

**European Fund for the Balkans**

# EFB Fellowship at the Austrian Parliament 2019/2020

## PROGRAMME DESCRIPTION

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**WE ARE LOOKING FOR THE 6 BEST APPLICANTS FROM WB6 NATIONAL PARLIAMENTS, WHO WANT TO SHAPE THE REGIONAL AND EUROPEAN COLLABORATION USING THEIR KNOWLEDGE AND ENTHUSIASM.**

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Applications  
are accepted in  
the period:

from **MARCH 10**  
to **APRIL 10**

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## PROGRAMME DESCRIPTION

### EFB Fellowship in the Austrian Parliament 2019/2020

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The Fellowship Programme at the Austrian Parliament is a practice-oriented educational programme for civil servants working in the National Parliaments of Western Balkan countries. The purpose of the programme is to give impetus to the EU integration-driven reforms of the Western Balkans' parliament's administrations, through building the capacities of individuals, who are acting as the agents of change. The programme targets ambitious public administration professionals with a strong commitment to contributing to the development of their societies who are lifelong learners, acquiring skills and broadening their horizons throughout their careers.

The fellowship is designed for professionals working in the administrations of the **National Parliaments in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia, who are proficient in German language (B1 Level)**. It is a unique opportunity to familiarize with the operations and practices of the Austrian Parliament, as well as to observe and to learn from administrative staff and professionals about different aspects of their work.

### Background

The Western Balkans countries' needs, as well as experiences before and after the accession of new Member States in 2004, and two subsequent expansions in 2007 and 2013 are showing that administrative capacity plays a key role in the capability to assume both the obligation of the EU accession process and the obligations of membership later on. The Enlargement Strategy adopted in the beginning of 2018, confirmed the European future of the region as a geostrategic investment in a stable, strong and united Europe based on common values. It spells out the priorities and areas of joint reinforced cooperation, addressing the specific challenges the Western Balkans face, in particular the need for fundamental reforms and good neighbor relations.

Whereas political leadership is undoubtedly necessary to steer the EU accession process, it needs to be supported by skilled and stable public officials, capable of performing all of the complex tasks involved in the EU integration process, including the transposition of EU *acquis* into national legislation, coordination of sectorial policies, management of EU pre-accession assistance, etc.

Cross-border working relations are not developed through institutions, but by the people who work in them. Personal networks and an understanding of different working cultures are essential to overcoming barriers of national administration and past conflict. Both the EU integration process and the performance of the Balkan countries within the EU will depend on qualified and experienced human resources to guide and shape the process. In this regard, the powers and the role of National Parliaments remains crucial.

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## Objectives and expected results

The European Fund for the Balkans (EFB) is an initiative launched in 2007 by European private Foundations. The EFB aims at strengthening democracy, fostering European integration and affirming the role of the Western Balkans in addressing Europe's emerging challenges.

The EFB's strategic objectives are:

- to develop the Western Balkans' social capacity focused on the region's democratisation and EU accession process;
- to develop a policy platform that improves policy making while strengthening democratic institutions and civil societies in the Western Balkans and supporting EU integration;
- to develop a culture of regional cooperation with a set of norms taken at the societal level.

The Fellowship Programme at the Austrian Parliament is enhancing EU integration-driven reforms of the Western Balkans' public administrations by educating and motivating parliamentary officials to practice and advocate European principles of public administration.

**Specific objectives are:**

- to develop the capacities of a selected category of parliamentary officials who want to shape regional and European collaboration by targeting national actors important for European integration;
- to enable a good environment for supporting motivated parliamentary officials in acquiring knowledge and skills regarding European principles of administration, and transferring know-how within their departments of work;
- To get to know the role of national parliaments in the EU-legislation process and to get familiarized with parliamentary processes in the Austrian political system.

**Expected results** are on the individual and institutional level:

- By empowering the ambitious individuals not only with knowledge, but also with tools and technique, the programme is providing them with assets to develop their careers.
- Participation in this programme helps to create a professional network on EU and regional levels and an understanding of different working cultures, which is essential for every public servant.
- After the programme, the officials return to their respective Parliament, acting as the agents of change in their everyday work.
- The programme's regional approach ensures the mixture of the officials from Western Balkans countries, and yields the additional benefit of regional confidence building, stemming from social bonding and professional networking of the fellows.

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## Programme description

The fellows will get the possibility to work in particular in one of the following fields of the Austrian parliamentary administration: central administrative services, plenary meetings, committee support, legal, legislative and research affairs, IT, EU participation, communication.

The Programme is specifically designed for civil servants from the national Parliaments in the Western Balkans who have several years of professional experience in public administration and have already assumed initial managerial responsibilities. The eligible applicants should be/have:

- national of one of the Western Balkan countries,
- at least 3 years as a civil servant for the Parliament,
- excellent academic qualifications,
- very good knowledge of English,
- at least B1 proficiency level of German language (the level will be checked during the interview)
- sound knowledge of national and international politics and economics,
- strong interest in the political development of Europe,
- ability and readiness to acquaint oneself with various different topics in a short period of time,
- ability and readiness to complete inter-disciplinary work in inter-departmental working groups,
- ability and readiness to organise one's own life arrangements in a new environment.

Planned objectives and expected results are achieved by implementing the following activities:

### Application

The European Fund for the Balkans is launching a targeted call for applications. Only civil servants working in the administration of National Parliaments can apply. Applications from candidates in political positions are not accepted. *Expected activity duration: one month.*

### Selection

Selection of applicants is conducted in two phases – technical and qualitative selection. Technical selection is an administrative review, performed by the EFB's General Secretariat staff. Only applicants fulfilling the technical eligibility conditions will be accepted for the qualitative selection process. Rejected applicants will be notified. Applicants pre-selected for qualitative selection may be requested to send a copy of their university diploma via e-mail. The copy of the diploma should be sent together with a translation into English. Qualitative selection is performed by the Selection Committee. During the qualitative selection process, short-listed applicants will be called for a skype interview in English, during which the German language proficiency will be also assessed. The final step is a formal evaluation process for post-interview selection, with the same criteria for every candidate.

*Expected activity duration: two months*

### Placement procedure

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After selecting the fellows, EFB will inform the candidates about the dates of their fellowships. There are three possible shifts (groups) for the fellowship – starting mid-September 2019, starting end October 2019, starting March 2020. Each shift will have two fellows at the same time.

The Austrian parliament delegates a host mentor responsible for supporting the development of the fellowship work plan, the fellow's orientation in the host institution, facilitating the fellow's work, and monitoring and evaluating the fellow's performance. Fellows develop their fellowship work plans, in consultations with home mentors and host mentors.

*Expected activity duration: two months*

## German Language training

Fellows take an intensive language course in their home country, prior to departure for the fellowship.

*Expected activity duration: three to six months.*

## Practice phase

Each fellow will be placed in one of the departments at the Austrian Parliament, depending on the preferences expressed during the selection process. During their stay, fellows will take part in a peer-to-peer exchange of experiences, and will familiarise themselves with administrative structures and forms of policy making in a host institution. Host mentors will support fellows by induction and orientation for each fellow's position, actively monitor and facilitate fellows' working and learning processes, facilitate fellows' interaction with other institutions and evaluate fellows' performance. The quality and intensity of the cooperation with the host mentor and authorities of the Austrian parliament is crucial for the success of the fellowship.

*Expected activity duration: six weeks*

## Final seminar

At the end of the Practice Phase, the Austrian Parliament and the European Fund for the Balkans will invite all six fellows to a final review meeting in Vienna (spring 2020) presenting the results of their work and plans for follow-up. The final seminar will also include meetings with the following institutions in Austria: Court of Auditors, Ombudsman Board, EU Agency for Fundamental Rights, International Anti-Corruption Academy, European Commission Representation in Vienna and the European Parliament Liaison Office in Vienna and the Diplomatic Academy.

*Expected activity duration: three days*

## Presentation of fellowship experience in home institution

The fellow is obliged to share the knowledge and skills with his/her colleagues in their Parliament. Knowledge sharing must be structured, with at least one presentation for colleagues. At the end of cycle, the fellow reports to the EFB.

*Expected activity duration: one month*

## Funding

Six (6) scholarships will be available for civil servants in the 2019/2020 programme cycle. The support granted to the fellow by the EFB includes: language course, travel expenses, international travel (medical) insurance, stipend for practice phase and the travel expenses and lodging for the final review meeting.

**Practice phase funding** - The EFB will cover round-trip travel expenses between the fellow's residence and Vienna. The fellow is expected to obtain sufficient travel insurance against illness, liability and accident in the host country (international medical insurance), which will be reimbursed by the EFB.

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Costs for six weeks multi-entry Schengen tourist visa for the host country will be covered by EFB (in case the fellow needs a visa).

EFB will grant the fellow a Stipend of €2,250.00 for the six weeks period. This sum shall serve to finance all living expenses throughout the duration of the Practice Phase - lodging, meals, local travel, etc (the host institution pays no compensation).

**German language training funding**– The EFB will directly pay costs of language training in the home country before the start of the fellowship. The fellow is responsible for selecting a language training provider and organising his/her language lessons. In total, up to €1,000.00 of language training costs can be paid by the EFB.

By participating in the programme, the fellows from the National Parliaments will have the opportunity to:

- gain professional experience in an EU country's parliamentary administration,
- receive training on their respective fields of expertise including EU issues,
- engage with their colleagues from the region and the EU, and thus
- create links between administrations through individual networks,
- serve as ambassadors of their respective countries,
- learn a foreign language and
- participate in the EFB Community network after completing the fellowship.

## Application Process

Applications can be submitted exclusively from March 10th – April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2019 to [fellowship@balkanfund.org](mailto:fellowship@balkanfund.org) (subject Application for FP Austrian Parliament). The following documents should be included:

- **Detailed CV in English** (maximum 3 pages, pdf). Please upload a CV using the Europass template in English. <https://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/en/documents/curriculum-vitae/templates-instructions> .  
The CV should include a description of your relevant professional experience to date and a summary of your educational and academic background, such as, name of your home organisation, job title, number of months/years spent in each position, description of your duties and responsibilities, details of the work you have carried out, etc.
- **Letter of consent from your employer** (pdf). You are asked to upload a signed and stamped letter of consent from your superior officer or an authorised representative<sup>1</sup> stating that you will be approved for the necessary leave of absence for six weeks (between September 2019 and March 2020, plus 4 days for the Final seminar in April 2020), in the case that you are accepted for the Fellowship Programme. Please send the letter of consent using the given template in the Call.
- **Motivation Letter**: We expect you to write a motivation letter, (minimum of 200 words, maximum of 400), with a detailed presentation of your motive for applying for the Programme, the connection of your professional interest with the Programme, as well as your

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<sup>1</sup> In cases where the superior officer has not been granted powers of procurator on behalf of the institution

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intermediate- and long-term professional goals and expectations for your visit to the Austrian Parliament.

When answering these questions be as specific as possible and describe your major area of professional interest and what would you expect to learn in the Austrian Parliament. Please clearly outline your preferences regarding the host department (for example research, human resources, IT, etc.)

## Selection process

The selection of applicants is conducted in two phases – technical and qualitative selection.

Technical selection is an administrative review, performed by the EFB's General Secretariat staff. Technically non-compliant applications will be automatically rejected and applicants will be notified. Applicants pre-selected for qualitative selection may be requested to send a copy of their university diploma via e-mail. The copy of the diploma should be sent together with the translation into English. Qualitative selection will be based on a skype interview.

## Fellows' Responsibilities

Participants are expected to be available during the overall period of the Programme and to attend each planned activity. **All of the activities of the Programme require a full-time presence.** Please, take some time to carefully review the contract template.

Any clarification questions concerning this call for applications should be submitted in writing via email to [fellowship@balkanfund.org](mailto:fellowship@balkanfund.org).