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**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN  
PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL  
COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

**A credible enlargement perspective for and enhanced EU engagement with the Western  
Balkans**

## ANNEX

<b>Action Plan in Support of the Transformation of the Western Balkans</b>	
<b>Main actions</b>	<b>Timing</b>
<b>1. Strengthening support to the rule of law</b>	
1.1. Support to the establishment of detailed <b>action plans</b> in the Western Balkans to address shortcomings and prioritise key issues for aligning existing legislation and practice with EU standards.	2019-20
1.2. Extend <b>rule of law advisory missions</b> in the Western Balkan and encourage increased support from Member States experts.	2019-20
1.3. Enhance monitoring of reforms through more systematic, <b>case-based peer-review missions</b> .	2018-19
1.4. Introduce <b>trial monitoring</b> in the field of serious corruption and organised crime.	2019-20
1.5. Work towards better <b>measuring of results in justice reform</b> .	2018-19
1.6. Work towards <b>better use of conditionality in the accession negotiations</b> , in particular by ensuring concrete results in judicial reform and in the fight against corruption and organised crime are achieved before technical talks on other chapters can be provisionally closed.	2018
1.7 Roll-out of support for the Western Balkans through the <b>European Endowment for Democracy</b> in the area of independent and pluralistic media and civil society.	2018-19
<b>2. Reinforcing engagement on security and on migration</b>	
2.1. Step up joint work on <b>counter-terrorism</b> and preventing violent extremism. National coordinators and offices for combatting violent extremism should be created or strengthened, and a regional network of national coordinators put in place, with the support of the EU Radicalisation Awareness Network and the EU regional counter-terrorism expert. Joint action plans on counter-terrorism to be elaborated.	2018-19
2.2. Enhance significantly <b>operational cooperation</b> including with EU agencies in the fight against international <b>organised crime</b> in particular firearms, drugs trafficking migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings.	2018-19
2.3. Post <b>Europol liaison officers</b> across the region.	2019

2.4. Encourage finalisation of <b>cooperation agreements with Eurojust</b> .	2019-20
2.5. Further promoting <b>Joint Investigation Teams</b> involving the Western Balkans and EU Member States. This should entail an active involvement of Eurojust and Europol, in line with their respective mandates.	2018-19
2.6. Expand the <b>EU Policy Cycle on organised crime</b> to the extent possible to include the Western Balkans in its operational activities. Western Balkans to be invited to take part in specific European Multidisciplinary Platform against Criminal Threats projects and to meetings of the Standing Committee on Operational Cooperation on Internal Security, including those held jointly with the Political Security Committee on an ad-hoc basis when the projects are discussed.	2018
2.7. Increase support to capacity-building in the area of <b>cyber-security</b> and fight against <b>cyber-crime</b> , including cooperation with the European Cybercrime Training and Education Group, with a view to participation in the European Network and Information Security Agency.	2018-19
2.8. Enhance cooperation on <b>migration and border management</b> , strengthening the flow of strategic and tactical information in the prevention and fight against <b>irregular migration</b> and the return of third country nationals, in particular through the conclusion of status agreements with the European Border and Coast Guard Agency.	2018-19
2.9. Further enhance cooperation between the <b>liaison officers</b> deployed by the EU (European Border and Coast Guard Agency) Member States and competent authorities of the Western Balkans	2018
2.10. Establish <b>national coordination centres for border control</b> in the Western Balkan countries connecting them via a regional network with the national coordination centres for information exchange in the neighbouring Member States.	2019
2.11. In order to follow-up on the various actions to be taken forward by the EU Agencies, create an <b>EU inter-agency Task Force</b> coordinated by the Commission involving Europol, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, Eurojust, the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training.	2019
2.12. Evaluation of the Action Plan 2015-2019 on illicit trafficking in firearms to prepare its renewal in 2019 to address more effectively the supply of <b>illicit firearms and the large stockpile of weapons</b> .	2018-19
2.13. Structured <b>Common Foreign and Security Policy/Common Security and Defence Policy dialogue</b> expanded and deepened with the Western Balkans, with increased contribution to EU missions and operations worldwide.	2018
2.14. Further develop participation in actions related to hybrid threats,	2018

intelligence, space issues and defence and security sector reform.	
<b>3. Supporting socio-economic development</b>	
3.1. The <b>Western Balkans Investment Framework</b> will be expanded to further attract and coordinate bilateral donors' and International Financing Institutions' investment.	2019
3.2 Significantly boost the Western Balkans Investment Framework's provision of <b>guarantees to crowd in private investments</b> .	2019
3.3. Strengthen measures to support <b>private sector development</b> , including a scheme supporting start-ups across the region and support efforts aimed at smart specialisation.	2019
3.4. Increase access to finance and harness the growth potential of <b>small and medium-sized enterprises</b> .	2018
3.5. Further integrate the Western Balkans into existing EU knowledge networks and support <b>research and innovation</b> capacity building for an effective participation in the EU's Framework Programmes.	2018
3.6. Mobilise EU expertise to support the implementation of the <b>Regional Economic Area</b> .	2018
3.7. <b>Facilitate trade</b> between the EU and the Western Balkans and in the region, including developing mutual recognition programmes on the basis of Central European Free Trade Area Agreement and the Regional Economic Area (e.g. Authorised Economic Operators).	2018
3.8 Further assist Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia in their <b>World Trade Organisation</b> accession process.	2018
3.9. Through reinforced dialogues and outreach activities, enhance assistance to the Western Balkans in view of ensuring the convergence of their <b>export controls of dual-use goods</b> .	2018
3.10. Further strengthen the <b>economic reform programme</b> exercise by bringing it closer in line with the existing European Semester for EU Member States, strengthening technical assistance and further integrating the priorities of the economic reform programmes and the ministerial policy guidance in Instrument for pre-Accession Assistance programming.	2018-19
3.11. Increase focus on <b>employment and social reforms</b> through greater monitoring of relevant policies and establishment of an annual EU-Western Balkans Ministerial meeting on these issues, that will feed into the economic reform programmes.	2019
3.12. Provide more financial assistance in the <b>social field</b> in the Western Balkans including on health.	2019-20

3.13 Enhance support to education, in particular launch a pilot project for mobility in <b>vocational education and training</b> .	2019
3.14. <b>Double funding</b> under the <b>Erasmus+</b> programme.	2019-20
<b>4. Increasing connectivity</b>	
4.1. Support increased take-up of opportunities under the <b>Connecting Europe Facility</b> in the Western Balkans, in line also with the relevant objectives of the EU macro-regional strategies.	2018
4.2. Expand the EU <b>Energy Union</b> to the Western Balkans: energy security, opening markets and energy transition – including energy efficiency and renewables.	2019-20
4.3. Support to capacity building and facilitate the participation of the authorities and organisations of the Western Balkans in the work of the network of <b>energy regulators and transmission and distribution system operators</b> , notably the Agency for Cooperation of Energy Regulators and the European Network of Transmission System Operators.	2018- 19
4.4. Work to complete the <b>Regional Electricity Market</b> in the Western Balkans, and ensure that the Western Balkans market is integrated into the EU Internal Electricity Market.	2018-19
4.5 Further support for creation of a single regulatory space and effective energy market reform process under the <b>Energy Community Treaty</b> .	2018
4.6. Support to the implementation of the <b>Transport Community Treaty</b> and full operation of its secretariat.	2018-19
4.7. Continue encouraging participation of the Western Balkans in different transport fora and meetings of the <b>Trans European Network for Transport committee</b> .	2019
4.8. Support to increased competitiveness through enhanced measures to <b>remove barriers at borders</b> , particularly integrated road and rail border crossings.	2018-19
4.9. Support to a new <b>rail strategy</b> to bring the Western Balkans into the main EU network and market through the progressive integration into the EU Orient East Med and Mediterranean Core Corridors.	2018
4.10. Explore possibility to allow participation of the Western Balkans in <b>European transport agencies</b> .	2018
4.11. Support set-up of a new <b>road safety strategy</b> including work to reduce road fatalities by removing road safety blackspots.	2018-19

<b>5. A Digital Agenda for the Western Balkans</b>	
5.1. Launch a <b>Digital Agenda for the Western Balkans</b> , including a roadmap to facilitate lowering the cost of roaming.	2018
5.2. Support to the <b>deployment of broadband</b> in the Western Balkans, including through integration into the Broadband Competence Office network.	2018-19
5.3. Support the development of <b>eGovernment, eProcurement, eHealth</b> , and digital skills in the Western Balkans.	2018-19
5.4. Support capacity building in <b>digital trust and security</b> , in parallel to efforts to enhance digitalisation of industries.	2018-19
5.5. Enhance support for the adoption, implementation and enforcement of the <i>acquis</i> in the area of the <b>Digital Single Market</b> .	2018-19
<b>6. Supporting reconciliation and good neighbourly relations</b>	
6.1. Support initiatives to foster reconciliation and <b>transitional justice</b> , such as the Regional Commission set up to establish facts about war crimes and other violation of human rights on the territory of the former Yugoslavia (RECOM).	2018-19
6.2 Support the <b>fight against impunity</b> through support to the Mechanism for the International Criminal Tribunals, both to deepen co-operation between national prosecutors and to inform the public, and to the Kosovo Specialist Chambers.	2018-19
6.3 Work towards a regional solution to resolve the issues of <b>missing persons and landmines</b> .	2018-19
6.4. Further support to reconciliation initiatives, including expanding the scope and reach of the <b>Regional Youth Cooperation Office</b> and introduction of an intra-regional mobility scheme.	2018-19
6.5. Enhance cooperation in <b>culture and sport</b> , including work to protect the Western Balkans cultural heritage, to fight the illicit traffic in cultural goods, and promote its cultural and creative industries, including participation in the <b>Creative Europe</b> programme.	2018
6.6. Western Balkan countries will be fully associated to the European Year of Cultural Heritage and will be involved in all relevant events and initiatives. Launch a <b>EU - Western Balkans Heritage Route</b> , comprising a series of events celebrating cultural heritage in all its forms.	2018