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Polish-German Reconciliation: Lessons for the Western Balkans

by Marta Szpala, Jelica Minić, Donika Emini and Adnan Čerimagić

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Introduction

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Seventy-five years after World War II most outsiders might think that the goal of full reconciliation between Poland and Germany has been achieved. After all, both countries are members of the European Union and NATO. Once contested border between the two countries is today almost invisible. Two governments are also coordinating many of their policies during their regular meetings and consultations. There is also a significant number of programs championing exchanges at the social level.

However, even in 2021 when both countries mark the 30th anniversary of the Polish-German Treaty of Good Neighborship and Friendly Cooperation signed on 17 June 1991, some of the bilateral issues are still subject to dispute and some tensions still occur on the horizon. Especially when sensitive issues in dealing with the past are subject to discussion.

The aim of this paper is to look at the reconciliation process in the Western Balkans in the light of the German-Polish reconciliation. This is why the paper starts with a historical overview of the German-Polish reconciliation. It then continues with an overview of how far the Western Balkans reconciled and sketches the main challenges.

Despite different historical circumstances the German-Polish reconciliation process provides some concrete lessons for the Western Balkans. This paper, in its conclusions, gives a list of very concrete recommendations that all those interested in championing reconciliation in the Western Balkans should seriously consider.

How Germany and Poland have reconciled

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Has the goal been achieved in the case of Polish-German reconciliation 75 years after World War II? Has the process (actors, perceptions, tools, mechanisms, institutions) been transformed in such a long period of time or the main issues are still the same – the truth about war crimes, border, return, or compensation for the property of expelled Germans and war reparations to Polish victims of war and property? Has the wider context of reconciliation influenced the outcomes and oscillations in dealing with the past and in which way?

The answer to these questions is not straightforward or easy, even in 2021 when both countries mark the 30th anniversary of the Polish-German Treaty of Good Neighborship and Friendly Cooperation signed on 17 June 1991. The Treaty was preceded by a Border Treaty, which

resolved the Polish-German border conflict - one of the most challenging problems in bilateral relations. These were decisive steps towards the rapprochement of the two traditionally antagonistic countries and marked a new era in their relations.

The tension between Poland and Germany was strong, long-lasting, and deeply rooted in history. The mutual negative stereotypes dated back to the 19th century, when Prussia occupied part of Western Poland. The relations in the interwar period were tense. German aggression against Poland was followed by the brutal occupation. During that period Poland lost six million inhabitants (including three million Polish Jews), its cultural heritage was destroyed (especially the capital after Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in 1943 and Warsaw Uprising in 1944). Many Poles experienced imprisonment in concentration camps, forced labour, and expulsions. In the auspices of the Potsdam Conference in 1945, under the pressure of Stalin, the Polish borders were shifted to the West. Polish eastern

provinces were incorporated into the Soviet Union and Poland received German territories to the Oder and Neisse river. It was followed by massive resettlement. Almost all Germans were expelled from these territories, in which people expelled by the Soviet Union were settled. The new border artificially divided coherent towns splitting them in two like in the case of Frankfurt (Oder)-Slubice, Guben-Gubin, and Görlitz-Zgorzelec.

During the period between 1945 and 1965, the reality of the Cold War did not help the normalization and reconciliation process. Quite the contrary, the governments of communist Poland and the Federal Republic of Germany belonging to competing power blocs cultivated mutual suspicions and antipathy towards each other.¹ In Germany the dominating narrative was about unjust borders, overshadowed by personal stories of millions of expelled people. And in Poland, the memory of atrocities committed by Wehrmacht and the SS and extermination of civilians was combined with the fears

of the millions of Poles in the Western Territory of revision of the border.

The period between 1965 and 1989 was marked by a symbolic gesture, which laid the ground for future reconciliation and the first step towards normalization of the relation between the two countries. As the conditions of both countries to start the reconciliation process were not ripe, this process starts in what is known as track two. The first Initiative to rebuild the relation between the two nations came from the milieu of Catholic and Protestant Churches. These initiatives were grounded in moral reasoning regarding the responsibility of Germany for atrocities committed during World War II and the practical argument to accept the new reality. In 1965, the process of rethinking German policy towards Poland initiated by the priests culminated with the famous Letter of Polish Bishop to their German counterparts "We forgive and ask for forgiveness" paving the way for reconciliation. In the document Polish side acknowledged the suffering of the ▶

¹ Feldman, Lily Gardner. *Germany's Foreign Policy of Reconciliation from Enmity to Amity*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2012. p. 222

► expelled and the Poles. Oppositions to these initiatives were significant both in Poland and Germany, none of these societies were ready to reconcile and even acknowledge the other side's suffering.

Further steps towards the normalisation of Polish-German relations were taken when Willy Brant became Chancellor in 1969. Brandt took a new approach in the foreign policy of Western Germany, known as the new Eastern Policy, a *détente* proposal to settle European issues by dialogue and accepting territorial changes after World War II.² One year after, in 1970 Poland and Germany signed the Treaty Concerning the Bases of Normalization of their Mutual Relation. In the treaty, both sides *de facto* recognized the borderline (not the border as Warsaw claimed) as a western frontier of Poland. A major turn of events took place in December 1970, when Willy Brandt during his visit to Poland kneeled at the memorial of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. This gesture was seen as one of the best signs of reconciliation, even though the photos of this event were

forbidden in Poland till 1989. The Treaty generated multi-frontal criticisms in Germany – even considered as a betrayal of national interest - and in the following years CDU/CSU tried to challenge this formulation. Also, in Poland reactions were not enthusiastic as the Polish side aimed at receiving *de jure* recognition instead.³ Shortly after, in 1972, diplomatic relations between the two countries were established.

In the following years, a package of bilateral agreements has been signed. These agreements tackled the three main areas which would build upon the reconciliation process, such as the regulation of the past issues (for example, pension insurances), the financial and economic relations, and the establishment of the institutional network for future understanding/reconciliation.⁴ The most important documents concerning the last point were recommendations for the UNESCO Commission for history and geography books and the declaration to support exchange in the fields of culture.

² Góralski, Witold Maciej. Polish Raison d'État and Détente in Europe: the Normalization of Relations between Poland and Germany in the Years 1970–1977, [in:] Góralski, Witold Maciej (ed.) Poland and Germany 1945 – 2007 From Confrontation to Cooperation and Partnership in Europe, Polski Instytut Spraw Międzynarodowych. 2007. p. 83

³ Feldman, Lily Gardner, op. cit. , p. 205

⁴ Góralski, Witold Maciej. op.cit., p. 107

The social and economic cooperation of the two countries intensified due to activities of church organizations and the establishment of the twin cities partnership.

The collapse of communism created a new context for bilateral relations as well as the establishment of a real institutional framework for normalization and reconciliation but also created momentum for the unification of the two Germanies.

Although 1989 was marked by various symbols of rapprochement between the two countries (mass of reconciliation in Krzyżowa) chancellor Kohl was hesitant to accept the Polish-German border.

From the Polish side, a good momentum took place when in 1989 the first Polish democratic government declared that one of its main goals would be reconciliation with Germany. This idea was supported by the concept of "community of interests" of both countries first mentioned in a speech given by the Polish Foreign Minister Krzysztof Skubiszewski in February 1990 during the meeting in the German Council

on Foreign Relations (DGAP). According to the concept, the two countries not only share common values but also their cooperation is the key to stability and prosperity in Europe. The good neighbourly relations were in mutual interest. Warsaw needed German support in economic transformation and integration with European Communities and NATO. Germany wanted to prove its credibility after the process of unification.

Despite its initiation problems, the Treaty confirming the border between Poland and Germany was signed in November 1990. It was a breakthrough in the relations between the two countries but also a precondition of further normalization as territorial integrity and security of Poland was confirmed. Furthermore, after the conclusion of this Treaty, the negotiations on the agreement aimed at regulation of cooperation accelerated.

The Polish-German Treaty of Good Neighborship and Friendly Cooperation was signed in 1991. ▶

► The document laid a solid foundation for future cooperation in different fields such as security, economy, environment, and youth exchange. It regulated the question of Polish citizens of German origin. The German community in Poland, a very important issue for Germany, was awarded minority status and allowed to cultivate their language and culture. Germany undertook the obligation to support Poland's membership in the European Communities. Regular meetings of the governments and state officials were established. Treaty also set a program of cooperation especially in economic/financial/youth/cultural/regional matters which set out the role for reconciliation. In the following years, a wide nexus of different organizations envisaged by the Treaty was set up to enhance rapprochement and cooperation between the two countries, and a number of issues causing conflicts were solved. In 2000, the German Bundestag established the Foundation "Remembrance, Responsibility and Future", which was in charge of the distribution of funds for the

victims of forced labour. Two Euro regions were established to integrate the Polish economy with the EU: Euroregions Spree – Nysa – Bóbr and Pro Europa Viadrina.

The Polish-German reconciliation process has evolved at the bilateral level but with the support of the strong European (EU) and transatlantic (NATO) structures which used the conditionality mechanisms at the beginning of the process. The unification of Germany was conditioned with the recognition of the Oder and Neisse border with Poland and the Polish aspirations to join the EU and NATO were the powerful motivation and implicit engine behind the first phase of the reconciliation process. Additionally, Poland actively participated in the Visegrad group and CEFTA, as regional structures supporting the aspirations of the - then-candidate countries - for the EU and NATO membership. A desire to leave the Eastern Bloc dominated by the Soviet Union played a much stronger role than more distant memories of World War II at the moment when the reconciliation process started.

But some of the bilateral issues are still subject to dispute and some tensions still occur on the horizon especially when sensitive issues in dealing with the past are subject to discussion. For the Polish side, for instance, actions and ideas promoted by the Centre for Expelled in Berlin, are seen as aimed at minimizing and relativizing German guilt. As for restitution and reparation, Germany addressed some

Polish claims for individual compensation. However, from time to time this issue negatively impacts the bilateral relation. For example, in 2006, the Prussian Claims Society filed claims before Polish courts and European Tribunals for German property expropriated by Poland. Polish Parliament responded by demanding reparation from Germany for devastation during World War II.

LESSONS LEARNT

Lessons learned for the Western Balkans – Despite different historical circumstances the German-Polish reconciliation process provides some concrete lessons for the Western Balkans:

1. The process of reconciliation is long-lasting.
2. Reconciliation requires the deployment of positive conditionality and mutual support.
3. Recognition of borders as the first step.
4. Religious leaders can play a positive role and encourage reconciliation.

Have Western Balkans reconciled?

If the questions posed for the German-Polish reconciliation are posed in the case of reconciliation in the Western Balkans, the differences are obvious and similarities very general. The two processes differ in the context, time span, characteristics of conflicts preceding the efforts to reconcile, number and structure of actors, dimensions, and in particular levels of institutionalization.

The reconciliation process in the Western Balkans, compared to that between Poland and Germany, is much more complicated due to the complex character of the recent wars. The dissolution of Yugoslavia happened in several phases; in the case of Slovenia, through a simulated war; in the cases of Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo through wars with the involvement of the Yugoslav/Serbian Army and paramilitary forces, followed by internal conflicts; in the case of North Macedonia the peaceful

secession took place; and similarly, much later in the case of Montenegro. There was no political/democratic capacity for the peaceful dissolution of the non-functional federation in which Serbia wanted to maintain control, but federal units wanted to gain sovereignty, with conflicting political and territorial aspirations. Besides characteristics of external aggression by Serbia and Montenegro the wars in federal units with the mixed population manifested as ethnic and religious conflicts as well. At the beginning of the nineties, at the time when Poland and Germany started their reconciliation process, fears and revindications as a legacy of previous wars in the 20th century were mobilized by the politicians in former Yugoslavia.

When the cycle of wars in the territory of former Yugoslavia finally ended after the NATO intervention in Serbia and Montenegro during the Kosovo war, a rather new regional constellation emerged instead of the previous federation. The region indeed was a blend of what remained from Yugoslavia tailored with a complex structure of animosities and

reconciliation efforts on the different levels – local, bilateral, and regional in which the direct involvement of the UN and the EU made both structures an integral part of the reconciliation process.

Two key actors of Polish-German reconciliation, political and religious leaders, in the Western Balkans, were the key actors of the conflicts and animosities. Both remained as such 20 and 25 years after the wars ended, with rare exceptions. There was a similar attempt such as the establishment of the Interreligious Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina, initiated by leaders of the four major religious groups of Bosnia and Herzegovina – Islamic Community, Orthodox, and Catholic Churches, and the Jewish Community – in 1997, intending to jointly work towards peace and reconciliation without the involvement of Serbia and Croatia. This initiative was a noble idea still alive but it did not yield results similar to what Churches have managed to achieve in the Polish-German relations.

Internal polarization of the political elites, on the other hand, has been

counterproductive in ensuring a genuine approach in the process of reconciliation. Different narratives and ideas on how to tackle reconciliation have seriously jeopardized this rather sensitive process. For instance, in Kosovo, each government has tried to create its mechanisms to deal with the past and reconciliation. This has not only reflected the lack of trust and internal unity but has caused severe discontinuations concerning this process.

The bilateral scene in the Western Balkans remained very volatile, without many sincere or even symbolic gestures of reconciliation, and with all participants in the conflicts perceiving themselves as victims and losers. The predominant discourse is one without empathy for all victims and without expression of sincere intentions to reconcile. The reconciliation process is mainly seen from the lens of tribunals – mainly through international or hybrid courts – whereas the political elites struggle to address constant denial of war crimes narrowing already minimal space for the reconciliation process to take place. ►

► Bosnia and Herzegovina, together with Serbia (then Yugoslavia) and Croatia signed the Dayton Peace Agreement in 1995, which included mutual recognition and the end of the war, but ideas of changing borders are still alive and part of the mainstream narrative. Twenty-five years after the war ended, Bosnia-Herzegovina has settled its borders only with Montenegro, but not with Croatia and Serbia. Negotiations are stalled. Kosovo and Serbia, since the war of 1999 has ended, have been going from one international negotiation process to another. The latest being the EU facilitated dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade which in the timespan of ten years has shown limited results in bringing normalcy between two parties. Negotiations have not only been stalled many times but even worse the process deteriorated to the point of seeking closure between Kosovo and Serbia long-lasting dispute through the exchange of territories along ethnic lines.

Three out of six Western Balkan members joined NATO (Montenegro, Albania, North Macedonia). Bosnia and Herzegovina

are officially in the process of joining, Kosovo aspires to join, and Serbia, on the other hand, has established high levels of cooperation with the Alliance without open aspirations to join. But Serbia also got observer status in the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) founded by Russia, and in October 2019, signed a free trade agreement with the Russia-led Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU).

However, the regional mechanisms of cooperation and implicit reconciliation, through the understanding of common interests in different areas, proceeded rather well. The EU has supported dozens of regional organizations and initiatives and in this climate, a number of them developed as autochthonous structures. The best known are the Stability Pact for SEE (1999) which transformed into the Regional Cooperation Council in 2008, Central European Free Trade Agreement 2006 (CEFTA 2006), the Energy Community (2006), and the Western Balkan Transport Community (2017).

The Centre for Democratisation and Reconciliation in Southeast Europe, which

produced a series of Joint History Textbooks, was unfortunately closed in 2019 after twenty years of successful work of historians from the region with many seminars and workshops organized for the teachers of history in the region. One of the most sustainable regional mechanisms in dealing with the past so far – albeit with many challenges – is the regional commission for the establishment of facts about war crimes and other serious violations of human rights committed in the former Yugoslavia – RECOM established in 1991. Later on, the Coalition for RECOM was established at the Fourth Regional Forum for Transitional Justice, held in 2008 in Pristina. So far, this initiative has been the widest among CSOs and received widespread support across the region making it a rather important track two mechanisms in reaching reconciliation.

All these efforts, lasting more than two decades, contributed to the increased communication and cooperation of the national administrations, local communities in the border regions,

business communities, CSOs, academic circles, artists, and others.

In the case of the Western Balkans it was facilitated by the fact that there was no language barrier – excluding here Kosovo and Albania - among part of the actors what has recreated a common cultural space, but to a more limited extent than in the former Yugoslavia. In the cases of natural disasters – fires, floods, and earthquakes, and recently the COVID-19 pandemic – a surprising level of solidarity was expressed in the region showing the capacity and will of the common people to normalize and upgrade mutual relations. Even the national administrations, which depended on the political climate, made fast and effective moves when they had a common interest. The most recent example is an easily achieved agreement on the establishment of green corridors for the basic and medical goods during the pandemic, and its fast implementation was a good indication that the Western Balkan Common Regional Market, launched at the Sofia Summit of the Berlin Process in November 2020, could be a feasible project. ▶

► Germany initiated the Berlin Process in 2014 when it became obvious that the enlargement process was not going to evolve as expected. The process contributed to the increased regional dynamics and even launched some regional reconciliation initiatives with the official signing of several documents on reconciliation and good neighbourly relations – mainly in Vienna 2015 and London 2018.⁵ It made use of existing regional structures and helped to build some new ones enhancing capacity to cooperate in designing and implementing to a certain extent numerous policies and projects in different areas.

However, the context of reconciliation is completely different as some external players are interested in keeping a status quo in the region - frozen conflicts that could be activated at any time. The growing influence and presence of China, Russia, and Turkey could result in a further decrease in the EU impact in this complex and contradictory structure of political alliances and economic interests. The US

returns to the region could in that sense play a role.

Unfortunately, the strongest leverage of post-war stabilisation, democratization, and prosperity - the enlargement process, was not effective and credible enough in the least developed and the most fragmented region which is geographically embraced by the EU. The reconciliation in the Western Balkans remained the hostage of bilateral animosities shared by the greatest part of the political class and religious institutions in the region, as well as of the unfulfilled expectations regarding the European (EU) future. However, the achievements of the Berlin Process Summits in Vienna and London show that there are political formats and appropriate forms of agreements that need to be further upgraded and implemented.

⁵ *Declaration on Bilateral Issues* was signed at the 2015 Vienna Summit by the ministers of foreign affairs from the Western Balkans.

Joint Declaration on Regional Cooperation and Good Neighbourly Relations and Joint Declarations on War Crimes and Missing Persons, was signed at the 2018 Western Balkan Summit in London. Berlin Process influenced the emergence of Six Flagship Initiatives, including the one on reconciliation and good neighbourly relations in the EC *Credible Enlargement Perspective for the Western Balkans*, of February 2018.

Lessons learnt and possibilities for their implementation

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Even within the Western Balkans, there are some similarities but also many differences in the reconciliation processes between Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Kosovo and Serbia. There is also a need for reconciliation within Bosnia-Herzegovina itself and a supportive role for Croatia, which is now an EU and NATO member state. To compare or draw lessons is therefore difficult. But still, some lessons can be learnt.

Although the current German-Polish relations are not free from tensions the results of the reconciliation process in the case of Poland and Germany are evident. After the collapse of communism, the Polish-German relations were marked by distrust and reluctance. In 1990 some 69 per cent of Poles felt personally endangered by Germans.⁶ According to the polls conducted by the Polish Institute of Public Affairs positive affection of Poles towards the Germans has visibly

increased (from 41 per cent in 2000 to 58 per cent in 2018). Practitioners underline that the creation of the nexus of various organizations dealing with different aspects of reconciliation and cooperation between two countries and engaging different groups of both societies contributed to the success of the process.

While many steps have already been made in the Western Balkans, with many operating regional institutions, policies, and activities, there is still a lot to be done. Here are some concrete ideas for the Western Balkans (but also Poland and Germany) and concrete policy proposals.

Polish-German leadership in the Berlin Process and other formats to support border agreements between Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia, Serbia and Croatia, as well as between Kosovo and Serbia

Presidents of Poland and Germany, supported by their foreign ministries, ▶

⁶ Łada, Agnieszka. Polacy i Niemcy – Wzajemny Wizerunek i Ocena Kraju Sąsiada, [in:] Skonieczny Tomasz (ed.) (Nie)Symboliczne pojednanie. Rozważania o relacjach polsko – niemieckich po 1945 roku. Fundacja „Krzyżowa” dla Porozumienia Europejskiego, Wrocław 2019, p. 65

- ▶ could explore the possibilities of supporting a process that would lead towards border agreements between Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, and Croatia, and give another push to the dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia in what is known as a solid momentum of US-EU re-alignment toward this process. These processes should be tailor-made to fit the complexities of each case and not using the fit for all approach which has been widely used so far albeit unsuccessful.

Explore possibilities for a joint work of the German-Polish churches with the Western Balkans religious communities towards reconciliation

Having an Inter-religious Council of Bosnia-Herzegovina was a noble aim that achieved certain results, but a similar attempt should be tried at the level of the Western Balkans region. Taking into account the positive experience of the German and Polish churches, with their leadership, one could consider bringing together religious communities in the Western Balkans to work together towards reconciliation.

Cross-border cooperation of local communities in the Western Balkans and with the local communities of the EU countries should be intensified

Promoting and increasing visibility of the IPA CBC and Interreg in the Western Balkans. The programmes supporting the twinning project between Western Balkans should be strengthened. More intensive cooperation with The Association of European Border Regions (AEBR) should be undertaken to exchange experience about the most effective practices of trans-border cooperation. The creation of trans-border economic clusters should also be considered.

Explore possibilities for cooperation between The Foundation for German-Polish Cooperation (FGPC) and the German-Polish Youth Office (GPYO) with the Western Balkans Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO) and other institutions working on reconciliation and regional cooperation in the Western Balkans

These institutions with similar backgrounds and aims should be able to learn from each other and explore areas where opportunities for cooperation are possible. Be it joint projects or exchange.

Invite Western Balkans political and civil society representatives to commemoration events related to Polish-German reconciliation

In 2019 the 75th anniversary of the outbreak of the Warsaw Uprising was marked with the attendance of representatives of both German and Polish political and civil society. In these and similar events, Germany and Poland should invite Western Balkans representatives to take part as observers. The seminars “Remembrance, Understanding, Future” aims at sharing the experience of Polish-German reconciliation as an inspiration for Western Balkans’ societies should be continued.

Western Balkans require tangible EU perspective, Poland together with Visegrad partners and Germany should be their advocates

The Visegrad Group is one of the main advocates for the EU integration of the Western Balkans. The V4 countries could use this and bilateral formats for involving Germany into the friends of enlargement group in the European Parliament.

The RCC and the Western Balkans governments should consider the establishment of the Western Balkans Prize

The German-Polish Prize is awarded annually to individuals or organisations from Germany and Poland for outstanding services to German-Polish relations. The RCC and the Western Balkans governments should consider the establishment of the Western Balkans Prize.

Information about the International Visegrad Fund

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The Visegrad Fund is an international donor organization, established in 2000 by the governments of the Visegrad Group countries—Czechia, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia to promote regional cooperation in the Visegrad region (V4) as well as between the V4 region and other countries, especially in the Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership regions. The Fund does so by awarding €8 million through grants, scholarships and artist residencies provided annually by equal contributions of all the V4 countries. Other donor countries (Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, South Korea, Sweden, Switzerland, the United States) have provided another €10 million through various grant schemes run by the Fund since 2012.

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Information about THINK BALKANS

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The 'Cooperation Instrument for the Western Balkans Think Tanks – THINK BALKANS' project is financially supported by the International Visegrad Fund and builds upon the previously established cooperation between the members of the Southeast European Think Net Network (SEE Think Net) and Think Visegrad as part of the 'Regional cooperation in the Western Balkans: The Berlin Process and Visegrad Group in comparison project'.

Following the successful past cooperation, the **Institute for Democracy "Societas Civilis" – Skopje (IDSCS)** is the project coordinator, which, in collaboration with the **European Movement in Serbia (EMinS)**, **Platforma CiviKos from Kosovo**, **Politikon Network from Montenegro**, **Albanian Institute for International Studies (AIIS)** from Albania, **Humanity in Action Bosnia and Herzegovina** from Bosnia and Herzegovina, **Centre for European Perspective (CEP)** from Slovenia, **Centre for Eastern Studies from Poland (OSW)**, **Institute for Foreign Affairs and Trade from Hungary (IFAT)**, the **Research Centre of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association (RC SFPA)** from Slovakia, and **EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy (EUROPEUM)** from the Czech Republic, will work in achieving the project's goals.

The project duration is 15 months, that is, from October 2020 to January 2022.

Modelling on the Think Visegrad – V4 Think Tank Platform and closely cooperating with it, this project aims to pilot an instrument for the permanent cooperation of Western

Balkan (WB) think tanks by 1) strengthening the cooperation of think tanks in V4 countries with WB think tanks/analytical institutions; 2) promoting V4 cooperation among experts / policy makers in the WB as a successful regional model open to experience sharing with countries wishing to join the EU; 3) offering V4 expertise on regional cooperation that can help strengthen regional cooperation in the Western Balkans, which represents a crucial aspect of the region's European integration; 4) providing a new platform for strengthening people-to-people links between analytical institutions, think tanks, government institutions from the V4 and the Western Balkans; 5) cultivating inter-regional cooperation between V4 and WB6 on issues of common strategic interest; and 6) encouraging the use of V4 know-how gained through Think Visegrad to help improve dialogue between the relevant state institutions in the WB countries (e.g. between the foreign ministries as well as between the WB think tanks and NGOs and the WB MFAs).

Information about the authors

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