



**REPORT
ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE
REGIONAL COOPERATION COUNCIL SECRETARIAT**

For the period 1 May – 30 September 2019

**BY THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE REGIONAL
COOPERATION COUNCIL**

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Executive Summary

The reporting period was marked by intensified efforts of the RCC Secretariat to reach the key deliverables envisaged for this stage of the implementation of the Multi-annual Action Plan for a Regional Economic Area (MAP REA) and the Strategy and Work Programme (SWP) 2017-2019. The overarching aim has been to deliver tangible results towards regional economic integration, social inclusion and security as necessary conditions for boosting socio-economic development and European integration of South East Europe (SEE). This is fully aligned with the Berlin Process and its spirit, making the Poznan Summit the most suitable occasion to present the accomplished deliverables.

Deliverables were identified as the following:

- Regional Roaming Agreement (RRA);
- Regional Agreement on the Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications for Doctors of Medicine and Dentists, Architects and Civil Engineers (MRPQ);
- Declaration on Recognition of Academic Qualifications (RAQ);
- Declaration of Western Balkans partners on Roma Integration within the EU Enlargement Process.

Poznan Summit Chair's Conclusions referred to these deliverables and assessed the progress of SEE on the European integration path. Heads of Governments of the Berlin Process reaffirmed the importance of regional cooperation to advance on that path and committed to overcoming difficulties which hinder progress. Notably, while achievements were welcomed, it has been recognized that current trade-related irritants have slowed down the process of implementing MAP REA. Implementation of relevant reforms and strengthening of economic ties among Western Balkans' economies, however, remain central to regional prosperity and accelerating convergence with the EU.

RRA testifies to that point. The Agreement had been signed by all six Western Balkan (WB) economies at the second Digital Summit in Belgrade, 4-5 April, and represents the most tangible example of benefits of regional cooperation and political will to pursue it. It is already reflecting both on the economic and everyday experiences of people living and travelling in the region, having provided for a significant reduction of roaming prices, up to 90% in some WB economies. It is the key step toward the establishment of a Roam Like at Home (RLAH) regime by July 2021, which will serve to approximate the region to the EU standards. Furthermore, the Agreement represents a necessary precondition for launching preparation of a roadmap for reducing roaming prices between the EU MS and WB economies. RRA had since its conclusion been applauded by the European Commission (EC) as the great and desirable example of regional cooperation which should be followed in other fields as well.

The Declaration on Roma Integration, facilitated by RCC's Roma Integration Action Team, was endorsed at the Poznan Summit. With it the regional leaders committed to a decisive action to fully integrate Roma population in their respective societies, with identified objectives in employment, housing, education, health, civil registration, and non-discrimination. This will represent an important step forward in regional social inclusivity of the part of the population still facing high degrees of prejudices in both social and professional settings.

Advances in the field of skills and mobility are aimed at enhancing the quality of regional higher education and dismantling the barriers to mobility of highly qualified workforce. Regional cooperation promoted and facilitated by the RCC would enrich the regional labour pool, address the mismatch between supply and demand of skills in the regional market, improve the regional research infrastructure, and thus approximate the region to European standards. No full regional consensus has been reached on the Declaration on Recognition of Academic Qualifications, whereas the negotiations on the MRPQ were not completed in time for the Poznan Summit in the absence of full regional consensus on the agreement's legal basis. The Western Balkans Leaders committed to work to find appropriate forms to ensure the timely delivery of results in this regard.

In the area of investment, Poznan Summit acknowledged the adoption of the Individual Reform Action Plans (IRAPs) on Regional Investment Reform Agenda (RIRA) implementation. Although regional dialogue has been facilitated with the aim to initiate work on reaching regional standards for negotiating International Investment Agreements (IIAs), in absence of full regional consensus, the Chair's Conclusions refer to the Joint Policy Statement towards developing regionally acceptable standards for negotiating IIAs only in a general manner. In the coming period, it will be important to maintain and advance the dialogue on this topic, as it would ultimately bring the region closer to the EU investment policy framework, portray WB as a coherent region to invest in, and allow the host-governments better legal protection in investor state disputes.

Under investment, there has also been progress on financial markets. Western Balkans' Leaders welcomed the ongoing diagnostics of the financial markets in the region and the practical guidelines for capital markets development which are to be adapted to each WB economy.

Overall, the Poznan Summit illuminated both the progress and the challenges to regional cooperation. It is good that the SEECP Summit Declaration, following the meeting at the level of Heads of SEECP government on 9 July at Jahorina, reaffirmed commitment by SEECP participants to regional dialogue in order to resolve open questions and their full dedication for inclusive regional cooperation and common future within the European Union. It is crucial that this commitment does not remain restricted to the declarative level.

One of the main takeaways from the working breakfast hosted by the RCC in New York with WB Ministers of foreign affairs and their representatives from the Western Balkans and

officials from the EU Commission, was therefore that next Summits of the Berlin Process (particularly Sofia/Skopje) should bring more tangible deliverables. In that regard, the support by WB and EC representatives for RCC's idea to begin working on a regional Agreement on Travelling with ID cards constitutes an important step forward. RCC welcomes the recognition of regional economies that economic connectivity does not go without freedom of movement.

Regional cooperation is of utmost importance given the conditions and nature of regional markets as well as the issues which are shared among the economies, and therefore best resolved by an integrated approach. This will be the guiding light in the drafting of SEE 2030, for which RCC has received the full endorsement at the SEECP informal working breakfast, hosted by Kosovo* Chairmanship-in-Office (C-i-O). The new long-term strategy will be crafted with the awareness that the full implementation of MAP REA and a regional framework of reform have no alternative.

The scope of RCC activities and the trust awarded to it by its participants has been substantially extended over the years. In recognition of this development, the SEECP Summit Declaration called for a strengthening of the RCC role. RCC will work in close partnership with its participants and partners to find the best way to respond to that call in order to continue facilitating the smoothest implementation of necessary regional programmes.

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence

Cooperation and coordination of the RCC with partners and stakeholders

RCC's statutory obligations in the reporting period were upheld with the holding of the 29th Coordination meeting with the SEECP C-i-O Troika and the EU on 15 May, the 37th Board meeting on 16 May and the 11th Annual Meeting on 8 July. The meetings ensured that the coordination between the RCC, SEECP, and its participants and stakeholders was maintained and the activities and regional priorities aligned.

Synergy with SEECP C-i-O is a high priority. RCC assisted and actively participated in Sarajevo C-i-O's calendar of activities, including the SEECP Political Directors meeting in Brussels on 24 June, where the possibility of creating an op-ed Working Group on streamlining of regional cooperation was discussed. RCC supported as well the parliamentary dimension of SEECP. The Plenary Session of the SEECP Parliamentary Assembly took place in Sarajevo on 22 June, but failed to agree on a joint Declaration.

Prolific cooperation has continued the assumption of Chairmanship by Prishtina, whose key pillars of activities – Connectivity, Youth, Culture, Art and Tourism – were presented at the SEECP MFAs meeting in New York, hosted by Kosovo*.

The 11th Annual meeting confirmed the full support for the RCC. The participants endorsed the Annual Report of the Secretary General for 2018-2019 and the SWP 2020-2022, which had previously been accepted and adopted at the 37th Board meeting. RCC participants welcomed in particular the human capital development introduced in the new SWP, as well as the security cooperation activities.

Moreover, the main findings of the Balkan Barometer (BB) 2019 have been presented. For the first time, the BB 2019 was launched in Poznan, at the margins of the Berlin Process Summit. Although public satisfaction with the current state of affairs continues to grow, it is doing so at an unremarkable and uneven pace across the region. Unemployment and overall economic situation remain the chief concerns, whereas brain drain is increasingly being noted by region's citizens. Most encouraging and telling are the overwhelming public support for regional cooperation and a growing backing of EU membership.

RCC Secretary General (SG) maintained the practice of regular communication and consultation with RCC participants, key stakeholders and other partners. She participated in and addressed a number of high-level events important for the promotion of regional agenda, including the Poznan Summit of the Berlin Process, SEECP high-level events under Bosnian C-i-O, and high-level events at the UNGA margins in New York, as well as the renowned events such as the EBRD Annual Meeting and Business Forum (8-9 May, Sarajevo), UNDP Istanbul Development Dialogues (27 May, Istanbul), GLOBSEC Forum (7 June, Bratislava), Financial Times' Western Balkans Forum (18 June, London), and Bled Strategic Forum (2-3 September, Bled).



Important to the goal of ensuring alignment of RCC activities with the preferences and priorities of its participants has also been the practice of bilateral meetings. In this reporting period, Secretary General has met with national authorities and officials in Berlin (6-7 May), Oslo (13 May), Bratislava (8 June), London (16 June) and government representatives of the US, Croatia, Bulgaria, Turkey and Moldova at UNGA margins. Furthermore, the SG met regularly with local diplomatic corps, partners from European Union, and representatives of international organizations and NGOs.

RCC Liaison Office (LO) contributed to maintaining communication with the EU institutions in Brussels, sustaining continuous exchange with DG NEAR, and providing assistance in organizing and hosting various working meetings in the context of MAP REA implementation.

In light of coordinating closely with EU priorities for the region, RCC partnered with the Romanian Presidency of the Council of the EU to organize a conference on how to better respond to European aspirations of the young generation in the Western Balkans. The conference was held on 28 May in Bucharest and addressed one of the main challenges faced by the region, namely the socio-economic position of youth and brain drain. In recognition of this, RCC will in the upcoming period support the development of targeted youth policies and the inclusion of youth in policy decision-making through the implementation of youth policy labs.

Implementation of regional programmes

A.1 Skills & Mobility

Strategic orientation of the activities in the Skills & Mobility flagship is aimed toward removing obstacles for mobility of professionals and highly qualified workforce, as well as improving the access to research infrastructure and promoting quality assurance of higher education. In this way mobility standards in the region will approximate those of the EU, while the select labor markets shortcomings and skills mismatch will be addressed.

Removal of obstacles to mobility of students and highly skilled workers in the region: mutual recognition of academic qualifications

In the reporting period, through the meetings of Working Group on Recognition of Academic Qualifications, text of the Draft Declaration was finalized and received support from regional Ministers of Education. The Declaration was, as per the text of Chair's Conclusions, endorsed at the Poznan Summit and annexed to the Conclusions, however Serbia subsequently formally informed the RCC that the delegation had not given its endorsement.

In the meantime, the beta version of the Joint Information System, which will facilitate the recognition of academic qualifications in the region, has been launched. The information and data collection protocols have been agreed and the data is in the process of collection to ensure full usability of the system by the end of 2019.

Removal of obstacles to mobility of professionals: mutual recognition of professional qualifications

Negotiations on the Draft Agreement on Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications for Doctors of Medicine, Dentists, Architects and Civil Engineers, continued apace and involved Ministries of Education, Labour, Health and Construction, as well as the Chambers of Doctors of Medicine, Dentists, Architects and Civil Engineers. Despite constructive dialogue and good progress, at the 7th negotiations meeting held in Brussels on the 14 June there was no consensus between the participants under which legal framework to continue the negotiations, and the negotiations were hence discontinued.

As part of the process of supporting the negotiations and in line with the actions outlined in the MAP REA, a proto-type of the Database on Regulated Professions in the Western Balkans fully aligned with the EU Database on Regulated Professions (in open source) and guidelines for entry of data have been prepared.

Removal of obstacles to mobility of researchers

At Poznan Summit, the Western Balkans Leaders recognized the importance of research and innovation for the future development of the region, and gave their support to the development of a regional research infrastructure map and completion of regional open access protocols to research infrastructure. This is in line with the commitments made under MAP REA and with the work done by the RCC with regional governments in the preceding

period, including the conclusions of the workshop attended by WB line ministers in April in Ulcinj, Montenegro.

In terms of Western Balkans economies' participation in the Horizon Europe programme, at the WB Meeting on Research and Innovation with DG RTD and Austrian Federal Ministry of Science in Vienna, co-organized by the RCC, WB6 raised concerns on the planned method of calculating the participation fee for the associate partners to Horizon Europe. The participants agreed to prepare the second joint Statement on Horizon Europe to raise shared concerns.

In conclusion of a subsequent session between WB6 representatives of Ministries of Science and the EU Science attachés on 23 September and the Ministerial Meeting of the Western Balkans Platform on Research and Innovation on 24 September, WB6 proposed recommendations for consideration ahead of the adoption of the Horizon Europe programme, namely: to ensure that the planned joint research missions include the WB region; and to ensure that all the planned measures under the Sharing of Excellence component are also opened to the WB. These recommendations will form the basis of the second joint Statement on Horizon Europe. RCC will facilitate the preparation of this Statement, including organizing another working session to discuss the recommendations further.

A.2 Connectivity

The Connectivity flagship seeks to provide support to sustainable development of the region through interventions aimed at digital transformation of the region and promoting clear sources and technologies with the view of protecting the environment and addressing climate change challenges.

Digital integration agenda

The Regional Roaming Agreement, signed at the second Western Balkans Digital Summit (WB DS) in Belgrade on 4 April 2019 was recognised by the WB leaders as the key achievement under the Digital Agenda of the region. The effects in terms of significant reduction of roaming costs, which entered into force as of 1 July, are already visible to all WB mobile end-users. Coordinated by RCC, regulatory authorities for telecommunications from the region have established a mechanism for effective implementation and monitoring of effects of the Agreement. The ultimate goal of the RRA2 is introducing Roam Like At Home (RLAH) regime as of July 2021 while WB is looking forward to preparation of a roadmap for reducing of roaming prices with the EU MS in the near future.

In order to facilitate the implementation of the Digital Agenda for Western Balkans (DAWB), the conclusions of the Digital Summit have been adopted by the WB leaders during the Poznan Summit. Defining activities which will aid the implementation of those conclusions has already started through various regional meetings and initiatives organized in the reporting period. RCC has prepared key priority actions for 2020 and discussed them in a series of consultation workshops held in each WB capital. Further operationalization of

actions will be discussed and agreed within MAP REA structures. WB economies expressed appreciation for the support provided by the RCC in digital integration and called for intensified efforts to achieve tangible results by the next Digital Summit, to be held in Tirana in spring 2020, and invest in the dialogue with EC to launch the roadmap for the reduction of roaming charges EU-WB.

With the aim of taking stock of the achievements of the Digital Single Market Strategy, the 2019 Digital Assembly was co-organised by the European Commission and the Romanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union in Bucharest in June. Also, as foreseen by the DAWB, and with the aim to monitor its implementation during the first year and define next steps, the EU – WB ICT dialogue was launched in July. This dialogue enabled the representatives from WB to better understand objectives and get informed about the latest developments of the EU's Digital Single Market and relevant *acquis*.

Sectoral support in environment, energy and sustainable development

Activities in this area were concentrated on the objectives of the Skopje Ministerial Declaration, supporting its implementation and monitoring progress. Regional Working Group on Environment (RWG Env) continued its activities on coordinated implementation of relevant regional projects to optimize use of scarce natural resources and introduce water-food-energy nexus approach, as well as to integrate climate proofing in road transport infrastructure development. Regional interventions to protect and ensure sustainable use of biodiversity continued through the activities of the Regional Biodiversity Task Force and resulted in proclamation of two additional areas as natural rarities (Kiselicka cave (the Republic of North Macedonia) and Pastrik Mountain and Lake Vrmica (Kosovo*)). Supported by IMPEL (The European Union Network for the Implementation and Enforcement of Environmental Law), the WB also made progress in ensuring implementation of environmental law in the area of nature protection and waste management.

In the reporting period RCC joined the UN Environment's initiative to beat pollution in Western Balkans. This will include a greater engagement of the RWG Env in the future on addressing air pollution which is one of the most dangerous threats to human health in the region with 6 among 20 most polluted cities in the World, according to the World Health Organization's statistics. Through cooperation of three DGs (ENV, CLIMA and NEAR) the EC has expressed its readiness to support the WB region's efforts to strengthen regional cooperation in the protection of the environment and improving health of its citizens, through preparation and implementation of a Green Agenda for the Western Balkans. In this regards, the RWG Env as a permanent intergovernmental platform, expressed readiness to be more involved in this process.

A.3. Competitiveness

Investment integration

As one of the milestones in the implementation of Investment component of MAP REA the RCC, in cooperation with the World Bank Group, prepared proposal for Regional Investment Instrument, in order to realize the investment reform framework stipulated by RIRA and streamline future work in investments reforms. The RCC commenced and led the regional dialogue on this subject, where different proposals for forms of regional instrument were discussed, which were to bring the region closer to the EU investment policy framework and portray Western Balkans to the potential investors as a coherent region to invest in. From the legal perspective, the importance of the International Investment Agreements (IIAs) reforms has been identified as a necessity, particularly in handling investors in protection cases. Setting the regional standards on negotiating IIAs has been identified of great importance for host-governments to have the right to regulate and to set the boundaries of protecting both the investments and policies of host-economies that needs to be preserved.

During the reporting period, the region commenced preparation of the Investment Policy Statement, intended as an instrument for fortification of the Regional Investment Reform Agenda, with a focus on developing regional standards for negotiating International Investment Agreements. However, in the absence of full regional consensus on the content of the prospective Statement, the Conclusions of the Chair of the Poznan Summit have acknowledged this work as a reference. The RCC will continue consultations on individual-economy and regional levels towards supporting implementation of RIRA and corresponding IRAPs.

The rest of the investment agenda was dedicated to the capacity building of the investment experts from the region working in the field of investment promotion as well as in investor state dispute settlement, which will help region to properly tailor investor outreach program and attract more quality and sustainable investments.

Work in the field of financial markets continued with the analytical work done by the World Bank Group on the subject of financial markets deepening. This work is intended to culminate in a regional strategy/programme, which will be backed with corresponding individual-economy action plans for implementation over the course of 2020 and beyond. Furthermore, and given that the work on capital markets has advanced over the course of past year, the region discussed this particular topic within the overall framework of financial markets deepening and reviewed the Practical Guide for capital markets development, based on the example of Serbia and prepared by the World Bank Group, with the aim to use this best practice and adapt and develop the recommendations to the rest of the participating economies.

As part of the Strategic Dialogue on Western Balkans and in line with the Forum Communiqué signed by the Leaders in October 2018, the World Economic Forum, with the regional support of RCC, has initiated work towards establishing a Competitiveness and

Innovation Accelerator in Western Balkans. The Accelerator, based on the WEF global model, is foreseen as a public-private collaboration platform that helps economies to drive change. The Accelerator model provides a platform to facilitate public-private collaboration; an ecosystem for Leaders to drive action and change; insights and analysis for evidence-based decision making and practical guides and tools for impact. The accelerator model aims to catalyze systems change, highlighting the need for collaborative action at different scales: institutional structures and policies as well as norms and attitudes and individual commitments. Key regional public and private actors will be called on to champion and participate in the Accelerator.

B Governance, Rule of Law and Security Cooperation

Security Cooperation

Within reporting period, activities in security cooperation continued to support RCC's security led cooperation formats and through them to ensure an appropriate and efficient response to existing security challenges in the SEE. Important focus remains on the need to streamline regional security cooperation efforts and to work closely with relevant partners in this field.

10th meeting of the SEEMIC Expert Working Group (Ljubljana, 29 May 2019) discussed and accepted the Draft OSINT Report "The Role of Intelligence Services in the Cyber Domain", to be forwarded to the main SEEMIC Conference in November for adoption. The report underlined that the region of SEE is missing overall cyber-security culture, with weak capacity of existing bodies, low level of cooperation with the private sector, absence of cyber-security education and comprehensive capacity building programs. It suggested that regional efforts should be focused on: Capacity building of the state administration; Awareness rising in the region; Law enforcement agency cooperation on tackling cyber-crime and CERTs exchange of information; Regular information sharing at national and the regional level and Adoption of new legislation.

Upon invitation of the European Commission, RCC Team held consultations with the representatives of DG NEAR and DG HOME on the future of IISG. As one of implementing partners in the DCAF/IISG project, RCC has been invited to share its views on the updated Terms of Reference (ToRs) and future tasks and objectives of the initiative. It is envisaged that the updated ToRs will be adopted (applicable as of 1 April 2020) at the upcoming IISG Board Meeting, to take place back to back with EU-WB Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) Ministerial, 18-19 November in Skopje.

C Horizontal and supporting activities

Monitoring activities

During this reporting period, RCC finalised the fifth edition of the Balkan Barometer (BB) for 2019. Public and Business Opinion surveys measure regional perceptions and attitudes across a wide array of social, economic and political factors on an annual basis. The official presentation of BB 2019 took place during the Poznan Summit of the Berlin Process and during the RCC Annual Meeting, and received good media coverage.

Next steps in the monitoring activities include the preparation of the next Balkan Barometer survey for 2020 as well as the meeting of SEE 2020 Strategy Monitoring Committee, which should, as per established practice, take place in December 2019. The meeting will provide a basis for the kick-start the next annual monitoring cycle for 2020, including the agreement upon the scope and timeframe of the new cycle as well as discussion on the lessons learned from the previous cycle.

Coordination activities, grants

The coordination activities continued during this reporting period with the Sixth meeting of the SEE2020 Governing Board held on 8 July in Sarajevo, which approved the final draft of the Annual Report on Implementation for 2019. The meeting also served as an opportunity to discuss the work of national authorities in terms of regionally agreed activities within the framework of SEE2020 Strategy.

Next steps will include a kick-start of the preparation of post-2020 agenda, which, among others, include mapping of the existing post-2020 strategies of the Western Balkans economies and a regional meeting of the offices in charge of strategic planning. In addition, a regional follow-up meeting of the Board will be held in October – November 2019 with an aim to further discuss the post-2020 strategy for the Western Balkans.

Horizontal activities related to the MAP REA

Within the framework of the 2019 Poznan Summit, the Leaders of the Western Balkans reiterated their strong commitment to REA and to the implementation of related reforms. The achievements and challenges in MAP REA implementation across all four components have been recognized. RCC contributed to the preparation of the Poznan Summit and the Economy's Ministerial Meeting as part of it, presenting key deliverables and highlighting the progress achieved so far.

RCC maintained the regular overall coordination and monitoring of MAP REA and finalized the Annual report on its implementation, which has been validated by the economies and published on RCC website.

RCC continued with regular reporting to MAP REA structures and WB PM's representatives. In this respect, RCC has presented progress in MAP REA implementation during the

Sherpas' meeting, held on 22 May in Brussels, sharing the progress achieved both at the regional and economy level.

Communication

RCC has enhanced communication and PR activities to promote the region, regional programmes and activities. This is being done through a series of videos, articles, interviews, social media presence and photo/video competitions and has included new campaigns designed to promote the Regional Roaming Agreement, women empowerment (WE), tourism, Roma Integration and youth. All activities are directed toward maintaining the positive EU narrative in the region.

Extended communication and PR activities have led to significant increase of our social media followers, website visitors, and article published in traditional media.

Projects

Employment and Social Affairs Platform (ESAP)¹

ESAP has been implemented by RCC for 3 years (from March 2016 to February 2019), and is currently in a no-cost extension phase until 31 October 2019, as agreed with and formally approved by the EU.

After the completion of 6 national diagnostic reports on undeclared work that focus on its drivers, institutional framework and current policy approaches, 6 national workshops have been organized in the Western Balkan capitals. The workshops brought together policy-makers, employer and employees' organizations, economic experts and other key stakeholders in order to share the results of the expert analysis and discuss recommendations for tackling informality from a holistic perspective. Inspired by the work of the European Platform Tackling Undeclared Work, these workshops have also paved the way for more structured cooperation in the Western Balkans, as part of which RCC envisages the creation of a regional network for tackling undeclared work through exchange of good practices and mutual learning among peers. A regional conference on informal employment will be organized on 15 October 2019 in Sarajevo, in order to build commitment of key national institutions to work jointly in order to more effectively tackle undeclared work through a holistic strategic approach.

RCC and International Labour Organization (ILO) have worked together to coordinate the preparation of a joint follow-up regional project on employment and social affairs (ESAP 2). A working meeting was hosted by the regional ILO office on 23 May in order to share in more detail the concrete planned activities as well as to build synergies on future actions.

¹ This project has been financed by the European Union and implemented by the RCC, grant number VS/2016/0054 (March 2016 to February 2019) and VS/2019/0094 (March 2019 to October 2019)

RCC has participated and contributed to the discussions at the stakeholder conference in connection with the first EU-Western Balkans Ministerial meeting on employment and social affairs, which took place on 13 June in Luxembourg, by presenting the work of ESAP and sharing ideas about the importance of investing in employment and social sectors under the clear EU perspective for the Western Balkan economies.

Building on the mutual learning activities and the bench-learning initiative implemented earlier by ESAP, a regional seminar was organized on 17 September 2019 to discuss recent developments, challenges and priorities in the Western Balkans economies' active labour market policies, and future cooperation on employment and social policies among Western Balkan Ministries of Labour and Public Employment Services.

Triple P Tourism²

Implementation of “Triple P” tourism project is on track with the product development efforts ongoing for all four selected regional routes. For the Western Balkans Crossroads of Civilizations the final list of 40 locations to be included in the route has been endorsed by Tourism Expert Group (TEG) as well as the five key themes of the route. The total 40 sites of the Balkan Monumental Trail were also endorsed. The Illyricum trail (archaeological heritage) has been approved as a sub trail of the CoE certified European Cultural Route of Roman Emperors and Danube Wine Route (RER-DWR). The development of the regional adventure travel route, Via Dinarica, continued with national consultations held in Albania, Kosovo*, Montenegro and Serbia. The candidate status for the nominated Country Lead Offices (CLOs) from those four economies was confirmed at the second Via Dinarica Regional Coordination (VDRC) meeting, the full status to be confirmed at the next VDRC meeting.

The tourism policy review is under way focusing on the four policy areas (ease of border crossing, industry data and statistics, workforce skills and mobility and sustainable tourism practices) with the goal of identifying the road map and development of recommendations.

The implementation of 12 grants awarded through the 1st Call for Proposals has been completed. The grants of the first Call addressed the needs on and of the regional routes currently under development. The main results include 11 new cultural trails connecting typology of heritage (i.e. fortifications, archaeological sites); 6 detailed assessments and 3 policy documents and guidelines in tourism valorisation of cultural heritage. Together with over 100 stories and legends this creates strong foundation for further development of cultural tourism products, and storytelling-oriented presentation of heritage. One application for iOS and Android was developed that presents and makes assessable intangible heritage within the historic core.

² This project is funded by the European Union and implemented by the RCC, grant number 2017/392-591

For the adventure tourism the main results include: over 50 km of new trans-border hiking trails and improved interconnection for another 580 km of trails with improved integration of cultural heritage, in particular intangible heritage, on some 280 km of those trails. A new standard of service was developed addressing specialised services needed by biking programs, and the first horseback reference riding path connecting two economies of approximately 1975 km in length, including physical marking-out of the facilities along the horseback riding path.

The 2nd Call for Small Grant Proposals was launched on 10 June 2019, and the final contracting will be completed by the end of October 2019.

Roma Integration 2020, Phase II³

The Action Team of the Roma Integration project facilitated the preparation of the Declaration of Western Balkans partners on Roma Integration within the EU Enlargement Process that was endorsed at the Poznan Summit. The Declaration states objectives in employment, housing, education, health, civil registration, and non-discrimination that should be reached by the economies' EU accession. During the Summit, the Roma Integration 2020 organized a side-event that discussed upcoming roles and contributions from different actors required to successfully and timely reach the Declaration objectives. The National Roma Contact Points (NRCPs) were supported to participate in the Western Balkans Summit.

To back-up the process of reaching the Declaration objectives in employment and housing, the Action Team prepared Roma Integration Roadmaps 2019-2021. The roadmaps conceptualise approaches and measures to reach targets set by 2021 that are economy-specific based on the contexts and available data, and are in line with the Declaration objectives.

Activities to perform mapping of metadata on the housing situation of Roma have started. Results are expected in the remaining part of the year, and will give better overview of the available information and locations of Roma settlements. The obtained information will steer the Roma Integration 2020 technical assistance for the governments to implement the roadmaps' within the housing priority.

Activities to pilot Roma responsive budgeting in the enlargement region have also started. The Roma Integration 2020 provided six capacity building trainings for governments' representatives to apply Roma responsive budgeting in their daily work. The remaining results, namely piloting of budget programmes that are responsive towards Roma integration are expected in the remaining part of the year.

³ This project is co-funded by the European Union, grant number IPA/2018/400-736



The Roma Integration 2020 assisted the National Roma Contact Points in preparing the 2018 annual reports on implementation of the Roma integration policies. In line with this, it organized two National Platform meetings where the annual reports and implementation of the roadmaps were discussed (in Tirana and Podgorica). The remaining National Platform meetings will be organized in second half of the year.

List of Abbreviations

ARI	Annual Report on Implementation
BB	Balkan Barometer
BIT	Bilateral Investment Treaties
CCPs	Component Contact Points
CEFTA	Central European Free Trade Agreement
CEF	Centre of Excellence in Finance
CIF	Chamber Investment Forum
C-i-O	Chairmanship-in-Office
CLO	Country Lead Offices
CoE	Council of Europe
COWEB	Working Party on the Western Balkans Region
CSIRT	Cyber Security Incident Response Teams
CT	Counter-terrorism
CVE	Countering of Violent Extremism
CVE-FTF Platform	South East Europe Regional Platform for Countering Radicalization and Violent Extremism Leading to Terrorism and Recruitment of Foreign Terrorist Fighters
DA	Digital Agenda
DG	Directorate-General
DG CLIMA	Directorate-General for Climate Action
DG EAC	Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture
DG ENV	Directorate-General for Environment
DG HOME	Directorate-General for Migrations and Home Affairs
DG NEAR	Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations
DG RTD	Directorate-General for Research and Innovation
DS	Digital Summit
EC	European Commission
EP	European Parliament
ESAP	Employment and Social Affairs Platform
EU	European Union
EU MS	European Union Member States
FES	Friedrich Ebert Stiftung
FTF	Foreign Terrorist Fighters
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
IISG	Integrated Internal Security Governance
IIA's	International Investment Agreements
IMPEL	European Union Network for the Implementation and Enforcement of Environmental Law
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance
JHA	Justice and Home Affairs
LO	Liaison Office
MAP REA	Multi-annual Action Plan for a Regional Economic Area in the Western Balkans 6
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MRA	Mutual Recognition Agreement



NALAS	Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South East Europe
NFP CVE-FTF Group	RCC Group of National Focal Points for Countering Radicalization and Violent Extremism Leading to Terrorism and Foreign Terrorist Fighters in Southeast Europe
NSA	National Security Authority
OSINT	Open Sources Intelligence Assessment
PA	Parliamentary Assembly
P-CVE	Prevention and Countering of Violent Extremism
RCC	Regional Cooperation Council
RER-DWR	Route of Roman Emperors and Danube Wine Route
RLAH	Roam Like At Home
RI	Research Infrastructure
RIRA	Regional Investment Reform Agenda
RIT	Regional Investment Treaty
RNNC	Regional Network of National P-CVE Coordinators of the WB
RRA	Regional Roaming Agreement
RWG	Regional Working Group
SG	Secretary General
SEE	South East Europe
SEE 2020	South East Europe 2020 Strategy: Jobs and Prosperity in a European Perspective
SEECP	South-East European Cooperation Process
SEECP PA	South-East European Cooperation Process Parliamentary Assembly
SEEIC	South East Europe Investment Committee
SEEMIC	South East Europe Military Intelligence Chiefs
SEENSA	South East European National Security Authorities
SWP	Strategy and Work Programme
TEG	Tourism Expert Group
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VDRC	Via Dinarica Regional Coordination
WB	Western Balkans

