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

PANEL 3: International Cooperation in Cybersecurity Capacity Building – Opportunities and Way Ahead for the Western Balkans
March 5th 2021, Online

Number of participants: 43

Moderator: Franziska Klopfer, Europe and Central Asia Division, DCAF

Introductory remarks: Fabio Barbero, EU Cyber Direct Project Officer, EUISS

Panellists:

Sabine Zwaenepoel, European Commission

Thomas Jordan, Global Forum on Cyber Expertise

Tadej Rupel, Ambassador, National Coordinator for External Aspects of Digitalization

Chelsey Slack, NATO Headquarters

In this panel, international experts and discussed lessons learnt and needs in cybersecurity capacity building in the Western Balkans. The panel explored approaches to cybersecurity capacity building and partners' strategic priorities in working with the Western Balkans in the future. International experts also discussed best practices in donor coordination and practical ways of making sure that countries receive targeted and sustainable expert support.

Key takeaways from the Panel
- Panellists took into account the specific challenges and opportunities of the Western Balkan region while discussing various possibilities for closer cooperation with other countries in Europe and organizations such as NATO and EU. It was clearly shown that **international organisations have Western Balkan countries on their radar** when it comes to supporting cyber security capacity building, and are ready to offer support through many ways.
- All panellists agreed that **coordination amongst donors, implementations and economies** is absolutely essential in the cybersecurity capacity building process. It is very important to

have a dialogue between beneficiaries and different partners on national priorities and best practices of organising cybersecurity capacity building in their own context. As an example, the Global Forum on Cyber Expertise offers its support to countries when determining their cybersecurity capacity building needs and matchmaking them with the community of implementers and donors who are ready to offer support.

- **Capacity building is not a one-way street.** The entire process needs to be completed with local ownership and strong interest from the ones that are receiving support. One size fit all is not the right approach in this process and panellists agreed that local ownership and contextualisation are key to successful cybersecurity capacity building.
- **Physical presence in the region** is important and it enables donor organisations to work more closely with WB economies and act as hubs for cyber security capacity building in the region. This requires continuous coordination with WB economies, other donors and implementors.