

# KOSOVO'S PARTICIPATION AND REPRESENTATION IN REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Mapping the gaps and opportunities



# Kosovo's Participation and Representation in Regional Organizations

Mapping the gaps and opportunities

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Balkans Policy Research Group (BPRG)

## ACRONYMS

<b>AII</b>	Adriatic and Ionian Initiative
<b>CEEC</b>	Central and Eastern European Countries
<b>CEI</b>	Central European Initiative
<b>CEFTA</b>	Central European Free Trade Agreement
<b>EnC</b>	Energy Community Secretariat
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>MARRI</b>	Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative
<b>MFA</b>	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
<b>OPM</b>	Office of the Prime Minister
<b>RAI</b>	Regional Anti-Corruption Initiative
<b>RACVIAC</b>	Regional Arms Control Verification and Implementation Assistance Centre
<b>RCC</b>	Regional Cooperation Council
<b>RYCO</b>	Regional Youth Cooperation Office
<b>SEDM</b>	South-East Europe Defense Ministerial
<b>SEE</b>	South East Europe
<b>SEECF</b>	South-East European Cooperation Process
<b>SEEHN</b>	South East Europe Health Network
<b>SEEPAG</b>	Southeast European Prosecutors Advisory Group
<b>SEESAC</b>	Small Arms and Light Weapons
<b>SELEC</b>	Southeast European Law Enforcement Center
<b>SEPCA</b>	South East European Police Chiefs' Association
<b>TCT</b>	Transport Community Treaty
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNMIK</b>	United Nations Mission in Kosovo
<b>WBF</b>	Western Balkans Fund
<b>WB6</b>	Western Balkans Six countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia)

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Kosovo has the lowest level of representation in regional organizations and initiatives among Western Balkans Six (WB6) countries; Albania, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro. This imbalance exists both in terms of the number of regional organizations that Kosovo is a member of, and the number of Kosovo national staff working in these organizations.

Between Kosovo's independence in 2008 and the launch of the Berlin Process in 2014, many regional organizations and initiatives emerged. Since then, they have continually been growing, and their agendas are expanding. These initiatives cover a variety of dimensions, ranging from political, economic and social, whereas their agendas encompass cross-cutting thematic issues such as youth, transport, energy, security, etc. An equal representation of WB6 nationals in these regional initiatives is critical for reflecting the diversity of WB6 countries and for creating a sentiment of fairness among them. Both are important ingredients for advancing WB6 cooperation.

Yet, a significant imbalance prevails in many regional cooperation initiatives – and in a few others that involve the wider geographic area of South East Europe. Among the WB6 countries, Kosovo is significantly underrepresented, particularly in leadership positions of the regional organizations where it is a member. Moreover, it does not enjoy membership in several other regional organizations, in which all other WB6 countries are members. This denies Kosovo the opportunity to represent itself on an equal footing with other WB6 countries. When in turn, this should offer a channel for consolidating its statehood in the region and beyond.

Besides political challenges, notably those related to the non-recognizing and blocking neighbors (Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina), its representation in regional cooperation organizations and initiatives is hindered by technical and practical obstacles too, of those many of domestic nature. Lack of a political “down-stream” approach, weak institutional capacities and a limited multilateral diplomacy are the most predominant ones. Hence, it is important for Kosovo to invest in establishing a solid inter-institutional coordination framework for dealing with regional cooperation and to advance diplomatic and strategic approaches for it to gain representation in an approximate level with other Western Balkans countries. However, these processes can only take place once the government of Kosovo builds the political will, positions “regional cooperation” higher on the political agenda and commits to enhancing Kosovo's role in regional fora.

Kosovo has already joined several important regional initiatives such as the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), the Transport Community Treaty (TCT), the Energy Community (EnC), the Migration, Asylum and Refugees Regional Initiative (MARRI), the Regional Youth Cooperation Organization (RYCO), or the Western Balkans Fund (WBF). However, it is necessary to boost Kosovo's role by increasing the presence of its nationals in governing structures/ secretariats of these organizations, but also through an active and enhanced engagement of

government officials there. Equally important is striving to gain membership in all relevant regional organizations in which Kosovo is not a member yet.

The Kosovo government shall look at the wider picture of regional organizations and initiatives, identify gaps and the policy opportunities. Having missed that, this mapping should serve the government for reconsidering Kosovo's role and status in regional organizations. It offers a viewpoint on how to develop a more proactive approach when it comes to increasing its representation in these organizations, and it identifies venues to improve its status vis-a-vis its neighbors in Western Balkans and South East Europe.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Kosovo needs to establish a solid institutional framework for regional cooperation, which regulates the inter-institutional coordination and clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of institutions in charge for coordinating and implementing regional cooperation agendas. Equally important, the country needs to step-up in its multilateral diplomacy. The key leading institution in charge of prioritizing, designing, coordinating, monitoring and implementing the agendas and programs of regional organizations and initiatives are the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) and line-ministries. To increase the number of Kosovo's representatives in the regional cooperation initiatives, and its overall role in regional fora, the government of Kosovo should undertake the following steps:

The MFA should develop a clear strategy and an action plan for gaining membership and increasing the level of representation in regional organizations. The action plan should entail specific tactics, and concrete steps, to be taken by each respective institution in charge. The MFA should conduct thematic analysis based on political and/or economic reasoning for gaining membership in specific regional initiatives where Kosovo is not yet a member and prioritize them accordingly.

### **The government of Kosovo should:**

1. Establish a clear institutional framework, including OPM/ Sherpa, MFA/ Department on Regional Relations (DRR) and relevant line-ministries, for building coherence, accountability and facilitating the information flow for all the regional cooperation issues, processes and agendas.
2. Devise a transparent mechanism of distributing vacant positions of regional organizations and initiatives with a wider domestic pool of experts.
3. Adapt legislation to facilitate the process of secondments of staff to regional organizations and initiatives. For example, enable senior staff to freeze their positions and return to the same jobs after they serve a mandate in regional initiatives.
4. Invest in human capital development within its Department on Regional

Relations (DRR). A distinguished analytical unit with regional “know-how” should be established. This unit should be endowed with the necessary analytical, administrative and language skills. Its tasks and responsibilities should entail preparing, conducting and following-up the application processes of Kosovo nationals applying in regional organizations for all Kosovo institutions (MFA, OPM, line-ministries and other agencies/bodies).

5. Mitigate the constant deadlocks and lack of consensus on the appointments of high-ranking officials in several important regional organizations the government could lobby for a systematic rotation of leadership positions in all regional initiatives so that each WB6 country is equally represented at the governing structures of regional organizations.

## INTRODUCTION

Kosovo remains underrepresented in regional cooperation fora. There are still some important regional organizations in which Kosovo is not a member and in those that it is, the number of its national staff is low.

Yet, regional cooperation is one of the core conditions for WB6 countries' EU path. It aims to boost cooperation in economic, political, societal, environmental areas, but not only. That was done through putting forth agendas and programs aimed at boosting trade, encouraging free movement of people, goods, services, ideas, strengthening energy and transport links, promoting youth cooperation etc.<sup>1</sup>

The structural composition of WB6 Regional Cooperation resembles the model of cooperation within the EU structures: it includes a variety of initiatives, organizations and mechanisms, it addresses a handful of cross-cutting thematic issues and requires a multi-level participation of national, regional and international actors. As such, each of these initiatives have a clear mandate, a specific statute and distinguished rules of procedure as well as recruitment processes. All regional organizations are composed of internal structures and bodies, which require a considerable number of staff. Similar to the EU, regional cooperation initiatives have their own staff regulations of officials and employment conditions of other workers. In each regional cooperation organization, positions are distributed by nationality of participating countries.

The non-recognition from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina is what prevents Kosovo from having its fair share of representation in the majority of these organizations. The dialogue process between Kosovo and Serbia, facilitated by the European Union (EU), brought the Agreement on Regional Representation and Cooperation in 2012. The agreement sets the basis for Kosovo's participation and representation in regional initiatives, allowing it to join or change its status in various organizations.<sup>2</sup> Despite managing to join ten (10) key regional organizations, this agreement has not served much for Kosovo to be treated equally in a few of these organizations nor to gain membership in many others.<sup>3</sup>

Consecutive governments have not had the sufficient political will to place regional cooperation higher on the policy agenda. Weak multilateral diplomacy and the absence of a defined institutional framework for regional cooperation also played a crucial role.<sup>4</sup> In turn, Kosovo governments failed to develop a strategic approach for enhancing its participation and representation in regional organizations and initiatives.

<sup>1</sup> For more, see Balkans Group report, *Regional Cooperation in the Western Balkans. Regional Economic Area, the "Mini-Schengen" and the Common Regional Market*, January 2021.

<sup>2</sup> Balkans Group report, *The Brussels Dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia: Achievements and Challenges*, October 2020, pp. 28–29.

<sup>3</sup> For more details, see the Table: Kosovo's Membership and Participation in key Regional Organizations and Initiatives.

<sup>4</sup> Balkans Group report, *Kosovo in Regional Initiatives: The Institutional Framework and Coordination*, October 2021.



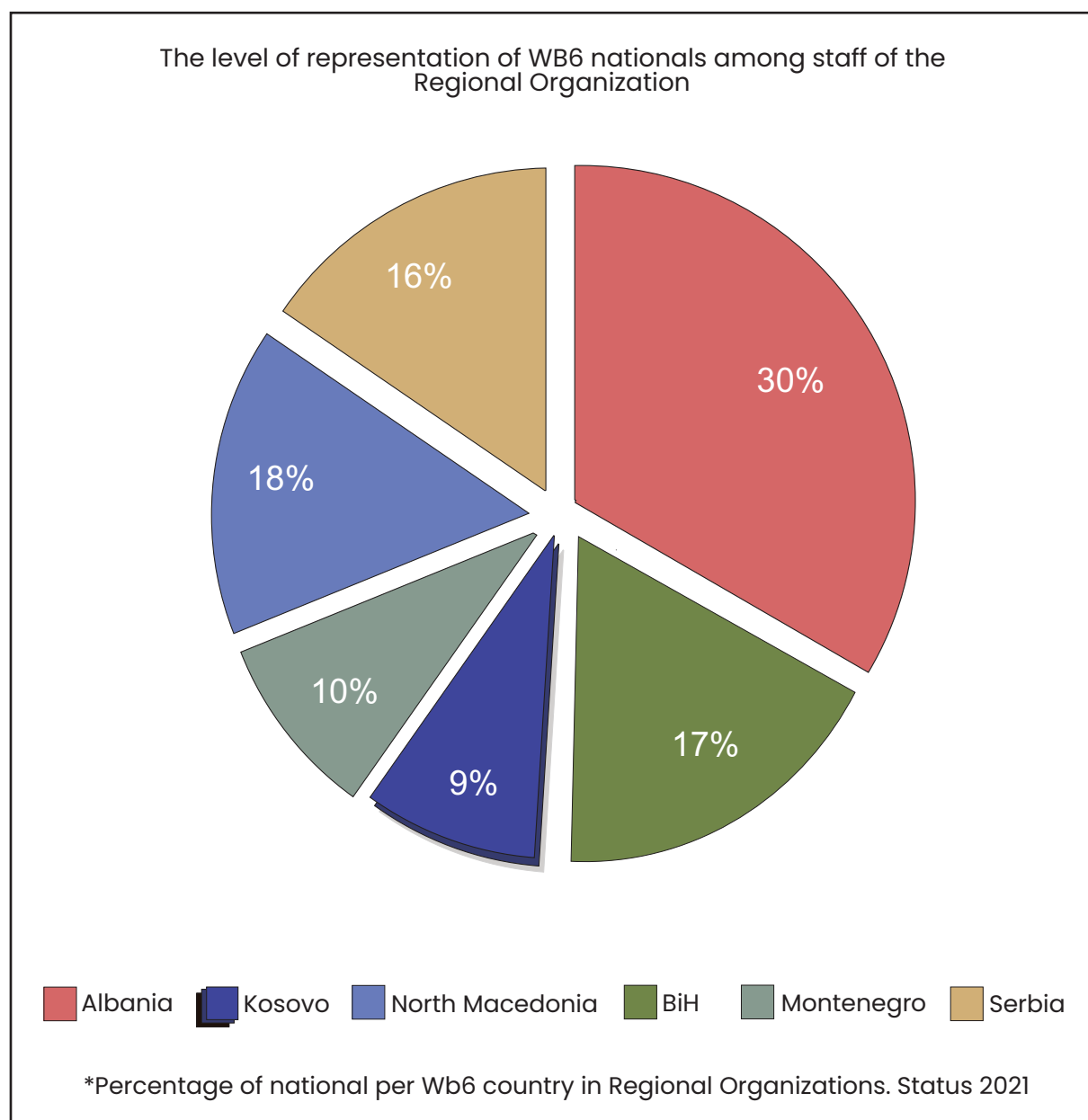
Kosovo's Membership and Participation in key Regional Organisations and Initiatives	
Organization/ Initiative	Membership
Adriatic and Ionian Initiative (AII)	
Brdo-Brijuni Initiative	✓
Central European Initiative (CEI)	
Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA)	✓ UNMIK as Kosovo Rep.
Energy Community Secretariat (EnC)	✓
Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative (MARRI)	✓
Regional Anti-Corruption Initiative (RAI)	
Regional Arms Control Verification and Implementation Assistance Centre (RACVIAC)	Participation
Regional Cooperation Council (RCC)	✓
Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO)	✓
South-Eastern Europe Defense Ministerial (SEDM)	
South-East European Cooperation Process (SEECOP)	✓
South East Europe Health Network (SEEHN)	
Southeast European Prosecutors Advisory Group (SEEPAG)	
Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC)	
Southeast European Law Enforcement Center (SELEC)	
South East European Police Chiefs' Association (SEPCA)	
Transport Community Treaty (TcT)	✓
Western Balkans Fund (WBF)	✓

Although the situation has improved somehow in recent years, many of these hindrances persist. As a result, out of the 10 organizations and initiatives that it partakes in, Kosovo enjoys full-scale membership in only six of them, namely RCC, EnC, TCT, RYCO, WBF and MARRI.<sup>5</sup> These are considered important organizations and initiatives, as they are closely related to the EU's reforms and the Euro-Atlantic integration in general. Of primary concern should be organizations that are related to the approximation of legislation with EU, or to the so-called EU *acquis*, specifically those that lead to harmonization with the EU Single market rules, those that focus on security sector reform and international and regional cooperation. Internal institutions should take a great deal of effort to enhance their presence in these organizations. In addition, Kosovo features as a counterpart in the Brdo-Brijuni initiative; a forum for discussion that gathers heads of WB6 countries, hosted by Croatia and Slovenia. In RACVIAC, it enjoys the "participant" status, as compared to other WB6 countries which are members. However, despite having a "Party" status

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

in CEFTA, it is not always represented on the same footing with other member countries.<sup>6</sup> UNMIK still remains Kosovo's representative in CEFTA, taking part in decision-making meetings.

On the other hand, Kosovo has not managed to become a member in several regional organizations where all other WB countries are already actively participating. These organizations are mostly related to the policy areas of Rule of Law or Security, such as RAI, SELEC, SEEPAG, or SEPCA. In fact, regional initiatives dealing with the justice and security sector are the most challenging to join. That is because the most important ones such as SELEC and SEEPAG have INTERPOL as the main operational partner.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, their headquarters are located in Bucharest, Romania – a country that does not recognize Kosovo as a state.

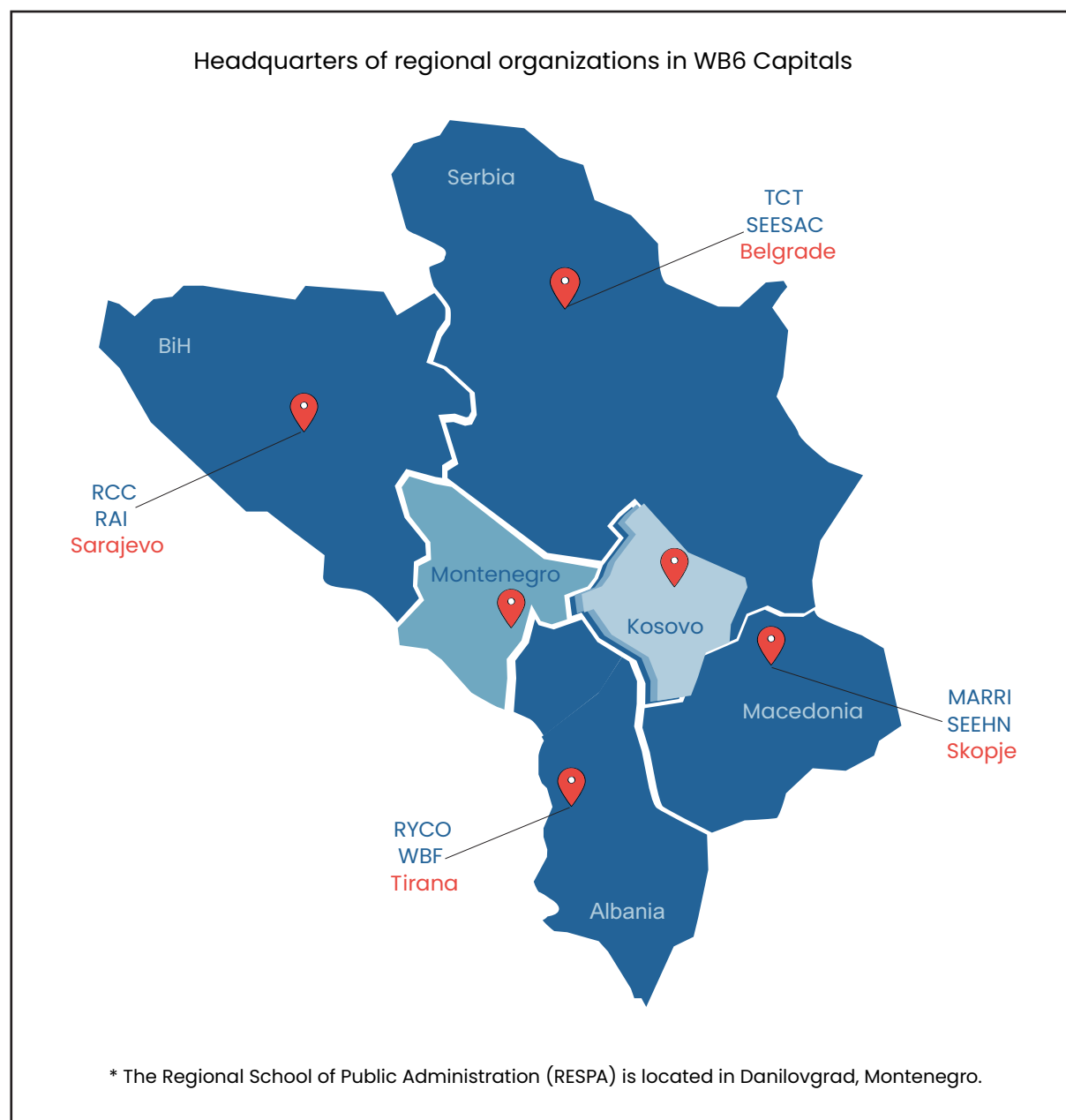


<sup>6</sup> Balkans Group report, *Regional Cooperation in the Western Balkans. Regional Economic Area, the "Mini-Schengen" and the Common Regional Market*, January 2021, pp.11.

<sup>7</sup> Balkans Group interview with an expert on regional cooperation, Prishtina, June 2021.

When it comes to staff representation, Kosovo has disproportionately fewer staff in regional organizations compared to other neighboring WB6 countries. It has the lowest percentage of nationals among staff working there (under 9 percent of the overall share of WB6). This is the lowest presence in the region, followed by Montenegro (10 percent). This low level of representation persists through all levels, but more particularly in leadership positions.

Lastly, Pristina is the only WB6 capital that does not host a secretariat of any regional organization.



Kosovo should persistently push for increasing the number of its nationals among staff in regional organizations in which it is a member. It should strive for a balanced level of representation with other WB6 countries and make consistent efforts to seek membership in the organizations that it is not a member. Benefits from this could be two-folds. Firstly, it would position Kosovo as a regional actor, on an equal footing with other WB6 countries. This in turn

can help consolidate its statehood. Secondly, by becoming a more robust regional actor, Kosovo's government could take part in the regional agenda-setting. This would enable the government to push forward its own national strategic interests and influence the regional agendas. As such, it is imperative for the government to undertake immediate actions to not prolong the current asymmetrical representation in the regional fora.

Albania provides a good example on how a country can shift from an asymmetrical presence to a fully-fledged one. However, a strong political will and a firm commitment are decisive for this to happen. Albania first obtained the Deputy Secretary General position, then a Secretary General (SG) position in RCC, along with four of its nationals working in the RCC secretariat. The Director of the Regional Security Centre, RACVIAC, based in Rakitje in Croatia, is also from Albania. Finally, Albania hosts the Secretariats of WBF and RYCO in Tirana, and has nationals working in the CEFTA secretariat, TCT, or MARRI.

This manual intends to guide Kosovo governmental institutions, by providing a clear overview of Kosovo's vis-à-vis other WB6 countries' level of representation in regional organizations and initiatives. The document distinguishes organizations in which Kosovo is a full member and those in which it is not. It gives comprehensive information about each organization's areas of work, governance structure, and recruitment procedures. Finally, it provides recommendations on how to boost Kosovo's representation in each of the regional organizations where Kosovo is a member, and target those that it is not a member of yet.

# **REGIONAL INITIATIVES IN WHICH KOSOVO PARTICIPATES OR IS A MEMBER**

## REGIONAL COOPERATION COUNCIL (RCC)

RCC is an important south-eastern European regional organization which serves the aim of regional cooperation, promotes development and supports the Euro-Atlantic integration of South East Europe (SEE).<sup>8</sup>

The RCC mandate comes from the political declaration of Heads of States and Governments of South-East European Cooperation Process (SEECP) countries; Albania, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia, Greece, Turkey, Moldova, Romania, from the Zagreb Summit in 2008 – the so-called Zagreb Final Act on the enhancement of SEECP. The Zagreb Final Act made RCC a successor of the Stability Pact, creating an organization that covers regional cooperation in sectors such as economy and social development, energy and infrastructure, human capital development, justice, home affairs and parliamentary cooperation.<sup>9</sup>

The RCC works under the political guidelines of SEECP. It aims to create a conducive environment for furthering regional processes and projects in different sectors. Its work and activities have shifted to a more result-oriented intervention for removing obstacles to mobility, enhancing connectivity and improving competitiveness in SEE.

Following the 2017 Western Balkans Summit in Trieste, the RCC, facilitated by the EU Commission, coordinated the development of the Multi-annual Action Plan on Regional Economic Area in the Western Balkans (MAP REA). It was also tasked by WB6 governments to be the leading organization facilitating MAP REA implementation.<sup>10</sup> At the 2020 Sofia Summit, the RCC was mandated to coordinate the implementation of the Common Regional Market (CRM), including four regional agreements on freedom of movement and the Green Agenda.<sup>11</sup>

The RCC also serves as the SEECP Secretariat and its participants include SEE countries (Albania, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia, Greece, Turkey, Moldova, Romania), the European Union and several EU member states.<sup>12</sup> RCC's Secretariat ensures the functioning of the organization and oversees the implementation of RCC's activities. Kosovo was part of RCC since its establishment in 2008.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>8</sup> The Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) is an all-inclusive, regionally owned and led cooperation framework. This framework engages RCC participants from the South East Europe (SEE), members of the international community and donors on subjects which are important and of interest to the SEE, with a view to promoting and advancing the European and Euro-Atlantic integration of the region. Within the framework of the general political guidelines set by the South-East European Cooperation Process (SEECP), the RCC works to develop and maintain a political climate of dialogue, reconciliation, tolerance and openness towards cooperation, with a view to enabling the implementation of regional programmes aimed at economic and social development to the benefit of the people in the region. For more, see the organization's website, at Regional Cooperation Council | About Us (rcc.int).

<sup>9</sup> Zagreb Final Act on SEECP enhancement, 11 May 2007, at <https://www.rcc.int/docs/20/zagreb-final-act-on-seeep-enhancement>.

<sup>10</sup> For more, see Balkans Group report, *The Berlin Process for Western Balkans: Gains and Challenges for Kosovo*, 17 January 2018.

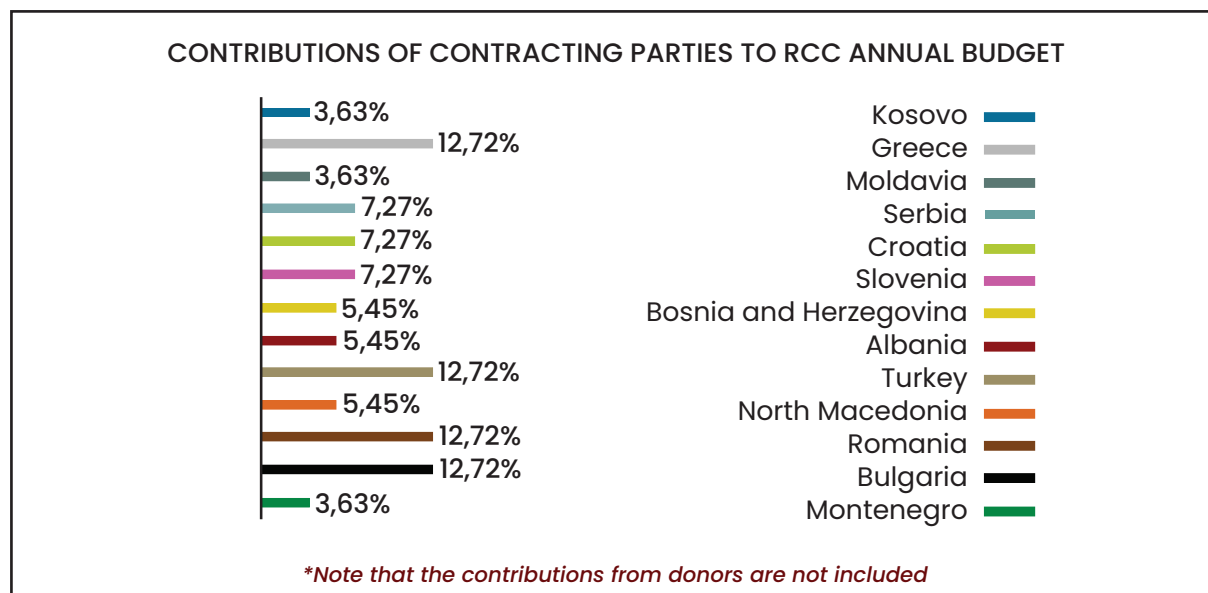
<sup>11</sup> Balkans Group report, *Regional Cooperation in the Western Balkans: Regional Economic Area, the "Mini-Schengen" and the Common Regional Market*, January 2021, pp. 27–32.

<sup>12</sup> See the list of RCC participants, at Regional Cooperation Council | RCC Participants.

<sup>13</sup> Since RCC is the successor of Stability Pact, Kosovo through UNMIK was a founding member. However in 2013, the Agreement on Regional Representation between Belgrade and Pristina mediated by the EU paved way for Kosovo to participate without UNMIK at RCC but with the denomination provided by the mentioned agreement.

## Funding

The RCC is funded by the EU Member States (Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, France, Italy, Hungary, Switzerland, Norway, Sweden, and Latvia) as well as the UK and USA and 13 SEECP member countries. The budget contributions from EU Member States (EU MS) and other non SEECP members is set at 50,000 Euros, while each SEECP member's contribution is calculated according to their population/GDP per capita. Kosovo and Montenegro are the two smallest contributors (with 40,000 Euros per year).<sup>14</sup>



## Location

The Secretariat is located in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina and has a Liaison Office in Brussels.

## The RCC Governance Structure:

### Secretary General (SG)

SG leads the RCC. The SG approves the staff recruitment and changes in the organization's organogram. He/She has a mandate of three years with a three-year extension (3+3).

## The Board

The Board is RCC's main decision making body. Members of the Board are the countries and organizations which contribute to the RCC budget.<sup>15</sup> The Board gathers National Coordinators (NC) from all participant countries and organizations. The NCs are senior civil officials (Directors at MFA) responsible for the coordination of RCC relevant issues within their respective national

<sup>14</sup> Other Contracting Parties contribute to the RCC budget as follows: Moldova: 40,000; North Macedonia and Albania: 60,000 Euros; Serbia, Slovenia and Croatia: 80,000 Euros; Turkey, Romania and Bulgaria: 140,000 Euros.

<sup>15</sup> Albania, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Croatia, the European Union (EU), represented by a representative of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and a representative of the European Commission, Germany, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Ireland, Kosovo, Latvia, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, and the United States of America.

administrations. The Board meets three times a year and is chaired by the Secretary General. The Board meetings are convened and prepared by the Secretary General, in coordination with the SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office (CiO).<sup>16</sup> It approves the nomination of the candidate for the position of the Secretary General of the RCC, provides operational guidance and supervision of the organization, accepts the Annual Report of the Secretary General and adopts the Strategy and Work Program, reviews progress and brings proposals and initiatives for the further development of regional cooperation.<sup>17</sup>

### Decisions of the RCC Board are taken by consensus.

#### Recruitment

Contracting Parties' Representation in RCC Governance Structures			
	Board	Financial Committee	Other Structures / Technical Level
Composition	Senior Officials from Ministries of Foreign Affairs/ RCC National Coordinators	Representatives from Ministries of Finance	Heads of Departments within RCC (Political Department, Program Department, Administration, Liaison Office in Brussels)
Roles / Responsibilities	27 RCC members (13 EU MS + 13 SEECP members + EU's representatives) participates in Annual Meetings and adopt the organization's Strategy and Work Program	Adopts the Financial aspects of RCC	

The RCC hires exclusively nationals from SEECP participating countries'. There are no seconded positions. The recruitments for high political level positions are conducted on a political level, by a consensus among the thirteen (13) Ministries of Foreign Affairs (MFAs) and Heads of State and Governments.

Candidates for the Secretary General position are individuals who are considered key political figures from the region, with a record of successful engagements in regional cooperation, and with the ability to interact with the Governments of the Western Balkans and international partners and institutions. The SG position is chosen by the SEECP governments through regular meetings at the political director's level and confirmed at the SEECP Summit of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs (MFAs) and Heads of State and Governments. Two criteria are determinant for the candidate's selection:

1. To have an outstanding personality with strong leadership skills and, a consensual and EU-oriented background.
2. To be a high ranked official (i.e. State Secretary or Former Minister or Prime Minister).

<sup>16</sup> The SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office follows the principle of one-year rotation (July–June), in no precise order. Greece is currently chairing the SEECP from July 2021 to June 2022.

<sup>17</sup> For more details, see RCC statute at [https://www.academia.edu/29732091/ANNEX\\_II\\_STATUTE\\_OF\\_THE\\_REGIONAL\\_COOPERATION\\_COUNCIL\\_RCC](https://www.academia.edu/29732091/ANNEX_II_STATUTE_OF_THE_REGIONAL_COOPERATION_COUNCIL_RCC)



SEECF members lobby for this position using various diplomatic channels. However, the current SG has introduced a new method of self-representation/campaigning. After being nominated by Albania, she visited the 13 capitals of SEECF.<sup>18</sup>

The first RCC SG, was a senior Croatian diplomat, and the second, a senior Serbian diplomat. The SG from Croatia employed most political advisors from Croatia, whereas the current SG, Majlinda Bregu, an Albania national, significantly increased the number of RCC staff from Albania.<sup>19</sup>

The three Secretary Generals had similar backgrounds. All of them were high-ranked state officials in their country.<sup>20</sup> Commonly, the RCC SG tends to employ staff from their own country of origin.

Other senior positions are filled through vacancy announcements, for a seven-year mandate with no possibility of extension. Positions such as the Deputy Secretary General, the Head of RCC Liaison Office in Brussels and the Head of Political Department remain at the discretion of the Secretary General and his/her informal deliberations and political bargaining with SEECF MFA representatives. They ensure a balance among representatives from 13 SEECF member states. These senior level positions are usually filled by senior diplomats from SEECF member states. For the expert positions, candidates must be nationals from SEECF member states, with relevant expertise on RCC policy areas. National governments do not have to lobby for these positions. However, it is crucial that the government disseminates these vacancies nationally to increase the number of nationals employed in these organizations. RCC also manages EU projects. Project positions are contracted for a shorter time frame compared to the RCC core positions (2-3 years) (as long as projects last).

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<sup>18</sup> Prior to this, governments lobbied for their candidate in bilateral fora or using diplomatic channels during SEECF Summits or other regional meetings. Majlinda Bregu, in contrast, represented herself directly, introducing her candidacy while visiting SEECF capitals.

<sup>19</sup> In 2019, there were two (2) Albania nationals employed as core staff in the Secretariat and one (1) as project staff. In 2021, there are eight (8) – five (5) in Secretariat and three (3) in project positions.

<sup>20</sup> The first SG (2008 to 2013), Hidajet Biščević, was a State Secretary from the Croatian MFA and served several mandates as the Ambassador of Croatia, notably in SEE countries. The second SG (2013–2018), Goran Svilanović, was a former Serbian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Chair of Working Table I in the Stability Pact for Southeast Europe. Majlinda Bregu, in position since 2019, is the former Spokesperson of the Prime Minister of Albania, and the former Minister for EU Integration and Chair of the Parliamentary Committee for EU integration.

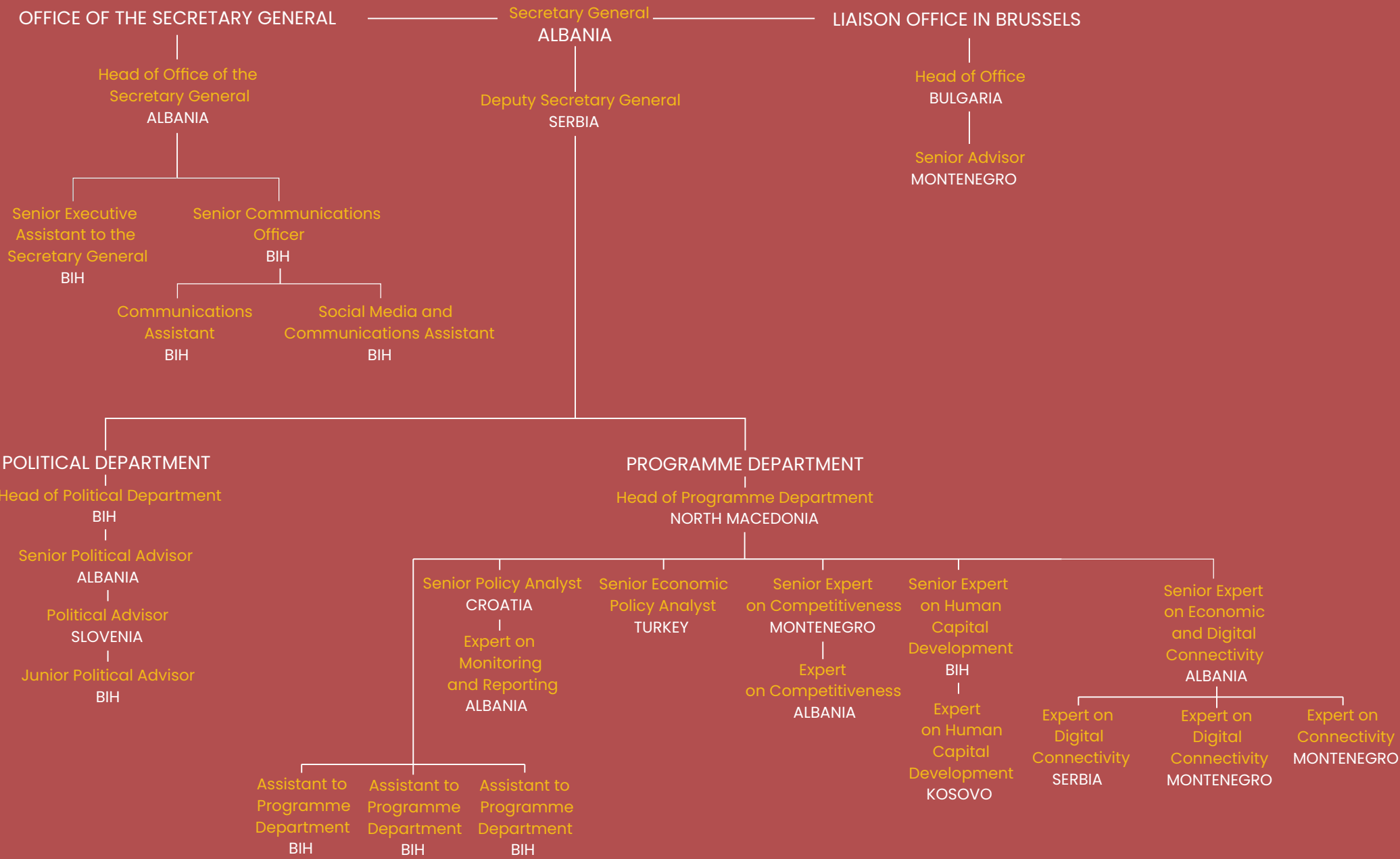
Since the establishment of the RCC, only one Kosovo national has been employed as an expert.

RCC Secretariat and WB6 Nationals among Staff				
	Office of the Secretary General	Program Department	Political Department	Liaison Office in Brussels
Rules for hiring/secondments	Secretary General, and the SG Office Staff, are appointed by consensus among 13 SEECP MFAs	Open competition among 13 SEECP country nationals	Open competition among 13 SEECP country nationals	Open competition among 13 SEECP country nationals and Local Staff
Kosovo	-	1	-	-
Albania	2	3	1	-
Serbia	1	1	-	-
North Macedonia	-	1	-	-
BiH	4	4	2	-
Montenegro	-	3	-	1

RCC is an important and influential organization within the region. An increased presence in RCC, can positively affect Kosovo's participation in other regional organizations with a similar membership but lower budget (i.e. MARRI, RYCO, WBF, CEFTA, TCT). That is why it is critical for the Government to:

1. Develop a strategy and a plan of action, which lays down concrete steps to be undertaken by each institution, but in particular by the MFA. The focus should be on employing more Kosovo nationals among staff in the RCC, both at expert and political positions.
2. Strengthen bilateral relations with SEECP member states and gain their support for an increased number of Kosovo nationals among RCC staff.

RCC SECRETARIAT ORGANOGRAM



## CENTRAL EUROPEAN FREE TRADE AGREEMENT (CEFTA)

CEFTA is a free trade agreement between six countries of the Western Balkans (Kosovo, Albania, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina) plus Moldova. The first CEFTA agreement was signed by Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, in December 1992 and entered into force in July 1994. Slovenia joined CEFTA in 1996, Romania in 1997, Bulgaria in 1999 and Croatia in 2003. Since 2007, the founding countries, along with others which adhered later (Slovenia, Romania, Bulgaria and Croatia) left CEFTA once they became members of the EU.<sup>21</sup>

As such, CEFTA was extended to the rest of the Western Balkan countries which had remained outside of the EU, and had already signed a number of bilateral free trade agreements with each other. These multiple bilateral free trade agreements were replaced by a single multilateral agreement – CEFTA.

CEFTA's mandate comes from the international binding Treaty for all WB countries and Moldova. It aims to foster the economic and trade relations between the participating countries, to remove the trade barriers and consolidate their market economies in order to eventually ease their way towards European Union (EU) integration. CEFTA contributes to regional economic integration along with initiatives in other areas such as the Energy Community, the European Common Aviation Area, the South East Europe Memorandum in the field of Transport, the South East Europe Initiative in the field of Telecommunications and the Internet, etc. All these initiatives aim at creating a common regional market that at a later stage will be integrated into the large European market.<sup>22</sup>

UNMIK signed the CEFTA Treaty on behalf of Kosovo in 2006.<sup>23</sup>

### Funding

CEFTA is funded through CEFTA Parties and donors, including the EU. The annual Budget of the Secretariat amounts to EUR 1,198,000.00. The CEFTA Parties' contribution to this overall budget is up to 55, 55 percent, or around 670, 875 Euros. The remaining, 44, 45 percent is covered by donors. Kosovo covers 8.67 percent of the overall budget, or 58,142 Euros.<sup>24</sup> The level of contributions has been reviewed in 2018.

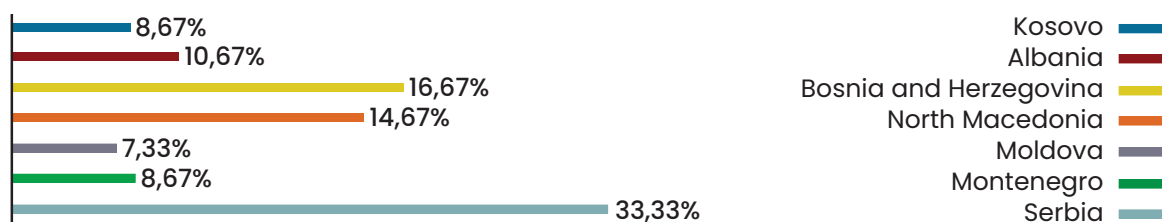
<sup>21</sup> Agreement on Amendment and Accession to the Central European Free Trade Agreement, 19 December 2006, at <https://cefta.int/legal-documents/#1463498231136-8f9d234f-15f9>.

<sup>22</sup> For more details, see the organization's website, at <https://cefta.int/>.

<sup>23</sup> Balkans Group report, *Kosovo's contested representation in CEFTA. A political and legal overview*, October 2021.

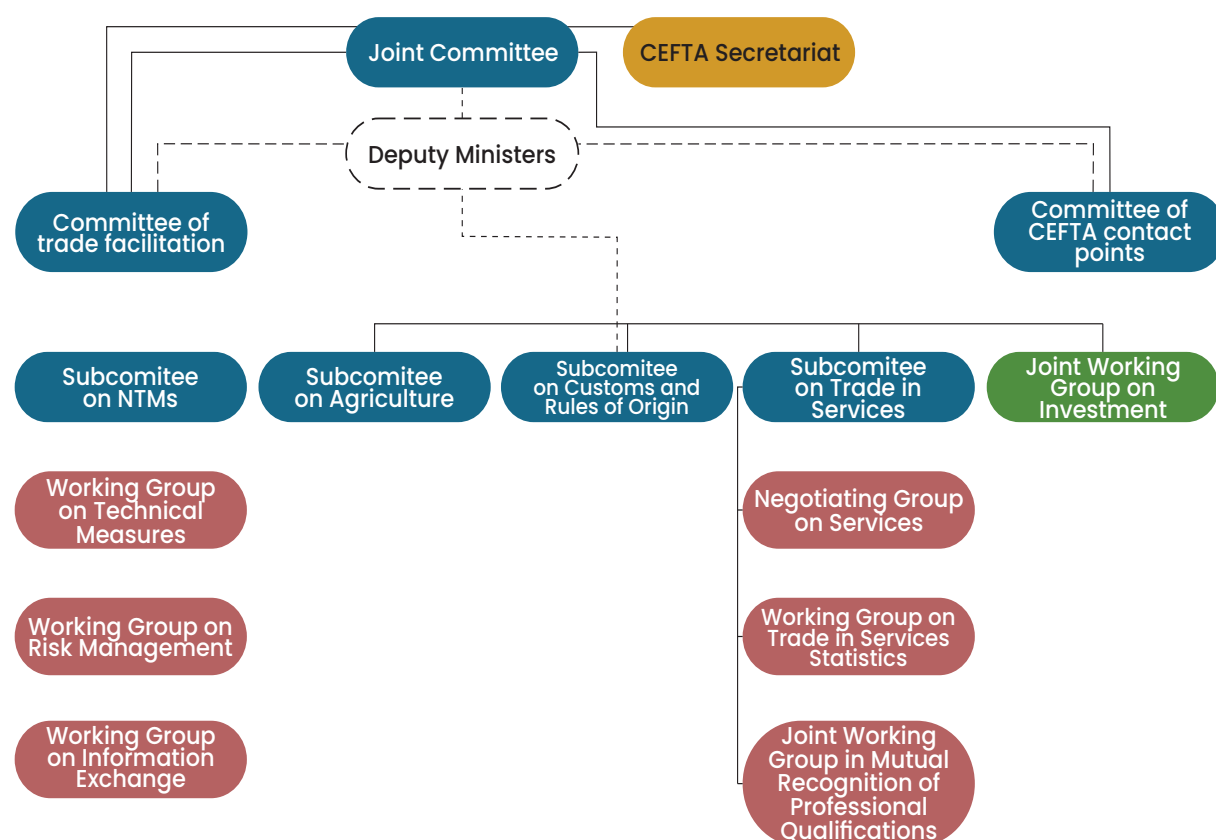
<sup>24</sup> Other Contracting Parties contribute to CEFTA budget as follows: Albania: 71,560 Euros; Bosnia and Herzegovina: 111,813 Euros; North Macedonia: 98,395 Euros; Moldova: 49,197 Euros; Montenegro: 58,142 Euros; Serbia: 223,626 Euros.

### CONTRIBUTIONS OF CONTRACTING PARTIES TO THE CEFTA ANNUAL BUDGET



*\*Note that the contribution from EU, EU Member States and other third countries are not included here*

### The CEFTA Governance Structure:



- A Joint Committee;
- A Secretariat; and
- Committees, Sub-committees and Working Groups as technical bodies.<sup>25</sup>

**The Joint Committee** is composed of the representatives of the Parties and is responsible for supervising and administering the implementation of CEFTA. Meetings are chaired by one of the Parties, on an annual basis in alphabetic order, and attended by Ministers that are responsible for Foreign Economic

<sup>25</sup> Central European Free Trade Agreement Secretariat, 31 May 2021, at <https://cefta.int/structures/>.

Relations. Decisions are taken by consensus.<sup>26</sup>

**The Committee on Trade Facilitation and Committee on CEFTA Contact Points (CP)** are established to assist the Joint Committee in addressing issues of facilitation of regional trade in CEFTA and securing that international and regional supply chains are met. The Committee of CEFTA CPs supports the smooth functioning of the Agreement and fulfillment of the decisions, recommendations and conclusion of the Joint Committee within the contracting Party.<sup>27</sup>

**The Secretariat** provides technical and administrative support to the Joint Committee and to any subcommittee, expert group or other body established by the Joint Committee. The Secretariat submits an Annual Report on its activities to the Joint Committee and to the Secretariat Steering Committee (which includes CEFTA parties and all donors that support activities of the Secretariat).<sup>28</sup>

**The Subcommittees** (Subcommittee on NTMs, Subcommittee on Agriculture, Subcommittee on

Customs and Rules of Origin and Subcommittee on Trade in Services) and **Working Groups** (WG on Technical Measures, WG on Risk Management, WG on Information Exchange, Negotiating Group on Services, WG in Trade in Services Statistics, Joint WG on Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications and Joint WG on Investment) support the functioning and the implementation of the Agreement in different areas.

CEFTA Secretariat and Nationals among Staff			
	Joint Committee	Committee of CEFTA Contact Points	Subcommittees
Kosovo	Ministers in charge for Foreign Economic Relations	CEFTA national Contact Points or Deputy Contact Points. Usually Head of Trade Departments	Senior Civil Servants in charge of a specific sectoral issue
Roles/ Responsibilities	Supervises and administers implementation of the CEFTA agreement	Supports the smooth functioning of the Agreement as well as the fulfillment of decisions, conclusions and recommendations of the Joint Committee	Deal with sectorial issues of Trade and report to the Joint Committee There are four sub-committees:- Subcommittee on Non-Tariff Measures -Subcommittee on Agriculture, Sanitary and Phytosanitary - Subcommittee on Customs and Rules of Origin- Subcommittee on Trade in Services

<sup>26</sup> Rules of Procedure for the Joint Committee, 28 September 2007, at <https://cefta.int/legal-documents/#1463498451954-049a1331-0c1c>.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Decision of the Joint Committee of the Central European Free Trade Agreement, Mandate of the Secretariat, 28 September 2007, at <https://cefta.int/legal-documents/#1463498451954-049a1331-0c1c>.

At the time of signing CEFTA agreement, Kosovo was administered by UNMIK, pursuant to the Resolution 1244. In 2012, Kosovo and Serbia reached the **Regional Representation and Cooperation Agreement, aimed at facilitating** Kosovo's participation in regional fora on an equal footing with other countries.<sup>29</sup> This agreement however, failed to resolve the representation in CEFTA which remains subject to the political dispute with Serbia, to this day.

UNMIK remains the representative of Kosovo, and it continues to consider itself a Party to CEFTA.<sup>30</sup> Consecutive governments did not place this issue high on their policy agenda. However, the current government went a step further. Prime Minister Kurti has insisted on Kosovo's unequal treatment in CEFTA proposing the replacement of CEFTA with the so-called "South Eastern European Free Trade Agreement (SEFTA)", based on the principles of the European Economic Area/ European Free Trade Association (EEA/EFTA) agreement, and offering equality to all members.

It is important to note that CEFTA is an important and durable regional mechanism that should not be neglected. It became a key coordinating organization, alongside RCC, in other regional cooperation agendas, including that of the Berlin Process. Thus, it is crucial for the government to step up its efforts to change its representation and its role in CEFTA.<sup>31</sup>

## Location

**The CEFTA Secretariat is located in Brussels, Belgium.**

## Recruitment

CEFTA hires exclusively nationals from the WB6 countries; Kosovo, Albania, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Moldova, which are its Treaty-based Parties. CEFTA has a rather small Secretariat. The only high-level position is that of the Director. Due to the fact that the WB6 countries, including Croatia and Moldova, had just joined CEFTA in 2006, while other Central and Eastern European Countries (CEEC) had already joined the EU (and left CEFTA), the first CEFTA Director was a national from Slovenia. This choice was made, partly, because he had previous experience and an in-depth understanding of CEFTA as an institution.

<sup>29</sup> Agreed Conclusions, Arrangements Regarding Regional Representation and Cooperation, 24 February 2012.

<sup>30</sup> For more information, see Balkans Group report, *Kosovo's contested representation in CEFTA. A political and legal overview*, October 2021.

<sup>31</sup> Disappointed with the treatment in CEFTA, Kosovo Prime Minister came up with a new proposal, to replace CEFTA with SEFTA (South-Eastern Free Trade Agreement). The Prime Minister Office, Prime Minister Kurti at the Tirana Summit, 10 June 2021, at <https://kryeministri.rks-gov.net/en/speech-of-prime-minister-kurti-in-tirana-at-the-summit-of-the-six-western-balkans-states-2/>. See also, Exit news, Kosovo Proposes Free Trade Agreement for the Western Balkans, 11 June 2021, at <https://exit.al/en/2021/06/11/comment-kosovo-proposes-free-trade-agreement-for-the-western-balkans/>.

The Director of CEFTA is selected among the proposals made by the CEFTA Committee of National Contact Points. The candidate for this position is elected by the Deputy Ministers in charge of Trade from all seven (7) CEFTA Parties during the Joint Committee meeting. Its mandate lasts four years.

As in other regional organizations, countries lobby for their candidates during CEFTA high-level meetings but also through other bilateral and diplomatic channels, mostly by utilizing Embassies. The Director of CEFTA, which is the highest political position of the organization, is expected to have a solid economic expertise and background.

CEFTA Secretariat also opens vacancies for “expert-level” positions. These positions are open for nationals from CEFTA parties. The selection of candidates for these positions is done by a committee composed of the CEFTA Director, a representative of the contracted Human Resources Agency and a representative of the CEFTA Secretariat, as well as a representative of the European Commission.<sup>32</sup> Given that the Secretariat is located in Brussels, some administration support staff are locally hired. Since 2015, a rotating system of secondments to the CEFTA Secretariat from the CEFTA Parties has been in place. Four trade officials from Parties holding the Chair in Office and/or the Chair of CEFTA sub-committees sit in the Secretariat for a minimum of 6 months to support the implementation of the work program of the respective body, in order to ensure the continuation of CEFTA activities between Chairs in office. During Kosovo’s Chairmanship in 2019, the country had two officials (expert positions) from the Ministry of Trade seconded to CEFTA. There are also project staff who are nationals from CEFTA Parties.

Since 2006, CEFTA has had two directors, respectively from Slovenia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and one acting director from Turkey. Each of them previously served in the Ministry of Economy and Trade in their country of origin.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>32</sup> CEFTA Joint committee decisions, at <https://cefta.int/legal-documents/#1463498451954-049a1331-0c1c>.

<sup>33</sup> From 2008 to 2013, Renata Vitez, a former State Secretary in the Ministry of Economy from Slovenia, served as the CEFTA director. From 2015 to 2017, Umut Erkezer, a senior economic analyst from Turkey served as acting director. Since 2018, a Bosnia and Herzegovina national, Emir Djikić, has been leading the CEFTA Secretariat, and his mandate ends in 2022. Prior to his nomination, he was a senior Trade official at the Ministry of Trade and Economic relations of the government of Bosnia and Herzegovina.



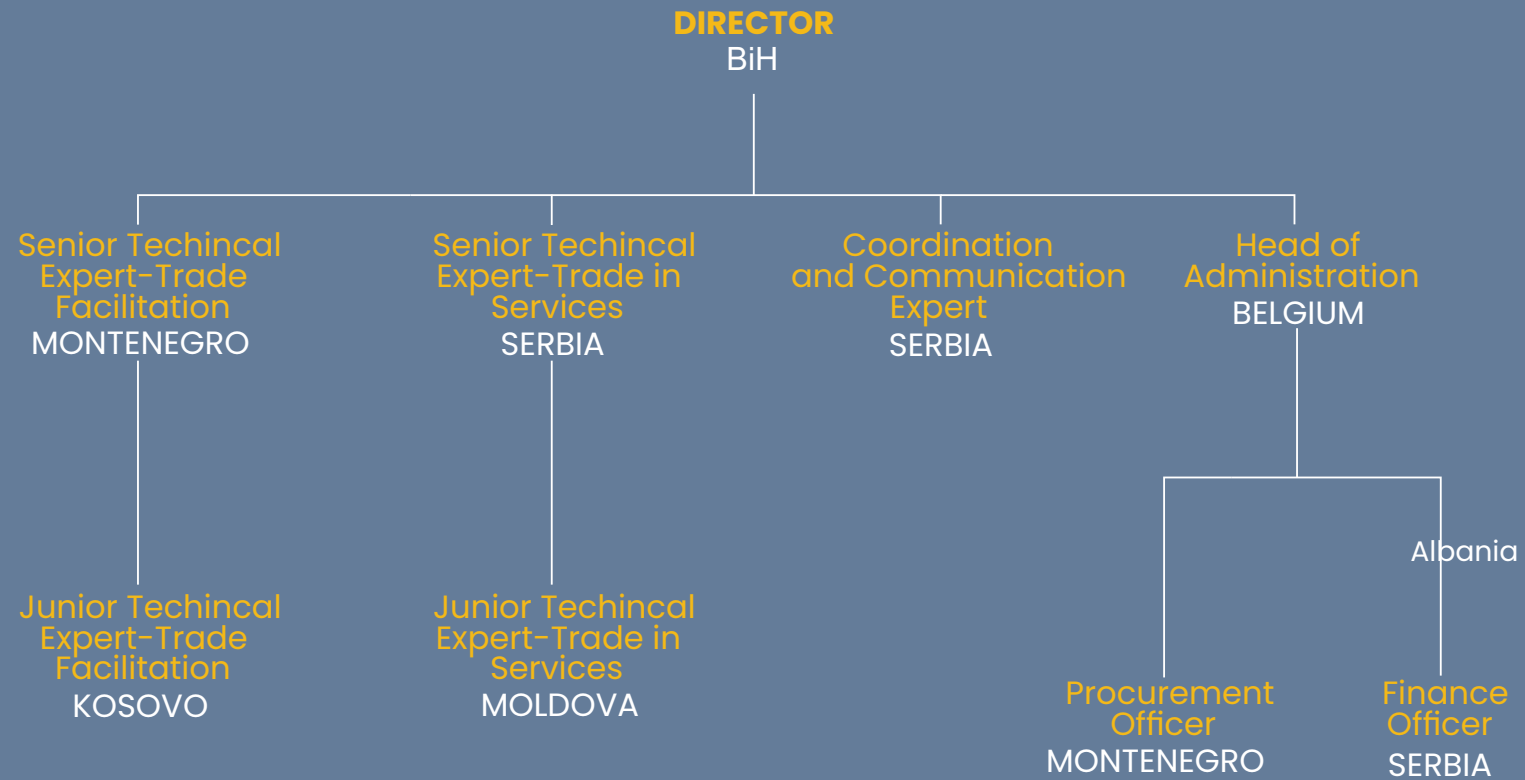
## Kosovo has one representative working as an expert in CEFTA.

CEFTA Secretariat and Nationals among Staff				
	Director	Expert	Project Staff	Seconded Staff
Rules for hiring/secondments	Appointed by a consensus among Ministers of Trade from 7 CEFTA parties	Open competition among nationals of 7 CEFTA parties	Open competition among nationals of 7 CEFTA Parties	Open to 2 civil servants/nationals of the CEFTA party holding the Chair in Office of CEFTA (6-12months)
Kosovo	-	1	1	-
Albania	-	-	1	-
Serbia	-	2	1	-
North Macedonia	-	-	1	2
BiH	1	-	1	-
Montenegro	-	1	-	-
Moldova	-	1	-	-

The Government of Kosovo shall set a concrete plan of actions for initiating the removal of UNMIK from CEFTA. The following actions should be taken:

1. Mobilize the support of allies, recognizers, and partners, within and outside of the EU (U.S., Norway, Switzerland, Germany, Croatia etc.), to demand UNMIK's unilateral withdrawal from CEFTA.
2. Strengthen cooperation with CEFTA members that recognize Kosovo (Albania, North Macedonia and Montenegro) to support Kosovo's request for the amendment of the preamble of CEFTA. In parallel, discuss with non-recognizers (Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Moldova) and seek for the implementation of the 2012 Agreement.
3. Prepare to proceed the request for amending the preamble, Article 1 and Article 4 of CEFTA, for removing UNMIK as the designated representative of Kosovo and replacing it with the denomination Kosovo\* (in accordance with the 2012 Agreement).

## CEFTA SECRETARIAT ORGANOGRAM



## TRANSPORT COMMUNITY TREATY SECRETARIAT (TCT)

The Transport Community is an international organization in the field of mobility and transport. It consists of 33 participants, the EU member states and the Western Balkans countries.<sup>34</sup> The organization's mandate comes from the Treaty establishing the Transport Community signed in October 2017.<sup>35</sup>

The purpose of the Treaty is the establishment of a Transport Community in the field of roads, railways, inland waterways and maritime transport, as well as the development of a transport network between the European Union and the six countries of the Western Balkans. It is based on the progressive integration of the transport markets of the Western Balkan countries into the EU transport market, based on the relevant *acquis*, including in the areas of technical standards, interaction, safety, security, traffic management, social policy, public procurement and the environment.<sup>36</sup>

TcT also has a key role in the Connectivity agenda, put forth within the framework of the Berlin Process.<sup>37</sup> It coordinates the development of "a rolling work plan for the development of the indicative TEN-T extension of the comprehensive and core networks to the Western Balkans, identifying priority projects of regional interest, which contribute to balanced sustainable development in terms of economics, spatial integration, environmental and social impact as well as social cohesion".<sup>38</sup> TCT is also the initiator of Green lanes, which opened up corridors among WB6 countries and between the WB6 and the EU in 2020, allowing the free flow of medical and safety equipment during the Covid-19 crisis.<sup>39</sup>

### Funding

Each Contracting Party contributes to the budget of the Transport Community.

The European Union contributes 80 percent of the budget, and the six Western Balkans countries cover the rest. Each WB6 country contributes equally with 2 percent, while the remaining 8 percent is distributed according to their GDP.

<sup>34</sup> Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Republic of Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden, as well as the WB6 (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia).

<sup>35</sup> The Council of European Union, Council Decision (EU) 2019/ 392 on the conclusion, on behalf of the European Union, of the Treaty establishing the Transport Community, March 2019, at <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32019D0392>.

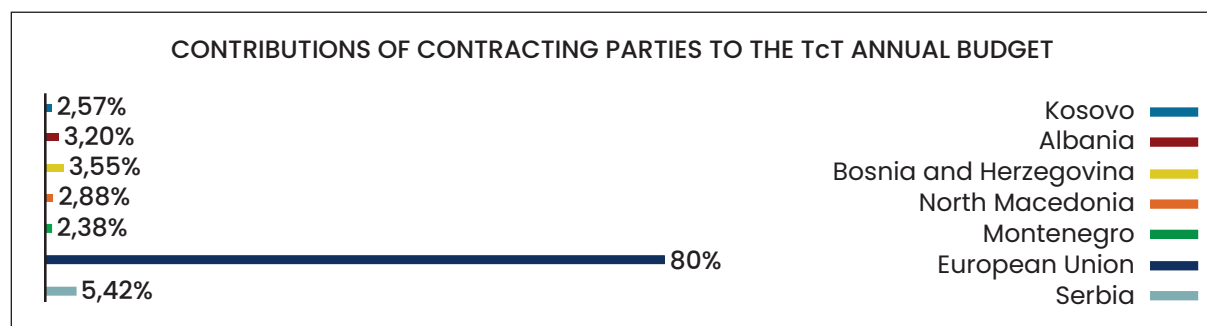
<sup>36</sup> See Balkans Group report, *The Berlin Process for the Western Balkans: Gains and Challenges for Kosovo*, 17 January 2018.

<sup>37</sup> During the Sofia Summit, November 2020, leaders endorsed a new connectivity package composed of six projects related to sustainable transport and clean energy areas (under the Economic and Investment Plan), established the Common Regional Market and launched the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans. For more, see European Commission, Western Balkans Summit in Sofia: Important steps taken to advance regional cooperation to boost socio-economic recovery and convergence with the EU, 10 November, 2020, at: [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP\\_20\\_2051](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_20_2051)

<sup>38</sup> For more, see the organization's website, at <https://www.transport-community.org/about/>.

<sup>39</sup> For more, see the Joint proposal prepared by the Permanent Secretariat of the Transport Community and the CEFTA Secretariat to facilitate the transport and trade of essential goods within the Western Balkans, March 2020, at <https://www.transport-community.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Joint-TCT-CEFTA-proposal-green-corridors.pdf>.

Kosovo is the smallest contributor, with 2.57 percent per year.<sup>40</sup> The level of contributions may be reviewed every three years, upon the request of any Contracting Party, by a decision of the Regional Steering Committee.



**The Transport Community is supported by a Permanent Secretariat. Its responsibilities entail:**

1. Providing administrative support to the Ministerial Council, the Regional Steering Committee, technical committees and the Social Forum;
2. Acting as the Transport Observatory to monitor the performance of the TEN-T indicator expansion of comprehensive and core networks in the Western Balkans;
3. Supporting the implementation of the Western Balkans Six (WB6) Connectivity Agenda, within the framework of the Berlin Process, which aims to improve ties within the Western Balkans as well as between the region and the European Union.<sup>41</sup>

**The TcT Governance Structure:**

**The Ministerial Council**

A Ministerial Council ensures that the objectives set out in the Treaty establishing the Transport Community:

1. Provide general policy guidelines;
2. Review progress on the implementation of this Treaty, including follow-up of the proposals put forward by the Social Forum;
3. Give opinions on the appointment of the Director of the Permanent Secretariat;
4. Decide on the seat of the Permanent Secretariat by consensus.

The Ministerial Council consists of one representative of each Party. Council meets on an annual basis. Participation as an observer is open to all EU Member States (MS).

<sup>40</sup> Conclusion on the Treaty establishing the Transport Community, March 2019, at [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:22017A1027\(01\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:22017A1027(01)&from=EN).

<sup>41</sup> For more details, see the organization's website, at <https://www.transport-community.org/>.

**As of July 2021 Kosovo's Minister of Transport serves as the President of the Ministerial Council. This role rotates annually.**

### Regional Steering Committee

A Regional Steering Committee is composed of WB6 representatives and an alternate representative. It is responsible for the administration of the Transport Community Treaty as well as its proper implementation. The decisions of the Regional Steering Committee are enforced by the Contracting Parties in accordance with their own rules.

Besides representatives from WB6 countries, participation as an observer is open to all EU Member States.

### Technical Committees

The Regional Steering Committee decides to establish technical committees in the form of ad hoc working groups. Each technical committee (Railways, Transport Facilitation, Road Safety, Road and Transport of Dangerous Goods) is composed of representatives of the Contracting Parties and makes proposals within its sphere of responsibility to the Regional Steering Committee. Participation as an observer is open to all EU Member States. On an ad hoc basis, relevant civil society organizations, and in particular those who address environmental issues, are invited as observers. The technical committees adopt their rules of procedure.

Contracting Parties' Representation in TcT Governance Structures			
	Ministerial Council	Regional Steering Committee	Technical Committees on Railways, Transport Facilitation, Road Safety, Road and Transport of Dangerous Goods
Compositions	Ministers in charge of Transport	Representatives from the Ministries in charge of Transport	Technical Committees on Railways, Transport Facilitation, Road Safety,, Road and Transport of Dangerous Goods consists of a representative from the Ministries in charge of Transport; responsible for the given thematic of the technical committee
Roles/ Responsibilities	Provides general policy guidelines and reviews progress on the implementation of the Treaty	Administers and ensures the smooth implementation of the Treaty	Make proposals within its sphere of responsibility to the Regional Steering Committee

## Location

**The Permanent Secretariat of TcT is located in Belgrade, Serbia.**

## Recruitment

The Secretariat hires nationals from WB6 and TcT Contracting Parties, including nationals of EU Member States (EU MS). The eligible candidates must possess expertise in the areas related to Transport Infrastructure and other TcT areas of work. There are no seconded positions thus far, but a balanced representation among WB6 nationals is opted during the recruiting process.

TcT is a new organization based on an EU Treaty. Hence lobbying directly to the EU institutions responsible for TcT is vital. The appointments for high-level positions at the TcT Secretariat are endorsed at the level of the Ministerial Council, which is composed of WB6 Ministers in charge of Transport. These meetings are also open to EU Member States (EU MS), which can attend as observers.

TcT employs a total of 20 staff, of whom 16 are nationals of WB6 countries and 4 from EU MS. Director of the TcT Permanent Secretariat- the highest position- is appointed by the Ministerial Council and has a three-year mandate with a possibility of extension for another three years (3+3).<sup>42</sup> The other political position at TcT Secretariat is the position of Deputy Director.

For other positions, candidates are selected through open vacancies.

**Kosovo has 1 expert position and 1 support staff employed in the TcT secretariat.**

TcT Secretariat and WB6 Nationals among Staff			
	Director	Experts	Administrative Staff
Rules for hiring	Appointment by consensus among the Ministerial Council	Open competition among TcT Parties	Open competition among nationals TcT Parties
Kosovo	-	1	1
Albania	-	2	-
Serbia	-	2	5
North Macedonia	Deputy Director	2	-
BiH	-	1	-
Montenegro	-	-	-

<sup>42</sup> The director, Matej Zakonjsek is a Slovenian official with a long-standing career in the European Commission's Directorate for Mobility and Transport. There, he focused on the EU's relations with countries of the Western Balkans.

Kosovo should opt to secure the Deputy Director's position in this organization.

*\*Note that this position is foreseen by the Treaty but is not functional yet.*

The EU, in particular the European Commission and the Directorate-General for Mobility and Transport (DG Move), has a key role in the TcT.<sup>43</sup> Hence, it is critical for Kosovo's Minister for Transport to build and consistently strengthen relations with the DG Mo

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<sup>43</sup> The Directorate-General for Mobility and Transport (DG MOVE) is a Directorate-General of the European Commission responsible for transport within the European Union. For more details, see the department's website, at <https://ec.europa.eu/info/departments/mobility-and-transport>





## REGIONAL YOUTH COOPERATION OFFICE (RYCO)

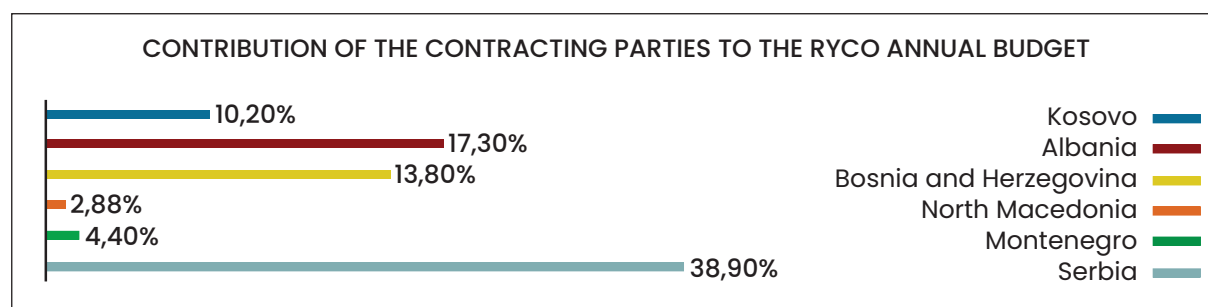
RYCO is a functional institutional mechanism, which aims to promote the spirit of reconciliation and cooperation among young people in the region through exchange programs. Kosovo is a founding member of RYCO, along with other Western Balkan Six participants: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia.

The mandate of RYCO was endorsed from the agreement for the establishment of RYCO, signed by the six prime ministers of the WB6 countries, at the Western Balkans Summit in the framework of the Berlin Process, in July 2016.<sup>44</sup> RYCO is built upon the example of the French-German Youth Cooperation Office (FGYO/OFAJ), established through the Franco-German friendship agreement, the “Elysée Treaty” in 1963.<sup>45</sup>

Its purpose is to support youth projects that contribute to the promotion of diversity and democratic values for advancing sustainable regional cooperation and mobility among youth. The organization finances projects implemented by schools and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). Projects include thematics such as intercultural learning, active citizenship and participation in decision-making processes by young people, as well as social inclusion and promotion of employability of young people.<sup>46</sup>

### Funding

All WB6 members contribute financially to the budget of the Secretariat, in accordance with their economy and demography.<sup>47</sup> Other donors contribute to the RYCO budget as well. Budget is planned on a three-year basis and is approved annually.



<sup>44</sup> Balkans Group report, *The Berlin Process for the Western Balkans: Gains and Challenges for Kosovo*, 17 January 2018.

<sup>45</sup> On a similar footing, the mission of the “Elysée Treaty” was to strengthen ties between German and French youth and to deepen their understanding about one another.

<sup>46</sup> For more details, see the organization’s website, at <https://www.rycowb.org/>.

<sup>47</sup> For more details, see RYCO’s Statute, at [https://www.rycowb.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/ryco-statute\\_final.pdf](https://www.rycowb.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/ryco-statute_final.pdf).

## The RYCO Governance Structure:

### The Governing Board

The Governing Board is composed of Ministers of Youth and youth representatives from WB6 countries. Each Contracting Party is represented by one (1) Minister and one (1) youth representative. The Government representative serves a term in line with his or her mandate in the government of the country they represent. The youth representative, between 18 and 30 years old at the start of her/his mandate, serves a mandate of three (3) years, with no possibility of extension. It is up to the government to select a youth representative using its own mechanisms in a transparent, inclusive and democratic manner and in close cooperation with civil society dealing with youth.

### The Advisory Board

The Advisory Board is composed of youth NGOs from the region and beyond.<sup>48</sup> Board Meetings are held once a year and are chaired by one of the Contracting Parties, on an annual/rotational basis, in alphabetic order.<sup>49</sup>

Kosovo chaired the Governing Board of the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO) in 2019, after it was previously chaired by Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2018 and Albania in 2017.

Contracting Parties' Representation in RYCO Governance Structures		
	Governing Board	Advisory Board
Compositions	Ministres responsible for Youth and Youth representatives	Youth NGOs from WB region and beyond
Roles / Responsibilites	Adopts the budgets, strategy and work plan of RYCO	Advises and evaluates RYCO's strategy

### Location

**The Secretariat of RYCO is located in Tirana, Albania.** It also includes Local Branch Offices (LBOs), located in all capitals of the WB6.

### Recruitment

The Secretary General (SG) and the Deputy Secretary General (DSG) are the highest political positions in RYCO. The SG and DSG have to be nationals from two different Contracting Parties. Both positions have a four-year mandate with no possibility of extention. Although these are advertised vacancies, their appointment is also based on political deliberations among WB6 Ministries of Youth (with a distinct support from WB6 Ministries of Foreign Affairs).

The first RYCO SG and DSG were from Serbia and Kosovo, respectively. Both

<sup>48</sup> For example, the Advisory Board is composed of members working in the Youth Initiative for Human Rights, Youth Alliance Krushevo, National Association of Youth Workers Serbia (NAPOR), CiviKos or the European Youth Forum. See more at [https://www.rycowb.org/?page\\_id=5674](https://www.rycowb.org/?page_id=5674).

<sup>49</sup> See RYCO's statute at [https://www.rycowb.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/ryco-statute\\_\\_final.pdf](https://www.rycowb.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/ryco-statute__final.pdf).

were senior officials in their national administrations. The former SG, Djuro Blanuša, served as a Senior Advisor for International Cooperation and European Integration at the Ministry of Youth and Sports of Serbia and had extensive experience with youth organizations. Whereas the former DSG, Fatos Mustafa, was overseeing European Integration at the Ministry of Public Administration of Kosovo. The first RYCO SG led the RYCO Secretariat from 2017 until April 2021, and was replaced by Albert Hani from North Macedonia in May. A new Deputy SG, Denis Piplaš from Bosnia and Herzegovina was appointed in August 2021. Both had previously worked in RYCO.

Other positions are open for project staff, and the candidates are recruited based on merit. The aim to reflect the diversity of the RYCO Contracting Parties is taken into consideration while selecting the candidates for these positions. The Selection Committee is composed of the Secretariat and the RYCO SG, in compliance with the Board.

Since its establishment, RYCO has considerably grown and now employs up to 50 staff.

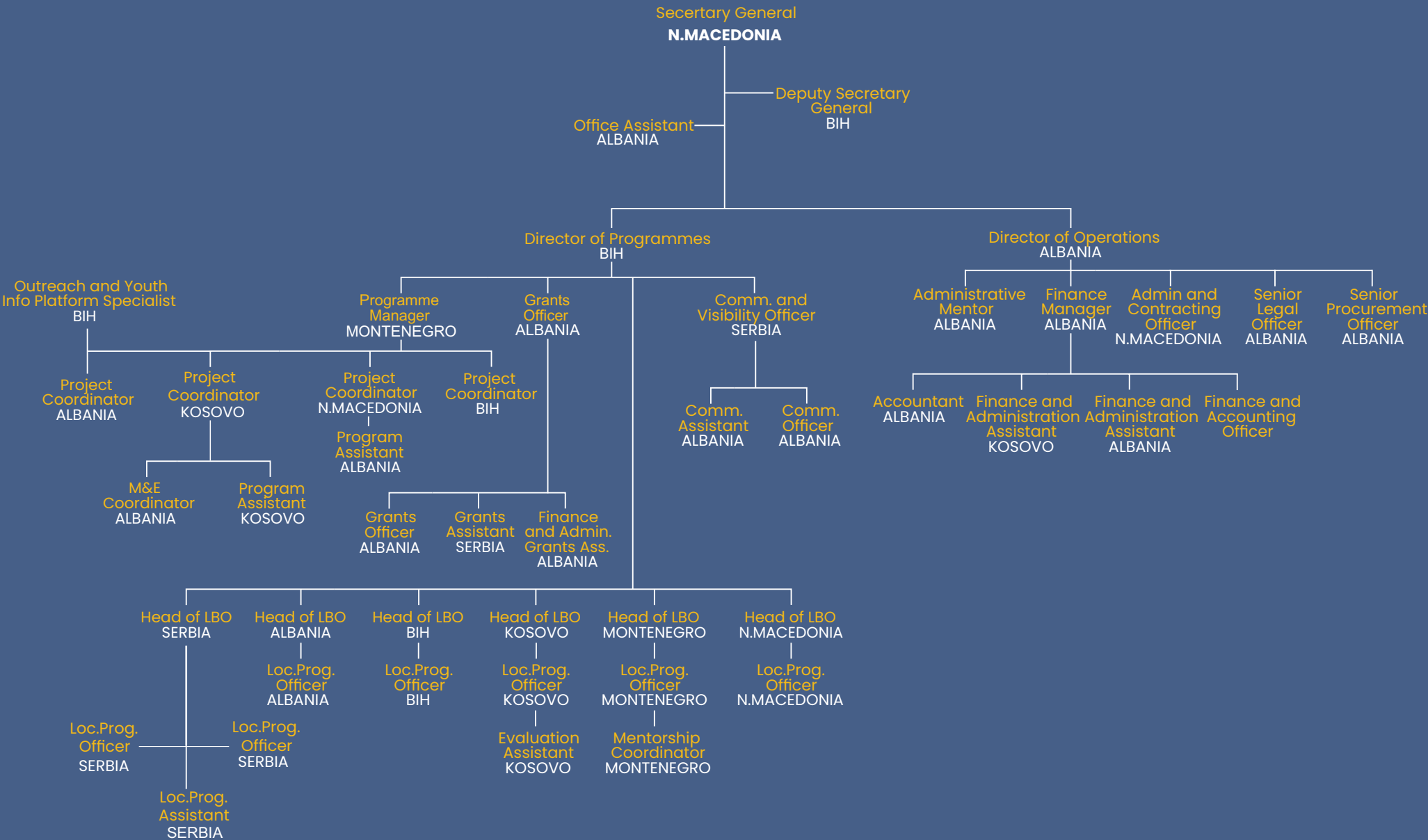
**Currently, two Kosovo nationals are employed in project staff positions in RYCO.**

RYCO Secretariat and WB6 Nationals among Staff				
	Office of the Secretary General	Director of Programs and Director of Operations	Project Staff	Local Branch Offices
Rules for hiring/secondments	Deputy of Secretary General and the SG office Staff, are appointed by consensus among WB6 MFAs	Open competition among WB6 nationals	Open competition among WB6 nationals	Open competition in each WB6 country
Kosovo	-	-	2	3
Albania	1	1	19 Project and Admin Staff	2
Serbia	-	-	2	4
North Macedonia	1	-	2	2
BiH	1	1	2	2
Montenegro	-	-	1	3

The government of Kosovo should intensify its efforts to employ more Kosovo nationals among staff in the RYCO Secretariat. That could be done by undertaking the following steps:

1. The Ministry of Youth, Culture and Sports (MCYS) should actively participate in RYCO's programs and opt to advance Kosovo's Youth agenda through RYCO projects.
2. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs should proactively provide diplomatic and political guidance to the RYCO's national Contact Point. It should closely coordinate with the Department for Youth within the MCYS, and regularly consult with RYCO's head of Local Branch Office in Pristina. Internal coherence among key actors in charge of RYCO is vital for increasing Kosovo's role and representation, as well as for leveraging the benefits from this organization.
3. The Department for Youth within the MCYS should maintain a close communication with RYCO's Secretariat in Tirana to ensure continuation, consistency and easy flow of information for the upcoming opportunities there

RYCO SECRETARIAT ORGANOGRAM



## WESTERN BALKANS FUND (WBF)

WBF was established in November 2015, within the framework of the Berlin Process. The establishing agreement was signed by the governments of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia. It aims to pursue the goals of regional cooperation by supporting projects that foster good neighborly relations in the region.<sup>50</sup>

The objectives of the Fund are pursued by financially supporting the activities in all fields, contributing to cross border and inter-regional cooperation. WBF aims at strengthening regional cohesion, particularly in the areas of development of cultural cooperation, development of scientific exchanges, research and cooperation in the field of education, promotion of sustainable development and development of youth, cross-border cooperation, media, European integration and gender as cross-cutting issues.<sup>51</sup>

As a grant-making organization, it provides direct support to joint regional projects aiming to further strengthen civil society skills in the Western Balkans and to pursue regional cooperation and reconciliation via people-to-people approach.<sup>52</sup>

In 2019, Kosovo held the chairmanship-in-office of the organization.

### Funding

Each Contracting Party contributes equally to the WBF budget.

***Their contribution to the WBF annual budget is 30,000 Euros (16,66 percent each).<sup>53</sup>***

### The WBF Governance Structure:

#### The Conference of Ministers of Foreign Affairs

The Conference of Ministers of Foreign Affairs is the primary body of the Fund. It is composed of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Contracting Parties or their duly authorized representatives, who meet once a year. The Conference of Ministers of Foreign Affairs approves the annual and long-term activity plans and the budget presented by the Council of Senior Officials.

#### The Council of Senior Officials

The Council of Senior Officials consists of Senior Officials from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the Contracting Parties or other duly appointed representatives and meets at least once every six months.

<sup>50</sup> Agreement concerning the establishment of the Western Balkans Fund, November 2015, at <http://westernbalkansfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Agreement.pdf>.

<sup>51</sup> For more details, see the organization's website, at <http://westernbalkansfund.org/>.

<sup>52</sup> Western Balkans Fund Strategic Development Plan 2020-2024, at <http://westernbalkansfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/WBF-Strategic-Development-Plan-2020-2024.pdf>.

<sup>53</sup> Agreement concerning the establishment of the Western Balkans Fund, November 2015

The Council of Senior Officials prepares the Fund's draft budgets, reports on their utilization in the preceding year and submits them for approval to the Conference of Ministers of Foreign Affairs. The Council of Senior Officials also lays down guidelines for the activities of the Executive Director and rules governing the preparation, acceptance and implementation of projects submitted to the Fund.

### The Executive Director

The WBF Executive Director is mandated by the Conference of Ministers of Foreign Affairs to represent the Fund and its interests, and to sign relevant agreements for the functioning of the Fund. He/She serves as the chief executive officer and is responsible for the implementation of the objectives of the Fund and its effective performance.

Contracting Parties' Representation in WBF Governance Structure		
	Conference of Ministers of Foreign Affairs	Council of Senior Officials of MFAs
Compositions	Ministers in charge for Foreign Affairs	Directors of Department for Regional Affairs from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs
Roles / Responsibilities	Approves the annual and long-term plans and the budget	Prepares budgets, reports and submits them for approval to the Conference of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, and supervises the Executive Director's work and WBF projects

### Location

**The Secretariat is located in Tirana, Albania.**

### Recruitment

The **Executive Director** is the highest position, chosen among nominees from MFAs of the WB6. The decision is taken by consensus. The Director's mandate is three years, with a possibility of extension for another two years (3+2). The first Executive Director, from 2016 to 2021, was an Albanian diplomat.<sup>54</sup> The position of the Executive Director of WBF is currently vacant as the Secretariat is in the recruitment process. Recently, Kosovo nominated a candidate for this position, however, the process encountered a stalemate as Serbia objected to the application procedure. Discussions are underway to move past this deadlock and agree on new methods of selection for this position.

**Other positions** within the WBF Secretariat are selected through open vacancies, among WB6 nationals. Priority is given to applicants with relevant backgrounds, such as in project management and the civil society sector in the region. Balance of WB6 nationals among staff is carefully sought, with positions being advertised targeting and prioritizing professionals from underrepresented

<sup>54</sup> Gjergj Murra (2016–2021) was an Albanian senior diplomat. He had previously served as the Head of the Regional Initiatives Department in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Albania, and as the Director of the Stability Pact Secretariat for Albania.

countries. The Secretariat employs 15 to 20 individuals.

According to the WBF's 2020–2024 Strategy and Work Plan, a revised management structure is reconsidered, aimed at reflecting the growing portfolio and complexity of the program.<sup>55</sup> Job descriptions and responsibilities of the Secretariat staff are currently being redesigned to enable the introduction of an effective human resource management performance measurement system. A Deputy Executive Director will be recruited in order to share the burden of representation, leadership and overall program management. The role of the Executive Director will be adapted to emphasize the diplomatic, promotional, representational and advocacy roles, while shifting operational responsibility to the Deputy and senior Secretariat staff.

**There is currently one senior program manager from Kosovo working at WBF.**

WBF Secretariat and WB6 Nationals among Staff			
	Executive Director	Project Staff	Administrative Staff
Rules for hiring/secondments	Appointment by consensus among WB6 MFAs	Open competition among WB6 nationals	Open competition among WB6 nationals
Kosovo	-	1	-
Albania	1	5	2
Serbia	-	1	-
North Macedonia	-	1	-
BiH	-	2	-
Montenegro	-	2	-

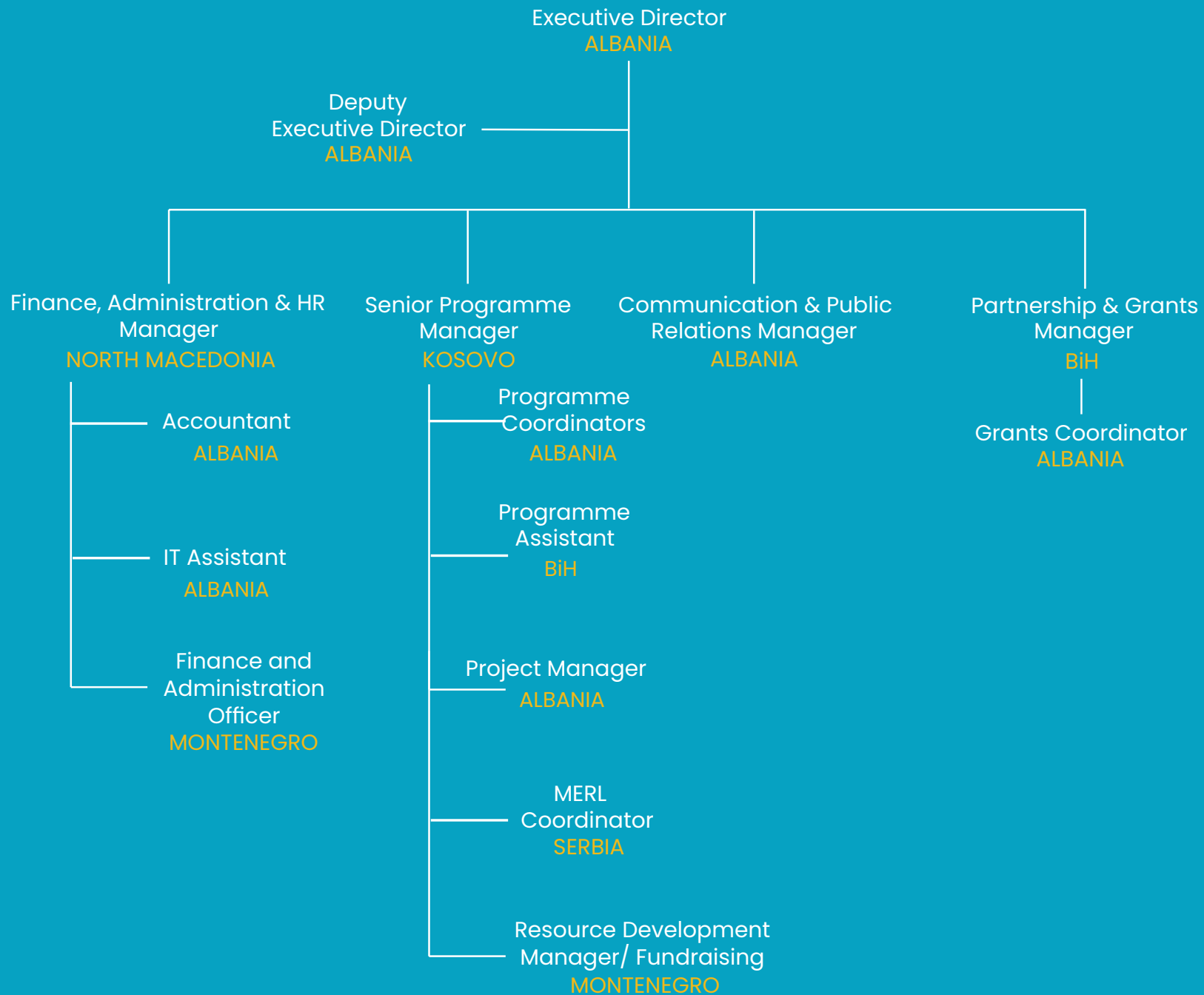
The government of Kosovo should intensify its efforts to increase representation in the WBF. That could be done by undertaking the following steps:

1. Advance the diplomatic efforts when negotiating the appointment of Kosovo national staff within WBF. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is the lead institution for the WBF, hence multilateral diplomacy plays a great role here.
2. Push forward the candidacy of a Kosovo national for the positions of Executive Director or Deputy Executive Director.

<sup>55</sup> For more, see the Western Balkans Fund Strategic Development Plan 2020–2024, at <http://westernbalkansfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/WBF-Strategic-Development-Plan-2020-2024.pdf>.



## WBF SECRETARIAT ORGANOGRAM



## REGIONAL INITIATIVE FOR MIGRATION, ASYLUM AND REFUGEES (MARRI)

MARRI is a regional initiative, established by a Joint declaration/Statement of SEECP Ministers in Herceg Novi in April 2004.<sup>56</sup> Its participating countries are the Western Balkans Six, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia. This initiative aims to promote closer regional cooperation and a common, comprehensive and harmonized approach among WB6 countries in the fields of migration, asylum, and border control, trafficking in human beings, visa regime, integration and return of refugees in order to achieve international and European standards in these areas. MARRI's goal is to provide free and well-managed movement of people in the Western Balkans, thus contributing to the development and stability of the Western Balkans.<sup>57</sup>

Kosovo joined MARRI through the Cavtat Declaration at the Regional Forum, held in June 2014, during Croatia's presidency of MARRI.

Kosovo held MARRI's chairmanship between 2019 and 2020.

### Funding

Each MARRI participating country covers the compensations for seconded staff to this initiative.<sup>58</sup> MARRI Center receives funding and contributions from members and donors.<sup>59</sup>

### The MARRI Governance Structure:

#### Regional Forum or Forum of Ministers

The Forum is composed of Ministers of Internal Affairs. It is MARRI's highest body, supporting and overseeing the activities taken in the area of migration, asylum and refugees. It provides the main guidelines and sets the principles and objectives of the initiative. It also adopts the programmes, approves participation, appoints the Director and decides upon the next Presidency. The Forum convenes at least once a year in the country hosting the MARRI Presidency.

### Presidency

The Presidency is responsible for guiding the initiative. The Presidency rotates annually in the English alphabetical order, starting from the month of May.

<sup>56</sup> Agreement on the establishment of MARRI, 4 April 2004, at <https://marri-rc.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/MoU-on-establishing-MARRI-Regional-Forum-2004.pdf>.

<sup>57</sup> For more see the organization's website, at <https://marri-rc.org.mk/about-us/>.

<sup>58</sup> Balkans Group could not find any official information about MARRI funding. Whereby, the contributions from MARRI members to the MARRI annual budget are not specified.

<sup>59</sup> For more, see MARRI's statute, at <http://marri-rc.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/MARRI-RC-Statute.pdf>.

## Regional Committee

The Regional Committee is composed of senior officials/ representatives from Ministries of Foreign Affairs from each member state. It provides guidelines on the implementation of ideas in cooperation with MARRI member countries. It also prepares the documents to be approved by the Regional forum and reviews the activities of the Initiative. The Committee meets twice a year, when the Presidency starts and once mid-term of the Presidency.

## MARRI Regional Center

The Regional Center is the MARRI's Secretariat. It employs up to 20 staff members. It is a permanent body which provides continuous conceptual and administrative support to both the decision-making and operational structures of the Initiative.

MARRI is composed of Four Sector Networks:

- Border management police network;
- Cooperation on the readmission network;
- Coordinators for prevention of trafficking in human beings' network;
- Heads of Asylum Departments network.

Contracting Parties' Representation in MARRI Governance Structures		
	Forum of Ministers	Regional Committee
Composition	Ministers in charge of Internal Affairs	Representatives from Ministries of Foreign Affairs
Roles / Responsibilities	Sets the objectives of the organization, approves the actions plans and supports and oversees MARRI's activities	Prepares documents to be approved by the Forum of Ministers, provides guidance and reviews MARRI's activities

## Location

**The Secretariat is located in Skopje, North Macedonia.**

## Recruitment

MARRI's highest position is the Executive Director of MARRI Regional Centre. The Director is elected at the Regional Forum of Ministers of Internal Affairs, appointed by a simple majority vote. He/she serves a three year mandate with a possibility of extension for another two years (3+2). In each WB6 country, the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) and Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) are the key leading institutions for MARRI. Hence, these two institutions jointly propose and nominate the candidates for the position of the Director.

At its establishment in 2004, MARRI was led by internationals. From 2005 to 2015, a North Macedonia national was selected to serve the MARRI's Director Position. From 2015 to 2017, the position was headed by a Montenegro national and as of 2017, the position is held by a North Macedonia national. *A new Director was*

*supposed to be appointed in 2021.* The eligible candidate for this position must be a senior official, having worked in the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and should have previous expertise in Justice and Home Affairs (JHA). The Director must be a national from one of the MARRI member countries.

MARRI also hires staff for project based/expert positions. The eligible candidates these positions should be civil servants of the relevant national public administrations (from the MIA or MFA). Civil servants are seconded – one per WB6 country – and serve a term of four years. MARRI's administration is composed entirely of nationals from North Macedonia, where the Secretariat is located.

MARRI Secretariat and WB6 Nationals among Staff				
	Executive Director	Seconded Staff	Expert staff	Administrative Staff
Rules for hiring/secondments	Appointed by consensus among WB6 MFAs	Representatives from MFA's or MIA's	Open Competition among WB6 nationals	Open competition among WB6 nationals
Kosovo	-	1	-	-
Albania	-	1	-	-
Serbia	-	1	-	-
North Macedonia	1	1	3	5
BiH	-	1	-	-
Montenegro	-	1	-	-

The government of Kosovo should intensify its efforts to increase representation in the MARRI. This organization should be of a priority because it is the only regional organization for migration, asylum and issues close to rule of law and security that Kosovo is an official member of.

In 2021, Kosovo nominated for the first time a candidate for the position of the Executive Director. Although the nomination did not successfully pass, Kosovo institutions, especially the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), should mark this experience as a lesson-learned. For future nominations, the following steps should be taken:

1. The MFA should increase its diplomatic efforts to secure high-level positions in these organizations. The MIA needs to prepare well in advance the potential candidate to be nominated for MARRI. Close coordination MIA and the MFA is vital during the pre-selection period. The MFA should continually advocate for its candidates to other regional MFAs and their respective Embassies.
2. The MFA should also solicit Kosovo's Embassy in Berlin, as Germany is one of the key donors for MARRI's projects.

## ENERGY COMMUNITY SECRETARIAT (ENC)

The Energy Community is an international organization established by the European Union (EU) and third countries in 2005, for extending the EU internal energy market to Southeast Europe and beyond. By signing the EnC, Contracting Parties have committed to implement the relevant EU energy *acquis communautaire*, to develop an adequate regulatory framework and to liberalize their energy markets in line with the *acquis* under the Treaty.

The Energy Community aims at establishing a Pan-European energy market by extending the energy *acquis* of the European Union to the territories of third countries. The Energy Community legal framework covers legislation in the fields of energy, environment, and competition of the EU legislation.<sup>60</sup>

### The mission of the Energy Community Treaty is to:

1. Establish a stable regulatory and market framework capable of attracting investment in power generation and networks;
2. Create an integrated energy market allowing for cross-border energy trade and integration with the EU market;
3. Enhance the security of supply to ensure stable and continuous energy supply that is essential for economic development and social stability;
4. Improve the environmental situation in relation with energy supply in the region and foster the use of renewable energy and energy efficiency;
5. Develop competition at regional level and exploit economies of scale.<sup>61</sup>

Members of the Energy Community Treaty are the European Union and nine Contracting Parties, of which the WB6 countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia), as well as Moldova, Georgia, and Ukraine. Bulgaria and Romania joined the European Union in 2007, and Croatia joined in July 2013. Armenia, Norway and Turkey take part as Observers. Ukraine and Moldova first had an Observer status and are now full-fledged members of EnC. Belarus applied for an "Observer status" in October 2016. Observers may attend the institutional meetings of the Energy Community. Any European Union Member State may obtain the status "Participant" status. Participants have the right to take part in all institutional meetings of the Energy Community. Currently, as many as 19 European Union Member States have the Participant status.<sup>62</sup>

During the Western Balkans Summit held in Vienna, in 2015, the WB6 reasserted their commitment towards establishing a regional electricity market. They agreed to implement the so-called "energy soft measures" that will remove existing legislative and regulatory barriers and enhance the institutional structures necessary for the functioning of this market, in line with the Energy

<sup>60</sup> Treaty establishing the Energy Community, 25 October 2005, at <https://www.energy-community.org/legal/treaty.html>.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> For more details, see organizations website, at <https://www.energy-community.org/aboutus/whoweare.html>.

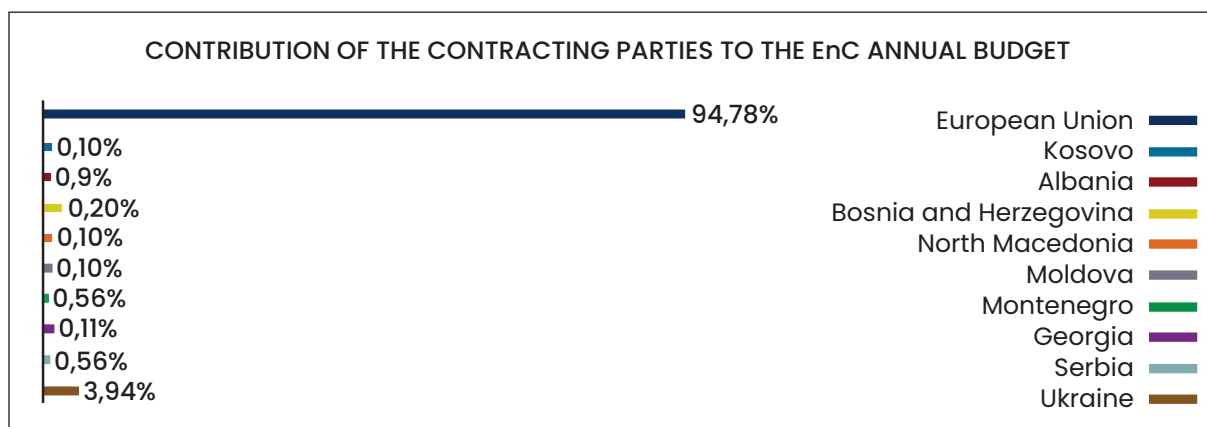
Community Treaty and relevant EU *acquis*. The 2016 Western Balkans Summit in Paris re-emphasized the need for closer cooperation on a regional level and integration of the markets of the WB6 into the pan-European one.<sup>63</sup>

In April 2016, this commitment was given an operating framework, upon the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) by the representatives of the WB6 countries. The MoU sets out the general principles of cooperation as well as concrete actions to develop the regional electricity market. Stakeholders from all EU Member States that are in close geographical proximity with the WB6 countries, joined the initiative by signing this MoU. Under the Secretariat's coordination function, stakeholders from all six neighboring EU countries – Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Hungary, Italy and Romania – have now joined the initiative.

During the Sofia Summit, held in November 2020, WB6 leaders endorsed and launched the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans. In line with the EU, WB6 leaders reiterated their commitment towards the 2050 target of a carbon-neutral continent, through mainstreaming a strict climate policy and reforming energy and transport sectors.<sup>64</sup> The EnC is also a supporting partner of the Green Agenda through the aforementioned MoU, but also in supporting WB6 countries in aligning with the EU *acquis* on energy.

## Funding

The European Union is the largest contributor to the Energy Community budget (nearly 95 percent).<sup>65</sup> All Contracting Parties contribute to the EnC annual budget. In 2020, the EU contributed to 94,78 percent of the Energy Community budget. Kosovo contributes to the EnC budget with 3368 Euros per year (0, 10 percent of the total EnC overall budget).<sup>66</sup>



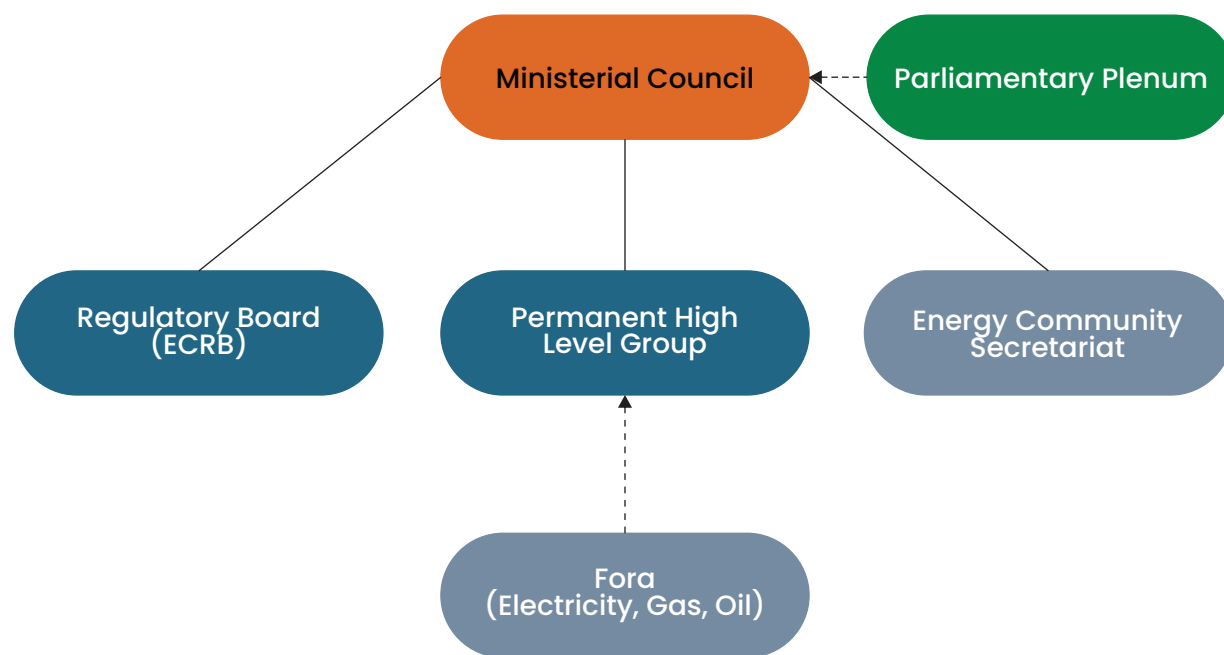
<sup>63</sup> Final Declaration by the Chair of the Paris Western Balkans Summit, July 2016, at <https://berlinprocess.info/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Final-Declaration-by-the-Chair-of-the-Paris-Western-Balkans-Summit.pdf>.

<sup>64</sup> Sofia Declaration on the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans, November 2020, at <https://berlinprocess.info/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Leaders-Declaration-on-the-Green-Agenda-for-the-WB.pdf>.

<sup>65</sup> For more details, see the organization's website, at <https://www.energy-community.org/>.

<sup>66</sup> See more, at <https://www.energy-community.org/aboutus/budget.html>.

## The EnC Governance Structure:



### Ministerial Council

The **Ministerial Council** is the highest decision-making body of the Energy Community. The council meets once a year to establish priorities and steer the implementation of the Treaty. It takes the key policy decisions and adopts the Energy Community's rules and procedures. The Treaty envisages different decision-making procedures depending on whether the adopted measure applies to the Contracting Parties alone, the Contracting Parties and several neighboring EU Member States or the Contracting Parties and the European Union as a whole. The Ministerial Council is composed of one representative from each Contracting Party, usually the Minister responsible for Energy, and two representatives from the European Union, the European Commissioner for Energy and a high-level representative of the Presidency of the European Union. The Ministerial Council meets once a year. Moreover, the Presidency of the Council is held in turn by each contracting party for a year. This year, Serbia is holding the presidency in office and chairs the key institutional meetings.

### Permanent High-Level Group

The **Permanent High Level Group** prepares the work of the Ministerial Council. The Permanent High-Level Group (PHLG) brings together senior officials from each Contracting Party and two representatives of the European Commission. It ensures the continuity of and follow-up to the political meetings by the ministers and decides, in certain cases, on implementing measures. The PHLG meets every three months.



## Energy Community Regulatory Board

**The Energy Community Regulatory Board** serves as the coordination body of the national energy regulators. Conceived as discussion platforms, four advisory Fora in the areas of electricity, gas, sustainability and oil complement the process. The Regulatory Board is composed of high-level representatives from the national energy regulatory agencies of the Energy Community Contracting Parties, Observers and Participants. It advises the Energy Community Ministerial Council and Permanent High-Level Group (PHLG) on details of statutory, technical and regulatory rules and makes recommendations in the case of cross-border disputes between regulators. The Board can take regulatory measures when empowered by the Energy Community Ministerial Council. The Board is currently chaired by the Energy and Water Services Regulatory Commission of North Macedonia. The European Union, represented by the European Commission, acts as Vice-President and is assisted by the Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators (ACER). The Regulatory Board meets in Athens. Its work is supported by the Energy Community Secretariat. In addition, the Energy Community regularly engages with its stakeholders, including civil society, investors and donors. A dispute settlement procedure contributes to the enforcement of the Energy Community legal framework.

## Energy Community Fora

**The fora** advise the Energy Community. Chaired by the European Commission, the fora bring together all interested stakeholders from the industry, regulators, industry associations and consumers. Their conclusions, agreed by consensus, are addressed to the Permanent High Level Group. The establishment of the fora reflects the process leading to the creation of the Energy Community. The Athens Electricity Forum, previously known as South East Europe Energy Regulation Forum, met for the first time in 2002. The Gas Forum was established in 2006 and it meets in Slovenia. The first Social Forum took place in November 2008. In December 2008, Ministerial Council adopted oil stock legislation and decided to establish the Oil Forum. The first Oil Forum met in 2009, in Belgrade.<sup>67</sup>

The European Commission assists the Presidency in chairing the Permanent High Level Group and the Ministerial Council and in the preparation of agendas of all institutional meetings. At the annual Ministerial Council meeting, the European Commission is represented by the Commissioner for Energy.

<sup>67</sup> For more details, see the Belgrade Oil Forum conclusions, at <https://www.energy-community.org/events/2019/10/OE.html>.



Contracting Parties' Representation in EnC Governance Structures				
	Ministerial Council	Permanent High Level Group	Energy Community Regulatory Board	Energy Community Fora
Compositions	Ministers responsible for Energy	Senior Officials from the Ministries responsible for Energy and two EU Commission Representatives	High-level representatives from the national energy regulatory agencies and Observers and Participants.	Interested stakeholders from the industry, regulators, industry associations and consumers.
Roles / Responsibilites	Adopts new laws and EnC priorities approves the budget, the work program, and adopts procedural acts	Prepares the work of the Ministerial Council and takes decisions on the adoption of new legislation	Coordinates the platform for exchange of knowledge and development of best practices for regulated electricity and gas markets in EnC	Advises EnC on various topics and on the implementation of the EnC acquis

## Location

The Secretariat is located in **Vienna, Austria**. The EU4 Energy Governance team operates two regional project offices in Kyiv, Ukraine and Tbilisi, Georgia.

## Recruitment

As of 2020, the Secretariat has 38 staff members. From 2012 to present, a Slovenia national has been serving the Director's position. He previously served as a senior official, head of the Energy Department in the Ministry of the Economy of Slovenia. He is the second consecutive Energy Community director, following a former senior energy official from Bulgaria (2007-2012). Pursuant to Article 75 of the Energy Community Treaty, the director of the Energy Community Secretariat is responsible for the implementation of the secretariat's budget.<sup>68</sup>

The Secretariat regularly offers secondment opportunities. The recruitment of the Secretariat's staff is based on merit, following the establishment plan of the Energy Community Ministerial Council. In parallel to the contracted/seconded positions, the Energy Community Secretariat offers a limited number of internships for individuals aiming to acquire an understanding of the Energy Community's work or gain experience in the field of their studies/work.

**Currently a Kosovo national works at an expert level in the EnC Secretariat in Vienna.** Other WB6 countries have a higher number of nationals employed as Heads or Deputy Heads of units.

<sup>68</sup> Treaty establishing the Energy Community, 25 October 2005, at <https://www.energy-community.org/legal/treaty.html>.

EnC Secretariat and WB6 Nationals among Staff				
	Director and Deputy Director	Head of Units	Experts	Support Staff
Rules for hiring/secondments	EU rules prescribed in EU Ministerial Council apply	Open competition among nationals from EnC Parties	Open competition among nationals from EnC Parties	Mostly locally hired
Kosovo	-	-	1	-
Albania	-	-	1	-
Serbia	-	1	1	-
North Macedonia	-	1	1	-
BiH	-	-	1	-
Montenegro	-	-	1	-

The Energy Community Secretariat is an EU Treaty based organization, therefore it applies the EU rules for recruitment. WB6 country nationals are unlikely to be selected for senior positions at EnC, as successful candidates for these positions are mainly selected from EU Member States. In EnC, Kosovo should seek for:

1. Representatives from the Kosovo energy sector to be selected for the Heads of the Boards of EnC fora positions.
2. Securing internships and/or traineeships opportunities for Kosovo nationals in the Secretariat. Upon their return to Kosovo, former interns can apply their learned experiences and support Kosovo's administrative capacities in the energy sector. This initiative can be undertaken by the Ministry of Economy.

## REGIONAL ARMS CONTROL VERIFICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION ASSISTANCE CENTRE (RACVIAC)

RACVIAC was established in 2000. Initially, it aimed at enhancing regional stability, whereas later, the Centre broadened its scope of activities to include a wide range of politico-military issues, including the security sector reform and international and regional cooperation with a focus on Euro-Atlantic integration. Now, it aims to provide arms control training, promote confidence and security building measures and broaden cooperation in South Eastern Europe (SEE).

Following the ongoing developments and changes in the security environment and the changing needs of the SEE countries, RACVIAC reviewed its mission, objectives and structure. This led to the transformation process of the Centre in 2007, which was concluded by the signing of a new RACVIAC Agreement in 2010.<sup>69</sup> By ratifying the Agreement in December 2011, the Centre obtained the status of a regionally owned international organization and was renamed the “RACVIAC – Centre for Security Cooperation”.

### **RACVIAC is composed of the following pillars:**

1. The Cooperative Security Environment Pillar – responsible for organizing activities related to Arms Control treaties and agreements and other Confidence and Security Building Measures.
2. The Security Sector Governance Pillar – responsible for organizing activities on the new security challenges related to the Security Sector Reform.
3. The Countering Transnational Security Threats Pillar – responsible for facilitating dialogue and cooperation amongst the countries within South East Europe as well building their capacities to counter diverse security challenges.

SEECF countries, EU Member states, but also Norway, Russia and Canada are members of RACVIAC. Kosovo is neither a member nor an associated member of this organization. However, in 2014, Kosovo was accepted to participate in all working level and high-level meetings. Following 2014, it can appoint a seconded staff, a MFA representative, to the Secretariat. Yet, its participation differs from that of the other WB6 countries which enjoy full membership. Their key institutional interlocutor for RACVIAC issues is the Ministry of Defense. Whereas for Kosovo, it is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Kosovo does not have a consensual decision-making role in the RACVIAC governing structures, and cannot delegate military personnel from the Ministry of the Defense to this organization.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>69</sup> For more details, see the organization's website, at <https://www.racviac.org/>.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

## Funding:

The Centre and its activities are financed by the Members' contributions (running costs and activities), the Associate Members' contributions (primarily activities) and other contributions from donors. The RACVIAC budget is divided into an Operating and a Program part. The Operating part, covering "running costs" of RACVIAC and a portion of activities, is financed by its Members, while Associate members contribute to the Program part – the funds required to execute RACVIAC activities. In addition, international partners, organizations and donor countries can make general financial contributions, supporting program activities.

## The RACVIAC Governance Structures:

### Steering Group/ The Multinational Advisory Group (MAG)

The Multinational Advisory Group (MAG) serves as RACVIAC's steering group. It is composed of representatives from members, associate members and observers. The MAG provides directions according to the rules and principles of the organization. MAG takes decisions by consensus and it is chaired by an elected MAG member for a period of one year. Currently the chair is held by North Macedonia. MAG meetings are held twice a year.

The RACVIAC Secretariat implements the day-to-day activities in compliance with the RACVIAC's mission and its objectives set forth by the Steering Group.

Contracting Parties' Representation in RACVIAC Governance Structures	
	Steering Committee/Multinational Advisory Group (MAG)
Composition	RACVIAC Point of Contacts, usually from Ministries of Defense.
Role/ Responsibilities	Provides directions to the secretariat and ensures its compliance with the rules and principles of the organization

## Location

**RACVIAC Secretariat is located in Rakitje, Croatia.**

## Recruitment

The RACVIAC structure consists of 40 positions. The permanent staff currently includes a combination of military and civilian personnel from eight RACVIAC members, predominantly coming from the SEE region.<sup>71</sup> Secondments are usually from RACVIAC's member states and associated countries. Both members and associate members are eligible to delegate more than one seconded staff at RACVIAC. Kosovo has seconded a diplomat from the MFA, who is currently serving a four-year mandate and holds the position of the program manager. This is the second time it has deployed a diplomat from the MFA to RACVIAC. Kosovo seconded the first diplomat in RACVIAC in 2015.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>71</sup> For more, see <https://www.racviac.org/organization/manpower.html>.

<sup>72</sup> For more, see <https://www.racviac.org/organization/index.html>.

The MAG (Multi Advisory Group) appoints the RACVIAC's director by a consensus among its members. The Director holds a four-year mandate, with a possibility of extension for another four years (4+4). The Chairman of the MAG/Steering Group is elected among candidates from the SEE countries, as well as the Director of RACVIAC.<sup>73</sup> The Deputy Director's position is always from the host country, Croatia.

RACVIAC Secretariat and WB6 Nationals among Staff				
	Director/ Deputy Director	Operations Department	Program Managers	Activity Managers
Rules for hiring/ secondments	Appointment by MAG members	Open vacancies for all members of RACVIAC	Seconded from MFAs/ part of RACVIAC SC MAG	Seconded from MFAs/ part of RACVIAC SC MAG
Kosovo	-	-	1	-
Albania	1	-	-	1
Serbia	-	-	-	-
North Macedonia	-	-	-	-
BiH	-	-	-	1
Montenegro	-	-	-	-

Kosovo is not a member nor an associate member of RACVIAC. However, having the "participant" status, the MFA can delegate a seconded staff to this organization.

For increasing its presence in the RACVIAC, it is important for the Government of Kosovo to:

1. Ensure internal coordination between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defense and search for modalities to enhance its participation in this organization. These actions should focus on enabling Kosovo to approximate the level of representation with other countries who enjoy the "member" status in RACVIAC. Being able to delegate personnel from the Ministry of Defense is crucial.
2. Intensify its lobbying to allied members within RACVIAC Secretariat (the host country Croatia as well as other NATO members within it) to upgrade its status to "Associate Member". Such a status could bring Kosovo closer to the RACVIAC's decision-making bodies.

<sup>73</sup> Currently, Jeronim Bazo, a retired Major General from Albania, serves as Director of RACVIAC. His mandate was extended to 2022 due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

# REGIONAL INITIATIVES WITH NO SECRETARIAT

## **SOUTH-EAST EUROPEAN COOPERATION PROCESS (SEECP)**

SEECP was launched in 1996 in Sofia, Bulgaria. It aims at strengthening regional cooperation and trust, good neighborly relations, stability and security, as well as enhancing economic relations, engagement in the human dimension, justice, fight against organized crime, and fight against terrorism.<sup>74</sup>

The SEECP's chief document is the "Charter on Good-Neighborly Relations, Stability, Security and Cooperation in South-East Europe", adopted at the 2000 Bucharest Summit. In 2007, its mandate was updated and the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) was established.<sup>75</sup>

### **RCC serves as an operational arm of the SEECP.**

At present the SEECP consists of the following participant countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Hungary, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Turkey, and Slovenia. Each participant holds the SEECP chairmanship-in-office for a one-year rotation period, in no specific order.

The SEECP is a regional process coordinated by the participant country holding the chairmanship-in-office. Its primary mission is to foster the EU prospect of South-East Europe and work towards the connectivity, security, stability, and economic progress of the region. In this manner, the rotating chairmanships-in-office work closely with the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC).<sup>76</sup>

Kosovo joined the SEECP in 2014. From July 2019 to July 2020, it chaired for the first time with the SEECP. Connectivity, youth and tourism were set forth as key priority thematic areas.

## **SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE DEFENSE MINISTERIAL (SEDM)**

SEDM was launched by a meeting of Ministers of Defense in 1996, held in Tirana, Albania. Now, SEDM is a process which aims to strengthen the understanding and the politico-military cooperation in the region in order to enhance the stability and security in SEE. The SEDM process follows a series of meetings convened by the Ministers, Deputy Ministers and Deputy Chiefs of Defense of South-East European countries. SEDM's member countries are Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Georgia, Greece, Italy, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, North Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine, the United States, and Moldova (Observer). The activities undertaken within the SEDM Process aim at developing the security of South-East Europe, with a focus on:

<sup>74</sup> Sofia Declaration on Good-Neighborly Relations, Stability, Security and Cooperation in the Balkans, adopted at the meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Countries of South-Eastern Europe, July 1996, at <https://www.seecp.info/declarations>.

<sup>75</sup> Zagreb Declaration of the 10th Meeting of the Heads of State and Government of the South-East European Co-operation Process (SEECP), May 2007, at <https://www.seecp.info/declarations>.

<sup>76</sup> For more details, see the organization's website, at <https://www.rcc.int/pages/111/south-east-european-cooperation-process--seecp>.

- 1) Promoting regional cooperation and good neighborly relations;
- 2) Strengthening regional Defense capabilities, as well as cooperation through collective efforts, and;
- 3) Establishing links facilitating integration into Euro-Atlantic institutions.

Kosovo is not a member of SEDM. The government officially requested the SEDM chairmanship in 2013 to acquire the status of SEDM observer, but Serbia and Romania opposed it. The SEDM Secretariat responded that the approval, according to SEDM procedures, requires a consensus among all SEDM member states.<sup>77</sup>

**The SEDM's Chairmanship is currently held by Albania (2019-2021).<sup>78</sup>**

## **BRDO-BRIJUNI INITIATIVE**

The Brdo- Brijuni Initiative is an annual multilateral event in the Western Balkans. It was launched in 2013, Brdo pri Kranju, Slovenia. The process was initiated by the president of Slovenia, Borut Pahor, and the president of Croatia, Ivo Josipović.

The Brdo-Brijuni Initiative provides a fora-for discussion, which gathers the leaders of the WB6 countries (Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, North Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo), as well as Slovenia and Croatia (EU Member States). The main focus of the Process is the enlargement of the European Union to countries of the Western Balkans. Similar meetings were held at the prime-ministerial level in 2010 and 2011. To date, nine Summits have been held in this constellation, in which Kosovo's Head of State participated.<sup>79</sup>

<sup>77</sup> KCSS, *Kosovo's membership and representation in regional security organizations*, September 2014, pp.18.

<sup>78</sup> For more details, see the organization's website, at <https://www.sedmprocess.org/>.

<sup>79</sup> For more, see Brdo- Brijuni-Initiative website, at <https://www.predsednik.si/up-rs/uprs-eng.nsf/brdo-brijuni-process>.



# **REGIONAL INITIATIVES IN WHICH KOSOVO IS NOT A MEMBER NOR DOES IT PARTICIPATE**

## REGIONAL ANTI-CORRUPTION INITIATIVE (RAI)

RAI was established in 2006. It aims to facilitate the overall regional cooperation and efforts in fighting corruption in the SEE region by building on existing actions tackling corruption, through a better coordination of all efforts, and by relying on a high-level political commitment. It views the impact of corruption from different perspectives including gender, disability and poverty. RAI is also a multidisciplinary regional Anti-corruption Resource Center. It acts as a network for information and expertise exchange by providing relevant regional and international actors a platform for interaction.<sup>80</sup>

RAI strives to become a focal point for regional anti-corruption cooperation in the SEE region through the coordination, facilitation and dissemination of best practices and lessons learned, as well as through facilitating interactions among member states and between member states and other international partners. RAI members are five countries from the Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia) as well as Moldova, Croatia, Bulgaria and Romania.

Membership in RAI requires consensus by all members. This organization used to be high on the priority list of regional initiatives where Kosovo wanted to extend its membership.

In 2012, the government of Kosovo, namely the MFA, sent an official request for membership to the RAI Secretariat. Immediately after, the MFA of Serbia sent several pages of legal justification detailing the reasoning for RAI not to accept Kosovo's request.<sup>81</sup> RAI has still not responded to this request.

### The Secretariat is located in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Ministry of Justice (MJ) is the lead institution for RAI. Hence, it is the responsible institution to prepare and renew Kosovo's request for membership in this organization. Internal coordination between the MFA and MJ is critical. Kosovo should also seek to closely cooperate with Croatia in order for it to support its membership.

*\*Four RAI member countries do not recognize Kosovo*

## SOUTHEAST EUROPEAN LAW ENFORCEMENT CENTER (SELEC)

SELEC is an international law enforcement organization that brings together the resources and expertise of Police and Customs authorities. It aims to join synergies in combating trans-border organized crime in the region.

<sup>80</sup> For more details, see the organization's website, at <http://www.rai-see.org/>.

<sup>81</sup> Dehnert and Taleski, *Monitoring Regional Cooperation in South East Europe*, 2013.

SELEC is a successor of SECI Center founded in 1999.<sup>82</sup> It aims to provide support to its eleven (11) Member countries; Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, North Macedonia, Greece, Hungary, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia and Turkey, in enhancing the coordination for preventing and combating crime, including transnational organized crime. SELEC provides multinational expertise to law enforcement authorities across the Southeast European region, offering the necessary platform for exchanging information and requests of assistance, supporting operational meetings, joint investigations and regional operations.<sup>83</sup>

**SELEC operational activities are mainly conducted within the framework of eight Task Forces:**

- Task Force Mirage on Countering Trafficking in Human Beings and Illegal Migration;
- Anti-Drug Trafficking Task Force;
- Financial and Computer Crime Task Force;
- Anti-Fraud and Anti-Smuggling Task Force;
- Anti-Terrorism Task Force;
- Container Security Task Force;
- Stolen Vehicles Task Force;
- Environment and Nature Related Crimes Task Force.

The Member States and the Operational partners delegate Liaison Officers from Customs and Police at SELEC Headquarters. Each Liaison Officer is supported in their activities by a dedicated National Focal Point established in each Member State.

The National Focal Points act as contact points within the Member State. They are responsible for coordinating and communicating with SELEC, and for facilitating the information flow between national law enforcement agencies and the Liaison Officers at SELEC Headquarters.

Under UNMIK, Kosovo has been an observer in SELEC. The Kosovo MFA submitted an official letter requesting information about membership procedures, followed by an official membership request. Kosovo never received an answer nor an explanation regarding its request.<sup>84</sup>

**SELEC Headquarter is located in Bucharest, Romania.**

<sup>82</sup> The Southeast European Cooperative Initiative (SECI) was launched in December 1996 to help provide regional peace and stability among the countries of southeastern Europe through cooperative activities, and to help the countries integrate into the rest of Europe. The RCC emerged from this initiative. During the Convention of the Southeast European Law Enforcement Center on 7th of October 2011, SECI Center transferred its operational and strategic capabilities and became SELEC.

<sup>83</sup> For more details, see the organization's website, at <https://www.selec.org/>.

<sup>84</sup> KCSS, *Kosovo's membership and representation in regional security organizations*, September 2014, pp.19.

## **SOUTHEAST EUROPEAN PROSECUTORS ADVISORY GROUP (SEEPAG)**

SEEPAG is a regional mechanism established in December 2003, in Belgrade, by the SEE countries. It gathers prosecutors from all eleven (11) Member States in order to facilitate and boost cooperation in trans-border crime investigations in the Southeast European region.<sup>85</sup> SEEPAG aims to enhance the cooperation and coordination between national investigating and prosecuting authorities, allowing law enforcement agencies to act more effectively when dealing with trans-border crime. It is a network of experienced prosecutors who assist SELEC in operational matters and facilitate the rapid exchange of information and evidence in trans-border investigations. This network consists of National Prosecutorial Focal Points established in each member state with the task of facilitating judicial cooperation between states participating in SEEPAG, as well as providing assistance to the SELEC operations. The SEEPAG's function is also to provide guidance, assistance and feed-back to lawmakers in the region, on justice and law enforcement issues.<sup>86</sup>

Similarly to SELEC, in 2013, the Kosovo MFA submitted an official request to the SEEPAG chair to join the organization. Kosovo authorities have not received any response back.<sup>87</sup>

## **SOUTH EAST EUROPEAN POLICE CHIEFS' ASSOCIATION (SEPICA)**

SEPICA was established in 2002, functioning upon the "Statute" signed in 2007, by ten (10) police services from nine (9) states, namely from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, North Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia. SEPICA's main objective is to build public security through cooperation of police services, together with citizens and its partner organizations.<sup>88</sup>

In the framework of SEPICA, the Women Police Officer Network (WPON) was established in 2010, with the facilitation of the RCC and with the support of the OSCE and SEESAC. The WPON is an independent network of female police officers from SEPICA member states. Between 2010 and 2012, the WPON was financially supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). The main mission of the WPON is to provide a platform for the exchange of experience and knowledge across police services in the region on the status, needs and priorities of police women in South East Europe. It also promotes an increased role of women in the police, and advocates for gender sensitive policing practices and the implementation of gender equality and democratic principles in policing within SEPICA police services. Members of the

<sup>85</sup> SEEPAG functions under the SELEC umbrella and has the same member states, namely Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, and Turkey.

<sup>86</sup> For more details, see the organization's website, at <https://www.selec.org/about-seepag/>.

<sup>87</sup> KCSS, *Kosovo's membership and representation in regional security organizations*, September 2014, pp.19.

<sup>88</sup> For more details, see <https://www.rcc.int/pages/34/rcc-and-regional-initiatives-and-task-forces-in-south-east-europe>.

WPON are from SEPCA police services with the exception of Romania.<sup>89</sup>

**Kosovo is neither a member of SEPCA nor of the WPON.**

## **THE SOUTH EASTERN AND EASTERN EUROPE CLEARINGHOUSE FOR THE CONTROL OF SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS (SEESAC)**

SEESAC was launched in May 2002, and it functions as an executive arm of the Regional Implementation Plan on Combating Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW), formulated and adopted by the Stability Pact in November 2001 and revised in 2006 and in 2014.<sup>90</sup> SEESAC aims to strengthen the capacities of national and regional stakeholders to control and reduce the proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons, and thus contribute to enhanced stability, security and development in South Eastern and Eastern Europe. SEESAC functions under the mandate of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC).<sup>91</sup>

SEE members participate in SEESAC through UNDP's representation. Kosovo participates through the UNDP office in Kosovo, therefore its membership is interpreted as being under the UN1244 Resolution. In meetings and documents partner countries are referred to by the names of their capitals.<sup>92</sup>

SEESAC receives political and strategic guidance and support from the Regional Steering Group for Small Arms and Light Weapons (RSG), which is composed of representatives of the governments of the states concerned, the RCC, UNDP and observers from institutions such as the European Union (EU), North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and civil society. The RSG meets annually and approves and revises the SEESAC Strategy and mandate. SEESAC liaises directly with governments and civil society, providing technical input, information exchange, coordination and overview of current and future efforts and fund-raising assistance for specific SALW projects. More specifically, SEESAC's regional activities include sensitizing governments and civil society on small arms issues, formulating national strategies for SALW control and supporting the national stakeholders in executing these strategies, as well as incorporating small arms issues into UNDP development planning.

### **SEESAC's activities is focused on the following issues:**

- Increasing regional cooperation, knowledge exchange and information-sharing;
- Improving capacities for Physical Security and Stockpile Management (PSSM) through infrastructure security upgrades, surplus reduction and training;

<sup>89</sup> For more details, see <https://www.seesac.org/Women-Police-Officers-Network-in-South-East-Europe-WPON-1/>.

<sup>90</sup> Combating the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons South East Europe Regional Implementation Plan, 2014, at <https://www.seesac.org/SALW-Resources/>.

<sup>91</sup> For more details, see the organization's website, at <https://www.seesac.org/>.

<sup>92</sup> For more details about SEESAC partners, see <https://www.seesac.org/SEE-Partners/>.

- Enhancing capacities for marking, tracing and record-keeping;
- Reducing illicit possession and misuse of firearms through support for awareness-raising and collection campaigns.

**The Secretariat is located in UNDP offices in Belgrade, Serbia.**

## **SOUTH EAST EUROPE HEALTH NETWORK (SEEHN)**

SEEHN is a regional intergovernmental initiative established in 2001. It aims to promote cooperation on health and well-being of people of SEEHN member countries, namely Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, North Macedonia, Moldova and Israel.

SEEHN's mission is to improve the health of member states' populations through better and more integrated cooperation, capacity building and coordination in public health at regional level, by following a comprehensive approach that integrates health in all policy areas. SEEHN is the only regional organization in SEE which is exclusively focused on health, while it addresses common health issues in SEEHN member states. It provides a platform for dialogue and exchange of best practices regarding the health sector. It also serves as an additional channel for cooperation as it advocates for public health and as an influential tool for health diplomacy.<sup>93</sup>

SEEHN also coordinated the Health dimension of the RCC SEE 2020 Strategy.<sup>94</sup>

**The secretariat is located in Skopje, North Macedonia.**

Each SEEHN member hosts a Regional Health Development Center (RHDC) focused on different technical areas:

- Communicable Diseases Surveillance and Control, Tirana, Albania;
- Mental Health, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- Antimicrobial Resistance, Sofia, Bulgaria;
- Public Health Services, Skopje, North Macedonia;
- Human Resources for Health, Chisinau, Moldova;
- Non-Communicable Diseases Surveillance and Control, Podgorica, Montenegro;
- Blood Safety, Bucharest, Romania;
- Sexual and Reproductive Health, Tirgu-Mures, Romania;
- Accreditation and Continuous Quality Improvement of Health Care, Belgrade, Serbia.

<sup>93</sup> For more details, see the organization's website, at <http://seehn.org/>.

<sup>94</sup> Regional Cooperation Council, South East Europe 2020 Strategy, November 2013, pp.30, at <https://www.rcc.int/pages/86/south-east-europe-2020-strategy>.

Kosovo is not a member of this organization. Consecutive governments have left this issue aside. According to the Kosovo officials, in early 2013, the ministry of Health of Kosovo had requested from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to officially submit a membership request to SEEHN. On the other hand, MFA encountered uncertainty regarding the membership application procedures, hence they did not proceed any further. Since then, no other attempt has been made by the Kosovo administration to join this organization.<sup>95</sup>

## CENTRAL EUROPEAN INITIATIVE (CEI)

CEI is a regional intergovernmental forum established in 1989. It gathers seventeen (17) Member States in Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. The forum aims to strengthen the capacities of its Member States in the areas of good governance, rule of law and sustainable economic development for stability, social cohesion, environmental sustainability, security and prosperity.<sup>96</sup>

CEI members are: Albania, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Ukraine.

The CEI has a three-pillar system: It cooperates in a governmental dimension, a parliamentary dimension and a business dimension.

CEI 3 Pillar System of Cooperation		
Government Dimension	Parliament Dimension	Economic Dimension
CEI Summit of Heads of Government of the seventeen CEI Member States	Parliamentary Assembly	Chambers of Commerce of the CEI Member States
CEI Minister of Foreign Affairs Meetings	Parliamentary Committee	Annual CEI Economic Forum convened by the Presidency
Committee of National Coordinators	General Committees -Political and Home Affairs; -Economic Affairs; -Cultural Affairs	/

### CEI promotes connectivity and diversity through six main areas:

1. Good governance;
2. Economic growth;
3. Media freedom;
4. Environmental protection;
5. Intercultural cooperation and;

<sup>95</sup> Dehnert and Taleski, *Monitoring Regional Cooperation in South East Europe*, 2013.

<sup>96</sup> For more details, see the organization's website, at <https://www.cei.int/>.



## 6. Scientific cooperation/ education & training.

The CEI implements its activities through its activities, EU-projects, exchange programs and technical cooperation with the European Bank for Reconstruction and development (EBRD). The CEI operates as a platform for political dialogue as a resource for people, businesses and communities through a multi-partnership approach.

The Secretariat provides administrative and conceptual support to the CEI three-pillar system. It also manages its funds and instruments and takes initiatives aimed at promoting the Organization's mission.

**The CEI Secretariat is located in Trieste, Italy.**

### **ADRIATIC AND IONIAN INITIATIVE (AII)**

All was established by the "Ancona Declaration" signed at the Summit on Development and Security on the Adriatic and Ionian Seas, held in Ancona (Italy) in May 2000 and attended by the Heads of States and Governments of Italy, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece and Slovenia. The Initiative aims at strengthening regional cooperation to promote political and economic stability, thus creating a solid base for the process of European integration.<sup>97</sup>

The Initiative was later extended to Serbia in 2004, and to Montenegro in 2006. In 2018, after the adoption of the Catania Declaration, North Macedonia also joined the All.

Today, the All counts nine Members: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Italy, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Slovenia.

Cooperation in this initiative has gradually assumed different forms, including the establishment of partnerships involving Adriatic Ionian networks and Fora, such as the Forum of the Adriatic Ionian Chambers of Commerce, the Adriatic Ionian Forum of Cities and Towns and UniAdriion (the Adriatic Ionian network of Universities). The All was originally founded with the aim of providing common and concerted solutions to shared problems, from fighting against organized criminality to the need to protect the natural environment of the Adriatic-Ionian Sea.

Following the recent EU approach to support multilateral sub-regional cooperation and the successful example of the adoption of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea, the All has been working on the idea of a Macro-Region for the Adriatic Ionian Region. Since then, the All participating States initiated a joint action aimed at raising awareness on the necessity of establishing a Macro-Region for the Adriatic Ionian basin (EUSAIR).<sup>98</sup>

<sup>97</sup> For more details, see the organization's website, at <https://www.aii-ps.org/>.

<sup>98</sup> For more details about EUSAIR, see <https://www.adriatic-ionic.eu/about-eusair/>.



EUSAIR's strategy was developed by the European Commission (EC) and the Adriatic-Ionian Region countries and stakeholders. The general objective of the EUSAIR is to promote economic and social prosperity and growth in the region by improving its attractiveness, competitiveness and connectivity. The participating countries of the EUSAIR agreed on areas of mutual interest aiming to create synergies and foster coordination among all territories in the Adriatic-Ionian Region in the four thematic areas:

- Sustainable tourism;
- Environmental quality;
- Connecting the region;
- Blue growth.

First and foremost, to increase its presence in the regional fora, the government of Kosovo should focus on mobilizing the support of allies, recognizers, and partners, within and outside of the EU (U.S., Norway, Switzerland, Germany, and Croatia, but not only) for advancing its commitment to join the organizations and initiatives listed above.

It should be noted, however, that the level of difficulty for joining these organizations varies between them. The process may be easier for Kosovo to join RAI; for which mobilizing the support of Croatia is critical. Whereas the process is more challenging when it comes to gaining membership in SELEC, SEEPAG and SEPCA. The fact that Kosovo is not a member of Interpol, adds to this challenge. In turn, an agreement with Serbia on normalization of relations, would certainly prompt Kosovo's membership in these regional organizations, as well as in other large international ones.

## CONCLUSION

Kosovo is quite a newcomer to the regional cooperation fora as compared to other WB6 countries. It is the country which joined many of these regional organizations last. This, along with the ongoing bilateral issues with other members in the region, stresses an impediment for an increased presence, a better representation and a strengthened role in many regional organizations and initiatives. Being a relatively small country, with a less experienced administrative and diplomatic core, also plays a role.

Still, Kosovo has managed to gain access to certain regional initiatives, has successfully changed its status in some others and it has secured a few mid or high-level positions in organizations in which it participates. Kosovo has full membership in all initiatives stemming from the Berlin Process, and was a founding member of WBF and RYCO. It has even managed to secure one of the first leadership positions in RYCO – the first Deputy Secretary General was a Kosovo national.

An enhanced participation in regional organizations and initiatives is even more crucial for Kosovo since they are the only multilateral platforms in which the country can actively engage. Since Kosovo's membership in large international organizations is still highly challenged, regional organizations are important multilateral venues in which it can interact and equally take part in decision making processes. Therefore, the government should utilize the regional initiatives in which the country is a member as a stepping stone for better learning how to engage and work in multilateral settings. It should draw experiences from regional organizations to increase its diplomatic efforts, to gain knowledge and practices, which are then to be used in multilateral organizations once it joins.

Lastly, Kosovo's government should look closely to build on the diplomatic and practical experience of its neighbors, particularly Albania. Albania, albeit not having the recognition issues that Kosovo has, has relentlessly intensified its influence and diplomatic and political lobbying in the region, now being a key player in most regional organizations (either by hosting a secretariat or by holding top positions in others). Kosovo remains the only WB6 country whose capital does not host a Secretariat/Headquarter for any of the regional cooperation initiatives. Yet, Kosovo has capacities and an advanced position in different areas and could propose new regional initiatives in sectors such as digitalization, creative industry, innovation and arts, etc. The government of Kosovo should increase its efforts to put forth new initiatives and for Pristina to serve as the secretariat of these potential new initiatives.

Increasing Kosovo's participation and representation in the regional setting is a lengthy process, which takes time to achieve. The key institutions in charge of regional cooperation, the Office of the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs should particularly treat regional cooperation as a priority, increasing their capacities and furthering their diplomatic efforts. A stronger diplomacy, in conjunction with a clear strategic vision is the only path to successfully advance Kosovo's position in regional fora.

The Balkans Policy Research Group is an independent, regional think-tank based in Pristina, Kosovo. We provide timely policy analysis and recommendations on a wide array of state building issues; institutional and democratic consolidation; minority integration and good neighborly relations: European integration and policy change. We have decades of experience in policy reporting and development, strategic thinking and advocacy with governmental, international and non-governmental organizations.

Our rigorous, detailed, impartial reporting, always based on in-depth fieldwork, is the core of our work. We go beyond mainstream positions and seek to make change through creative, feasible, well-measured and forward-looking policy recommendations with the aim of helping develop strong, vibrant democracies, prosperous states and societies based on rule of law in the Western Balkans.

We engage in high-level advocacy, domestically, regionally and internationally, impacting policy discussions and options with regard to the home affairs and European policies toward the Western Balkans.

Balkans Group has developed other tools and platforms to achieve this change:

**The Policy Dialogue** promotes Kosovo's domestic dialogue, cohesion and reform-making agenda.

The Policy Forum (a Think-Tankers High-level Advocacy Forum) committed to enhancing the dialogue between the civil society and the institutions.

**The Kosovo Serbia Policy Advocacy Group** (a forum for Cross-Border Civil Society Cooperation) that aims to communicate, promote and enhance dialogue toward full normalisation between Kosovo and Serbia, and their societies.

**Women in Politics** promotes the empowerment of women and girls; their security and inclusiveness; and is committed to strengthen the Women Caucus' impact and reach throughout Kosovo.

**Youth in Politics** promotes an active participation from youth from different political parties in the institutions. This component helps in developing a culture of dialogue and cooperation, by providing capacity building trainings on key policy areas and skills and leadership.

**The Dialogue Platform** promotes the dialogue process between Kosovo and Serbia, by informing the wider public and generating debate about the agreements, benefits and challenges of the Dialogue.

**Expert Support component** provides policy support to the government and key institutions on key policy areas, peace and state-building agendas.



Norwegian Embassy