

**JOINT DECLARATION  
ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE REGIONAL YOUTH  
COOPERATION OFFICE OF THE WESTERN BALKANS**

We, the Prime Ministers of the Western Balkans participants, meeting in Vienna, in the framework of the Conference on the Western Balkans, in the presence of .....

- Bearing in mind the objective set in the “Berlin Process” to expand transnational exchanges, among young people in particular;
- Striving to give substance to regional cooperation by way of identifying common and mutual interests aimed at strengthening people-to-people contacts and enhancing trust at the service of civic regional cooperation;
- Considering that joint action across the region and connection of young people are of critical importance for furthering European integration, promoting and disseminating European values, fostering of the European spirit, as well understanding the concept of European Union and its importance for citizens;
- Being aware that closer ties among young people will foster the spirit of understanding, tolerance and friendship and cognisant that the region can only attain progress by applying the principles of equality, joint action and promoting inclusiveness, solidarity and cooperation;

- Committed to expanding and strengthening friendship among the youth in the region, and to promoting and pursuing policies, programmes and joint activities in areas that are of direct interest to the youth;
- Following the best European examples of dealing with the bitterness of the past and looking forward to a better future that is built on regional cooperation and inspired by the model of the Franco-German Youth Office;
- Considering that sustainable regional cooperation among young people is a required mechanism to foster the spirit of understanding, tolerance, friendship and cooperation in our region and beyond;
- In the light of the Joint Declaration on Youth Cooperation adopted by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Western Balkans in Tirana, on 22 May 2015, and the Positive Agenda for Youth in the Western Balkans, an initiative launched during Brdo Summit of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, on 23 April 2015,

*have agreed to the following:*

- Support the regional exchange of youth, and their sharing of ideas, as a ground for future cooperation prospects in our region, based on the values of co-existence, tolerance and respect of human rights and diversity, as well as commitment to inclusion and security;

- Further step up regional cooperation among youth and youth-dedicated institutions and ensure implementation of joint programs for young people with the focus on the principles of democratic governance, sustainable economic development, education and innovation;
- Create the Regional Youth Cooperation Office of the Western Balkans, as a regionally-owned structure that leads and coordinates youth cooperation in our region;
- Task relevant institutions of the participants to develop in close collaboration with the Working Group on regional youth cooperation<sup>1</sup> concrete proposals for the mission, structure, activities and financing of the Regional Youth Cooperation Office, to be finalized by 1 March 2016;
- Financially contribute to the establishment and functioning of the Regional Youth Cooperation Office;
- Support the active participation of civil society in the work of the Regional Youth Cooperation Office;
- Seek funding from the European Union and its member states, as well as from regional and international organizations and donors to provide additional support through existing funding mechanisms.

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<sup>1</sup>Parties to the Working Group shall have two representatives each: one representative from Youth Ministry/Directorate for Youth/National Youth Agency and one representative from youth organizations. The Franco-German Youth Office will provide the Working Group with technical assistance.

*aiming:*

- Promote the spirit of reconciliation and cooperation between the youth in our region by designing joint programmes acknowledging the best values and cultural traditions of our peoples;
- Encourage and support youth in our region to fight and distance themselves from the practices and phenomena of racism, xenophobia, hate speech, discrimination on grounds of ethnicity, religion and native language;
- Cooperate in the area of academic and scientific education by boosting cooperation between universities, academic and scientific institutions;
- Promote mobility between the youth in our region and the European Union member states, within the existing programmes and student mobility schemes;
- Devise and implement joint projects in the context of European programmes, like Erasmus +, Europe for Citizens, EASI, and others, in function of promoting student exchanges, internships, mobility and common projects;
- Bolster activism and volunteering among youth, including the establishment of cooperation between youth and organizations dealing with young people from the region, as well as advocacy for youth participation in decision-making-processes;

- Establish a joint regional research platform on youth scientific and vocational training in the areas of IT, infrastructure, tourism, energy and agriculture, in line with the specific national and regional needs and priorities;
- Promote youth employment and entrepreneurship by presenting models of good practices from the region, as well as encouraging mobility to gain work experience/vocational training and employment;
- Establish adequate mechanisms for youth vocational training that match labour market demands and criteria;
- Establish contacts with sister organizations based across Europe, in order to organize joint activities that contribute to peace, reconciliation, integration and progress;
- Encourage and support youth cultural activities with focus on the best regional traditions and on the modern art, as important elements of youth and people-to-people cooperation;
- Organize joint activities for improving health quality amongst the youth;
- Organize joint youth activities on environmental protection and engage youth in voluntary activities to the benefit of the society.

**The Prime Ministers:**

..... **Republic of Albania**

..... **Republic of Serbia**

..... **Bosnia and Herzegovina**

..... **Montenegro**

..... **Republic of Macedonia**

..... **Kosovo\***

**Done in Vienna, on 27 August 2015**

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\* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence