

Western Balkans Business Forum– Draft Agenda

Idea

Western Balkans Business Forum is a B2B event accompanying the Ministers' Meeting in the Berlin Process Framework. Polish Presidency wants to bring the benefits of regional and European integration closer to businesses and citizens. We believe that investments and trade in goods and services are the pillars of strong neighbourly relations and an equal partnership.

Business Concept

Following the main agenda of the Berlin Process and responding to real business needs, the WBBF will focus on three sectors:

- Energy: renewables and conventional energy generation and distribution (upstream & downstream), grids management and conservation, construction sector in energy (including power plant modernization)
- Digital: start-ups and scale-ups, IT & ICT, digital services & BSS, AI, automatization, industry 4.0., e-government & govtech, data management and analysis, digital infrastructure development, skills development
- Food & agritech: agriculture, food processing, manufacturing, agricultural machinery, development of rural areas services

Attendance of other businesses is welcome. During the registration process, participants will be asked to disclose the main activities and spheres of interests of their parent companies.

Organisational info

- Event to be held in English
- Open attendance after registration
- Separate B2B meeting space
- Prior matchmaking services for qualified companies
- Booth space possibility included

- Possibility to participate in high-level panels and workshop with government stakeholders, representatives of think-tank community and civil society

Agenda

All panellists are TBC

09.00 – 10.00 Opening Session

Navigating the Future: How to Prepare for the Revolution in Trade, Services and Industry

10.00 – 12.30 OECD Conference

10.00 – 10.30 Presentation of the OECD publication “Global South East Europe: Unleashing the Transformation Potential for Growth”

10.30 – 11.30 OECD: Promoting New Approaches to Unlock Next Growth Opportunities

11.30 – 12.30 OECD: Reaping the Dividends of Trade and Investment

10.00 – 12.00 Side Workshop

Regional Integration – Deliverables and next milestones for Regional Economic Area

12.30 – 13.50 Lunch

14.00 – 15.50 Parallel Session A

Financing Entrepreneurship – Lessons Learned and Challenges Ahead for Western Balkans

At the Crossroads of Business and Activism: Social Entrepreneurship

16.00 – 18.00 Parallel Session B

Going Online – Preparing Public and Private Sector for Digital Transformation in the Western Balkans

Powering the Energy Market in Transition

Supporting Mobility: The Connectivity Agenda

The Next Generation: Better Skills for the Workplace of the Future

16.00 – 18.00 Launch of the Chamber Investment WB6 – EU Business Platform

1. Opening Debate - Navigating the Future: How to Prepare for the Revolution in Trade, Services and Industry

Idea

The transformation of long-established patterns of trade, production and services has accelerated. Old ways of doing business are uprooted, creating both new, exciting opportunities, on one hand, and provoking social angst on the other. How can we adapt for the future that is already on our doorstep and what is the role of government strategies in doing so? Is there a place for the public – private sector cooperation and how can the European Union and Western Balkan partners work together in ensuring that the shape of things to come benefit all? How are the EU and Balkan partners prepare for the revolution in manufacturing and in services to secure the growth that can sustain inclusive, sustainable societies and ensure that the generations to come remain confident in their future?

Main Topics

- The revolution in industry and services: preparing for digitalisation, automatization and the knowledge-based economy
- European and global trade patterns and its consequences
- Sustaining the European growth model
- The role of public and private sector strategies in innovative economy

Debate

Moderation: Marko Čadež, Western Balkans Chamber Investment Forum

Jadwiga Emilewicz, Minister of Entrepreneurship and Technology, Poland

Jacek Czaputowicz, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Poland

Johannes Hahn, Commissioner for European Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations

Angel Gurría, Secretary-General, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

Majlinda Bregu, Secretary General, Regional Cooperation Council

3. Financing Entrepreneurship – Lessons Learned and Challenges Ahead for Western Balkans

Idea

Lack of access to affordable financing, especially for SMEs, startups and companies run by socially marginalised groups have been pointed out as to being one of the main hurdles on the way to a sustainable, long-term growth in the Western Balkans. How can the European and international institutions address this obstacle? What are the main steps taken by regional governments to address the issue? What is the role of financial markets in the Western Balkans in financing innovative entrepreneurship?

Main Topics

- Lending programmes – assessment so far and next steps
- Access to finance for women, youth and minority groups
- Challenges in financing innovations In Western Balkans

Debate

Moderation:

Linda van Gelder, Country Director, World Bank

Werner Hoyer, President, European Investment Bank

Remy Rioux, President, Agence Française de Développement

Blaž Brodnjak, Nova Ljubljanska Bank

Time frame and format

Moderated 90 minutes panel discussion.

Language

English

4. At the crossroads of Business and Activism: Social Entrepreneurship

Idea

Social Activism and Business are not contrary to each other. More than competing, they are completing each other in the process of prosperity building. Profits can be made on society-friendly ideas, as well as pure traditional business can be caring after societal impact. All of these needs flexibility, openness and smart support from public sector. In Europe, a large variety of businesses and stakeholders are working to promote this approach: from social entrepreneurs and innovators to large companies deliberately including societal objectives in their strategy.

Main Topics

- Business for social change and responsibility beyond profit
- From social initiatives to successful entrepreneurship
- Connecting entrepreneurs and activists
- Engaging youth for change
- Public policies support for social entrepreneurship

6. Going Online– Preparing Public and Private Sector for Digital Transformation in the Western Balkans

Idea

The digital transformation on WB and EU economies call for agile policymaking, creating a regulatory framework for safe & privacy-focused development of services. The borderless nature of digital economy underlines the necessity of a wider, regional and European approach. How to structure the public-private sector digital dialogue? How to empower the SME voice in digital transformation? What are the lessons learned from Western Balkan efforts on digital policy so far and what are the next steps to be taken?

Main Topics

- **Regulatory and economic framework for digital transformation** - What is already in place, what is missing? Which fields need more attention and effort?
- **Digital integration of the WB Region** - EU DSM model;
- **MAP REA Deliverables** - pillar *digital integration* (incl. Digital Summit Belgrade 2019);
- **Building data economy** - fostering exchange, access and transfer of data in the WB;
- **Security and privacy in digital economy**
- **Digital business models and application of new technologies**
- **SME support** - Ways and means to support the digital transition of SMEs;
- **Development of digital infrastructure, internet access and regional connectivity**

Debate

Moderation: Darko Brkan, President, "Zašto ne" Association

Dragica Sekulić, Minister of Economy, Montenegro

Karol Okoński, Deputy Minister for Digital Affairs, Poland

Blerta Thaci, President, Open Data Kosovo

Violeta Jovanovic, Executive Director, National Alliance for Local Economic Development, Serbia

Vasko Kronevski, CEO, NextSense

7. Powering the Energy Market in Transition

Idea

The energy sector is undergoing a global transformation. The development of more efficient renewable sources, growing liquidity of the natural gas market and the undergoing energy market integration in Europe require a fundamental policy shift. Meanwhile, the Western Balkans energy market is facing challenges on its own, with the rising pace of the economic growth increasing the demand energy supplies. How can the EU and Western Balkans Berlin Process partners manage the undergoing energy transition? What is the role for the conventional energy and what is the right strategy for renewables development? How to increase energy security and fight energy poverty?

Main Topics

- How to develop a working energy transition model?
- Western Balkans electricity & gas market integration
- Financing the energy transition and reducing energy poverty
- Ensuring the right legal framework and market transparency
- What role for renewables in the Western Balkans?
- Energy efficiency

Debate

Moderation: Aleksandar Kovacevic, Sr. Visiting Fellow, Oxford Institute for Energy Studies

Janez Kopač, Director, Energy Community

Werner Hoyer, President, European Investment Bank

Anila Denaj, Minister of Finance and Economy, Albania

Valdrin Lluka, Minister of Economic Development, Kosovo

Nenad Savic, Nova Commodities

Genoveva Ruiz Calavera, Director Western Balkans, DG NEAR European Commission

Time frame and format

Moderated 90 minutes panel discussion.

Language

English

8. Supporting Mobility: The Connectivity Agenda

Idea

Connectivity is at the forefront of the Berlin Process agenda. Endorsed and supported by the EU from the start, extending the trans-European transportation corridors has been an important vehicle for regional integration and for bolstering convergence between the Western Balkan economies and the EU. Transportation is not only the lifeblood of the economy, but constantly ranks as one of the crucial factors taken into account by foreign investors as well as an indispensable tool for social mobility.

Main Topics

- Taking the Transport Community Treaty forward
- Assessing the Western Balkan Connectivity agenda
- Western Balkans Investment Framework and infrastructural investments
- New mobility and Western Balkan connectivity

Debate

Moderation: Jakub Lachert, Warsaw Institute

Violeta Bulc, European Commissioner for Transport

Charlotte Ruhe, Managing Director, Central and South Eastern Europe, EBRD

Alain Baron, Director, Transport Community

Goran Knezevic, Minister of Economy, Serbia

Mirko Šarović,, Minister of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Time frame and format

Moderated 90 minutes panel discussion.

Language

English

9. The Next Generation: Better Skills for the Workplace of the Future

Idea

Work, as we know it, changes rapidly. The way in which we used to manufacture goods, provide services changes – and so change the workers businesses need, the skills that will be sought after in the market. This transformation is not only restricted to IT, it encompasses the whole economy, affecting employees on both spectrums of the skill ladder. How can we anticipate these changes and equip the youth of today and tomorrow with the skills they need? How does the changing nature of work affect the tertiary education and how does it affect the vocational training? Is the employee of the future akin to a modern-day entrepreneur?

Main topics

- Better youth skills as the next generation advancing technological development and supporting economic growth
- Promotion of youth entrepreneurship
- Peer-to-peer learning and skills development in businesses
- Building a lifelong learning ecosystem

Debate

Moderation: Duro Blanusa, Secretary-General, Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO)

Kreshnik Bekteshi, Minister of Economy, North Macedonia

Cesare Onestini, European Training Foundation

Christoph Tiskens, Director for Southeast Europe and Turkey, KfW Development Bank

Eliza Kruczkowska, CIO Polish Development Fund, Head of Start-up Pioneer School

Igor Milosevic, Association for Democratic Prosperity - ZID

Salvador Lorenzo Martinez, Ambassador for European Vocational Skills Week/European Alliance for Apprenticeship

Time frame and format

Moderated 90 minutes panel discussion.

Language

English

10. Launch of the Chamber Investment Forum – EU Business Platform

Discussion

16.00 – 16.30 Presentation of the WB6 – EU Business Platform

Marko Čadež, President of the Management Board of WB6 CIF

Johannes Hahn, European Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations

16.30 – 18.00 Panel discussion on Importance of Public-Private Dialogue for the Berlin Process

Expectations from the EU Business Platform

What are the main obstacles currently for businesses from the region in operating freely in the region and what would they recommend for the EU and the Governments to focus on?