



WESTERN BALKANS YOUTH FORUM 2023

Summary and action points

In the framework of Western Balkans Youth Forum 2023, over two days, more than 100 young people, representatives of government institutions, and young journalists from Western Balkans gathered in Tirana, Albania, to discuss the implementation of the Berlin Declaration drafted during the last year's Forum. Throughout the extensive consultations moderated in 3 different groups, they designed concrete, specific, and detailed action points for each of the three chapters outlined in the Berlin Declaration. The discussions tackled various issues focusing on concerns related to democratic participation, inclusive peacebuilding, and sustainable living.

Within all discussions, two important cross-cutting topics appeared: the question of education and the question of mobility of (young) people in the Western Balkans. Education was highlighted in all three groups, emphasizing two points: improving existing initiatives and integrating new, up-to-date, contemporary topics and methods into formal curricula that will ease young people's civic and democratic participation, as well as their contribution to peacebuilding and securing sustainable living in Western Balkans societies. On the question of mobility, participants highlighted three crucial things: the necessity to improve infrastructure and connectivity among WB6 societies, as well as the need to make traveling sustainable and affordable to young people. The third essential topic was creating and offering more mobility opportunities within the formal and non-formal education sectors.



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Regarding Chapter I of the Berlin Declaration, Resilient Democracies Involving Youth Voices, where youth call on political authorities to work along the principles of good governance, refrain from polarizing actions and hate speech, create more opportunities for youth participation, include civic education in formal curricula, strengthen youth programs through capacity building and financial support, endorse regional mobility activities through existing regional mechanisms and the full access to EU schemes for youth, participants produced following action points:

On Democratic Institutions

- Youth organizations, CSOs, formal education institutions, UN agencies, and media outlets should design and develop the "Beyond Bias Balkan Initiative" as a multistakeholder campaign to raise awareness of hate speech and polarizing narratives in the Balkans.

On Civic and Political Education

- Governments of WB6, formal education institutions, and CSOs should create and design a platform connecting high schools across the Western Balkans to the local civil society organizations working on civic and political education.

On the Enhancement of Community Resilience

- Governments of WB6, specifically ministries of education, Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO), and CSOs working on civic and political education, should develop a Western Balkans Youth Academy for young people aged 15-18 as well as for civil society activists, politicians, journalists & students aged 18-30;

On Mobility of Young Professionals within the Balkan Region and Beyond

- Governments of WB6, Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO), and European Union institutions in charge of ERASMUS + should create a Western Balkans 6 ERASMUS + program for students to study in one of the CPs in the WB6 for two weeks, one month, or one semester.



Referring to Chapter II of the Berlin Declaration, Enhance Security and Inclusive Peace, which calls for the inclusion of youth in peace negotiations and bilateral dialogues and advocates for a regionally coordinated approach to implement the Youth, Peace, and Security (YPS) agenda in the Western Balkans, participants designed the following action points:

On Youth in Peace and Security

- Governments of WB6 and organizations carriers of the Berlin process should youth-mainstream the modernization process of the regional infrastructure and innovative developments. For example, reduce the cost of traveling and offer discounts to young people (up to 30 years old) who wish to engage in regional cultural exchanges and initiatives;
- Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO) should create a space to connect young politicians and young academic representatives of the WB6 in a committee complementary to the RYCO Advisory Boards, where they exchange knowledge and propose programmatic solutions.

On Regional Approach to Implementation of Youth, Peace, and Security Agenda

- As a part of existing initiatives, governments of the WB6 should engage annually with young people and their associations in a direct dialogue about pressing issues concerning peace in the WB6 region.

Besides these three action points, participants also highlighted the following:

- 1. To take a regional approach to combating hate speech and national extremism*
- 2. To create a regional peace corps*

Referring to Chapter III of the Berlin Declaration, Ensure Sustainable Living for the Future of Our Planet, where the youth requests obligatory green education in core curricula and the support of the civil society in sustainable activities, and calls for the improvement and



implementation of existing regulations, introduction of new monitoring mechanisms, and the implementation of new policies that support the Green Agenda including the production of green energy by youth, participants proposed following action points:

On the Establishment of a Green Mentality for Change

- Governments of WB6 should incorporate the EU Green Competence framework as an integral part of the formal education system by 2030 to advance the 2030 Agenda, precisely goals 6,7, 11, 12, and 13;
- Governments of WB6 should stimulate and incentivize sustainable living habits and choices as a cross-cutting mechanism within multiple policies, among other things, using strategic communication to tackle disinformation, such as greenwashing.

On a Participatory Green Agenda

- Ministries of WB6 should strengthen the capacities of Local Youth Councils to support the implementation of the Green Agenda for the WB6 by securing a "green seat" within the councils and establishing regional cooperation mechanisms;
- Governments of WB6 should effectively implement international treaties outlining environmental democracy principles, such as the Aarhus Convention;
- Governments of WB6 should focus on rural development in the green agenda investment plans, including through multi stakeholder approaches, with a particular emphasis on youth, within the next seven years.

On Energy Security, not Endangering the Climate

- Responsible ministries within WB6 should intensify efforts to diversify energy sources through incentivizing alternative renewable energy options, strong collaboration with the responsible private sector, and engagement of young people;
- Governments of WB6, with the support of the international community, should lay the ground for establishing energy hubs/communities to advance energy democracy and support the empowerment of energy prosumers.



On Green Agenda Regulations Implementation and Monitoring of the Process

- CSOs across WB6, with the support of the international community and cooperation with governments, should endorse the establishment of knowledge platforms and campaigns for the active use/enforcement of legal mechanisms to hold stakeholders accountable;
- The international community should enforce the accountability requirements under the different financing mechanisms (e.g., conditional finance).

On Regional Initiatives Supporting the Sustainable Development of the Western Balkans

- The international community and regional bodies should improve coordination mechanisms/platforms concerning their interventions;
- Support the knowledge-sharing mechanisms to improve the quality of data and research in sustainable development (including the green agenda for the WB6) on a regional level.