
Enhanced Policy Dialogue of
Professionals in Kosovo and Serbia Program



British Embassy
Belgrade

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The Balkan Trust
for Democracy

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Enhanced Policy Dialogue of Professionals in Kosovo and Serbia Program

Building on the past success of the Professional Work Exchange for Enhanced Policy Dialogue Program, the **Enhanced Policy Dialogue of Professionals in Kosovo and Serbia Program** (EPDP) aims to further normalize Kosovo-Serbia relations by strengthening communication platforms, advancing multi-perspective policy dialogue, and facilitating cooperation between representatives of governments, media, and legal organizations in both Kosovo and Serbia.

Through a series of reciprocal exchanges and a civil servant workshop, the EPDP Program fosters much-needed dialogue and exchange that are essential to maintaining the stability, security, and further Euroatlantic integration of the Western Balkans. Program participants engage in joint policy work, including research, monitoring, and advocacy for inclusive policy development and implementation.

Specific Program Components Include:

- A series of reciprocal policy-oriented work exchanges for journalists and legal professionals for a period of two weeks.
- An intensive workshop for civil servants from Kosovo and Serbia, to provide a platform for dialogue and to strengthen the respective policy community.
- Outreach and advocacy support through, but not limited to, grants to the involved organizations and institutions to advance Kosovo-Serbia cooperation as the accepted norm for Euroatlantic integration.
- Published personal reflections, multi-perspective research outcomes, and policy and sectoral recommendations for enhanced cooperation.
- Promotion of the importance of active exchange to normalize relations, both regionally and internationally.

These partnerships foster:

- **Enhanced Policy Capacity:** If structured professional cooperation creates greater understanding of plural perspectives, then the resulting research and policy outputs will be more responsive to the needs and concerns of a multi-perspective reality.
- **Informed Political Decision-Making:** If civil actors advocate for inclusive policies, then evidence-based policy dialogue is fostered, the understanding of decision-makers is broadened, and democratic accountability is approved.
- **Organizational Development:** If collaborative communication allows institutions and individuals to expand their perspectives on issues, then a more rounded and regionally aware framework will be supported in the future.
- **Public Awareness:** If examples of Kosovo-Serbia cooperation are made visible, then increased public awareness will help improve regional relations and dialogue.

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

While this program is implemented by the Balkan Trust for Democracy with the support of the British Foreign and 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 British Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Exchanges

Valerie Hopkins & Paulina Nushi
Balkan Investigative Reporting Network Kosovo



Aleksandar Djordjevic & Slobodan Georgijev
Balkan Investigative Reporting Network Serbia

Nenad Trajkovic
Center for Legal Aid and Regional Development



Milan Antonijevic & Jovana Spremo
Lawyers' Committee for Human Rights Serbia

Civil Servant Workshop

Ministry for European Integration, Kosovo



European Integration Office, Serbia

Exchange: Balkan Investigative Reporting Network Kosovo – Balkan Investigative Reporting Network Serbia

Rationale

The Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN) is devoted to the production of high-quality investigative and analytical reporting that delivers objective information and new stories to the people of the Western Balkans. BIRN Kosovo and BIRN Serbia have recently forged a partnership to implement the BIG DEAL project, a civic oversight initiative on the Kosovo-Serbia negotiations. To gain a greater and firsthand understanding of the implementation of the agreements reached in Brussels and to build internal monitoring capacities around the BIG DEAL project, both BIRN Kosovo and BIRN Serbia were eager to exchange with one another.

Goal of Exchange

To understand the implementation of the Brussels Agreement in Kosovo and Serbia across a range of issues that affect both communities.

Participant Observation

"I do believe now that the problems are the same and that there is a possibility to understand that on both sides. But, I also learn[ed] that there will be no substantial improvement until we do not have established institutional cooperation between Belgrade and Pristina."

Results

During the exchange, Valerie Hopkins (BIRN Kosovo) worked alongside BIRN Serbia colleagues to explain the BIG DEAL project framework and identify issues that would be relevant to audiences in both Kosovo and Serbia. As the project lead, she laid the foundation for joint reporting and story production. Building on this, Paulina Nushi (BIRN Kosovo) investigated several stories of interest to fellow Kosovars, including locally-owned Albanian businesses, trade between both Kosovo and Serbia, and daily life in Belgrade. Stories have been published online with additional audio and visual components.

Similarly, Slobodan Georgijev (BIRN Serbia) and Aleksandar Djordjevic (BIRN Serbia) investigated stories of interest to the Serbian public, namely the relationships between Serbia and North Kosovo, the Kosovo opposition and its leaders, energy supplies between Kosovo and Serbia, and daily life in Pristina. Stories have been published online and shared throughout social media.

Participant Observation

"Very useful and educative experience. I'm considerably richer for new knowledge, also I gained a wider and deeper insight into the political situation in the region... My expectations were surpassed, especially in the part that relates to the expected experience. Since this was my first visit to Kosovo, I think I have now gained a much clearer picture of Kosovo."

Participant Observation

"The exchange program was a very good experience... It was a good opportunity to see more closely how our colleagues from Serbia work and to learn something new and to share our knowledge... this is a very good chance to create good relations, first as Kosovo and Serbian citizens and then as journalists."

Exchange: Center for Legal Aid and Regional Development – Lawyers’ Committee for Human Rights Serbia

Rationale

The Lawyers’ Committee for Human Rights in Serbia (YUCOM) specializes in the protection and promotion of human rights, while the Center for Legal Aid and Regional Development (CLARD) is dedicated to safeguarding the rights of citizens throughout Kosovo, accepting human rights, civil, economic, and criminal cases. Together, these organizations have demonstrated a desire to partner with one another to exchange legal expertise and to build capacities internally to better serve the needs of their citizens, especially those living in border communities.

Goal of Exchange

To enhance the access to justice for vulnerable and marginalized groups in both Kosovo and Serbia.

Participant Observation

“The BTD Kosovo-Serbia Professional Exchange Program offers a lot... For myself it was very interesting to change the working environment for a week, especially, because I have never been to a similar exchange program. I had the opportunity to learn a lot...with the help of the colleagues from CLARD.”

Results

During the exchange, Nenad Trajkovic (CLARD) studied the Serbian experience with regard to the European Court on Human Rights (ECHR), conducting research and meeting with relevant stakeholders within the Serbia legal system. This information was then compiled into a handbook for Kosovo's legal practitioners on how to submit a case to the ECHR, in advance of becoming a member. Results from the exchange were also presented to the next generation of lawyers in Pristina, those currently studying law, at a public event.

Similarly, Jovana Spremo (YUCOM) conducted research on the legal and strategic anti-discrimination frameworks in Kosovo, in order to draw comparisons to such examples in Serbia and see what lessons can be learned from the Kosovar legal system. Building on this research, Milan Antonijevic (YUCOM) met with relevant actors in the field of anti-discrimination to gain insights into the extent of implementation of the Kosovar legal frameworks, to further understand what can be compared to the Serbian model and to produce a paper summarizing these findings. Results from the exchange were presented to a group of law students and human rights activists as well.

Participant Observation

"The strength of the program is in the fact that it connects two organizations working in the same field, which can provide them the base for their future cooperation and networking. The added value is that the program allows the participants to spend certain time in the neighboring countries with the chance to learn about the every day life in the country and the system itself."

Participant Observation

"The main strength of the exchange program was putting people from different environments together, and giving them [the] opportunity to work together towards finding solutions and best practices... This experience showed that both sides face similar challenges, and that the exchange of information could be mutually useful. "

Civil Servant Workshop

The sustainability of the results of the Brussels negotiations depends largely on the ability of political actors to work together to ensure the development and implementation of policies responsive to the realities of the context in both Kosovo and Serbia. To do this, inter-organizational and inter-professional relationships are needed to strengthen the cross-sector and cross-community platforms and communication channels necessary for creating and sustaining policy dialogue.

Addressing this need, BTD brought together representatives from the Ministry of European Integration in Kosovo and the European Integration Office in Serbia for a workshop to identify topics of mutual interest that could be furthered through joint cooperation. The topics identified by participants included: exchanging experiences and expertise on the implementation of the European Union's (EU) Stabilization and Association Agreement, as well as the issue of translation into Serbian of the EU's *acquis communautaire*.

Goal of Workshop

To strengthen sustainable communication channels and policy dialogue platforms to facilitate greater cooperation between Kosovo and Serbia.

Result

The civil servants workshop yielded a principal arrangement with jointly agreed upon steps to be taken, in order to advance cooperation in the specific field of European integration.



Professional Work Exchange for Enhanced Policy Dialogue Program

The Enhanced Policy Dialogue of Professionals in Kosovo and Serbia Program builds on the success of the two-year Professional Work Exchange for Enhanced Policy Dialogue Program (PWEEPD). The PWEEPD Program consisted of a series of cross-border policy work exchanges of mid-career professionals from a targeted group of think tanks, civil society organizations, and universities in Kosovo and Serbia. These work exchanges enhanced the human resources and knowledge products of host organizations and facilitated the production of multi-perspective policy work in the fields of government accountability and transparency, human rights protection, independent media, security and justice, and migration policies.

These four to eight week embedded exchanges aimed 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 opportunities for sustained organizational collaboration.
- Foster the publication of multi-perspective policy and research knowledge products that resulted from the increased collaboration and interaction of researchers and analysts due to the work exchange program.

Joint results included: policy papers, briefs, and articles; research studies and surveys; events and workshops; back office know-how; and other policy activities that benefited the hosting organization's primary mission and used the unique skillsets of each exchange participant.

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

About BTD

The Balkan Trust for Democracy (BTD) is an initiative that supports democracy, good governance, and Euroatlantic integration in Southeastern Europe through grantmaking, policy dialogue, and leadership development. This award-winning public-private partnership was created in 2003 by the German Marshall Fund of the United States, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation.

About GMF

The German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF) strengthens transatlantic cooperation on regional, national, and global challenges and opportunities in the spirit of the Marshall Plan.

GMF contributes research and analysis and convenes leaders on transatlantic issues relevant to policymakers. GMF offers rising leaders opportunities to develop their skills and networks through transatlantic exchange, and supports civil society in the Balkans and Black Sea regions by fostering democratic initiatives, rule of law, and regional cooperation.

Founded in 1972 as a non-partisan, non-profit organization through a gift from Germany as a permanent memorial to Marshall Plan assistance, GMF maintains a strong presence on both sides of the Atlantic. In addition to its headquarters in Washington, DC, GMF has offices in Berlin, Paris, Brussels, Belgrade, Ankara, Bucharest, and Warsaw. GMF also has smaller representations in Bratislava, Turin, and Stockholm.

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