

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

The first event of the ELF's „Train the Coalition Managers“ serial, titled „Preparation Steps for the Coalition Negotiations“, was held in Opatija, Croatia, on 9-11 March 2018, organized and moderated by the FNF Western Balkans Office.

Participants included the highest ranking members of the liberal political parties IDS, GLAS and Pametno from Croatia. The latter three have lately been in a process of deliberating and building an electoral fusion ticket alliance.

Lecturers Manfred Richter from the FDP Germany and Monica Tjelmeland from the Venstre Norway explained the basic rationale for coalescing in politics, described the most usual types of coalitions and analysed the advantages and risks of coalition building. They broadly discussed the issue of preserving individual parties` identities while building a common coalition identity.

Special emphasis was put on the internal preparation within the parties for the coalition building, including openness and inclusivity of the decision making process, uninterrupted flow of information in all directions and motivation of the negotiators at the early stage of the process.

Having a clear strategy of each party was emphasized as a precondition for successful formulation and implementation of the common coalition strategy. Both strategies should include communication to voters so as to have the decision to coalesce been widely accepted.

Lecturers outlined the five most important steps in coalition building and the role of various actors therein.

Examples of both successful and failed coalitions in Germany, Norway and Balkan countries were analyzed. Participants took active role, asked numerous questions and debated on the opportunities and risks of coalition building in Croatia.

The outcome of the event is their clear understanding of those and determination to thoroughly prepare before starting their own coalition negotiations.