

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 – 12.00 Opening Session

09.00 – 10.00 – Western Balkans Summit Opening

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

10.00 – 12.00 Business Forum Opening and Debate

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

10.00 – 12.00 Side Workshops

10.00 – 11.00 OECD: Promoting New Approaches to Unlock Next Growth Opportunities

11.00 – 12.00 OECD: Reaping the Dividends of Trade and Investment

10.00 – 12.00 RCC & CEFTA: Next steps for Regional Integration

12.30 – 13.50 Lunch

14.00 – 15.50 Parallel Session A

Financing Entrepreneurship – Lessons Learned and Challenges Ahead for Western Balkans

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

At the Crossroads of Business and Activism: Social Entrepreneurship

16.00 – 17.50 Parallel Session B

Digital Society in the Western Balkans

Powering the Energy Market in Transition

Supporting Mobility: The Connectivity Agenda

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 to be preceded by introductory remarks by Minister Jadwiga Emilewicz and Commissioner Johannes Hahn

Panellists TBC

2. Next steps for Regional Integration

Idea

Taking stock of the deliverables and the forward – looking commitments. Discuss challenges of implementation the Multi-annual Action Plan for Establishing Regional Economic Area. Mutual presentation of concrete advancement in made in regional development, mobility and digital integration agenda. Highlight best practices and possibilities for further economic cooperation among WB6 partners.

Main Topics

- Regional WB6 all-inclusive roaming agreement,
- Regional Mutual Recognition Agreement of professional Qualification,
- Declaration on Automatic Recognition of Academic Qualifications,
- Joint Declaration of the Digital Summit.

Debate

Moderation: Ms. Majlinda Bregu, Secretary General RCC

Johannes Hahn, European Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations

Emir Djikic, Director at CEFTA Secretariat

Ms. Majlinda Bregu, Secretary General RCC

Minister of Economy of one of EU BP partners

Minister for Economy of one of Western Balkans BP partners

Time frame and format

Moderated 90 minutes panel discussion.

Language

English

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

Idea

Lack of access to affordable financing, especially for SMEs, start-ups 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: Gjergj Murra, Executive Director, Western Balkans Fund

Suma Chakrabarti, EBRD President

Linda van Gelden, Country Director, World Bank

Pier Luigi Gilbert, Chief Executive, European Investment Fund

Remy Rioux, President, Agence Francaise de Development

Tatjana Zbasu Mikuz, Managing Partner, South Central Ventures

Time frame and format

Moderated 90 minutes panel discussion.

Language

English

4. 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)

Minister of Economy of one of EU BP partners

Minister of Economy of one of Western Balkans BP partners

Representative of DG EMPL

Representative of KfW

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

Vesna Dukic, Belgrade Open School

Time frame and format

Moderated 90 minutes panel discussion.

Language

English

5. 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: Alain Baron, Director, Transport Community

Violeta Bulc, European Commissioner for Transport

Minister of Economy of one of EU BP partners

Minister of Economy of one of Western Balkans BP partners

Werner Hoyer, President, European Investment Bank

Time frame and format

Moderated 60 minutes panel discussion.

Language

English

6. 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 sources 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?

Debate

Moderation: Janez Kopač, Director, Energy Community

Peter Altmaier, Federal Minister for Economy and Energy, Germany

Minister of Economy of one of Western Balkans BP partners

Werner Hoyer, President, European Investment Bank

Minister of Economy of one of EU BP partners

LNG Croatia LCC

Kosovo Energy Corporation

Time frame and format

Moderated 90 minutes panel discussion.

Language

English

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

Discussion

16.00 – 16.30 Presentation of the WB6 – EU Business Platform

Safet Gerxhaliu, Secretary General, WB6

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?