



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion

HIGH-LEVEL EXPERT CONFERENCE

Labour market reforms in the Western Balkans and Turkey – More and better jobs for inclusive growth and prosperity –

Budva, Montenegro, 2-3 October 2018

Background

Over the past year, the cooperation between the EU and the Western Balkans and Turkey in labour market and employment policies has gained further momentum. In May 2018, the EU and its partners in the region held for the third time an annual Economic and Financial Dialogue and adopted joint conclusions with targeted country-specific policy guidance to each participant. The recommendations for the employment and education area cover a wide array of issues; reducing informal employment, targeted support to women and youth and the supply of skills corresponding to labour market needs feature most prominently.

At the same time, the accession process is advancing. Negotiations in the area of free movement of workers (Chapter 2) and Social Policy and Employment (Chapter 19) are under way with Montenegro and being prepared with Serbia. Following the recent Council deliberations, the start of negotiations with Albania and The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is in sight. Countries will thus have to make tangible progress in meeting the accession criteria.

Since two years, the Employment and Social Affairs Platform is supporting the cooperation between labour market institutions by fostering regional cooperation of partners facing similar challenges. Concrete actions of the project include mutual learning seminars on a range of employment policy topics, a benchmarking initiative for the Public Employment Services, a peer review of Economic and Social Councils and agencies for peaceful settlements of labour disputes, and labour inspectorates' campaigns for health and safety at work.

The European Commission, the Council and the European Parliament have reaffirmed the social dimension of the EU at the Social Summit for Fair Jobs and Growth in Gothenburg/Sweden on 17 November 2017 with the proclamation of the European Pillar of Social Rights. The Pillar enshrines 20 principles and rights for equal opportunities and access to the labour market, fair working conditions, and social protection and inclusion. The implementation of the Pillar is now integrated feature of the EU's economic governance and of equal relevance for the countries aspiring EU membership.

In the Western Balkans Strategy presented in February 2018, the European Commission has committed to support employment and social policy in the region, encouraging appropriate engagement from all levels of government, social partners and civil society. An annual EU-Western Balkans Ministerial on employment and social policies will be held as of next year.

Objectives of the conference

The conference brings together senior level representatives of government administrations, public employment services and social partner organisations as well as experts from the Western Balkans and Turkey, who are actively involved in the design and implementation of labour market policies. The European Commission, the European Training Foundation, Eurofound, and regional and international organisations will be represented by senior management and senior expert level.

The conference has three main objectives. First, it will carry forward the policy dialogue between the EU and the partners in the region by launching a more in-depth discussion about policy reforms. There are a number of challenges where the countries' performance shows considerable gaps with regard to the EU, and closing these gaps will require decisive action. Second, the conference will explore some of the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights that are particularly relevant for the alignment to European norms and standards in the area of employment, with a particular focus on the role of social partnership. Third, the conference will discuss how to strengthen further the governance of labour market reforms in the EU accession process.

FINAL AGENDA

2 October 2018

08:00 – 08:50 *Registration of participants (in front of conference room)*

9:00-9:30	Welcome and Opening remarks
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*Chair: **Lluís Prats**, Head of Unit “International Issues”, DG EMPL, European Commission*

Hermann Spitz – Head of Cooperation, Delegation of the European Union to Montenegro

Kemal Purišić – Minister for Labour and Social Welfare, Montenegro

9:40-13:00	Session I: Tackling informal employment
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*Chair: **Lambert Kleinmann** – Deputy Head of Unit “Free movement of workers, EURES”, DG EMPL, European Commission*

9:45-11:00 **Presentations**

- Labour market informality in the Western Balkans: Findings from the *Employment and Social Affairs Platform* – **Colin C. Williams**, University of Sheffield, United Kingdom, and **Nand Shani**, Team Leader Employment and Social Affairs Platform, Regional Cooperation Council
- Informal employment in Turkey – **Hakan Ercan**, Professor of Economics, Middle Eastern Technical University, Ankara
- Evidence matters: What works and what doesn’t work to combat informality – **Markus Pilgrim** – ILO, Director, Decent Work Technical Support Team and Country Office for Central and Eastern Europe, Budapest

Q&A with the room

11:00-11:30 *Coffee break*

11:30-13:00 **Panel:**
Developing policy approaches on the ground – experiences and way forward

Panellists:

- **Mirjanka Aleksevaska** – Head of Labour Department, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
- **Ljiljana Stojšić** – Head of Department, Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs, Department of Labour Inspection Novi Sad, Republic of Serbia
- **Zoran Ratković** – Director-General, Labour Directorate, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, Montenegro
- **Filip Lazovic** - Montenegrin Employers Federation
- **Enis Bagdadioglu** – Advisor, Confederation of Turkish Trade Unions

Q&A with the room

13:00 – 14:30 Lunch for all participants at the conference venue

14:30 – 17:30 Session 2: Upgrading skills and promoting inclusive labour markets

Chair: **Nathalie Creste** – Adviser to the Director, Directorate “Labour Mobility”, DG EMPL, European Commission

14:30 – 16:00 Presentations

- The EU skills policy framework – **Minna Nurminen**, Policy Officer, DG EMPL, European Commission
- Upgrading skills in the Western Balkans and Turkey – achievements and the way forward – **Anastasia Fetsi**, Head of Operations, European Training Foundation
- Fostering competitive and inclusive labour markets in South-East Europe: key insights from the OECD Competitiveness Outlook 2018 – **Hendrik Bosshammer**, Economist and Project Manager South East Europe, OECD
- Challenges for raising women's employment in the Western Balkans and Turkey – Findings from the European Quality of Life Survey – **Robert Anderson**, Head of Unit, Eurofound
- A perspective from the region: the Montenegrin approach – **Vukica Jelic**, State Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, Montenegro

Q&A with the room

16:00 – 16:30 Coffee break

16:30-17:30 Panel: From policy priorities to action

Panellists:

- **Bojana Stanic**, Assistant Minister, Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs, Serbia
- **Suljo Mustafić** – Director, Employment Agency, Montenegro
- **Drin Haraçia**, Director-General, Employment Agency, Kosovo*
- **Koli Sinjari**, Director, Biznesalbania, Albania
- **Zoran Mihajlovic** – Council Secretary, Confederation of Autonomous Trade Unions of Serbia – CATUS

Q&A with the room

19:30 *Departure from Hotel to Restaurant for Dinner for all conference participants (ca. 15 min walk on foot)*

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

3 October 2018

9:00-11:30	Session 3: European Pillar of Social Rights
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*Chair: **Lluís Prats**, Head of Unit “International Issues”, DG EMPL, European Commission*

9:00-9:30 **Keynote speech:
Strengthening Social Partnership in the Western Balkans and Turkey**

Patrick Develtere – Principal Adviser for European Social Policy, European Political Strategy Centre of the European Commission

Q&A with the room

9:30-10:00 **Presentations**

- The European Pillar of Social Rights: principles for labour market access, fair working conditions and social protection – **Christiane Westphal**, Policy Officer, DG EMPL, European Commission
- Western Balkans’ welfare state policies in the light of the European Pillar of Social Rights – **Iva Trajkovska**, Network “The Future of the Welfare State in the Western Balkans” and “Finance Think”, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Q&A with the room

10:00-10:30 *Coffee break*

10:30-11:30 **Panel: Priorities for action to foster the social dimension**

Panellists:

- **Vladimir Krsmanovic** – Confederation of Trade Unions of Montenegro
- **Mladen Pandurevic** – Director, Association of the Employers of the Federation Bosnia and Herzegovina
- **Bozidar Dakic** – Director, Republic Institute for Social Protection, Republic of Serbia
- **Maja Bobić** – Senior Project Advisor of the Western Balkans Social Dimension Initiative, Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund, Country Office Serbia
- **Jessie Fernandes** – Advisor, Businesseurope
- **Ben Egan** – Advisor, European Trade Union Confederation

Q&A with the room

11:30 -12:30	Round-table: The governance of labour market reforms in the EU accession process
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Chair: Cesare Onestini, Director, European Training Foundation

Panellists:

- **Edina Desic** – Director-General, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, Montenegro
- **Slavica Vucic Vojnovic** – Chief of Section for Labour and Employment, Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina
- **Gazmend Turdiu** – Deputy Secretary General of the Regional Cooperation Council
- **Markus Pilgrim** – ILO, Director, Decent Work Technical Support Team and Country Office for Central and Eastern Europe
- **Patrick Develtere** – Principal Adviser for European Social Policy, European Political Strategy Centre of the European Commission
- **Mihail Arandarenko** – Professor of Labour Economics, Faculty of Economics, University of Belgrade

12:30- 12:40 **Closure of the conference**

Lluís Prats, Head of Unit “International Issues”, DG EMPL, European Commission

Light buffet lunch for all conference participants at the conference venue

Departure of participants

Interpretation is provided from/to Albanian, English, Macedonian, Serbian-Bosnian-Montenegrin and Turkish.