



Call for Submission of Policy Paper Outline for the Regional Alumni Conference 2018  
Belgrade Open School

## **Alumni as Policy Advisors in EU integration of the Western Balkans**

### GUIDELINES FOR APPLICANTS

#### **1. Background**

Berlin Process, a political initiative launched in 2014, evolved into a process aimed at advancing EU's agenda in four different dimensions: economic growth and connectivity, good neighborly relations and regional cooperation, civil society development and people-to-people connectivity and, most recently, rule of law. One of the goals of this initiative is to fulfill accession process with concrete and tangible results with the aim of making the EU still attractive for citizens of Western Balkan states, especially in the light of EU enlargement fatigue.

Regionally coordinated and agreed Connectivity Agenda, supported by the European Union and Independent fiscal institutions, the establishment of Regional Youth Cooperation Office, and the launch of the Western Balkan Chambers Investment Forum, are considered as the greatest successes of the Berlin Process.

Support of the Berlin Process to the non-state actors from this region is another dimension of this initiative. During four summits held within the Berlin process (Berlin, Vienna, Paris and Trieste) involvement of civil society organizations (CSO) was gradually institutionalizing together with youth connectivity. Every summit gave its own "touch" to the process, in line with the interest of host country. Concerning the involvement of CSOs in the whole process, Austria involved civil society on a much larger scale during the Vienna Summit in accordance with its interest, which was at that time related to refugee crises and Balkan route and rise of extremism in Europe.

Project *OSF Alumni as Policy Advisors in EU integration of the Western Balkans* is the third project Belgrade Open School implements with support of Open Society Foundations Scholarship Programs, in order to support the development of the Western Balkan region founded in evidence-based policy making and regional cooperation. Through different scholarship programs which have been distributed by the Open Society Foundations in the Western Balkans for more than 15 years, a strong alumni network of intellectuals engaged in public, private and international sector is formed. Belgrade Open School, as a local educational center of Open Society in Serbia, tends to provide support to more than 300 alumni from the region to be active and mutually connected in processes of reforms in the Western Balkan countries. We recognize involvement of researchers from academia as of utmost importance in the process of preparing policy recommendations within the Berlin Process, which is

intended to be a platform for dialog of civil and state actors. Universities and University lecturers, as an active part of civil society, have capacities to bring together perspectives of citizens from WB states and knowledge of experts from fields such as the economy, transportation, fighting corruption, illegal migration etc. Grounded on previous experience with Open Society Foundations Scholarship Programs' alumni (in further text OSF Alumni), we see OSF alumni as an important part of the debate around the Berlin Process.

In the third year of the alumni project, OSF alumni will have the opportunity to develop their ideas through individual work, policy paper which deals with some of the aspects of Berlin Process driven policy debate. Produced policy proposals in this cycle of project implementation have to be relevant and contribute to the discussions around the summit of Western Balkan states in London scheduled for July 2018. On the Third Regional Alumni Conference, which will be held as part of this project, alumni will have an opportunity to present their ideas and to be part of bigger debate concerning Berlin Process.

Networking of participants is recognized as one of the main aspects of the project implementation. In previous two cycles, 82 alumni have been gathered on board, out of which 28 worked in producing of policy papers. Direct sharing of experience between participants of the previous project cycles with future participants is crucial for the quality of policy products and for increasing the influence of OSF alumni as non-state actors in the Berlin Process.

## **2. Policy Areas and Topics targeted by This Call**

The policy outline proposal will have to address issues within the policy areas determined on the Trieste Summit (July 2017, Berlin Process WB6 annual meeting):

- Youth cooperation (focusing on RYCO program development and priority issues: youth exchange, reconciliation, entrepreneurship);
- Rule of Law (how can non-state actors monitor and advance respect of rule of law through conducting policy relevant research);
- Environment and climate change (waste management including waste water treatment, adaptation and mitigation of the climate change, energy transition);
- Migration and borders (possibilities and best practices for work/education/cultural integration of refugees/migrants in their host countries);
- Integration of the WB with the EU transport market (Bringing transport legislation in line with the EU's and need for modern transport operations and safety requirements, increasing efficiency and connectivity of the transport system);
- Regional Economic Area (perspectives, benefits and challenges for the WB countries);
- Communication of the Berlin Process in the time of rising populism (future of the Berlin Process and EU integration of the Western Balkans).

The focus of OSF alumni, who apply with their outlines, should address relevant policy problems from one of these policy areas.

Here follows the concise overview of topics which fall under each of the targeted policy areas. **Submitted policy paper outlines should refer to one of these topics.** However, this overview is just an introductory framework, which does not limit OSF alumnus if he/she wants to tackle presented topics through their own policy approach.

### Topic 1: Youth cooperation

Establishment of Regional Youth Cooperation Office is probably the most tangible result of this process. This regionally-owned and regionally-financed organization is independently

functioning institutional mechanism which brought together governmental and non-governmental representatives with the mission of improving cooperation and dialogue among youth from this region, a group facing animosities grounded in the war from last century, bad economic conditions and obsolete education model. During the process of establishment, RYCO received a very strong support from state and non-state actors, especially from Vucic-Rama duo who had a significant role in its formation. The idea of establishing a body which will work on youth issue came from achievements of Franco-German Youth Office, which was found in 1963 with the aim of fostering cooperation between young people from France and Germany. At the Summit on the Western Balkans, held in Paris, on July 4<sup>th</sup> 2016, the Agreement on the Establishment of the Regional Youth Cooperation Office was signed. Ratification procedure was slow but is now concluded, and governments have allocated the respective funds for the 2017 budget, amounting €1.5 million.

## Topic 2: Rule of law

Rule of law and good governance are key preconditions for the region's future EU membership and implementation of all planned projects within Berlin Process. At the last summit which was held in Trieste (July 2017) rule of law was put in focus together with business climate innovation, and people to people contact. In its 2016 Communication on the EU enlargement policy, the Commission referred to several countries in the region continuing to show "clear symptoms and varying degrees of state capture"<sup>1</sup>. Furthermore, as the annual country reports from the European Commission have highlighted, the region has witnessed a dramatic deterioration in democratic governance and the rule of law, even though the rule of law issues were placed highly at the agenda of the accession process. In Declaration by the Italian chair adopted after the summit in Trieste, the chapter on the Governance, Rule of Law and Prevention and Fight against Corruption emphasized how bad impact the corruption has on citizens' trust in democratic institutions and importance of improving capacities for dealing with this problem<sup>2</sup>. Rule of law in Western Balkan states is very fragile and due to the turbulent past, societies from this region didn't really have a chance to develop strong institutions and balancing mechanisms.

## Topic 3: Environment and climate change

The Connectivity Agenda led to the introduction of environment protection and climate change mitigation as the next steps in deepening regional cooperation. Paris Summit (July 2016) put focuses on climate change and environmental issues. On the margins of the Summit, the French host launched the "Western Balkan Sustainable Charter" stressing improved governance for energy efficiency, smart support measures improving sustainability of energy systems and fostering climate action and transparency of sustainable energy markets.

At the same meeting, EU pledged to allocate EUR 50 million from its Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) for incentives for energy efficiency and renewable energy investments and policy reforms in the six markets.

Some of the conclusions of the Paris Civil Society Forum in the respective area were redirecting funds for new coal projects towards financing the Sustainability Charter to meet EU

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<sup>1</sup> COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS 2016 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy

<sup>2</sup> TRIESTE WESTERN BALKANS SUMMIT- Declaration by the Italian Chair

[https://www.esteri.it/mae/en/sala\\_stampa/archivionotizie/approfondimenti/trieste-western-balkan-summit-declaration.html](https://www.esteri.it/mae/en/sala_stampa/archivionotizie/approfondimenti/trieste-western-balkan-summit-declaration.html)

standards, create more green jobs, and reduce pollution costs, as well as blocking of legislative bottlenecks to residential EE retrofit to help fight energy poverty.

Conclusions of the Civil Society Forum in Trieste 2017, besides underlining the importance of energy efficiency and energy poverty eradication, as well as air pollution, encompassed the following recommendations:

- Promoting and focusing CSO resources on direct action, stimulating and inspiring a stronger link between think tanks and grass root groups, in parallel to policy making;
- Adopt and promote circular economy and renewables in WB6, ensure full and unobstructed implementation of national environmental legislation, work on fiscal reform, remove harmful subsidies, promote innovation and R&D policies and address topical issues of relevance.

#### Topic 4: Migration and border

After the huge influx of refugees in Europe after 2014, security of the EU southern borders became a priority for political leaders from EU Member countries, especially for transition and destination countries, like Germany, Austria, and Hungary. With issues phenomenon such as fear from refugees and rise of far-right leaning parties across Europe, closing of the Balkan route became a popular topic in the internal political life of the countries in the route. During migration crisis, civil society organizations provided humanitarian assistance, logistic support and contributed to the mobilization of the public, which resulted in recognizing them as one of the most important players in this process. Due to the lack of adequate capacities for providing humanitarian aid to the huge number of refugees, financial support from EU is necessary and for that reason this problem will remain on BP agenda. Destination countries will seek for tighter control of the southern borders where Republic of Serbia, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and other WB countries are going to remain important players, now facing challenges with integration of refugees to educational, labor and cultural system.

#### Topic 5: Integration of the WB with the EU transport market

Improving connectivity in the field of transport, energy, and digitalization is one of the main tasks of the Berlin Process, especially the integration of WB countries in European transport corridors. Connectivity Agenda was established in the WB6 format as part of the Berlin process with the aim to support infrastructure development and energy projects.

In 2015, with the aim of supporting Connectivity Agenda, European Union set aside up to one billion Euros in grants until 2020<sup>3</sup>. Investments in this area financed by aforementioned grants should create 45.000 jobs. Due to the time needed to implement an infrastructure project, the complexity of project preparation and the high cost of investment, this kind of projects are not so visible result of Berlin Process. Vienna Summit (August 2015) resulted in agreement on specific regional transport and energy priority projects. Besides hard “infrastructure”, this agreement included “soft measures”- specific reforms of the transport and energy policies relevant to the successful functioning of regional interconnections in these areas.

#### Topic 6: Regional Economic Area

Based on the model of European Union and CEFTA, the Western Balkans Regional Economic Area should provide space where goods, services, investments and skilled workers can move

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<sup>3</sup> CONNECTIVITY AGENDA Co-financing of Investment Projects in the Western Balkans 201

without obstacles.<sup>4</sup> The overall goal is to make this region attractive for the investors who can have access to almost 20 million consumers. During Trieste Summit on July 12<sup>th</sup> 2017, Western Balkans leaders have endorsed multiannual action plan which comprises of four dimensions: trade, investment, mobility and digital market. Within trade, parties agreed on implementing CEFTA additional protocols on trade facilitation, Additional Protocol on trade in service and launch negotiations of new protocol on dispute settlement. Within investment dimension, parties agreed to establish a regional investment agenda, together with exchange of information and best practices on investment policies and identify policies that could be harmonized.

#### Topic 7: Communication of the Berlin Process in the time of rising populism

Berlin Process wasn't successful enough in the policy area of regional cooperation and bilateral disputes. Old populist political language of politicians in the Balkans is resistant and still present in everyday politics in WB region. Political disputes from the past related to the primordial fear about identity and borders have still the strong presence in these societies and great influence on younger generations, dealing with bad economics circumstances and lack of perspective. During summit in Vienna, a document on bilateral disputes in the region prepared by civil society representatives was signed. The final declaration adopted after summit invited WB leaders to take concrete steps toward lasting reconciliation in the region.

Participants of Trieste summit recognized populism as one of the obstacles in achieving goals of the Berlin process, especially after the rise of far-right leaning parties in Europe. Poor economic conditions and complicated history of this region are the main reasons why this part of Europe is especially suitable for spreading this kind of political views.

### 3. Application procedure

#### Step 1: Who can apply?

Alumni of any of the OSF Scholarship Programs from Albania, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo\* and Serbia are eligible to apply to the Open Call of Policy Paper Outlines.

#### **Policy paper should be developed individually.**

In the third year of the alumni project, OSF alumni will have the opportunity to develop their ideas through **individual work on creating a policy paper** which deals with some of the aspects of the Berlin Process driven policy debate. Produced policy proposal has to be relevant and contribute to the discussions around the summit of [Western Balkan states in London scheduled for July 2018](#). On the Third Regional Alumni Conference, which will be held as part of this project, alumni will have an opportunity to present their ideas and to be part of a bigger debate concerning Berlin Process.

Alumni of any of the OSF Scholarship Programs<sup>5</sup> from **Albania, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo<sup>6</sup> and Serbia** are eligible to apply to the Open Call for Policy Paper Outline.

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<sup>4</sup> European Commission - Fact Sheet- Western Balkans: Regional Economic Area  
file:///C:/Users/admin/Downloads/MEMO-17-1967\_EN%20(2).pdf

<sup>5</sup> E.g. Undergraduate Exchange Program, Oxford Hospitality, Cambridge, Global Supplementary Grant Program, Alumni Grant Program, Civil Society Scholar Awards or other

<sup>6</sup> This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSC 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

## Step 2: Submission and selection of policy paper outlines

While preparing an outline, special attention should be given to further dimensions of public policy:

- Precise definition of the policy problem;
- Relevance of the problem on national, regional and EU level;
- Why resolving this policy issue is important for regional cooperation and development;
- Mapping of stakeholders, mainly decision makers, to whom this paper will be addressed;
- Plan for communicating policy recommendations to the targeted audience;
- Correlation of the proposed outline with the Berlin Process Agenda.

### Regional Dimension

Policy papers with Western Balkan perspectives will be favored to the papers dealing with single country.

- Analysis with a broader perspective of this region - the unique historical background, economic ties of the WB countries, bilateral disputes and rising populism across the region, transport infrastructure, people to people connection etc.
- Applicants are invited to show how their policy recommendation will affect the whole region, its citizens and its European perspectives.

As previously mentioned, concrete results and institutional frameworks formed during the Berlin Process are RYCO, Connectivity Agenda, and Western Balkan Chambers Investment Forum. BOS will secure communication between alumni and aforementioned institutions from the very beginning of their work on policy papers, as well as the exchange of information between researchers working on similar or complementary policy problems.

### Selection process

The selection process will be conducted by a team of experienced policy researchers/analysts from BOS based on a set of criteria which will focus on the regional importance of the policy issue which is addressed with the paper, as well as the coherence and particularity of the recommendations and /or policy options that the paper proposes. **Up to 10 authors will be selected to develop papers within the 3-months mentorship programme**, present them to the Regional Alumni Conference in Belgrade and participate in the activities of promotion and advocacy. In order to ensure the papers meet the standards and provide high-quality solutions, the selection committee will review and proofread the papers and provide final feedback for the authors to incorporate in their policy papers.

Developed policy papers will be presented at the Regional Alumni Conference to be held in Belgrade at the end of May 2018.

Compensation for covering research costs is 250\$ gross sum per researcher.

### Submission of outline

- Submit policy paper outline using the [form](#) attached to this Call
- Submit outline to the email: [osfalumni@bos.rs](mailto:osfalumni@bos.rs) until **March 5 2018**.
- Notification of acceptance will be sent no later than **March 9 2018**.

### **Step 3: Development of Policy Paper**

On the basis of developed policy outlines, applicants will be invited to produce one of the acceptable forms of policy papers – policy brief, policy analysis, policy memos, and policy overview. Mentoring process implies the peer work on a single policy document provided by mentor from the Belgrade Open School. Particular focus will be on: (1) Defining policy relevant problem having in mind aforementioned policy pillars of Berlin process; (2) Understanding policy contexts, policy networks and policy cycles in this regards; and (3) Developing the chosen policy document: structure, development of coherent policy relevant argumentation and visual presentation which follows the purpose of selected policy document .

[This handbook](#) created by the International Centre for Policy advocacy can be used as a reference guide through policy writing process.

Final paper submission deadline is **May 15 2018**.

### **Step 4: Capacity Building Program and Regional Alumni Conference**

Policy documents and recommendations will be discussed with decision makers within the frame of Regional Alumni Conference and disseminated to regional and EU policy community. A two-day Regional Alumni Conference will gather alumni to present their findings and initiate discussion upon their policy recommendations.

Throughout the conference priority will be given to discussions with decision makers and thematic workshops in smaller groups that will enable: a) stronger focus on more specific issues from the Berlin Process Agenda and b) space for facilitated discussions that will allow greater networking of the OSF Alumni among each other, as well as with other stakeholders with matching interests. The purpose of the second day will be to provide an opportunity to the OSF alumni to advocate their policy solutions in front of those actors who are not only relevant to the topic, but also deeply engaged and participate in the Berlin Process. Through this direct dialogue, the OSF alumni will gain an opportunity to influence domestic and the EU policy community of the Berlin Process and to indirectly shape its policy outcomes.

Apart from being a channel of communication created for the OSF alumni policy recommendations towards the Berlin Process, the conference will raise the visibility of the OSF potentials to develop relevant and applicable policy solutions to challenges of the EU integration of the region. Policy papers of the alumni will be presented in the publication which will be produced as part of the campaign before the summit in London. The purpose of the campaign which will precede London Summit is to give alumni the opportunity to present conclusions of their work on this summit.

#### **Important dates**

- Deadline for submission of the Policy Paper Outline: **5 March 2018**
- Notification of acceptance: **9 March 2018**
- Final policy brief submission deadline: **15 May 2018**
- Regional Alumni Conference: **May 2018 (exact date tbc)**

For any further information please contact Ms Ana Stevanovic and Ms Ivana Dimitrijevic, OSF alumni project team at the Belgrade Open School, to the email [osfalumni@bos.rs](mailto:osfalumni@bos.rs) or telephone +381 11 3061577 and +381 11 3061342