

Short report following the Conference

“Knowledge sharing for building stronger partnerships in the process of European integration”

25-26 April 2018, Modern Gallery, Zagreb

The Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Croatia organized the international conference ***“Knowledge sharing for building stronger partnerships in the process of European integration”*** in the framework of Croatian Presidency of the Central European Initiative (CEI). The aim of the conference was to facilitate the discussion between CEI Member States and other regional and international actors on different aspects of institutional and capacity building instruments related to the EU integration process and to enhance networking possibilities for future cooperation between CEI Member States and other interested stakeholders.

Ms Andreja Metelko Zgombić, State Secretary for European Affairs in the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, opened the conference on behalf of the Croatian Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs. She emphasized the importance to facilitate the discussion between CEI Member States on different aspects of institutional and capacity building instruments related to the EU integration process. Ms Metelko Zgombić thanked the Central European Initiative for supporting this conference and being a valuable contributor to the regional stability and progress for almost 30 years.

The introductory speeches followed by Mr. Antal Nikoletti, Deputy Secretary General of the Central European Initiative (CEI), Mr. Branko Baričević, Head of Representation in Croatia of the European Commission and Mr. Boris Grigić, Assistant Minister in the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Croatia.

The title of the first session was ***“Importance of Knowledge Sharing Instruments as a Support for the European Integration Process”***. Ms Daniela Morari, State Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of the Republic of Moldova held a presentation on the European agenda support instruments for Moldova. The experience of Bosnia and Herzegovina in implementation of different EU instruments for knowledge sharing was presented by Ms Maja Rimac Bjelobrč, Assistant Director in the Directorate for European Integration of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The views of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH in creating platforms of knowledge exchange and fostering a culture of cooperation was made by Ms Alexandra Hilbig, Project leader.

The topic of the second session ***“Experiences in Implementation of Different EU Instruments for Knowledge Sharing”*** was discussed from various perspectives. The 15 years of experience and knowledge sharing in the EU funded projects of Austria was presented by Ms Heidrun Zanetta, General Manager of the Agency for European Integration and Economic Development of Austria. Furthermore, EU integrated approach to civilian security sector reform in Ukraine was elaborated by Ms Tanja Tamminen, Head of Planning, Coordination & Cooperation Department at the EUAM Ukraine. The impressions and lessons learnt regarding strengthening of EU Diplomacy was presented by Mr. Andreas List, EEAS official seconded in the MFEA Croatia. The presentation on the experience of Slovenia in usage of the Twinning instrument was made by Ms Maja Dimkovski Engelman, National Contact Point for Twinning, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia. Croatia’s

experience in the implementation of TAIEX Instrument as a successful support of Croatia's path to the EU membership was presented by Ms Gordana Vidović Mesarek, Head of Sector for European Law in the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Croatia. The first hand practical experience in the implementation of Twinning instrument was explained by Mr. Stefano Cocchi, Resident Twinning Advisor in Croatia.

The final session of the Conference was entitled "***Future of EU Assistance in the Framework of the Institutional Cooperation and Knowledge Sharing Instruments-How to Effectively Promote their Valuable Impact?***". In this panel view of Albania on the future of EU assistance was presented by Mr. Sokol Dedja, Director of EU Directorate in the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, Republic of Albania. The ideas how to make the Twinning project successful through effective implementation were presented by Ms Anneli Temmes, Managing Director of the Finnish Institute of Public Management (HAUS).

Lessons from Croatia on the successful application of Twinning instrument were presented by Ms Nirvana Sokolovski, Head of Service for Twinning from the Central Finance and Contracting Agency. Finally, importance of strengthening the impact of knowledge sharing projects was emphasized by Mr. Marek Tabor, Director of Development Service from the College of Europe.

The Conference gathered a great number of participants from CEI Member States, other EU Member States and partner countries, including recipients and donors of the technical assistance. It confirmed the importance of continuous strengthening of capacities in the EU related fields. In this respect, the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Croatia will continue to provide experts assistance to partner countries in strengthening their capacities for the EU integration process and actively promote knowledge sharing instruments – Twinning and TAIEX, but also other forms of technical assistance projects.