

Stocktaking Conference – Before the WB6 Summit in Trieste

Belgrade, 11 April 2017

The purpose of the conference was to present a critical analysis of the Berlin Process from civil society's perspective and offer recommendations to be considered at the Trieste Western Balkan Summit, on July 12th, 2017.

The participants examined the overall context in which the Berlin Process appeared and analyzed how much dynamism it has brought to the sluggish EU-WB relations addressing several issues with systemic impact on many areas of the accession process and regional cooperation in the Western Balkans.

Special attention was paid to the Connectivity Agenda, which paved the way for some strategic opportunities in the areas of infrastructure development and transport and energy policies in the region, giving additional incentives to the adoption and implementation of the *acquis* in these areas.

A new project developed in the framework of the Berlin Process to be presented at the Trieste Summit was introduced and analyzed – the concept of a more integrated regional market. It includes coordinated efforts to improve the business climate and investment attractiveness of the region. The Western Balkan Chambers Investment Forum established at the Vienna Summit was also analyzed as highly instrumental in achieving these objectives.

The civil society dimension of the Berlin Process was also explored, underlining the relevance of the nongovernmental actors in the adoption, implementation and promotion of different reconciliation incentives, such as addressing bilateral issues and youth cooperation in the region, but also in launching new initiatives, as well as their monitoring, evaluation and promotion.

Finally, a new issue was introduced in the debate on the Berlin Process – how to communicate the goals, activities and achievements of this innovative framework. The concept of well-structured and targeted communications was proposed in order to bring the Berlin Process closer to the decision and opinion makers, as well as the citizens in the region and increase its effectiveness.

Recommendations

There is great level of urgency to address the major risks and challenges and make use of the opportunities in the Western Balkans. The Berlin Process is the only comprehensive framework available for that purpose. In that context, the following recommendations may be considered:

1. General considerations

- The Berlin Process should be used to further reenergize and innovate some aspects of the EU enlargement policy. It is expected to further pave the way to come out of the EU-WB slow motion characterizing this decade.
- The streamlining of regional initiatives already initiated by the Regional Cooperation Council has to be further enhanced by the Berlin Process in order to facilitate addressing the key issues in the region;
- Launch an open debate on enhancing sectoral/functional integration of the Western Balkans into the EU (connectivity, Energy Market, Digital Europe, border control etc.) before the full membership will be possible;
- The increased transparency, governance structure, reporting, accountability and a complete data base about the process should be considered in particular if it is to be continued after 2018, following the model of the Civil Society Forum (Website) and Chamber Investment Forum (Regional Mechanism of Representation);
- The Western Balkan countries need to be not only an object but also an active subject of the Berlin Process and influence its further priorities and modes of action.

2. Energy and Transport

- The Berlin Process should address effective integration between the Adriatic-Ionian and Danube macro regional strategies on energy and transport;
- The Berlin Process should consider the initiative to enhance river-to-sea navigation between the Danube and the Black Sea & Central Asia and facilitate political arrangements to provide all countries in the region with access to the Belgrade Port and the (far more ambitious) intermodal terminal;
- Massive forestation and integral water management are critical for preventing risks and harnessing opportunities regarding renewable energy across the region and hinge on the resolution of cross-border disputes and the introduction of a structure of trans-border



responsibilities. This is a massive and urgent undertaking and has to be addressed by an efficient regional governing institution;

- The Berlin Process has to take a stand in favor of people living in the region and their basic human rights to a healthy environment, clean air, access to water and energy poverty eradication. This is prerequisite for effective forestation, use of hydro resources and development of the electricity markets;
- Commercial and professional institutions are to assume responsibility for (1) better use of the existing infrastructure, (2) large-scale innovative investments in renewable heat and power generation (to displace the existing lignite fired power plants and eliminate problems with security of supply) and (3) introduction of innovative transport solutions by the region's Governments;
- Given that the USA is emerging as a major exporter of energy commodities (LNG and oil products) and energy and transport technologies, the Western Balkan region needs a framework for effective access to these opportunities.

3. Towards a More Integrated Regional Market

- Deeper trade integration will significantly benefit the regional economies because they traded significantly even before their regional cooperation arrangements. Every new step in integration will bring new benefits that will increase intraregional trade and general welfare;
- The process of deepening regional integration among the WB6 must be coordinated with their accession to the EU. The WB6 should concentrate more on regional trade cooperation if their accession to the EU is put off. However, any future progress in EU enlargement must make sure that it does not impinge on WB6 regional trade ties;
- All WB6 economies that are not WTO members have to join this organization as soon as possible in order to further harmonize their trading standards.

4. Civil Society in the Berlin Process

- Provide critical analyses and assessments of the Berlin Process and role the adopted connectivity package, as well as the other "products", are playing;
- Evaluate their role in the broader enlargement/accession context;
- Initiate or continue the systematic think tank work, consultations and dialogue on the Berlin Process with the national authorities, academia, professional associations, regional initiatives and others;



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- Initiate networking of grass-root organizations, civic movements and professionals in developing joint programs and activities supporting specific Berlin Process initiatives; Develop monitoring and reporting mechanisms;
- Disseminate information about the Berlin Process and promote its results.

5. Communicating the Berlin Process

- Both the implementers of individual projects and initiatives and the organizers of meetings (Berlin Process communicators) should understand communications and advocacy as instruments facilitating the attainment of the Process goals and objectives, and should apply them following careful strategic and action planning;
- The communicators should take a pro-active rather than a reactive approach to media and other communication stakeholders, in order to be able to exercise influence over the extent and the content of communications;
- Civil society organizations with expertise in advocacy and communications should provide strategic and technical support to the Berlin Process communicators. This can be achieved through a highly operational communications/advocacy service unit operated by professionals from civil sector organizations from the Western Balkans Six, within the framework of the Civil Society Forum.
- The establishment of a communication/advocacy unit comprised of the think tanks from the Western Balkans Six, as a concrete measure of civil society support to the Berlin Process-related efforts of the governments in the region, within the framework of the Civil Society Forum.