



The Berlin Process in a Nutshell

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Published by the
Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

Registered offices
Bonn and Eschborn, Germany

Open Regional Fund for SEE – Promotion of EU Integration
Zmaja od Bosne 7-7a
71000 Sarajevo, BiH
Phone +387 33 957 500
Fax +387 33 957 500
giz-bosnienherzegovina@giz.de
www.giz.de

As at
09/2018

Printed by

Design

www.studiodeset.com
Sarajevo

Photo credits

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Text

Ana Marjanović Rudan

GIZ is responsible for the content of this publication.

On behalf of the
German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)

What is the Berlin Process?

The Berlin process is a platform for high-level cooperation between the leaders of the Western Balkan countries (WB6) and the Berlin Process host countries, also including the region's civil society, youth, and businesses. It began in 2014 as a 4-year platform, but it will continue beyond 2018.

Why was it initiated?

At the time when the European Union (EU) was facing multiple challenges and its enlargement was put on hold, the Berlin Process was launched to maintain the stability of the Western Balkans (WB), support the ongoing reforms, and to move the cooperation among the regional countries forward.

The Goals

The 2014 Declaration of the German Chair set out to make concrete progress in:

- 1. Resolution of outstanding bilateral and internal issues**
- 2. Achieving reconciliation within and between the societies in the region**
- 3. Enhancing regional economic cooperation**
- 4. Laying the foundations for sustainable growth**

The Berlin Process and the EU's policy towards the WB

The Berlin Process is not a part of the Stabilisation and Accession Process (SAP) but supplements it by focusing on the region as a whole.

The participants

- The Berlin Process host countries: EU member states' governments – Germany, Austria, France, Italy, the United Kingdom, Slovenia, Croatia and Poland – with perspective of other EU members joining in the future
- The WB6: Governments, civil society and businesses
- The EU institutions – The European Commission (EC), European External Action Service (EEAS), and the member state holding the Presidency of the Council
- International financial institutions – European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), European Investment Bank (EIB), and other investment institutions grouped in the Western Balkans Investment Framework (WBIF) and the Connectivity Europe Facility (CEF)
- Regional initiatives – Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), South East European Transport Observatory (SEETO), Energy Community (EnC), Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA), Regional Anti-Corruption Initiative (RAI).

How does it work?

The Process has a flexible structure, with no central coordination mechanism. The EU member states host the yearly summits, set the agendas and follow up on the last year's summit. The process proceeds through a series of meetings:

- Yearly meetings of the WB6 and the Berlin Process host countries at the governmental level, with high-level representatives of the EU and member states, international financial institutions and regional organisations involved in the Process – the Western Balkans Summits
- Yearly meetings of the region's civil society, youth, and businesses – adjacent to the Summits
- Preparatory and follow-up meetings at governmental level (Prime Ministers, ministers, government representatives)
- Preparatory meetings of the civil society, youth and businesses

The results

The Process has thus far yielded results in 3 areas of regional cooperation – economic, political, and social.

Most projects, programmes and initiatives within the Berlin Process have been designed to enhance regional economic cooperation: the “connectivity agenda”, the initiatives in support of cooperation and growth of the Western Balkan businesses and to joint projects of the regional scientists.

Regional economic cooperation – the “connectivity agenda”

Compared with the EU average, the WB has low railway and motorway densities, low capacities for power generation and scarce broadband internet connections. This “infrastructure gap” negatively affects the region’s prospects for growth, mutual linking and integration in the European Economic Area.

To overcome the gap, the Berlin Process has been putting forward the “connectivity agenda” – the projects, programmes, and initiatives to link the Western Balkans to Trans European Transport Network (TEN-T), implement the electricity Projects of Energy Community Interest (PECI) and contribute to creating conditions for sustainable growth.

In the area of transport, the 24 “connectivity” projects include construction and rehabilitation of roads, railways, tunnels, viaducts, ports, and cross-border crossings and will extend the three core network corridors of the TEN-T (Mediterranean, East/Med and Rhine/Danube) to the WB. In the area of energy, the 5 projects include the construction of 450 km of electricity network and over 100 km of gas infrastructure, contributing to energy security, while the 2 energy efficiency and renewables programmes – the Regional Energy Efficiency Programme (REEP) and Green for Growth Fund (GGF) – will provide investments fostering the region’s sustainable growth.

Since the EU investments in connectivity should take place in an optimal policy framework for construction and operation, the funding decisions are linked to the progress on reforms related to energy, transport and sustainability in line with the acquis. These “soft connectivity measures” are meant to open the transport market and establish reliable rail systems, develop the regional energy market and contribute to sustainability of the energy sector.

The investment projects are proposed for funding by potential country beneficiaries to the Western Balkans Investment Framework (WBIF), in line with regional and national strategies. Funding decisions are based on maturity and regional impact of investment projects, but the key criterion for selection is the progress in legal and regulatory reforms.

The digital aspect of connectivity has recently been touched upon, as the Digital Agenda for the Western Balkans was launched in 2018. It aims to increase cybersecurity, trust and the digitalisation of industry in the Western Balkans, deploy eGovernment, eProcurement, and eHealth tools, help increase digital skills among citizens and boost research and innovation. 30 million euros were pledged for broadband infrastructure by the WB EDIF (Western Balkan Enterprise Development and Innovation Facility).

Regional economic cooperation – support to cooperation and development of businesses

Chamber Investment Forum (CIF)

The Chamber Investment Forum was established at the Vienna summit, in 2015, by the Chambers of Commerce of WB6, Croatia, and Slovenia. Representing 350,000 companies from the Balkans, the CIF aims to ensure their involvement in implementation of connectivity infrastructure projects and advocate for the improvement of business environments in the region.

Regional Economic Area (REA)

The idea of the REA is to create a space where goods, services, investments, and skilled workers will move freely. The initiative will extend the market available to potential investors in the WB, by enabling access to almost 20 million consumers, and make investing in the WB more attractive by offering opportunities to create value chains across borders, while taking advantage of trade relations with the EU. The Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) prepared a multi-annual Action Plan (MAP) for the REA, which was endorsed in Trieste in 2017. The plan covers trade, investment, mobility, and digital economy. National Coordinators for the MAP were appointed. The actions introduced in the MAP REA are expected to be implemented until 2020, with some extensions until 2023.

Transport community (TC)

With the Treaty concluded between the EU and the WB6, the TC was established in 2017, in the field of road, rail, inland waterway and maritime transport as well as regarding the development of the transport network between the EU and the WB countries. The TC should provide support to the realisation of common infrastructure projects and progressively integrate the transport market of the WB6 into the EU transport market on the basis of the relevant acquis in the areas of technical standards, interoperability, safety, security, traffic management, social policy, public procurement, and environment – for all modes of transport (excluding air transport).

Support to SMEs through Western Balkan Enterprise Development and Innovation Facility (WB EDIF)

In order to boost entrepreneurial capacity and provide new financing opportunities to the companies in the region, in 2017 the EC has committed to providing 48 million euros through the WB EDIF.

Regional economic cooperation – support to scientific cooperation

Western Balkans Research Foundation (WBRF)

At the 2017 summit in Trieste, the participants decided to start the process of establishing the WBRF. The Foundation will be a self-governing international institution implementing mobility programmes and providing financial support to teams of junior scientists from the WB.

Regional political cooperation

Young Civil Servants Pilot Scheme (YCSPS)

The YCSPS is an executive programme agreed upon in 2016, designed to develop the professional capacities of public administrators and policy makers in the WB6. Through this programme they will acquire a global perspective on public administration and jointly participate in a programme tailor-made for the WB. The scheme involves participation in the Regional Exchange Programme.

Declaration on Bilateral Issues

The Declaration on Bilateral Issues was adopted by the WB6 Foreign Affairs ministers in Vienna in 2015. The signatories committed to resolution of all open questions in the spirit of good neighbourliness and commitment to European integration. The declaration is an obligation for the signatories to resolve their bilateral disputes in a manner which will not block or encourage others to block their neighbours' EU integration process. As the first encouraging steps in that endeavour, two border agreements were signed on the margins of the Vienna summit.

Joint Declaration on Regional Cooperation and Good Neighbourly Relations, Joint Declaration on Missing Persons, and Joint Declaration on War Crimes

The Joint Declaration reiterates the commitments made regarding the resolution of outstanding bilateral issues in 2015, commending the initiative for biannual stocktaking, and pointing to the contribution that the civil society can make in improving regional cooperation. It stresses the need to resolve the cases of the missing persons in post-Yugoslav conflicts without politicisation and welcomes the pledge of the WB6 to investigations. In relation to war crimes, it emphasises the need to end impunity and overcome the legacy of the past and indicates the crucial importance of the independence of judiciary, but also of recognition of verdicts, of the need to reject hate speech and glorification of war criminals, to strengthen the prosecutors' office and courts and their regional cooperation, as well as the cooperation with the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (MICT).

Roadmap for a sustainable solution to the illegal possession, misuse and trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons and their ammunition in the Western Balkans by 2024

The Roadmap is an elaborate action plan, a guiding and consensual document developed and owned by the WB6 authorities and embedded in the Berlin Process, which complements existing European Union activity to counter those threats. It builds on a vision of a safer, more secure region, where comprehensive and sustainable mechanisms, fully harmonized with the European Union and other international standards are in place to identify, prevent, prosecute, and control the illegal possession, misuse and trafficking of firearms, ammunition and explosives. The Roadmap is also a practical progress measuring tool, with defined, goals, targets and performance indicators.

Joint Declaration: Principles of Cooperation in the Field of Information-Exchange for Law Enforcement

The WB6 governments agreed to share strategic assessments and operational and tactical intelligence on serious and organised crime and terrorism. The principles of cooperation were established: the exchanges will be in line with national legal requirements, including in relation to personal data protection and classified information security, timely, proactively, using secured channels, with as many details as possible and in an efficient and effective manner.

The Berlin Process Security Commitments Steering Group

As a part of the London Summit in 2018, the governments of the Western Balkans, committed to strengthening connectivity and cooperation within the region in the fields of serious and organised crime, terrorism and other security threats, established the Steering Group to identify priorities, monitor and assess the delivery of these commitments, address obstacles and identify future security threats and areas for cooperation.

Anti-corruption country commitments

In the framework of the London Summit, the governments of the WB6 (with the exception of Serbia) made individual country stipulations, committing to step up their anti-corruption efforts, namely in the areas of exposing corruption, of prosecuting the corrupt and of driving out the culture of corruption..

Regional social cooperation

Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO)

RYCO is a regionally-owned and financed organisation, based in Tirana. It was modelled after Franco-German Youth Office and is the first major step taken in the course of the Berlin Process towards accelerating reconciliation among the post-conflict societies of the post-Yugoslav space. Its mission includes providing support to youth exchanges in the region, stepping up regional youth cooperation, cooperating with institutions working with youth, implementing joint projects as well as coordinating cooperation among youth in the WB. RYCO was established in 2016.

Western Balkans Fund (WBF)

The WBF is a regionally-owned and financed organisation modelled after the Višegrad Fund, established in 2015. By financing projects, which must include participants from at least three WB6 countries, the WBF boosts cooperation between the societies of the WB6, strengthens relations and regional cohesion, and advances integration into the EU.

Overview: 3 areas of cooperation forwarded via the Berlin Process

ECONOMIC COOPERATION

- The “connectivity agenda”
 - 24 transport connectivity investment projects
 - 2 technical assistance projects (transport)
 - 5 energy connectivity investment projects
 - 2 sustainability programmes (efficiency, renewables)
 - Broadband infrastructure investment (digital)
 - Soft measures – energy
 - Soft measures – transport
 - Soft measures – sustainability
- Transport Community
- Regional Economic Area
- Chamber Investment Forum
- SMEs support via WB EDIF
- WB Research Foundation

POLITICAL COOPERATION

- Young civil servants pilot scheme
- Declaration on bilateral issues
- Declaration on Regional Cooperation and Good Neighbourly Relations
- Declaration on Missing Persons
- Declaration on War Crimes
- Roadmap for a solution to SALW and their ammunition
- Security commitments steering group
- Anti-corruption country commitments

SOCIAL COOPERATION

- Regional Youth Cooperation Office
- Western Balkans Fund

The course of the Process

Aside from the annual Summits, the Process goes on through the meetings following up to the past summits' commitments, and through the meetings held in order to prepare for the next summit. The topics of the Berlin Process are also tackled in gatherings not directly linked to the Process, which is why the review of its course also takes these events into account.

2014

Meetings in the run up to the Berlin Summit / Highlights

Feb 11, London

Western Balkans Investment Forum

- WB6 and Croatia Prime Ministers
- EBRD
- Promotion of the WB6 as an investment destination

Jul 15, Dubrovnik

Brdo-Brijuni Process meeting

- WB6 Head of States and Governments
- Presidents of Croatia and Slovenia
- German Chancellor
- The summit in Berlin announced
- The Council of the EU invited to organise WB-EU Summit
- EU strategy of transport and infrastructure should include the WB

August 28: The Western Balkans Summit in Berlin

Participants:

- WB6: Heads of States and Governments, Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Economy
- EU: EC President and Vice-President, DG NEAR Commissioner
- Austria, Croatia, Germany, Slovenia: Prime Ministers, Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Economy
- France: Special Envoy of the Minister of Foreign Affairs

Topics:

- Regional cooperation
- Transport community
- Independence of judiciary, fight against corruption
- Vocational education

2014

Commitments:

- Yearly Summits will provide a framework for a period of four years to achieve “additional, real” progress in economic cooperation, sustainable growth, reconciliation, bilateral issues
- Germany will foster media freedom in the WB
- The WB6 will work intensively on developing the Energy Community

Follow up to the Berlin Summit and preparations for the Vienna Summit / Highlights

Oct 23, Belgrade Informal meeting in Belgrade

- WB6 Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Economy/Finance
- DG NEAR Commissioner
- The EC will allocate 1 billion euros through IPA funds for transport and energy

2015

Follow up to the Berlin Summit and preparations for the Vienna Summit / Highlights

Feb 24, Tirana

South East Cooperation Process meeting

- Ministers of Foreign Affairs of SEECP members
- Latvian EU Presidency
- RCC
- RCC invited to prepare a regional cooperation platform to fight terrorism

Mar 20, Vienna

Conference “Tackling Jihadism Together – Shaping, Preventing, Reacting”

- Austria, Croatia, Italy, Slovenia, WB6 Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Interior
- EC, OSCE, RCC, Europol
- Ministers will enhance cooperation in fighting extremism and international terrorism

Mar 25, Pristina

Conference “Improved Connectivity and a Strong Core Network”

- WB6 Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Infrastructure
- DG NEAR Commissioner
- Draft Core Network Agreement announced
- Technical standards must be met by 2030 to have the Core Network completed

Apr 21, Brussels

Summit “Building Networks, Connecting People”

- WB6 Prime Ministers
- DG NEAR Commissioner
- DG MOVE Commissioner
- RCC
- CCore transport network agreed upon
- National Investment Committees must establish Single Project Pipeline of priority investments

2015

Apr 23, Brdo pri Kranju

Brdo-Brijuni Process meeting

- Italy, France, Slovenia and WB6 Ministers of Foreign Affairs
- State Secretary of Federal Foreign Office of Germany
- DG NEAR Commissioner
- Programmes of the Positive Agenda for Youth to be made more effective

May 6, Brussels

Regional cooperation day in Brussels

- WB6 Ministers of Foreign Affairs
- DG NEAR Commissioner
- RCC
- Furthering regional cooperation was deemed priority

May 25-26, Belgrade

CSO preparatory meeting for the Vienna Summit

- Regional civil society organisations and think tanks
- Recommendations for the Vienna Summit prepared (regional cooperation, creation of jobs and prosperity, freedom of expression)

Jun 12, Sarajevo

Regional BIRN conference

- Regional media professionals and experts
- Recommendations for the Vienna Summit prepared (regional cooperation, creation of jobs and prosperity, freedom of expression)

2015

Jun12, Sarajevo

Regional BIRN conference

- Regional media professionals and experts
- Recommendations for the Vienna Summit prepared (legal protection of journalists, state influence, rules on ownership and financing of outlets, hate speech)

Jun 22, Riga

TEN-T Days 2015

- WB6 Ministers of Transport
- DG NEAR Commissioner
- Energy Security Community
- The Core network, the Corridors and the mandate of the Corridor coordinators to be extended into the WB

Jul 8, Vienna

Conference “Connecting Systems, connecting Markets”

- WB6 Ministers of Energy
- DG NEAR Commissioner
- Director of Energy Security Community
- Shortlist of investment projects agreed upon, energy soft measures to be completed, regional power market initiative to be launched, NICs to be established

Jul 15-17, Haale and Berlin

Joint Science Conference

- National Academies and Rector' Conferences of WB6, Austria, Germany, Italy and Slovenia
- 3% of GDP for higher education and science should be allocated, research foundation should be established

2015

August 27: The Western Balkans Summit in Vienna

Participants:

- WB6: Heads of States and Governments, Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Economy
- EU: EC President and Vice-President, DG NEAR Commissioner, HR of the EU Foreign Policy and Security Affairs
- Austria, Croatia, Germany, Slovenia: Prime Ministers, Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Economy
- France: Secretary of State for European Affairs, Special Envoy of Minister of Foreign Affairs
- Italy: Minister of Foreign Affairs, Director General of the Ministry of Economy
- International financial institutions

Topics:

- Bilateral issues
- Migration and fight against terrorism
- Economic prosperity
- Connectivity agenda
- Youth
- Education and science

Commitments:

- Declaration on Regional Cooperation and Solution of Bilateral Disputes signed
- Declaration on Establishment of RYCO signed
- Annual Economic Reform Programmes (ERPs) will be prepared
- 6 transport and 4 energy infrastructure investment projects agreed upon
- The list of “soft measures” to be implemented before the Paris Summit was agreed upon
- Establishment of a regional energy market agreed upon
- 1 billion euros for connectivity projects will be made available from IPA II
- Obstacles to the Transport Community Treaty to be overcome

2015

August 27: The Civil Society Forum in Vienna

Highlight:

- Recommendations on enhancing regional cooperation, media freedom, job creation and solution of bilateral issues presented

August 27: The Business Forum in Vienna

Highlight:

- Agreement on establishment of the Chamber Investment Forum signed

Follow up to the Vienna Summit and preparations for the Paris Summit / Highlights

Sep 18, Split Conference “WISE”

- WB6 Ministers of Education and Science
- Minister of Education of Croatia
- “WB Research and Innovation Centre” (WISE) was established

Oct 8, Luxembourg Conference “Eastern Mediterranean –Western Balkans route”

- WB6, EU member states, Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan Ministers of Justice and Home Affairs
- Migrants must be returned to countries of origin
- WB6 assistance commended
- Key joint actions agreed upon

2015

Oct 21, Budva

Inauguration meeting of the CIF

- Members of the Chamber Investment Forum
- Working groups were established and rules of procedure adopted

Oct 25, Brussels

Meeting on the WB Migration Route

- Heads of States/ Governments: Albania, Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, FYROM, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia; President of the EC; Reps of the Luxembourg Presidency of EU Council, of the future Dutch Presidency, UNHCR, Frontex, European Asylum Support Office
- 17-point action plan agreed upon

Nov 12-13, Prague

Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the V4 and the WB6

- Ministers of Foreign Affairs of WB6 and V4
- representatives of the EC, of Croatia, Slovenia, UK
- RCC Secretary General
- The Agreement on Establishment of the Western Balkans Fund signed

Dec 7-8, Sarajevo

EU-WB Forum on Justice and Home Affairs

- Ministers for Justice and Home Affairs of WB6 and the EU member states
- DG HOME Commissioner
- EU-Western Balkans counter-terrorism initiative adopted

2016

Follow up to the Vienna Summit and preparations for the Paris Summit / Highlights

Feb 22, London

Western Balkans Investment Summit

- Croatia and WB6 Prime Ministers, Ministers of Economy, Energy and/or Transport, UK Minister for Trade and Investment
- EBRD; WB business representatives
- Development of transport links, renewable energy and the privatisation agenda elaborated upon
- EBRD-backed SEE Link launched

Feb 25-26, Zagreb

Chamber Investment Forum Meeting

- Presidents of Chambers from SEE and of the EU member states; EU representatives;
- The Regional Platform for Strengthening SMEs established

Mar 1, Brussels

Meeting of WB6 Ministers of Energy and Transport

- WB6 Ministers of Transport and Energy
- DG NEAR Commissioner
- The WB6 will work towards establishing a regional market for electricity
- The NICs will keep Single Project Pipelines (SPPs) of priority investments up to date and credible

2016

Mar 30-31, Durres

Meeting of WB6 Ministers of Foreign Affairs in Durres

- WB6 and Czech Ministers of Foreign Affairs
- Secretary of State of France
- Italian Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs
- DG NEAR Commissioner,
- RCC Secretary General
- The EU will fund connectivity investment projects where soft measures have been addressed
- The WB6 proposed a cooperation agenda as regards to the refugee crisis and demanded the conclusion of the visa liberalisation process for all the WB citizens
- The EC will organise a youth forum, launch a pilot scheme for young civil servants and prepare a regional hydropower master plan

Apr 25-26, Vienna

Conference “WB: Energizing Enlargement by Solving Bilateral Disputes”

- Representatives of WB6, Austria, Croatia, Germany, France, Italy and Slovenia, of the EU institutions, RCC, think-tanks
- The ways of resolving bilateral issues were deliberated

Apr 27, Vienna

Meeting in EnC Secretariat

- WB6 Ministries of Energy
- WB6 Transmission system operators and national regulatory authorities
- MoU of the WB6 on Regional Electricity Market Development signed

May 12-13, Belgrade and Novi Sad

Civil Society Forum

- Regional civil society organisations and think tanks
- Recommendations for the Paris Summit prepared (youth cooperation, migration crisis, environment and bilateral disputes)

May 18, Vienna

Building a WB Alliance for Work-Based Learning Conference

- Representatives of companies from Austria, Croatia, France, Germany, Italy, Slovenia and WB6; of the EC and IFIs
- The principles of cooperation in order to support vocational education and training were agreed upon

May 22-24, Vienna

Joint Science Conference

- National Academies and Rector' Conferences of WB6, Austria, Germany, Italy and Slovenia; RCC
- Recommendations for the WB6 governments agreed upon (involvement of scientists in policy-making, application of international quality criteria, support to mobility measures, etc.)

May 24, Paris

Brdo-Brijuni Process meeting

- Italy, France, Slovenia and WB6 Ministers of Foreign Affairs; German Minister of State for Europe; State Secretary of France
- DG NEAR Commissioner
- EEAS Secretary General
- Cooperation needs to be stepped up in the area of migrations

May 25, Brussels

Economic and Financial Dialogue between the EU, the WB, and Turkey

- Representatives of WB6, EU member states, Turkey, EC; of European Central Bank and central banks of WB6 and Turkey
- The WB6 representatives presented their Economic Reform Plans (ERPs) for 2016

2016

May 26, Ljubljana

Conference “Strengthening Econ. Governance in SEE”

- WB6 Ministers of Economy
- Representatives of the EC and IMF
- Reform priorities identified under Economic Reform Programmes discussed

July 4: The Western Balkans Summit in Paris

Participants:

- WB6: Heads of States and Governments, Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Economy
- EU: EC President and V.-President, DG NEAR Commissioner, HR of the EU Foreign Policy and Security Affairs
- Austria, Croatia, Germany, France, Italy, Slovenia: Prime Ministers, Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Economy
- International financial institutions

Topics:

- Rule of law and anti-corruption
- Youth
- Environment
- Migration and fighting terrorism
- Connectivity agenda

Commitments:

- 3 new railway projects agreed upon, and the programme for energy efficiency received additional funding
- Soft measures to be implemented
- A roadmap for setting up of a regional market for electricity agreed upon
- Proposals for increasing the access for the region's youth to the Erasmus agreed upon
- Western Balkan Sustainable Charter agreed upon
- Agreement on the Establishment of the RYCO signed
- Young Civil Servants Pilot Scheme launched

2016

July 4: The Civil Society Forum in Paris

Highlights

- Recommendations on climate change and green growth, youth cooperation, bilateral disputes, migration and democratic governance presented

July 4: The Business Forum in Paris

Highlights

- WB6 chambers to promote cooperation and increase competitiveness

July 4: The Youth conference in Paris

Highlights

- Recommendations on education and mobility, employment and entrepreneurship, youth engagement and participation, and youth and the media presented

2016

Follow up to the Paris Summit and preparations for the Trieste Summit /

Sep 26-28, Ljubljana

Europe-Western Balkans Youth Meeting

- WB6 and EU members states youth leaders
- Representatives of institutions of 15 Erasmus+ countries
- Minister of Foreign Affairs of Slovenia
- Progress on implementation of the recommendations of the Paris Youth Conference discussed

Nov 24-26, Skopje

Civil Society Forum

- Regional civil society organisations and think tanks
- State of democracy and rule of law discussed

Nov 29, Warsaw

Annual Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the V4 and WB6

- Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the WB6 and V4
- High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy
- Reps. of Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania, Slovenia and Italy
- V4 supported the WB6 EU integration and their effort in the fight against corruption and in managing the migrations

2016

Dec 6–12, Brussels

Annual Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the V4 and WB6

- WB6 Ministers of Transport; DG NEAR and DG MOVE Commissioners
- Representatives of SEETO, RCC and IFIs
- Agreement regarding the text of the Transport Community Treaty reached

Dec 16, Brdo

EU-WB Ministerial Forum on Justice and Home Affairs

- WB6, Slovenia and Slovakia Ministers of Justice and Home Affairs
- Representatives of the EU, civil society, regional cooperation bodies
- The WB6 will be partners in the operational actions related to the fight against firearms trafficking

2017

Follow up to the Paris Summit and preparations for the Trieste Summit / Highlights

Feb 9, Skopje

WB6 Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Energy

- WB6 Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Energy;
- Italian Undersecretary of State for Foreign Affairs
- DG NEAR Commissioner
- Representatives of IFIs
- RCC Secretary General
- 50 million euro to support energy efficiency and renewable energy were allocated
- Transport Community Treaty will be signed
- Roadmap on Regional Market on Electricity and Sustainability Charter to be implemented

March 16, Sarajevo

WB6 Prime Ministers meeting

- WB6 Prime Ministers
- Representatives of Italy, the EC and the EEAS
- Further progress is needed to improve border crossing procedures and infrastructure facilities
- Proposal to further economic cooperation in the WB6 announced for the Trieste Summit

Apr 26-28, Tirana

Civil Society Forum

- Regional civil society organisations and think tanks
- Recommendations for the Trieste Summit formulated (youth cooperation, rule of law / anti-corruption, business environment, bilateral issues)

Jun 14-16, Paris Joint Science Conference

- National Academies and Rector' Conferences and Universities of WB6, Austria, Germany, Italy and Slovenia; representatives of France, Italy and the EC; RCC; regional and EU scientists and experts
- Recommendations for the Trieste summit agreed upon (to establish the WB Research Foundation and to develop a WB Action Plan for Smart Growth)

July 12: The Western Balkans Summit in Trieste

Participants:

- WB6: Heads of States and Governments, Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Economy
- EU: EC President and V.-President, DG NEAR and DG MOVE Commissioners, HR of the EU Foreign Policy and Security Affairs
- Austria, Croatia, Germany, France, Italy, Slovenia and the United Kingdom: Prime Ministers, Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Economy
- International financial institutions

Topics:

- Connectivity agenda
- Transport Community
- Rule of law and fight against corruption
- Regional economic integration
- SMEs development
- Education and science

Commitments:

- Treaty Establishing Transport Community signed
- Multi-annual Action Plan for a Regional Economic Area adopted
- Joint Declaration Against Corruption agreed upon
- 7 additional connectivity investment projects agreed upon

2017

- A grant for co-financing and the balance loans from the EIB and the EBRD provided
- Connectivity Europe Facility (CEF) mobilized for the first time
- IT Summit to be held
- 48 million euro will be provided for SMEs through WB EDIF
- Western Balkans Research Foundation to be established

July 11-12: The Civil Society Forum in Trieste

Highlights

- Recommendations on regional cooperation and bilateral relations, rule of law / anti-corruption, youth cooperation, business climate, environment, and more efficient communications of the Berlin Process were presented

July 12: The Business Forum in Trieste

Highlights

- The Secretariat of the CIF inaugurated

July 12: The Youth Conference in Trieste

Highlights

- The work of RYCO, the Young Civil Servants Scheme, Erasmus+ programme discussed

2017

Follow up to the Trieste Summit and preparations
for the London Summit / Highlights

August 26, Dures

WB6 Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Energy Informal
meeting of WB6 Prime Ministers

- WB6 Ministers of Foreign Affairs
- DG NEAR Commissioner
- 115-point plan - a road map to deepen regional economic cooperation agreed upon

Sep 20, New York

Meeting of the WB Ministers of Foreign Affairs in New York

- WB6 Ministers of Foreign Affairs
- DG NEAR Commissioner
- RCC Secretary General
- MAP for the REA was discussed

Oct 26, Sofia

EU – Western Balkans Justice and Home Affairs
ministerial forum in Sofia

- Ministers for Justice and Home Affairs of WB6, Estonia, Bulgaria and Austria
- DG HOME and DG JUST Commissioners
- Ensuring effective border management and fighting migrant smuggling are top priorities
- It is necessary to strengthen operational partnership to efficiently and effectively address counter-terrorism and radicalisation, and transnational organised crime

2017

Oct 31, Brussels

Meeting of MAP coordinators for the REA

- WB6 MAP coordinators,
- Representatives of the EU institutions, RCC, CEFTA and CIF, the World Bank and the EBRD
- Full implementation of the Action plan and the formation of the regional economic area would begin in 2023
- RCC to work on mutual recognition of professional and academic qualifications, on single roaming space, on regional investment reform agenda; and to co-organise the Digital Summit

Dec 18, Brussels

Meeting of the Berlin Process Sherpas

- WB6 governments' representatives
- Representatives of the DG NEAR
- RCC Secretary General
- Monitoring reports on MAP for the REA and Connectivity agenda implementation plans presented
- The WB6 presented plans for the coming months for implementation of the Connectivity agenda, for MAP for the REA and for the related reforms

Follow up to the Trieste Summit and preparations for the London Summit / Highlights

Jan 24 – 26, Kolasin Regional Meeting on Security

- Representatives of WB6 Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Ministries of Interior/ Security and Ministries of Finance
- UK Summit team, Home Office
- EU Delegation to Montenegro, RCC, MARRI
- GIZ ORF EU Integration
- Coordination among the WB6 Ministries of Interior and with other relevant structures involved in strengthening security in the Western Balkans region, in the field of combating transnational organized crime, money laundering and terrorism
- Exchange of views regarding the inclusion of the topic of the WB region security in the London Summit agenda

Feb 16-18, Skopje Digital Summit Preparatory Meeting and Exchange on REA Structures

- Representatives of WB6 Ministries of Foreign Affairs and institutions in charge of digital agenda
- GIZ ORF EUI Integration
- The meeting kickstarted cooperation of the representatives from institutions in charge of digital agenda and produced a platform for exchange of ideas

Feb 26, London WB Investment Summit

- Prime ministers of the WB6 and Bulgaria
- Representatives of the EC, EBRD and other IFIs, RCC and CIF
- Establishment of the REA is understood to be the key element of the “soft connectivity”

Mar 16, Sarajevo

Meeting (informal) of the WB6 Ministers of Foreign Affairs

- WB6 Ministers of Foreign Affairs
- UK Minister for Europe, UK Summit coordinator
- DG NEAR Director General
- Representative of the Bulgarian Presidency
- RCC and GIZ ORF EU Integration
- Progress on the Trieste commitments was assessed
- Rule of law, bilateral issues and reconciliation were emphasized as critical to the region's EU integration, in light of the upcoming London Summit

Mar 16, Sarajevo

Conference of the WB6 Ministers of Foreign Affairs

- WB6 Ministers of Foreign Affairs
- The list of projects selected for funding by the Western Balkans Fund was approved

Mar 19-20, Sarajevo

Preparatory meeting for the London Summit

- Representatives of WB6 Ministries of Foreign Affairs
 - GIZ ORF EU Integration
 - Information exchange on progress regarding Transport Community and REA
- The EU Strategy for the WB, priorities and program of the EU – WB Summit in Sofia, and expectations and deliverables of the WB Summit in London were discussed

2018

Apr 18-19, Skopje

Western Balkans Digital Summit

- Prime ministers of the WB6
- Ministers of the WB6
- Representative of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy
- DG NEAR and DG CONNECT Commissioners
- RCC and EIB
- The Digital Agenda Flagship initiative was welcomed
- Readiness expressed to set up a regional framework for recognition of certificates of electronic signature and facilitation of cross-border trusted services
- The importance of extending the scope of the Regional Roaming Agreement and of establishing cooperation with the European Union Network and Information Security Agency (ENISA) was

Apr 26, Vienna

Preparatory meeting for the London Summit

- UK Summit coordinator and his team
- Civil Society Forum of the WB
- GIZ ORF EU Integration
- The Civil Society Forum policy briefs, prepared in accordance with the topics of the London Summit, were presented to the UK Summit team and discussed

Apr 27, Skopje

Preparatory meeting for the London Summit

- WB6 Head of States
- Presidents of Croatia and Slovenia
- Prime Minister of Bulgaria
- European Council President
- Responsibility of the WB6 to strengthen the rule of law, fundamental human rights, efficient judiciary, good governance, the fight against corruption and organized crime was underlined
- The importance of refraining from polarising populist and nationalist rhetoric or activity that may increase tension in bilateral and regional relations was stressed

2018

May 28-29, Tirana

Preparatory meeting for the London Summit

- Representatives of WB6 Prime Ministers, Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Interior Ministers
- UK Summit team
- Ambassadors of Germany and the UK
- GIZ ORF EU Integration
- Update on preparations for the London Summit and working sessions on the expected outcomes of the Summit

May 30 – Jun 1, Rome

Joint Science Conference

- National Academies and Rectors' Conferences of WB6 and member-states participating in the Process
- Recommendations prepared for the London Summit on smart growth, convergence and cohesion, and cooperation

Jun 14, Brussels

Joint Working Group on Recognition of Ac. Qualifications

- Representatives of the Ministries of Education of the WB6
- Agreements on principles and steps towards mutual recognition of academic qualifications

Jun 25-26, Sofia

Digital Assembly

- Representative of the subject WB6 ministries
DG CONNECT Commissioner
RCC Secretary General
- The Digital Agenda for the Western Balkans was launched

Under the WBIF, €30 million in EU grants will be made available to deploy broadband infrastructure in the region

Jun 26, Brussels

Ministerial meeting of the WB platforms on Education and Training & Research and Innovation

- WB6 Ministers of Education and Science
- Representatives of the EC, RCC, OECD, RYCO, ETF and WBAA,
- A set of key principles on automatic recognition of academic qualifications in the Western Balkans was endorsed

Jun 29 – Jul 1, Novi Sad

Regional Youth Forum

- WB6 youth representatives
- Prime Minister of Serbia
- RYCO Secretary General
- Mayors of Novi Sad and Tirana
- GIZ ORF EU Integration
- Models of future regional cooperation based on reconciliation and mutual understanding were discussed

Jul 4, Vienna

Economy Ministers meeting

- WB6 Economy and Finance Ministers
- Representatives of Berlin Process governments, EC, the IFIs, regional and international organisations
- Participants welcomed progress towards setup of the WBRF, in implementation of MAP REA, the new guarantee instrument by the EC, under WBIF
- Addressing skill gaps in the context of digitalisation within the Berlin Process was discussed

Jul 2 – Jul 4, Berlin

Regional conference “New Dynamics of TVET in the WB”

- WB6 Education/Labour Ministers and other relevant participants from the WB
- German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
- The necessary adjustments of the regional technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in the light of globalisation and digitalisation were discussed
- A joint Communiqué was prepared

July 9-10: The Western Balkans Summit in London

Participants:

- WB6: Prime Ministers, Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Interior (and Security) and Economy
- Prime Ministers of Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany, Greece, Poland, Slovenia and the United Kingdom and representatives of the French President and the Italian Prime Minister
- Ministers (and/or representatives) of Foreign Affairs, Interior (and Security) and Economy of Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany, Greece, France, Italy, Poland, Slovenia and the United Kingdom
- EU: HR of the EU Foreign Policy and Security Affairs, DG NEAR Commissioner and other representatives of EU institutions
- International financial institutions

Topics:

- Security issues
- Regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations, missing persons and war crimes
- Fight against corruption
- Digitalisation – youth education

Commitments:

- Principles of regional cooperation in information-exchange for law enforcement agreed upon (Declaration)
- Roadmap for a sustainable solution to the illegal possession, misuse and trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons and their ammunition in the WB by 2024 agreed upon
- Declarations on regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations, on missing persons, and on war crimes were signed and stocktaking of progress in resolution of bilateral issues agreed upon
- Anti-corruption country commitments were made
- The Berlin Process Security Commitments Steering Group was set up
- Funds were pledged for digitalisation of schools and for strengthening of democracy in the WB

2018

July 9: The Civil Society and Youth Forum in London

Highlights

- The participants discussed youth issues and the future of the Berlin Process
- The Civil Society Forum of the Western Balkans presented recommendations for the continuation of the Berlin Process to the Forum and at the Meeting of the Berlin Process Foreign Ministers – increased focus on the rule of law, migrations and green topics, structured monitoring of implementation of commitments and increased regional ownership

The achievements and the future of the Berlin Process

The Berlin Process annual summits and the numerous meetings held related to them intensified the interaction between the EU and the WB high-level politicians and succeeded in retaining the focus of the EU on the WB.

Through conditioning the infrastructure investments with implementation of the “soft measures”, the Process encouraged the countries to rev up the legal and regulatory reforms in line with the acquis. In this sense, it contributed to their rapprochement to the EU and maintained the transformative influence of the Union in the region.

The Berlin Process has also galvanized regional cooperation in resolving the problems of regional relevance – such as the infrastructure gap, region-wide youth unemployment, low competitiveness of economies and distant prospects of economic convergence with the EU, slow progress in institutional and social reconciliation, alongside a number of lingering bilateral issues, and, as of lately, security issues – by using a regional approach.

Finally, the Process succeeded in inspiring the WB6 leaders to cooperate and initiate new forms of interlinking. Such is the example of the joint work on prioritising the connectivity agenda projects for financing, or the initiatives to set up new, common institutions furthering the interweaving of businesses, youth and civil societies; or the shared enthusiasm for the prospect of the Transport Community, Regional Economic Area, and for other institutions in the making. This initiative of the WB leaders to champion various cooperation initiatives led the region to begin taking over ownership of the Process.

After the London summit one thing is certain – the Berlin Process will continue. Regional and the EU experts suggest possible ways to improve the Process’s efficiency in the future: in view of the Process’s goals – an increased focus on the rule of law, migrations and green topics, and at the instrumental level – a well-designed, comprehensive monitoring to add to the accountability of actors and better communication with the Western Balkans’ citizens to generate public support for the reforms – the “soft measures”.

Milestones

2014

- Brdo-Brijuni Process meeting in Dubrovnik – Chancellor Merkel announced the Summit in Berlin
- **August 28: The Western Balkans Summit in Berlin**

2015

- **August 27: The Western Balkans Summit in Vienna**
- August 27: The Civil Society Forum in Vienna
- August 27: The Business Forum in Vienna
- Agreement to set up Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO) is signed
- Chamber Investment Forum (CIF) established
- Energy soft measures agreed upon
- Roadmap for regional electricity market for the WB6 agreed upon
- Declaration on Bilateral Issues signed
- Agreement to set up Western Balkans Fund (WBF) signed
- 4 energy investment projects and 6 transport investment projects agreed upon

2016

- **July 4: The Western Balkans Summit in Paris**
- July 4: The Civil Society Forum in Paris
- July 4: The Business Forum in Paris
- July 4: The Youth Forum in Paris
- WB Sustainable Charter agreed upon
- Young Civil Servants Pilot Scheme (YCSPS) initiated
- 3 transport investment projects agreed upon
- Green for Growth Fund: hydropower and other renewable energy schemes for the WB agreed upon
- Regional Energy Efficiency Programme (REEP) for the WB/REEP Plus agreed upon
- WB Sustainable Charter agreed upon

2017

- March 16: WB6 Prime Ministers meeting in Sarajevo – the 1st meeting of the WB PMs in a WB country
- July 11: The Civil Society Forum in Trieste
- July 11: The Youth Forum in Trieste
- July 11: The Business Forum in Trieste
- **July 12: The Western Balkans Summit in Trieste**
- 1 energy investment project 6 transport investment projects agreed upon
- Western Balkan Enterprise Development and Innovation Facility (WB EDIF) launched
- Green for Growth Fund: hydropower and other renewable energy schemes for the WB agreed upon
- Joint Declaration Against Corruption signed
- Consolidated Multi-Annual Action Plan for a Regional Economic Area (REA) in the WB6 presented
- Establishment of Western Balkans Research Foundation (WBRF) agreed upon
- CIF Secretariat inaugurated
- WB Core Transport Network Soft Measures agreed upon
- First meeting of coordinators for the Western Balkans Regional Economic Area
- RYCO and WBF launch 1st calls for proposals

2018

- Digital Agenda agreed upon, 30 million euros allocated for broadband deployment in the WB
- The Civil Society Forum of the WB contributed to preparation of the Summit and to design of its outputs
- 9 transport connectivity and 2 technical assistance projects agreed upon (within the EU-WB Sofia Summit)
- The responsibility of the WB6 governments for the rule of law, protection of human rights and good governance and the importance of refraining from populist and nationalist rhetoric were stressed (Brdo-Brijuni Summit)

Facts and Figures

The participants

■ 4 sides in the process

- The “WB6”
- EU member states (Austria, Croatia, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Slovenia, United Kingdom)
- EU institutions (EC, EEAS)
- International financial institutions

■ 4 types of Western Balkans participants:

- Governments and ministries
- Civil society – think tanks and activist organisations
- Youth
- Businesses and their associations

Reasons

■ 4 goals of the process:

- Resolution of outstanding bilateral and internal issues
- Achieving reconciliation within and between the societies in the region
- Enhancing regional economic cooperation
- Laying the foundations for sustainable growth

Operations

■ 5 Western Balkans Summits:

- Berlin (2014), Vienna (2015), Paris (2016), Trieste (2017), London (2018)

■ 50+ preparatory and follow up meetings, bringing together the Western Balkans actors

Results

- 3 types of outputs – economic, political and social cooperation projects
- Economic cooperation projects: projects
 - Economic cooperation projects: projects
 - 5 energy investment projects
 - 2 energy efficiency and renewable energy programmes
 - 2 technical support projects
 - Broadband deployment
 - 4 packages of “soft” connectivity measures agreed upon:
 - Energy soft measures, Roadmap for regional electricity market in WB6, WB Sustainable Charter, WB Core Transport Network soft measures
 - Regional Economic Area, Chamber Investment Forum, SMEs support via WB EDIF, WB Research Foundation
- Political cooperation projects:
 - Young civil servants pilot scheme, Declaration on bilateral issues, Joint Declarations on Regional Cooperation and Good Neighbourly Relations, on missing persons and on war crimes, Roadmap to solution to illicit SALW, Anti-corruption country commitments, Security commitments steering group
- Social cooperation projects:
 - Regional Youth Cooperation Office, Western Balkans Fund

Achievements

- Galvanised regional cooperation
- Brought the region closer to the EU

