

FROM PARIS TO ROME: REGIONAL COOPERATION AND EU INTEGRATION OF WB6, 2016

Wednesday 26 October and Thursday 27 October, 2016

Venue: Akernia - Hotel Tirana International

In view of the present developments, and in the aftermath of the Paris Summit, it is of utmost importance to reflect over the progress achieved so far in the framework of the Berlin process, as well as to substantially contribute with contextualized recommendations on the further enhancement of regional cooperation in the Western Balkans. To this goal, we continue with the research and organization of the upcoming conference "From Paris to Rome: Perspectives from Albania on Regional Cooperation – Fall 2016". This conference and the research paper proceeding it, aim to:

- document the main institutional, legal, procedural, administrative and financial developments up to October 2016;
- perform a mid-term assessment of the Berlin process' achievements, through the identification and analysis of drivers and threats affecting the process' credibility and its future development related to EU integration;
- identify potential synergies between the Berlin Agenda and European Union Strategy for Adriatic and Ionian Region; and,
- delineate concrete policy recommendations in view of the next Summit of Italy in 2017, the fourth in the framework of the Berlin process.

The research paper will initially provide a summarized background on the Berlin process, followed by an analysis of the achieved progress in the main connectivity areas, and novelties introduced by the last summit in Paris, as of 4 July 2016. The second section will focus on the extent to which the ambitions settled by the Berlin agenda reflect and make good use of the available capacities, mechanisms, financial instruments and political situation on the ground in the Western Balkans countries. In this regard, it will also provide an overview of the drivers and threats affecting the credibility of the Berlin process, considered both from the perspective of the WB6 countries and the EU. The third section aims to analyse Italy's specific potential contribution to further strengthening the Berlin process in view of the Summit of 2017.

Considering the importance of economic connectivity in the region, this section focuses on the identification of converging priorities and mutually reinforcing activities undertaken both in the framework of the Berlin process and EUSAIR strategy. This allows for the establishment of synergies and better coordination between these two cooperation mechanisms. A particular attention will be devolved to the analysis of the Italian small and medium enterprises' experience in raising economic growth and employment, widely known as a successful best practice for endogenous development. Finally, the authors will provide some concrete policy recommendations that can further improve Western Balkans' regional integration.

The October 2016 conference is composed by four panels over two days. In the high level segment, it will be discussed the added value of political cooperation among the Western Balkans countries, and how it interacts with their EU negotiation/integration path. In the wake of the EU Commission

opinion on the opening of the accession negotiations with Albania, the Minister of European Integration and the ambassadors of Germany, Austria, France and Italy to Albania will have the opportunity to lay out the context and dynamics 4 that are determining that decision. The panel will be followed by a plenary discussion with representatives of civil society, academia, media and other stakeholders.

The second day will be composed by three panels. In the connectivity panel, the Minister of State for Innovation and Public Administration will present the importance that Albania devolves to the digital market and digital connectivity, as well as its policies to promote it. The energy connectivity will be the next component to be touched upon, which will be followed by the presentation of “Business connectivity”, analyzed from the perspective of inclusion of Albanian enterprises in the EU value chain. In the migration panel, representatives of the Albanian government, German Embassy, local government, as well as international and local NGO will reflect on the current situation of Albanian emigration wave to the EU (with a specific focus on Germany), the national policies and measures for the re-integration of the returnees, the factors that push Albanian youngsters to emigrate and how to mitigate them, as well as the main EU policy measures to deal with this phenomenon.

In the youth cooperation panel, representatives of the “Road to RYCO” and “Team RYCO” will lay out the progress made until now, the challenges ahead and the milestones for 2017. Youth organization representatives from WB6 will explain the situation of youth organizations in their country, and how RYCO is expected to deal with them.