

***High Level Regional Conference: Cyber Resilience and Cybersecurity
Capacity Building in the Western Balkans***

***High-level Panel: Cyber Resilience and Cybersecurity
Capacity Building in the Western Balkans - Past
Achievements and the Way Ahead***

March 3rd 2021, Online

Number of participants: 73

Chair:

Boštjan Koritnik, Minister of Public Administration, Republic of Slovenia

Statements by the Ministerial participants of the Western Balkans:

Etjen Xhafaj, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy, Albania

Selmo Cikotić, Minister, Ministry of Security, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Ergin Bunjaku, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Economy and Environment, Kosovo*

Marina Banović, State Secretary, Ministry of Public Administration, Digital Society and Media, Montenegro

Jeton Shaqiri, Minister, Ministry of Information Society and Administration, North Macedonia

Miloš Cvetanović, State Secretary, Ministry of Trade, Tourism and Telecommunications, Serbia

High-level Panel summary and closing remarks:

Franziska Klopfer, Europe and Central Asia Division, DCAF

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSC 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

Summary given by Franziska Klopfer (Europe and Central Asia Division, DCAF) of the high-level panel on Cyber Resilience and Cybersecurity Capacity Building in the Western Balkans

3 March 2021

All panellists agreed that cybersecurity is a very topical issue and that the high-level conference on cyber resilience and cybersecurity was very timely. The increased digitalisation, also driven by the COVID-19 pandemic, makes it clear that cybersecurity is essential for a safe economic, social and political life online.

Cybersecurity is especially important when it comes to critical infrastructure protection. Panellists shared good practices on identifying critical national infrastructure (CNI), and organising cooperation between different actors involved in CNI and cybersecurity.

In that context, what was also underlined was the importance of strategic planning and legislation in cybersecurity. Most economies of the regions have aligned or are in the process of aligning national legislation with the European Union's Network and Information Security directive (NIS directive). An important tool in strategic planning in cybersecurity are national cybersecurity strategies (NCSS) and we can already see the first or even second generation of NCSS in the Western Balkan economies.

One of the other key topics that was raised, was the importance of the national CERTs, or Computer Emergency Response Teams, and the progress that they have made in the past few years - also with the support of the DCAF project.

Cooperation was one of the key words mentioned by all speakers, and this is not surprising because we all know that cooperation in cybersecurity is essential. As one speaker mentioned, in cybersecurity we need cooperation and trust, because trust is needed for actors to work together effectively. The panellists talk about the importance of cooperation at the national level and international level. At national level, cybersecurity requires a multi-stakeholder approach, which includes not only state actors, but also private businesses.

Cybersecurity also requires cooperation at the international cooperation. Cybersecurity is a borderless issue and therefore it is very important for countries to work together. It was several times mentioned that the economies of the region really see the value of regional and international cooperation; that they are already taking part in international processes on cybersecurity. A good example was the international cooperation of national CERTs, supported by DCAF's regional project.

But international cooperation is also an area which needs to be expanded. The panellists agreed that it is a great advantage to work together on cybersecurity capacity building, and that support from other partners, other countries, and international organisations on cybersecurity capacity building is very useful and very welcome. Regional cooperation in cybersecurity capacity building

seems evident because the economies of the Western Balkan region share many of the challenges in this area.

The panellist also expanded on the need to enhance training opportunities, and the need for finding creative solutions of retaining the talent which is already present in the region. As a final point, there seemed to be agreement on the importance of awareness raising on cybersecurity of the general public and the need to invest more in this field.