

Civil Society Forum

of the Western Balkans Summit Series

CSF Vienna

Working Groups' Recommendations

Legacy Issues in the Western Balkans

Bilateral disputes

- The EU should design clear mechanisms to support the bilateral disputes resolution and show commitment and readiness to engage;
- The Western Balkans' governments should publish (through their websites) report on the bilateral disputes resolution annually;
- Reports of the technical commissions dealing with the bilateral disputes at the national level should be public;
- The Western Balkan countries should plan work of the technical commissions within/for the three-year period;
- The EU and the Western Balkan governments should involve the CSOs in monitoring of the bilateral disputes resolution and the agreements implementation. When engaged with parties in resolution of bilateral disputes, methodology of involvement needs to include elements of formulation of exit strategies, so that resolution does not get converted into an open-ended frozen conflict.

Reconciliation

- Agreement at the governmental level on the establishment of the regional commission for the establishment of facts and other serious violations of human rights committed in the former Yugoslavia between 1991 and 2001 should be signed;
- Institutions responsible for education, in cooperation with the CSOs, should improve text-books for primary and secondary schools with facts about past and reconciliation; Set of principles should be defined at regional level with stronger articulated outreach strategy by the CSOs;
- The Western Balkans' prosecution offices should strengthen cooperation in prosecution of war crimes with the assistance of the Mechanism for International Criminal Tribunals (bilateral agreements on cooperation in prosecution of war crimes should be signed between the Western Balkan countries);
- The Western Balkan countries need to further step up their efforts to fight impunity for war crimes with a more proactive approach, to proactively investigate and punish them in line with international standards; the prosecutor offices and the courts should start prosecuting chain of command cases.

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Economic Stability Issues in the Western Balkans

To address the WB region's critical SME access-to-finance gap and enable entrepreneurial environment:

- Develop regional financial instruments to provide guarantees, debt and equity, and reduce transactional costs of investing into the SME sector; and support establishment of regional impact intermediaries to enable early-stage intelligent capital and patient financing for the region's SMEs and SEs;
- Remove all contingencies and eligibility constraints to enable the WB countries' full access to the funds, instruments, and toolbox available to the SMEs and intermediaries in the member countries.

To enable youth, women and social entrepreneurship, startups and digital frontier innovation in the WB region:

- Develop regional value-driven ecosystems and relevant infrastructure to mobilize entrepreneurial innovation and move TMT and other key sectors towards a digital economy;
- Address unfavourable business environment and remove complex, demanding, and expensive business processes in order to support the region's SMEs and to attract innovation to the WB region.

To attract innovation and talent to the WB, increase mobility and enable circular migration:

- Extend regional frameworks, facilities, and programs to include digital economy, youth entrepreneurship, women entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship;
- Qualify the WB6 for EU education, training, and youth programs and extend curricula to address digital literacy, entrepreneurial learning, and vocation training topics.

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Security Issues in the Western Balkans

Fostering talent in law enforcement

- In EU accession process, **the reform of police organisation should be a benchmark** for all Western Balkan (WB) countries. A professional, reliable and efficient police organisation is of paramount importance for effective fight against corruption, organised crime, terrorism and trust of citizens in state. Therefore, further support for **professionalization of police services and building organisational and individual integrity** of law enforcement needs to be supported through independent monitoring by the WB6 civil society and the European Commission and regional exchanges among police services. The outcome of strengthening professionalization and integrity in the law enforcement should be that police services are operationally independent from political interests and shielded from criminal influence.
- **Professionalization of law enforcement** should include establishment of functional human resources management procedures and practices that will allow for transparent and merit-based recruitment, selection, professional development, promotion and nurturing of talent. Within the reforms of human resources management in the WB6 law enforcement agencies, special attention should be paid to:
 - Introduction of checks and balances into police legislation and practice for limiting political interference in the HR management and career cycle;
 - The HR reforms should ensure also for retention and further professional development of investigators, analysts and other professional law enforcement staff that have been involved in most sensitive investigations of high-profile corruption and organised crime cases;
 - All reforms of the HR management need to pay special attention not to create additional hurdles for women in operational jobs to do their jobs and get equal opportunities for career development and promotion as their colleagues. The promotion of equal opportunities for women in law enforcement could be further strengthened through regional exchanges and networking.
- **Integrity of police services** should be significantly improved through strengthening of internal affairs and external oversight mechanisms resulting into inquiries looking at the infiltration of crime in the police or political interest meddling into operational investigations. Based on the lessons learned in security and integrity vetting of all employees in the State Police of Albania, similar practices could be tried in other countries of the region. **The safeguards must be in place not to allow for the misuse of anti-corruption measures, such as integrity and security vetting** of the police staff for selection of only party-loyalists.

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- In order to make professionalization and building integrity initiatives in WB6 law enforcement sustainable, **regional networks of competent civil society organisations and investigative journalists focussing on police reform should be supported to continue independent monitoring** of national police reforms and regional commitments within Berlin Process.

Countering violent extremism – civil society should be included in all these activities and their contribution recognized.

- We welcome the efforts invested by the WB6 Governments and international partners in confronting the threat of Islamic extremism but highlight the need for the Governments to also address forms of extremism other than Islamic extremism. This primarily refers to addressing right-wing and ethnic-political extremism that has created violent incidents in the country and is one of primary drivers of the Islamic extremism. Special attention should be paid to exploration of links between right-wing extremism and football hooliganism and hate speech.
- Violent extremism prevention efforts should be strengthened, especially in relation to the groups faced with social exclusion such as youth, ethnic and religious minorities. All prevention efforts should not treat these groups as potential risk, but as partners in preventing radicalisation of their peers. Therefore, support should be provided for provision of formal and informal educational programs, sports and other community-based activities in partnership with youth and minorities groups and local civil society.
- More resources and professional support should be given to the government agencies in charge of re-integration and rehabilitation of foreign fighters.
- Appropriate sentencing must be ensured for all foreign terrorist fighters irrespective of whether they fought in Syria, Iraq or Ukraine, as well as their subsequent social re-integration.
- The information exchange among law enforcement authorities within each of the WB6 countries and among them should be improved so as to facilitate timely identification of new groups or prevention of incidents and interruption of financial flows financing terrorism. Direct cooperation and information exchange should be established also with international partners, in particular with Europol and Eurojust.
- The prevention of money laundering and terrorist financing should not be used to limit activities of legitimate and law-abiding civil society organizations. The CSOs should monitor the effects of the new risk-based approach promoted by the FATF on recommendation application in their countries vis-à-vis international human rights law and the principles and standards which facilitate an enabling environment for civil society development (for example the recommendation for introduction of mandatory registration of the NPOs in Bosnia and Herzegovina might be limiting for the freedom of associations). Governments should be held accountable for any measure undertaken in response to the FATF evaluation processes. The identification of a subset of the NPOs that are at high risk of terrorist financing abuse (if any) should be based on the information coming from various relevant sources: regulators, security institutions (i.e. police and intelligence agencies), donors, tax authorities, the NPOs and beneficiaries.

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Gender Issues in the Western Balkans

Institutional-procedural recommendations

- All issues discussed under the Berlin process should include a gender perspective, with a particular emphasis on security topics and economic development.
- The Regional Co-operation Council should create a regional task force for gender equality issues, including both governmental representatives and women civil society organisations' representatives;
- Governments should ensure financial support to regional cooperation of women CSOs (possibly through the regional task force, as a supporting structure to women CSOs in the region)
- Governments should support the creation of gender knowledge (online) exchange platform at the regional level;
- Governments should ensure structured cooperation between women CSOs and gender equality bodies at national and regional level, institutionalised participation in development and monitoring of gender equality policies, with budgets allocated for the advisory role of the gender CSOs (e.g. through multilateral match funding between donors and governments – for support to implementation of policies – see BiH example);
- Governments should ensure gender mainstreaming in the EU integration process and gender mainstreaming in donor funds programming, with support of gender organisations. Moreover, furthering gender equality should be mainstreamed in all forms of political dialogue, policy reforms, and programming in accordance with GAP II and with the EU Comprehensive Approach on the UNSCR 1325 and 1820 on women, peace and security (15671/1/08 REV 1),
- Governments should commit to strengthening independent national bodies for protection against discrimination;

Policy recommendations

Gender based violence

- Governments should commit to full implementation of the Istanbul Convention, and especially move from legislation to implementation. Governmental actions at both national and regional level need to include funding for women CSOs working on gender violence and specialised services providers;
- Governments should step up efforts on collection of data on all forms of gender-based violence;
- Within the framework of the Istanbul Convention, more emphasis should be given to sexual harassment and other forms of gender-based violence;

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Gender stereotypes

- Governments should include the problem of gender stereotyping in the media in all media strategies and policy documents and propose concrete actions to combat gender stereotypes in the media space. The role of the independent media regulatory bodies should be strengthened in this sense;
- Governments should revisit all education policy strategies and action plans, from primary to tertiary education, from the perspective of gender stereotyping, with a special emphasis on development of curricula and textbooks. Developing gender sensitive curricula for teacher education faculties should particularly be addressed;

Discrimination in the labour market

- Governments should include the gender perspective in all policies and cooperation in the sphere of economic development, with particular recognition of the vulnerable position of women in the labour market and in the informal economy;
- Governments should align with EU legislation promoting quotas in governance and decision-making bodies in the companies (both public and private sector);
- Governments should develop work–life balance policies and policies in support of changes in parental gender roles;

Participation in politics and decision making

- Governments should commit to respect quotas for political participation of women at all levels and introduce them, where they do not exist;
- Legislation should include quota for women in decision-making bodies of the political parties and promote the role of women in political life;
- Governments should promote adoption and implementation of gender sensitive codes of conduct for political parties;

Gender mainstreaming

- Governments should work towards development of joint methodologies, guidelines and toolboxes for gender mainstreaming through the regional cooperation mechanisms, using international good practices;
- Governments should encourage regional exchange of experiences and good practices on gender mainstreaming, relying on the existing gender infrastructure as well as the enhanced role of the Regional Co-operation Council's gender equality task force.