TEN 2025

Organisational Development Strategy of the
Think for Europe Network (TEN)

TEN
Think *for*
Europe
Network

2018

Contents

I. Executive summary

The aim of this Strategy is to present the plan and steps for organisational development of Think for Europe network (hereinafter: TEN) for the period 2018-2025. As a network of think tanks from six Western Balkan (WB) countries devoted to improving the evidence basis for policymaking and advocacy in the context of the region's EU membership perspective, TEN has been operating in complex and challenging environment in the previous five years.

On the one side, WB countries' EU integration progress is uneven and rather unsatisfactory, with serious deficiencies of reforms in rule of law, public administration and economic governance, as well as unfavourable circumstances for dialogue and civil society engagement. On the other side, despite the prevailing 'enlargement fatigue' in its most influential member states, the EU has been insistent on pushing the WB governments to pursue open and inclusive EU accession process and to improve inter-regional political, economic, social and cultural relations and cooperation. In such environment, TEN has grown into reputable and influential regional network of think tanks, with immense potential for development but in need for important interventions.

The development of TEN Strategy 2025 has relied on the Network's strategic objectives jointly defined by its members on the outset of its establishment. They pertained to exchange of information among TEN members; exchange of expertise, peer learning and best practices; policy research in the EU accession process, as basis for policy making in the region; involvement of civil society in the policy making; and the dialogue between civil society actors and national authorities. These objectives have been upgraded in accordance with the present political, economic and social circumstances. Among them are: to help drive forward the EU accession process of the Western Balkan region, including EU membership compliant reforms at domestic level; and to inform policy debates on the key regional challenges in accomplishing the EU accession requirements, including challenges in the areas of the rule of law, economic governance and public administration reform.

In pursuing these objectives, TEN will need to undertake actions to improve its governance and management; research quality and research products; communication and advocacy; as well as to expand its cooperation with other partners in Europe and worldwide.

TEN will seek to continually improve its internal governance and management, especially in terms of funding and reputation. In particular, TEN will improve the functioning of its governing bodies, introduce new methods for internal communication and establish a special financial governance structure. In terms of research products and research quality, TEN members will jointly work on diversifying the research methods applied in joint projects, improving their teams' research and

writing skills and on improving the quality assurance standards and procedures. On communication and advocacy, TEN plans to upgrade its Strategy on this matter, maximise participation and interactivity with the key audience, take greater advantage of multipliers in disseminating and communicating its messages and products and develop a set of key messages to be used in advocacy efforts towards specific target groups. Finally, the partners will engage in a set of targeted activities to improve the Network's international, and particularly European outreach.

II.   Preface

This document sets the strategic plan for organisational development of the Think for Europe (TEN) network for 2018-2025 period. It is intended for TEN members, potential funders and supporters as well as anyone interested in the development of our network. The first part of the document (Sections III-VIII) provides information about TEN, previous achievements, current state of affairs, its vision, mission, strategies and strategic objectives, whereas the second part of the document (Section IX) provides details on key areas of planned intervention in terms of organisational development. They pertain to governance and management structures; quality of research products and research quality; communication and advocacy; and internationalisation of the network.

III.   About TEN

"Think for Europe" Network of Think Tanks and EU Policy Research Centres in South East Europe (TEN) was established in May 2013 against the background of weak regional cooperation in policy research related to the European Union (EU) and despite the common challenges pre-accession countries face on their road to EU membership. The founding think tanks have recognised a great potential of think tanks and policy research centres in the Western Balkans to, through an evidence-based approach, review and enhance the process of policy-making, monitoring, and evaluation of public policies in the context of EU accession, being aware that these efforts generally remain constrained to individual countries.[1]

TEN was created with the purpose to **improve the evidence basis for policy making and advocacy**, to **undertake joint research on EU matters** and to **transfer best practices and experiences in policy making and policy coordination processes**. Regional cooperation and joint research and advocacy activities can also ensure regional peer pressure to **improve standards of policy research and analysis**.

In the process of EU accession, the countries in the region face similar challenges: rule of law, sustainability of reform and administrative capacities to ensure implementation of EU law. Therefore, sustainable EU related reforms would benefit from joint research, analytical and advocacy capacities of think tanks in the region on EU matters, and transfer of best practices and experiences in policy making and policy coordination processes among them. **The think tanks and research centres in the Western Balkan region active in the field of EU integration are the actors capable of stimulating the transfer of such experiences and practices**.

TEN gathers think tank organisations across the Western Balkans (see TEN membership section), which are active in the area of coming up with solutions for mutual obstacles in the EU accession process. The network has so far implemented a significant number of regional projects and produced numerous influential publications.[2]

TEN Membership

TEN members are non-profit, independent think-tank or policy research centres focusing on the EU integration process and committed to the evidence-based policy making and advocacy.[3] The membership within the Network is also defined by a set of common values and principles – they are all non-profit organisations with well-established governing procedures and standards, which highly value and practice transparency, political independence and legal-financial accountability. The members of TEN are also think tanks with solid policy research portfolios and policy communication and advocacy capacities, and they include:

o **European Policy Centre** **(CEP)**, based in Belgrade, Serbia;

o **Institute Alternative** **(IA)**, based in Podgorica, Montenegro;

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[1] The Agreement establishing the "Think for Europe" Network of Think Tanks and EU Policy Research Centres in SEE (TEN), Art.3, entered into force on 1 July, 2013
[2] Think for Europe Network (TEN), https://ten.europeanpolicy.org/category/publications
[3] Official website of the Think for Europe Network (TEN), http://ten.europeanpolicy.org

- o **European Policy Institute** **(EPI)**, based in Skopje, Macedonia;

- o **Institute for Democracy and Mediation** **(IDM)**, based in Tirana, Albania;

- o **Group for Legal and Political Studies** **(GLPS)**, based in Pristina, Kosovo;

- o **Foreign Policy Initiative Bosnia and Herzegovina** **(FPI BH)**, based in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

TEN Values

TEN members are brought together by the values of **good governance** and **rule of law** as primary drivers of the development of our societies. Furthermore, this cooperation promotes **openness** and **transparency** as well as **partnership** – another set of principles crucial for development and intrinsic to the EU legal system.

At the same time, TEN members seek to establish themselves as **"honest brokers"** in the relationship between the civil society and the governments of their countries, thus striving to balance the role of partners in development and reform processes on the one side, and that of watchful scrutinisers of their actions, on the other.

Furthermore, TEN members have agreed to continuously promote **excellence in policy research**. They thus collaborate and exchange practices with the aim of expanding the scope and further improving the quality of methodologies applied in both joint and individual research projects.[4]

TEN Areas of Cooperation

In addition to the horizontally driven emphasis on the overall policy making and policy implementation processes and efforts to render them more evidence-Abased, the **main areas** of cooperation have been taken into consideration when defining strategic directions of the Network. These topics, jointly identified by the TEN members upon the Network's establishment, are first and foremost the following:

- → Public administration reform and administrative capacities for EU integration;
- → Economic governance and integration of the region into the EU economic policy framework
- → Rule of Law, including Chapters 23 "Judiciary and Fundamental Rights" and Chapter 24 "Justice, Freedom and Security" of the EU accession negotiations;
- → Civil society involvement in policy making and decision making for EU accession (including EU negotiations);
- → Western Balkan integration into the EU internal market (including competition, consumers and other relevant policy areas).
- → Government accountability and accountable public finances (Chapter 32);
- → Capacities for EU pre-accession funds management and IPA monitoring;
- → Regional dimension of the EU accession process and regional sectoral integration;

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[4] http://ten.europeanpolicy.org

Previous achievements

Since its establishment in 2013, TEN implemented six projects in the area of PAR, rule of law and economic development while one is currently in the implementation phase. TEN's projects have been supported most notably by the European Union, European Fund for the Balkans, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, Visegrad Fund and German Organisation for International Cooperation (GIZ).[5] TEN has so far produced more than 10 publications - policy papers, studies, collection of articles, position papers, policy briefs and survey reports.

Through strategic appearances in the media, TEN has been intensively working on communication with citizens, as well as with domestic, regional and European policy and decisionmakers on issues that concern Western Balkans' EU accession process. TEN's activities, results and policy products are already largely represented in the media of TEN members but also in the foreign media. As organiser and host of many high-level expert public events, TEN has positioned itself as unsurmountable influencer on EU policy debates in the Western Balkans. Since 2017, TEN has been issuing monthly newsletter that covers all prevailing topics related to the EU integration process.

TEN was ranked as one of the best think tank networks in the world for two consecutive times in January 2018 , according to the ranking of prestigious US program of the University of Pennsylvania, which has ranked world's best think tanks and think tank networks for 11 years.

State of affairs and prospects

The following analysis represents strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats will allow for more convincing arguing on what should be done in the context of the organisational development of TEN in the period 2018-2025. As the result of comprehensive evaluation of the work done in the previous years, it represents a solid basis for the future planning.

TEN SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
▪ Expertise: each TEN member relies on pool of experts with strong academic background and previous experience in state administration, private sector and EU/international institutions (excellence in human resources) ▪ Strong advocacy potential: successful regional advocacy towards the EU and regional/national actors (Weber, Bencher projects) ▪ Proven track record in CSO empowerment (Weber, Visegrad, RRPP projects)	▪ Internal management, difficulties in gathering at strategic level (TEN Regional Council) ▪ Timely coordination and communication ▪ Inexistence of financial and fundraising strategy

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[5] More information on TEN's projects: https://ten.europeanpolicy.org/category/projects/

Opportunities	Threats
- Expanding the outreach and impact of TEN beyond the WB region (internalisation of TEN) - Building on strong advocacy potential in the context of enlargement-accession fatigue; expanding areas for regional peer pressure and advocacy beyond the existing (good governance, rule of law) - Taking greater advantage of peer review/learning through better internal management (see weaknesses) - Expanding activities for CSO empowerment	- Continued double enlargement and accession fatigue - Potential lack of interest for the EU integration related topics from the donors - Negative attitudes and/or feedback by state stakeholders - Disabling environment for evidence-based research, constructive dialogue and criticism

PEST Analysis

In addition to the SWOT analysis (see above), an analysis of the changing environment in which TEN will operate in the future has been done. The PEST analysis, presented in the four groups of factors – political, economic, social and technological, helps to explain why the TEN organisational development strategy has focused on the exact Key Areas of Organisational Development Action presented below.

Political	Economic
- Unstable political situation and frequent elections in WB countries create unpredictable environment for think tanks - Unstable relations and uneven cooperation among some WB countries - Lack of common regional policy in the process of EU accession – absence of harmonisation in accession process approaches - Cooperation between civil society and the state different from country to country in WB, which is a special challenge for TEN to adjust its approach to specific circumstances in each country - Problems with the rule of law in the countries and variation in this respect from country to country - The EU enlargement fatigue and frequent preoccupation with internal crises may affect the course of the EU integration process, the efforts of the civil societies in the WB countries and thus put Network's sustainability is at risk - WB governments' efforts toward the EU integration creates motivation for think tanks to continue with their work on improving the policy making environment in the EU accession context	- Donors, as well as the EU, recognize the importance of regional co-operation, which creates additional opportunities for TEN as sources of funding will most likely increase - Unstable economic situation in the WB countries may affect the work of think tanks - Unemployment in WB countries is high, which may present a good source of opportunity for recruiting quality staff - Low level of retention of staff in the civil service with knowledge on EU integration also represents an opportunity for think tanks and the Network to recruit quality people.

Social	Technological
▪ Brain drain: young and educated staff leaving the countries for better opportunities might in the coming period represent the challenge for TEN think tanks to recruit labour force ▪ Citizens' poor understanding of the role of think tanks in the region in changing the WB governments' policies ▪ Perception of civil society organisations and think tanks as mediators and honest brokers between the governments and the society ▪ Unresolved issues between some WB countries may be an obstacle to successful cooperation	▪ Technology utilization accelerates and facilitates contacts between physically separated locations of the TEN members' offices ▪ Good access to modern technologies and their extensive use in the Network's work (e-communication, social networks, etc.) ▪ Governments in the region devoted to digitization

IV. Purpose and Methodology of TEN Strategy

The purpose of the TEN Organisational Development Strategy 2018-2025 (hereinafter: TEN Strategy 2025) is to **improve organisational and financial sustainability, as well as transparency of TEN** , to increase efficiency and effectiveness of the Network, in line with the previously conducted SWOT and PEST analysis (please see above).In this manner, TEN members' credibility for partnerships with both governments and civil society[6] actors and defining joint measures to be undertaken until 2025 would be ensured. In the following structure of the Strategy, the aspects of organisational and financial sustainability, transparency, as well as efficiency of the TEN work are mainly addressed through the Section dealing with Governance and Management, whereas the effectiveness of the network's products and work is mainly tackled through the sections dealing with Quality of Policy Products and Research Quality, and Communication and Advocacy and Internationalisation of the Network.

The development of TEN Strategy 2025 has relied on the Network's strategic objectives jointly defined by its members on the outset of its establishment. Those objectives pertained to: exchange of information among TEN members; exchange of expertise, peer learning and best practices; policy research in the EU accession process, as basis for policy making in the region; involvement of civil society in the policy making; and the dialogue between civil society actors and national authorities. Strategic guidelines and points from 6 separate strategic documents of each TEN

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[6] In line with one of the specific objectives of the WeBER project.

member organisation respectively have been identified, analysed and integrated into the TEN strategic objectives until 2025 presented below.

Furthermore, successful implementation of the OD Strategy will be ensured by full participation of Network's members in developing, applying and evaluating the Strategy. More specifically, to promote an *interactive* and *participative* approach among TEN members, a workshop on issues and perspectives of the Network's organisational development in the period 2018-2025 was organised for TEN members in October 2017.[7]

Finally, the Strategy integrates the results of the qualitative analysis of responses to the online questionnaire conducted in June 2018 among TEN members' representatives. Namely, the questionnaire targeted directors and senior level managers from the TEN member organisations, in order to reflect the views of the member organisation in all key areas of strategic development.

V.   TEN Vision 2025

Based on the key words and inputs received from member organisations, the key elements of the TEN Vision for 2025 have been defined as follows:

- in 2025, TEN shall be a well-developed, credible and sustainable network of reputable think tanks from all Western Balkan countries, achieving a tangible and recognised impact at national, regional and European levels, in the key policy areas relevant for the region's EU integration process;

- with more than ten joint successfully implemented research projects and advocacy initiatives, TEN shall be widely recognised for its strong research capacities and evidence-based solutions to identified policy problems;

- in 2025, TEN shall be recognised by relevant external stakeholders at EU level as an example of strong regional cooperation jointly aiming to overcome shared regional challenges.

VI.   TEN Mission 2025

TEN delivers high-quality, evidence-based policy recommendations addressing challenges and policy problems of the Western Balkans on its road to the EU to relevant policy actors and policy communities in the Region and the European Union.

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[7] The workshop was conducted by the Chief Executive of the European Policy Centre (EPC), Mr Fabian Zuleeg.

VII. TEN Strategies

To achieve its mission and vision, TEN will apply the following strategies:

1. Delivery of high-quality, evidence-based research and policy products, which will include policy proposals, recommendations and advocacy initiatives;
2. Promotion of regional cooperation by sharing experience and knowledge between TEN members, with the policy community and with the public;
3. Boosting European reach and reputation of the Network through cooperation with renowned think tanks from European countries and relevant networks;
4. Affirmation of the role of the civil society in policy making processes and the EU integration among the general public in the Region.

VIII. TEN Strategic Objectives

TEN strategic objectives directing the Network's functioning for the period 2013-2018, have been identified in the joint agreement among the member organisations establishing the Network, as already mentioned above in the Methodology part of the strategy.

In light of the changes in both internal and external Members' environment in the past years, as described in the State of Affairs and Prospects section above, these strategic objectives have been reconsidered and revised so to fully correspond to the current state of affairs:

1. To help drive forward the EU accession process of the Western Balkan region
2. To inform policy debates on the key regional challenges in accomplishing the EU accession requirements, including challenges in the areas of the rule of law, economic governance and public administration reform
3. To drive forward the EU membership compliant reforms at domestic level in the region

In pursuing these objectives, TEN will be guided by the four defined strategies (see part VII above).

IX. Key Areas of Organisation Development Action

The TEN OD Strategy focuses on four broad areas of action, each of which comprises a set of actions which will combine to create results and impact towards the above stated objectives, while observing the key values of TEN. The actions within each of the presented key areas have been identified and recognised by all the TEN members as feasible having in mind the organisational, human and financial capacities of the Network. The four key areas where actions will be undertaken to further TEN's organisational development are:

1. Governance and management (including financial governance)
2. Quality of research products and research quality

3. Communication and advocacy
4. Internationalisation of the TEN Network.

When it comes to governance and management, TEN will improve the functioning of its governing bodies, introduce new methods for internal communication and establish a special financial governance structure. In terms of research products and research quality, TEN members will jointly work on diversifying the research methods applied in joint projects, improving their teams' research and writing skills and on improving the quality assurance standards and procedures. On communication and advocacy, TEN plans to upgrade its Strategy on this matter, maximise participation and interactivity with the key audience, take greater advantage of multipliers in disseminating and communicating its messages and products; and develop a set of key messages to be used in advocacy efforts towards specific target groups. Finally, the partners will engage in targeted activities to improve the Network's international, and particularly European outreach. The following sections explain in greater detail the state of play and plans for action in these four areas.

1. Governance and Management Structures

TEN fully recognises that for any independent think tank as well as for a network of think tanks, a high level of **good governance** is a necessity rather than an option. The issue of legitimacy is becoming more important, and societies in the Western Balkan countries ask more and more why think tanks are playing the role they are playing in the public sphere. Therefore, the challenge for the Network is, as mentioned above in the PEST analysis as well, to legitimize its work, by applying the good governance principles, transparency being among the most important in the context of Network's functioning. In addition, funders require demonstration of such principles before committing to support a think tank, particularly if this is in the form of institutional support rather than project funding.

TEN has put in the core of its functioning the awareness of **interests** it represents and **good governance** principles, as preconditions for achieving its full capacity to fulfil its role. Moreover, the Network members realise that the appearance of any cases of conflict of interest or corruption could make it lose its credibility and reputation, to the extent of thwarting its very existence.

These concepts are related: greater transparency tends to enforce better governance by ensuring that there is public scrutiny. Both good governance and transparency have so far proven indispensable to underpin, guarantee and support the independence of the Network. **Thus, good governance principles are already incorporated into the fabric of TEN and need to be further enhanced as the network progresses.** These principles are essential for the credibility and legitimacy of the Network and serve as a basis underpinning its **sustainability and longevity**.

TEN will seek to **continuously improve internal governance and management,** particularly in terms of funding or reputation. By establishing a self-discipline of following these principles, these principles become internalised, making adherence the default position.

Achieving good internal governance is all about how the Network is run and managed, how decisions are taken both day-to-day and long term, the organisational form including statutes and

bylaws and how the monitoring/oversight function is performed. TEN members will, by 2025, work on increasing the four aspects of its governance: ***policies and principles of governance, governance structures***, ***management / management structures***, ***financial governance*** and ***internal communication***.

Principles of governance

This section elaborates the key principles on which the governance and management of the Network will be based until 2025, as agreed among its members:

- **Efficiency**: considering that the Network members have limited internal resources, the governance and management structures need to be lean and efficient while ensuring the fulfilment of the agreed objectives.

- **Accountability:** all governance and management structures and procedures of the Network should be organised so as to allow for accountability to the boards of the individual member organisations.

- **Coherence**: the structures underpinning individual projects should be integrated in the overall TEN governance structures to allow for more efficient coordination, and thus coherence in fulfilling various tasks, among these structures. New structures shall only be created in cases of major, long-term projects, especially when they involve third parties, partners and stakeholders, which are not represented in the general TEN governance structures.

- **Transparency**: open and transparent governance structures, which is to be achieved through regular publishing products of its work and relevant data online, communicating the results of its work efficiently through social media and producing regular (annual) reports. Its overall work will be easily accessible and whenever possible, results will be made available in open data formats, thus underpinning the overall transparency of the Network work, beyond its governance procedures. This will be ensured by the TEN Secretariat.

Governance structure

The **governance structure** of the TEN involves key decisions regarding the Network's form and basis of functioning. These are related to (i) the legal form of TEN and its appropriateness in terms of the nature of its work and functions, (ii) the relationship between the Network and its members, as well as (iii) the organisation of the bodies (structures) tasked with the strategic level steering and guidance of the Network as well as their relation to the more operational level bodies.
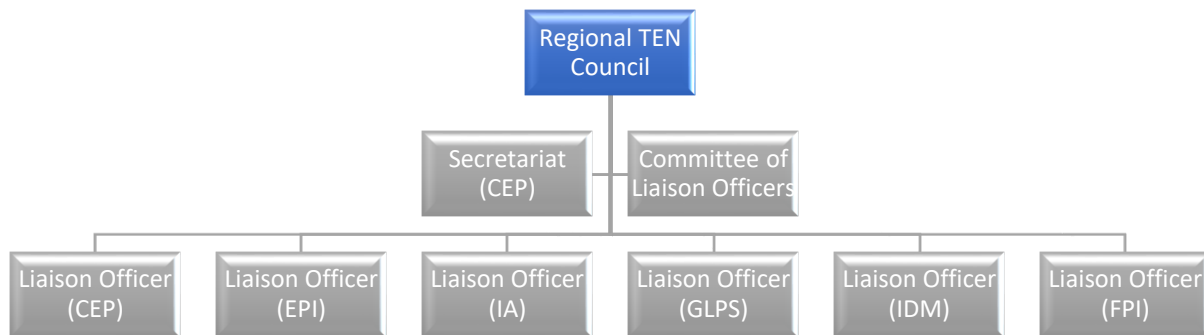
So far, the governance structure envisaged by the TEN Agreement has consisted of three bodies:

1) Think for Europe Regional Network Council,

2) TEN Committee of Liaison Officers

3) Permanent TEN Secretariat

The **Regional Network Council** provides strategic guidance to the work of the Network and takes decisions regarding the Network's initiatives, projects and strategic development. The Council comprises of the heads of the Members and meets at least once every six months. The Chair of the Council rotates every six months.

The **Committee of Liaison Officers (CLO)** comprises of **Country Liaison Officers** who are assigned by each TEN member for daily communication with other members as well as for the organisation of cooperation at the operational level.

The European Policy Centre – CEP performs the role of the permanent **Secretariat to the Network**. According to the Agreement, CEP is to perform this function until the conditions are met for the establishing of a separate Secretariat.[8] To date, the TEN members have not expressed an intention to form a separate secretariat (a new legal entity), mainly due to concerns related to funding and sustainability. In the strategic planning process, this question has remained opened, subject to the creation of appropriate funding conditions for a separate secretariat, which would have legal entity and its own staffing.

So far, the envisaged governance structure has become only partially operational. The Regional Council has met approximately once per year, which is why the member organisations have proposed to formalise this frequency of the strategic meetings at the Directors' level. Subject to need and opportunity, the Council could meet more frequently, through ad hoc sessions. Moreover, the rotating Council presidency has not kicked off, despite efforts to introduce it. The presiding organisation should be in charge of proactively pursuing TEN's development and strategic guidance.

Future prospects

In the upcoming period, TEN members will adapt to the existing circumstances and amend the format of the Regional Council meetings to the Directors' level, which will allow them to meet more than once a year, as it has so far been the case. Considering difficulties with the establishment of Council presidency, the Network will continue to pursue its development via the Secretariat, which will also take upon itself a commitment to engage more proactively with the presiding organisation over the course of its presidency, seeking counsel and inviting it to provide new proposals and

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[8] TEN Management Structures are defined in the in the Agreement establishing the "Think for Europe" Network of Think Tanks and EU Policy Research Centres in SEE (TEN), Art.4-6 entered into force on 1 July, 2013

initiatives. The duration of the presidency will, however, be prolonged to a period of one year, aligning it with the changed frequency of the Council meetings.

In addition, the member organisations will commit to ensuring that the Committee of the Liaison Officers (CLO) starts to function. So far, this body has not been formalised, although the functioning of similar bodies established for specific projects has been very successful. The member organisations now possess the video-conferencing equipment necessary for the facilitation of virtual meetings. All TEN members will designate one representative to act as a coordinating officer for Network activities and thus to serve at the CLO. At the same time, and to ensure maximum flexibility and adaptability of the governance structure replacement representatives can attend the meetings of the CLO, depending on the meeting topics.

CEP will continue to serve as the TEN permanent secretariat, until the TEN Council agrees that the funding conditions for the establishment of a viable and sustainable separate Secretariat are met.

Management structure

The **management structure** is mainly related to the everyday functioning of the Secretariat and the steering and management of the individual Network projects and initiatives. So far, practice has shown that the Secretariat has been the most proactive in fundraising for the TEN activities, although one TEN project has already been implemented under the initiative and leadership of another partner (EPI).

The Secretariat will continue to actively seek funding for the Network, but it will also take upon itself an obligation to engage more regularly with the other members regarding funding opportunities, mainly using the meetings of the CLO to discuss these issues (and relying on the fundraising plan which is to be developed). Essentially, more ownership needs to be developed among all member organisations, which would be demonstrated through greater engagement in fundraising for regional cooperation initiatives via the TEN network.

As part of the TEN flagship project WeBER, CEP – as the Secretariat of the Network – has developed a sound management and monitoring structure and set of procedures, which will be adapted and used for other joint projects and initiatives in the future. The most important element of this structure are the regular (monthly) meetings of the Project Implementation Unit, which gathers the project manager and project officers from all member organisations. Moreover, an online monitoring tool has been developed, which gathers all reports, data and documents related to project implementation and tracks progress towards realisation of project activities, milestones and results. Future projects' monitoring tools will be developed based on this example and experience, which is overall rather positive.

Internal communication

Closely related to management, but still as a distinct issue, the TEN members have recognised the need to streamline and improve internal communication. It has often happened that important messages remain unanswered for a long time and require repeated reminders, which happens as a result of the fact that people's e-mail inboxes are chronically cluttered.

The partners have recognised that internal communication can be facilitated and made more flexible and handier with the use of *Slack* – a collaborative platform which the partners have already successfully implemented for daily communication within the WeBER project. Opening a separate TEN workspace which will include as members all directors and liaison officers (as well as their replacements/deputies), with a number of well-designed channels that would gather relevant subgroups, will greatly facilitate everyday communication, all the while ensuring that the right messages reach the right people. Confirmations and approvals of proposals shared via Slack will be a click away and will no longer necessitate drafting e-mails. A separate channel will at one point also need to be established for the communications officers from all member organisations. As intensity of cooperation grows, new channels can be opened. CEP will be in charge of managing the platform and it will also submit a request to Slack for granting free license for NGOs.

The regular COL meetings will take place via the Vidyo or Skype for Business apps, using the equipment that the Network has acquired with the WeBER funding. The Council will still hold at least one annual face-to-face meeting, whereas separate, ad-hoc VC meetings will be introduced as needed.

Financial governance

The **financial governance of the TEN** relates to how the Network's initiatives and projects are funded, how fundraising is implemented and how financial management of joint work is handled. Whereas this strategy sets out the main principles and objectives of TEN financial governance, more detailed fundraising and financing strategies, alongside with the corresponding action plans for their implementation, will be set out in a separate Fundraising Plan of the Think for Europe Network.

The main principles of the TEN financial governance are transparency, integrity and programmatic independence, which needs to be preserved in the Network's work.

The **key objectives** in financial governance and improvement to be achieved until 2025 are:

- **funding diversification** – to avoid an overreliance on only one or a very small number of donors and sources of funding and ensuring funding through different funding sources (programmes, not necessarily organisations);
- **funding integrity** – to guarantee that the Network only accepts funding from donor organisations which observe high ethical standards and are transparent about the funding sources;
- **funding transparency** – to ensure that the Network discloses its funding sources fully;
- **external assurance of spending** – to undertake external audit on all major projects and initiatives (over EUR 500,000);
- **independence** – to pursue the Network's own programmatic strategy in order to ensure that individual donors do not dictate the topics and contents of the Network's work but rather that the Network successfully imposes its own programmatic orientation into its cooperation with current and prospective donors.

To keep up with the new developments, both internal – such as the Network's expansion from 2017, or change of TEN members' management – and external ones – such as dynamics of the

policy environment in the region – the TEN members will establish a special financial governance structure. This would include, *inter alia*, regular meetings of the TEN Council dedicated exclusively to the issues of fundraising and financial governance.

Note: Fundraising plan for the Network is developed as a separate document based on this Strategy.

2. Quality of Policy Products and Research Quality

Types of policy products

In the coming period until 2025, TEN members will strive to improve the quality and use of its policy research and final policy products. To achieve this, TEN will advance some of the existing and develop some new policy products, helping the Network to prepare for diversified methods:

TEN Study – These large volume publications (around 50-150 pages), based on in-depth research and analyses of issues of relevance, will continue to be the main product of the Network. They are usually developed as part of larger and longer projects and usually have multiple authors. As a general rule, TEN studies are comparative in nature, but depending on the subject matter, they can also explore a specific regional case study or a common phenomenon across national borders, without the comparative perspective. Alongside the analysis of the policy problem(s), a TEN study offers its authors' evidence-based opinion about the solutions and recommendations for improving the state of play in the studied policy area.

TEN Brief – A short (up to 4 pages) policy product, one of the most important products of TEN, produced by one or several authors from the TEN organisations. A TEN Policy Brief can stand individually or accompany a TEN Study. It contains both analysis and recommendations on the particular problem and it is written primarily for the decision makers and executive level stakeholders.

TEN Commentary (new) – The shortest written policy product (around 800-1000 words), not necessarily embedded in in-depth research, but primarily based on the expert knowledge and opinions of its authors. It represents a sort of an op-ed, and thus, is possibly placed in newspapers or other media outlets. It can have one to two authors. As a rule, it should be based on regional salient policy issues. It does not offer recommendations, but it does point to a specific direction of action in a policy area. Alternatively, it can open a new question, raise a new issue, as a "teaser" for future research and deeper analysis. It is made for a broader public, in particular when used as op-eds in media.

TENfographic – A simple visual representation of data, problem(s) or information. It is made primarily for a broader public, in order to bring closer to the citizens of Western Balkan countries (but also the EU citizens) the often robust and complicated issues and findings of TEN research.

TEN Report – In this document, TEN presents the current situation in a specific policy area. It can be developed as a policy monitoring report, in which case it is more comprehensive and can be based on diverse and complex methods and approaches. Comparative TEN Reports can also be

developed only to present results of a regional survey or individual issue analysis; in this case, a TEN Report is produced as a document accompanying a larger policy document (e.g. a monitoring report). TEN Reports can contain recommendations, but not necessarily.

Research skills and methods

To further raise the quality of its policy products and ensure that they hold up to the rigorous quality standards upheld in EU think tanks, the TEN members will jointly work on diversifying the research methods applied in joint projects, improving their teams' research and writing skills and on improving the quality assurance standards and procedures. This will be achieved via the following:

- joint trainings for researchers from all TEN organisations, focused on new research methods (focusing on the application of mixed methods and improvement of the capacities for quantitative research);
- joint trainings for researchers from all TEN organisations, focusing on the improvement of writing skills, with a focus on writing in English;
- peer review among the TEN members' researchers, in the production of joint policy products;
- engaging highly experienced EU think tankers as mentors and external reviewers on selected, high-priority policy products;
- engaging experienced, native-speaking editor(s) for the policy products produced in English by the Network.

3. Communication and Advocacy

In the following period, TEN members will work on increasing the involvement of civil society in the policy-making process for EU accession and on promoting dialogue between civil society actors and national authorities across the Western Balkans, regional organisations and the EU. To do so, TEN will seek to increase its capacities for *strategic* **communication and advocacy**. The quality of the policy and research products, described above in the previous section, is crucial in achieving efficient strategic communication to conveying key messages to the key target groups (see below).

To achieve efficiency in communicating its messages to the target groups in the region, Network member organisations will seek to:

- **develop and/or continuously update its communication/advocacy strategy:** some of TEN members (e.g. CEP) already have developed and started applying strategic communication and advocacy documents and corresponding action plans. Those members which have not developed similar documents or do not regularly update the existing documents, should start doing so on regular basis. Communication strategies/plans of the TEN members can be either in a form of separate documents or part of an overarching development strategic document (organisational development strategy, or similar);

- **monitor the implementation of its communication strategy/advocacy on regular basis:** this is crucial for ensuring the continuity in improving communication capacities and skills of both TEN members and the Network itself;
- **adjust their individual messages with the jointly identified key messages of the Network:** the adjusted and mutually compatible messages of individual member organisations and the Network will contribute to the overall coherence and efficiency in their communication

Key target groups

With its work, TEN targets mainly *policymakers* in the Western Balkan countries and in the EU – both in Brussels and in national capitals, *CSOs and think tanks* in the region as well as the fellow think tanks from Brussels and the EU member states but also those which are prominent at global level , as well as *the expert public and international donor community, media and general public.* Throughout the period of implementing the OD strategy, the TEN members will seek to engage the key audience in shaping the communication tools and key messages, in order to maximise *participation and key audience's interactivity* in TEN communication efforts.

Dissemination tools and channels of TEN policy products

In dissemination of its messages to the key target groups, the Network produces several different communication-oriented products, disseminated via the TEN website and social media accounts, e-mail, and other channels, based on possibilities available to the Network:

1. **TEN Short Videos –** Produced either within TEN capacities or with an external expertise, up to 10 minutes long, short videos can either tell a story of a TEN project or initiative or they can serve as "explainer videos", with the aim to unpack a certain topic/issue/problem for a wider public. They are essentially a communication product.

2. **Think for Europe TV series** – The first (pilot) episode of this communication product was produced as part of the flagship WeBER project. It is envisaged as a studio talk show, 24 minutes long, gathering 3 guests from three different WB countries. As a rule, two guests should be from the TEN Network and one should be a guest. The TV series focuses on regional cooperation in the EU integration context, but contextualises and focuses on various issues tackled by the Network (good governance and PAR, rule of law, economic governance, EU funds, EU accession process, civil society development and participation in policymaking, etc.).

3. **TEN Newsletter –** TEN Newsletter is primarily a communication product, produced quarterly and disseminated to more than 2000 relevant stakeholders (via *e-mail*) in the Western Balkans and the EU. It is also published on the TEN website. In the future, TEN will seek to broaden the network of stakeholders to whom the Newsletter will be disseminated. The newsletter comprises four sections:
    i. **TEN News** (most important news on TEN work),
    ii. **WeBER News** (updates on the activities of this flagship project),

      iii.   **On to go – News from TEN Members –** most important news or publications of each TEN Member in the previous quarter,

      iv.   **In the Spotlight –** a short interview with prominent individuals, members of Network or other individuals relevant for the areas of TEN's work.

    4.   **TEN Podcast** – "**Fresh from the Balkan Oven"** is going to be a short-form conversation that aims to untangle difficult questions on various topics related to WB's relations with the EU and its member states, by talking to experts, diplomats, and other relevant actors. For development and streaming of the podcast, TEN will use the existing resources in the framework of CEP's "European Talks" podcast.

Also, *media appearances,* **op-eds** and *press releases* are often used by the Network (its members) to promote and disseminate information on various policy products, produced within the joint projects and/or activities. Regular media appearance of TEN members' representatives also contributes to the Network's presence and dissemination of its policy products and key messages.

The Network has established/used several *online dissemination channels* of its policy products and key messages:

    TEN Website: ten.europeanpolicy.org
    Twitter: @ThinkforEurope
    Facebook: @thinkforeuropenetwork
    YouTube: Think for Europe

    Media: (TV, radio)

Besides the online channels, TEN members use each opportunity to disseminate and advocate for the results of the joint research products, using own organisational communication channels.

Multipliers

TEN has recognised a number of potential multipliers which have tremendous effect on disseminating and communicating the Newtork's messages. These are:
- ➢ influential followers of the TEN social media profiles,
- ➢ other social media influencers,
- ➢ prominent members of academia,
- ➢ opinion makers in the areas covered by the work of the TEN

To achieve this, TEN will seek to:

1. involve more multipliers in its activities
2. additionally spread its activities within the EU in both Brussels and in national capitals of the EU member states. The latter will allow engaging multipliers without them having to come to the region, given that this is not always easy. In more concrete terms, TEN will run flagship projects/activities which from the outset have a (major) transnational dimension involving project partners from EU member states with an elaborate communication strategy coordinated among TEN Network members and the EU project partners.

Communication messages of the Network need to tailored to the target groups. Firstly, the TEN members will develop a set of key messages to be used in advocacy efforts with EU-based policy actors. Secondly, the Network will develop a set of simple and straightforward messages aimed at policy makers within the region. Thirdly, the TEN will need to address the public at home and in the EU member states. Whereas the former is less demanding and will be predominantly led by country-specific information place into the context of comparisons with other countries, the latter is far more complex. These messages, targeting the EU public, will be developed only on issues where the partners agree that there is a legitimate expectation of an interest by the EU public. They will need to be checked with partner think tanks from EU countries with which the Network will collaborate in the future.

The messages will be defined jointly, in a **participative** and **consultative** manner, including all the TEN members, at the initiative of the Secretariat. The key messages will be regularly updated, according to the changes and developments in the Network's environment, in close consultations with the member organisations.

4. Internationalisation of the Network

TEN has already made important first steps in facilitating its cooperation and linkages with policy actors beyond the Western Balkan region. One such step was achieved via the WeBER project, which has connected TEN with one of the most renowned EU think tanks, European Policy Centre (EPC) and with policymakers from the EU institutions (European Commission and European Parliament in particular). Furthermore, in 2018 TEN was ranked as one of the best think tank networks in the world for two consecutive times, according to the Global Go To Think Tank Report, an international think tanks ranking of the prestigious US program of the University of Pennsylvania, which has ranked world's best think tanks and think tank networks for 11 years. The TEN Network was also recently recognised as a worthy partner for the Europeanisation Beyond Process programme of the Open Society Initiative for Europe (OSIFE).

All of the aforementioned three areas will combine to facilitate increased and higher-quality internationalisation of the work and impact of the Think for Europe Network. At the same time, the partners will engage in some targeted activities to improve the Network's international (particularly European) outreach:

- They will maintain and further develop partnerships and cooperation opportunities with EU based think tanks, not only those based in Brussels, but also those based and operating at the level of EU member states;
- The partners will also use the opportunities presented to their own organisations to promote the Network and will seek to involve other TEN member organisations in activities, projects and events initiated by third parties;

- CEP, as the Network Secretariat, will seek to engage EU based partners in all suitable joint projects, at least through individual activities. Moreover, all joint projects will ensure an advocacy and communication thread targeting EU level policy actors, with messaging specifically tailored to those target groups.

5. Monitoring and Evaluation

The Strategy will be monitored regularly by CEP, as the Permanent Secretariat, with the production of annual reports, starting from the 2019 annual report, which will be published in the first half of 2020. The progress in the implementation of the TEN Strategy will be discussed every 6 months at regular joint VC meetings of the TEN Council.

TEN members will seek funding for an external evaluation of the Strategy implementation, to be conducted after at least 3 years of implementation (i.e. in 2022). Based on such an evaluation, a revision of the Strategy might be performed by the end of 2022.