**Declaration**

**2nd High Level Youth Dialogue “Bridging the Gap” conference, Skopje, 21 September 2018**

We, the young members of Parliament and youth organisation representatives from the Western Balkans who took part in the 2nd High Level Youth Dialogue “Bridging the Gap” in Skopje, 20-21 September 2018, declare our commitment to this framework in order to deliver concrete actions to enhance youth participation in politics and the implementation of youth-centred policies throughout the Western Balkans.

As well as focussing on specific themes during this 2nd High Level Dialogue, namely ***Youth engagement with politics*, *Youth Employment, Enterprise and Brain Drain*, *Fake News and Disinformation* as well as *Reconciliation and Legacies of the Pas****t*, we also used an innovative policy design mechanism in the form of ***Youth*** ***Policy Labs*** to elaborate recommendations.

As well as instrumental in agreeing on the policy recommendations listed in these conclusions, the ***Youth*** ***Policy Labs*** provided a blueprint to be followed-up pro-actively in the implementation of youth policies at the national and regional level in the Western Balkans region.

We state our commitment to establish the ***Bridging the Gap*** as a sustainable regional dialogue platform focussed on eliminating the gap between youth policy, youth participation and Parliamentarians in the Western Balkans. As Parliamentarians and active youth we intend to build on our dialogue and focus on action in the following areas:

* Support conditions for structured participation of national youth councils, youth organizations and young people in the process of creation of youth policies;
* Participate in regional initiatives such as the Regional Youth Cooperation Office;
* Create platforms, including national caucuses and regional parliamentary dialogues, to exchange knowledge and best practices youth-centred policies;
* Continue the good practices of organizing regional and national conferences to enhance the dialogue between young people and parliaments regarding youth policies and the exchange of good practices between the countries.
* Create and support joint regional initiatives for the exchange of knowledge and data between the professional services in the six Western Balkan parliaments

We welcome the continued support of the European Parliament’s Young Political Leaders Programme as well as the European Commission in such initiatives as ***“Bridging the Gap”.***

We agreed to meet again in this and other frameworks to pursue the agenda set out in this Declaration.

Annex 1

*Conclusions adopted after the Policy Lab sessions:*

***Youth engagement with politics***

* Audit the barriers to youth participation
* Civic education as part of formal education
* Support the debate on vote for 16 olds
* Encourage the creation of new spaces for political debate, including parliamentary caucuses

***Youth Employment, Enterprise and Brain Drain***

* Introduction of social entrepreneurship for all Youth
* Introduction of obligatory apprenticeship/internship and service learning
* Recognition of informal learning
* Introduction of competence based approach
* Introduction of quality assurance in particular for apprenticeships
* Increased participation of youth trough formalized procedures and clear agenda for youth with allocated budget for measures contained
* Increased budget allocation for education

***Fake News and Disinformation***

* Raise awareness of the adverse effects of disinformation and fake news on societal resilience
* Advocate contemporary approaches in introducing media literacy in schools
* Help introduce and develop culture debate through the educational system and media

***Reconciliation and Legacies of the Pas****t*

* Support the development and implementation of law on voluntarism that will ensure effective regional exchange and regional voluntary actions that will contribute to reconciliation
* Advocate for integrated education – formal and informal
* Introduce Balkan Youth Mobility Scheme