



Poznań 2019

Western Balkans Summit

Towards a common Europe



Ministry
of Foreign Affairs
Republic of Poland

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Poznań 2019

Western Balkans Summit

Towards a common Europe

*Report on Polish presidency
in the Berlin Process
and the Western Balkans Summit*



*Szymon Szynkowski vel Sęk
Government Plenipotentiary
for the Western Balkans Summit*

DEAR SIRs,

The year 2019 marked the 15th anniversary of Poland's accession to the EU. Initially a country aspiring to EU membership and then facing the challenges of the first years of its presence in EU structures, Poland has become a country effectively realizing its potential within the European community and taking responsibility for the present and future of the EU.

The enlargement of the European Union is perceived by the Polish government as one of the strategic challenges whose effectiveness will determine EU's strength and significance for many years to come. This

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is why we are actively engaged in both the implementation of the EU enlargement policy itself and the processes supporting it. We have already built our credibility in this respect as a co-initiator of the Eastern Partnership.

Another step in the activities aimed at fostering security, stability and social and economic development in the EU's neighbourhood was Poland's 2018 accession to the so-called Berlin Process and the commitment to take up the challenge of organising the 2019 Western Balkans Summit as the crowning achievement of our presidency of the BP initiative.

Entrusting us with the Berlin Process presidency signifies the recognition of our role in European politics and previous involvement in bringing the Western Balkans and the EU closer together. This is a format that fosters more intensive collaboration in areas of key importance for the prosperity and security of the entire continent, such as the development of transport, energy and digital infrastructure and economic and social integration.

The Western Balkans are part of Europe for geographical, historical and cultural reasons. All members of the Berlin Process are facing similar challenges, and fostering collaboration in the region and between Western Balkan and EU members of the Process is beneficial for both sides, as exemplified by the continuing growth of infrastructural connections. The Process is also a strong political

stimulus for reforming Western Balkans and serves as an excellent forum on which politicians, public administrators, international organizations, entrepreneurs, members of civil society and youth organizations can meet, offering a space for dialogue between the stakeholders who are key to successful reforms.

Poland took the decision to become involved in the Berlin Process since she reasoned that, with her baggage of political, economic and social transformation experience and the still active institutional memory of the EU accession process, she will be able to contribute added value to the process and provide inspiration for Western Balkans. The similarity of historical experiences and cultural proximity underpinned Poland's understanding of the Western Balkans region and contributed to a successful presidency. Sharing good practices developed during the accession period was reflected in actions undertaken throughout 2019 on both political and expert levels.

The context for Poland's involvement in the Berlin Process is her invariable support for EU's "open door" policy. The political message of the Polish presidency, emphatically put forward by the President of the Republic of Poland Andrzej Duda and the Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki in their speeches opening the meeting of leaders, was unequivocal: Poland is an advocate of bringing the region of Western Balkans closer to the perspective of EU membership.

The Berlin Process supports and supplements the EU enlargement policy and cannot be treated as either an alternative to accession or replicating efforts undertaken as part of the enlargement. Regional collaboration, infrastructural links and economic and social integration, developed as part of the Process, support the region's growth and the progress noted by Western Balkans on the path towards the EU, while the intergovernmental and informal character of the format provides the required flexibility.

At the same time, we are convinced that a policy of enlargement based on the principle of conditionality, i.e. advancing the accession process once the candidate countries have met certain requirements, remains the most effective EU instrument stabilizing and

increasing the prosperity of neighbouring countries and should therefore be continued. On the other hand, it is the duty of the Member States and the EU institutions to send to Western Balkans positive stimuli and incentives to follow the path of European integration. Poland appreciates the increased activity of the European Commission in the Western Balkans, including the document titled *A credible enlargement perspective for and enhanced EU engagement with the Western Balkans*, issued in February 2018, which confirmed accession prospects as real. A clear sign of interest in the region is the European Union–Western Balkans Summit held in Sofia for the first time in fifteen years during the Bulgarian Presidency in the EU Council, with another summit in this format planned to take place in May 2020 in Croatia.



Polish President Andrzej Duda, Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki and German Chancellor Angela Merkel during the Leaders' Summit in Poznań

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The Polish presidency in the Berlin Process has also drawn upon earlier experiences derived from engagement in the region, at both political and technical levels. Poland is actively supporting the enlargement policy with respect to the Western Balkans. In June 2019, she was one of the thirteen countries that issued a joint declaration calling EU countries to fulfil their commitment on integrating the Western Balkans and make a decision to commence negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia. Previously a similar position was taken and consistently promoted by the V4 countries.

By the decision of Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki, Poznań was chosen as the host city of the Western Balkans Summit in Poland. This thriving academic centre, with its rich, 90-year-old traditions of a trade fair city, has become not only an arena for meetings of government and ministerial leaders filled with content, but also – in line with the previously adopted assumptions of the Polish presidency – a place for social integration and discussion with a broad participation of civil society. The format of the Civil Society Forum, expanded by the Polish presidency, the new format of the Think Tank Forum and the invitation of representatives of non-governmental organisations to debate with decision-makers created new added value, which Poland leaves behind as its legacy. Supplementing the presidency with numerous accompanying events in the fields of culture and science, both in the region and in Poznań, made it possible to create new social ties and build a strong

brand of Poland as a country involved in the process of grassroots integration between the region and the EU.

The countries in the region are now facing challenges that will impact not only their own future but that of the European Union as well. The year-long Polish presidency efforts to support our Western Balkan partners were crowned by the Western Balkans Summit in Poznań. The results of the presidency include progress in the reform process, new initiatives to integrate economies in the region – addressed among others to local governments, more extensive contacts between societies in the region and stronger participation of civil society in public debate about the European future of Western Balkans. Poland also decided to make specific financial contributions to projects in the Western Balkans.

All of this represents our common and solid achievements, which we hope will be used in the course of future Berlin Process presidencies and as part of the progress made under the EU's enlargement policy.

I wish you a pleasant reading as you learn about the course and accomplishments of the Polish presidency.

I take the opportunity to thank all who contributed to the success of our presidency.

Szymon Szyrkowski vel Sęk

The Berlin Process – maintain the dialogue, enhance mutual connections

THE BERLIN PROCESS (BP) is an initiative supporting regional cooperation and economic development of the Western Balkans and complementing the EU enlargement policy. BP was inaugurated by a meeting of the heads of government in Berlin in 2014, with further summits taking place in Vienna (2015), Paris (2016), Trieste (2017) and London (2018). This collaboration framework encompasses the Western Balkans region – which consists of candidates and

potential candidates aspiring to EU membership: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia – as well as several EU member states: Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland, Slovenia and the United Kingdom. Actions undertaken in the Berlin Process also involve the European Commission, international financial institutions, and international and regional organizations. Poland joined the process in 2018 following an



Prime Minister Theresa May, Chancellor Angela Merkel and Foreign Minister Jacek Czaputowicz
– the Leaders' Meeting at the Western Balkans Summit, 5 July 2019, Poznań

invitation from the German chancellor Angela Merkel, taking part in the Summit in London and the accompanying meetings on ministerial level. In 2019, Poland presided over the Berlin Process and, following the decision of Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki, organized the Western Balkans Summit in Poznań.

The main priority in the Berlin Process is given to enhancing regional cooperation in economic and social areas, and its flagship initiative is the *Connectivity Agenda* established in 2014 – a complex plan to develop transport, energy and telecommunications

infrastructure to integrate Western Balkans, accelerate the economic growth of the region and tighten its links to the EU. More intense economic collaboration is to be achieved via the *Multi-annual Action Plan for a Regional Economic Area (MAP REA)* adopted in 2017 in Trieste, aimed at supporting the free movement of goods, services, investments and workers in the region.

bilateral disputes and striving for reconciliation between societies in the region. During the Vienna summit, the heads of government of Balkan countries agreed to resolve bilateral disputes in the spirit of good neighbourly relations. As an addendum to the meeting, two border delimitation agreements have been signed: between Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina and between Montenegro and Kosovo*. In 2018, North Macedonia signed a breakthrough agreement with Greece that put an end to a dispute concerning the former's official state name. Regional collaboration in the region on societal level is furthered by the Civil Society Forum or-

An essential component of the Berlin Process are human contacts and good neighbourly relations

An essential component of the Berlin Process are human contacts and good neighbourly relations. This stems from the assumption that fostering economic collaboration in the region is contingent on good cooperation on bilateral and regional level. Accordingly, the Process places strong emphasis on resolving

organized since 2015 in parallel with each BP summit. This also provides an opportunity to involve non-governmental organizations, experts and activists in the reform process. In turn, youth collaboration is intensified thanks to the establishment in 2016 of the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO) with its seat in Tirana.

The third priority of the Berlin Process are issues related to broadly understood security and the fight against corruption and organized crime. Within the Process, actions have been taken to limit corrupt practices and intensify collaboration concerning security. Projects are also carried out to curb arms dealing or drug trafficking.

Polish presidency – sharing experiences and good practices

OFFERING THE PRESIDENCY TO POLAND and holding the summit in a country that in 2019 celebrated the 15th anniversary of joining the EU was a very positive political signal for those participating in the process. During the presidency, Poland has leveraged her still fresh experiences related to joining the UE and the institutional memory preserved in the public administration to share her experiences and good practices from that period. The political message of the Polish presidency was unequivocal: The Berlin Process supports and supplements the EU enlargement policy and cannot be treated as either an alternative to accession or replicating efforts undertaken as part of the enlargement.

The process of integrating the Western Balkans with the European Union is of key importance for the stability and security of the continent as a whole and therefore is the best instrument of change and a strong stimulus to introduce reforms and economic growth in the region. Poland was involved in the process of stabilizing the Balkans, actively participating in peacekeeping missions in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo*, and is now supporting those aspiring to membership on political and technical level. Poland is also an active member of the “friends of enlargement”, an informal group of countries seeking to maintain the pace of opening subsequent negotiation chapters or sup-

porting the “pro-enlargement” EU positions. Polish involvement in the Western Balkans has significantly increased in recent years as exemplified by intensification of high-level political dialogue, including numerous meetings between presidents, ministers of foreign affairs and ministers of defence. On the technical level, Poland is sharing her transformation success and the experiences gained while implementing the often tough pre-accession reforms during the bilateral conferences in Skopje (since 2010), Belgrade (since 2017) and Tirana (since 2018), which are annual meetings of European integration experts from various sectors, coordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Since 2015, the MFA has also been carrying out the Enlargement Academy project addressed to government officials from the Western Balkans region. The Academy combines topics falling within the competencies of various ministers (such as European integration, security, agriculture, economy, the judiciary) which are of paramount importance in the process of adapting regulations to the *acquis communautaire*. The training follows the recommendations of the European Commission found in the enlargement package. The fifth edition of the Academy took place in late May/early June in Warsaw as Poland was getting ready for the summit. Poland is also supporting local communities of Western Balkans, providing development aid through the small grants programme.

Polish priorities – clear goals, specific actions

IN ORDER to ensure inter-ministerial coordination of the preparations for and proper performance during the Polish presidency in the Berlin Process, the Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki had appointed a government plenipotentiary responsible for this issue. This function was entrusted to the Secretary of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Szymon Szynkowski vel Sęk. The MFA also appointed the Poznań 2019 Western Balkan Summit Organization Support Team of seven members, coordinated by ambassador Wiesław Tarka.

The Polish presidency programme was designed on the basis of extensive consultations with Western Balkans conducted in the autumn of 2018 at the level of the Government Plenipotentiary for the Western Balkans Summit. The consultations were of decisive importance for choosing priority areas. Poland also attached considerable importance to close collaboration with EU member states participating in the Berlin Process (paying particular regard to previous presidencies), as well as with the European Commission, regional and international organizations (such as RCC, RYCO, OECD) and international financial institutions (EBRD, EIB).

Strengthening the involvement of civil society in the Berlin Process was one of the key objectives of the presidency. Hence, an important stage of the summit run-up involved thematic consultations with representatives of non-governmental sectors (so-called national round tables) in six capitals of the region. The first meeting, organized by the Civil Society Forum of the Western Balkans (CSF WB), took place in Belgrade on 25 January 2019 as a discussion panel open for the public and the media. The second meeting was held in Tirana on 25 February 2019 and focused on the living conditions for young people in the WB region. The third debate, arranged in Podgorica on 26 February 2019, was devoted to relations and collaboration between central state administration and the non-governmental sector. The fourth meeting, which took place in Sarajevo on 28 February 2019, dealt with the assessment of previous summits and the expectations related to the Polish presidency. The series of meetings was concluded in Pristina on 25 April 2019 where the main topic of discussion was the involvement of experts and the nongovernmental sector in the Berlin Process.

Another valuable factor in the process of shaping the Polish presidency were national debates. The results of individual meetings were discussed at a regional conference of experts entitled “Reinforcing the European

format debates dealt with issues such as security, establishing democratic institutions in the region that would be resistant to outside influences, and resolution of bilateral disputes.



Reinforcing the European Integration of the Western Balkans. Skopje, 13-14.05.2019

integration of the Western Balkans – Learning from the Past, Preparing for the Future” which took place at the regional Think Tank Forum in Skopje (13-14 May). The conference was organized by the Centre for Eastern Studies and the Institute for Democracy “Societas Civilis” Skopje (IDSCS) in cooperation with the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The plenary sessions focused on integration experiences of Central European countries, internal EU challenges and the future of the enlargement policy. A series of round-table

The Polish presidency programme for the Berlin Process was adopted by the Council of Ministers on 1 April 2019. It was assumed that the presidency would include not only the Poznań summit, but the entire year of activity on both political and expert levels. The related activities spanned four priority areas:

1. economy;
2. connectivity;
3. civil dimension;
4. security.

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As regards the first priority, the background for Polish presidency actions was the *Multi-annual Action Plan for a Regional Economic Area (MAP REA)* adopted by prime ministers of Western Balkans at the 2017 Trieste summit, whose four pillars – trade, investment, mobility and digital integration – were reflected in the topics of political meetings (especially the meeting of BP ministers of economy) and supporting events. Actions were also taken to intensify economic cooperation between the EU and Western Balkans and to stimulate economic growth by, among others, support for young entrepreneurs. The latter scheme was aided by initiatives undertaken by the Ministry of Entrepreneurship and Technology (MET). In the first half of July, the MET held the first series of study visits of young leaders from the Western Balkans and EU member states in Poland. The Polish International Leadership Visiting Programme was established to present Poland as an active EU member receptive to economic collaboration and provided opportunities for an exchange of good practices and networking between young leaders. During the study visit, they not only participated in the Western Balkans Summit, but also toured a number of innovative enterprises.

Poland also took up the matter of why statistics is important when making decisions and shaping policies, among others in the context of the approaching round of population censuses and the role of foreign migrations, with particular emphasis on combining geospatial and statistical infor-

mation. On 24-25 April 2019, the Central Statistical Office organized a meeting with the management and experts of statistical offices from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia, as well as Denmark and Greece, and the representatives of Eurostat and OECD. The meeting was also attended by representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Entrepreneurship and Technology.

In line with the presidency priorities, Poland contributed EUR 0.5 million to the Western Balkans Investment Framework to support economic development in the region and the expansion of infrastructural connections. The first agreement on this issue was signed on 4 July at the Western Balkans summit between ERBD, EIB and the Republic of Poland.

In the area of security, Poland as part of her presidency continued the theme of fighting corruption, previously started by Italy. This issue was later taken over by the UK presidency and extended to include the fight against organized crime. On 6 March 2019, a seminar entitled „From London to Poznań: Anti-Corruption Pledges, Countering Organised Crime and the Role of Civil Society in the Berlin Process” took place in Warsaw. The seminar was organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the British Embassy in Poland and the international organization Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime. The event was attended by representatives of nongovernmental organ-



Signing of the agreement with EBRD and EIB
by the Government Plenipotentiary Sz.Szynkowski vel Sęk

izations such as Transparency International or the Helsinki Committee, researchers and academicians from the Western Balkans, delegates of the UK Home Office and Foreign Office, as well as employees of the Italian Embassy and the European Commission. The main topic of the meeting was monitoring of the implementation of the commitments to counter corruption and organized crime, which Western Balkans undertook at the London summit. Strengthening regional cooperation between centres dealing with these issues was also discussed. On 20 May in Vienna, Global Initiative organized a seminar “From Trieste to London to Poznań: Mapping local vulnerabilities in the Western Balkans”, devoted to regional links between organized crime groups, which was attended by a Polish delegate. Poland decided to support the Global Initiative project addressed to Western Balkan Countries

– the Civil Society Observatory to Counter Organized Crime in South-Eastern Europe – and allocated the amount of PLN 100,000 for this purpose. Poland also supported the joint French-German initiative to curb arms dealing and assigned PLN 180,000 for an action plan concerning small arms and light weapons (SALW).

The Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration, in collaboration with the National Police Headquarters, organized a training session for Western Balkan law enforcement representatives on discovering and fighting illegal drugs manufacturing. The training took place at the International Training Centre for Combating Clandestine Laboratories (ITCCCL) in Legionowo.

A horizontal priority of the Polish presidency were young people. This theme was pres-

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ent at both sectoral meetings and in special actions devoted to this issue. Supporting the education and developing the potential of young people in the Western Balkans is a key factor in further development of this region and the condition for reconciliation and good neighbourly relations. On 29-31 May the Ministry of National Education, in collaboration with the Foundation for the Development of the Education System, organized in Warsaw an international seminar entitled “Digital Youth Work and Innovation”. The meeting was attended by young people and youth activists from the Berlin Process and Eastern Partnership members. Its objective was to extend the knowledge on digital tools used when working with young people and on innovative activities in non-formal education. A debate on challenges related to activity in cyberspace was attended by, among others, officials from the Ministry of National Education, RYCO, the Information Processing Centre – National Research Institute and the European Union–Council of Europe Partnership Programme.

A number of programmes coordinated by the National Agency for Academic Exchange are open to young people from Western Balkans. In February, the Western Balkans were admitted to the Stefan Banach scholarship programme. Poland is also funding 6 scholarships for WB students (one per partner) at the European College in Natolin, and provides significant financial support to projects carried out in the region by RYCO.

For several years, Poland has been undertaking initiatives directed at the reconciliation process in the context of activities dedicated to young people. The week from 16 to 22 June saw the third edition of the “Memory, Understanding, Future” seminar for young people from the Western Balkans, Poland and Germany. The project is carried out by the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in Warsaw and the Krzyżowa Foundation for Mutual Understanding in Europe in collaboration with the European Commission’s Regional Representation in Wrocław. The seminar focuses on presenting various aspects of Polish-German relations in the context of challenges posed by the process of reconciliation between nations. The purpose of the workshop is to inspire young people to overcome divisions and build a common European future.

Poland intends to continue collaborating with Western Balkans as regards education and cooperation of young people. In 2020, a forum on university education and science systems with the participation of Polish institutions and guests from Western Balkans will be organized. Also in 2020, the Polish Academy of Sciences will hold a “Joint Science Conference”, to be attended by representatives of national academies of sciences, leading universities and research organizations, and eminent scientists. These annual conferences are devoted to challenges faced by the university education and scientific research systems in the Western Balkans.

Before the Poznań summit – a packed schedule of events



Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs – 11–12 April 2019, Warsaw

THE POZNAŃ SUMMIT was preceded by a host of political and expert events. Among others, on 21 February Podgorica saw a meeting of Western Balkan ministers of energy and environmental protection, organized by Montenegro. A *Joint statement on transition to low-emission energy systems* was then adopted. The Western Balkan countries have declared that they will attempt to align with the EU energy, climate and environmental protection policies as soon as possible. They will also work on the ambitious Green Agenda plan, to be unveiled at the EU-Western

Balkans summit that will take place in Croatia in 2020.

On 4 April, the second Digital Summit took place in Belgrade. At the meeting, participants signed an agreement providing for a gradual phasing-out of roaming fees between Western Balkan countries by 2021. The growth of broadband networks, giving a boost to cybersecurity, programmes to support scientific research and innovation, and plans to establish a regional platform on digital threats were also discussed.

**The first meeting of BP Ministers of Foreign Affairs.
More reflection on difficult questions**



Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs – 11–12 April 2019, Warsaw

On 11–12 April in Warsaw, following the invitation extended by the Minister of Foreign Affairs Jacek Czaputowicz, a meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Berlin Process participant took place.¹ The main discussion topics included the situation of young people in the region and the quite difficult area of outstanding bilateral issues. North Macedonia, Greece and Bulgaria presented experiences and good practices that led to the Prespa agreement and the *Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation and Good Neighbourly Relations*. The meeting allowed to summarize the work done as part of stocktake seminars in Vienna and Skopje. The Warsaw discussion was attended, besides delegates of Berlin Process participants, also

by representatives of the European Commission, European External Action Service and the Romanian presidency of the EU Council. A report outlining the progress on solving outstanding bilateral issues has subsequently been attached to the Presidency's conclusions. The Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Berlin Process were also hosted at the Presidential Palace by President Andrzej Duda. The discussion, whose departure point was the presentation of the RYCO Secretary General, concerned the reforms of the Western Balkans in the context of the prospects for the young generation, the lack of which causes young people to migrate away from the region and sours public sentiments.²

¹ *Foreign ministers of the Berlin Process met in Warsaw to discuss bilateral issues and the situation of young people*, <https://www.gov.pl/web/diplomacy/foreign-ministers-of-the-berlin-process-met-in-warsaw-to-discuss-bilateral-issues-and-the-situation-of-young-people>

² *Spotkanie Prezydenta z ministrami spraw zagranicznych Procesu Berlińskiego [A meeting of the President with foreign affairs ministers of Berlin Process countries]*, <https://www.prezydent.pl/aktualnosci/wydarzenia/art,1373,spotkanie-prezydenta-z-ministrami-spraw-zagranicznych-procesu-berlinskiego.html>

The Forum of Cities and Regions. Extending the channels for dialogue and exchange of experiences

The Forum of Cities and Regions was organized by the Ministry of Investment and Economic Development in Rzeszów-Jasionka from 4 to 6 June. Forum guests included ministers and experts representing over a dozen participants involved in the Berlin Process, representatives of the European Commission, European Investment Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Committee of the Regions, local government units and non-governmental organizations. Poland was represented by, among others,

closer together, improves trust between nations, and leads to dialogue about common history and relations between cultures, which is of key importance for the Western Balkan region. As part of the forum, the Ministry of Infrastructure organized a session devoted to the Via Carpatia project, a pivotal international road corridor linking the Baltic Sea, Black Sea, Aegean Sea and Adriatic Sea basins. In addition, the Association of Polish Cities, the Association of the Provinces of the Republic of Poland and the NALAS (Network

The forum was devoted to international cooperation between local governments and their role in stimulating regional and local development

the Minister of Investment and Economic Development Jerzy Kwieciński and the Marshal of Podkarpackie Province Władysław Ortyl.

The forum was devoted to international cooperation between local governments and their role in stimulating regional and local development. Experiences on partner collaboration in implementing projects as part of Interreg, the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance, and the European Neighbourhood Instrument were shared. The participants stressed that local government cooperation has a very important role in building good neighbourly relations on internal and external EU borders, as it draws societies

of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe³) prepared a session on local government in the context of improving the quality of public services and using EU funds. The European Commission partnered a session on the transformation of mining regions. The forum was a unique event that complemented the Berlin Process with a regional dimension. Opening the forum, the Minister of Investment and Economic Development Jerzy Kwieciński stressed that: “for us, Western Balkans were, are and will be part of Europe. For this reason, Poland strongly supports their aspirations to join the EU.”

³ A network of 14 local government associations from South-Eastern European countries.

The Western Balkans Summit in Poznań – three days of intense dialogue

FROM 3 TO 5 JULY, Poznań was the venue of a broad dialogue between European Union and Western Balkan delegates. Participants included heads of governments and ministers of the Berlin Process participants, EU commissioners, heads of international organizations and financial institutions, and representatives of civil society and business. Linking the main pavilion that hosted the summit of leaders and ministerial level meetings with the pavilions accommodating the Civil Society Forum, Business Forum and OECD Forum debates by means of a special corridor symbolized both the drive to seek maximum synergy between political decision-makers on the one hand and members of civil society and expert groups on the other hand, and the distance that remains to be covered in this area. The agenda of the Poznań meetings shortened this distance by including the representatives of civil society in the debates of political leaders, and doing so for the first time to such an extent.

The tone of the leader summit was set by the speeches made by President Andrzej Duda and Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki, both of whom have spoken firmly and clearly in favour of enlarging the EU to include Western Balkans, referring to Polish experiences and the challenges faced by the whole con-

tinent. Locating the summit in Poznań – the capital of the Wielkopolska region and a city located halfway between Warsaw and Berlin, had a symbolic meaning.

The entire summit was attended by about 1,500 guests, including 300 from the business community and 350 from non-governmental organizations. Locating all events at the Poznań International Fairs site facilitated contacts between participants hailing from the government, civil society and business. It also allowed to organize discussion panels attended simultaneously by ministers, members of international institutions and organizations, non-governmental organizations, and the business world. The summit plainly demonstrated the rich and multi-threaded nature of the Berlin Process in all forms of its activity.

On 4 July three ministerial meetings (ministers of foreign affairs, internal affairs and economy) took place, followed by a meeting of leaders on 5 July. On 3 and 4 July, supporting events such as the Think Tank Forum, Civil Society Forum, Business Forum and the Poland-OECD conference were held. The plenary session of the Leaders' Summit and the ministerial meetings were attended by organizations playing a major role in sup-



The Western Balkans Summit – the Leaders' Meeting, 5 July 2019, Poznań

porting social and economic development of Western Balkans: the European Investment Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO) as well as the European Commission represented by its Vice-President and High Representative.

Discussions during the leader summit focused on economy (development of infrastructure, action plan for the Regional Economic Area and youth entrepreneurship), the future of the Berlin Process, and European perspective of the Western Balkans. The invitation to attend the 5 July Leaders' Summit was accepted by 13 heads of govern-

ment, while two countries were represented by ministers. The prime ministers of all Western Balkans were present.

The Western Balkan Summit also featured a meeting of the ministers of economy. Poland was represented by Minister of Entrepreneurship and Technology Jadwiga Emilewicz. The discussion focused on key factors to stimulate and maintain economic growth and entrepreneurship, such as economic potential, the infrastructural investments package (*connectivity*), access to financing for small and medium enterprises and start-ups in particular, and spurring innovation. The second session was devoted to implementing MAP REA and the future agenda of the Regional Economic Area.

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During the meeting of ministers of interior affairs at which Poland was represented by Minister Elżbieta Witek, participants reaffirmed their London commitments as regards information exchange by law enforcement agencies, recognizing the need to intensify the mutual transfer of strategic and operational information in real time using state-of-the-art methods and tools. For Western Balkans, the meeting was an opportunity to showcase their progress in implementing a plan of action to permanently resolve the issue of illegal possession and improper use of small arms and light weapons (SALW) and ammunition, including dealing in these items in the region. The participants were pleased to accept political and financial support for implementing the plan granted by the European Commission, as well as the offers of bilateral projects extended by individual

partner states. The validity of anti-corruption obligations undertaken last year by Western Balkans was affirmed. The discussion demonstrated that fighting corruption remained a priority for the region, and the participants decided to focus on sharing good practices and ensure practical implementation of national anti-corruption strategies and plans of action.

At their meeting, ministers of foreign affairs discussed the European perspective of the Western Balkans, the future of the Berlin Process, and regional cooperation. At the plenary sessions, presentations were given (and the entire discussion of ministers listened to) by representatives of civil society from all six Western Balkan participants and the umbrella organization European Fund for the Balkans.



Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, 4 July 2019, Poznań

The Western Balkans Business Forum. Economy as a common link



Business Forum, the Western Balkans Summit, 4 July 2019, Poznań

The meeting of the ministers of economy was accompanied by the Western Balkans Business Forum organized by the Polish Investment and Trade Agency, with some 300 participants in attendance. The Forum consisted of three components: debate panels, exhibition space and B2B talks. The event's focus was on cooperation between the digital, energy, and agricultural and food sectors. The debates were attended by, among others, the EU Commissioner for Transport Violeta Bulc, the secretary of state at the Ministry of Digital Affairs Karol Okoński, the ministers of economy and finance of Albania, Kosovo* and North Macedonia, and officials representing EBI, the World Bank and EBRD. The panels were devoted to business financing, social entrepreneurship, digital transformation, energy market and transport infrastructure

transformation, and skills of use to the next generation. For the first time in the history of the Berlin Process the economic part was so important and open to all entrepreneurs. A large number of companies that booked a place at the Forum demonstrated the interest of the Polish business community in expanding to the Western Balkan markets.

When preparing the summit, Poland collaborated closely with the OECD. On 4 July, in parallel with the Business Forum and the Civil Society Forum, a joint high level conference entitled „The Western Balkans in Global Markets: New Opportunities for Trade and Investment” took place. The conference saw the unveiling of the *Global South East Europe: Unleashing the Transformation Potential for Growth in the Western Balkans*

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OECD Conference during the Western Balkans Summit, 4 July 2019, Poznań - from left: Szymon Szyrkowski vel Sęk, Secretary of State, MFA, Jacek Czaputowicz, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Angel Gurría, Secretary General, OECD, Jadwiga Emilewicz, Minister of Entrepreneurship and Technology.



One of the panels of the Business Forum in Poznań – from left: Jadwiga Emilewicz, Minister of Entrepreneurship and Technology; Angel Gurría, Secretary General, OECD; Majlinda Bregu, Secretary General, RCC.

report financed by the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Discussion panels during the conference were attended by the Minister of Foreign Affairs Jacek Czaputowicz, Minister of Entrepreneurship and Technology Jadwiga Emilewicz, OECD Secretary General José Ángel Gurría, Director General for

Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG-NEAR) Christian Danielsson, and ministers of economy/entrepreneurship of the countries involved in the Berlin Process. The collaboration with the OECD was aligned with the priorities of the Polish presidency that gave precedence to economy.

The Civil Society Forum. Nothing about the citizens without the citizens

The Civil Society Forum is a framework established as part of the Berlin Process and used for collaboration, consultation and exchange of thoughts and experiences between non-governmental organizations and civil society representatives. Involving civil society was a priority of the presidency, as well as of the summit itself, from the very start. This was reflected at the early stage of preparations for the presidency – in autumn 2018, the plenipotentiary's consultations in the region involved not only meetings with politicians, but also with representatives of the nongovernmental sector. Poland collaborated, among others, with the European Fund for the Balkans which also provided a series of analyses presented during the summit as part of the Civil Society Forum of the Western Balkans.⁴

On 4 July, a large body of experts and activists met at the Poznań International Fairs to discuss both the present and the future of the Western Balkan region with politi-

cians from partners involved in the Berlin Process and business community members. Among numerous meetings in this format, the following panels took place: *Local initiatives solving local problems* (with the participation of the minister of investments and development Jerzy Kwieciński and the Bulgarian deputy prime minister and minister of foreign affairs Ekaterina Zakharieva) and *Overcoming the legacy of the past. Better environment for better living* with the participation of Commissioner Johannes Hahn, minister of foreign affairs of Macedonia Nikola Dimitrov, ambassador Artur Lorkowski representing the Polish presidency of UNFCCC, and members of non-governmental organizations involved in environmental protection in the Western Balkans, devoted to a discussion of pro-environmental investments, particularly in renewable energy sources, cleaner production and consumption, but also addressing improved quality of water, air and the natural environment. An interesting discussion on entrepreneurship and social innovation also took place during the *Between business and*

⁴ <https://wb-csf.eu/csf-publications>

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activism panel. The *Stories from the Balkans* event that closed the Civil Society Forum gave young entrepreneurs from the region an opportunity to showcase their business initiatives that transform the dynamically growing societies in their countries.

In addition, for the first time civil society members not only gave presentations to ministers, but also selected a regional seven-strong team to participate in the entire plenary session of the meeting of Ministers

of Foreign Affairs. Extending the ministerial meeting format was appreciated by civil society organizations. The scale of involvement of civil society during the Western Balkans Summit was certainly larger than ever before. The format was considered ground-breaking, as it allowed actual interaction between political, business and civil society groups and independent experts. This allowed to strongly emphasize the role to be played by civil society in the reforms necessary for the integration process.

The expert dimension. How to leverage the knowledge and experiences of a civil society in the region

A dialogue involving civil society members and experts was one of the key components of Polish presidency in the Berlin Process. Expert groups are playing a considerable role in the Berlin Process: they monitor the fulfilment of obligations of Western Balkans and also prepare analyses and recommendations prior to political level meetings. Poland initiated a new format for meetings of expert institutions – the Think Tank Forum – to formalize their involvement in the Berlin Process. This cooperation platform supports the collaboration of expert and non-governmental organizations from the Western Balkans and EU to develop joint proposals for solutions to the issues of importance for the region. Hence, it provided important substantive support for Poland as the country hosting the Western Balkans Summit. By way of example, in the project entitled *Regional cooperation in the Western Balkans – The Ber-*

lin Process and Visegrad Group in comparison a network of think tanks from the Western Balkans, SEE Think Net Network, coordinated by the Institute for Democracy “Societas Civilis” Skopje, provided a number of recommendations on priority areas of collaboration within the Berlin Process.

The Think Tank Forum took place on 3 July⁵ as part of the Poznań summit. The conference, organized by the Centre of Eastern Studies in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was devoted to evaluating previous achievements within the Berlin Process in the social and economic aspect and discussing recommendations to in-

⁵ *Forum Think Tanków w ramach szczytu Bałkanów Zachodnich w Poznaniu [The Think Tank Forum at the Western Balkans Summit in Poznań]*, <https://www.osw.waw.pl/pl/wydarzenia/forum-think-tankow-w-ramach-szczytu-balkanow-zachodnich-w-poznaniu>

crease the effectiveness of the enlargement policy and Berlin Process instruments. The leading motif of the first panel was regional cooperation as regards integration of Western Balkan economies in terms of the infrastructure and extending trade cooperation. The second session was devoted to social and economic issues and main challenges hindering the region's development, such as problems with effective rule of law. The third session dealt with broader reflections of Western Balkan experts on the effective-

ness of the current EU policy towards the region and the initiatives taken within the framework of the Berlin Process. Proposals were put forward to make EU actions in the Western Balkans more effective and to expedite the social and economic transformation and integration with the EU. The recommendations resulting from this cycle of debates were presented at ministerial meetings accompanying the Western Balkans Summit in Poznań.

Conclusions of the summit

The events preceding the Western Balkans Summit and the debates at various levels held in Poznań from 3 to 5 July were reflected in conclusions drafted by the Polish presidency.

At the summit, projects to support infrastructure interconnections and entrepreneurship were announced. The new connectivity package includes 8 transport and energy projects worth EUR 180 million.⁶ Once implemented, they will allow to construct and modernize more than 100 kilometres of railways, 30 kilometres of motorways, 100 kilometres of electric energy transmission lines and 68 kilometres of gas pipelines. An amount of EUR 15 million was allocated to improving road safety and operation

of border crossings, while EUR 1.65 million was earmarked for developing broadband Internet in Albania, Montenegro and North Macedonia.

The countries participating in the summit were pleased to see the signing on 21 January of the Agreement on the Permanent Secretariat of the Transport Community which was launched on 6 May. In parallel, a plan of action to design a regional railway strategy was announced.

The European Commission signed letters of intent with international financial institutions with a view to boosting the Western Balkans Enterprise Development and Innovation Facility with EUR 20 million to support small and medium enterprises.

During the summit, Western Balkan leaders signed the Roma Integration Declaration,

⁶ This is in addition to 31 infrastructural projects already underway; https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/connectivity_agenda_brochure.pdf

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promising to undertake specific actions in the pre-accession period on behalf of this community as regards employment, housing policy, education, health care or civil registers. On 4 July the declaration was the subject of a debate at the Business Forum, with the participation of German deputy minister of foreign affairs Michael Roth and Macedonian minister of foreign affairs Nikola Dimitrov.

At the Poznań summit, South-Eastern Europe countries signed a memorandum on framework cooperation for the purpose of establishing the South-East Europe International Institute for Sustainable Technologies (SSEIST) located in Montenegro.

France proposed a new form of parliamentary dialogue that would be initiated prior to the next summit.

More familiarity equals better understanding

THE POLISH PRESIDENCY in the Berlin Process was an exceptional opportunity to form a positive image of the Western Balkans in Poland and intensify Polish-Balkan relations. A distinguishing feature of the presidency were cultural events that brought societies from the region and Poland, the summit's organizer, closer together. Thanks to them, presidency in the Berlin Process clearly went beyond the political and expert dimension. From 13 to 18 May, Poznań hosted the Balkan Culture Week – an event organized jointly with the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, promoting the culture of Western Balkans and relations between that region and Poland. In addition, the Balkan Film Fest was also held in May, followed

by the Balkan Weekend as part of the Guitar Academy Festival in August and the Balkan Rendezvous (an event to sum up the sequence of cultural events accompanying the Summit) in October.

On 29 May 2019, Warsaw hosted the conference entitled *Western Balkans: infrastructure and energy from a geopolitical viewpoint*, organized by the Warsaw Institute. The discussion was attended by representatives of scientific institutes from Western Balkans. The conference dealt with issues related to the benefits derived from European integration, implementation of major infrastructural projects (Via Carpatia, Via Baltica), energy security issues in the Balkans and the region's



Balkan Randevous in Poznań – 5 October 2019, Poznań

stability in the face of growing involvement of countries such as China, Russia or Turkey in the area.

The Institute for Western Affairs, partnering with the Institute of Slavonic Philology of the Faculty of Classical and Polish Philology and the Faculty of Political Sciences and Journalism of the Adam Mickiewicz University, organized very valuable expert projects in Poznań. The topics discussed included, among others, the complex issues of settling the past and reconciliation in the Western Balkans, also in the context of utilizing the experiences of German reconciliation.

Public debates also took place to outline the current political and economic landscape of the Western Balkans in the context of the report entitled *Go Balkans! Importance and potential of cooperation between Poland and Western Balkan countries*⁷, drafted by the Jagiellonian Club. The Jagiellonian Club also published a series of articles to extend knowledge about the region and develop-

⁷ A. Balcer, *Kierunek Bałkany! Znaczenie i potencjał współpracy Polski z państwami Bałkanów Zachodnich [Go Balkans! Importance and potential of cooperation between Poland and Western Balkan countries]*, <https://klubjagiellonski.pl/publikacje/kierunek-balkany-znaczenie-i-potencjal-wspolpracy-polski-z-panstwami-balkanow-zachodnich/>



Infrastructure, Energy, geopolitics The Warsaw Institute's seminar under the Polish Presidency in the Berlin Process

ment challenges faced by Balkan countries as regards energy policy, fighting corruption and the activities of countries such as Russia or China.

From 9 to 15 June 2019, a study visit of invited journalists from the region took place

as part of the run-up to the Western Balkans Summit in Poznań. The guests visited Poznań, Gdańsk and Warsaw and also met with Polish experts. The main purpose of the visit was to showcase Polish achievements during the 15 years of EU membership, as well as Polish history.

Challenges for the future



Secretary of State in the MFA, Szymon Szynkowski vel Sęk, professor Bogusław Zieliński,
Director of the Slavic Philology Institute, Adam Mickiewicz University

THE 2020 SUMMIT is to be held jointly by Bulgaria and North Macedonia. For the first time, therefore, this event is to be hosted by one of the Western Balkan partners and an EU participant, which will likely make this format of cooperation more recognizable among the inhabitants of Western Balkans. The joint presidency is also a symbolic reference to the agreements entered by the Skopje government with its neighbours, Greece and Bulgaria. These were momentous events that

demonstrated the intention to solve bilateral disputes and maintain good neighbourly relationships in the region. To advance integration with NATO and the EU, the government of North Macedonia decided to strike a far reaching compromise with its neighbours.

Already during its own tenure, Poland took actions to support Bulgaria and North Macedonia in the process of getting them ready for their own presidency in the Berlin Pro-

cess. On 17 September the Ministry of Foreign Affairs organized consultations with delegates of both partners, the Polish side being represented by officials from ministries involved in organizing the Poznań summit. On 5 October, the same city hosted a meeting of experts from Bulgaria, North Macedonia and other countries in the region, which aimed to summarize the involvement of the non-governmental sector in the Berlin Process during the Polish presidency and schedule actions for subsequent years. As part of the joint Bulgarian-Macedonian presidency it was decided to continue the themes and actions undertaken by Poland, as well as to organize another Think Tank Forum and maintain wider participation of civil society representatives in the Berlin Process, which proves the aptness of these initiatives.

Organizing the Western Balkans Summit and the one year presidency in the Berlin Process greatly affected the relations between Poland and countries in the region. Poland has been intensifying these relations for several years, but thanks to the presidency they have been considerably boosted and the thematic areas of cooperation have been extended. The civic and business dimension of the Polish presidency led not only to strengthening political

relations, but also tightened contacts between entrepreneurs, representatives of civil society, think tanks and the cultural community. The presidency was also an opportunity to strengthen cooperation between Poland and EU participants of the Berlin Process, especially Germany who initiated the process, the European Commission, European External Action Service, OECD, international financial institutions, and regional organizations, especially the RCC, RYCO and Western Balkans Fund.

Poland is consistently supporting the European ambitions of Western Balkans, a position confirmed during the Polish presidency of the Berlin Process in 2019. We also expected that this year would bring more concrete progress of the region towards European integration due to the decision to open negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia. We expect that the decision to start accession negotiations will be made before the EU-Western Balkans Summit planned in the spring of 2020 in Croatia. Given the current problems in the enlargement process, the Berlin Process continues to play a very important role in deepening collaboration with Western Balkans and strengthening the processes of the region's integration with the EU.



Polish MFA Western Balkans Summit Team