cooperation Office

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**Miljana Pejić**, National Youth Council of Serbia

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**Milorad Bjeletić**, Executive Director, Belgrade Open School

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**Ana Koeshall**, Executive Director, Divac Foundation

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**Jelena Anđelić**, Initiative for Development & Cooperation

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## The main part of the study visit was reflected in three presentations:

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### National Convention on the EU – Objectives, Procedures and Achievements

**speaker >** **Nataša Dragojlović**, Coordinator of the National Convention on the EU

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### The role of the Serbian National Parliament in the process of European Integration,

**speaker >** **Gordana Čomić**, Deputy Speaker of the Serbian Parliament and Member of the European Integration Committee

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### EU Accession Negotiations in Serbia – challenges, perspectives and lessons learned

**speaker >** **Tanja Mišćević**, Head of the Negotiating Team for the Accession of Serbia to the EU

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On the second day of the study visit the participants visited the European Movement in Serbia (EMinS) during which the Suzana Grubješić, former Minister of European Integration of Serbia and Secretary General of the EMinS, and Dina Rakin, Deputy Secretary General of EMinS presented the role of civil society in EU integration.

# Regional Thematic Network Forums

The Thematic Forums were organized for planning, monitoring and evaluating local and regional activities.

Forums were attended by 32 members:

- members of the Project Management Team (14)
- members of the Regional Youth Working Group (8)
- up to 10 CSOs and youth organizations from the WB countries



# 1<sup>st</sup> Regional Thematic Network Forum

Tirana, February 2019

The aim of the Forum was to launch the collaborative activities engaging local and regional thematic CSO networks and youth groups to contribute effectively to the awareness raising, reporting and monitoring of the progress of the Western Balkan countries towards the EU integration. The organizers of the Forum were ALDA and Youth Act Center Albania. The Forum gathered 72 representatives of the civil sector and youth from the Western Balkans and Turkey.

## Topics:

- priority areas of the accession negotiation process with the EU: the rule of law, fundamental rights, social policy and employment, public administration reform;
- support to a more enabling environment for civil society and youth participation in structured policy dialogue, strengthening the capacity for reporting, monitoring and advocacy actions to promote effective implementation of the EU integration-related reforms.



## Panel I

### European and regional policies for youth cooperation

#### Opening remarks

Arbjan Mazniku, Deputy Mayor of Tirana

Sokol Dedja, Deputy Minister of European and International Affairs from Albania

Antonella Valmorbida, Secretary General of ALDA

#### Guest speakers

Đuro Blanuša, Secretary General of the RYCO

Gjergj Murra, Executive director of the Western Balkan Fund

## Panel II

### Focused on how to make European integration agenda more youth friendly

#### Speakers

Nataša Dragojlović, Coordinator of National Convention on the EU in Serbia

Marko Mrdak, Deputy Chief Negotiator with the EU, Montenegro

Dalina Jashari, Programme Manager from Institute for Democracy and Mediation, Albania

Zlata Đorđević, Programme Coordinator from Transparency Serbia

Zoran Ilieski, SEGA – Coalition of youth organisations from North Macedonia

Habit Hajredini, Director of the Office for Good Governance, Human rights, Kosovo\*

Katarina Vučković, Institute for Youth Development, KULT, Bosnia and Herzegovina

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Regional Thematic Network Forum

### Reconstructing the Way Forward to EU Integration

March, 2021 • Organized by LDA Subotica

Planned for end March 2020, the second Forum was postponed due to the pandemics of the COVID-19. It was organized as a hybrid event in 2021.

**It focused on thematic issues:** developing effective public consultation mechanisms, participatory approaches in reforming the policy making in areas relevant for the accession negotiation – the rule of law, good governance, fundamental rights, employment and social cohesion. It was attended by NGO experts and practitioners, think-tank groups, local governments and national institutions, business sector and media from all across the region.



#### **Session 1: Role of CSOs and CSO thematic networks- structuring the dialogue with public authorities for policy reforms**

#### **Session 2: Improving the democratic culture of participation by reforming the sector policy making** (Moderated by Stanka Parać, LDA Subotica)

##### **Key speakers**

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**Nataša Dragojlović**, Coordinator of the National Convention for the EU, Serbia

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**Jovana Knežević**, Project Manager WeBER 2, European Policy Centre, Serbia

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**Anja Bosilkova Antovska**, Policy and Advocacy Coordinator, Balkan Civil Society Development Network, Skopje, North Macedonia

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**Snježana Ivandić**, Programme manager, Network for Peace Building, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

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**Ljiljana Uzelac**, Head of Sector for Strategic planning, Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-government, Serbia

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**Biljana Cvetanovska Gugoska**, Head of Democratic Governance Unit UNDP, North Macedonia

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**Marija Hajduković**, Head of Unit for good governance and civil society, Ministry of public administration, Montenegro

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**Danijel Dašić**, Programme manager, National Coalition for decentralisation, Serbia

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# 3<sup>rd</sup> Regional Thematic Network Forum

## Youth Activism in the Western Balkans

Belgrade, July 2021 • Organized by Center for Democracy Foundation

The third forum was the last event organized within the project with aim to deepen the debate on possibilities of the young generation to work together. Therefore, the organizer invited the participants of all previous youth-oriented activities - network members, participants of previous Forums, participants of the Politeia School, CSOs beneficiaries of the Youth Fund and youth organizations to share their ideas and discuss possible follow-up of the RYCE project.

At the Forum the authors of the study presented the results and recommendations of the “Comparative Study - Youth transformative potential in the EU Integration processes and post-covid-19 developments in the Western Balkans”.



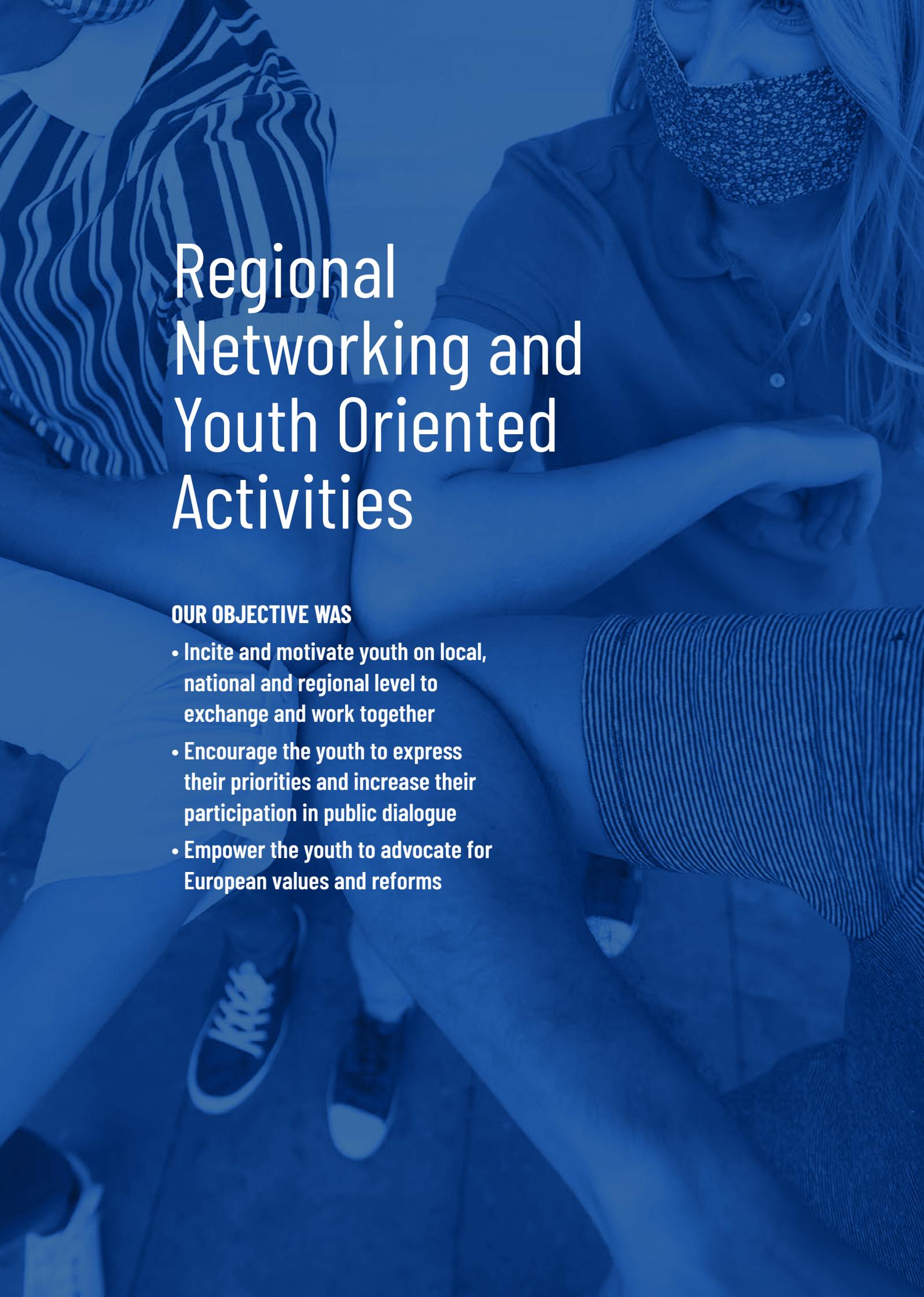
### Speakers

Dragan Srećković, researcher

Stefan Simić, Center for Democracy Foundation

Nikola Paunović, CRTA





# Regional Networking and Youth Oriented Activities

## **OUR OBJECTIVE WAS**

- **Incite and motivate youth on local, national and regional level to exchange and work together**
- **Encourage the youth to express their priorities and increase their participation in public dialogue**
- **Empower the youth to advocate for European values and reforms**

# Workshops for Regional Youth Working Group

## 1<sup>st</sup> Workshop for Regional Youth Working Group

### Rule of law and fundamental rights – why is it important for the youth and how youth can contribute to monitor reforms in these fields

Mostar, March, 2019 • Organized by LDA Mostar

**28 young participants** from Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Albania, Kosovo\* and North Macedonia (20 youngsters)

**Aim** > to empower young people to join existing and create their own thematic networks focusing on key issues of the rule of law and fundamental rights, employment and social cohesion, and public administration reforms.

#### Issues debated

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Fundamental rights

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Rule of law

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Key actors and stakeholders in these areas,

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The EU in the eyes of youth from the EU and WB countries

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Good governance and youth participation

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Sets of recommendations in the area of rule of law and fundamental rights

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#### Outcome

This activity gave the participants a better understanding of the situation in other Western Balkan countries and strengthened their capacity to influence and monitor reforms in their communities.



## 2<sup>nd</sup> Workshop for Regional Youth Working Group

Prishtina, November, 2019 • Organized in by LDA Kosovo

The second workshop was intended to deepen youth common understanding of the EU accession negotiation process with particular focus on the Chapter 19 (part of the EU accession negotiations on social policy and employment) - Social Policy and Employment. Therefore main topics discussed were: Labour market reforms; Decent work standards and social cohesion; Employment opportunities and regional mobility.



**Session 1:** Education system and labour market reforms in WB countries

**Session 2:** Decent work standards

**Session 3:** Social cohesion

**Session 4:** Youth mobility and employment opportunities

### Speakers and trainers

**Levent Koro**, World Bank, Prishtina

**Jovan Protić**, International Labour Organization, Belgrade Office

**Ivan Sekulović**, Center for Democracy Foundation, Belgrade

**Elza Ramadani**, GIZ, Prishtina Office



## 3<sup>rd</sup> Workshop for Regional Youth Working Group

Subotica, June 2021 • Organized as a two-day webinar by LDA Subotica

The aim of the workshop was to recap substantiate knowledge and skills of the participants, but also expose them to a collaborative visioning exercise on how they can get engaged in the BNLD development perspective.



### Topics

Decentralization, local democracy and local self-government system in the Western Balkans – does it work for youth?

Getting prepared for participation, step 1: Monitoring Public Administration Reform process

Project cycle management skills – tricks of the trade

Communication and outreach development skills

Regional co-operation in the Western Balkans – new dynamics and perspectives

Western Balkan EU integration (long run) perspective

Creating sustainable Regional CSOs co-operation, exchange and networks

Balkan Network for Local Democracy – navigating the organizational change

### Speakers & Presenters

**Gordana Nestorovska, Memet Memeti,**  
Senior experts, Skopje, North Macedonia

**Jovana Knezević,**  
European Policy Center, Belgrade, Serbia

**Jadranka Stantić,**  
Senior trainer, Subotica, Serbia

**Ivana Velkova,**  
Trainer, ALDA SK, Skopje, North Macedonia

**Aleksandar Popov,**  
Igman Initiative, Novi Sad, Serbia

**Vladimir Medjak,**  
Senior expert NKEU, Belgrade, Serbia

**Mirela Rajković,**  
SEEYN, Podgorica, Montenegro

**Aleksandar Kolekeski,**  
Senior expert, Skopje, North Macedonia

# Regional Forum Youth Regional Compact for Europe Network

## We Will Do It Together!

Prishtina, November 2019 • Organized by LDA Kosovo

The Regional Youth Forum was designed as a youth initiative for networking and regional cooperation and was supposed to grow up on the basis of other youth-oriented activities –workshops, trainings, regional Politeia School.

The networking focused on demanding acceleration of reforms in the WB countries and reinvigoration of the EU integration process. Also, it was previewed as a platform for demanding that governments implement youth policies that would respond to youth priorities in the region – access to quality education, good jobs, open perspectives for career advancement, more mobility, more governments.

Fifty seven participants from youth organizations in the Western Balkans gathered at the Forum with the aim to establish a youth network of young students and activists for monitoring the EU related reforms within the EU integration process.

### Outcome

During the Regional Forum, the young participants together with the project partners developed the Youth Platform for Regional Cooperation.

Youths from Western Balkans and Turkey listed their shared problems as high youth unemployment rates, lack of youth participation in the process of policy creation, brain drain, gender equality, their worries for the environment and rising Euroscepticism among their peers. The participants highlighted the need for regional approach in overcoming the listed problems.



# Youth Platform for Regional Cooperation



We the representatives of the youth of the Western Balkans and Turkey, under the auspices of the Regional Youth Compact for Europe, have gathered to form the Youth Regional Compact for Europe Network.

In light of the shared problems we face in the high youth unemployment rates resulting from the lack of job opportunities and the difficult transition from education to the labour market. The fact that, even when youth are employed, jobs are often characterized by a high degree of precariousness and mired in insecurity. Employers often see their workforce as a resource to be exploited. There is a growing gap between the haves and have-nots making social cohesion nearly impossible to achieve. Laws do not take into account the greater good and legal processes underline a severe absence of the rule of law. Corruption has become endemic and is crippling the progress of our countries. This is compounded by the lack of youth participation in the processes of policy creation, especially on the local level where inclusion of all stakeholders is required most, and the disregard of decision makers in seriously working to overcome these challenges as well as a scarcity of inter-generational solidarity and social solidarity in general.

Consequently, the percentage of youths that are not in education, employment, or training is two times as high as in EU-28 countries, seeing no perspective in their countries of origin youth seek opportunities outside their borders. Brain drain has a debilitating effect on all aspects of society. To address it properly we must first have a dialogue between stakeholders, with a particular emphasis on youth. The core reasons of brain drain need to be identified and dealt with. Only with an inclusive dialogue on this issue can we hope to start to find an adequate solution.

Gender equality is also lacking in our countries. Gender stereotypes are widespread, as is gender discrimination in the labour market. Women still face large hurdles in breaking into politics and top management. The amount of gender-based violence is particularly worrying. There needs to be a shift in society, both from the bottom-up and from the top-down. Discrimination of any kind cannot be tolerated! In this regard we especially believe that judiciary has an important role.

Our environment and the future of our planet are at stake. Climate change is a fact that we feel more year after year, with record temperatures and an increased number of natural disasters. The energy we consume is dirty and the resources unsustainable. The air we breathe and the rivers from which we get our water are polluted. Our generation takes these problems very seriously and we call on decision-makers to do so as well. Without an intergenerational and societal approach and strong political will we cannot overcome these challenges.

We see a worrying rise in Euroscepticism among our peers, but also the advantages that EU integration can bring both as a leverage for crucial reforms in our countries aimed at curbing widespread corruption and establishing the rule of law and as driving factor in the economic and social revitalization of the region. These advantages must be better communicated to youth.

We note the need for a regional approach in overcoming the listed problems and the urgency of prevailing against intolerance propagated through short-term minded and populist political rhetoric and our sincere conviction of the necessity maintaining peace in the region and fostering intercultural cross-border exchange in order to build awareness of the fact that far more things bind us together than separate us.

Youth is crucial to the prosperity and future of the Western Balkans and Turkey we should not be ignored but instead must be embraced. Without youth there is no hope, with youth our societies can prosper and thrive!

We call on governments, academia, employers, trade unions, civil society organizations, the European Union and other international actors to lend their support in overcoming these challenges.

We commit to actively contribute to overcoming our shared challenges, both as individuals and by working within youth organizations, to propose and advocate for inclusion and reform, to hold governments accountable to youth for amending the present situation and providing a clear vision on how to achieve a future of peace and existential security.

Prishtina, November 2019

# Western Balkans Politeia School for Youth Participation

## Politeia 1<sup>st</sup> course

Danilovgrad, April 2019 • Organized by Center for Democracy Foundation and LDA Montenegro

**This activity is based on the CDF Politeia School for Democracy and Civil Society which was organized in Serbia since 1998 and had an alumni network of nearly 2000 students. With RYCE, Politeia School became a regional school.**

The participants were recruited through a public open call, published on websites and social networks of co-applicants and other CSOs in their respective countries.

**100 applications were received!**

**Attended by 24 participants from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo\*, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia.**



### Working program

**Module I:** Introduction; Team Building Workshop

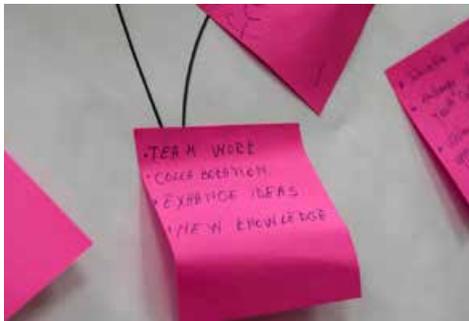
**Module II:** EU integration process: SAA and Accession Negotiations; Europe and Western Balkans - integration and enlargement; Reforms as a homework for WB countries - key challenges; EU Strategy for the Western Balkans - is there a place for youth;

**Module III:** Rule of law and fundamental rights - strategic perspective and reforms implementation

**Module IV:** Employment and social cohesion: social dimension of the EU integration. EU programs for youth 2014-2020; Informal and structured dialogue between youth and decision makers

**Module V:** Public policy design and monitoring methodology; Group projects from local and regional perspective; Drafting set of recommendations;

**Module VI:** Evaluation



## Speakers, presenters & trainers

**Stanka Parać**, Regional Coordinator of the Balkan Network for Local Democracy

**Kerim Međedović** LDA Nikšić

**Marko Mrdak**, Deputy Chief Negotiator of Montenegro with the EU

**Ilija Grgurović**, Deputy Mayor of Danilovgrad

**Miloš Radonjić**, Office of European Integration, Montenegro

**Sanja Mešanović**, Secretariat for Public Policies, Serbia

**Prof. Gordana Đurović**, Faculty of Economics, University of Montenegro

**Eralda Cani**, Faculty of Law, University of Tirana

**Sarita Bradaš**, CDF, Serbia

**Natasa Vučković**, CDF, Serbia

**Nives Miošić Lisjak**, Social Development Consultant, Croatia

**Ivan Sekulović**, CDF, Serbia

**Dina Rakin**, European Movement in Serbia

**Pavle Dimitrijević**, CRTA, Serbia

**Bojana Ružić**, Arbeiter Samariten Bund

## From students' evaluation sheets

“

We want to learn by doing and share our experience with young people from the region. Dialogue is important throughout the region, including the dialogue among the young. So, I expect to build a friendship network and learn how to be more active in monitoring what our governments are doing.

”

“

I found it really interesting. Indeed, it was my goal to have brainstorming and exchange of ideas. I refreshed what I already knew and acquired new ones that will be significant in my fields, both political sciences and administrative law. Thanks for your contribution and encouragement to express our opinions and enlighten our view regarding the EU integration process.

”

## Politeia 2<sup>nd</sup> course

May, 2021 • Organized by Center for Democracy Foundation

*“COVID - 19 pandemics required that the Politeia course be adjusted and reformatted to the travel and public meetings limitations. It was a particular challenge which led us towards searching new opportunities in the digital world. So the slogan Politeia Goes Regional was again reformulated as **Politeia Goes Digital!**”*

**Nataša Vučković, CDF**

The first phase of the reformatted Politeia was a design of the online platform for democracy, development and education Politeia Institute. The Politeia Institute is a regional educational platform for young people who wish to enrich their knowledge, contribute to the development of the society, through exchange with young people in their country, in the countries of the Western Balkans and in the European Union.

POLITEIA INSTITUTE platform presents an innovative online space for educating citizens from the Western Balkans. POLITEIA INSTITUTE contributes to the improvement of knowledge, gaining experience through the exchange of ideas and the creation of new programs for the development of democracy, civic activism and cooperation in the Western Balkans.



Politeia Institute develops programs in the areas of:

- Democratic institutions
- EU integration
- Promotion and protection of fundamental rights
- Youth and employment
- Citizen participation in decision making
- Principles of good governance
- Multiculturalism in management and business
- Global processes and socio-economic development

After the public call for the online course, distributed regionally, 30 students from the Western Balkans were selected.



The POLITEIA Western Balkans School for Youth Participation took place from 7 to 29 May 2021. The program was organized online with two public events: the opening panel, "WB Youth - Actor of Changes" and the panel "3E in the Western Balkans - Economy, Energy, Environment".



### Speakers at the opening panel "Western Balkan Youth - Actors of Change"

Liselotte Isaksson, European Commission, DG NEAR, Head of Sector, Society, Social Inclusion and Human Capital

Snežana Samardžić Marković, Director General of Democracy, Council of Europe

Jan Zlatan Kulenović, Director of Programs, Regional Youth Cooperation Office, RYCO

Antonella Valmorbida, Secretary General of the European Association for Local Democracy, ALDA

Prof. Dragoljub Mićunović, President of the Board of Directors of the CDF, former MP and Speaker of the Chamber of Citizens of the Assembly of FR Yugoslavia

They were joined by former Politeia fellows who shared their Politeia experience with the audience

Jasmina Murić, Head of Human Resources, Ministry for Labour, Employment and Social Affairs

Jovan Protić, ILO Office in Serbia

Djordjo Cvijović, RYCO office, Belgrade

Marijana Koceku, WPS Albania





## Lecturers and trainers

**Andreas Gross**, former MP and Chair of the PACE Political Committee, Switzerland

**Aleksandar Kovačević**, expert on energy, Serbia

**Ana Marjanović Rudan**, policy consultant, Praxis Development, Serbia

**Gordana Đurović**, Faculty of Economics, University of Montenegro

**Eralda Cani**, Faculty of Law, University of Tirana

**Ivan Vejvoda**, Institute for Human Sciences, Austria

**Kori Udovički**, President of the Governing Board, CEVES, Belgrade and former Minister for Energy and Mining in the Government of the Republic of Serbia

**Linda Čavdarbasha**, Deputy Minister of Environment of the Republic of Kosovo\*

**Dr Natalija Micunović**, Institute for Social Sciences, Belgrade

**Mirna Jusić**, PhD candidate in Public and Social Policy at the Faculty of Social Sciences of Charles University, Czech Republic

**Prof. Vesna Pusić**, former Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign and European Affairs, Government of the Republic of Croatia

**Prof Vladimir Janković**, University of Manchester, Manchester

**ONLINE** POLITEIA Western Balkans School for Youth Participation

**FRIDAY, 7 May 2021**

**OPENING PANEL / 12<sup>00</sup> - 14<sup>00</sup>**

## YOUTH IN THE WESTERN BALKANS - AGENTS OF CHANGE

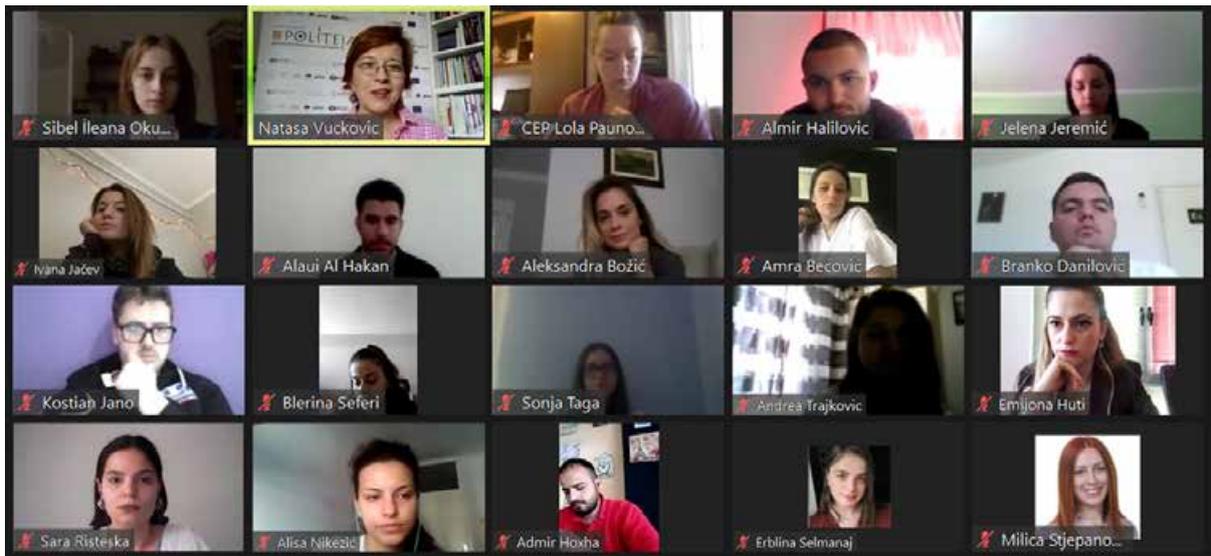
**KEY NOTE SPEAKERS**

					
H.E. Mr. Sem Fabrizi, Ambassador and Head of Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Serbia	Ms. Liselotte Isaksson, Head of Sector – Civil Society, Social Inclusion and Human Capital, DG NEAR	Ms. Snežana Samardžić Marković, Director General of Democracy of the Council of Europe	Mr. Jan Zlatan Kulenović, Director of Programs, Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO)	Ms. Antonella Valmorbidia, Secretary General, ALDA - The European Association	Prof. Dragoljub Micunović, Chair of the Board, Center for Democracy Foundation and former Speaker of the FRYP Parliament

**DISCUSSANTS**

					
Jasmina Murić, Head of Human Resources, Ministry for Labour, Employment and Social Affairs	Jovan Protić, ILO Office in Serbia	Djordjo Cvijović, RYCO	Marijana Koceku, WPS Albania	Emilija Dolovački, Center for Democracy Foundation	Nataša Vučković, Center for Democracy Foundation

**MODERATOR**



At the panel "3E in the Western Balkans – Economy, Energy, Environment" the speakers discussed the topics related to the Economy, energy and environment in the Western Balkans.



**The main topics raised in the debate related to key questions:**

The Green Agenda is on the focus these days - how much are citizens and decision-makers in the Western Balkans aware of these issues?

Is there a political will to sacrifice election percentages for the common good?

What is the quality of eco projects in the Western Balkans?

Is energy efficiency achievable in the Western Balkans?

How much does the Green Agenda influence the creation of so-called "green jobs"?

How far WB is behind the European Union?



# Internship program

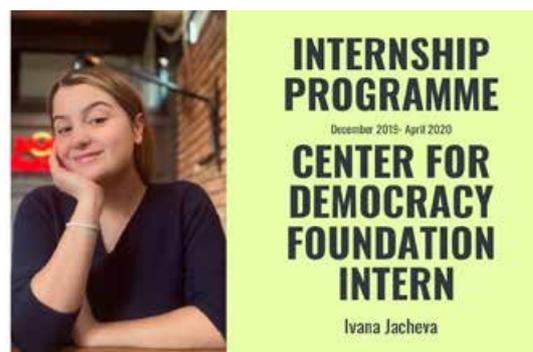
The Internship program was organized to enable youth exchange and strengthen capacities of interns for active engagement in civil society organizations.



The first step in the implementation of the Internship program was to launch an open call for youth interested to take a part in the internship. After reviewing applications and assessing the candidates' background and experience, each project partner organizations selected one or two interns for the program at their headquarters.

The host organisations and selected interns agreed about the timeline of the internship within the period December 2019 – April 2020.

Eight interns have successfully finished their internship program. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, internship program for additional four interns was first postponed and, due to the ongoing travel limitations, did not take place.



“

*This internship helped me testing, knowing myself, growing professionally and gave me experience and confidence that will be very valuable for my future.*

”



**INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME**  
 December 2019- April 2020  
**LDA PRIJEDOR INTERN**  
 Jovana Bigovic

The Internship program provided a new experience for young people to gain working experience, in another country in the region, in the office of one of the project partners. The Internship program provided a framework for the interns to gain first-hand experience about the functioning of CSOs and the work they do, but also to assist in creating innovative, youth friendly, forms and content of communication, leading to increased youth participation in civil initiatives, policy design and structured dialogue.



**INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME**  
 December 2019- April 2020  
**LDA MOSTAR INTERN**  
 Jasmina Krajovan



“ *I have unquestionably gained experiences of great value for my future, both business and personal life.* ”

Daria Knežević,  
Crta Intern



**INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME**  
 December 2019- April 2020  
**LDA KOSOVO INTERN**  
 Klajva Xheka.



“ *One important lesson I will take from this internship is how important is the youth for the local democracy, especially the contribution it can have in building peace and prosperity which is important for the Western Balkans.* ”

Dajana Marinković,  
ALDA Skopje Intern



**INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME**  
 December 2019- April 2020  
**ALDA SKOPJE INTERN**



**INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME**  
 December 2019- April 2020  
**YOUTH ACT INTERN**  
 Ideal Kastrati



“ *This internship was invaluable in terms of gaining practical knowledge related to project management, youth capital development and networking in the context of civil society.* ”

Xheni Shehaj,  
LDA Kosovo\* Intern

# Local Youth Workshops

## Regional Youth Compact for Europe - We are Europeans

The local youth workshops aimed to share knowledge gained from trainings and thematic forums with youth associations in local communities and motivate youth organizations to participate actively in the implementation of the project Regional Youth Compact for Europe.

Local youth workshops were held continuously all over the Western Balkan region.

The COVID-19 prevented the public meetings so the workshops were reformatted for online mode.

**Around 30 workshops were organized in various local communities with participation of nearly 200 young participants.**



# Small Grants Scheme Youth Fund “WE HAVE A SAY”

The RYCE sub-granting programme, entitled Youth Fund “We Have a Say” provided support to youth initiatives that fostered development of participatory youth policies and promoted youth voices in local communities in the Western Balkans.

The open call for applications for the Youth Fund was published on 15 January 2020 and was open until 28 February. The call was shared on the project’s website, partners` websites and social media.



**Until the closing of the Youth Fund Open Call a total of 64 applications were received:**

	Received	Selected
Albania	12	2
Bosnia and Herzegovina	9	2
Kosovo*	8	1
Montenegro	6	1
North Macedonia	5	1
Serbia	24	6

## Supported projects

Project name	Organization	Country
<a href="#">Singing Together - Youth Voices</a>	Art Apart	Serbia
<a href="#">Empower Youth for Participation!</a>	Youth Voice Network	Albania
<a href="#">First steps towards youth centered Leskovac</a>	Tim 42	Serbia
<a href="#">Voices of youth make the decisions</a>	ECO Action Tetovo	North Macedonia
<a href="#">Motivate, Activate, Participate!</a>	InterLingua	Montenegro
<a href="#">Young2Democracy</a>	Ogledna bašta Niš	Serbia
<a href="#">We create dialogue</a>	NYGEA	Bosnia and Herzegovina
<a href="#">Youth as agents of fostering local democracy through active participation in structured dialogue</a>	National Youth Congress of Albania	Albania
<a href="#">Brus and youth</a>	Youth Centar Brus	Serbia
<a href="#">Gračanica Youth Clubs</a>	Mlada aktivna Gračanica	Kosovo*
<a href="#">Unijada 2020</a>	Studentska unija Vršac	Serbia
<a href="#">Face to Face with Local Administration</a>	Trade Union Educational Centar	Bosnia and Herzegovina
<a href="#">Opinion Poll on Budget Priorities of Youth</a>	Balkanski razvojni centar Kraljevo	Serbia

Due to COVID-19 crisis which started immediately after the Call was closed, required significant reformatting of the proposed projects. The selected grantees adjusted the planned activities to the existing limitations for travel and for in vivo events. Nevertheless, they implemented the projects with great commitment and enthusiasm.



Youth as agents of fostering local democracy through active participation in structured dialogue  
National Youth Congress of Albania



Empower Youth for Participation!  
Youth Voice Network



Young2Democracy  
Ogledna bašta Niš



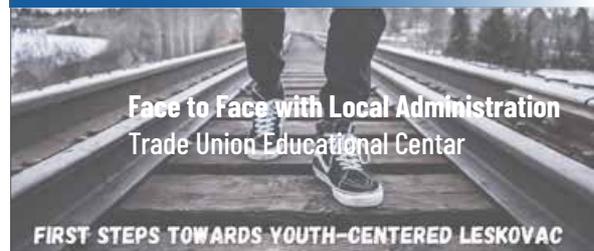
Face to Face with Local Administration  
Trade Union Educational Center



Unijada 2020  
Studentska unija Vršac



First steps towards youth centerd Leskovac  
Tim 42



Brus and youth  
Youth Centar Brus



Istraživanje položaja i potreba mladih u Leskovcu

Predstavljanje rezultata istraživanja i dijalog sa donosiocima odluka u Leskovcu  
sreda, 23.12. u 12:00h

Projekat "Prvi koraci za Leskovac prilagođen mladima" podržan je od strane Evropske Unije kroz projekat "Regional Youth Compact for Europe" koji sprovodi Fondacija Centar za demokratiju.

## On May 26-28, 2021 the CDF organized a two-day meeting of all grantees in Belgrade with aim to present their results.

All the projects were implemented during the COVID-19 crisis which showed capacity of small organizations to adjust to changed circumstances, keep their target groups active and motivated and deliver expected results. In general, the projects addressed the need of the youngsters to stay connected, learn in an online environment and overcome the consequences of confinement during the COVID-19 crisis.

The gathering in Belgrade was an opportunity for the grantees to meet each other and discuss potential future cooperation on the basis of their small grants results.

On the second day of the gatherings, the grantees attended the specially designed training on fund raising.



# Research and Study



## Comparative study

# Civil Society Involvement in Monitoring EU Accession and EU Integration Processes in the Western Balkans – from Initial Projects to Structured Dialogue



The comparative study “Civil Society Involvement in Monitoring EU Accession and EU Integration Processes in the Western Balkans – from Initial Projects to Structured Dialogue” was conducted by CRTA and published in November 2019 in Albanian, Macedonian, Serbian and English language.

The study aimed to identify practices and potential of civil society to participate and contribute to decision making and in a dialogue regarding the reforms relevant to the EU accession processes. The study was divided into two parts. The first part covers Montenegro and Serbia, which have already started accession negotiations with the EU, while the second covers Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo\* and North Macedonia which are not yet in that phase of EU integration.

### Research focus

Civic involvement and monitoring in specific areas covered by [Chapter 19](#) – Social Policy and Employment, [Chapter 23](#) – Judiciary and Fundamental Rights and [Chapter 24](#) – Justice, Freedom, and Security, as the most challenging and most demanding chapters in the integration process.

### Key directions for improvement and recommendations included

- Open, positive and constructive dialogue between state and civil society organizations is essential;
- Further steps to improve the legislative framework for civil sector participation is needed;
- Ideas and recommendations coming from the civil society should be evaluated in a meaningful way;
- Strengthening CSOs capacity and network building to influence public policy is required.

### Key regional issues identified

An improved framework for the CSOs participation does not necessarily mean a constructive dialogue between the government and civil society, better legislation and greater influence of CSOs;

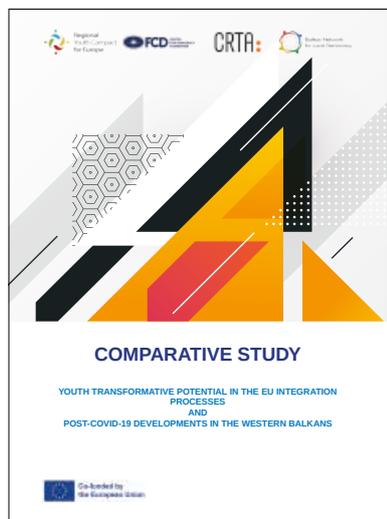
The number of proposed recommendations and suggestions given by CSOs during the consultation phase of the adoption of laws and strategic documents that are incorporated in the final versions remains extremely limited;

There is still a limited number of CSOs that participate in decision-making especially at the local level;

Transparency of the European integration/negotiation process remains limited.

## Comparative study

# Youth transformative potential in the EU integration processes and post-COVID-19 developments in the Western Balkans



This research study, again prepared by project partner CRTA and published in 2021, tried to identify what are the transformational potentials of WB6 youth in the EU integration processes and where do these potentials reside, particularly in the light of the COVID-19 crisis. More precisely, the study wanted to investigate and analyze the key drivers and motivation for youth participation in decision-making processes, and the relationship between that motivation and the perspectives in relation to the EU and its core values.

The study also attempted to give indications of what makes the youth adhere to those values in 2020, having in mind political and social turbulent dynamics in the region, as well as what motivates them to move forward and stay actively involved in their societies and the region's future. The study particularly examined how COVID-19 crisis affects their motivation and perceptions, as well as how youth perceive the effects of the pandemic on their further

involvement in the policy designs and the EU integration processes. It analyzed what tools and approaches, when it comes to youth participation, work best, and which ones are expected to be more efficient and fruitful in the future.

## Research methodology

### 1. Focus group interviews (FG), a method of qualitative research, which allowed for deeper understanding of behavior, attitudes, motives, and practices.

A total of 12 FGs were conducted, 2 in each of the targeted societies, during June and July 2020. The target group was the regional youth, from 18 to 30 years old, with dominantly neutral to positive perception of the EU and with the experience of and/or knowledge about the participation in the decision making, policy design and/or monitoring processes on local or national level. This FG composition allowed for deeper insights and knowledge of youth participation from those who know how the participation process looks like, what are its (wanted and unwanted) outcomes, and, as the study has showed, how closely connected it is with activism. FGs consisted of 6 to 8 participants (6.3 on average), which allowed for active contribution of each participant and for the lively group dynamic. All FGs were conducted electronically, using Zoom platform. They were recorded (audio and video), and transcribed (and translated where needed). FGs lasted approximately for 120 minutes, which was more than anticipated.

### 2. Desk research work was conducted during July-September 2020. The data was collected through the review of the official legislation, previous analysis and research conducted by national and local youth CSOs, international organizations, umbrella organizations, research institutes and other institutions involved and interested in the issue.

Preparations, selection of FG participants, FG interviews and the analysis itself were taking place during the COVID-19 pandemic. This affected the study-making process, both technically and thematically. The focus group meetings were organized at the time when the first wave of COVID-19 has just passed and the second one was on its way,

with the local outbreaks happening across the region and with an anticipation that the next wave would happen in autumn. This situation has significantly affected the respondents' assessment of their own reactions and the local and national governments' response, as well as their perception of youth reaction to this unprecedented situation. It was difficult for participants to give any predictions about how the COVID-19 experience would affect the future of youth participation because nobody knew at the time how exactly the pandemic would further develop, not to mention how long it would last.

### Key findings

Selected key findings should provide more understanding of the social and political context in which the WB youth resides, as well as the most important insights important for understanding the potentials and limitations of youth participation in the region.

- A strong migration drive is one of the most outstanding commonalities of entire WB region, and a large number of young people are thinking about leaving to other countries outside the region, primarily because of unsatisfying socio-economic conditions;
- General understanding of participation among interviewed youth activists includes a range of different perceptions: both as a formal and informal activity, done through formal or informal channels. Participation is also closely connected to activism itself, here defined as taking a public stand and engaging in an activity to tackle a publicly important issue;
- Low level of trust in the institutions and the elites makes informal participation tools and mechanisms more attractive. These mechanisms and tools have a more powerful democratic potential, bear more energy, and allow for more creativity, but sometimes are less efficient and less credible in the formal systems where decisions are made;
- The COVID-19 crisis, as well as any other potential crisis, is seen as both an opportunity and a threat. In other words, in the Western Balkan context, the pandemic is perceived as something that can bring the best out of young people – solidarity, motivation and creativity, and the worst out of autocratic, populist regimes.



In preparation of the study, a young respondent to survey questions said:

“ I would like for young people in the Western Balkans to be more connected, to exchange experiences and knowledge more. That is very important because young people in the Western Balkans, unfortunately, do not know enough about each other. The tragic '90s took us apart. We have a lot of common concerns and problems that we can solve together or at least help make the positive change happen. ”

# Advocacy

Promoting EU Integration of the Western Balkans, fostering dialogue among key stakeholders for reforming the quality of life and the capacity of the state to deliver on democracy, rule of law and human rights and motivating citizens to participate in policy debates on local level was in the core of our advocacy activities.

- Through regional conferences we reached out to national governments, international organizations, policy makers, local governments, civil society organizations and businesses.
- Through multi stakeholders' platforms representatives of local authorities were involved in public dialogue with citizens, business sector and CSOs.
- Open assemblies provided platform for citizens to speak out, meet their representatives in local governments, place their requests and search for support.

## Advocacy on regional and national level through regional conferences

Every year a regional conference gathered decision makers, scholars and civil society activists to discuss the status of EU integration of the Western Balkans and to reiterate the role of the civil society in the process. Democracy, rule of law and fundamental rights as well as fight against corruption continuously were the topics of the utmost concern. In addition, we focused on social dimension of the reform process, particularly on social policy and employment, as well as education which are all the highest concerns for the young generation in the Western Balkans.

The first regional conference was organized in Tirana in February 2019. The COVID-19 crisis postponed the second annual conference which, initially planned for end March 2020, took place in Novi Sad in spring 2021 as a hybrid event. The final one was organized in Belgrade as a hybrid event, but with in vivo participation of project partners – an occasion to see each other after more than a year!

### The first annual conference

Tirana, February 27, 2019 • Organized by ALDA and Youth Act

Total 72 participants from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo\*, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia took part in the Conference which gathered high ranking representatives of relevant institutions, development agencies and CSOs, representatives of local and regional stakeholders and students.

#### Topics

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**Identification of key actors in accession negotiations and role of CSOs**

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**Models of CSOs involvement in monitoring implementation of reforms**

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**Towards increased focus of public authorities on the needs of youth in policy making**

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**The key message from Annual conference was:**

**Countries of the Western Balkans all face similar challenges – it is therefore important to address them together and to share good practices and positive examples.**

# The second annual conference

Novi Sad, March 2021 • Organized by LDA Subotica



The second regional conference was focused on the requirements for acceleration of reforms in the Western Balkans, actual obstacles in advancing on accession negotiations, as well as it addressed the democracy on local level opened by **Nataša Vučković**, Executive Director, Center for Democracy Foundation.

## Speakers

**Besnik Vasolli**, Programme Manager, RYCO Office, Albania

**Vladimir Medjak**, Vice-president, European Movement Serbia

**Gledis Gipali**, Secretary General, European Movement Albania

**Zorka Kordić**, Chief Negotiator with the EU, Montenegro

**Goran Lazarov**, Project Research Manager, CSO Dialogue - Platform for Structural Participation in EU integration- Open Society Foundation, North Macedonia

**Esmeralda Hasani**, Head of Projects and Erasmus Unit, University Marin Barleti, Tirana, Albania

**Mirela Rajković**, Executive Director, SEEYN, Bosnia and Herzegovina



# Final Conference

## European Union and the Western Balkans - Towards the Renewed Trust

Belgrade, July 2021 • Organized by Center for Democracy Foundation

The conference was attended by 86 participants.



### Topics

EU and the Western Balkans: Towards Renewed Trust and Reinvented Enthusiasm for Enlargement/Integration

Youth in the Western Balkans – Between Expectations and Realities

Local Democracy – Active Citizens, Sustainable Communities





“  
*Our main task in the region is to find the way to carry out, with much more strength and conviction, the struggle for our European dream that lasts for more than thirty years. The Pan European approach in debating the future of Europe is needed. We have to form the movement for our European future.*”

**Sonja Licht**, Belgrade Fund for Political Excellence

“  
*It is necessary to strengthen support of European citizens for the enlargement, and the support of citizens in the Western Balkans for the reforms and for the accession to the EU. We have to create new enthusiasm for the EU integration process, while defending the values of democracy, rule of law and human rights, which are the reasons which traced our path towards the EU. Additionally to economic growth and improved standard of living, we want that our societies have these values rooted and that our states have democratic capacities.*”

**Nataša Vučković**, CDF, Serbia

“  
*Contribution of young people to creating policies and strengthening trust between the EU and the Western Balkans are important issues for the EU. The Western Balkans integration into the EU is investment for peace and stability for the whole region.*”

**Matea Norčić Štamcar**,  
 Deputy Head for Mission, Delegation of the EU in Serbia

“  
*The future of the Balkans is the future of Europe. It is not possible to forget it. The general inclusion of the region starts with the region itself, however. It is therefore necessary to strengthen various stakeholders from local level. ALDA started in the Western Balkans, we always saw integration of the Western Balkans as the key political achievement. ALDA is part of the civil society Convention on the Conference on the future of Europe. There is not a place dedicated for the Balkans, but all of us are bringing the voices of our partners from the Balkans into the Conference. You shall use our networks and platforms.*”

**Antonella Valmorbida**, ALDA



## Recommendations Resulting from the Conference

European Union and the Western Balkans: Towards Renewed Trust  
held in Belgrade, 1 July 2021, under the Regional Youth Compact for Europe project



Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) - partners of the Regional Youth Compact for Europe project which over the last three-year period has promoted the process of Western Balkan integration into the EU, brought together and encouraged regional youths toward activism and supporting reforms on the path toward the EU and strengthened the capacities of CSOs in local communities to dialogue with decision makers and the citizenry on the subject of developmental policies. At today's conference, EU and the Western Balkans - Towards Renewed Trust the partners agreed to send the following messages to key actors:

We urge the governments of Western Balkan states to hasten reforms in these areas, in particular, rule of law, democracy and combatting corruption, ensuring the consistent application of EU standards in the areas of public procurement, infrastructural investment and development, and to make environmental protection a political and developmental priority.

We call upon these governments and decision makers to improve the manner in which they present EU contribution to economic and social development to the public as well as the benefits which development and the EU integration process bring to the population, at the regional, national and local levels, and to represent EU membership as a priority strategic foreign policy.

We ask the governments of Western Balkan states to apply the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights in planning public policies and in monitoring reforms, and thus strengthen the social aspect of EU integration, which is of key significance to maintaining and intensifying the support of the public in this process.

We call upon both our government and the EU to include Western Balkan youths in considering development policies and encouraging them to apply European values through educational, cultural and regional collaboration.

We consider it important that the Western Balkans are included in the Conference on the Future of Europe.

We invite the EU to open accession negotiations with Northern Macedonia and Albania by year-end 2021.

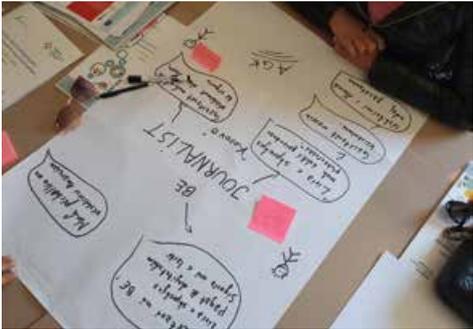
We invite the EU and countries of the Western Balkans to continue to develop solidarity in resolving their mutual issues and crises management. We also expect solidarity from regional EU member states on our path toward EU integration.

We believe it a necessity that all participants in the political sphere work toward improving the quality of political dialogue, parliamentary democracy, the participation of the citizenry and freedom of the press.



# Advocacy on local level

- Multi-stakeholders` platforms were established by partners in local communities engaging CSOs and youth organizations in dialogue with local government, public and private sector.
- In direct actions with citizens the awareness was raised about the benefits of CSOs and youth involvement in EU integration processes.
- Through My City - Youth City, open Local Assemblies initiative - youth participation in decision making processes on local level was encouraged and promoted.



# Visibility and Outreach



**Communication was our key activity. In 2018 we developed and adopted the Communication strategy. Communication and visibility framework of the project was upgraded with the adoption of the Digital Marketing Strategy: Regional Youth Compact for Europe 2019-2021.**

## **WE WERE**

- **Promoting EU values**
- **Presenting the EU assistance to the Western Balkans**
- **Spreading knowledge about EU integration**
- **Motivating citizens to participate in local initiatives and speak out about their priorities**
- **Getting young people on board to work together**

## The main target groups were mapped in the communication strategy

Youth

Youth related organisations

Local and national CSOs

Local Governance and Authorities

Governmental agencies

Policy makers and society

EU institutions and organisations

Regional and worldwide media

## Key messages were incorporated in our message house



Regional  
Youth Compact  
for Europe

EU-funded project that aims to strengthen the CSOs in policy design and in monitoring the process of European integration in the Western Balkans and Turkey as well as actively including young population in the process

Importance of citizen participation in structured dialogue on local and national level.

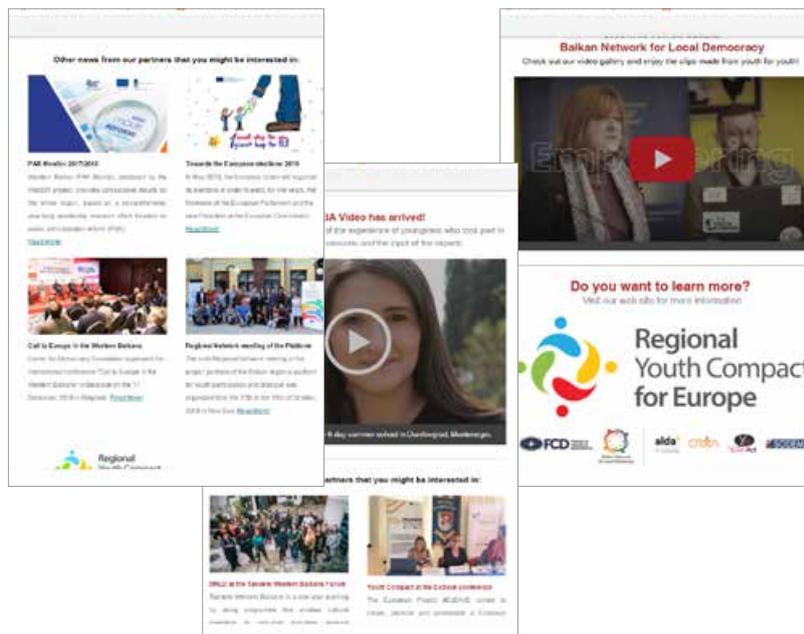
CSOs should be actively involved in the process of monitoring of EU integrations

Youth participation and engagement is the crucial precondition for ownership of democratic reform process in WB

# Implemented channels of communication

## Newsletters

Monthly newsletters were published in the second project year and were sent to approximately 1000 addresses each CDF monthly bulletin in Serbian sent to nearly 2000 per item 1500



## Films

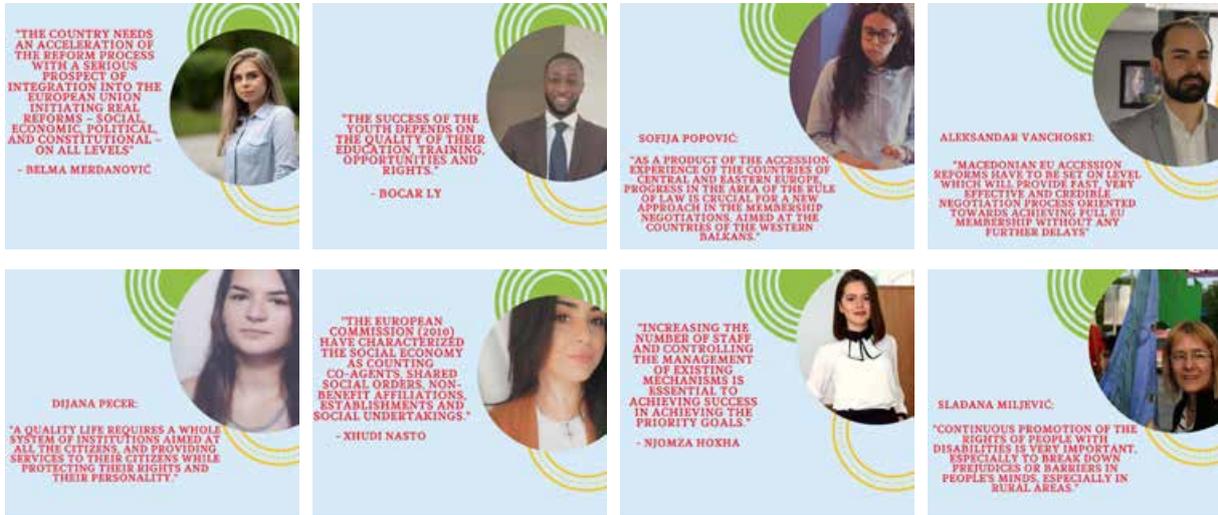


- The production of a documentary film, reflecting youth participation in CSOs and the benefits it provides (LDA CSS Knjaževac)
- The documentary was filmed during the Politeia Western Balkan School for Youth Participation (LDA Knjazevac and CDF)
- Animated film (LDA Subotica and Alda Skopje)



# Blogs

40 blogs of mostly young authors were published on the BNLD website.



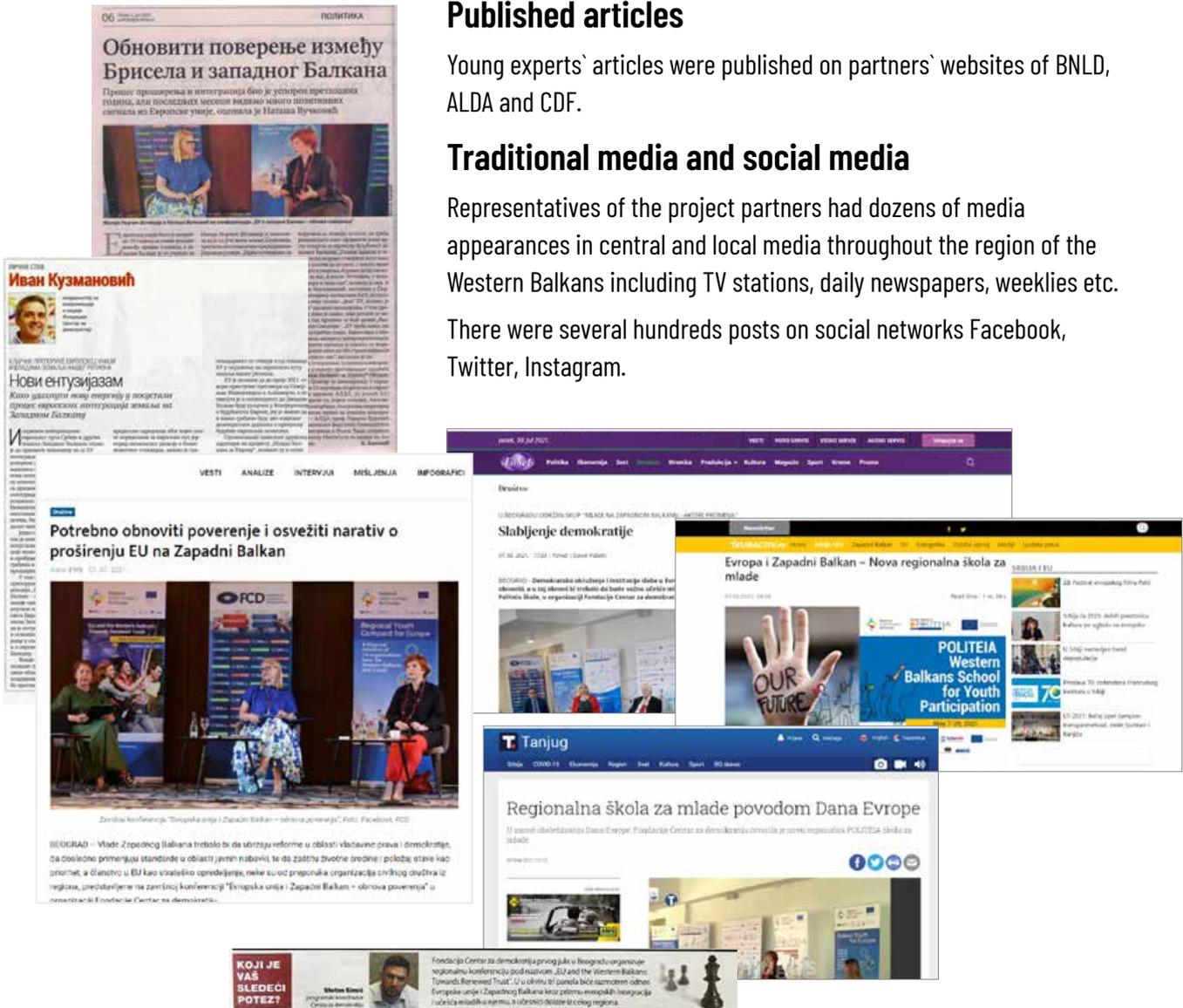
## Published articles

Young experts` articles were published on partners` websites of BNLD, ALDA and CDF.

## Traditional media and social media

Representatives of the project partners had dozens of media appearances in central and local media throughout the region of the Western Balkans including TV stations, daily newspapers, weeklies etc.

There were several hundreds posts on social networks Facebook, Twitter, Instagram.



## Key speakers at our events



**Antonella Valmorbida,**  
Secretary General,  
European Association  
for Local Democracy  
ALDA, France



**Andreas Gross,**  
former MP and  
Chair of the PACE  
Political Committee,  
Switzerland



**Sarita Bradaš,**  
Center for Democracy  
Foundation, Belgrade,  
Serbia



**Arbjan Mazniku,**  
Deputy Mayor of  
Tirana, Albania



**Dalina Jashari,**  
Programme Manager  
from Institute for  
Democracy and  
Mediation, Albania



**Daut Bajramović,**  
OSCE Mission to BiH,  
National Programme  
Officier



**Djuro Blanusa,** RYCO,  
Tirana office



**Zoran Ilieski,**  
SEGA – Coalition of  
youth organisations  
from North Macedonia



**Eralda Cani,**  
Faculty of Law,  
University of Tirana,  
Albania



**Ervjola Osmanaj**  
Albanian National  
Youth Network



**Habit Hajredini,**  
Director of the Office  
for Good Governance,  
Human rights,  
Kosovo\*



**Hašim Mujanović,**  
Mayor of Zavidovići,  
Bosnia and  
Herzegovina



**Ilija Grgurović,**  
Deputy Mayor  
of Danilovgrad,  
Montenegro



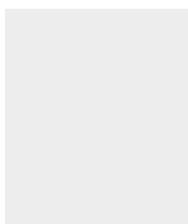
**Ivan Vejvoda,**  
Institute for Human  
Sciences, Austria



**Jelena Anđelić,**  
Initiative for  
Development &  
Cooperation



**Katarina Vučković,**  
Institute for Youth  
Development,  
KULT, Bosnia and  
Herzegovina



**Levent Koro,**  
World Bank, Pristina,  
Kosovo\*



**Liselotte Isaksson,**  
Head of Sector –  
Civil Society, Social  
Inclusion and Human  
Capital, DG NEAR,  
Brussels



**Marko Mrdak,**  
Deputy Chief  
Negotiator of  
Montenegro with  
the EU, Government  
of Montenegro,  
Podgorica,  
Montenegro



**Mateja Norčić  
Štamcar,**  
Deputy Head of  
Delegation, Delegation  
of the European Union  
to the Republic of  
Serbia



**Marija Bulat,**  
Local Branch Officer  
Belgrade, Regional  
Youth Cooperation  
Office



**Miljana Pejić,**  
National Youth Council  
of Serbia, Serbia



**Milorad Bjeletić,**  
Executive Director,  
Belgrade Open School,  
Belgrade, Serbia



**Nataša Dragojlović,**  
Coordinator of the  
National Convention  
on the EU, Belgrade,  
Serbia



**Natasa Vučković,**  
Center for Democracy  
Foundation, Belgrade,  
Serbia



**Nicolas Bizel,**  
Head of Operations  
Section 1, EU  
Delegation to Serbia



**Gjergj Murra,**  
Executive director of  
the Western Balkan  
Fund



**Gordana Čomić,**  
Vice President and  
member of the  
European Integration  
Committee at National  
Parliament of the  
Republic of Serbia



**Gordana Đurović,**  
Faculty of Economics,  
University of  
Montenegro,  
Podgorica,  
Montenegro



**Kori Udovički,**  
President of the  
Governing Board,  
CEVES, Belgrade and  
former Minister for  
Energy and Mining in  
the Government of the  
Republic of Serbia



**Saša Magazinović,**  
Member of Parliament,  
Bosnia and  
Herzegovina



**Snežana Samardžić  
Marković,**  
Director General of  
Democracy of the  
Council of Europe,  
Strasbourg



**Sonja Licht,**  
President, Belgrade  
Fund for Political  
Excellence, Serbia



**Stanka Parać,**  
LDA Subotica, Serbia



**Remzi Lani,**  
Executive Director of  
the Albanian Media  
Institute, Albania



**Tanja Mišević,**  
Head of the  
Negotiating Team  
for the Accession of  
Serbia to the EU



**Prof. Vesna Pusić,**  
former Deputy  
Prime Minister and  
Minister of Foreign  
and European Affairs,  
Government of the  
Republic of Croatia



**Prof. Vladimir  
Janković,**  
University of  
Manchester,  
Manchester, United  
Kingdom



**Ivan Sekulović,**  
Center for Democracy  
Foundation, Belgrade,  
Serbia



**Vladimir Medjak,**  
European Movement  
Serbia



**Dragoljub Mićunović,** founder and Chairman of the Board of the CDF, member of parliament in the Serbian and Federal parliaments legislatures for 30 years, President of the Serbian Standing Delegation in Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (2000-2003, 2008-2012) and was member of the PACE Political Committee

# Regional Youth Compact for Europe in Numbers



ADOPTED AND PUBLISHED RECOMMENDATIONS - the Final Document of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Regional Conference



Regional  
Youth Compact  
for Europe

**A Regional  
Initiative of  
14 organizations  
from the  
Western Balkans  
and Turkey**

**2018-2021**



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CIP - Каталогизacija у публикацији  
Народна библиотека Србије, Београд

341.232.7-053.6(4-12)

061.2(4-12)

341.217.02(4-12)

VUČKOVIĆ, Nataša, 1967-

Regional Youth Compact for Europe : project Report / [Nataša Vučković,  
Ivan Kuzmanović]. - Beograd : Fondacija Centar za demokratiju, 2021  
(Belgrade : Grafolik). - 60 str. : ilustr. ; 30 cm

Tiraž 1.000.

ISBN 978-86-83675-34-0

1. Kuzmanović, Ivan, 1973- [аутор]

- а) Европске интеграције -- Млади -- Југоистчна Европа
- б) Невладине организације -- Сарадња -- Југоистчна Европа

COBISS.SR-ID 45398281





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