
Discussion points from the Think Tank Forum and Civil Society Forum of the Poznan Summit

Think Tank Forum and Civil Society Forum of the Poznan Summit were held on July 3rd and 4th 2019. The sessions' topics included regional cooperation, reconciliation, cultural cooperation, socio-economic development, environment, the role of civil society in fight against corruption and organised crime, fight against hybrid threats to democracy and the future of the Berlin Process. The discussion points were the following:

- **On regional cooperation in general:**

The region faces joint challenges when it comes to reforms of judiciary, fight against corruption and respect of fundamental rights and these need to be prioritised. At the same time, closer regional integration and resolution of bilateral issues should equally be kept at the top of the political agendas. Closer cooperation between governments and civil society organizations remains crucial for sustainable societal transformation process.

- **On reconciliation:**

In order to make progress in the process of reconciliation, the Western Balkan governments need to support transitional justice strategies and co-ordinate their actions. The existing commitments made at the London Summit must be followed up on. The governments should commit to combating the stalled reconciliation and to countering the denial of crimes and the transference of ethnic divisions to younger generations: joint fact-finding efforts, such as the initiative to set up RECOM, need to be initiated without delay. Council of Europe standards regarding history-teaching in schools should be promoted in order to move away from divisive narratives. Functioning of forward-looking initiatives (such as RYCO) should not be subject to political disputes and RYCO should be enhanced with the dimension of people-to-people exchange.

- **On cultural cooperation:**

For structural and proper regional exchange, the governments would need to set up a long-term mechanism (fund) of financing and providing logistical support for management of regional projects and joint co-productions, including also other countries of the South East Europe region, with which cultural cooperation already exists (Croatia and Slovenia, but also Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary and Greece). A first step and a proof of good will could be the removal of administrative obstacles for mobility of cultural operators/artists/researches and cultural works.

- **On socio-economic development:**

Considering their role in the EU approximation process, local governments need to be included in the process of EU integration and their capacities to match responsibilities in the EU accession process should be developed. Inclusion of the most vulnerable, like Roma and migrants, as well as other marginalised groups on the labour market, like women, need to receive particular attention, also having in mind human capital development and the untapped potentials for economic growth in the region.

- **On environment:**

Investments in new coal projects should urgently be stopped, having in mind the Paris agreement, global goals and trends and regional EU requirements that by 2020, at least 20% of all energy produced in EU aspiring states must come from renewable sources. Investments in mini hydro-plants are endangering rivers and biodiversity across the Western Balkans region and their further building must be stopped immediately, as the Western Balkans Energy/Economy ministers agreed at the Podgorica summit in the run-up to Poznan in February 2019.

- **On the role of civil society in fight against corruption and organised crime:**

Civil society should continue to perform its main role as corruption watchdog, expose corruption cases and criticize corrupt public servants and institutions, including the judiciary, as well as identify corruption-prone areas within the legal and administrative system. Civil society should participate in the future development of *the Roadmap for Fighting Organized Crime and Corruption in the Western Balkans*.

- **On fight against hybrid threats to democracy:**

Because the region faces the same hybrid threats as the EU – disinformation and propaganda – it should be integrated into relevant actions in the EU, including in the application of the EU *Action Plan against Disinformation and support* in creating fact-checking mechanisms. Also, additional investments should be made in civil society and civic education in the spirit of democracy, rule of law and free press, including the introduction of media literacy to national curricula (rather than one-off trainings).

- **On the future of the Berlin Process:**

Having served its original purpose, the Process should be streamlined in line with the EC's six flagship initiatives and with the initiative to organise an EU-Western Balkans Summit every two years. New member-states should continue to host the Process, with stronger Western Balkan ownership and with an increased participation of the RCC. Enlargement policy should regain its importance and focus.

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