

***Working to strengthen regional cooperation in the Western Balkans:
Achievements and Prospects***

26th and 27th of November 2015, Jahorina, Bosnia and Herzegovina

During the discussions at the regional conference in Jahorina, Bosnia and Herzegovina, held on November 26th and 27th, 2015 several key points, conclusions and recommendations were raised by parliamentarians, experts and ministers from the Western Balkans. Conclusions and recommendations are not binding for parliaments and can serve as action points that can be proposed by committee's members of NPC for further improvement of IPA 2, and budgetary and financial oversight in the Western Balkans.

The Network recognises the achievements in the past 3 years, also recognised in the recent assesment report on regional parliamentary initiatives commissioned by the European Commission¹ and calls for further and more intensified regional cooperation between Western Balkan parliaments to closely follow the Berlin agenda, the Vienna conference conclusions and key goals for European integration of Western Balkan countries.

In the area of European Integration and oversight of IPA 2 funds

- Parliaments in the Western Balkans should use the expertise and knowledge from the civil sector in order to be able to engage in evidence based negotiation process with the EU;
- Parliaments should engage in more intensive oversight on the efficiency and effectiveness of the spending of IPA 2 funds, by using good oversight practices from the parliaments and civil sector in the Western Balkans region;
- Where possible parliaments should increase their engagement and participation in the process of programming and planning of the IPA 2 funds on a country level;
- Parliaments participants in the Network should cooperate regionally to apply and access IPA 2 funds, that can be used for further development of the capacities of the parliaments, both on country and on regional level and work together with WFD in preparing applications for such regional parliamentary project.

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/enlargement_process/2015-02-17-mapping_and_analysis_report.pdf
http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/enlargement_process/2015-02-17-capacity-building-report.pdf

In the area of budgetary and financial oversight

- The Network of parliamentary committees welcomes the establishment of the parliamentary budget office in the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia as the first PBO in the Western Balkans region.
- Participants in the network welcome the sharing of best practices in financial and budgetary oversight on a regional level and are looking forward to further regional discussion on budgetary and financial oversight on bilateral and multilateral level.
- Where there is existing capacity to do so, parliaments should work together with WFD and other potential donors and partners to establish such offices and calls on WFD to share the best practice from the work with the Serbian parliament in the Western Balkans region.
- The Network encourages its participants to follow up on the conclusions and recommendations from regional conference on budgetary and financial oversight held in Tirana on February 20-21st 2015.

In the area of implementation the Vienna conclusions and the Berlin agenda

- There is a role for parliaments in improving and increasing the communication regarding the Berlin process, bringing it closer to the citizens and increase the internal debate about it in parliamentary sessions.
- One of the main tasks in following period should be the introduction of Methodology for prioritization of the projects coming out from the Berlin and Vienna conference. MPs should work together with their colleagues from the Western Balkans region to coordinate the platforms, thus supporting the process. The „connectivity agenda“ could be one of the priorities in future MP regional forums.
- During the conference ministers of Foreign affairs of BiH, and EU affairs of Serbia recognized the value of the network of parliamentary committees on economy finance and European integration of Western Balkans and called on further regional parliamentary cooperation within this network and voiced support for their future initiatives.
- We recommend that the Network of parliamentary committees and participating parliaments should be included in the analysis, monitoring and oversight of strategic documents connected with the Berlin process.
- We call on ministers for foreign affairs, ministers for EU affairs and ministers for finance to establish a practice of regular 6 month reporting process to parliaments in Western Balkan's regarding all national and regional projects resulting from the Berlin process.