
Professional Work Exchange for Enhanced Policy Dialogue Program



B | T | D The Balkan Trust
for Democracy
A PROJECT OF THE GERMAN MARSHALL FUND



Professional Work Exchange for Enhanced Policy Dialogue Program

The **Professional Work Exchange for Enhanced Policy Dialogue Program** (PWEEDP) is a series of cross-border policy work exchanges of professionals from a targeted group of think tanks, civil society organizations, and universities in Kosovo and in Serbia.

The goal of these work exchanges is to enhance the human resources and knowledge products of host organizations and facilitate the production of multi-perspective policy work in the field of government accountability and transparency, human rights protection, independent media, security and justice, and migration policies.

Exchanges aim to:

- Facilitate the transfer of policy knowledge and best practices between and among host and sending think tanks, civil society organizations and universities from Serbia and Kosovo, creating opportunity for sustained organizational collaboration.
- Foster the publication of multi-perspective policy and research knowledge products that result from the increased collaboration and interaction of researchers and analysts due to the work exchange program.

This publication profiles the exchanges conducted under the auspices of this program, and their results.

The program is implemented by the Balkan Trust for Democracy with the support of the British Foreign Commonwealth Office. Opinions expressed in the products of these exchanges do not necessarily represent those of the Balkan Trust for Democracy, the German Marshall Fund of the United States, or the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Exchanges

2014

- Belgrade Fund for Political Excellence & Prishtina Institute for Political Studies
- Youth Initiative for Human Rights Kosovo & Youth Initiative for Human Rights Serbia
- Centre for Research, Documentation and Publication & SeConS Development Initiative Group
- Forum for Ethnic Relations & Prishtina Council on Foreign Relations
- Belgrade Centre for Security Policy & Kosovar Centre for Security Studies
- Kosovo 2.0 & Policy Center

2015

- GAP Institute & Public Administration and Local Government Center
- Group 484 & Kosovar Centre for Security Studies
- Heartefact Fund & Kosovar Stability Initiative
- Democracy 4 Development & Society Innovation Center-NIIT
- National Alliance for Local Economic Development & Institute for Development Policy
- Centre for Community Development & Forum for Ethnic Relations
- Heartefact Fund & Kosovo 2.0
- Center for Ecology and Sustainable Development & Advocacy Training and Resource Center
- Kosovar Centre for Security Studies & Belgrade Centre for Security Policy

Belgrade Fund for Political Excellence – Prishtina Institute for Political Studies

Rationale

The Belgrade Fund for Political Excellence (BFPE) and the Prishtina Institute for Political Studies (PIPS) have a long history of collaboration through multilateral initiatives and international events, including through the Council of Europe's Network of Schools of Political Studies.

The overall aim of the exchange between BFPE and PIPS was to strengthen ties and establish closer bilateral cooperation aimed at contributing to the normalization of Serbia-Kosovo relations. This exchange placed Alisa Hasani (PIPS) into the BFPE office.

Goal of Exchange

Develop innovative approaches to strengthening new generations of civil society activists and political leaders in Serbia and Kosovo.

Host Observation:

"Both BFPE and PIPS wish to underline that participating in the Professional Work Exchange for Enhanced Policy Dialogue Program significantly strengthened our bilateral cooperation and directly enabled us to devise new joint activities through which we will be supporting the process of normalization of relations between Serbia and Kosovo in the upcoming years..."

We deepened our understanding of the situation in Kosovo regarding policy areas that have been in our focus, while Alisa Hasani (PIPS) gained an extensive overview of the state-of-play in Serbia in various policy areas. We gained greater insight into the state-of-play in terms of the needs and possibilities for political education aimed at decision- and opinion-makers in Kosovo... Also, with the help of our colleague from PIPS, we were able to map out several policy areas around which we could design new joint capacity building programs."

Results

BFPE and PIPS used the exchange to conduct in-depth analysis on the present situation in both youth unemployment and energy policy in Kosovo. This led to the development of two new bilateral projects, one focused on tackling youth unemployment and another on promoting sustainable energy use, both thorough cross-border policy development between Kosovo and Serbia. The project aimed at tackling youth unemployment has been granted funding from the EU's Civil Society Facility program, and is currently being implemented.

BFPE and PIPS also used the exchange to facilitate joint work on new components and methodologies for the Regional Academy for Democracy (RAD), an ongoing initiative co-implemented with five other organizations. During the exchange, BFPE and PIPS developed a methodology for analyzing results of their work and used this to improve the ongoing project. In addition, the exchange enabled several rounds of interviews with participants and alumni to identify ways to further engage the growing network of political leaders from the Western Balkans through introducing new program components.

Youth Initiative for Human Rights Kosovo – Youth Initiative for Human Rights Serbia

Rationale

Youth Initiative for Human Rights (YIHR) is a network of organizations with offices in Kosovo, Serbia, Bosnia, Montenegro and Croatia, with regional cooperation among its main goals. Initially, YIHR was established in Serbia and Kosovo in 2003 to work to bring the two societies closer and to provide space for young people to meet each other and communicate despite general political atmosphere. YIHR Kosovo and YIHR Serbia have thus conducted many projects together, but had not previously had the opportunity to share the same working space and to jointly develop and implement a direct advocacy campaign.

This reciprocal exchange built on past cooperation, and aimed to promote the establishment of an institutionalized youth exchange program between Kosovo and Serbia, by examining different models for youth exchange programs around the world, developing a prospective model for the exchange program, identifying stakeholders and making contact with relevant institutions and organizations to build a regional coalition to advocate for an official youth exchange program.

Results

Besart Lumi (YIHR Kosovo) and Jasmina Lazovic (YIHR Serbia) sought to determine the potential for establishment of a regional body for youth exchanges to be implemented at the governmental level with focus on Kosovo and Serbia. The PWEEDD exchange facilitated the initial talks with political representatives of Kosovo and Serbian institutions, international representatives, and relevant civil society organizations. Following the official announcement of the Serbian Prime Minister in August 2014 that the government would advocate the establishment of the Western Balkans Youth Association, YIHR Serbia organized a press conference in support of this idea and to discuss the future Western Balkans Youth Association through the perspective of the rich experience YIHR has in implementing youth exchanges in the region.

YIHR Kosovo and Serbia continue to work together on the promotion of the establishment of the Regional Youth Exchange Program, and organized the second round of meetings with the representatives of Kosovo institutions and political parties in October 2014. Additionally, the YIHR Regional Network was awarded a European Commission Regional IPA project to implement the regional advocacy campaign about youth exchanges in former Yugoslavia.

Goal of Exchange

Promote the establishment of an institutionalized youth exchange program between Kosovo and Serbia.

Policy Impact

“The absolute benefit of YIHR’s participation in PWEEDD is the fact that this organization was quite ready to react when the Serbian Government announced in August 2014 in Berlin that they will advocate establishment of the Western Balkans Youth Association.

Since YIHR had already spoken about this initiative to some representatives of governments in Kosovo and Serbia, as well as earlier in Croatia, it was able to reference existing youth exchange programs in other parts of the world that could be inspiration for the Western Balkans, potential models that might be applied in the context of former Yugoslavia as well as potential problems that might occur in the process of establishment of this body. YIHR also proved itself as a qualified and interested partner that can be helpful in the process of establishment of this program with special advantage that YIHR has with its office in Kosovo... This resulted in the fact that Ministry of Youth and Sport of Republic of Serbia involved YIHR in its efforts for advocating the creation of a regional youth exchange program.”

Participant Observation

“We used this opportunity in coordinating advocacy efforts, meeting key stakeholders in Serbia and developing a strategy for establishing the Regional Exchange Program... PWEEDD provided YIHR with a unique opportunity to improve its efforts for strengthening regional cooperation.”

Centre for Research, Documentation and Publication – SeConS Development Initiative Group

Rationale

The Centre for Research, Documentation and Publication (CRDP) and SeConS – Development Initiative Group (SeConS) are partners in a regional initiative working on issues of human security. Their reciprocal exchange in the PWEEDP program enabled the organizations to enhance their research on workplace violence in order to better inform their advocacy and policy endeavors on this theme.

Results

During the exchanges, Rron Gjinovci (CRDP) and Stefan Stefanovic (SeConS) contributed to the development of a methodology and research instrument on workplace violence; participated in desk reviews on human security in the context of illegal privatization in Serbia and on the security issues of construction workers in Kosovo; conducted interviews with stakeholders and vulnerable groups; and wrote short investigative papers on current human security issues in each country.

Both organizations convened a public event to present the main research findings in each country and to discuss the problem further. CRDP and SeConS strengthened their partnership and have since begun another joint project.

Goal of Exchange

Research workplace violence in Serbia and Kosovo.

Key Finding

“Our research revealed workers’ distrust towards state institutions. Contracts were not expected to be enforced, labor inspections were often viewed as an unnecessary act of bureaucracy, and reporting of injuries more as whistleblowing that could endanger the workers’ position in the company. A lack of trust in the judicial system prohibits workers from fighting for their cause legally. Trade unions are considered as interest groups and not as an effective tool. In addition, the level of information among the workers about laws, regulations and rights is very low...

In this context, advocacy activities on our behalf must focus both on the content and on the best way to present the results in order to influence the decision making.”

Host Observation

“This exchange program was beneficial both for the professional and personal growth of the team members directly participating in the exchange, as well as the organizations as a whole. During their stay in the respective organizations, both team members participated in on-going project and organization activities. The participants had the opportunity to participate in research in inquiry and other issues related to human security such as youth violence, as well as events organized by other organizations and thereby gain a more fruitful experience of the NGO sector networks in the respective countries.”

Forum for Ethnic Relations – Prishtina Council on Foreign Relations

Rationale

The Forum for Ethnic Relations (FER) and the Prishtina Council on Foreign Relations (PCFR), together with other Serbian and Kosovo organizations, have been engaged in discussions on normalization of relations between Serbia and Kosovo. The result of this informal endeavor was the first draft of the “Comprehensive Agreement of Normalization Between Serbia and Kosovo.”

During the PWEED exchange, PCFR and FER sought to further explore the implications of this draft agreement, and to contribute to prospective strategies for institutional preservation and advancement of the Serbian community in Kosovo. Objectives included to examine position of Serbian stakeholders vis-à-vis the “Comprehensive Agreement of Normalization Between Serbia and Kosovo;” to explore possibilities for creation of a strategy for building institutions for preservation and advancement of the Serbian community in Kosovo; and to create long standing working relations with Kosovo based think-tanks and expand the professional network both in Serbia and in Kosovo

Results

Engjellushe Morina (PCFR) worked with colleagues from FER to conduct interviews with stakeholders from Serbia regarding the draft agreement on normalization of relations. The two organizations also assessed the needs and mapped actors and institutions in the Serb community in Kosovo, in order to explore and contribute to the possible development of a strategy for building institutions for preservation and advancement of the community.

Djurdjevic and Morina participated in several events and presentations during the exchange, including a diplomatic dialogue session on the impact of local elections in North Kosovo. The organizations used the exchange opportunity to better understand the political processes and dynamic linked to their shared objectives.

Goal of Exchange

Advance normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia through stakeholder research and policy development.

Host Observation

“For two think-tanks like FER and PCFR, who have very well-developed professional networks and expertise, the topic of this exchange represented a challenge, since the political discussion around these two topics do represent a challenge for both societies as a whole. The signing of the Comprehensive Agreement between Serbia and Kosovo became a subject of the EU Negotiation Framework for Serbia and a part of the Chapter 35. Foreseeing such a development, the two organizations wanted to get first-hand information from the political stakeholders in Serbia. By supporting and contributing to the process of normalization of the Serbia-Kosovo relations, the two organizations are contributing to EU accession process of both Serbia and Kosovo.

The input and the knowledge of the current political developments in Kosovo the FER got from PCFR represent an invaluable contribution to its expertise.”

Belgrade Centre for Security Policy – Kosovar Centre for Security Studies

Rationale

The Belgrade Centre for Security Policy (BCSP) and the Kosovar Centre for Security Studies (KCSS) are longtime partners, and have previously cooperated on many research products and project activities. BCSP and KCSS' participation in the PWEEDP program further intensified their collaboration activities, including policy research, exchange of practices and further networking.

This reciprocal exchange sought to examine the integration and representation of minorities in state security institutions in Serbia and Kosovo. At the time of the exchanges, there was little information on the process of integration of police officers available to the public. Thus, BCSP's exchange participants researched the integration of Serbian police officers in North Kosovo into the Kosovo police force, as stipulated in the Brussels Agreement, and KCSS' exchange participant analysed the representation of the Albanian minority in the Serbian police.

Key Finding

"The main findings suggest that there were serious omissions in the process [of integrating Serbian police officers], including insufficient training, incomplete vetting procedures, as well as forceful retirement of Serbian police officers by the Ministry of Interior... In addition to these omissions, the lack of transparency of the integration process was also a problem, which is why this research paper has additional value for being the only independent, non-governmental analysis of the process."

Participant Observation

"A great opportunity for a comparative overview of the state of play of minority integration in both Serbia and Kosovo."

Goal of Exchange

Research minority integration and representation in state security institutions in Serbia and Kosovo.

Key Finding

"Although Albanians are underrepresented in Serbian police force, the situation is improved compared to what it was during the '90s. However, ethnic Albanians are mainly found in the rank and file of the police, whereas those who belong to the higher echelons of police hierarchy are few and far between."

Results

During their exchanges, Maja Bjelos (BCSP) and Bojan Elek (BCSP) conducted more than 15 interviews with Kosovo police officials, members of the parliament, state institutions, OSCE and EULEX representatives and Serbian police officers from northern Kosovo, and made 3 field visits, a visit to the Kosovo Academy for Public Safety in Vucitrn/Vushtrri, a visit to police station in Gracanica and a visit to the newly established Regional Command North in Mitrovica. While in Prishtina, BCSP's researchers also delivered a lecture on Serbian foreign and defence policy at the University of Prishtina.

Meanwhile, Sofije Kryeziu (KCSS) conducted around 20 interviews with representatives of Serbian independent institutions, CSOs and Albanian police officers, and made a field visit to southern Serbia to interview local politicians in Bujanovac and Presevo, and local policemen of Albanian origin who live and work in this multi-ethnic area.

As a result of the exchange, two research studies were produced, and findings were presented at three conferences in Prishtina and in Belgrade, receiving extensive media coverage.

Kosovo 2.0 – Policy Center

Rationale

Kosovo 2.0 is a web-platform, a print magazine and a grass-roots activity organizer aiming at giving a voice to the country's silenced, disenfranchised majority: young people. The Policy Center deals with conflict prevention and the improvement of relations between Serbia and Kosovo, including through promoting transparency on state spending on parallel institutions.

This exchange contributed to the expansion of Kosovo 2.0's regional presence, through improving the number, quality and impact of stories published from Kosovo, Serbia and the region; increasing the quality and topicality of the magazine; and expanding cooperation with writers, journalists and media outlets in Serbia and the rest of the region. The Policy Center's exchange participant was responsible for overseeing and improving the overall quality of the Serbian language editions of all Kosovo 2.0's work.

Goal of Exchange

Strengthen regional perspective of an independent media platform by improving Serbian language content quality.

Objectives

- Diversify content
- Increase regional relevance and topicality of magazine
- Expand outreach and collaboration in Serbia

Results

During the PWEED exchange, Djurdja Djukic (Policy Center) was placed with Kosovo 2.0. As a result, Kosovo 2.0 expanded and diversified its online content; more than 20 articles from contributors based in Serbia and the region were published as a result. In addition, Kosovo 2.0 published its seventh magazine issue, "Migration," with Djukic overseeing the production and printing of the Serbian-language edition. This 148-page

edition includes 34 articles examining regionally relevant topics related to movement, including the history of migration and its effect on Kosovo's society, visa liberalization, repatriation, education and arts. The exchange resulted in greater contacts with writers and contributors from Serbia and the region, and the identification of more possible selling points in Serbia. Building on the cooperation established in the exchange, Kosovo 2.0 and Policy Center collaborated again to further examine Kosovo-Serbia relations, analyzing media reporting on 'the other side' and its effect on relations between the two societies, and publishing 5 in-depth articles on possibilities for overcoming the legacy of the past in view of existing violence and discrimination in both societies.

Host Observation

"Through the exchange, Kosovo 2.0 managed to get a different kind of access into north Kosovo. Djurdja Djukic (Policy Center) researched and wrote an article about the youth of North Mitrovica, called 'When the Bridge is a Barrier.' Together with the magazine's photography editor, she visited North Mitrovica, and arranged meetings with youth from there. The story speaks to how the youth of North Mitrovica lack perspective in their city due to isolation, and why some young people return to their city after studying in Serbia, while some never choose to come back. The story also talks about the post-Brussels Agreement context as well as the prospects of real integration between Kosovo Serbs and Albanians."

GAP Institute – Public Administration and Local Government Center

Rationale

GAP Institute and the Public Administration and Local Government Center (PALGO Center) had not collaborated prior to participating in the PWEEDD program. GAP's participation as a host in the exchange program sought to enhance its ongoing activities related to municipal monitoring and development policy analysis.

Given the longstanding backgrounds of both GAP and PALGO in addressing issues of local development policies in Kosovo and Serbia, the organizations' participation in the program has enabled the development of new research into the implementation of the Brussels Agreements in North Kosovo.

Results

The establishment of the Development Fund for North Kosovo is one of the Brussels Agreements on Customs Revenue Collection, signed on January 17, 2013. This special fund aims to develop Serb municipalities in the north, but its implementation and results have been underexamined.

Jovica Damjanovic (PALGO Center), together with colleagues from the GAP Institute, prepared and conducted extensive interviews with representatives of relevant Kosovo and Serbia institutions, local governments in North Kosovo, European institutions, and non-governmental organizations.

This research explores the structure of the Fund and its efficacy to date in improving the welfare of citizens in North Kosovo. The resulting study is expected to show the progress and deficiencies of the implementation of the Fund and to draw the attention of policy makers to consider the recommendations generated by this study. The publication will be presented in a roundtable discussion in April 2015 to an audience expected to include representatives of the Kosovo government's negotiation team, representatives of local governments, European institutions, and the NGO community.

Goal of Exchange

Analyze the efficacy of the Development Fund for North Kosovo, a special fund created as a result of Prishtina-Belgrade dialogue.

Host Observation

"The main benefit of this exchange program is to research and draft a policy brief on a very important yet unexplored topic. The other benefit is to create a future partnership for collaboration between the two organizations. We think that there are plenty of topics for future cooperation between PALGO Center and GAP Institute."

Group 484 – Kosovar Centre for Security Studies

Rationale

Group 484 works to promote a systemic approach to issues of forced migration and migration in general, through working with key partners and stakeholders to promote an equal opportunity society. Group 484 has a strong record of working in regional migration policy research and development, and was active in promoting visa liberalization for Serbia.

The Kosovar Centre for Security Studies (KCSS) works to promote and strengthen democratic oversight of the security sector in Kosovo and the region, and to safeguard human security and protect human rights.

Since 2010, Kosovo is the only country in the Western Balkans whose citizens are unable to travel freely in the European Union. The European Commission has created the Road Map for Kosovo, similar to the Road Maps for the countries in the region. The Road Map has several important areas: Requirements related to Readmission and Reintegration and Requirements related to Document Security; Border/Boundary and Migration Management; Public Order and Security; and Fundamental Rights related to the Freedom of Movement. The European Council has reaffirmed that Kosovo would benefit from eventual visa liberalization, without prejudice to member states' position on status, once all conditions are met.

Group 484 and KCSS had not collaborated prior to their participation in the PWEEDD program. As a host, Group 484 sought to improve its knowledge on Kosovo migration policy and challenges and to expand its regional cooperation in migration policy work with partner organizations from Kosovo.

Results

During the exchange, Plator Avdiu (KCSS) cooperated closely with Group 484 colleagues to research the recent irregular migration of the Kosovo citizens towards the European countries in the context of visa liberalization for Kosovo. The forthcoming policy brief, based on detailed desk research and interviews conducted in Serbia and in Kosovo, will address related issues including factors and reasons of migration.

The policy brief will be presented at public events in Belgrade and in Prishtina, where it is intended to inform a target audience including public institutions in Kosovo and Serbia, European institutions, academics and those affected directly by the migration.

Goal of Exchange

Research irregular migration in the context of Kosovo's visa liberalization process.

Participant Observation

"An added value of the exchange is strengthening our capacity in the field of migration and asylum in the frame of the visa liberalization process. The future cooperation can be potentially expanded further in the area of visa liberalization, migration and asylum with a particular emphasis on the security impact."

Heartefact Fund – Kosovar Stability Initiative

Rationale

The Heartefact Fund (HF) and the Kosovar Stability Initiative (IKS) had not cooperated with one another prior to their participation in the PWEPPD program. HF works to foster and connect creative and progressive forces contributing to the democratization and European integration, and to building new regional relations to overcome effects of the recent past. IKS is a think-tank focused on empirical research and socio-economic developments in Kosovo, and has worked on a range of policy topics including governance, economic development, urban planning, corruption in post-war reconstruction, education, and environmental issues.

The organizations' participation in the exchange program was inspired by their mutual search for identifying new partners and establishing new cooperation in project implementation, research and policy writing focused on Kosovo-Serbia relations. This exchange thus aimed to contribute to both organizations' policy work through assessing the current social context, identifying prospective areas for cooperation, and strengthening their capacity for future cross-border engagement.

Results

HF and IKS decided to focus their collaboration on issues that are common to Kosovo and Serbia, as both countries navigate the process of economic and political transition and are confronted with similar challenges, yet more attention is standardly given to points of division rather than commonalities. Edona Krasniqi (IKS) and partners from HF sought to establish a platform for future cooperation, by establishing guidelines and outcomes for their collaboration, identifying and defining topics to be addressed, mapping relevant stakeholders from each country, and jointly developing a new project strategy and activity plan.

The two organizations will continue to implement the project that was developed during the exchange and the future cooperation will continue in projects related to normalization of relations between the two countries. The focus will shift from the wider political dialogue into areas that affect people on a daily basis and that present commonalities between the ordinary citizens of both countries.

Goal of Exchange

Identify a platform of topics for future cooperation on issues common to both Serbia and Kosovo, but conventionally neglected from the discourse.

Participant Observation

“While the dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia is ongoing at the highest political level the historical, political, and social rifts and barriers between the people of the two societies are still prevalent and slowly changing. The nationalist political narratives still permeate the public discourse and further contribute to alienation, separation and even hostility between the two societies, as well as between the Albanian/Serb communities living in the respective countries.”

Democracy 4 Development – Society Innovation Center-NIIT

Rationale

Democracy 4 Development (D4D) is a think-tank informed by the principle that democracy is a precondition for development. Its goals include the development of independent public policy research in socio-economic development, governance, and formation of political parties as well as the development of inter-ethnic, regional and international relations.

Society Innovation Center-NIIT (NIIT) works to strengthen democracy, broaden civic involvement in the decision-making process, and promote transparency. NIIT sought to establish new partnership with Kosovo organizations and to identify areas for future cooperation.

D4D sought to host a PWEEDPD participant to enhance its ongoing work with membership-based organizations. Membership-based organizations in the Kosovo Serb community have tended to operate within their own communities, with generally had limited communication with Kosovo Albanian membership-based organizations. This exchange sought to map the membership-based organizations in North Kosovo and to assess prospects for increased cooperation between membership-based organizations located in the south (mainly Albanian) and in the north (mainly Serbian), in order to empower them to become more influential in policy-making.

D4D and NIIT had not collaborated prior to this exchange.

Results

During the exchange, Dragan Petkovic (NIIT) worked in close coordination with D4D partners to develop questionnaires, forms and objectives for mapping membership-based organizations, and identify organizations to be included in the assessment. After this, 25 meetings were held with organizations in North Kosovo. The resulting assessment is expected to inform D4D's future work in this field. In addition, the exchange prompted a visit by the NIIT team to Prishtina to conduct a series of meetings on potential topics for future cross-border cooperation and knowledge transfer.

Goal of Exchange

Assess prospective cooperation between membership-based organizations from South and North Kosovo.

Key Finding

"Main conclusions related to potential cooperation between membership-based organizations from North and South Kosovo include:

- The first contact should be through a local well-reputed NGO or a local leader.
- Most of the Serbian organizations from North Kosovo have never been proposed any direct cooperation with similar Albanian organizations.
- Most organizations are registered in the Serbian system.
- It is important that the proposal for cooperation has a clear, specific and tangible result."

Participant Observation

"Even when organizations have already cooperated, that cooperation has mainly been between civil society organizations from Belgrade and Prishtina. Regional cooperation will particularly require the involvement of organizations and institutions which are not from the capitals, for example, from Prishtina and Vranje, or Mitrovica and Kraljevo."

National Alliance for Local Economic Development – Institute for Development Policy

Rationale

The National Alliance for Local Economic Development (NALED) is a business association and civil society organization bringing together representatives of companies, municipalities and non-governmental organizations to cooperate on improving the conditions for local economic development and doing business in Serbia.

The Institute for Development Policy (INDEP) is a think tank and advocacy centre promoting independent research-based policy solutions. NALED and INDEP had not cooperated prior to participation in the exchange program.

NALED has created the Regulatory Index of Serbia, a mechanism for monitoring the quality of the regulatory environment in Serbia, and developed an online tool featuring the Regulatory Index Simulator (RIS), intended to enable user data entry and automated calculation of results. The online tool is seen as increasing the advocacy potential of the Regulatory Index and establishing it as an objective quantitative mechanism for assessing the quality of the regulatory framework in Serbia. The purpose of this exchange was to analyze the regulatory environment in Kosovo in order to determine the potential for regional replication of the RIS as a monitoring tool. NALED and INDEP view the application of an effective regulatory system is vital for business environment and investors both in Kosovo and Serbia.

Results

Petrit Nishliu (INDEP) conducted research on the regulatory environment in Kosovo and worked in collaboration with colleagues from NALED to produce a policy report. The findings of the report were presented at NALED's roundtable "Differences and Similarities Regarding the Legislative Environment in Serbia and Kosovo," attended by a range of close partners and donors. The report's main findings were that most elements of the Regulatory Index are relevant in Kosovo. As a result, the organizations will continue to work to identify the modalities and potential to adapt the Regulatory Index to the Kosovo context.

Goal of Exchange

Research the regulatory environment in Kosovo to assess the potential regional replication of the Regulatory Index Simulator.

Host Observation

"This exchange managed to link both organizations to cooperate further and to try to improve the Index and make it applicable to the whole region. Successful cooperation of this kind gives incentive to other organizations to consider the establishment of similar partnerships with organizations outside the borders. This is expected to directly contribute to moderate, but meaningful, normalization of relations."

Centre for Community Development – Forum for Ethnic Relations

Rationale

The Centre for Community Development (CRZ) is a grassroots civic organization from the north of Kosovo. CRZ runs an influential media outlet (KoSSev), whose particular mission is to accurately inform the Serbian community in the north of Kosovo on current events, post-Brussels period and the upcoming political and social processes, as well as the wider public about the Serbian community of the north of Kosovo.

The Forum for Ethnic Relations (FER) has been recognized as a leading peacekeeping and reconciliation organization with the extensive expertise on inter-ethnic issues. CRZ and FER had cooperated prior to the exchange. CRZ sought to host an exchange participant from FER due to the organization's expertise on the impact of the Brussels process on political and inter-ethnic relations in Kosovo. Objectives included investigating the impact of the Brussels process on political and inter-ethnic relations in Kosovo; improving mutual understanding and tolerance between central and local institutions in Pristina and the north of Kosovo; and expanding the outreach of KoSSev and improve the quality of its news and analysis content with an expertise on Brussels dialogue topics.

Results

Ksenija Markovic (FER), together with colleagues from CRZ and FER, conducted a series of interviews in North and South Mitrovica and Prishtina. Interviewees included Kosovo Albanian and Serb civic, media and political representatives, international stakeholders, and members of the Kosovo negotiation team.

Based on these interviews and on desk research, the policy paper "The Impact of the Brussels Process on the Political and Inter-Ethnic Relations in Kosovo" is under development. The paper will be presented to key stakeholders in Kosovo and Serbia, and is expected to provide a new perspective on the impact of the Belgrade-Prishtina dialogue.

Goal of Exchange

Examine the impact of the Brussels dialogue process on relations between Kosovo Serbs and Albanians and on the Kosovo political scene.

Host Observation

"It was important to learn more about the daily developments in North Mitrovica, political relations and the relations between the communities. In addition, the activities envisage organizing and conducting a survey on the attitudes of the political parties and Kosovo institutions towards the negotiation process in Brussels and the impact of the process on the relations between the Serbs in Albanians."

Heartefact Fund – Kosovo 2.0

Rationale

Kosovo 2.0 and the Heartefact Fund (HF) began cooperation in 2014. Their participation in the PWEPPD program allowed the organizations to strengthen their ongoing collaboration in working to support cooperation between Kosovo and Serbia through empowering social and intercultural dialogue, mutual understanding and tolerance between the two societies. Specifically, this exchange aimed to move forward from the already established political dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia by enabling a public space and social atmosphere in which positive communication between two communities would be considered desirable and normal, and also far more rooted in everyday challenges that both societies face and share.

Goal of Exchange

Create new channels of communication between Kosovar and Serbian societies.

Results

During the exchange, Cristina Mari (Kosovo 2.0) and colleagues from HF conducted and produced a series of video interviews with key public figures from fields of media, arts and political activism in Kosovar and Serbian societies focused on the necessity for communication on socially critical topics and the future neighborly relationship between the societies. The exchange sought to foster intercultural and interethnic dialogue. Content produced during the exchange will be presented online, through the Kosovo 2.0 and HF websites and social media networks.

Public events will be organized in Belgrade and in Prishtina to present the results of the interviews and to launch discussions on the normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia and the role of dialogue on a people-to-people level. The exchange and the ongoing project aim at creating the opportunity to move forward from the already established political dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia by enabling a public space and social atmosphere in which positive communication between two communities will be considered desirable and normal but also far more rooted in everyday challenges that both societies face and share.

Host Observation

“The ongoing dialogue between Kosovar and Serbian state representatives and the recently signed agreements have contributed to the establishment of sustainable peace in the region. However, in the everyday life of these communities, this hasn’t had a decisive impact. The problems between the communities remain significant as they are still largely divided, unfamiliar and even hostile to each other. Deep separation and nationalist political narratives remain predominant in public discourses on both sides.”

Participant Observation

“The action represents a step in public advocacy for the need to establish day-to-day communication between the communities... the goal is to assimilate broader public to cultural diversity and to create the social atmosphere in which multiculturalism is not perceived as a problem, but as an accelerator of regional cooperation. Finally, the exchange itself provides a unique opportunity to consolidate our cooperation and review our potential projects toward a more concrete strategic partnership, while increasing our regional presence and outreach.”

Center for Ecology and Sustainable Development – Advocacy Training and Resource Center

Rationale

The Center for Ecology and Sustainable Development (CEKOR) and the Advocacy Training and Resource Center (ATRC) have an established cooperation based in a regional project on sustainable energy policy. Based in Subotica, CEKOR works to promote public participation and awareness on environmental protection and sustainable development. ATRC, located in Prishtina, aims to strengthen the advocacy capacities of non-governmental organizations to strengthen their policy impact.

CEKOR and ATRC's participation in the PWEEPD exchange sought to build on their existing partnership and to strengthen their collaboration in additional fields, such as environmental protection and citizen participation in decision-making.

Results

Almira Qupeva (ATRC) worked with colleagues from CEKOR to research the public participation rights and practice in energy decision making in Serbia and Kosovo, and analyzing key energy sector challenges, including energy poverty, corruption, environmental damage and implementation of relevant European Union directives. In addition to improving knowledge and facilitate the comparison of practices in Serbia, Kosovo and the region, the resulting policy paper will provide inputs to shadow reports on Negotiation Chapters 15, 23 and 27 related to public participation rights in energy decision making.

The results of the research will be presented at press conferences and events in Kosovo and in Serbia. It is expected that the in-depth analysis will foster the advocacy impact on decision makers, and will enable more open and transparent public participation in the process of drafting the new National Emission Reduction Plan.

Goal of Exchange

Research public participation in energy decision making in Serbia and Kosovo

Host Observation

“Legal and institutional frameworks for energy sector operation in the Balkan countries are changing rapidly. A process of amending existing and adopting new regulations is underway in almost all the countries, and new institutions have been or are being set up to implement national priorities, fulfill requirements of the European accession process and obligations undertaken upon signature of the Energy Community Treaty. Serbia is continuing its efforts for the preparation of implementing the Large Combustion Plants and Industrial Emissions Directives. In this regard, the adoption of amendments to the Decree on the Emission Limit Values of Polluting Substances to Air and the National Emission Reduction Plan is of primary importance. While deciding on the sequence of investments that are necessary to be made in Serbia energy sector, there is a huge necessity to improve capacities of civil society organizations to monitor concrete cases of public procurements, and to participate in drafting national emission reduction plan, which should be submitted by the end of 2015.”

Kosovar Centre for Security Studies - Belgrade Centre for Security Policy

Rationale

The Kosovar Centre for Security Studies (KCSS) and the Belgrade Centre for Security Policy have a longstanding partnership working on topics of security policy and regional security cooperation. KCSS and BCSP's participation in the second round of the PWEEDP program intended to build on this established collaboration through detailed empirical research on the implementation of the Brussels Agreements.

Goal of Exchange

Assess the integration of Civil Protection units into Kosovo's security institutions.

Key Finding

"Overall, the ways in which civil protection members will be reorganized and embedded into Kosovo's security institutions remain problematic. The discussions between Pristina and Belgrade on the matter are not transparent, while there is no official plan envisaging the prospects of the civil protection units in the northern Kosovo."

This exchange investigated the civil protection units operating in North Kosovo. The civil protection units, established in the 1990s to serve disaster relief and civil protection tasks, remain a mechanism operating outside the legal framework of Kosovo. The agreement reached between the Prime Ministers of Kosovo and Serbia remained vague in regards to the integration of civil protection units into Kosovo's security institutions. There is no explicit reference to civil protection in the agreement, although the agreement calls for the dissolution of all parallel security structures in the northern part of Kosovo. While the future of the civil protection units has been subject to interpretations and political narratives expressed differently in Pristina, North Mitrovica and Belgrade, they are expected to be gradually integrated into Kosovo's security institutions, following the example of former Serbian police structures.

Results

Researchers Maja Bjelos (BCSP) and Isidora Stakic (BCSP) worked with their colleagues at KCSS to examine the legal status, structure, and activities of the civil protection units, and to assess the alternatives for their integration into the legal and institutional system of Kosovo. During the exchange, the partners conducted 22 in-depth interviews with stakeholders from Belgrade, Prishtina and northern municipalities.

Preliminary research findings were presented on the television show 'Jeta ne Kosove' (Life in Kosovo). The resulting policy paper and recommendations will be presented at a regional conference in Prishtina.

Participant Observation

"Due to the political sensitivity of the topic, KCSS researchers would not be able to get the access to the relevant stakeholders from North Kosovo which is crucial for this research. On the other hand, BCSP researchers could not research this topic from Belgrade, without collecting primary data through interviews with stakeholders in Kosovo. Therefore, this exchange enabled BCSP and KCSS to obtain jointly relevant information on civil protection and to produce a policy paper."

