

Report on the fourth ELF training for coalition managers in Western Balkans

The fourth event of the ELF's „Train the Coalition Managers“ serial, titled „Around the Coalition Negotiations and Further“, was held in Banja Luka, BiH, on 25-27.05.2018, facilitated by the FNF Western Balkans Office.

Participants included the highest ranking members of the liberal political parties IDS, GLAS and Pametno from Croatia. The three have lately advanced in a process of building an electoral fusion ticket alliance for several future elections at various tiers.

In the initial part of the seminar, three parties presented some more experience of theirs in building and management of coalitions throughout Croatia. Subsequently, they discussed various aspects of their ongoing cooperation, challenges ahead and ways to maximize electoral success through proper constituency targeting and adequate division of responsibilities between coalition partners.

The lecturer from Germany, Manfred Richter from the FDP, presented some more FDP experience in coalition building. He made an in-depth analysis of the dynamics of coalition negotiations, especially regarding the role of chief whips as crucial persons to provide proper information flow, positive motivation by both negotiators and parties` rank and file and successful final outcome of the process. A focus was also put on the proper handling of human resource issues, especially regarding proper timeline for resolving and publicizing the personal vis-a-vis programmatic elements of the coalition contract. Finally, it was stressed that, for the sake of successful and durable governance and of maintaining good image of all partners, junior coalition partners should primarily look for those portfolios in a coalition government where they had gained relatively bigger programmatic concessions from the senior partner.

On the last day of the seminar, participants entered a roll play, simulating a discussion and vote in a local council, on a controversial local urban development and social issue. They practiced making ad hoc coalitions and getting to a democratic decision through debate and various compromise.