



Call for Submission of Policy Paper Outlines for the Regional Alumni Conference 2017

“Mind the Gap: Improving the Policy Impact of OSF Alumni Network in the Western Balkans”

GUIDELINES

1. Background

The **Berlin Process (2014-2020)**, launched by five EU Member States under the lead of Germany, has an aim to reinvigorate political commitment to the future enlargement of the European Union towards the Western Balkans. It started with the Berlin Summit in the 2014 and continued through summits in Vienna in 2015 and Paris in 2016. The process is heading to the next summit to be held in Rome in 2017. In the [Final Declaration of the Paris Summit](#) is stated that the future of the Western Balkans lies in the European integration and regional cooperation, that the connectivity and trade are an opportunity and a challenge, that the priority should be given to youth and that it is crucial to jointly tackle current challenges such as migration and fight against terrorism.

The Berlin process is a window of opportunity for strengthening pluralistic society and further engagement of non-state actors in decision making process. The Berlin Process Summits encompass on its margins Western Balkans Civil Society Forum, which establishes a dialogue between CSOs and decision-makers. This initiative aims to follow dynamics of summits, but as well to enable sustainable and continuous involvement of civil society in topics to which the process addresses. This is achieved through regional Civil Society Forums that were, by now, held in Belgrade and Skopje in 2016.

“Mind the Gap: Improving the Policy Impact of OSF Alumni Network in the Western Balkans” project aims to engage potentials of OSF Alumni in developing and advocating policy solutions and answering to policy challenges, where Berlin Process provides a concrete context for such engagement. The OSF Alumni accumulates a valuable pull of

knowledge and expertise which could be utilized to make impact on policy areas which are recognized by the Berlin Process Agenda.

2. Policy Areas and Topics targeted by This Call

The **three pillar policy areas** of the Berlin Process covered by this call are:

- 1) Youth cooperation;
- 2) Environment, energy and climate change;
- 3) Migration/border issues (refugee crisis and fight against terrorism).

The focus of OSF alumni, who apply with their outlines, should address relevant policy problems from these three policy areas.

Here follows the concise overview of **topics** which fall under each of the targeted policy areas. Submitted policy paper outlines should refer to one these topics. However, this overview is just an introductory framework, which does not limit OSF alumni if they want to tackle presented topics through their own policy approach.

Topic 1: Youth Cooperation

With the aim to strengthen cooperation among the Western Balkan (WB) countries and confirm the political commitment of the EU towards the WB, one of the proposed topics that could improve regional cooperation was youth cooperation. High youth unemployment and low mobility rates were proof of the need to improve the prospects of young people. As a continuation of prior initiatives in the area of youth cooperation, WB 6 (Albania, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo¹, Montenegro and Serbia) leaders agreed on putting additional efforts in creating an institutional mechanism for fostering sustainable cooperation and promoting reconciliation. This mechanism will be the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO).

The mission of the Regional Youth Cooperation Office is to create conditions and support activities that promote reconciliation, mobility, diversity, democratic values, participation, active citizenship and intercultural learning, with the spirit of the European integration process of the region in mind.

Having the above mentioned in mind, we invite authors to contribute to the discussion on building sustainable regional youth cooperation and the constructive approaches towards it having in mind the previous initiatives of civil society, as well as to give contribution to

¹ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSC 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

the topic of smooth transition from education to the labour market considering the commonalities in obstacles young people face and all that under the umbrella of promoting the European idea and spirit of cooperation.

Topic 2: Environmental/climate change and green growth agenda

Berlin Process aims to support sustainable economic growth of the region, as a basis of its prosperous future. Increasing connectivity is foreseen as a main instrument for achieving aforementioned goal. Well developed regional energy market, connected with EU energy market, improvement of energy efficiency and increased utilisation of renewable energy will be main tasks for decision-makers and policy practitioners in the forthcoming period. Expected policy transformation should result with resilient local communities capable to cope with climate risks, sustainable management of natural resources, accountable, inclusive and transparent energy and climate policy on local, national and regional level. Those expected results are in line with global transformation towards low-carbon economy and fossil free future, which is grounded in Paris agreement and EU climate and energy development goals.

Topic 3: Migration/border issues (refugee crisis and fight against terrorism)

Migration is a growing and permanent part of Europe's future. According to The International Organization for Migration (IOM), over one million refugees entered European Union countries in 2015. Most of them are still in the process of asylum application. Only 292,540 asylum applications were approved. As it is part of the migration route, the Western Balkans have been and remain important partners to tackle migration crisis. In the Final Declaration of the Paris Summit, it is stated that these are areas in which regional cooperation between the European Union and the Western Balkans should be further strengthened: return and readmission, information exchange, coordination, joint operations to fight smugglers' networks and organised crime, enhanced cooperation between border police forces, as well as constant monitoring of new migration routes development in the region. However, besides areas expressed in the aforementioned Declaration, encouraged are outline proposals tackling perspective of economic, social, cultural, and political integration of migrants. Due to the forced nature of their migration, compared with other migrant groups, refugees (all persons protected under international or national law including asylum seekers, asylees, persons under subsidiary protection etc.) often have specific needs that should be met in order to support their integration into host societies.

3. How to Apply?

Step 1: Make a research team

Alumni of any of the OSF Scholarship Programs² from **Albania, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo³ and Serbia** are eligible to apply to the Open Call for Policy Paper Outlines.

Regional dimension of the research is required, and research team should be made of **at least two members from two different countries**. Working in team (from 2 to 4 members) in developing and submitting policy paper outline is strongly encouraged. Nevertheless, policy paper outlines could be sent individually, but in the next stage regional teams will be composed based on complementarity of proposed outlines.

Step 2: Submission and selection of policy paper outlines

Alumni from afore mentioned countries are invited to submit policy paper outlines for development of the policy brief (**up to 3000 characters, approximately one page**) on the topics from policy areas listed in this Call (Section 2 of Guidelines). Policy paper outline should address:

- policy relevant problem;
- relevance of the problem on national, regional and EU level;
- why resolving this policy issue is important for regional cooperation and development;
- stakeholders, mainly decision makers, to whom this paper will be addressed;
- plan for communicating policy recommendations to the targeted audience;
- interrelation of the proposed outline with the Berlin Process Agenda.

Please submit policy paper outline using the [form](#) attached to this Call.

Please submit outlines to the email: osfalumni@bos.rs until **Sunday, 18th of December 2016**. Notification of acceptance will be sent no later than **30th of December 2016**.

Selection Committee will evaluate policy paper outlines and select 6 of them to be further developed in teams (6 teams in total) into policy papers within the 3-months mentorship programme. Developed policy papers will be presented at the Regional Alumni Conference in May 2017.

² E.g. Undergraduate Exchange Program, Oxford Hospitality, Cambridge, Global Supplementary Grant Program, Alumni Grant Program, Civil Society Scholar Awards or other

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Honorarium for covering research and dissemination costs will be provided (600\$ gross sum per team).

Step 3: Development of Policy Brief

On the basis of developed policy outlines, regional teams will be invited to produce a policy briefs. **Mentoring process** implies the peer work on a single policy document provided by mentor from the Belgrade Open School and by the OSF alumni peer reviewers. Particular focus will be on: (1) Defining policy relevant problem having in mind aforementioned policy pillars of Berlin process; (2) Understanding policy networks and policy cycles in this regards; and (3) Developing policy documents – types, structure and argumentation.

Final policy brief submission deadline is **April 2017**.

Instruction for writing the policy brief could be find [here](#).

Step 4: Capacity Building Program and Regional Alumni Conference

Policy documents and recommendations will be discussed with decision makers within the frame of **Regional Alumni Conference** and disseminated to regional and EU policy community. A two-day Regional Alumni Conference will gather alumni research teams to present their findings and initiate discussion upon their policy recommendations.

First day of the conference will take the form of the capacity building for alumni, where alumni research teams will present and discuss their policy documents, key findings and recommendations with the OSF alumni network fellows. The team of experienced trainers will facilitate the discussion and provide feedback. This part of the conference serves to prepare research teams to present and discuss their policy recommendations with decision-makers, think tanks and civil society organizations during the conference's second day.

The purpose of second day will be to provide an opportunity to the OSF alumni to advocate their policy solutions in front of those actors who are not only relevant to the topic, but who are deeply engaged and participate in the Berlin Process. Through this direct dialogue, the OSF alumni will gain an opportunity to influence domestic and the EU policy community of the Berlin Process and to indirectly shape its policy outcomes.

Apart from being a channel of communication created for the OSF alumni policy recommendations towards the Berlin Process, the conference will raise the visibility of the OSF potentials to develop relevant and applicable policy solutions to challenges of the EU integration of the region.

Regional Alumni Conference is to be held in **Belgrade, Serbia, May 2017**.

Reminder: Important dates

Deadline for submission of the Policy Paper Outlines: **18 December 2016**

Notification of acceptance: **30 December 2016**

Final policy brief submission deadline: **April 2017**

Regional Alumni Conference: **May 2017**

For any further information please contact Ms Ana Stevanovic, project coordinator at the Belgrade Open School, to the email osfalumni@bos.rs or telephone +381 11 3061577.