

**Western Balkans Youth Lab Concept
and
Project Design Workshop Agenda
7 November 2019
Podgorica, Montenegro**

Venue: Hotel Aurel, Josip Broz Tito Boulevard nn

Background

Supporting cooperation and potential of young people in the Western Balkans is crucial for the region's further development and a prerequisite for reconciliation. This was emphasised in 2018 Commission Communication on “A credible enlargement perspective for and enhanced EU engagement with the Western Balkans”. Supporting socio-economic development and putting a special focus on creating opportunities for youth in the Western Balkans is also one of the EU priorities identified in the Sofia Priority Agenda in May 2018. The Sofia Priority Agenda further called for the establishment of a “Western Balkans Youth Lab”, providing space for innovative policy-making addressing the needs of young people, and tackling brain drain.

Therefore, during the programming exercise 2019 for the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II), European Commission together with the IPA beneficiaries and in consultation with stakeholders in the Western Balkans brought forward the proposal for the Western Balkan Youth Lab action. The action has been adopted in July 2019 with the aim to offer safe space for young people to participate and to engage meaningfully in policy development based on principles of co-management and co-production.

The aim of the policy labs is to facilitate youth participation in policymaking. The action is envisioned to start in February 2020 for a duration of 36 months. It will be implemented by Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), and supported by Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO) and other relevant organisations.

The consultative project design workshop will take place on 7 November 2019 in a stakeholder round-table format. The workshop will aim to define the concept and activities of the Western Balkans Youth Lab.

Objective

The consultative project design workshop will aim to gather ideas and reflections on the design and implementation of the future Western Balkans Youth Lab.

The workshop will address two of the four identified sub-components of the action: Reinforcement of National Youth Councils and Youth Policy Labs. Discussions and findings will feed into development of an informed concrete project proposal and action plan for the Western Balkans Youth Lab project.

The workshop participants will aim to map the needs of key stakeholders to address the development, implementation and monitoring of youth policy and development and strengthening of the national youth councils, as well as instruments to address the identified needs. Furthermore, the workshop participants will discuss how to best conceptualise and implement the youth policy labs which aim to bring together the policy makers and youth from the region to co-create policy solutions to specific priority challenges faced by the youth of the region.

Summary of the Western Balkans Youth Labs Project (as per approved concept note)

1. Mapping

Upon the start of the action a mapping exercise that will build upon current analytics will outline key youth actors and organisations/stakeholders working with youth and map existing youth policies, programmes and initiatives as an input to the Western Balkan Youth Labs and evidence based policymaking.

2. Youth Policy Labs in the Western Balkans

Western Balkans Youth Lab will consist of a series of interactive meetings that stimulate open conversations and active engagement between young people and policy-makers in the region.

The main results of the Youth Lab will be co-creation of recommendations addressing a particular policy challenge.

A technical assistance instrument will be designed to support the implementation of the recommendations of the youth policy labs by either the youth organisations or the policy makers. The instrument can be mobilised to take forward specific policy work/studies that have been identified as necessary to advance on collaborative proposals emanating from the from the policy labs.

3. Reinforcement of Youth Councils

In view of supporting structures for more effective youth participation in policy making more broadly, the action will aim to complement the work on youth policy labs with support to the development and strengthening of the national youth councils in the Western Balkans, including a mobility component amongst themselves.

4. Participation of Western Balkan Youth in International Conferences

The programme will further aim to promote people-to-people contacts between the EU and the Western Balkans. Opening opportunities for young people to participate in events (meetings, seminars, workshops, conferences) is of particular importance to the youth of the Western Balkans. Therefore, this component will support the participation of the Western Balkan youth in selected international conferences by covering costs of travel and accommodation for the young people from the region.

Participants

The targeted participants will include key youth organisations, representatives of the national administrations responsible for youth policy from the region and international stakeholders active in the field of youth working in the Western Balkans.

Draft Agenda
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DAY 1 **Thursday, 7 November 2019**

09:00-09:30 **Registration & welcome coffee**

09.30 – 09.45 **Welcome remarks**

- DG NEAR
- RCC

09:45-10:45 **Presentation of the concept paper and objectives of the workshop**

Vanja Ivosevic, RCC and Karolina Buzaljko, DG NEAR

10:45 – 11:00 **Coffee break**

11:00 – 12:30 **How to support the strengthening and development of the National Youth Council in the Western Balkans? (Session I)**

Aim of the session: map the needs to be addressed through targeted support and identify common regional challenges for joint activities. Identification of common needs to be addressed and appropriate instruments to employ to address the identified needs, in particular in the first year of the project.

- Training and capacity building strategies and programmes, European Youth Forum
- Building a National Youth Council, Croatian Youth Council

Guiding questions:

- What are the main capacity building/technical assistance needs to support development, implementation and monitoring the youth policy/strategy development?
- What are the capacity building/technical assistance needs to ensure the development of necessary legal frameworks to ensure independence and sustainability of the national youth councils?
- What are the shared needs in the region? How to best address the identified needs? Which instruments to use?
- What are the potential current practices to be used for peer-learning activities?

12:30-13:30 **Lunch**

13:30-15:30 **Western Balkan Youth Policy Lab: Design session**

Aims of the session: to ensure shared understanding of the concept of the Western Balkan Youth Policy Lab in the context of the project and to prepare the implementation plan for the Western Balkans Youth Policy Lab in the first year of the project.

Western Balkans Youth Policy Lab will consist of a series of interactive workshops and conferences based on participatory leadership methods that stimulate open conversations and active engagement between young people and policy-makers in the region. The main results will be co-creation of concrete proposals that address complex social issues. For example: writing a strategy or a policy, conducting research, evaluating a public service/programme or policy, or running a small-scale project or an information campaign, etc.

A technical assistance instrument will be available to support the implementation of the recommendations of the youth policy labs by either the youth organisations or the policy makers. The instrument can be mobilised to take forward specific policy work/studies that have been identified as necessary to advance on collaborative proposals emanating from the policy labs. The instrument will include, but will not be limited to: provision of expert support/technical assistance, training/capacity building, workshops/seminars/conferences, stakeholder consultations, analysis/case study/mapping, peer-learning, evaluations of the programmes targeted at youth, information campaigns, etc.

Guiding questions:

- How to ensure the aims of the Western Balkans Youth Policy Labs are clearly communicated to the youth, policy makers and the public?
- Thematic focus and the dynamics of the Western Balkans Youth Policy Labs: what should be the thematic focus of the first Western Balkans Youth Policy Labs? The thematic focus should be a shared joint concern across the region.
- What is the best dynamic of the Western Balkans Youth Policy Labs – how many national vs. regional events, how to combine national and regional events, how to ensure follow up actions?
- Mechanisms of participation in the Western Balkans Youth Policy Labs
 - How to activate youth across the region and ensure wide participation of all?
 - How to attract policy makers, line Ministries and relevant national agencies and bodies depending on the thematic focus?
 - How to ensure continuous coordination among the youth and the policy makers? How to ensure communication between the events?

15:30 – 16:00 Coffee break

16:00 – 17:00 **Summary of the discussion: Western Balkans Youth Policy Labs**

- Defining the thematic focus and dynamics for the first year of the Western Balkans Youth Policy Labs
- Defining the mechanisms for youth participation and participation of policy makers
- Defining the coordination mechanisms for the project

17:00 – 18.00 **Potential synergies with ongoing projects in the region**

20.00 *Dinner*