

Referral for the General Assembly of Central European Service for Cross-border Initiatives, 25th April 2017

Report on the activities of CESCIBalkans

The work of CESCIBalkans started in January 2015, the final entry took place on 25th February 2015. It began its operation in Mid-March in Novi Sad. The referent of Association of European Border Regions from Belgrade, Ana Nikov is also an employee of CESCIBalkans. Our work has been supported by many people with free labour. These people include dr. Nora Repo, expert of Finnish human rights and interreligious dialogue, dr. Ksenija Crnomarković, professor of Friedrich Schiller University in Jena. Our enthusiastic intern, Isabell Reinhardt came from Schiller University too. We welcomed 5 trainees during the last year from the universities of Novi Sad and Belgrade. The Youth Alliance of Serbia made available to have a small office room in Belgrade free of charge for us.

Our work this year is characterised by more thoughtful, more tactful steps. Our approaches are rather focused on key initiatives and stakeholders; we have broadened our territorial and professional embeddedness, while we have also tried to find a service offer which can make us unique in the Balkan market. We still give special role to reach financial independence and we have been working on a more diverse structure of resources. It is going to be a multi-year enthusiastic work, thus last year was characterised by financial difficulties too. We are proud to be both a more and more Balkan and European type of organisation in terms of our activities and geographical scope. Our competence, social capital and initiatives have already been present in a few Balkan states as well as on European levels.

Our most important achievements

- We help the Serbian authorities with the professional support of CESCIBudapest and the Council of Europe in the legal harmonization processes after the ratification of the Madrid Convention
- As teachers we took part in the Leadership Academy Programme of Council of Europe in the fields of cross-border cooperation, EGTCs, and strategic planning.
- As part of the Leadership Academy with the Council of Europe we are planning on launching a series of seminars in Serbia too
- After signing the Cooperation Agreement with the ministry of the Republika Srpska responsible for regional cooperation and economic relations we have been asked to elaborate a cross-border integrated plan
- We have been following, encouraging and supporting the establishment of a few EGTCs in the region
- The results of the partnership created between us and the government of Vojvodina and the Assembly of Autonomous Province of Vojvodina have been manifested multiple times; we organised two large events in the building of the Assembly in 2016
- We have strengthened our partnerships in 2016 with all the institutions in Serbia competent in the EU integration of the country: with the integration office of the central government (SEIO), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Public Administration, and delegation of EU in Serbia. The colleagues of the delegation use our office.
- We have proposed significant initiatives in the topics of youth and business development

- The partnership with the Friedrich Schiller University in Jena continued. We had workshop, trainings on cross-border cooperation, furthermore from last autumn the internship programme started in our office
- The result of the partnership created with the Prosperitati Foundation and the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians can be found in that the CESCI Balkans could be an active player of the economic development process in Vojvodina with mentor and advisory roles, furthermore Balkans could be a player in Vojvodina Hungarian tourist survey.
- Diverse social capital has been created with decisive institutions. The partnership network of our organisation is stronger year by year what brings more and more possibilities in relation to contracts and participation in tenders

In the last period we created and submitted dozens of project applications of which we would like to highlight the followings:

Winning applications

- Network Start-ups 101 – Erasmus+ (Mobility for Youth programme) – The project was submitted together with the Fatime Ház Foundation from Szeged. The project deals with the motivation and active involvement of the youth from three countries (Hungary, Germany, Serbia). We have carried out the anticipated activities, currently we are working on the reports.
- The International Conference Women in Rural Areas and Cross-border Cooperation supported by the government of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina has been completely finished
- The VIII Youth Forum supported by the Assembly of the Republic of Serbia has been finished as well.

Highlighted submitted and planned project ideas

- We participated in 7 projects, and assisted the elaboration of more than 10 other projects in relation to the call for proposals in the frames of the Hungarian-Serbian Cross-border Programme
- We elaborated 6 Erasmus+ projects with the Youth Alliance of Serbia
- We elaborated almost 20 projects for various different calls
- We have been preparing with 3 big volume projects for the second call of the Danube Transnational Programme

We would like to highlight the following **works, contracts** from the last period:

- We have finished an exploratory study with a legal-financial type of character in both Serbian and Hungarian languages which deals with the following issues:
The system of Serbian licencing authorities in the field of cross-border economic relations and especially in services; bank system, financing opportunities; ways of entering the market, local business practices, activities of institutions supporting the Hungarian companies in entering the Serbian market (e.g. chamber); Serbian international fairs in the year of 2016; business establishment, tax, contributions, wages.
- We have compiled an inventory about the Serbian stakeholders concerning cross-border cooperation, which contains the border cities, cross-border cooperation initiatives, euroregions, the important institutions functioning in border areas, furthermore the departments, units, institutions concerned within the central government in relation to cross-border cooperation activities

- We elaborated a study, an inventory about the Bosnian and Montenegrin stakeholders concerned in cross-border cooperation, which study contains the border cities, cross-border cooperation initiatives, euroregions, the important institutions functioning in border areas, furthermore the departments, units, institutions concerned within the central government in relation to cross-border cooperation activities
- We supported 3 EGTCs, territorial cooperation initiatives:
 - We support the regional development processes and the cooperation of local governments and public administration organizations within the region around Baja, Mohács, Sombor, Apatin, Osijek and Beli Manastir
 - At the tri-point of Croatia, Bosnia and Montenegro we supported the formation of an EGTC planned by Dubrovnik, Trebinje and Herceg Novi.
 - We supported the creation of an association that concentrates multiple stakeholders of agrotech industry from EU Member States initiated by Central Macedonia of Greece as a specialized institution

We organised five important, large **own events** too, out of these two was held in the Assembly of Autonomous Province of Vojvodina and one was held in the House of Representatives of Republic of Serbia, Belgrade.

Study tour and meeting in Sarajevo – Cross-border cooperation in pre-during and post conflict situation (Israel/Palestine)

In cooperation with the Balkan office of AEBR, the International Peace and Cooperation Center, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Shasha Center for Strategic Studies and the Faculty of Architecture of University of Sarajevo we organised a study tour and meeting in Sarajevo between 15th and 17th April for Palestinian and Israeli experts engaged in the preparation of a strategic plan for the area between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea.

International Conference "Development of Media Literacy and Information in Serbia and Region"

CESCI Balkans, Media Education Center and AEBR Center for Balkans organised an international conference called "Development of Media Literacy and Information in Serbia and Region" in Novi Sad, on August 1st, with the support of the Assembly of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina. The conference, where there were more than a hundred participants, covered the topic about media Literacy and information literacy as a ground for the development of global and sustainable education and achievement of Millennium Development Goals.

The participants included Mr. Damir Zobenica, Vice-President of the Assembly of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, Mr. Žolt Sakalaš, Provincial Secretariat for Education, Administration and National Communities, Mr. Miomir Rajčević, Media Education Centre Mr. Walter Olensky, Federal Ministry of Education, Austria, and Ms. Ivana Jelača, Media Diversity Institute Beograd.

At the end of the conference we signed a cooperation agreement with the Media and Education Centre, the Journalist School of Novi Sad and the Media Diversity Institute.

VIII Youth Forum – Supporting career and friendly neighbourhood

We helped to AEBR in organising the VIII Youth Forum, which was held in 2nd and 3rd December 2016 in Belgrade in the Assembly of the Republic of Serbia as a debate forum

and workshop with the following topics: role of young leaders in cross-border cooperation; the power of youth initiative for positive change of system; cross-border youth friendship for peace. As a result of the VIII Youth Forum the Youth Statutes of Cross-border Cooperation was worked out.

The role of young people in cross-border cooperation – meeting of leaders of the youth

Together with Timiș County Youth Foundation and the AEBR we organised an event called “The role of young people in cross-border cooperation – meeting of leaders of the youth” between 16th and 19th February 2017 in Timișoara, Romania. During roundtable discussions and workshops the following topics were targeted: participation of the youth in the elaboration of policies; best practices in cross-border cooperation, furthermore cross-border project development.

Women in rural areas and cross-border cooperation

In cooperation with Balkan Centre of AEBR we organised an international conference and workshop under the title “Women in Rural Areas and Cross-border Cooperation” on 6th March 2017 in the Assembly of Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, Novi Sad. More than 120 participants attended the conference. The aim of the conference was to improve and strengthen women’s position. The international discussion was opened by István Pásztor, the President of the Assembly of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina. The speakers included Ann-Sofi Backgren, First Vice President of the Association of the European Border Regions, Sanda Šimić, Assistant Director of the Serbian European Integration Office of the Government of the Republic Serbia, Ana Milenić, program manager from the Delegation of the European Union Serbia, and Maja Sedlarević, coordinator of Women’s Parliamentary Network of the Assembly of Vojvodina.

Colleagues of CESCO Balkans have participated at several important European, national **events and meetings**, out of which we would like to emphasize the followings:

- Erasmus+ Info Day, Belgrade (20.1.2016.)
- *Solidarity in Europe. Help is needed* - Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, Belgrade (26.1.2016)
- Reception at Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, Belgrade (4.2.2016)
- Introduction of Prosperitati, Subotica (4.2.2016)
- Public Diplomacy: Regional Dimension, Belgrade (17.2.2016)
- Signature ceremony of the cooperation agreement with the Ministry of Regional Cooperation and Economic Relations of the Republic of Sprska, Banja Luka (7-8.3.2016)
- Visit of Macedonian Ministries, Skopje (10-11.3.2016)
- Closing event of the Open Arms, Moravica (11.3.2016)
- 2nd meeting of Friends of Voivodina Association, Etyek (19.3.2016)
- Hungarian Development Centre – EU funds meeting, Pilisszentkereszt-Dobogókő (31.3.2016-1.4.2016)
- Hungarian Foreign Economic Forum of Voivodina, Novi Sad (5.4.2016)
- CBC planning workshop, Sombor, Apatin (14.4.2016)
- Meeting sin Belgrade on the evaluation of the cross-border cooperation programmes with the participation of AEBR and CESCO (SEIO, Serbian EU delegation, the EU Cross-Border Institution Building+ project), Belgrade (15.4.2016)

- Dialogue of religions, Sarajevo (16-19.4.2016)
- 23rd economic-political forum, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, Belgrade (19.4.2016)
- CBC planning workshops, Vukovar, Sl. Brod (26.4.2016)
- Meeting with the colleagues of the integration office of the Serbian government, Belgrade (4.5.2016)
- Meeting with Pásztor István, president of the province house of parliament, Novi Sad (2016.05.10)
- European Citizens towards the European Union conference, Sombor (13.5.2016)
- General Assembly meeting of CESCI, Budapest (19.5.2016)
- Youth Digital Business Forum, Belgrade (20-21.5.2016)
- Hungarian Development Centre, Novi Sad (1.6.2016)
- Board conference of ESPON Programme, Amsterdam (15-17.6.2016)
- Erasmus+ project kick-off event, Hódmezővásárhely (20-22.6.2016)
- Lectures at the Friedrich Schiller University, Jena (26-28.6.2016)
- Meeting with Sven Henrik Häseker, Pergo Management, Berlin (29.26.2016)
- Meeting with Schalbert Csilla on the Hungarian Twinning projects, Novi Sad (4.7.2016)
- EXIT festival research (8.7.2016)
- „Media education and information literacy in Serbia and the region” conference, Novi Sad (1.8.2016)
- Erasmus + Network Start-ups 101 project event, Hódmezővásárhely (12-23.8.2016)
- Visit at CESCI, Budapest (6-7.9.2016)
- Danube e-region cooperation conference, Domžale (19-20.9.2016)
- AEBR General Assembly meeting and annual conference, Görlitz (22-24.9.2016)
- ComUNYouth meeting, Lithuania (28.9.2016-2.10.2016)
- „Media and Information Literacy as a Tool to Build Trust in the Media” conference – Belgrade (13.10.2016)
- European Youth Summit, Belgrade (14-16.10.2016)
- 5th international conference on cross-border cooperation, Belgrade (21.10.2016)
- Meeting on project proposals to the HU-SRB call, Szeged (26.10.2016)
- Visit at Nisava Eurorégio, Pirot (28.10.2016)
- Meeting on project proposals to the HU-SRB call, Sombor (4.11.2016)
- EBESZ meeting, Vienna (10-11.11.2016.)
- Katana Info Day, Novi Sad (16.11.2016)
- International meeting of clusters and enterprises, Novi Sad (18.11.2016)
- European Youth Summit, Belgrade, Belgrade (20.11.2016)
- Meeting with the Mayor of Ruma (21.11.2016)
- Nikola Tesla Museum, Vaip – Danube project meeting, Belgrade (23.11.2016)
- Meeting with the leadership of Čoka (24.11.2016)
- Strategic meeting of CESCI network, Budapest (28.11.2016)
- 8th AEBR Youth Forum, Belgrade (2-3.12.2016)
- IPA infrastructure and transport project application meeting, Sombor (11.12.2016)
- Partner meetings concerning the call of HU-SRB CBC Programme (December 2016-January 2017)
- Meeting with Pásztor István, president of the province house of parliament, and with Biosense, Novi Sad (18.1.2017, 3.2.2017)
- Roundtable on export of wine from Voivodina to the EU, Sremski Karlovci (14.2.2017)
- Meeting of young leaders - “Youth Role in Cross-border Cooperation Context”, Timisoara (16-19.2.2017)

- Meeting with the Mayor of Opština Kanjiža, (27.2.2017)
- TransDanube.Pearls kick-off conference, Belgrade (1.3.2017)
- „Women in Rural Areas and Cross-border Cooperation" conference, Novi Sad (6.3.2017)
- Meetings concerning the Danube Transnational Programme call (Exit Foundation, RTV, Biosense (February-April 2017)
- National hearing of the Strategy for the Danube Region, Novi Sad (24.3.2017)
- I4MS Conference, Novi Sad (29.3.2017)
- Leaders Academy of the Council of Europe, Trebinje (3-7.4.2017)
- Meeting with the director of the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, Belgrade (19.14.2017)

The report was compiled by Erős Ervin, director of CESCI Balkans