



REGIONAL SEMINAR

“Investing in People & Social Cohesion: A Youth and Civil Society Perspective”

13-14 February 2020 | Hotel Rogner

EU enlargement policy is at a crossroads, especially after the strong opposition coming from France, the Netherlands and Denmark regarding the opening of the negotiation talks with Albania and North Macedonia. Ever since, there have been many debates regarding what will the future hold for the enlargement process and for the Western Balkans. At the European Council Summit in October, the member states, once again, failed to reach a decision on opening accession negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia, with some calling for the entire process to be reworked. It seems that, unless there is a change of political will, the EU's approach to the Western Balkans must reform or remain blocked.

However, in the last few years, the EU Accession negotiations dynamics have in fact shown the need to shift from a technocratic and mechanic process of opening / closing chapters led by the public administration towards a more citizen-centric approach, where different stakeholders become an integral part of the process. This includes more citizen-friendly information, impact-oriented communication and clear and friendly procedures of involvement of non-government actors in the negotiation process.

From the local consultations held within CONNECT project - Applying sector approach to Civil society Contribution in EU integration of Albania - in three cities of Albania (*Korçë, Vlorë and Shkodër*) emerged several challenges to a meaningful citizen / youth engagement in the current EU integration process in Albania. Many of them regard the lack of information that citizens and especially young people in local level have with regard to the process of EU integration and accession, while their involvement in the domestic reforms and policy making remains low.

Furthermore, CONNECT has provided up to now the ground for a debate with the relevant country stakeholders in Albania on the state of implementation of Regional Economic Area (REA) Multi-Annual Plan (MAP) with a special focus on mobility and digital pillar, on the mapping of economic, innovative and scientific potential in the country, on the relevant public policies that have a particular focus on innovation, mobility of youth and academics and employability.

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While the main focus of REA at the moment remains on youth and on the relevant policies, like the law for start-ups and potential fiscal facilities for young people who want to build a start-up, the inclusion of youth in sectorial debates, even if too technical sometimes, can be of added value for their personal and professional development. From the debate it emerged the need for Albania to first have a clear domestic vision and agenda, including projections for future investments such as having an Agenda 2030.

In this framework, Cooperation and Development Institute will organize on 13-14 February, 2020 in Tirana, the Regional Seminar **“Investing in People and Social Cohesion: A Youth and Civil Society Perspective”**. This event aims to invite a large audience of different stakeholders such as local and regional institutions, civil society, academia, media, youth organizations etc., to trigger a discussion on the state of implementation of REA MAP with a focus on mobility and digital pillar, on the mapping of economic, innovative and scientific potential in the country, on the relevant public policies that have a particular focus on innovation, social cohesion, mobility of youth and academics and employability.

On February 13th, the seminar will be tailored in the form of a workshop where different actors such as civil society organizations, academia, media, young people, etc., will work together under three thematic topics such as: i) Education and Employment, ii) Youth Connectivity and Mobility, and iii) Innovation, Digitalization and Media.

On February 14, the event will start with the presentation of a Presentation of the research findings on state of play of Regional Economic Area in the WBs, prepared within the project by CDI and its partners, as well as the recommendations of the workshop and will then conclude with the Panel “Investing in People and Social Cohesion”.

The regional seminar is themed to have a regional approach and component, such as sharing the best cases and experience of our Balkan neighbours and accession front-runners. In this regard, the seminar will strengthen the regional cooperation component, as praised both in the Enlargement Strategy 2018 and in the Berlin process, while painting a broad and comprehensive picture of the state of play across the Western Balkans region.

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- PROGRAMME-

13 February 2020 – Workshop

Venue: Rogner/London-Paris-Rome-Stockholm

15:30 Registration / Afternoon coffee & tea

16:00 Opening and Rationale

Inva Nela, Cooperation and Development Institute

Parallel Thematic Workshops

- **Education and Employment:**
Chaired by: Adriatik Kotorri, Professor, Faculty of Economy, University of Tirana
Co-chaired by: Anisa Seferaj, CONNECT Policy Coordination Expert, Cooperation and Development Institute
- **Youth Connectivity and Mobility:**
Chaired by: Dafina Peci, CONNECT Liaison Officer with FES, Executive Director of National Youth Congress of Albania
Co-chaired by: Meliha Muherina, Project Manager, Centre for European Perspective, Young Bled Strategic Forum Programme Director, Slovenia
- **Innovation, Digitalization and Media:**
Chaired by: Geron Kamberi, EU Integration Expert
Co-chaired by: Nemanja Todorović Štiplija, Editor-in-Chief, European Western Balkans

17:30 Presentation of the recommendations

18:00 Discussion and Final Conclusions



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14 February 2020 – Public Event

Venue: Rogner/Antigonea 1

09:30 **Registration / Morning Coffee**

10:00 **Welcoming and Opening Remarks**

Krisela Hackaj, Executive Director, Cooperation & Development Institute
Stine Klapper, Country Director, Friedrich Ebert Foundation

Setting the Scene “Labour Market New Dynamics: Focus on Innovation & Digital Skills”

Dajna Sorensen, Albanian Deputy Minister of Finance and Economy

Presentation of the research findings on state of play of Regional Economic Area in the WB: Spotlight on social cohesion, youth mobility and digitalization”

Nemanja Todorović Štiplija, Editor-in-Chief, European Western Balkans

10:45 **Panel Discussion: Investing in People & Social Cohesion**

- **Prof. Dr. Tanja Miščević**, Former Chief Negotiator of the Republic of Serbia Negotiator, Deputy Secretary General - Regional Cooperation Council;
- **Oriana Arapi**, Unit Director for Strategic Planning and Development Programs at Prime Minister's Office, Albania;
- **Mirela Muça**, Director, National Agency for Scientific Research and Innovation;
- **Gledis Gjipali**, Executive Director, European Movement Albania.

Moderation: Dafina Peci, CONNECT Liaison Officer with FES, Executive Director of National Youth Congress of Albania

12:00 **Discussion and Conclusions**

12:30 **Closure and Light lunch**

* There will be simultaneous translation English-Albanian-English.

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