

# news REGION

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Some progress in  
the fight against  
corruption and in  
judicial reform

## Albania strives towards EU-Integration

### 3 Cultural Heritage:

International IRE- Expert  
Conference in Novi Sad,  
Vojvodina

### 12 Local self- government in Kosovo:

Meeting with Deputy Prime  
Minister Enver Hoxhaj in  
Brussels

### 14 Local and municipal elections:

Great Britain and  
Schleswig-Holstein



**Sebastian Kurz**  
Austrian Federal Chancellor



## A Europe that protects

Many of us have come to take for granted the benefits of the European Union – a common currency, travelling in a Europe without borders, being able to study or work in every country of the European Union. Moreover, the European Union has been the guarantor of peace in Europe for over 60 years.

In the second half of this year and for the third time, Austria will assume the presidency of the Council of the European Union. Under the motto **'A Europe that protects'**, we are committed to re-strengthening the trust in the EU and to ensure that the Union is capable of fulfilling its tasks. In order to achieve this objective, Austria's approach will be built on the reinforcement of the principle of subsidiarity - in terms of 'doing less, but more efficiently'. In this context, the regions play a key role.

For its upcoming presidency Austria has identified three priority areas:

**Security and migration, maintaining competitiveness through digitalisation and stability in the neighbourhood.**

Europe must be able to protect its citizens. It is therefore important to create a resilient union that is capable to take action and in which efficient protection of external borders is guaranteed. In this context, one of the highlights of the presidency will be the informal meeting of the heads of state and government, which will take place in Salzburg on the 20th of September.

Digitalisation is becoming increasingly important for growth and innovation. An intelligent policy for the digital transformation of the economy and society will enable us to continue to safeguard the competitiveness and sustainability of the European single market in the future. To ensure that the digital economy can develop its full potential, a modern and balanced regulatory framework is required. In addition to that, we plan to support a large-scale modernisation-process of public administration and the renewal of the European industrial policy, making them more responsive to the challenges of digitalisation. Innovation power is primarily found in regional areas, where particularly SMEs strengthen our competitiveness.

Stability, security and peace in the European Union are only possible if stability and security also prevail among the EU's im-

mediate neighbours. In this context, and according to Austria's European and foreign policy, we have traditionally been supporting the Western Balkan countries' path to EU membership. In terms of economic and security policy, this region of Europe is part of our continent, and has repeatedly proven to be a reliable partner during the migration crisis. During its presidency, Austria will work to give concrete shape to the EU perspective of all Western Balkan countries and to achieve measurable progress in that respect.

The approach Austria is choosing consists in **strengthening our regions and the principle of subsidiarity**. What is needed is a European Union with an enhanced focus on the major issues such as foreign, security and defence policy, protection of the EU's external borders, competitiveness and digitalisation. Where issues can be better resolved by individual Member States or regions themselves, the Union should take a step back.

This approach aims to take into account the **motto of the European Union, 'United in Diversity'**. To that effect, the Austrian Presidency will prioritise the protective role of the EU. By strengthening the element subsidiarity, the goal is to bring Europe closer to its citizens and make it more transparent. Citizens of all Member States should have the opportunity to become even more actively involved in shaping EU-policy in future.

The presidency of the Council of the European Union will give Austria the opportunity to achieve tangible results in significant matters. To do so, Austria will act as an honest broker in order to attain strong and sustainable solutions. Maintaining and strengthening the unity of the Member States is of fundamental importance here. As a Member State in the heart of Europe, Austria will attach particular importance to its traditional role as a bridge-builder and gathering place for international dialogue and mediation.

I would like to thank the Institute of the Regions of Europe (IRE) for their support. 'Newsregion' will make a significant contribution to providing additional information about the way in which the European Union works and to bringing Europe closer to you, enabling us to strengthen the existing bridges and continue to build new ones with neighbours and partners.

2<sup>nd</sup> International IRE- Expert Conference

## "Cultural Heritage – Added value for the Regions of Europe"

Common European Cultural Heritage in the Western Balkans – International IRE Conference in cooperation with the appointment of the City of Novi Sad as European Capital of Culture 2021.

For the second time, the Institute of the Regions of Europe (IRE) organized, under the direction of former Governor Univ. Prof. Dr. **Franz Schausberger**, on the 27<sup>th</sup> of April 2018 a conference on „Cultural heritage – Added value for the Regions“ on the occasion of the nomination of the City of Novi Sad (Serbia) as European Capital of Culture 2021. In cooperation with the Central European Initiative (CEI), the City of Novi Sad and the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, the conference took place in the Regional Parliament of AP Vojvodina, highlighting the great importance of cultural heritage for all European cities and regions, but above all for the candidate countries.

Cultural heritage has an important value for all regions, cities, communities and societies. The preservation and salvation of cultural heritage is an important emotional criterion for Serbia's EU integration, and forms the core for the common European cultural heritage by strengthening its regional identity. „By cultivating our cultural heritage, we can

continue to preserve Europe's cultural diversity“, said IRE-Chairman Franz Schausberger, opening the conference. The former Governor of Salzburg also pointed out that a common European culture can only be achieved if it is based on a specific regional cultural identity. Above all, cultural heritage should be the foundation of a European vision for prosperity.

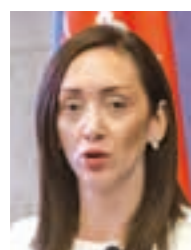
When we talk about cultural heritage, we do not only talk about the past, but also talk about preserving the culture of today and tomorrow. It is about „values of the past that we transfer into the future to preserve the heritage of our culture, including cross-border cooperation and the conditions of cohesion, if these circumstances are not ensured we cannot preserve the cultural heritage“, said the President of the Regional Parliament of AP Vojvodina, **István Pásztor**, in his speech. In addition, he emphasized the diversity of cultural heritage as it encompasses various territories, multiculturalism and inherited culture. The ability to understand a common interest, regardless

From left to right:  
Franz Schausberger,  
Paul-Henri Passet,  
Johannes Irschick,  
István Pásztor,  
Dragana Milošević  
and Dalibor Rožić





From left: Asja Drača Muntean, Boran Ivanoski, Adrian Tibu, Bosko Negovanovic (Moderator), Katarina Živanović and Ketrina Čabiri Mijo



Dragana Milošević, Provincial Secretary for Culture, Public Information and relations with Religious Communities of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina

of political directions, should be at the center of the daily process of perception. This is an example of the city of Novi Sad's claim to be a pioneer when it comes to carefully and actively shaping its future.

In Serbia, and especially in the city of Novi Sad, many ethnic groups live in harmony. **Dalibor Rožić** (Member of the City Council for Culture) emphasized at the conference that Novi Sad also promotes „universal, lasting and shared values“. The Novi Sad Cultural Administration supports projects of national minorities aimed at preserving their traditions and cultures, while promoting initiatives for the recognition and emphasis of the common.

Another perspective was given by **Dragana Milošević** (Provincial Secretary for Culture, Public Information and relations with Religious Communities of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina) in her speech, when she stressed the interconnectedness of cultures that influence the regions and thus the cultural heritage itself. Fortresses, monuments, folklore and archeology are examples that show the different aspects of history.

For **Paul-Henri Passet**, Head of Information, Communication and Press, Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Serbia, the main focus lies on citizens: „Making them aware of their own national identity a key to the EU accession process. Providing them with greater opportunities for their own future is the foundation of sustainable prevention“. Cross-border and regional cooperation within Serbia and with the EU are important in preserving cultural

heritage for generations to come. The EU supports cultural heritage and social cohesion in Serbia.

Regarding regional policy and social cohesion, **Johannes Irschick**, Director of the Austrian Cultural Forum of the Austrian Embassy in Belgrade, focuses on joint regional projects for the preservation and promotion of regional cultural heritage. „It cannot only foster our mutual understanding of supraregional heritage, but also local and tourism development and to initiate regional projects requires common strategies and funding mechanisms“, said the director.

### Best-Practice Examples of Cultural Heritage Protection and its Financing

Cultural heritage contributes to promoting social cohesion across Europe and provides a framework for participation, engagement, promotion of integration and cooperation. In the opening speech of the Panel „Best Practice Examples of Cultural Heritage Protection and its Financing“, **Norbert Beckmann-Dierkes** (Head of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation for Serbia and Montenegro in Belgrade) spoke about the current situation of the Western Balkan countries „which are on the right track to the EU, for example by investing in cultural goods. Together, a cultural city can be built and Novi Sad represents such a city“.

However, in order to be part of the cultural path to the EU, the cultural asset „is economically, politically and socially important, which transcends borders, nationalities and regions“, said **Asja Drača Muntean** (Representative of Serbia to the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe of Ministry of Culture and Information in Belgrade). In her opinion, a step towards the EU would be to start with small programs to gain experience.

Additionally, **Ketrina Čabiri Mijo**, Head of the project „Network Creation and Promotion of Castles“ in Albania, highlighted the importance of sustainable

“Together, a cultural city can be built and Novi Sad represents such a city.”

Norbert Beckmann-Dierkes, Head of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation for Serbia and Montenegro in Belgrade



From left: Dimitrije Tadić, Leylya Strobl, Bosko Negovanovic (Moderator), Mina Radmilović Pjevac, Tijana Palkovljević Bugarski, Marija Budimir, Tomislav Paljak, Milan Popadić and Nemanja Milenković

and above all stable projects. „In Albania, cultural goods are not limited to castles, but are extended to f.e. churches“. For this reason, a common understanding of what culture means should be developed.

**Boran Ivanoski** (NALAS program officer for the Sustainable Tourism Task Force in Skopje, Macedonia) goes one step further, stressing that „good cooperation at local and regional government level is important to promote, among other things, tourism. Above all, this would bring social, economic and environmental effects“, says Ivanoski. For this purpose, NALAS offers position papers on concrete measures and recommendations for sustainable development.

For **Adrian Tibu**, Director of the Municipal Theater „Gong“ in the City of Sibiu in Romania, is the key to success „the attitude to be ready to be part of the EU“. The combination of culture and tourism would lead to benefits and opportunities, innovative programs and services are inevitable tools to make the cultural heritage accessible to citizens and visitors towards Europe. There are still daily cultural events and volunteer programs are taken place in the city of Sibiu in the framework of the Capital of Culture.

In Europe, the wealth of historical buildings and sites, historical neighborhoods and cultural landscapes is visible to the people. For **Katarina Živanović** (Archaeologist Europanostr Serbia) „cultural heritage provides European countries and regions with a unique identity, a basis for developing cultural tourism and attracting investment“. To sum up, cultural heritage is a key component and contributes to the attractiveness of European regions and cities. In this way, it creates jobs and attracts talent, companies and investors.

### Regional Cultural Heritage – A European Vision for Prosperity

In the panel discussion „Regional Cultural Heritage - A European Vision for Prosperity“, **Nemanja Milenković**, Director of the Foundation Novi Sad (FNS20201), emphasized in his keynote that cultural

“Ideas and innovations, based on the international concept of human rights, are essential for the protection of cultural heritage.”

Leylya Strobl, Board Member of the Austrian Blue Shield Committee

heritage goes beyond the national framework. It was inherited from the ancestors, represents a way of life and shapes regions and cities. „Social development therefore influences what we understand by cultural heritage“, says Milenković.

Cultural Heritage will be celebrated throughout the year 2018 with various events and activities aimed at strengthening the common European identity and providing new impetus for the development of social and economic sectors throughout Europe. „In order to develop the cultural heritage of nations in the long term, it must be protected in the case of threatening situations, so many state and non-governmental organizations are actively involved in the process of cultural heritage protection“, **Leylya Strobl** (Board Member of the Austrian Blue Shield Committee, Austrian Roerich Society) further explained in her speech. The exchange of ideas and innovations for sustainable development, based on the international concept of human rights, is essential for the protection of cultural heritage. The aim is therefore to raise awareness of cultural heritage in civil society. „Only governments alone cannot handle this task“, explained Strobl. The UNESCO-affiliated NGO „Blue Shield International“ is an internationally recognized organization operating in 28 countries and working to protect cultural assets.

**Tijana Palkovljević Bugarski**, Director of the Matica



Boran Ivanoski (NALAS program officer for the Sustainable Tourism Task Force in Skopje, Macedonia)



Srpska Gallery in Novi Sad, pointed to the question of a „national culture“. The gallery not only illustrates Serbian art, but also deals with the processes of protection of Serbian cultural heritage in the region, especially in Hungary and Romania. „We need not only national identity or culture, but also the embedding in European culture, a broader view of Serbian cultural heritage in the European context, because cultural heritage knows no borders“, expressed Bugarski. She also pointed out that these projects for the protection and prevention of secular and religious Serbian art, cooperation between Serbian, Hungarian and Romanian cultural institutions, develop and promote cultural diversity in the region.

Another example was provided by **Marija Budimir** (Head of Tourism and Culture in the Vukovar Srijem in Croatia), stressing the importance of intangible heritage, such as cultural festivals that to preserve the cultural goods.

**Tomislav Paljak**, Vice-President of the Varaždin County in Croatia, emphasized the common history in this context and referred to the closeness between Novi Sad and Varaždin. The decay of cultural heritage is an „inefficient way of dealing with culture. To revitalize a region, there is a need for skilled workers“, highlighted the Vice-President. EU projects would contribute to the preservation of cultural assets.

Financing transnational projects is important for both cities and regions. „In order to promote prosperity and preserve the cultural heritage for future generations, the EU supports various projects related to this theme with the most important programs for Serbia being the Creative Europe Program and the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA), Creative Europe’ funds projects around the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018 in the regions, enabling the revitalization of objects and the purchase of equipment that can stimulate culture development and progress“, stated **Mina Radmilovic Pjevac** (Antenna Creative Europe Culture Desk Serbia, European Affairs Fund of AP Vojvodina).

According to **Dimitrije Tadić**, Head of the Creative Europe Culture Desk in Serbia, an intensive exchange of sustainable concepts, not only at national but also at regional level, is necessary for cooperation with the EU. „Priorities and objectives are needed to fund sustainable projects, so a detailed regional and state-level exchange is the first step“, explained Tadić.

To create awareness, one must preserve the value of the past. The origin of the cultural heritage is that a modern person must determine themselves in relation to their own past. „It is the past whose cultural value is recognized in the present. The existence of the common heritage therefore always includes the recognition of common values. On the one hand, taking care of these values while cultivating all layers of testimony about the common past can lead to social well-being. On the other hand, indifference certainly leads to social disorientation“, concluded



Franz Schausberger presented István Pásztor the Friendship Chalice of the Institute of the Regions of Europe

**Milan Popadić** (UNESCO Chair in Cultural Policy and Management, University of Belgrade).

To create awareness, one must preserve the value of the past. The origin of the cultural heritage is that a modern person must determine themselves in relation to their own past. „This is the past whose cultural value is acknowledged in the present, so the existence of the common heritage always involves the recognition of common values, and caring for those values while cultivating all layers of testimony on the common past can become social Prosperity on the other hand, indifference certainly leads to social disorientation“,

The Institute of the Regions of Europe (IRE) has been dedicated to strengthening regions and cities throughout Europe for around 15 years. The aim of the conference was to present best practice examples of the preservation of cultural heritage in various European regions, especially in Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe, in order to exchange experiences and knowledge for the preservation of cultural assets. Experts and politicians from all over Europe attended the conference to discuss innovative financing mechanisms as well as sustainable approaches to regional and local cultural heritage conservation activities.

IRE-Chairman **Franz Schausberger** has held bilateral talks with, among others, the President of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, **Istvan Pásztor**, on the European Commission’s recent progress report on Serbia and on the EU’s Western Balkans Enlargement Strategy. The importance of preserving the cultural heritage, which is a cornerstone of the European Union, was emphasized. Around 120 participants from eight European countries participated in the international conference in Serbia. Conference partners in Novi Sad were the Konrad Adenauer Foundation Serbia, Europa Nostra, Blue Shield International, Raiffeisenbank International AG (Serbia), the Council of Europe, European Institute of Cultural Routes and the Austrian Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs (BMEIA).

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Skanderbeg Square in the center of Albania's booming capital Tirana

# Albania on its way to EU-Integration

Meeting in Luxembourg on June 26, EU foreign ministers agreed to set out the path towards opening accession negotiations in June 2019. European Union member states have given a cautious green light to opening accession negotiations with Albania and Macedonia. The ministers required the two Balkan countries to demonstrate progress on reforms before the actual negotiations can begin at the end of 2019.

On June 25, Johannes Hahn, commissioner for European neighborhood policy and enlargement negotiations, warned against delaying the start of membership talks with the two countries, stressing the importance of giving a „positive signal“ to the whole Western Balkans region.

Austrian European Affairs Minister Ger- not Blumel said that EU countries took a „strong position,“ signaling to countries in the Western Balkans that they had a „clear perspective toward the European Union.“

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of May 2018, Franz Schausberger hold a lecture on “Western Balkans and Albania on the Road To EU-Integration” at the Aleksandër Moisiu University of Durres.

He mentioned in his speech, that the year 2018 offers a special window of opportunities for the Western Balkan Countries and their path to the European Union. In addition to the enlargement process, the the six countries are also closely involved in the EU’s migration policy (Western Balkans route) and related policy areas, such

as security.

Subsequently, in all these processes local and regional authorities are playing a major role, because broad public support for enlargement can only be achieved if the potential benefits of enlargement are explained to society at a grassroots level. To be successful in these efforts local authorities, first and foremost, mayors are needed.

We may not overlook that in most of the Western Balkan countries that there is an urgent need for reform particularly in state-building, the rule of law and expansion of administrative capacities at all levels, especially at regional and local level and also in better governance as well as effort to combat corruption and organized crime at every government stage.

On the 6<sup>th</sup> of February 2018, the European Commission presented a comprehensive Western Balkan strategy, which intends to give the six countries a perspective that is oriented towards 2025. >>>



Franz Schausberger met Arbjan Mazniku, Deputy Mayor of Tirana.



## Judiciary reform and opening of EU accession negotiations

The meeting with Prime Minister Edi Rama focused on the ongoing judiciary reform and the opening of EU accession negotiations with Albania. Rama hoped that the concerns of some western European countries could be cleared up against accession negotiations with Albania. Rama stressed that Albania is now shifting into a new stage because of the clear recommendation from the European Commission to open negotiations. Albania aims to work and implement all necessary reforms that are required to access the European Union as a member state in the near future.

## Communal reform and decentralization

Franz Schausberger and Deputy Minister of Interior Romina Kuko, held a detailed talk on communal reform and decentralization. Albania had reduced the number of municipalities from 373 to 61 in 2014. In the meantime, although municipalities have been given more competences, they are under-funded; as a result, financial decentralization has not yet been satisfactorily implemented. According to experts, the problem lies in the failed reform in its goal to reduce administrative and operational costs. Furthermore, the reform also failed to improve revenues and the quality of services. The new large municipalities, which include administrative units (former municipalities), fail to provide the same quality services in their entire territory as they do in city centres. The new municipalities have hired more employees, with the pretext of facing more work due to the enlargement of administrative units. Currently, every new municipality has about 20-25% more employees. Schausberger underlined that the trend towards regionalization and decentralization is an inevitable process for Albania on its path towards European integration.



In a meeting with Franz Schausberger, opposition leader Lulzim Basha from the Democratic Party expressed that the accession negotiations will not be opened very soon, because Albania has not yet met the conditions set by the EU. Subsequently, the Albanian government has not done its homework, i.a. corruption, crime and bad economic situation generate frustration and instability. Albania has lost time in the fight against corruption and the judiciary reform is progressing at a small pace. Basha underlines his effort towards lobbying to favour accession negotiations; however, the opposition does not hide the truth in its duties. From left: Enver Bytyci, Franz Schausberger, Lulzim Basha and Genc Pollo.



Franz Schausberger also met the former Prime Minister and President of Albania, Sali Berisha. He said the situation of Albania is dramatic and continuously rises even more. This is mainly due to the government’s connection with crime and criminal gangs. Therefore, above all, the judiciary reform must be promoted rapidly.



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I am looking very much forward welcoming you at this Conference in Salzburg.  
**Franz Schausberger**, IRE President



From left: Klajda Gjoshja, former Minister of Integration of Albania, Genc Pollo, Chairman of the Integration Committee of the Parliament of Albania, Franz Schausberger, Andon Kume, Dean of the faculty of Political Science and Law and Prof. Enver Bytyci at a panel-discussion at Aleksandër Moisiu University.

▷▷▷

### „Front runners“ Serbia and Montenegro

The negotiations with Serbia and Montenegro are already well advanced. These two countries are among the „front runners“ in the EU integration process, although there are still huge deficits in terms of democracy and freedom of media. If they manage to carry out real and sustainable reforms and, above all, that Serbia can conclude a comprehensive, legally binding agreement for the normalization of relations with Kosovo, a membership could be in the prospect by 2025.

### Accession negotiations with Albania and Macedonia

If the candidate countries Albania and Macedonia continue to make significant progress, the basis for opening accession negotiations would be given. The fact that in Albania all political forces are currently participating in the political and parliamentary process as well as that the progress in the fight against corruption and in judicial reform is remarkable helps to bring them closer towards the EU. After violent conflicts in the parliament, political life in Macedonia has been stabilized again and the negotiations in the name dispute with Greece make it possible for the first time to bring together a common solution.

### Possible candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina

Bosnia-Herzegovina could be given candidate status by 2025 if the country makes the necessary efforts. The ability to agree on a constitutional reform of the electoral law for the October 2018 elections will be the litmus test of the country's suitability for the EU.

### Latecomer Kosovo

Kosovo is the taillight of the road to the EU, hence, which is not by accident. Although it was gratifying that after three years the Parliament of Kosovo finally managed to ratify the border agreement with Montenegro some regrettable events put the country somewhat back.

The European Commission adopted on the 17<sup>th</sup> of April, its annual Enlargement Package. The Commission recommended to the Council that accession negotiations should be opened with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Albania, in the light of the progress achieved, maintaining and depending the current reform momentum.

The region's economies must be strengthened. If not, they remain uncompetitive, with too much political interference as well as an underdeveloped private sector which affects growth and jobs particularly for the youth of the region. None of the Western Balkans can currently be considered to have a functioning market economy nor to have the capacity to cope with the competitive pressure and market forces in the union.

The adoption of a Multiannual Action Plan for the development of a Regional Economic Area is henceforth a necessity.

The entire Western Balkans region is surrounded by EU member states. Under no circumstances should forces from outside Europe – i.a. Russia, Turkey, reactionary Islamic states or China – take the place of the EU.

In addition to his speech, Franz Schausberger participated in a panel-discussion with **Klajda Gjoshja**, former Minister of Integration of Albania and **Genc Pollo**, Chairman of the Integration Committee of the



Ksenela Sotirofski, rector of the Aleksandër Moisiu University of Durres awarded Franz Schausberger the title „Doctor Honoris Causa“.

Parliament of Albania with an audience of approximately 120 students.

Franz Schausberger, Chairman of the IRE and the Western Balkans Working Group of the Committee of the Regions, visited Albania from the 21<sup>st</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> of May 2018. As part of this visit, the rector of the Aleksandër Moisiu University in Durres, Prof. Dr. Kseanela Sotirofski, awarded Schausberger the title „Doctor Honoris Causa“ in a solemn ceremony. The initiative was based by Prof. Enver Bytyci, who has been working closely with Prof. Schausberger and the IRE for a long time.



Meeting of Enver Hoxhaj and Franz Schausberger in Brussels

# A strong local self-government of Kosovo is important for the rapprochement with the European Union

Issues of decentralization and strengthening of local self-government in Kosovo were the focus of a conversation between Deputy Prime Minister of Kosovo **Enver Hoxhaj** and the Chairman of the Institute of the Regions of Europe (IRE) on the 15th of May 2018 in Brussels.

Enver Hoxhaj pointed out that Kosovo's municipalities already have many skills, but they do not yet have the necessary financial resources. The mayors, who are directly elected, have a strong position. The

Local Self-Government Act provides for twenty-five key responsibilities for all communities in Kosovo, including the provision of clean drinking water, sanitation, waste management, adequate housing, efficient transport, a clean environment, education and health services and economic affairs.

Perhaps the biggest challenge is that large responsibilities have been transferred from the central government to the municipalities without providing them with the necessary financial resources. Local governments have limited resources to raise their own resources and depend on national government grants for most of their revenues. The grants to the municipalities amount to about one third of the state budget.

**Franz Schausberger** pointed out that a decentralization of tasks to the municipalities would be meaningful only if this also involved financial decen-

“Kosovo's municipalities already have large responsibilities, but they do not yet have the necessary financial resources.”

Enver Hoxhaj, Deputy Prime Minister of Kosovo

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Enver Hoxhaj, Deputy Prime Minister of Kosovo with Franz Schausberger, Chairman of the Western Balkans Working Group of the European Committee of the Regions

tralization. After 80 percent of EU legislation has to be implemented at regional and local level after EU accession, involvement of the local level in the accession process is of crucial importance. Therefore, it is necessary to train the municipal administration and provide them with the necessary know-how, not least because they are able to work out good projects for EU funding.

The creation of a separate community association of Serbian communities in the north of Kosovo and the fulfillment of the conditions for an early visa liberalization for the inhabitants of Kosovo were topics of the meeting.

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President of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, Igor Mirović

## Funding for agricultural projects

On 5<sup>th</sup> of May 2018, **Igor Mirović**, President of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, awarded 68 contracts to representatives of 41 municipalities. The provincial secretaries of agriculture, water management and forestry from a total budget of 932.5 million dinars (800 million euros), 300 million dinars (254 million euros) were allocated from the government.

Mirović emphasized that the government of AP Vojvodina has focused since 2016 on economic development and agriculture as one of the most central points.

The government of AP Vojvodina also has invested 500 million dinars (4.2 million euro) in the development of the municipality of Ruma over the past two years.

Source: Government of AP Vojvodina

## Apatin to become a university town in 2018

Apatin has embarked on its way to become a university town, as the Belgrade Modern Business School plans to open another faculty in Apatin, stated Apatin's mayor, **Milan Škrbić** and Professor **Nenad Vunjak**. The Modern Business School, which was founded by the Academy for South East Europe (A.S.B.) in Vienna, offers Bachelor's and Master's degree programs.

Source: radioapatin.com

## Banja Luka invests in infrastructure

The Mayor of Banja Luka, **Igor Radojčić**, announced on 16<sup>th</sup> of May 2018, that the total budget of Banja Luka was increased by six million euros for investment. Private investors and the Republika Srpska will also participate in the realization of projects.

The largest projects involve the development of the wastewater system, which will cost 50 million euro, and the construction of a multifunctional congress center with an estimated value of around 20 million euro.

Radojčić noted that Banja Luka was declared a European City of Sports in 2018 and was also nominated for the European Capital of Culture 2024. „So we have many long-term plans ahead of us, and in ten years' time, we will transform our city into a safe and comfortable living environment”, said the mayor.

Source: Nezavisne.com



Mayor of Banja Luka, Igor Radojčić

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Bezahlte Anzeige

## Local elections in Great Britain

### Conservatives win, right-wing populists

After the parliamentary election last June, the local elections in Great Britain took place on 3<sup>rd</sup> of May 2018. 4,851 seats in English local councils were re-elected, including all 32 London boroughs, as well as six-city mayors. Additionally, Sheffield, Hackney, Lewisham, Newham, Tower Hamlets and Watford held mayoral elections. In the first five boroughs, the Labor Party won.

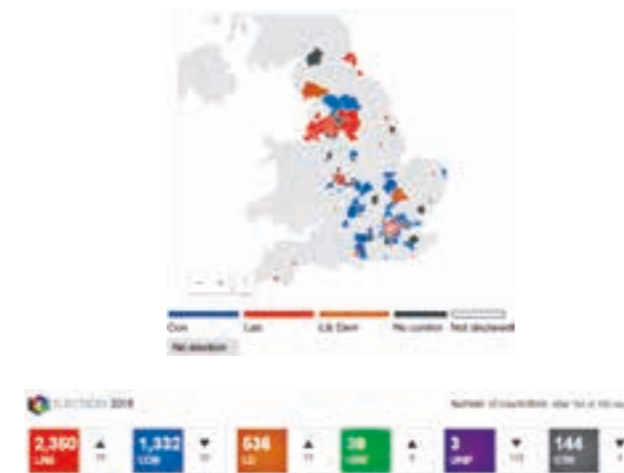
The Conservatives make 1,332 (-33) seats in the UK. The party has won in the London districts of Barnet, Westminster and Wandsworth and in the communities Basildon and Peterborough. The party was unable to hold control of Trafford, Plymouth, Kingston and Richmond, losing a total of 28 seats.

The opposition Labor party reached 2,350 seats (+79). As expected, the party won in London and places 1,120 seats in the capital (+60). Furthermore, the party has taken over Plymouth from the Conservatives and gained control of Kirklees and Tower Hamlets.

The Liberal Democrats were able to improve their results from the past election. They achieved a plus of 75 and thus a total of 536 seats. The party obtained the most votes in Kingston-upon-Thames, Richmond-upon-Thames, South Cambridgeshire and Three Rivers.

The Greens received more votes which resulted in 39 (+8) seats. The Welsh center-left party Plaid Cymru was able to gain 35 seats. The UKIP party, which achieved a good result in the last election in 2014, lost almost all seats (-123). The party now holds three seats.

Source: zeit.de, bbc.com



## Municipal Elections in Schleswig-Holstein

### CDU leads, SPD loses, Greens strong

The people of Schleswig-Holstein elected on the 6<sup>th</sup> of May 2018 new municipal and district parliaments. Around 2.4 million people were eligible to vote. 47.1 percent of voters cast their votes, compared to 46.7 percent five years ago. They decided on the composition in about 1080 municipalities in the district, in the independent cities Kiel, Lübeck, Flensburg and Neumünster as well as in the eleven districts.

The CDU continues to be the strongest political force in Schleswig-Holstein's municipalities, cities and counties. After the preliminary official country result of the local election, the Union comes to 35.1 percent. The party loses 3.8 percentage points compared to the election in 2013. The SPD sinks heavily and lands at 23.3 percent (-6.5). The Greens reach 16.5 percent (+2.8), the FDP 6.7 percent (+1.7) and the Left 3.9 percent (+1.4), the SSW 2.3 percent (-0.6). The AfD comes to 5.5 percent and participated for the first time in a local election. Other parties and electorate communities come to 6.7 percent (-0.5 percentage points).

Source: spiegel.de, sueddeutsche.de, NDR.de



Result of the municipal election 2018



Ralf Stegner (SPD) and Daniel Günther (CDU)

Strategic Partner of the IRE







The capital city is Poznań, with an old town with picturesque tenements and notable highrises of the modern city.



Delegation from Poland visited the IRE in Salzburg

## Discussion on future cooperation between the IRE and the Regional Parliament of Wielkopolska Voivodeship



Franz Schausberger and Zofia Szalczyk, president of the regional parliament of the Wielkopolska Voivodeship

A delegation of the regional parliament of the Wielkopolska Voivodeship (Greater Poland) led by the president of the regional parliament, **Zofia Szalczyk**, visited the Institute of the Regions of Europe (IRE) on the 28th of May 2018 and met the IRE chairman **Franz Schausberger** and Secretary General **Joachim Fritz** for a detailed discussion. President Zofia Szalczyk was accompanied by the Deputy-President of the Regional Parliament **Mirosława Rutkowska-Krupka** and the President of the Committee of Regional Development Strategy and International Relations, **Mikołaj Grzyb**, as well as members of three parliamentary groups of the regional parliament. As President Zofia Szalczyk emphasized, the visit was intended to strengthen cooperation between her Voivodeship and the Austrian provinces. Due to the good geographic location of the Wielkopolska Voivodeship and the excellent traffic con-

nection with Moscow, Berlin and Warsaw, the region is ideally suited for foreign investors. This is also reflected in the fact that already 4,000 foreign companies have settled in this region. The development of cross-border regional cooperation is one of the priorities of the IRE. It was agreed to intensify this in further meetings.

Afterwards, the delegation met with the president of the state parliament (Landtagspräsident) **Josef Schöch**. „Wielkopolska Voivodeship is one of the country's strongest economic regions and an interesting growing market and Salzburg can offer know-how in organic agriculture or tourism to support the economic boom in this region great interest in future cooperation“, Schöch summed up the discussions.

Sources: Land Salzburg, Franz Neumayr,  
Photos Poznan: Przemov300 and Dennis Jarvis  
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pozna%C5%84>



From left: Deputy-President Mirosława Rutkowska-Krupka, Josef Schöch, president of the state parliament of Land Salzburg and president Zofia Szalczyk



## Appeal for a „citizen-close“ EU on the annual Europe Day

To visualize how great the loss would be if the EU breaks apart - that is one of the concerns of the annual Europe Day, which was celebrated this year in Bad Reichenhall on the 28<sup>th</sup> of May 2018 with a ceremony in the concert rotunda. Therein, former Governor of Salzburg Prof. **Franz Schausberger** spoke. He campaigned for a citizen-oriented EU, in which individual countries should not isolate themselves. Nevertheless, Europe's borders must be secured externally. Even if one can not approve of their policies on all points, one must be glad that Hungary and Austria have largely blocked the Balkan route for refugees. In order to avoid refugee flows from Africa in the future, one must start with a new policy in Africa. So far, development aid has often only supported the local potentates and brought little to the peoples.

In his greeting, **Herbert Lackner** emphasized what great value Europe has for all citizens. Furthermore he referred that a life



Reichenhall's Lord Mayor Herbert Lackner (left) and District Representative Rudolf Schupp (right) thanked the keynote speaker Franz Schausberger

in peace and freedom is a great gift and by no means self-evident.

The keynote speaker, Professor Franz Schausberger, took up this topic. The long-term cooperation of the countries in the European Union has brought a great boon, and citizens should participate in their further development at all levels. He recalled

that the founding fathers, in establishing state-level coalitions in Europe, aimed at ending old hostilities, not least for economic reasons, between peoples.

Source: heimatzeitung.de, Dieter Moosleitner

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**They have nerves of steel:  
The APG line teams need  
to keep balance.**

Credit: Karl Michalski

## New employee at the IRE

After **Martina Balazic** changed her profession this may after almost four years at the IRE, **Julia Soldo** is now her substitute and responsible for the IRE Office Management Administration.

Julia was born in 1998 in Salzburg. Grown up bi-lingual (German and Croatian), Croatian roots gave opportunity to easily learn languages (Russian, English and French), which was facilitated by the education in HAKII Salzburg, within the field of "International Business". Simultaneously, opportunities to go abroad arose from social engagement and language-contests. Most notably, the international Russian-Olympics in Moscow, as well as regional and national wins at speaking competitions.

The IRE thanks Ms. Balazic for her valid support and wishes her good luck and success in her bright future.

More information about the new employee can be found on the IRE-Website.

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Insofar as this publication features only personal designations in their gender-specific forms, they relate – insofar as this can be considered with regard to the content – to men and women on equal terms.

## The balancing act of electricity supply – Austrian Power Grid (APG) must strengthen grid

The European electricity supply is undergoing a transition. The construction of many additional wind and photovoltaic power plants calls for increased efforts in order to maintain the necessary balance between electricity generation and consumption at all times.

### The balance of generation and consumption

Electricity supply is based on a fundamental physical principle that is very simple: every single second, precisely as much electricity must be generated as is being consumed at that moment. The reason for this is that electricity cannot be stored at will. If the balance is disrupted, large-scale outages can occur.

"Maintaining the balance every single second between generation and consumption is the core task of Austrian Power Grid," explains Dr. Ulrike Baumgartner-Gabitzer, CEO of APG. "What may appear simple becomes a daily balancing act due to the current changes in the European electricity sector: The higher the share of electricity generated from wind power as part of the overall supply, the greater the fluctuations that the electricity grid has to balance out. This also means that grid operators such as APG have to intervene more frequently."

### APG invests in a secure electricity future

Wind and photovoltaic power require an electricity grid that can handle even great power fluctuations. "The restructuring of our electricity supply towards renewable energy sources requires huge investments in our electricity grid," says Baumgartner-Gabitzer. "In the next ten years, we will invest over 100 million euros annually to improve our facilities. This is the only way to maintain the high standard of the Austrian electricity supply."

One very central project is the Salzburg line. Over 600 million euros are flowing into this project alone. Investments in the national electricity grid are important investments in the future and an important impulse for the national economy. Around 80 percent of the invested funds benefit the Austrian economy.

You can find further information at [www.apg.at](http://www.apg.at)

Anzeige





**“United in diversity” should not only be  
a motto, it needs to be lived!  
Therefore, regional cooperation and exchange  
have to be more than pretty words.**