

SECOND
EUROPE-WESTERN
BALKANS **YOUTH
MEETING**

**THE BERLIN
PROCESS – A NEW
IMPETUS FOR
YOUTH WORK?**

PODGORICA,
23 – 25 MAY 2018

**Inspiring youth projects, challenges and
achievements and the impact of the Berlin
process**

SURVEY RESULTS

By Lana Pašić



CONTEXT

The Berlin process started in 2014, aiming to step up the process of European integration of the Western Balkan region. Followed by the heads of states and governments Summits in Paris and Trieste in 2016 and 2017, the process in the region also defined an Action Plan for youth work and youth policy at the first Europe-Western Balkans Youth Meeting in Ljubljana in 2016.

Since the initiation of the process, around 3.000 cooperation projects involving in total more than 78.000 participants, and including over 13.000 participants from Partner countries in the Western Balkans, have been implemented in the field of youth through the Erasmus+ programme since 2014. These projects have supported the exchange of practices, built competences and capacities, promoted intercultural understanding and long-lasting friendships. Furthermore, the establishment of the Regional Youth Coordination Office for the Western Balkans (RYCO) today represents the most visible result of the Berlin process in the field of youth. The role of Erasmus+ and RYCO are important elements of social and economic development in the region, charged with supporting the process of reconciliation. The initiative is further upheld through the announcement by the European Commission, on 6 February 2018, of “A credible enlargement perspective for and enhanced EU engagement with the Western Balkans”.

Further important developments in the youth field at European level, which can be expected to have an influence on possibilities for cooperation with, and developments in the region include the development of a new EU youth strategy as well as a new generation of European youth programmes following the end of the current Erasmus+ programme in 2020.

ABOUT THE SURVEY

In order to assess the impact of the Berlin process so far, the SALTO SEE Resource Centre, together with the German, Macedonian and Slovenian National Agencies for Erasmus+, launched a survey and as well as a call for participation in a seminar¹ targeting organisations from Erasmus+ Programme and Partner countries in the Western Balkans to reflect on the work done so far and stimulate and support further work in the region².

This analysis is based on the findings from **87 application forms** for the seminar **and 28 responses to the qualitative survey**. The aim of the findings is not to be any way representative of the regional youth work connected to the Berlin process, but rather to provide a snapshot of activities that have been done, and serve as a starting point for discussion on the impact of the Berlin process in the youth field so far, in order to spark a debate and examine the possibilities of future contributions.

The main thematic areas of work examined in this analysis are **youth participation, civic education and social inclusion**. The three themes are interlinked, and are also inclusive of

¹ Second Europe – Western Balkans Youth Meeting: The Berlin process: a new impetus for youth work? Podgorica, 23 – 25 May 2018.

² More information about the activity: <https://www.salto-youth.net/rc/see/activities/connectingpolicy/secondwbyouthmeeting2018/>

other sub-categories, such as provision of opportunities and spaces for youth participation and inclusion in political decision making and social issues, promotion of democratic processes and fundamental values through education, training and strengthening capacities of young people and youth organisations, promoting volunteerism and youth leadership, increasing access to information, promotion of diversity, inclusion for youth with fewer opportunities, strengthening advocacy and influencing of young people, youth policy, and topics of youth and peace, security and regional stability, including reconciliation.

Project development, funding, benefits and impact, challenges

EXAMPLES OF PROJECTS SUBMITTED³

Organisation	Project	Country
Y Peer Albania	Theatre Based Techniques (TBT) in Peer Education for Roma Communities	Albania
Roma Active Albania	Fighting antigypsyism through grassroots actions	Albania
Youth Centre "Kosmos"	Developing an anti-oppressive practice in international mobility projects	Bosnia and Herzegovina
Association NARKO-NE	Intercity Theatre Project	Bosnia and Herzegovina
Center for career development CERK	Tech2girls	Bosnia and Herzegovina
Mostar Friedensprojekt e.V.	All inclusive	Bosnia and Herzegovina
South East European Youth Network	Emphatist, Social Innovation Challenge and Baba residence (3 projects))	Bulgaria
Talk	Street Talk: Walls vs Walls	France
Bringing Europeans Together Association (BETA e.V.)	MEU (Model European Union) Strasbourg	France
Memos e.V.	Brain Drain, Brain Gain + Circular Migration	Germany
Amt für Soziale Arbeit Wiesbaden / Department of Social Affairs Wiesbaden (Germany)	„Ich bin gut, wir sind besser – Respect For All - Albanien 2018“	Germany
CAMPUS15 - Jugend wagt den Frieden e.V	Summer Camp 2014: "Be the Change you want to see - Young people go for a joint and peaceful Europe"	Germany

³ For a full list of projects with project description and additional details, please see Annex 1

	and Summer Camp 2016: European Youth for Peace: Creating a United Tomorrow"	
"Roter Baum Berlin" UG	Music for human rights	Germany
Ligo Lex Legis	"Not Just Numbers: Youth Work, Migration and Asylum in Europe"	Kosovo* ⁴
7ARTE	Mitrovica Goes Green	Kosovo*
Local Youth Action Council - Gjakovë	Promoting skills for youth employment	Kosovo*
Association for Education Mladiinfo	mYouth: mobile, Young, Opportunity, Unity, Technology, Help	Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
National Youth Council of Macedonia	Structured dialogue between youth and institutions	Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
Center for Intercultural Dialogue	Born2 Run plus	Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
Center for Intercultural Dialogue	Move Your Finger: Youth Engagement for Local Issues in Kumanovo Region	Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
Center for Intercultural Dialogue	Promoting youth activism in multi-ethnic communities	Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
Association for Democratic Prosperity - Zid	Regional CSO platform advocating social innovation under employment policies that guarantees security for youth at risks	Montenegro
Youth Initiative for Human Rights (YIHR)	Regional Youth Exchange Association	Serbia, B&H, Croatia, Montenegro, Kosovo
National Youth Council of Serbia	Young people's voice in democratic processes	Serbia
Club for youth empowerment 018 (KOM 018)	Creativity Creates Change	Serbia
Association People's Parliament (Udruženje Narodni parlament)	Break the myth - spread the word	Serbia
Youth Centre Krško	Spice up your youth	Slovenia
Centre for European Perspective	Young Bled Strategic Forum	Slovenia

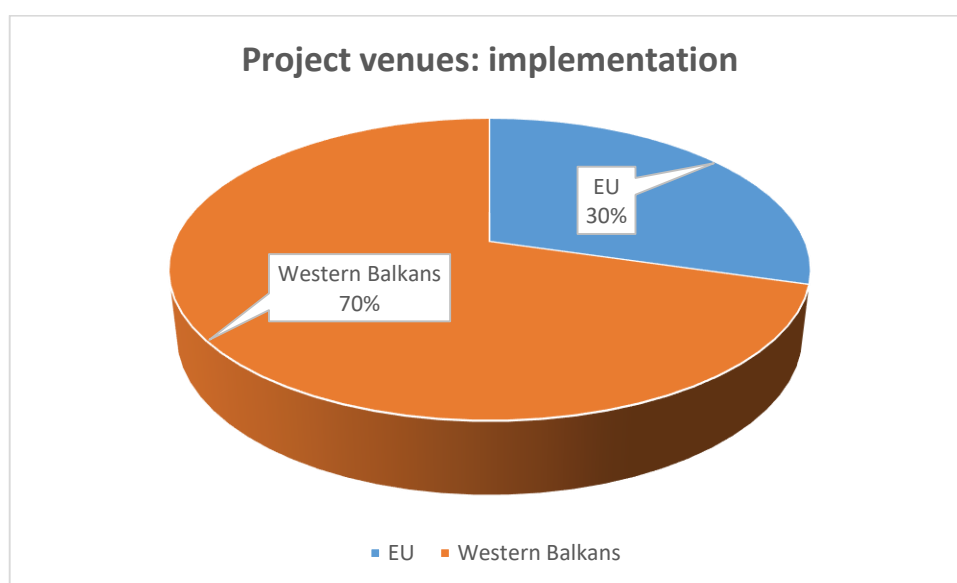
⁴ *This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

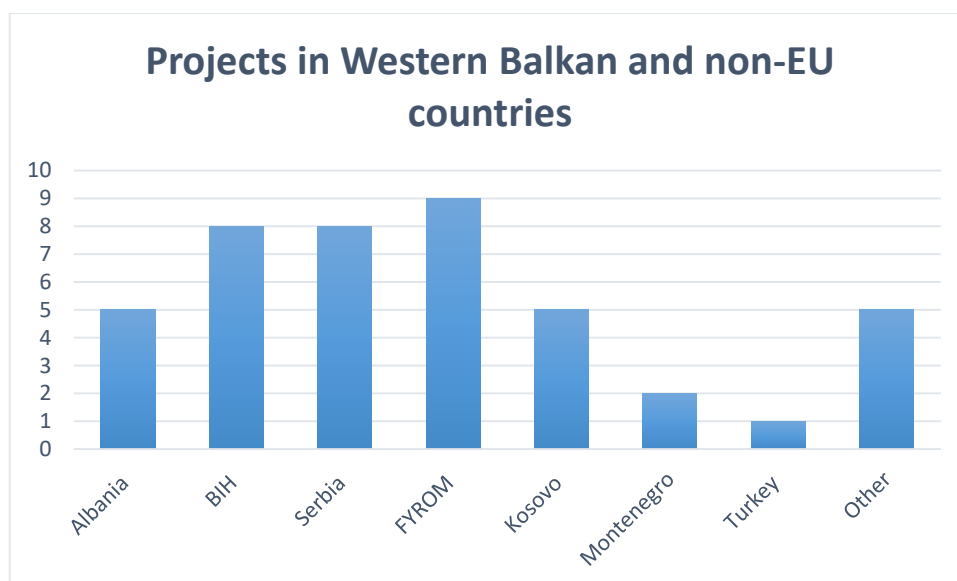
Most of the projects included in the survey are quite recent, which is expected due to the recent nature of the Berlin process, although some of them are continuous. According to the survey results, the number of projects has been steadily increasing, compared to previous years, reaching its peak in 2017.

Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Number of projects	3	8	14	25	11

The majority of the project activities described in the framework of this survey take place in the Western Balkan countries, with approximately 30% of activities being implemented in a member state of the European Union, or internationally. This indicates that **although the number of projects linked with Berlin process has been on the rise, the project activities and exchanges are taking place mainly within the region.**



The highest number of projects has been implemented in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (8), Bosnia and Herzegovina (8) and Serbia (8), followed by Kosovo (5) while Germany and Bulgaria have the highest number of projects within the European Union member states.



Besides partnerships between Western Balkans and EU member states, two of the projects are also implemented with non-European partners, including Israel, Senegal, Ghana, Singapore and Hong Kong. When it comes to project partners, they are fairly equally distributed among Western Balkans and EU countries. This is a logical result of the grant requirements for cooperation projects.

PROJECT FUNDING

The application forms for the Second Europe – Western Balkans Youth Meeting also indicate some specificities in terms of funding. The majority of the projects mentioned here are funded through Erasmus+ or other EU grants, foreign embassies (Swiss, German, US, Netherlands, Sweden, Finland), state development assistance agencies or other bodies (Sweden – SIDA, Denmark – DRC, Germany - GIZ Luxembourg), international organisations, national/regional or local governments, through foundations or private donors, and finally through own funding or with corporate donations. The diversity of funding sources in a relatively small sample of projects indicates that organisations are searching for new funding opportunities and co-funding for their activities.

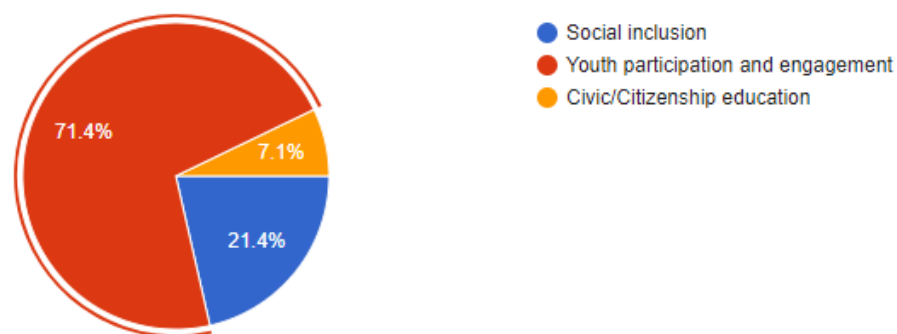
Sources of funding	Number of projects
Erasmus + (including NAs)	19
Other EU grants	6
Foreign embassies in the country	9
State development agencies and governments (Sweden, Germany, Denmark, Finland, Luxembourg)	5
International organisations and UN agencies	6

National/regional funding (relevant Ministries in the countries of the Western Balkans – B&H, Montenegro, Serbia)	7
Funding by local authorities/municipalities	6
Organisational funding (international – from “mother” organisations)	4
Own organisational funding (local)	5
Foundations and private donors	6
Corporate funding	5
RYCO	1
Other: Visegrad Fund	1

The **key themes and topics** covered by the meeting, and through the survey relate to three of the six priority areas also identified in Action Plan for Youth Work and Youth Policy⁵: youth participation and engagement, social inclusion and civic/citizenship education. **Of 28 initiatives included through the survey, the majority, or 20 projects, are focused on youth participation and engagement, followed by six projects on social inclusion. The lowest number of projects – only 2 - deal with civic/citizenship education.**

Priority theme/s of your project, please select:

28 responses

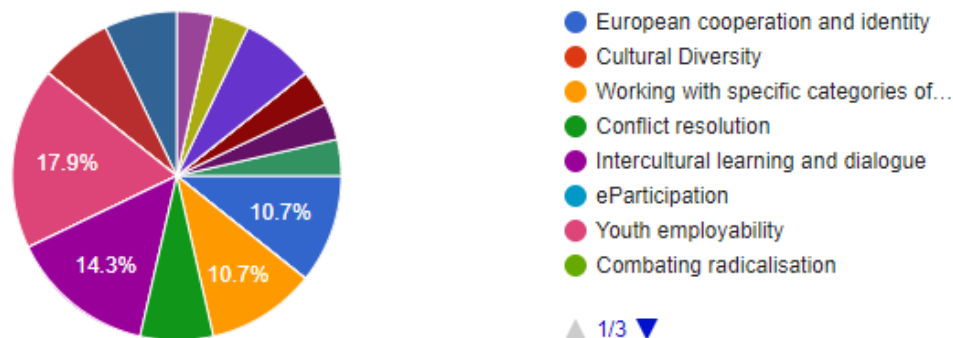


Additional key topics covered by the organisations represented in the survey relate to youth employability (5 projects), intercultural learning and dialogue (4 projects), working with specific categories of young people (3 projects) and promoting European cooperation and identity (3 projects), while other topics, including youth policy, conflict resolution, cultural diversity, non-formal education, training of youth workers, among others, are represented through one or two projects.

⁵ Europe-Western Balkans Youth Meeting: Connecting Youth Work and Youth Policy: Action Plan for Youth Work and Youth Policy, Ljubljana, Slovenia, September 2016.

Other topics covered by the project:

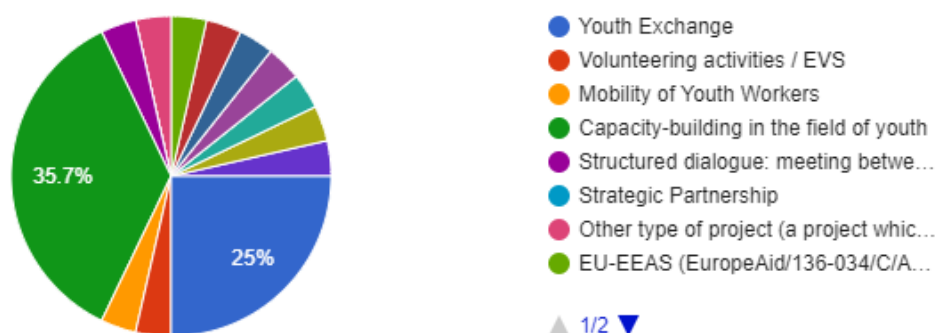
28 responses



The type of project activity within the Erasmus+ Programme in the field of youth or other programmes or frameworks generally relates to Capacity-building in the field of youth (10 projects) and Youth Exchanges (7 projects), while the volunteering, mobility of youth workers, structured dialogue and local advocacy are also represented in the survey.

Type of project activity (within the Erasmus+ Programme in the field of youth or other programmes or frameworks):

28 responses



IMPACT AND BENEFITS OF FEATURED PROJECTS:

- **Capacity building of youth and youth organisations :**
 - development of professional skills and social competences of young people, including labour market skills, digital skills, influencing and advocacy skills, critical thinking and analytical skills, conflict management skills etc.
 - building their confidence and self-esteem, and their belief in ability to influence their environment
 - Mentoring and transfer of knowledge and skills
 - promoting diversity, strengthening inter-cultural competences, inter-ethnic cooperation and dialogue
 - developing capacities of youth organisations and increasing the quality of youth work in the region
- **Sharing and learning:**
 - Sharing of best practices and exchanging experiences, study visits
 - Research on young people's perceptions, priorities and needs
 - Production of various learning and training materials, toolboxes, online platforms etc.
 - Developing participants' capacities to implement projects in own contexts
- **Social inclusion**
 - Promoting inclusion of different youth: girls, young people of various ethnicities, rural youth, youth with disabilities etc.
- **Promoting youth activism and participation in decision-making**
 - Strengthening and creating inclusive youth structures and spaces for participation e.g. youth clubs
 - Promoting youth involvement in community life by encouraging structured dialogue and youth collaboration with local authorities and community
 - Promote volunteerism among young people
- **Emphasising importance of values and diverse groups**
 - Stimulating constructive dialogue and discussion in society
 - Promoting values of human rights, tolerance, respect, democracy and good governance
 - Addressing discrimination, stereotypes and prejudices and raising awareness of the issues such as gender equality, LGBTIQ rights etc.
- **Communication & networking**
 - Creating links between civil society (youth organisations) and other stakeholders, including national, regional and local authorities and decision-makers, strengthening dialogue and increasing young people's advocacy and influencing abilities towards these institutions
 - Increasing regional networks – better promotion of work of youth organisations
 - Increased visibility of E+ projects and international cooperation
 - Better informed young people and citizens

- **Youth policy**
 - Provision of recommendations on youth policies
 - Impact on adoption of certain policies
- **Regional and European processes:**
 - Establishment of RYCO
 - Provision of information about European politics and European-decision making processes

CHALLENGES

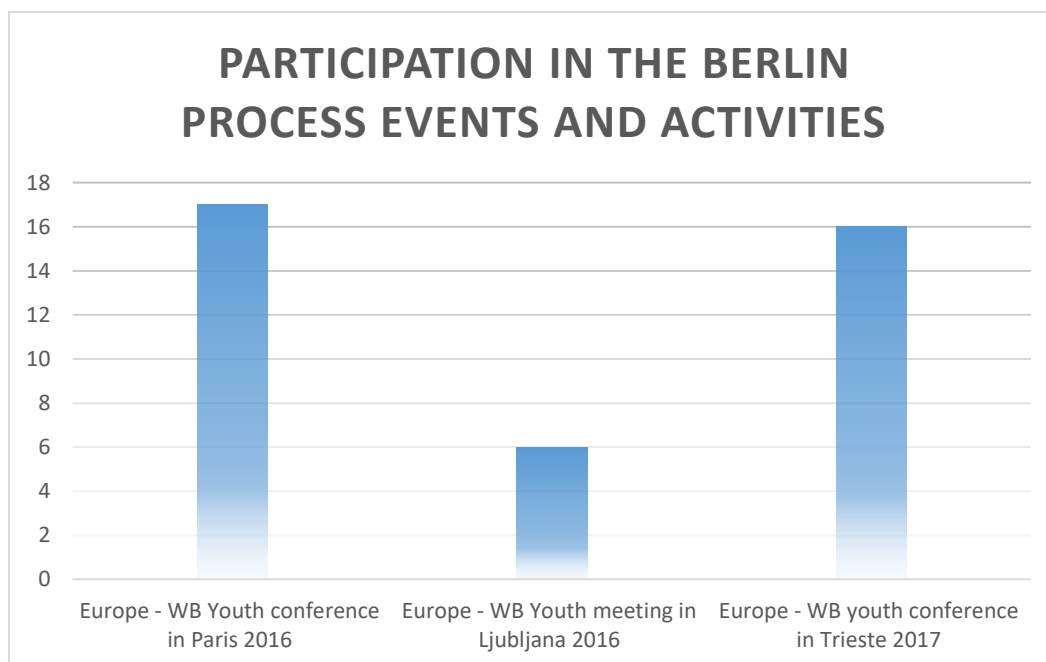
- **Human resources – capacities**
 - Decreasing quality of education in the region
 - Capacities of youth and youth organisations
 - Capacities of local, regional and national levels institutions
 - Difficult to find partners with expertise in certain topics
 - Need for better inter-cultural competences and communication
 - Communication with various stakeholders (municipality, police etc)
- **Funding**
 - Limited funds
 - Dependence on external funding
- **Youth participation**
 - Youth participation in the region is not at a high level – young people lack motivation to engage in decision-making processes, due to pessimism about the transparency of the processes, thus mobilising them and sustaining their interest is challenging
 - No youth ownership of the participation processes
 - Need to reach out to relevant youth representatives
 - Difficult to engage diaspora youth
 - Social misconceptions about roles of young people in society (especially young women)
 - National and local authorities lack of understanding of the structured dialogue process and its applicability
- **Social inclusion**
 - Stereotypes and prejudices in society
 - Inclusion of youth with fewer opportunities and disadvantaged youth is still challenging
 - Inclusion of youth from different ethnic backgrounds
- **Logistics and practical challenges**
 - Project delivery, timing issues, challenges with venues (e.g. accessibility of venues for persons with disabilities etc.)
 - Cultural differences

- **Mobility issues**
 - Visa are still required for participants from Kosovo and Turkey to take part in certain events and training courses, and many young people miss the opportunity of international mobility due to long procedures and visa refusals
 - Visa procedures for all Western Balkan participants taking part in EVS projects
- **Regional and European context**
 - Slow bureaucracy
 - Lack of responsibility from public power holders mainly due to corruption and nepotism.
 - Political instability in the region sometimes impacts on the implementation
 - Divides and ethnic tensions still present in some parts of the region
 - Working on certain topics is still very challenging e.g. Roma rights, LGBTIQ rights and utilizing unpopular tools e.g. graffiti
 - Realities of the labour market vs the expectations of young people
 - Lack of interest by participants and from EU and other Programme countries in activities concerning the Western Balkans
 - Likewise, Programme countries noted the difficulty to get participants from the Partner countries for the activities
 - Different local realities and lack of understanding from the coordinating partner about challenges and difficulties in working in very specific social, economic and political context.
- **Research and communication**
 - Availability of data for research – lack of information
 - NGOs not effectively communicating their work and results – poor visibility
 - Poor communication with local business sector

The impact of the Berlin process

PARTICIPATION IN THE BERLIN PROCESS EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Results from the application forms for the meeting and the survey show that there is an awareness of the Berlin process events and activities. Thirty nine of the respondents have already participated in some of the past activities, of which seventeen took part in the Europe – Western Balkans Youth conference in Paris 2016, six in the Europe- Western Balkans Youth meeting in Ljubljana in 2016 and sixteen in the Europe – Western Balkans youth conference in Trieste 2017.



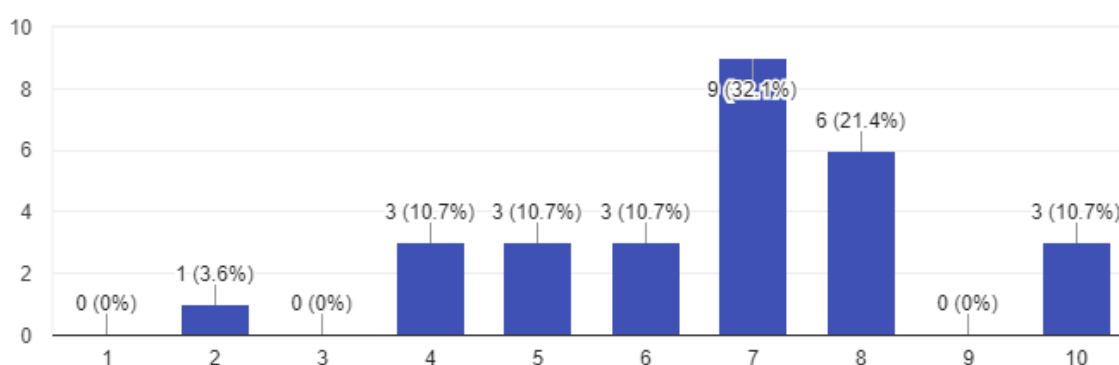
Young people have also taken part in **other activities** including:

- Erasmus+ projects launched as a part of Berlin process
- Erasmus+ exchanges
- EVS in the Balkans
- Conferences and forums:
 - Strategic conference of the Regional Youth Cooperation – RYCO: “Strategic Dialogues – a Better Region Starts with Youth”, strategic planning for developing the framework of RYCO for the years 2018 - 2020
 - 3rd Tirana Conference on Berlin Process “From Trieste to London: Stocktaking and Future Scenarios for the Berlin Process” (TCBP)
 - Civil society forums of the Western Balkans in Vienna, Paris, Trieste, Belgrade, Skopje, Tirana, Prishtina
 - Western Balkans Alumni Association kick-off meeting in Ohrid, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, March 2018
 - Western Balkans Youth Conference, Conference organized by the British Council in Prishtina, focusing on drafting youth recommendations for the London Summit.

In order to assess the **overall impact of the Berlin process**, the survey asked participants to rate the impact on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being no impact and 10 being extensive impact. **32%** of the respondents assessed the impact as **7**, and **21%** as **8**, which shows a relatively positive view of the process in the region. However, this score must also be understood in the context of limited responses and the ability of respondents to link the impact of certain initiatives to the Berlin process itself.

Please indicate the overall impact on a scale of 1 to 10:

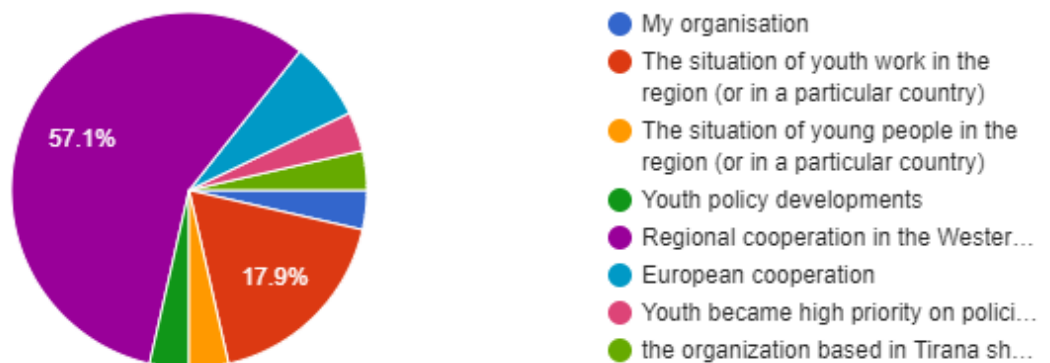
28 responses



The organisations answering the survey note that the Berlin process had the most notable impact on the increased **regional cooperation** within the Western Balkans region. **57%** of respondents feel that this is the most significant impact of the initiative. Additionally, the second most notable impact of the Berlin process is felt when it comes to the situation of youth work in the region, or a country. Only **7%** believe that the process has enhanced the **European cooperation**, while the impact on the situation of youth in the region and countries, development of youth policy, impact on specific organisations and prioritisation of youth on the policy agenda follow in responses with 3.6% or one vote each.

In your opinion, on which level(s) has the Berlin process had a noticeable impact so far?

28 responses



IMPACT OF THE BERLIN PROCESS

According to responses to the surveys and application forms, the overall impact of the Berlin process has been identified as: between no impact at all and promising. We can distinguish between the impact in youth sector alone and overall impact for the political and EU integration processes in the region.

IMPACT ON YOUTH SECTOR

- **Increasing the importance of youth sector with policy makers and youth becoming a priority on political agenda**
 - Establishment of RYCO (this was noted by majority of respondents to be one of the main impacts of the Berlin process in the region, and as one development which is expected to have the greatest impact on the youth field)
 - Establishment of National Agencies in the countries of the region
 - Recognising young people as drivers of change and stability in the region
- **Improving the situation of youth work in the region**
 - Creating more opportunities for youth, youth leaders and youth workers to meet, discuss and work together
 - Brining a lot of credibility for youth NGOs of the Western Balkans for their role in the reconciliation process in the region, and the overall importance of youth voices in the policy making.
 - opportunities for greater advocacy for youth participation

- Establishment of youth councils
- Greater focus on youth policy e.g. in Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia a process sparked a development of a new Law on youth, new youth strategy, a youth guarantee, and in whole better cooperation between the central government and the local authorities in this field.
- **Enhancing regional youth cooperation**
 - Creating new spaces and new cooperation platforms for young people
 - Promoting reconciliation and cross-border cooperation between youth and youth organisation
 - Increasing opportunities for youth mobility, exchanges, collaboration, sharing and learning and developing skills and competences
 - Providing opportunities for youth engagement at various levels
- **Promotion of inter-cultural understanding**
 - Promoting values of social inclusion, tolerance, diversity and respect

OVERALL IMPACT

- Impact on political level so far – renewed political support for EU integration of the region
- Increasing regional cooperation & dialogue between the countries – multiplication of regional meetings at all levels
- It created an opportunity for opening sensitive questions between the countries (e.g. name disputes between Greece and Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, borders between Kosovo and Montenegro, revival of the dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia)
- An opportunity to boost EU related reforms in the Western Balkan countries including reform of public administration, raised questions of judiciary, and corruption and nepotism
- An opportunity to bridge the gaps between the countries and different stages of their accession process
- It has created a positive momentum for regional cooperation in the region
- The Connectivity Agenda has attracted new investments in the Balkans, boosting, thus the market and creating new jobs for young people. Innovation, infrastructure and re-organization of the economy have been on the top of the agenda.

However, there were also several responses which noted that Berlin process has not had any impact so far, and it remains to be seen whether the initiatives, including the establishment of RYCO will produce any results. Some have also noted that the renewed political initiatives, besides for RYCO, have been very modest in the field of youth, and the delays in the kick-starting of the process have been similarly challenging.

Some of the issues identified regarding the Berlin process have been the lack of information and the lack of awareness of young people about such political initiatives. Furthermore, the process has been noted to be inclusive in theory, but not in practice. The efforts also seem to be stronger on the side of the European Union to drive this process, than within the Western Balkans countries. Throughout the process, what was noted was still a need for ensuring transparency and accountability, and continuous monitoring of the Western Balkans countries in the area of rule of law and democracy. The process has also been seen as top-down, and there is a need to bring the initiative to the local level.

Thinking further ahead... which issues should be addressed first?

The respondents have identified several priority areas:

- **Capacity-building of youth and youth organisations**, particularly at the local level, is crucial. This can be done through training for project developments, study visits, sharing of good practices, promotion of political participation of young people etc.
- Need for **cross-sectoral cooperation**
- Establish **clear standards and guidelines for RYCO** and NGO project implementation
- Work on **inclusion of all youth**
- **Administrative obstacles**: facilitate visa application for participants in E+ programmes
- Be clear about other **important priority areas** for youth in the region: youth employment, youth participation in decision-making, brain drain in the region
- **Youth work and youth policy**: need for institutional planning, development of strategies and action plans at the national/regional/local levels
- More **cooperation programmes** between the countries of the Western Balkans
- Collect **evidence on youth needs** and priorities: invest in research on young people in the region