



## Western Balkans Civil Society Platform for Democracy and Human Rights 3 November 2020

As we approach the Sofia Summit, the Civil Society Platform for Democracy and Human Rights (CSP) shares the key findings and recommendations from its [research](#) undertaken in 2020, focusing on the progress made by the WB6 governments towards fulfilling their pledges since London and Poznań Summits. The research is one of the actions taken within the CSP's pledge to assuming greater responsibility for monitoring the Berlin Process agendas, holding the WB Six (WB6) governments accountable for implementing recommendations from the Berlin Process Summits and meeting EU integration criteria.

Findings point to the direction that despite existing challenges and gaps, the Berlin Process as a whole has had a considerable positive impact on the Region. It has managed to redirect the focus of the EU back on the WB6 countries and start a high-level dialogue on equal terms between EU-WB6 leaders, reviving the region's declining interest in EU integration. It has placed the Region on a stable position on the EU infrastructure map, united the regional civil society under joint causes, and highlighted the role of citizens and youth in promoting dialogue and social change. It has also brought the issue of reconciliation and transitional justice back on the table, raising it as a matter not only of regional but also international importance, as emphasised within the proceedings of the 2020 Zagreb Summit.

Evidence shows, however, that specific factors are slowing down or discouraging progress:

- In many cases, there is political ambition, but no genuine will;
- Specific pledges made in the field of security and the fight against organised crime have been unrealistic in the way they were initially planned, in terms of both time and capacity;
- Entrenched habits, stereotypes and obsolete mentalities of 'doing things' get in the way of achieving progress and interregional cooperation;
- The Berlin Process has no built-in steering and monitoring mechanism and hosting member states, ad hoc, have no authority to act in an oversight capacity. While it is possible to a certain extent to assess the technical and economic progress made within the Berlin Process, it is extremely difficult to evaluate social change;
- There is a lack of clarity on how the 'stocktaking' of each Summit takes place and how previous Summits inform the agendas of the forthcoming Summits;
- The outbreak of the pandemic exposed a Region which was completely vulnerable and unable to support its citizens.

As the Sofia Summit is the 7<sup>th</sup> annual gathering, what is expected from the WB countries is to take the necessary steps to move the Berlin Process forward by translating pledges into concrete action. In order to step up the reputation and importance of these summits, the focus must shift to issues regarding, monitoring and visibility, commitment and responsibility, and consistency. Therefore, we request the 2020 Sofia Summit Agenda include:

- The implementation of a **Monitoring and Visibility Framework** to compare and classify whether WB6 governments are holding up to their pledges;
- A shift to legally binding pledges to bolster the **Commitment** as well as taking **Responsibility** for the promises being made. Even if this results in a slower pace of progress as WB6 countries scale down their more ambitious commitments. The results may be more concrete than previously seen;
- **Consistency** is a key factor in the success and viability of the Berlin Process. WB6 governments should refrain from engaging in contradicting actions of sabotaging each other's progress which do not serve the spirit of good neighbourly relations, cooperation, and peace. The recent flares of nationalist rhetoric across the region only serve to divide the societies and stifle progress being made towards EU integration;
- At a time when the COVID-19 is continuing to have massive impact in the most vulnerable sections of the societies in the Region, the WB6 governments should step up **joint efforts** to alleviate the negative socioeconomic impact of the crisis, and to build more just, sustainable and democratic societies.

## **CSP Members/signatories (in alphabetical order)**

1. ADP-Zid, Montenegro
2. Albanian Center for Good Governance (ACGG), Albania
3. ALFA Centar, Montenegro
4. Asocijacija za promociju poslovanja (APROPO), Bosnia and Herzegovina
5. Association "IRSH", Albania
6. Balkan Green Foundation (BGF), Kosovo
7. Center for Advocacy and Democratic Development (CADD), Serbia
8. Center for Democratic Transition (CDT), Montenegro
9. Center for Economic Prosperity and Freedom (CEPS), Montenegro
10. Center for Euro-Atlantic Studies (CEAS), Serbia
11. CIVIL, Republic of North Macedonia
12. Community Business Development Center (CBDC), Kosovo
13. European Movement Serbia (EMinS), Serbia
14. Forum MNE, Montenegro
15. Fondacija za razvoj i demokraciju (FRD), Bosnia and Herzegovina
16. Gender Alliance for Development Centre (GADC), Albania
17. HandiKOS, Kosovo
18. iACT, Montenegro
19. Humanity in Action, Bosnia and Herzegovina
20. Institute for Democracy and Development (IDD), Republic of North Macedonia
21. Institute for Development Policy (INDEP), Kosovo
22. Institute for Research and Development, Montenegro
23. Institute of Project Management and Development, Republic of North Macedonia
24. International Debate Education Association South East Europe (IDEA SEE), Republic of North Macedonia
25. Kosovo Youth Atlantic Treaty Association (KYATA), Kosovo
26. Krenar Shala, civil society activist, Kosovo
27. LGBT Forum Progress, Montenegro
28. LGBTIQ Social Center, Montenegro
29. Lawyers' Committee for Human Rights (YUCOM), Serbia
30. Macedonian Young Lawyers Association (MYLA), Republic of North Macedonia
31. NGO Aktiv, Kosovo
32. NVO 4 Life, Montenegro
33. Nvo Nova+, Serbia
34. Protection and promotion of Environment, Culture and Art (proECA), Kosovo
35. Research Center for Security, Defense and Peace (ICBOM), Republic of North Macedonia
36. Romska Nada, Bosnia and Herzegovina
37. Sexual and Gender Minorities Association SUBVERSIVE FRONT Skopje, Republic of North Macedonia
38. The Balkan Forum
39. Youth Initiative for Human Rights – Kosovo (YIHR KS)