



Short Report: Capacity building program for young liberals from the western Balkans

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Since February 2016 The European Liberal Forum in partnership with Centre Party International Foundation has initiated a regional program for young liberal politicians in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the Republic of Macedonia, Republic of Serbia and Montenegro. The overall objective of this regional program is to enhance the political participation and influence of the 21 participants in their home countries. A total of three capacity building sessions annually, compose this so called “Regional Liberal Political Academy”. The generous contribution from ELF has enabled a key component of this academy, namely the third capacity building session in Brussels, exposing the participants to the nexus of political EU institutions, and for most of them, the first international political environment that is extremely relevant to current situations in their home countries. This project was therefore organized as a key capacity building and international networking component, that would further encourage young liberals to influence politics in their home countries, within and beyond the seven political parties represented in the program (Nasa Stranka (BiH), Hrvatska Narodna Stranka (Croatia), Istarski Demokratski Sabor (Croatia), Liberalna Partija Crne Gore (Montenegro), Liberalna Demokratska Partija (Serbia), Nova Stranka (Serbia) Liberalno-Demokratska Partija (Macedonia), Alternativa (Kosovo)).

The overall objective was to provide an international networking opportunity for the selected participants and enhancing their knowledge and understanding of the following:

- I. political structure and systems in the European union,
- II. institutional structures of the European parliament,
- III. the history and influence of liberal parties within the European union structure,
- IV. the entry requirements to join the EU and the relative status of countries in the western Balkans,
- V. the ALDE party.

During the Brussels program, participants had fruitful discussions with many interesting and relevant actors such as Members of the EU parliament, various EU institutions, NATO, EU’s Strategic communications in the Western Balkan, and were able to gain much insight on the challenges and opportunities that western Balkans are facing, vis a vis EU accession processes. A key component of the overall discussions also related to the progression of liberal values in Europe and the role that young politicians should play in safeguarding those values, in what can only be described as an increasingly non-democratic trend of the Western Balkan nations. Other key topics included: transatlantic matters including peace and security, green policies and current global issues, human rights, LGBT rights etc.