

## **Program Statement of the Belgrade Fund for Political Excellence**

With this statement, the employees in the organization of the Belgrade Fund for Political Excellence (hereinafter BFPE) express the intention that in the period from 1 June 2016 to 31 May 2018 they will design, prepare and implement the activities in the framework of the following program areas:

### **1. Advanced Political Education**

In the further development of the activities, that we consider as primary since the establishment of the organization, we assume that a need for a capacity development of the holders of political positions in Serbia hasn't stopped, on the contrary; nowadays it is necessary to further improve and adapt this need towards further increasing requests, which mainly arise from the accession process to the European Union (hereinafter: EU), as the dominant framework for the modernization of our society.

In that sense, we intend to continue with the implementation of the “reform compass” method (in cooperation with Bertelsmann Foundation), case studies, decision-making simulations, as well as other interactive work methods. Our intention is to offer a comprehensive program that is as much as possible adapted to the actual work conditions and to the challenges at the local and national government levels, by avoiding ex cathedra approach and by appreciating the experiences of our alumni.

The framework of the BFPE functioning in this program area will represent following activities-programs: *Annual Seminar, Regional Policy Academy and Women's Leadership Academy*, which is jointly implemented by BFPE, Centre for Modern Skills and Centre for Support of Women Kikinda. In this program area BFPE's key partners are: the Council of Europe, Vilhelm Martens Centre, the European Fund for the Balkans, the British Embassy in Serbia and USAID.

Therefore, in this program area BFPE will perform as an **education provider**.

### **2. Promoting and networking of opinion leaders<sup>1</sup>**

We are particularly proud of our achievements in the field of creation and implementation of events, which encourage the national and regional policy community on thinking, networking and functioning in the various policies, and above all in foreign and security policy. In the context of new divisions, continuing economic uncertainty and raising popularity of populist and extreme political options we believe

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<sup>1</sup> In the interpretation of BFPE the “opinion leaders” are prominent individuals, which advocate changes that can be taken as undeniable positive by their overall functioning in the public scene of Serbia, the Western Balkans region and in Europe.

that need for such dialogue, which is permanent and open for different opinions, has never been greater. Our concern is that the whole region of the Western Balkans - i.e. South East Europe - is under threat of becoming (or remaining) a periphery, without any real possibility to have influence on the ongoing events. In that endeavor, BFPE brings together men and women politicians, think-tankers, activists, and those people who make, implement, interpret and criticize decisions; confronts them with the circumstances of inaction; and seeks to move them away from the “comfort zone” in order to enforce the debate. We emphasize that during 2016/2017 we will intend to provide more support to the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, both independently and in cooperation with partners.

Our activities in this program area include design, preparation and implementation of the *Belgrade Security Forum (BSF)* as the most prestigious conference of that type “from Vienna to Istanbul”, which is celebrating its six edition this year; and *Belgrade Dialogues*, the platform for dialogue and cooperation between key stakeholders in Berlin and Belgrade on a various issues of the development of Serbia, all in the context of support to our country on the path towards EU membership.

Activities mentioned above BFPE is implementing together with the European Movement in Serbia and the Belgrade Centre for Security Policy (regarding BSF), and Forum Serbia Germany (regarding Belgrade Dialogues). The list of our partners in this program area starts from BSF’s strategic partners: Balkan Trust for Democracy, Robert Bosch Foundation, the Geneva Centre for Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF), the European Fund for the Balkans and Open Society Foundation (OSF); but it also includes a number of other actors - above all, the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ), that has supported the format of the Belgrade Dialogues in its inaugural year, 2015.

BFPE team continuously develops innovative formats in this program area and it remains open for the new partnerships. An example of such a format is the meeting of youth leaders, which will be implemented this September in Belgrade, together with the BMW/Quandt Foundation.

Therefore, in this program area BFPE will act as a **matchmaker for stakeholders**.

### **3. Mixed migrations**

Regarding the understanding of the phenomenon of mixed migrations, the BFPE primarily follows the interpretation of the UNHCR<sup>2</sup>; but it also considers the phenomenon-threat of “brain drain”, that the whole region is facing with; and the

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<sup>2</sup> Available on the following link - <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/4a16aac66.html>

necessity of qualitative improvement of relations between mainstream and “new diaspora”<sup>3</sup>, as a potentially important factor for development of Serbia.

We start with assumption that this is a irreversible and unstoppable process, that involves “the global North and the global South”, and as such it represents one of the greatest challenges that EU and Serbia, as its potential member-state, will be faced with: challenge that has its own social, humanitarian and security dimension. We are witnesses of the unsatisfactory answer of principal actors (with the exception of the civil society) on the refugee and migrant crisis, which has escalated during 2015.

For the first time, BFPE activities in this program area are framed within one unit and they will include: research of issues arising from the implementation of readmission; opportunities for integration both of returnees, as well as of the migrants in our society; the implication of the “brain drain” and the strategy for its prevention; the potentials of the “new diaspora”.

Its activities in this area BFPE will realize in the close partnership and understanding with the Group 484, while respecting the accumulated expertise, which this organization has; United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Serbia and GIZ.

In this program area the BFPE will primarily act as a **think-tank**.

#### **4. Political and social inclusion of the vulnerable groups**

When it comes to decision-making, social groups don't necessarily have to be a minority in order to be threatened or discriminated. We are witnessing the situation in which members of the large parts of society, and even the majority of society doesn't have the equal chances to engage in relevant decision-making, participation in the political life in the country, but also in their own municipality. Discrimination lines are multiple, and thus a person can be found in inconvenient situation on the basis of physical or national characteristics, or place of residence.

The BFPE believes that local communities, as well as the state of Serbia, are entities in the public sphere, which should involve all citizens on the equal basis, regardless their other characteristics.

BFPE traditionally promotes the improvement of position of women, Roma, youth, as well as the residents of underdeveloped areas. We see the opening of the opportunities for the equal participation of these groups in the political process and decision-making, as well as in the educational institutions of all levels, as necessary

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<sup>3</sup> Mainly highly educated generation of migrants, who have emigrated from Serbia to Western Europe and North America countries, since 1991.

requirement for democracy consolidation and for truly open society building. Also, we think that the existence of sufficient awareness and familiarity of decision-makers on issues that arise during the participation of mentioned groups are necessary.

Accordingly, in this program area the BFPE will act as an **advocacy organization and matchmaker of stakeholders.**

## ***5. Facing the future***

BFPE considers climate changes for the most important, and at the same time for the most part neglected long-term challenge for the future of Serbia, the region (and indeed for the whole humanity), which are in our interpretation directly caused by environmental pollution, for which again the man is responsible. Serbia is addressing this global problem on the policy level within the Chapter 27 (Environment) and Chapter 15 (Energy). In this area for us, it is for great importance to raise awareness of decision-makers and their willingness to devote to this problem.

By building on earlier successes, BFPE together with the Centre for Modern Skills will continue to perform as informal secretariat of the Green Parliamentary Group. Also, BFPE will implement activities within the circular economy project, in cooperation with GIZ IMPACT project.

In agreement with the European Movement in Serbia, BFPE is principle willing to continue with the coordination of the Working Group 15 (dedicated to energy) of the National Convent for Serbia's EU accession.

In this program area the BFPE will perform as a **matchmaker for stakeholders.**

The BFPE may exceptionally go out of the context of these programs, when it is in a public interest- and not in the role of implementer. When BFPE estimates that its actions can contribute to the improvement of the situation, BFPE will, as it always does, perform in good faith, valuing the expertise and seniority of other organizations that have achieved valuable results within the given area.

After the expiration of this period, the new program statement will be prepared and submitted for consideration and adoption to the Executive Board of BFPE.

The regular narrative report to the Executive Board, for which preparation BFPE program director is responsible, will be organized - exposed by the following program areas.

In Belgrade, 10 June 2016

President of BFPE  
Sonja Liht