

■ Concept Note on National Working Groups on PAR

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In Brief: What are National Working Groups on PAR (NWGs)?

NWGs are national consultative mechanism for participation of civil society in the dialogue with relevant public authorities on design and **monitoring of public administration reform (PAR)** processes in the Western Balkans (WB).¹ NWGs are constituted in each of the WB country as **national** extensions for dialogue on PAR of the wider mechanism - **regional** WeBER Platform.²

As the integral part of the WeBER Platform, NWGs follow the Platform **rationale** that *only by empowering local non-governmental actors and strengthening participatory democracy at the national and local level, can the same pressure on the governments to continue implementing the often painful and inconvenient administrative reforms be maintained post-accession*. Thus, NWGs ensure that

WeBER Platform

Regional consultative platform, consisting of WeBER partners + 2 to 3 organisations per WB country

WeBER Platform members from each WB country are known as “National Consortium”

National consortia in each country are led by respective WeBER partner and are at the same time

NWG Coordinators

NWGs
*National consultative mechanism
Extension of the Platform to the national level, app. 30 participants*

dialogue on PAR involves all levels of civil society engagement, including national and local level, through participation of locally based civil society organisations (CSOs) in NWGs. Following the same line, NWGs gather wide network of CSOs in each country, that will participate in discussions and consultations on the PAR Monitor,³ and address other relevant issues in the PAR area in each country.

NWGs are initiated, led and coordinated by the respective WeBER project partners and other CSOs from each country which participate directly in the regional WeBER Platform.⁴ For Bosnia and Herzegovina, the role of the coordinator is performed by the Foreign Policy Initiative BH – FPI BH.

In Essence: How do NWGs Function?

NWGs derive from the **logic and structure** of the WeBER Platform (displayed in the graph below), that provides a common ground for involvement of CSOs in PAR monitoring and dialogue at regional and national level. Each national consortium of the Platform constitutes NWG for respective country, taking into consideration specificities of civil society environment in relation to

¹ This concept note is part of the three-year WeBER project (Western Balkans Enabling Project for Civil Society Monitoring of Public Administration Reform - WeBER), funded by the European Union and co-financed by the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Visit WeBER website: <http://www.par-monitor.org/>.

² From the Concept Note on WeBER Platform: The WeBER Platform is a regional consultation platform, led by CSO in the Western Balkans (WB), for maintaining dialogue with public authorities in WB countries on the public administration reform (PAR) process - the process that is ongoing in all WB countries simultaneously. For more info on the WeBER Platform visit the website: <http://www.par-monitor.org/pages/purpose>

³ PAR Monitor is the cornerstone element of the WeBER Platform and represents a foundation for the activities within the Platform. It is the tool that provides all necessary resources and methodology for independent PAR monitoring by civil society in the WB. It is based on the CSO inputs that are evidence-based, and PAR Monitor methodology closely follows the Principles of Public Administration developed by SIGMA.

⁴ WeBER Partners implementing the project are six policy oriented think tank organisations in the Western Balkans, gathered in the Think for Europe Network (TEN). Civil society organisations from the Western Balkan countries that are implementing the project are: 1) European Policy Centre (CEP), Belgrade, 2) European Policy Institute (EPI), Skopje, 3) Institute Alternative (IA), Podgorica, 4) Institute for Mediation and Democracy (IDM), Tirana, 5) Group for Legal and Political Studies (GLPS), Pristina, and 6) Foreign Policy Initiative BiH (FPI), Sarajevo.

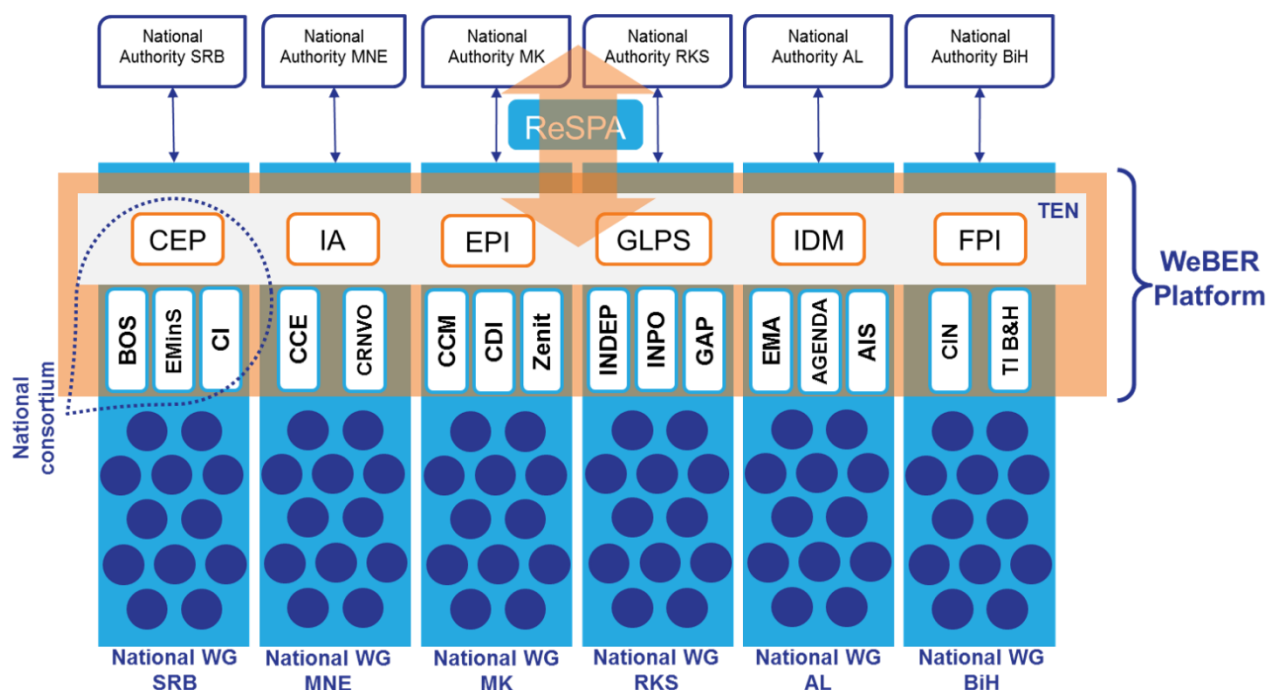
availability of and the need for evidence-based research and advocacy on PAR. However, driving idea behind the establishment of NWGs is to gather as many CSOs as possible and to create wide but credible domestic mechanism that will represent the views and standpoints of the civil society in dialogue with public authorities in PAR monitoring process.

Membership in NWGs is open to all, and limited only to 1) declaration of interest by CSOs to join and to 2) demonstration of either PAR related efforts in portfolio (in case CSOs have at least basic experience in PAR), or expression of willingness to become active in this field. This will be done through a Call for Expression of Interest to join NWGs.

The purpose of the NWG is to take part in discussions and consultations on the PAR Monitor, regional and national PAR monitoring reports that will be produced as part of the WeBER project, but also to address other relevant issues in the PAR area in each country (e.g. discussing the SIGMA assessments and EU progress reports, outcomes of the PAR Special Group meetings, identifying topics for focus of further joint work, etc.). The NWG meetings will also involve representatives of the relevant public administration institutions (first and foremost the ministries/offices for PAR, but also other relevant institutions).

NWGs will **operate** in accordance with constitutive documents (memorandum of cooperation or similar), and related workplan and working guidelines that will be developed and adopted subsequently. NWGs will be designed and established as the activity of the WeBER project, however their work and operation extend beyond the project duration.

On the graph: WeBER Platform



CSOs that lead and coordinate the NWG (called also the “national consortium”), that are at the same time members of the Platform regionally (see the graph above), are:

- Foreign Policy Initiative BH – FPI BH, Sarajevo, NWG Coordinator in BiH, and partner on WeBER Project
- Transparency International – TI, Sarajevo

- The Center for Investigative Reporting (CIN)– Sarajevo

The Platform members in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Platform members in remaining country, were selected through the Open Call for the Expression of Interest.

In Particular: Why join the WeBER Platform and its NWGs?

Distinct nature of the WeBER Platform and its NWGs is embodied in its comprehensive approach that focuses on all levels of governance and building multi-level partnerships among CSOs and increasing their influence for PAR monitoring accordingly.

NWGs, specifically:

- Involve locally based CSOs that are genuinely interested and/or active in the monitoring of the work of local (municipal or sub-national) administrations;
- Create opportunities for CSOs' capacity-building through tailor-made trainings and workshops, and potential support for the application of PAR Monitor methodology at the national and local level;
- Create opportunities for local CSOs with little prior experience in the area of PAR to start building their portfolio in this area, and are thus encouraged to propose project ideas and apply for small grants to monitor local administrations' reform.

In the (Immediate) Future: First Steps

- National consultations and completion of concept notes

The draft concept notes on NWGs will be circulated widely in the civil society in each country. Members of the national consortia from each country will be invited to this consultation. Results of the consultative process will be integrated into the final concept notes on the NWG design.

- Call for Expression of Interest

After concept notes are consulted and finalised, the invitation to CSOs in each country to join the NWGs will be disseminated through Call for Expression of Interest for CSOs to join the NWGs, with the main idea to create wider network of CSOs, considering basic capacities and experience of joining but above all willingness and motivation to take part in PAR monitoring. Exact number of NWG participants (and participating organisations) will be determined by respective national consortium for the country in question.

- Establishment of the NWGs

The first, constitutive meetings of the NWGs will be organised in each country following registration of CSOs. They will include the signing of NWG constitutive documents (a memorandum of cooperation or similar type of document, depending on the decision by each national consortium).

- Meetings of the NWGs

Following the first, constitutive meetings at the beginning of 2017, the NWGs will hold two additional meetings in each country. Both meetings will be consultative:

- The 2nd NWGs' meeting, later in 2017, will serve to hold mid-term consultations on the progress in the research and analytical work on the application of the PAR Monitor, coordination with projects and initiatives of other CSOs involved in the NWG that are relevant and can be used as contributions to the PAR Monitor as well as to discuss fundraising ideas for additional support to the PAR Monitor and NWGs' work;
- The 3rd NWGs' meeting, in 2018, will in each country be organised in conjunction with the final WS on drafting PAR Monitor methodology, where the draft national reports will already be discussed.