

REPORT
ON THE ACTIVITIES OF
THE WESTERN BALKANS 6
CHAMBER INVESTMENT FORUM
IN 2024

Contents

I. Supporting the implementation of the Common Regional Market (CRM) and the CRM Action Plan and promoting the benefits of regional cooperation to the business community	5
II. Trainings for companies in WB6 economies	25
III. Advocating the interests of WB6 companies	29
IV. Tailor-made support for WB6 companies.....	43
V. Organizational activities of the WB6 CIF	58



In 2024 WB6 CIF conducted different activities in the following areas:

- ✓ Supporting implementation of the Common Regional Market (CRM) and CRM Action Plan
- ✓ Promotion of the benefits of regional cooperation to business community
- ✓ Organization of free trainings for companies in WB6 economies
- ✓ Advocating the interests of WB6 companies
- ✓ Tailor-made support for WB6 companies
- ✓ Organizational activities of the WB6 CIF

This progress was achieved through numerous initiatives and active engagement. From offering [technical assistance](#) to the SMEs of the WB6, to jointly presenting the capacities of the region's Construction and Plant Engineering sectors at [SAIE Fair in Bologna](#) and launching the [CE Marking platform](#) with the aim to support the manufacturers from the WB6 in the CE Marking process. WB6 CIF showcased and supported SMEs in the sectors of infrastructure, agriculture, and automotive including metal, plastic, and textile to participate in the Business Forum: [10 years Berlin Process – The Western Balkans as an economic area on the way to the EU, as a delegation accompanied by the Managing Board of the WB6 CIF](#).

Throughout the year, we committed ourselves to championing businesses' priorities in the process of the preparation of the new Common Regional Market Action Plan for 2025-2028, and our dedication to the implementation of the policy areas under the CRM has been with the [Berlin Process Chair's conclusions](#).

WB6 CIF has established cooperation with almost all relevant business supporting organizations and is recognized as the important partner in implementation of business-related activities with regional coverage. Regional Supplier Development Program is one of the few concrete deliverables achieved through the Implementation of the CRM AP.

I. Supporting the implementation of the Common Regional Market (CRM) Action Plan and promoting the benefits of regional cooperation to the business community

1. Implementation of the Regional Supplier Development Programme

The Western Balkans Six Chamber Investment Forum (WB6 CIF), with the support from the European Commission, has been developing the WB6 CIF Supplier Development Program to ensure participation of SMEs (Small and Medium companies) in the regional and multinational supply chains and establishing new regional partnerships between WB6 companies.

The activities across the years have included mapping of suppliers from the WB6 region in selected industries, development of databases aimed at providing the necessary information to SME easing their access to markets, providing technical assistance to SMEs easing their access to finance and integration in the global supply chains, organization of networking events for SMEs from the region (joint participation at fairs and business events, investment conferences) and events aimed at increasing the capacities of regional SMEs (info days and trainings), all aiming at supporting the integration of WB6 SMEs in the regional and global supply chains. In 2024, particular focus was on the activities to support companies easing their integration in the global supply chains and achieving compliance with EU health, safety, and environmental protection standard and regulations.

1.1. Technical assistance program for entering the European and global markets

The Open call for Technical assistance program was published on 3rd June and it was closed on 15th of July 2024, with 135 applications from all economies. On 8th August selected companies were notified that they were accepted to participate in TA, and on 20th and 28th august companies from selected sectors for Berlin Business Forum received email invitation for workshops and link for the [digital tool](#) with custom made reports.

Companies were split in 6 groups/sectors: Infrastructure, Metal production and automotive, Agriculture, Plastic and textile, Construction and Plant Engineering, 45 companies were selected

to participate in (4 groups) workshops as preparation for Berlin Business Forum, while 30 were selected to participate in (2 groups) workshops as preparation for SAIE Fair in Bologna.

Through this activity, 10 reports have been prepared:

- Report 1 - GUIDELINES FOR TARGETING THE POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS – BERLIN BUSINESS FORUM
- Report 2 - GUIDELINES FOR TARGETING THE POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS – SAIE BOLOGNA
- Report 3 - German infrastructure sector, metal production and automotive sector and agriculture (food processing) sector
- Report 4 - Foreign trade of German manufacturers and service providers that are related to infrastructure sector, metal production and automotive sector and agriculture (food processing) sector
- Report 5 - Foreign trade of WB6 manufacturers and service providers that are related to infrastructure sector, metal production and automotive sector and agriculture (food processing) sector
- Report 6 - Macroeconomic overview of German economy
- Report 7 - SAIE Trade Fair in Bologna
- Report 8 - Italian construction industry
- Report 9 - Foreign trade of Italian manufacturers and service providers that are related to Construction Industry
- Report 10 - Foreign trade of WB6 manufacturers and service providers that are related to Construction Industry

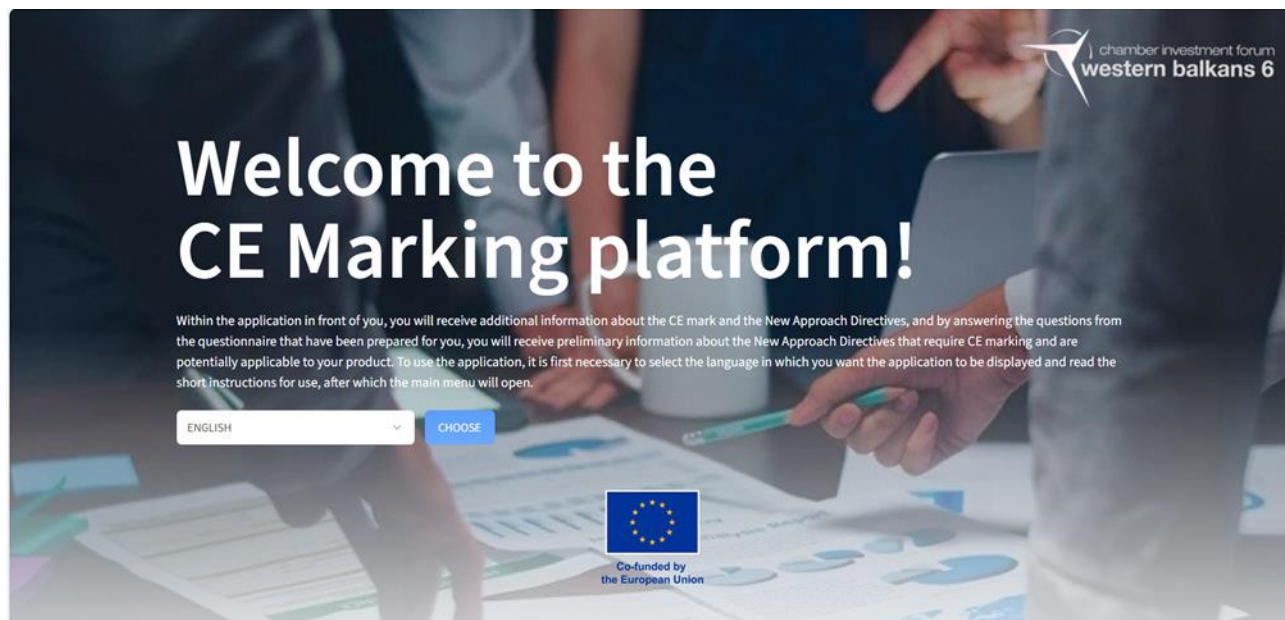
1.2. Setting up services supporting WB6 companies in compliance with EU health, safety, and environmental protection standard and regulations (CE marking)

Within this activity WB6 CIF is supporting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in obtaining complete, clear and reliable information and instructions that are highly important for promoting exports and encouraging businesses to enter the international market. Supporting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in obtaining internationally valid certificates is highly important for promoting exports and encouraging businesses to enter the international market. Certification with standards and marks demonstrates that the enterprise adheres to high standards of quality, safety, and performance, making your products and services acceptable in international markets. The CE mark is a guarantee that the product complies with all the essential requirements of the

European New Approach Directives that apply to it and that a conformity assessment has been carried out to prove compliance with essential requirements. One CE mark on a product indicates that the product complies with all the essential requirements of all directives applicable to that product.

To support this process, WB6 CIF with the support of the European Commission within the framework of the project: “EU Support to the WB6 CIF for the Development of a Common Regional Market, 2024/454-229”, has developed the digital tool: CE marking platform.

CE marking platform is an online application created to help manufacturers from WB6 economies to identify which European New Approach Directives are potentially applied on their products, using a set of questionnaires. Based on the answers on questionnaires, one consultative report on all potentially applicable European New Approach Directives, as well as Regulation, harmonized standards, notified bodies, etc. important in the realization of process of CE marking, for all WB6 markets, as well as EU market is created. Part of the CE marking platform is also a knowledge base, containing important questions & answers in the field of CE marking and New Approach, as well as detailed instructions for users.



In order to strengthen the role of chambers of commerce as business support providers and to enhance the WB6 CIF and its member chambers' support services in the CE mark, the training day on the 'CE Marking Platform' took place on October 23, 2024, at the premises of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia. The event included the participation of 12 representatives from

the Western Balkans 6 Chambers of Commerce, WB6 CIF representatives, as well as members of the Thematic Group on Quality Infrastructure.

The main advantages of the CE marking platform: CE marking platform is a tool helping manufacturers to identify preliminary applied European New Approach Directives for its product, and to facilitate import and export to European Union and all WB6 markets. The important advantage of the platform is consultative report containing detailed information and links on regulations, harmonized standards, etc., related to applicable New Approach Directives, and important for operational realization of CE marking process.

The platform is available in all WB6 languages. The CE marking platform contains detailed, step-by-step instructions for users, along with questionnaires to identify relevant New Approach Directives, and a knowledge base with important questions and answers.

To ensure the sustainability of the process, the CE marking platform will be integrated into the WB6 CIF Market Access database, and CE marking workshops for local SMEs in each of the 6 chambers of commerce of the Western Balkans economies will be organized to present the platform and facilitate company access.

2. WB6 leaders in Skopje underscore the paramount significance of regional cooperation and EU integration



rules and standards.

During the WB6 leaders and partners conference “Growth Plan- Western Balkans meets EU” in Skopje on 22 January 2024, the Western Balkans 6 Chamber Investment Forum (WB6 CIF) actively participated by emphasizing the importance of the newly adopted Growth Plan for the region. The conference focused on enhancing economic integration with the EU’s single market and boosting economic integration within the Western Balkans through the Common Regional Market, based on EU

In the consultation process, the Western Balkans 6 Chamber Investment Forum, in collaboration with the European Commission and regional companies, ensured the integration of needs and recommendations from the Western Balkans business sector.

WB6 CIF Chairman, Mr. Lulzim Rafuna, expressed gratitude to colleagues at the European Commission for integrating the voices and perspectives of regional businesses. He emphasized the transformative potential of integrating economies into the EU single market outlined in the Growth Plan. Chairman Rafuna highlighted the importance of close cooperation between the public and private sector in the region to achieve concrete results, calling for commitment from both Western Balkan national governments and EU policymakers. Rafuna invited national authorities to consult and listen to the business sector, especially regarding priorities related to the implementation of the Common Regional Market Action Plan as a steppingstone toward the EU Single Market. The WB6 CIF stands ready to support this process, advocating for real benefits for companies.



The development of the Common Regional Market Action Plan 2.0 (CRM AP 2.0) under the Berlin Process remained a top priority for the business community. WB6 leaders emphasized collaboration among regional organizations during the preparation of this strategic document, recognizing the WB6 CIF as a driver of the process, jointly with the Regional Cooperation Council, CEFTA, the Energy Community, and the Transport Community.

3. Meeting of Western Balkan Ministers for EU Integration in Tirana



Deputy Prime Ministers and Ministers for EU Integration of Western Balkans (WB6), alongside EU representatives and partners, convened in Tirana on 28 February 2024, to discuss the Growth Plan for the region. A WB6 CIF delegation led by WB6 CIF Managing Board member Mucostepa also attended the gathering, actively joining the work and discussion of the participants.

The WB6 leading officials welcomed the European Commission's Growth Plan proposal, aiming to extend the benefits of the EU Single Market to the Western Balkans before formal accession, targeting doubled economic growth and accelerated socio-economic convergence.

Being a side event of the Leaders Regional Summit on Growth and Convergence, discussions focused on roadmap design for priority actions and Reform Agenda, along with opportunities, priorities, and challenges in implementing the Growth Plan.

Emphasizing regional cooperation's importance, WB6 leaders called for phased integration into EU programs and policies and further alignment with the EU Single Market. They welcomed the Commission's Critical Medicines Alliance call opening to Western Balkans stakeholders.

WB6 leaders proposed establishing a core team with the European Commission to implement the Growth Plan, focusing on Pillar 1 priorities. They called for technical assistance from the Commission and a communication initiative on the Growth Plan and Facility. Highlighting the need to bridge socio-economic gaps, WB6 leaders proposed enhanced cooperation on policy areas like SEPA, green lanes, trade facilitation, and digitalization, aiming for greater convergence with the EU.

4. Regional Summit on the Growth and Convergence Plan for the Western Balkans in Tirana

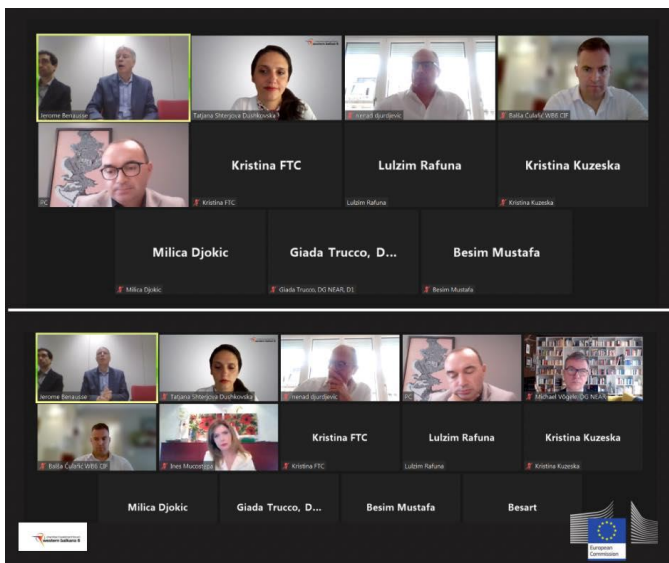
The Regional Summit on the Growth and Convergence Plan convened in Tirana on 29 February 2024, with a primary focus on advancing the integration of the Western Balkans with the European Union and executing the Growth Plan tailored for the region. This pivotal event provided a strategic forum for stakeholders to exchange insights and perspectives on the European trajectory of the Western Balkans and to collectively address shared regional challenges.



The notable participation of European Union Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighborhood, Oliver Varhelyi, underscored the summit's significance and the EU's commitment to the region's progress.

Ines Mucostepa, WB6 CIF Managing Board member taking part in the Growth Plan Summit in Tirana, delivered a compelling message advocating for streamlined business operations both within the region and with the EU. In her address, she emphasized the pressing need to eliminate barriers hindering business growth, with a dual objective of bolstering income and reducing costs for WB6 companies. Her advocacy extended beyond mere economic interests, highlighting the broader implications for regional prosperity and the well-being of all citizens. In stressing the importance of collaborative efforts, Ines urged stakeholders to unite in paving the way for sustainable growth and unlocking opportunities for all.

5. Exchange with DG Near on the New Growth Plan



On 8 May 2024, WB6 CIF hosted an exchange meeting with the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), ahead of the final steps before the endorsement of the Regulation on establishing the Reform and Growth Facility for the Western Balkans and the approval of the national Growth Plans.

In this meeting DG Near representatives provided a debrief on the Growth Plan Facility and an overview of the policy areas covered in the Reform Agendas. Additionally, a brief update was received on the state of play for the four Pillars and especially for the first and second pillars but as well for the

Growth Plan.

This exchange ensures that WB6 CIF remains informed and share its inputs on the reforms that will benefit the business community in the Western Balkans.

6. WB6 CIF participation at the Ministerial Meeting: “One Region, Common Vision”



On May 15, 2024, the meeting of Western Balkans Ministers of European Affairs and Finance was held in Kotor, Montenegro, under the

theme “One Region, Common Vision.” This ministerial meeting, preceding the Leaders’ Summit, emphasized the importance of regional cooperation and economic integration within the Growth Plan framework.



The Chairman of the WB6 CIF Mr. Lulzim Rafuna in his address highlighted the transformative potential of a Common Regional Market for the Western Balkans 6 during his address at the “One Region, Common Vision” meeting. “By aligning our efforts and resources towards a common objective, we unlock a myriad of opportunities for economic growth and prosperity. Central to our collective vision is the establishment of a Common Regional Market, a transformative platform that transcends borders and fosters a seamless flow of goods, services, and investments across our region, which serves as a catalyst for economic development, driving innovation, creating jobs, and bolstering trade within and beyond our borders and amplifies the

attractiveness of our region to foreign direct investment (FDI). By presenting a unified market with harmonized regulations and standards, we enhance investors’ confidence and stimulate inflows

of capital that fuel economic expansion and infrastructure development. “stated Mr. Lulzim Rafuna.

Mr. Lulzim Rafuna underscored the importance of the full implementation of the Common Regional Market as a top priority for businesses in Western Balkans region, aligning efforts with the New Growth Plan for the Western Balkans.

7. WB6 CIF Participation at the Regional Leaders` Summit: “One region, Common vision”, Regional Western Balkans Leaders Meeting on the Growth Plan: A Step Towards Regional Integration and Economic Growth



Building upon the success of previous summits in Skopje and Tirana, Montenegro proudly hosted the Regional Western Balkans Leaders Meeting on the Growth Plan. This significant gathering brought together leaders from

the six Western Balkans countries, along with representatives from the European Commission, Regional Cooperation Council, Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA), European Investment Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, World Bank, Transport Community, Energy Community, and the Western Balkans 6 Chamber Investment Forum (WB6 CIF). The aim was to engage in constructive discussions on the opportunities presented by the Growth Plan and the Reform Agendas, with a focus as well at the Common Regional Market. The delegation of the WB6 CIF was led by the Chairman Mr. Lulzim Rafuna.



Chairman Rafuna during his intervention emphasized the importance of regional cooperation for economic advancement and European integration. He appreciated the joint efforts and commitment of various actors in promoting sustainable development and improving the well-being of the region. Special emphasis was placed

on the development of the private sector and businesses in the region, which are the promoters of these processes. The active involvement and leadership of WB6 CIF at the Summit underscore our commitment to fostering closer regional integration and economic cooperation.

8. WB6 CIF Delegation at the Business Forum: 10 years Berlin Process - The Western Balkans as an economic area on the way to the EU



On September 24, 2024, WB6 CIF delegation took active participation in the Business Forum: 10 years Berlin Process – The Western Balkans as an economic area on the way to the EU took place in Berlin at the premises of Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action. The Business Forum was organized by the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action (BMWK), supported by the German Eastern Business Association (OA), the German Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DIHK), and the Western Balkans 6 Chamber Investment Forum (WB6 CIF).



During his impulse statement, Mr. Lulzim Rafuna, WB6 CIF Chairman emphasized the transformative potential of the Common Regional Market. Mr. Rafuna noted that the idea of a Common Regional Market (CRM) represents far more than trade and regulation—it embodies opportunity. It signals better conditions for businesses to grow, for

individuals to thrive, and for our region to realize its true potential. Together, we are creating a marketplace where goods, services, people, and capital flow freely, elevating the lives of approximately 17 million citizens across the Western Balkans. Mr. Rafuna underscored that the Common Regional Market initiative, launched in 2020, is a key step toward deeper regional and EU integration. By advancing the four freedoms—free movement of goods, services, people, and capital—the region is laying the groundwork for long-term competitiveness and growth. The WB6 CIF has actively contributed to the preparation of the new Common Regional Market Action Plan for 2025-2028.

The forum also addressed the need for climate transformation, which brings both opportunities and challenges, particularly for the energy sector in the Western Balkans. The region's energy mix is dominated by fossil fuels, especially coal, leading to high carbon emissions—four times that of the EU, with a slower reduction rate. However, there is significant potential to expand renewable energy, particularly solar and wind.

The introduction of the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) in 2026 is expected to reshape the current tendencies, offering a pivotal moment for transition.

The Western Balkans contributed to the panel discussion with the participation of Mr. Svetozar Janevski, Member of the Western Balkans 6 Chamber Investment Forum Business Council and representative of Tikveš, North Macedonia, Ms. Angela Nastevska, representative of Kentaur Impex, North Macedonia, and Mr. Stjepan Kumric, representative of Lukavac Cement, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

9. WB6 CIF participation in the Western Balkans Economic Ministerial Conference

WB6 CIF Chairman Mr. Lulzim Rafuna, participated in the Ministerial Conference, held within the framework of the Business Forum: 10 years Berlin Process – The Western Balkans as an Economic Area on the Way to the EU, highlighting both the challenges and opportunities of the green transition for the region.



Decarbonization is rapidly becoming a decisive factor in production, export, and foreign investment decisions, driven by regulatory requirements and growing consumer expectations, noted Mr. Rafuna. Many

local companies see this as an opportunity to strengthen their competitiveness and enhance their export potential to the EU. In fact, more than 60% of local companies are already familiar with decarbonization efforts and are investing in new technologies to reduce emissions. However, to achieve our ambitious goals, financial support is crucial. Without adequate funding, local businesses will struggle to reduce their carbon footprint and adopt clean energy solutions, as shown in a regional economic study conducted by WB6 CIF and the six national chambers of commerce, published two weeks ago.

Foreign investors are recognizing the potential of the Western Balkans as a promising destination for green investments, particularly due to its proximity to the EU. If we can improve our decarbonization efforts, around 68% of companies have indicated that they would increase their investments in the region.

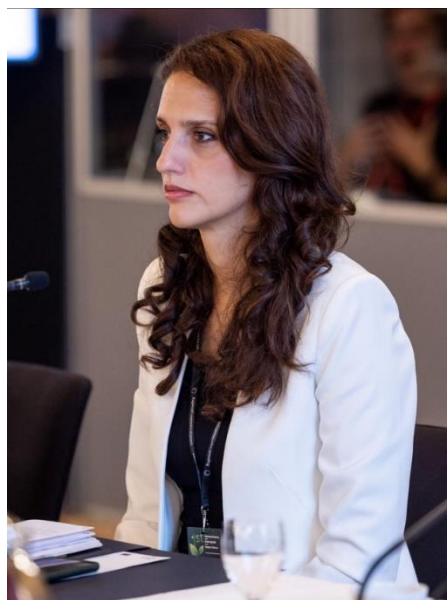
10. WB6 CIF Secretary General at the 1st Ministerial Meeting on the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans

Secretary General of WB6 CIF, Ms. Tatjana Shterjova Dushkovska, on 7 October 2024 in Hamburg, participated in the 1st Ministerial Meeting on the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans. As part of the 2024 Berlin Process, the ministerial meeting on the Green agenda for the Western Balkans brought together stakeholders to review progress, address challenges, and outline future actions.



To share the perspective of regional cooperating organisations, WB6 CIF Secretary General, participated in the panel discussion Partners' perspective- Implementation of the GAWB and its Action Plan. Ms. Tatjana Shterjova Dushkovska emphasized that trade and climate should not be viewed as separate strides, as they are both interconnected—given the impacts of trade on carbon emissions.

“The private sector is now confronting the reality that decarbonization is a current situation, not a distant one. The clock is ticking, and swift action is essential. Reducing carbon emissions requires



both technological transformation and a change in the mindset. While two-thirds of big companies are taking strides with mid-term plans for green energy and technological investments, SMEs—which account for over 80% of supply chains—are lagging behind. Many SMEs lack the knowledge and resources to comply with complex regulations like the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (#CBAM), and this is where holistic support is needed from all stakeholders. The private sector is generally positive about the Green Agenda, seeing opportunities for technological transformation and increased competitiveness. However, without proper financial and technical support, many businesses—especially SMEs—may struggle to meet climate goals. The call for blended

financing, local carbon taxing systems, and capacity-building support is urgent, as is the need for skilled manpower to drive this transformation, stated Ms.Shterjova Dushkovska.

Ms. Tatjana Shterjova Dushkovska concluded by noting that transition takes time, and while decarbonization must be pursued vigorously, without an efficient support system for companies, some may not survive this transformation, or we give rise to a process of deindustrialization in the region.

11.Recognition of the role of the WB6 CIF during the 10th Berlin process Summit and it's contributions to the preparation of the new Common Regional Market Action Plan 2025-2028

The 10th Berlin Process Summit took place on 14 October 2024 in Berlin, with the participation of the Western Balkans 6 Leaders. It was opened by Federal Chancellor Mr. Olaf Scholz and attended by representatives of Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland, Slovenia, the United Kingdom and the President of the European Commission, Ms. Ursula von der Leyen as well as international and regional bodies, organizations, and financial institutions. Hungary participated as an observer in its capacity as the rotating Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

The participants acknowledged the results achieved under the Common Regional Market 2021 – 2024. And as well they commended the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), CEFTA and the Western Balkans 6 Chamber Investment Forum (WB6 CIF) for their support in the implementation of policy agendas under the CRM. The second phase of the Common Regional Market (2025-2028) was formalized by the Western Balkans 6 leaders at the 10th Berlin Process Summit through the signing of the Declaration on the Common Regional Market 2025-2028.

The Western Balkans 6 Chamber Investment Forum (WB6 CIF) has been actively involved in the preparation of the Common Regional Market Action Plan 2025-2028.

Common Regional Market Action Plan 2025-2028 (CRM 2.0) represents a regionally-owned framework based on the EU rules and standards with the objective to consolidate and enhance competitiveness and economic cooperation. With its scope and ambition of going beyond four freedoms provisions, it contributes to the long-term economic growth of the region, supporting its fair, green and digital transition, fostering regional cooperation and convergence with the EU. Serving as a powerful catalyst for growth and attractiveness, the CRM 2.0 seeks to further boost

the socio-economic convergence between the region and the EU and paves the way for closer integration with the Single Market.



This Action Plan is an integral part of the Growth Plan for the Western Balkans, aimed at boosting economic growth and increasing socio-economic convergence of the region, bringing it

closer to the EU Single Market. In particular, it contributes to its Pillar II: Regional Cooperation, which is an essential element of boosting economic development of the region, already identified in the Action Plan 2020-2024 as a stepping stone to the Single Market.

CRM 2.0 builds on the results of CRM 2021–2024 Action Plan, which has represented the cornerstone and key unifying and by far the most elaborate regional cooperation and integration framework since its endorsement by the WB6 Leaders at the 2020 Berlin Process Sofia Summit.

The successful implementation of CRM2 relies on strong governance, clear communication, and regular monitoring. While the RCC and CEFTA oversee coordination and trade-related actions, WB6 CIF plays a key role by overseeing private sector-led measures. The private sector, through close collaboration with WB6 CIF, is crucial in both the implementation and monitoring of the Action Plan.

The Areas that form the building blocks of the CRM2 center around the following:

- Free Movement of Goods
- Free Movement of Services
- Horizontal Trade Measures
- Human Capital Development
- Business enabling environment and competitiveness
- Digital Transformation

The Western Balkans 6 leaders, by signing the declaration, reaffirmed their dedication to the effective implementation of the CRM Action Plan 2025-2028, supported by the necessary

institutional and administrative capacities to ensure greater impact, with the unwavering support from the European Union. Recognizing the important role of regional organizations in the implementation of the CRM Action Plan 2025-2028, they reaffirm their full support for the efforts of the RCC, CEFTA, TCT, WB6 CIF, and other relevant regional partners, which exemplify strong regional ownership.

In the Common Regional Market Action Plan 2025-2028, the Western Balkans 6 Chamber Investment Forum (WB6 CIF) will be a lead organisation for the activities that fall under this priority area: 3- Horizontal Trade Measures; 4-Human Capital Development and 5- Business enabling environment and competitiveness and WB6 CIF will be a supporting organisation in the implementation of the other activities.

12. Participation in CRM Coordination meetings



WB6 CIF Secretary General Tatjana Shterjova Dushkovska took active participation in the Coordination meetings dedicated to the Common Regional Market, organized on 29 February in Tirana and on 30 April online, joining the exchange on the preparation of the new Common Regional Market Action Plan. On the meeting held on 30 April, dedicated to preparation of the key building blocks of the Common Regional Market

Action Plan 2.0 (CRM 2.0), Ms.Shterjova Dushkovska presented the inputs from the WB6 business community during the Western Balkans PM Sherpa's Meeting

WB6 CIF, jointly with the regional partner organizations Regional Cooperation Council - RCC , CEFTA - Central European Free Trade Agreement and Transport Community, worked on preparation on the Joint Statement summarizing the main building blocks and priority areas of CRM2 - "Common Regional Market a stepping stone for an accelerated integration of the Western Balkans in the EU Single Market" that are expected to be endorsed by WB6 Leaders, during the Summit in Kotor, Montenegro in May.

WB6 CIF Secretary General Tatjana Shterjova Dushkovska and WB6 CIF project manager Marija Askovic Matic took active participation in the Coordination meetings dedicated to the Common Regional Market, actively contributing in the process of the preparation of the new Common Regional Market Action Plan (CRM 2.0.), coordinating WB6 CIF's contributions to the first draft of the text of the Action Plan, which has been shared with the WB Governments in June 2024, the Wb6 CIF's reflections on the comments received by the national governments during July 2024, contributing to the preparation of the second draft of the text of the Action Plan and the narrative part of the document, as well as the political declaration to be endorsed by the Leaders in October 2024.

During the time-frame August-September WB6 CIF Secretary General Tatjana Shterjova Dushkovska and WB6 CIF project manager Marija Askovic Matic took active participation in the Coordination meetings dedicated to the Common Regional Market, actively contributing in the process of the preparation of the new Common Regional Market Action Plan (CRM 2.0.), coordinating WB6 CIF's contributions to the second draft of the text of the Action Plan, which has been shared with the WB Governments in September 2024, the WB6 CIF's reflections on the comments received by the national governments during September 2024, contributing to the preparation of the final text of the document adopted during the 10th Berlin Process Summit.

13. Meetings of the WB6 CIF Thematic Groups under the New Growth Plan for the Western Balkans

The Western Balkans 6 Chamber Investment Forum (WB6 CIF) embarked on initiatives to enhance representation of SMEs and facilitate focused, thematic feedback based on a proposal from WB6 Business Council representatives. To this end, WB6 CIF supported the establishment of 9 Thematic Groups (TG), comprising experts from chambers and representatives of local SMEs, aligned with priority areas outlined in the New Growth Plan for the Western Balkans:



WB6 CIF Thematic Groups

Based on the proposal from WB6 Business Council representatives, to have greater representation of SMEs and focused, thematic feedback, WB6 CIF will support the **establishment of 9 Thematic Groups (TG) that will include experts from chambers and representatives of local SMEs**, following the priority areas defined in the New Growth Plan for the Western Balkans:

1. TG on Trade in Goods and Services
2. TG on Tourism
3. TG on Transport
4. TG on Investments and Access to Finance
5. TG on Digital Transformation and IT
6. TG on Green Transition and Energy Efficiency
7. TG in Internationalization
8. TG on Quality Infrastructure
9. TG on Human Capital



1. TG on Trade in Goods and Services
2. TG on Tourism
3. TG on Transport
4. TG on Investments and Access to Finance
5. TG on Digital Transformation and IT

6. TG on Green Transition and Energy Efficiency
7. TG on Internationalization
8. TG on Quality Infrastructure
9. TG on Human Capital

Additionally, the WB6 CIF initiated preparations for drafting inputs from the business community for the Common Regional Market Action Plan 2.0 (CRM AP 2.0), with the newly established WB6 CIF Thematic Groups playing a pivotal role in providing inputs from companies in the region.

All the Thematic Groups have held their meetings, and have prepared inputs, identifying obstacles and summarizing key demands of regional businesses within the sector, to be included in the new Common Regional Market Action Plan. The prepared initial inputs are attached in Annex 1 of this Report.

13.1. Meeting of the Thematic Group on Quality Infrastructure



On May 15, the 2nd meeting of the Thematic Group (TG8) on Quality Infrastructure was held in Bar, Montenegro.

Members of the TG8 discussed the previous proposals and recommendations of this Thematic Group for facilitating the free movement of industrial goods within the Region and between the Region

and the European Union, as a contribution to the development of the new Common Regional Market Action Plan (CRM 2.0), based on the New Growth Plan for the Western Balkans. During this meeting, proposals and recommendations were elaborated that primarily relate to further harmonization of technical regulations and procedures on standardization, conformity assessment, product certification, and further strengthening of all four pillars of quality infrastructure in the six economies and the Region as a whole.

13.2. Meeting of the Thematic Group on Green Transition and Energy Efficiency



On 16 May 2024 the second meeting of the Thematic Group on green transition and energy efficiency was held in Podgorica, Montenegro.

The members of the TG discussed the strategic approach to supporting companies during the decarbonization process by helping them establish green industry supply chains. The members of the TG also discussed the inputs provided in the process of preparation of the Common Regional Market Action Plan (CRM 2.0), and cross-collaboration with other thematic groups.

13.3. Meeting of the Thematic Group on Transport



On 25 October 2024, in Sarajevo, BiH, the Thematic Group (TG3) on Transport held a productive meeting. Members of TG3 reviewed the current situation in the transport sector, and with the endorsement of the

Common Regional Market Action Plan 2025-2028, they will continue to focus on preparing detailed sectoral recommendations for the transport sector in the frameworks of supporting further regional cooperation and implementation of the CRM and consequently Growth Plan. The final recommendations will be presented and discussed at the EU-WB6 Business Council meeting within the EU-WB6 Business Platform.

13.4. Online meetings of the Thematic groups

The WB6 CIF Thematic groups have held numerous online meetings, of the groups themselves, but also with the other regional partners involved in the preparation of the new Common Regional Market Action plan 2025-2028. The complete list of held meetings is contained in Annex 1 of this report.

II. Trainings for companies in WB6 economies

1. Training on the role of communication in international trade

The Kosovo Chamber of Commerce, in cooperation with the WB6 CIF and with the support of the European Commission, held a Training Day on 12 June 2024 themed “The Role of Communication in International Trade.”



The aim was to uncover for participating companies from different sectors the details of communication strategies essential for leveraging the complex dynamics of international trade. During the training more than 20 participants had the opportunity to gain valuable

knowledge about the importance of intercultural communication in international trade negotiations. They explored strategies to overcome language barriers and foster clear communication channels, essential for smooth interactions and successful negotiations. Additionally, the training emphasized the role of effective communication in building and maintaining robust international business relationships. Participants were provided with practical tools and techniques to enhance their communication effectiveness, highlighting how clear, consistent communication can strengthen partnerships and drive business growth.

2. Training on Optimization of Logistics Costs, Sustainability, and E-Logistics

On the second day of the “Second International Logistics Conference in Bosnia and Herzegovina,” organized by the Foreign Trade Chamber of Bosnia and Herzegovina, a dedicated training session for companies took place. This was Session V of the conference, titled “Optimization of Logistics Costs, Sustainability, and E-Logistics.” Organized by the Foreign Trade Chamber of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in cooperation with the Western Balkans 6 Chamber Investment Forum (WB6 CIF) and with the support of the European Commission, the session gathered more than 200 participants. The training session, moderated by Kristina Petljak, Sanja Miović, and Ermin

Muharemović, guided participants through three focused panels, each concentrating on Optimization of logistics chains, Sustainable logistics, and E-logistics, offering in-depth insights into each area.



3. Training Sessions on the CE Marking Platform Across WB6 Chambers of Commerce

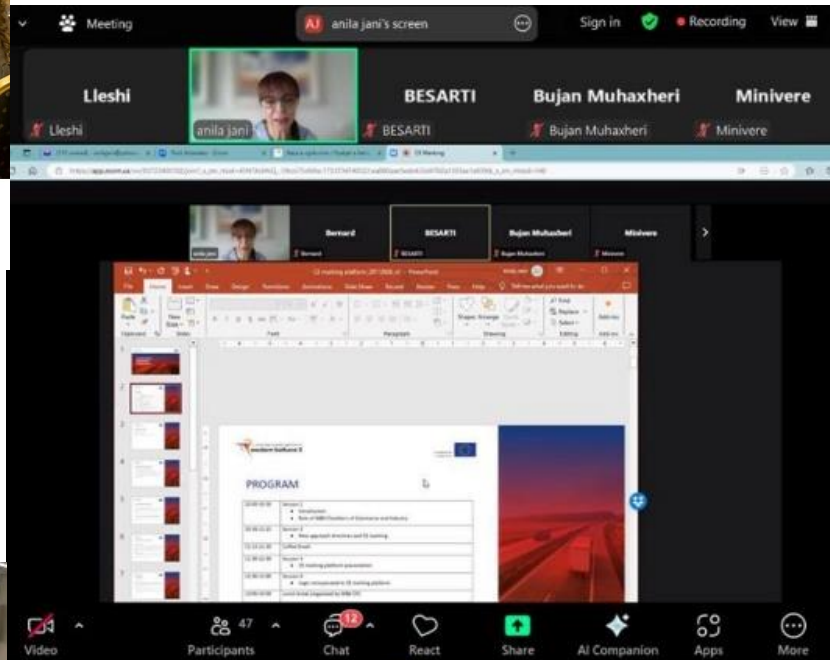
The CE marking platform is a tool helping manufacturers to identify preliminary applied European New Approach Directives for its product, and to facilitate import and export to European Union and all WB6 markets. The important advantage of the platform is consultative report containing detailed information and links on regulations, harmonized standards, etc., related to applicable New Approach Directives, and important for operational realization of CE marking process.

WB6 CIF has developed the digital tool designed to support SMEs of the WB6 to help manufacturers from WB6 in obtaining internationally recognized certificates, ensuring compliance with EU health, safety, and environmental protection standards. Supporting the CE marking process, this platform is an essential resource for facilitating exports and assisting businesses in the WB6 economies to compete in the EU and global markets.

To ensure manufacturers fully understand and utilize this platform, each of the WB6 Chambers of Commerce hosts dedicated training sessions:

- Chamber of Economy of Montenegro: November 27, 2024
- Foreign Trade Chamber of Bosnia and Herzegovina: November 28, 2024
- Kosovo Chamber of Commerce: December 9, 2024
- Union of Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Albania: December 10, 2024
- Economic Chamber of North Macedonia: December 11, 2024
- Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia: December 23, 2024





III. Advocating the interests of WB6 companies

1. Chairman Rafuna at the Budapest Balkans Forum (BBF)

On 17 January, the WB6 CIF Chairman Lulzim Rafuna participated in the Budapest Balkans Forum (BBF) “BBF On Tour” event series, which was held in Tirana under the theme “Brussels Calling: Road to the Single Market”. The event focused on exploring possibilities and overcoming bottlenecks for economic convergence between the Western Balkans and the EU within the evolving geopolitical landscape.

In his address, Chairman Rafuna emphasized that the notion of a single market extended beyond a technical or economic concept; it embodied a vision of a brighter future for the people of the region. This vision encompassed increased opportunities for businesses to thrive, investors to find profitable ventures, and individuals to enjoy higher living standards. It entailed streamlining regulations, reducing trade barriers, and fostering innovation and entrepreneurship.

Chairman Rafuna highlighted that while the convergence of WB6 with EU27 was gradually progressing, the New Growth Plan represented a monumental opportunity. He emphasized that the journey towards deeper economic integration of the Western Balkans was a shared responsibility, with the business community in the region ready to actively contribute its inputs to this process.

2. Western Balkans Coordination Meeting on the Circular Economy Pillar of the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans (GAWB)

On 8 February 2024, Prishtina hosted the Western Balkans Coordination Meeting on the Circular Economy Pillar of the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans (GAWB). The event, organized by the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) and Western Balkans 6 Chamber Investment Forum (WB6 CIF) in collaboration with the and the EU4Green Project, aimed to engage stakeholders with the circular economy aspects of GAWB.





Mr. Lulzim Rafuna, Chairman of the WB6 CIF Managing Board, emphasized the potentials and challenges of transitioning toward a Circular Economy (CE) in the Western Balkans. He stressed the importance of mainstreaming CE objectives in policy areas, integrating CE practices across all sectors, and fostering awareness about its benefits. Collaboration among governments, businesses, communities, and international

stakeholders was highlighted as crucial for success.

A Panel Discussion on the Industry Transition of the Western Balkans to Circular Economy, moderated by Kristina Kuzeska, featured discussions on the need for a robust CE regulatory framework, financial support for the green transition, knowledge transfer, and public-private cooperation. Representatives from Aluminij and TIKIhome showcased innovative approaches, underlining the potential for a sustainable future.

The meeting yielded promising outcomes, including harmonized donor support, improved regional knowledge sharing, and strengthened regional cooperation.

3. Public EU Hearing on New Growth Plan and Facility for the Western Balkans

On 9 February, WB6 CIF Secretary General Tatjana Shterjova Dushkovska took part in the EU EESC Hearing on New Growth Plan and Facility for the Western Balkans. The New Growth Plan represented a significant turning point in the EU's approach toward the Western Balkans economies, promising enhanced access to the EU single market for our companies well before accession. The WB6 CIF was given the opportunity to actively contribute to identifying priority actions for integration into the EU's single market within the first pillar of the Growth Plan.



Western Balkan businesses require support to prepare for the market pressures of the Single Market, and we outlined our committed to collaborating with companies in this process, building on the success of the Regional Supplier Development Program within the Common Regional Market. Over the past three years, more than 6,500 companies from the Western Balkans have benefited from our trade promotion activities and received individual, tailor-made support.

One form of business involvement in EU institutions was the EU-Western Balkans Business Platform, which facilitated dialogue between the Western Balkans' business community and the European Commission. This forum enabled discussions on challenges and opportunities for the region's private sector, aiding businesses in understanding EU laws and policies and preparing for integration into the Single Market.

4. Meeting of WB6 CIF Chairman Rafuna and WB6 CIF MB member Cadez with the USA Ambassador to Kosovo Hovenier

WB6 CIF Chairman Lulzim Rafuna and WB6 CIF Management Board member Marko Cadez engaged in a constructive dialogue with the USA Ambassador to Kosovo Jeffrey Hovenier, focusing on enhancing cooperation between the Kosovan and Serbian business communities and collaboration within the Western Balkan region. The discussions delved into identifying specific strategies and mechanisms to foster collaboration, address existing challenges, and capitalize on mutual opportunities. Emphasizing the significance of normalizing relations between the two countries, Ambassador Hovenier underscored that such efforts would not only bolster regional stability but also promote prosperity across the wider region.



5. Meeting of WB6 CIF Chairman Rafuna and WB6 CIF MB member Cadez with Manuel Sarrazin, Special Representative for the Western Balkans with the German Federal Government

WB6 CIF Chairman and President of the Kosovo Chamber of Commerce Lulzim Rafuna and the President of the Serbian Chamber of Commerce and Industry Marko Cadez held a meeting with Manuel Sarrazin, Special Representative for the Countries of the Western Balkan, in Berlin. This

pivotal meeting centered on showcasing the impactful work of the WB6 CIF in supporting regional businesses and addressing the challenges encountered by businesses in the Western Balkans.



Throughout the discussions, Presidents Rafuna and Cadez emphasized the urgent need to revitalize the Berlin Process and accelerate the region's integration into the single European economic market. They appealed for heightened support from Berlin in dismantling barriers to business in the region.

Manuel Sarrazin affirmed robust support for the implementation of all agreements crucial to the advancement of the WB6, reaffirming the commitment to promoting economic development and cooperation within the region.

6. Chairman Rafuna at the ESG Adria Summit



On 24 April, the Chairman of the Managing Board of the Western Balkans 6 Chamber Investment Forum (WB6 CIF) Mr. Lulzim Rafuna contributed to an enlightening panel discussion on “Cross-border Solutions: Advancing Circular Economy Through Technology and Infrastructure” at the ESG Adria Summit, under the theme Act Now for a Sustainable Tomorrow. The event was organized by Sustineri Partners and Porto Montenegro in partnership with the Government of Montenegro and under the auspices of the President of Montenegro.

During the panel discussion, Mr. Lulzim Rafuna emphasized the key role that WB6 CIF plays by actively leading the CRM industrial actions and contributing to the

platform with the private sector inputs on supporting their transition towards the green and circular economy.

Our commitment to the green agenda is unwavering. Regional initiatives like the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism guideline, Waste Framework Directive guidelines, and the establishment of the Western Balkans Green and Circular Economy Stakeholders Platform demonstrate how cooperation can drive sustainable development. By aligning policies and sharing resources, we can effectively address common challenges, concluded Mr. Rafuna.



7. Working lunch with Primeminister Spajic



Prime Minister of the Republic of Montenegro, Mr. Miloško Spajić, met with the President and the members of the Managing Board of the Western Balkans 6 Chamber Investment Forum (WB6 CIF) during a working lunch, on which the touristic potentials of the Western Balkans region and the possibilities for joint promotion were discussed.

8. Presentation of the WB6 CIF at the Balkan Trafik festival

The Chairman of the Western Balkans 6 Chamber Investment Forum (WB6 CIF), Mr. Lulzim Rafuna, highlighted the WB6 CIF's unwavering commitment to economic cooperation in the region, as one of the key actors for economic cooperation in the Western Balkans, during the panel discussion at the 18th edition of the Balkan Trafik Festival in Brussels titled: "Meeting between actors from Southeast Europe & Brussels in Economic, Cultural & Tourism Ecosystems."

The discussion brought together personalities and experts from institutions in the region and the city of Brussels, as well as institutions from countries in Southeast Europe. It aimed to strengthen ties between Brussels and the Balkans by sharing visions and experiences in the economic, cultural, and tourism sectors.



9. WB6 CIF meetings with US officials



On 22 May 2024 in Washington, D.C., WB6 CIF representatives, led by Chairman Mr. Lulzim Rafuna, held a significant meeting with Congressman Mr. Robert Aderholt. During the meeting, Congressman Aderholt was informed about the important work of WB6 CIF and expressed his willingness to support WB6 CIF's efforts.

During their stay in Washington, the representatives of the Chambers of Commerce of the WB6 also participated in a panel discussion on "Regional Cooperation: Overcoming Barriers and Improving Trade" during the Southeast Europe Transatlantic Economic Forum, followed by the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding to strengthen transatlantic

tourism cooperation between the Western Balkans and the United States.

10. WB6 CIF Participation in the EESC High Level Conference on the Western Balkans

On 24 May 2024, WB6 CIF project manager Mrs. Marija Asković Matic, represented the Western Balkans 6 Chamber Investment Forum at the "Civil Society High-Level Conference: Continuing the

success story of the EU Enlargement – Bringing benefits to the Western Balkans in advance of accession” held in Ljubljana, Slovenia.

Celebrating two decades since the EU’s significant enlargement and Slovenia’s accession, this conference gathered key stakeholders to discuss progress and future steps. The conference also provided an opportunity to follow up on the European Economic and Social Committee’s (EESC)

opinion New Growth Plan and Reform and Growth Facility for the Western Balkans, adopted by the EESC plenary in April 2024.

“The Reform and Growth Facility significantly increases financial assistance based on ambitious reform agendas. Recognizing the importance of the reform agendas in this process we believe that involvement of the business sector and all CSOs is the key element for ensuring full benefits of the Growth Plan and the Facility.” was stated by Mrs. Marija Askovic Matic during the panel discussion themed: “Accelerating the socio-economic convergence of the region with the EU.”



11.WB6 CIF participation at the 29th Athens Electricity Forum



On 5-6 June 2024, WB6 CIF brought out the Industry Perspective at the 29th Athens Electricity Forum, with the participation of WB6 CIF Secretary General Mrs. Tatjana Shterjova Dushkovska in Panel II on the first day of the forum, titled “Mastering the

Transition – All Hands on Deck”. The discussion in the panel focused on pivotal decisions about

carbon pricing systems, which are essential for integrating the electricity market under the CBAM, and for transforming the power sector.

The key insights that our Secretary General Mrs. Tatjana Shterjova Dushkovska addressed during the discussion were that the Western Balkans have committed to the Green Agenda, aligning with the EU Green Deal to reduce carbon emissions and develop carbon pricing systems, a critical step in mitigating the risk of de-industrialization, and with the CBAM now in effect, the transition sets a firm timeline for compliance by 2026. This timeline is crucial for industries under the first transitional phase, emphasizing the need for readiness in carbon management. Transitioning involves significant investments and could notably affect the competitiveness of industries not yet proactive about decarbonization, especially as full CBAM implementation approaches. Mrs. Tatjana Shterjova Dushkovska emphasized the importance of awareness and proactive management of carbon footprint by industry as the region faces profound transformations in its energy and production sectors.

12.WB6 CIF participation at the 7th edition of the MEF Energy Forum 2024

On 11 June 2024 WB6 CIF Secretary General Mrs. Tatjana Shterjova Dushkovska discussed green jobs during her participation in the 7th edition of the MEF Energy Forum 2024 in Skopje, North Macedonia.

The discussion focused on the complexities and opportunities of the energy transition, addressing job redundancy challenges while highlighting the increasing demand for qualified personnel in renewable energy and energy efficiency roles. This was a key focus during the panel discussion themed “Reskilling and Upskilling for a Repowered World: Green Jobs Challenges and Opportunities.”



"As the process of green transition entails reshaping growth strategies, investment plans, and labor markets in all WB6 economies," said our Secretary General Mrs. Tatjana Shterjova Dushkovska, and further highlighted: Key regional documents highlight the critical role of

human capital development in transforming our economies. This focus is integral to national reform agendas under the Growth Plan for the Western Balkans but also as one of the key building blocks envisioned in the new Action Plan for the Common Regional Market.

The Green Agenda for the Western Balkans sets clear targets and strict time frames, requiring skilled personnel with a focus on green skills.

The urgent need for green skills often requires the private sector to lead in upskilling and reskilling, as formal education adapts slowly to market changes. Collaboration between companies and educational institutions is crucial, with chambers bridging the gap between academia and industry. The Regional Challenge Fund, an initiative that WB6 CIF is implementing with the support of the German and Swiss governments, exemplifies this approach.

13. Annual conference of the Regional Challenge Fund



The Annual Regional Conference of the Regional Challenge Fund (RCF) was held on 12 June 2024 in Tirana under the title “Realizing Opportunities: Building Human Capital in the Western Balkans 6 for Integration into the EU Single Market”. The event provided a platform for regional dialogue and the exchange of best practices among key stakeholders in vocational education and training (VET).

The central theme was the critical aspect of human capital development within the context of the European Union integration of the Western Balkans, a momentum further strengthened by the EU Growth Plan.

Ines Mucostepa, member of the Wb6 CIF Managing Board underlined the importance of human capital development in the Western Balkans and the need for joint investments to address challenges in the field of employment and the green economy. “The development of human capital has been one of the main development challenges for each of the economies in the Western Balkans, and it still is today, but only with investments and improvement of the education and vocational training (VET) system can we all contribute together to reducing the development gap in our economies,” stated Mrs. Ines Muçostepa.



In the conference, Tatjana Shterjova Dushkovska, WB6 CIF Secretary General delivered a keynote speech focused on: Fostering Western Balkans 6 Economic Growth through Human Capital Development, stating that the national reform agendas and the New Action Plan on the Common Regional Market prioritize human capital development, emphasizing the effective recognition of skills and qualifications and fostering academia-industry collaboration. The Regional Challenge Fund serves as a model for transforming education systems and building quality staff in the region through partnerships and synergies.

Representatives of Chambers of Commerce of WB6 participated in insightful panel sessions and discussions during the Annual Regional Conference of the Regional Challenge Fund.

14. Meeting with the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs



On 28 June 2024 in The Hague, Netherlands, the delegation of WB6 CIF, led by Mr. Lulzim Rafuna, WB6 CIF Chairman had a meeting with the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to discuss regional economic cooperation. In the productive meeting, held with Mr. Gert Kampman, Head of Central and South East Europe, Europe Department, Central & South East

Europe Division and Mr. Marc (Curiijn) Hasselaar, Head of Unit for European Markets, Directorate-General for Foreign Economic Relations, International Enterprise Department at the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, key areas of interest in cooperation were highlighted, including high tech, smart management, and agriculture.

15.WB6 CIF Involvement in the Parliamentary dimension of the Berlin process



WB6 CIF Secretary General Ms. Tatjana Shterjova Dushkovska on 9 October 2024 in Berlin, Germany, participated in the conference “Parliamentary Dimension of the Berlin Process,” hosted by Institute for Democracy 'Societas Civilis' Skopje and supported by the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), this event brought together Members of the Parliaments (MPs) and parliamentary staff of the WB6 countries and the

German Bundestag, along with partner organizations and think tanks organisations working on the Berlin Process.

Ms. Tatjana Shterjova Dushkovska, delivered the introductory remarks for the session: “Green Agenda – implementation of the action plan based on the monitoring reports with focus on decarbonisation.” During her address, Ms. Tatjana Shterjova Dushkovska noted that the start of the CBAM transitional phase has been a reality check for some of the companies, but for now, only a small portion of the region’s businesses.



The recent survey within the study on nearshoring and decarbonization, published last month by WB6 CIF in cooperation with the Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies (wiiw) indicates a positive outlook among companies. While they are aware of the challenges presented by decarbonization, they also recognize the opportunities it offers, positioning this transition as a potential vehicle for technological transformation. Investing in new technologies is crucial for enhancing global competitiveness, as sustainability is viewed as a source of added value. However, the primary challenge is that most businesses struggle to manage this transformation on their own.

There is a pressing need for technical support to build capacity and provide guidance for companies at all stages. A comprehensive ecosystem should be established, with chambers of commerce as the focal point, to pool resources and ensure sufficient skilled manpower for driving the green transformation, emphasized Ms. Tatjana Shterjova Dushkovska.

16. Berlin process Civil Society Forum

Ms. Tatjana Shterjova Dushkovska, Wb6 CIF Secretary General, contributed to the panel discussion titled "Common Regional Market and Mobility" at the Civil Society & Think Tank Forum 2024 in Berlin. The forum was held within the framework of the Berlin Process, organized by the Southeast Europe Association e.V. (SOG) and the Aspen Institute Germany, with support from the Federal Foreign Office (Auswärtiges Amt), Germany.



WB6 CIF Secretary General emphasized the importance of continuing collaboration in the ongoing development of the Common Regional Market as a stepping stone towards integration into the EU Single Market.

“We should recognize that the EU Single Market is not a closed structure, but one that has been evolving for more than three decades, and more importantly, it continues to adapt to new circumstances. The same applies to the Common Regional Market, which is also developing. Progress cannot be seen as a final milestone, as it remains open to further growth and integration.”

Ms. Tatjana Shterjova Dushkovska noted that the current action plan for establishing the Common Regional Market in the Western Balkans has shown resilience, having withstood challenges such as the global pandemic, energy crisis, and the situation in Ukraine. Despite these obstacles, regional cooperation has continued, with progress in implementing the four freedoms for businesses and citizens within the region.

While improvements are still needed, Ms. Tatjana Shterjova Dushkovska highlighted that the basic notion is the need to sustain the will to continue working together and cooperating to achieve our common goals. This is essential for better linking our region to the EU Single Market, as the new action plan is moving in that direction, focusing on what needs to be done within the region to ease the connection to the single market, especially in light of the EU Growth Plan.

Our Secretary General stressed out the need for increased support for exporting companies, particularly with the upcoming adoption of the new action plan and especially in light of the new growth plan. As access to different areas of the single market opens up, it is essential to focus on building the capacities of these companies so they can effectively compete with market forces. WB6 CIF, through the holistic approach developed by the Regional supplier development program has supported more than 7000 companies throughout the region, and 1200 new companies have started engaging in regional trade.

17.EU-WESTERN BAKLANS SUMMIT 2024: “A RENEWED APPROACH TO THE WESTERN BALKANS”

The EU-Western Balkans Summit 2024, organized by Friends of Europe, on 5.12.2024 in Brussels, was organized with the aim to redefine the dialogue on EU enlargement by addressing the accession process of the Western Balkans through an inclusive and innovative approach. The economic future of the Western Balkans cannot be envisioned without considering the private sector's role, both within and outside the region. Understanding how businesses perceive economic trends, growth prospects, and the capacity for local versus external investment is crucial. These insights will help shape the direction of development initiatives and influence the region's integration into the European and global economy.

WB6 CIF Secretary General Tatjana Shterjova Dushkovska participated in the second panel discussion of the summit, focusing on the topic of unlocking economic potential: growth and integration through EU accession. Ms.Shterjova Dushkovska stated that the biggest challenge we are facing is the lack of implementation, and that is the biggest hurdle the Western Balkans have to overcome if they want to grow. Despite the fact that the issue has been on the spotlight in the last decade, companies are still facing many challenges when trying to work regionally. All these challenges lead to companies from the region more easily deciding to cooperate with partners more than 3,000 kilometers away than with companies from a neighboring country, from which they are less than 300 kilometers away. That is the reason why the EU remains the dominant export

market for the Western Balkans (more than 65% of the total exports), with most economies in the region exporting to the EU five times more than to CEFTA countries.

With the Growth Plan and the New Common Regional Market Action plan, the bottlenecks are detected, the needs of the businesses have been identified, detailed time framed agendas on moving forward have been set out – so, we get back to the beginning of my address, we need



implementation of all that, and for that, we need strong will but also mutual trust and confidence by all 6 WB economies. The new Action Plan itself calls upon the goal to add 10% to the WB economies, but this goal can even be outmatched, only if there

is willingness and commitment to implementation, stated Ms.Shterjova Dushkovska.

IV. Tailor-made support for WB6 companies

1. RCF Grant Award ceremonies

In April, WB6 CIF's Regional Challenge Fund (RCF) organized the Third National Grant Award ceremonies in each of the 6 Western Balkan countries. **The German- and Swiss-funded Regional Challenge Fund (RCF)** enhances the sustainable competitiveness of businesses in the Western Balkan 6 on the way to the EU single market by financing VET providers and addressing skill needs in cooperation with companies.

Serbia

- On 9 April, 11 new skill-building projects from all over Serbia received award letters in a ceremony hosted by the Regional Challenge Fund in Belgrade. The Selection Committee selected the eleven most successful projects to finance in Serbia with close to EUR 4.7 million. These funds directed toward the relevant economic sectors in Serbia that encourage education-industry partnerships and sustainable economic growth have been awarded to eleven vocational education and training providers in Serbia.



Albania

- On 16 April, RCF organised the Third National Grant Award Ceremony in Albania to share the results of the Third Call and to award the grants to winning consortia. The third round of applications attracted a total of 155 Expressions of Interest across the



Western Balkan 6. Ten successful projects from Albania were proposed for finance, allocating approximately EUR 5.4 million for investments in equipment, infrastructure and training at vocational training institutes implementing cooperative training.

Montenegro

- On 18 April, three new skills-building projects from Montenegro received investment commitment letters in a ceremony hosted by the Regional Challenge Fund in Podgorica. The Selection Committee selected the three most successful projects to finance in the country with close to EUR 1.62 million. The funds will be used to improve the infrastructure of five educational institutions and deliver training to the participants in the cooperative education program.



Bosnia and Herzegovina

- On 23 April, five new skill-building projects from Bosnia and Herzegovina received investment commitment letters in a ceremony hosted by the Regional Challenge Fund in Sarajevo. Earlier, the Selection Committee selected the five most successful projects to finance in the country with EUR 1.8 million. The funds will be used to improve the infrastructure of six educational institutions and deliver training to the participants in the cooperative education program.



Kosovo

- On 24 April, five new skill-building projects from Kosovo received investment commitment letters in a ceremony hosted by the Regional Challenge Fund in Prishtina. The five most successful projects from Kosovo are being proposed for finance in



the Third Call of the Regional Challenge Fund (RCF), allocating approximately EUR 2.2 million for investments in equipment, infrastructure and training at the vocational training institutes implementing cooperative training.

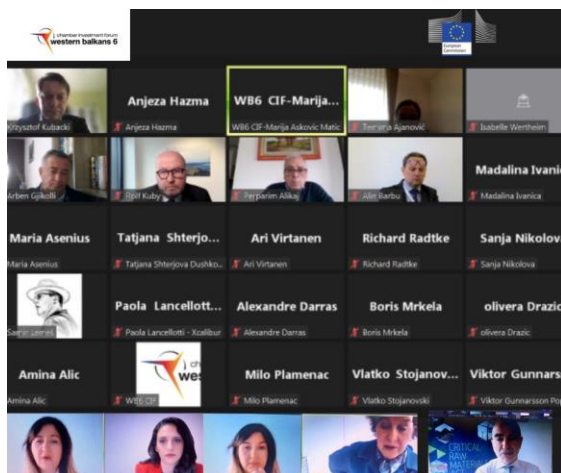
North Macedonia

- On 25 April, two new skill-building projects from North Macedonia received investment commitment letters today in a ceremony hosted by the Regional Challenge Fund in Skopje. The third round of applications organised last year attracted 25 Expressions of Interest from North Macedonia. The Selection Committee selected the two most successful projects to finance in the country with close to EUR 952,000. The funds will be used to improve the infrastructure of two educational institutions and deliver training to the participants in the cooperative education program.



2. Workshop on Critical Raw Materials Potential in the Western Balkans Region

On 24 April, the Western Balkans 6 Chamber Investment Forum (WB6 CIF), in collaboration with EU's DG for Neighborhood and Enlargement Negotiations and EU Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship & SMEs, hosted a groundbreaking online event, drawing over 150 participants and featuring four panel discussions.



The event delved into various topics, including the European Critical Raw Materials Act and its pillars. The CRMA aims to enhance the EU's domestic extraction, processing, refining, and recycling of critical raw materials, while ensuring diversification of supplies from third countries. It sets forth benchmarks, limiting the reliance on a single country for more than 65% of the EU's annual consumption of each strategic raw material.

Discussions also explored the potential of the Western Balkans region for Critical Raw Materials.

The EU seeks to identify and support projects in the region that contribute to diversifying European

supplies. Concrete investment opportunities in third countries, including the Western Balkans, were identified, where the EU can collaborate as Team Europe alongside Member States to improve the enabling environment and facilitate activities.

Insights were shared on concrete projects from the Western Balkans, along with discussions on financial frameworks supporting environmentally and socially responsible CRM projects. The discussions underscored a strong commitment to funding CRM projects meeting strict ESG standards, emphasizing the strategic importance of investing in the critical raw materials value chain for partner countries, including the Western Balkans region.

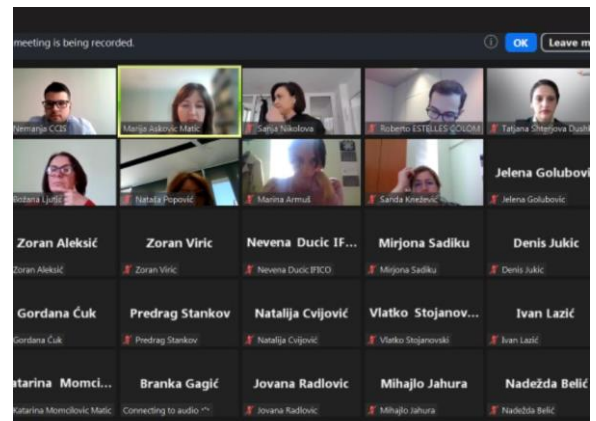
3. Online Event WBIF Private Sector Funding Presentation to Chambers of Commerce of Western Balkans

On 25 April, in partnership with EU's DG for Neighborhood and Enlargement Negotiations and WBIF (Western Balkans Investment Framework), the WB6 CIF convened a highly successful online session tailored for the chambers of commerce in the Western Balkans.

The aim of the session was to bolster the support services provided by WB6 CIF and chambers of commerce by offering precise information and guidance on accessing available EU funds for SMEs:

- We explored a range of WBIF Private Sector Development tools.
- We provided practical insights into accessing and utilizing EU funds, with a focus on the implementation of current WBIF programs.
- Strategies for enhancing the visibility of EU programs and effectively leveraging these opportunities to expand market reach were discussed.

This event was organized under the project "EU Support to the Western Balkans 6 Chamber Investment Forum for the Development of the Common Regional Market," underscoring our unwavering commitment to supporting SMEs in accessing EU funds and fostering sustainable growth across the region.



4. EU – WB6 CHAMBRES`ACADEMY “Development of Services Supporting Integration of Local SMEs into the EU Single Market”

29-30 May 2024, Thessaloniki, Greece – The EU – WB6 CHAMBRES`ACADEMY “Development of Services Supporting Integration of Local SMEs into the EU Single Market” was organized by the WB6 CIF with the support of the European Commission and in cooperation with Eurochambres, with the specific focus on European accession perspective and topics of interest for regional cooperation. The event welcomed 40 speakers and guests from the Chambers of Commerce of Europe and the Western Balkans.

Chambers of Commerce in the Western Balkans constantly follow market changes to improve the skills of their employees and provide the best support to local businesses, and in this framework, the Academy was organized in order to meet the needs of their members. The academy facilitated the exchange of best practices developed by Chambers of Commerce from both the EU and the Western Balkans. Participants shared these practices and networked with colleagues, reinforcing the role of chambers as vital supporters of local businesses.



During the opening remarks, Mrs. Tatjana Shterjova Dushkovska, Secretary General of WB6 CIF, noted: “During these two days, we will have a lot of exchanges and presentations by chamber representatives from the Western Balkans region, but also on EU level, which will give us insights on the current status of play, all the activities each of the chambers has when it comes to setting up different services related to supporting the integration into European supply chains for our local companies. But also, I am hoping that the discussions that will follow will provide opportunities for also building up the existing and developing new types of services and activities”

Mrs. Juliette Loppe, Senior Policy Advisor for Neighborhood and Enlargement highlighted during her opening remarks: “Eurochambres highly values cooperation and exchange of knowledge between chambers in the EU and chambers in the WB6 with a view to gradually integrate SMEs from the region into the EU single market and implement the New Growth Plan.”



At the EU – WB6 CHAMBERS’ ACADEMY, speakers from the Chambers of Commerce from the EU and Western Balkans shared and discussed their best practices in several key areas. These areas included the Green Economy, Carbon Footprint and Accounting, and Corporate Sustainability, highlighting the focus on environmental responsibility. Additionally, the discussions addressed the advancement of E-Services and Digital Transformation, as well as Intellectual Property and standardization processes. Data on the speaker and the presented topic is available on the following link: [WB6 CHAMBERS ACADEMY Development of Services Supporting Integration of Local SMEs into the EU Single Market- WB6 CIF](#)

5. Balkans Business Days 2024

28 June 2024, the Hague, Netherlands – WB6 CIF Chairman Mr. Lulzim Rafuna participated in the Western Balkans Business Day 2024. This pivotal event, focusing on highlighting business opportunities in the Western Balkans, was organized by the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, with participation from the Dutch embassy networks in the Balkan countries. The Western Balkans Business Day gathered key stakeholders, business leaders, and Dutch entrepreneurs to explore the potential of emerging markets in WB6 Economies.

Key areas of focus during the event included flood risk and wastewater management, the agro-industry, and EU integration.



In his discussion at the Plenary session, Mr. Lulzim Rafuna, the Chairman of WB6 CIF highlighted the importance of this event, noting that it provides a good platform to discuss and promote the economic potential and opportunities within the Western Balkans region. “Every country in our region is unique, with different perspectives, cultures, and stages of economic development. However, we strive to promote our region collectively, recognizing that our strength lies in unity. By highlighting our individual strengths while working together, we can create a more compelling and attractive proposition for investors and businesses.”

stated Mr. Rafuna.

During the presentation of the WB6 CIF and doing business in the WB6 region, Mr. Lulzim Rafuna also emphasized that the WB6CIF acts as a unified voice for the business community in the Western Balkans. We work tirelessly to identify and address common challenges, advocate for improved policies, and facilitate networking and partnership opportunities. Our goal is to ensure that the Western Balkans is recognized as a region of stability, economic vitality, and potential. The WB6 CIF has organized numerous trade missions, business forums, and investment conferences, bringing together stakeholders from across the region and beyond. These efforts have resulted in increased foreign direct investment, the creation of new business ventures, and the strengthening of existing economic ties. Furthermore, the WB6CIF will play a pivotal role in the Growth Plan for the Western Balkans. To support this Growth Plan, various thematic groups have been established, each dedicated to different sectors and aspects of economic development.



6. RCF Technical Advisory Committee Workshop

13 June 2024, Tirana, Albania - RCF Technical Advisory Committee Workshop was held in Tirana, with the view to gather insights and perspectives from key stakeholders in Vocational Education and Training (VET). The focus was on shaping the funding policy of the Regional Challenge Fund for the upcoming open calls, with a spotlight on supporting projects that promote green and digital transition, gender equality in VET, and regional cooperation among VET providers.

The session brought together a diverse group of VET stakeholders, including VET policy experts, decision-makers, project managers, and donor representatives from the Western Balkan 6 region. It provided an opportunity for regional exchange and sharing of experiences and lessons learned in developing national VET frameworks.



Specific recommendations regarding promoting green and digital transition in vocational training, emerged from the discussions, including the importance of training trainers, fostering partnerships for knowledge transfer from the private sector, and involving licensed private providers in training programs. For advancing gender equality and social inclusion in VET, suggestions encompassed modularizing the VET system, integrating the private sector in curriculum development, and recognizing Prior Learning to enhance the VET system's inclusivity. Lastly, to align national VET policies with regional and EU strategies for human capital development, the session highlighted the significance of collaborative regional projects, leveraging EU funding opportunities, organizing study visits, and fostering networking among VET policymakers and providers in the region.

7. Registration of the WB6 CIF Collective trade mark

In the process for registering a collective trade mark, which will be used for promotion of products/services from Western Balkan economies (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia,

Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia), and will be registered in the EU and all 6 Western Balkan economies, the WB6 CIF has launched an open call for the Name and design of the Collective Trademark. The contest was open to young individuals up to the age of 35 who are either nationals of or reside in one of the Western Balkan economies. Following the closing date of the open call, a selection committee has voted on selecting the best solution, and has chosen the following:



The procedure proceeded with submitting registration applications for the collective trademark before EUIPO and the national WB6 IP offices.

8. Presentation of the study “Transforming the Western Balkans through Nearshoring and Decarbonisation”

12 September 2024, Budva- The conference “Nearshoring through Decarbonisation in the Western Balkans: Private sector views on challenges and opportunities” was held, presenting the findings of our regional economic study Transforming the Western Balkans through Near-shoring and



Decarbonisation conducted within the framework of the Chamber Partnership Project by the Western Balkans Six Chamber Investment Forum (WB6 CIF) and the six national chambers of commerce in the Western Balkans, in cooperation with The Vienna Institute

for International Economic Studies (wiiw).

Through two panels, the conference offered presentation of the study results, focusing on the issue whether nearshoring occurred in the Western Balkans post-pandemic, how this trend can be aligned with ongoing decarbonisation efforts and whether these trends can boost cooperation between foreign investors and local suppliers, and can decarbonization efforts incite nearshoring in the region. In addition, during the conference, the first CBAM Guideline for companies was launched, helping companies understand what the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) is, whether they are affected and how to comply.

The key recommendations from the study are as follows:

For Investors

1. Collaborate with local suppliers that are advancing decarbonisation to meet sustainability goals.
2. Increase investments in decarbonising firms in the Western Balkans to optimize supply chains and leverage skilled labor.
3. Share technical expertise to help local companies meet global production standards and enhance mutual decarbonisation efforts.

For Suppliers in the Western Balkans

1. Invest in green technologies to reduce emissions and become more attractive to foreign investors.
2. Obtain necessary certifications to meet international standards and integrate into global supply chains.
3. Seek financial and technical support to decarbonise and improve competitiveness.

For Decision-Makers

1. Provide financial incentives and technical support to help local companies decarbonise and meet international standards.
2. Enhance governance, institutions, and infrastructure to attract more investment.
3. Invest in renewable energy to align with global sustainability trends and attract FDI.

9. B2B Meetings during the Business Forum: “10 years Berlin Process - The Western Balkans as an economic area on the way to the EU”



Berlin, Germany, 24 September 2024 - 24.A delegation of 25 SMEs from the WB6 economies, in the sectors of infrastructure, agriculture, and automotive including metal, plastic, and textile participated in the Business Forum: “10 years Berlin Process – The Western Balkans as an economic area on the way to the EU” and in B2B meetings, held as a side session within the framework of the Business

Forum, in Berlin on September 24th, 2024.

The focus of the Business Forum, organized by the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action with the support of the German Eastern Business Association (OA), the German Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DIHK), and the Western Balkans 6 Chamber Investment Forum (WB6 CIF), was the Common Regional Market- 10 years Berlin Process and the Energy and Climate Protection, focusing on the green transformation as an opportunity for the Western Balkans.

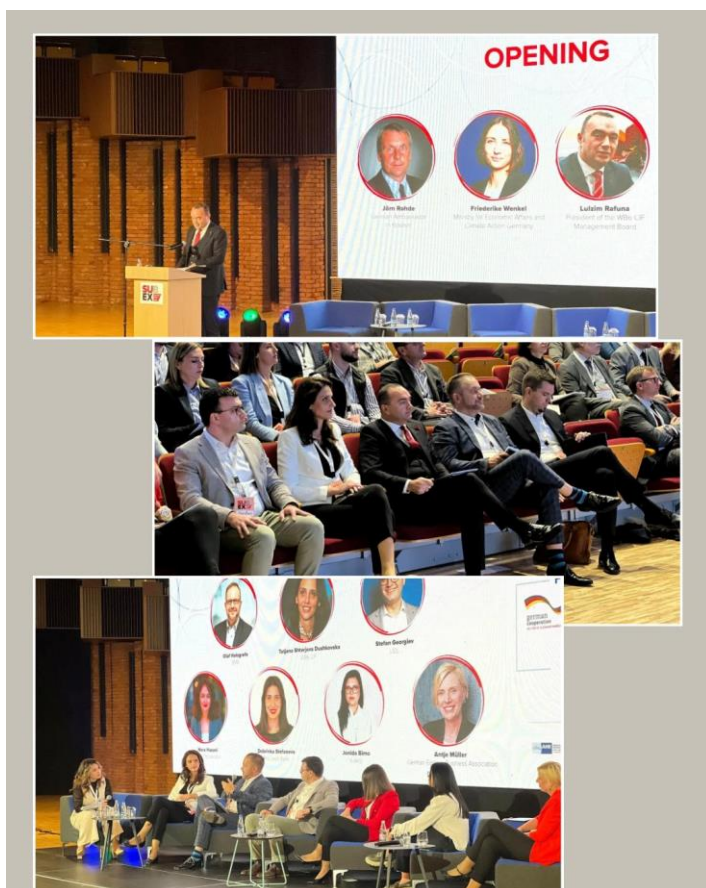
Building robust partnerships, exploring new market potentials, and exchanging expertise across the mentioned sectors, while providing an ideal platform to find business partners, present investment opportunities, and establish joint supply chains, were the goals of the B2B meetings for the participating companies, with the view of presenting opportunities and benefits of investing in the region and to find partners for establishing joint supply chains.

A total of 24 SMEs were part of the delegation, from the sectors of infrastructure, agriculture, and automotive, including metal, plastic, and textile, and had the opportunity to participate in the

networking event, where companies and investors had the chance to connect and explore the potential of the region.

For more details on the SMEs that were part of the WB6 CIF delegation, explore the [E-catalogue](#), and the links from the event – [Link1](#), [Link 2](#).

10.WB6 CIF participation in SUBEX - Suppliers Balkan Expo 2024



On 1 October 2024 in Prishtina, Mr. Lulzim Rafuna, WB6 CIF Chairman and Ms. Tatjana Shterjova Dushkovska, Secretary General of WB6 CIF, participated in SUBEX - Suppliers Balkan Expo 2024 at the conference "Relevant Aspects for the Western Balkans as a Procurement Market", an annual central Conference + Workshops, B2B, and Expo event, organized by AHK North Macedonia in cooperation with KDWW Kosovo and DIHA Albania, for foreign and domestic buyers with regional suppliers, for companies from the EU and Southeast Europe.

During his opening address at the conference, Mr. Lulzim Rafuna, Chairman of the WB6 CIF Managing Board emphasized the necessity of regional cooperation to enhance competitiveness and create new opportunities for

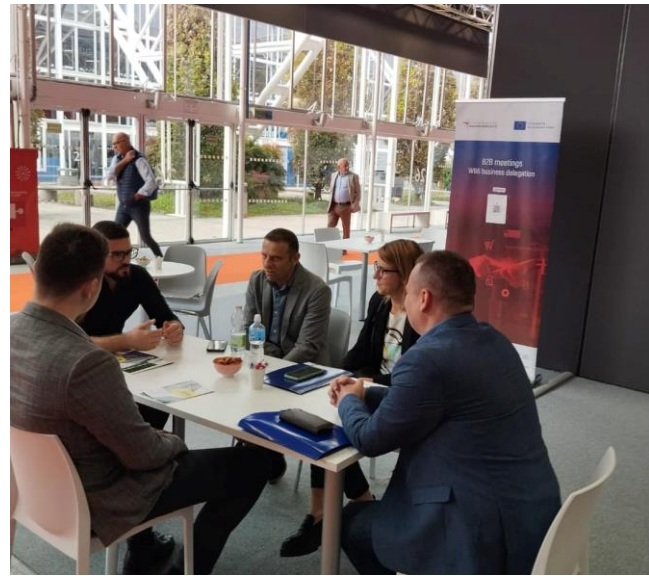
integrating regional businesses into global markets.

WB6 CIF Secretary General Ms. Tatjana Shterjova Dushkovska joined the panel - Relevant Aspects for the Western Balkans as a Procurement Market. Ms.Shterjova Dushkovska in her address focused on role which the #EU plays in facilitating the Western Balkans as a supplier market, and the opportunities emerging for our local companies with the New Growth Plan for the Western Balkans, granting them direct access into the EU Single Market in selected areas.

"This is enormous potential for growth of our companies, but they have to be well prepared in order to fully tap the opportunities that are arising. We at the WB6 CIF have been actively working

in increasing the capacities of our local companies through the Regional Supplier Development program, from which more than 6500 companies have benefited until now, and will continue to be providing support to companies in joining local and regional supply chains.”Ms.Shterjova Dushkovska also focused on the decarbonization efforts of the region, focusing on the findings of the recently published study “Transforming the Western Balkans through Near-shoring and Decarbonisation”, and pinpointing the question how to turn these challenges that companies face in the process of green transformation into opportunities and potentials for them.

11. Joint Presentation of Western Balkans 6 SMEs in the Construction and Plant Engineering Sectors at SAIE 2024



Bologna, Italy – October 9-12, 2024 – The joint presentation of SMEs from the construction and plant engineering sectors from the Western Balkans 6 participated in SAIE 2024: The Building Fair. Design, construction, plant engineering. This joint presentation, also part of the WB6 CIF Regional Supplier Development Program, which aims to ensure participation of SMEs in the regional and multinational supply chains and establishing new regional partnerships between WB6 companies, served as a valuable tool for supporting the development of SMEs and helping them establish a presence in broader international markets. The SAIE fair in Bologna is a prime platform for showcasing innovation, seismic safety, sustainability, and digital transformation within the

construction supply chain, offering an occasion to discover the excellence of the entire building supply chain.

During this 4-day fair, a large number of visitors visited the WB6 CIF stand. The participating SMEs, under the WB6 CIF umbrella, had the opportunity to attend B2B meetings, which were held daily, aiming to forge partnerships with potential European and Italian collaborators, fostering opportunities to develop joint supply chains and expand into new markets. The Chairman of the Managing Board of the Western Balkans 6 Chamber Investment Forum (WB6 CIF), Mr. Lulzim



Rafuna, visited the event and engaged with the participating SMEs.

The participating SMEs gained valuable opportunities during the fair, establishing important new contacts and showcasing their products on an international stage. It was a significant success, opening doors to international market opportunities. The experience opened new horizons for international cooperation and provided a valuable opportunity for further expanding their market abroad and driving overall business growth.

For more details on the SMEs that were part of the WB6 CIF delegation, explore the [E-catalogue](#).

12. Signal

The “Signal” section on the WB6 CIF website is regularly updated with new information. It includes the latest regulations published by the European Commission that are relevant for WB6 companies.

13. Regional Center for Economic Analysis

The Regional center for economic analysis (RCEA) started functioning as interactive platform for the employees from WB6 CIF founding chambers from the analytical departments, providing the establishment of database for the preparation of automated market reports for the needs of chambers in the region and WB6 CIF.

Results of the RCEA in the previous period are the following:

- ✓ Joint WB6 CIF database with relevant data that are available for all chambers
- ✓ WB6 CIF Survey platform for data gathering and regional surveys
- ✓ Joint RCEA Internal Exchange Folder within the WB6 CIF IEP platform
- ✓ Training for all chambers' analytical staff on how to use available data

All chambers now have direct access to the:

- WIIW database of economic indicators (The Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies)
- Dun&Bradstreet Hoovers package, Boniteti International and Portfolio Intelligence – Linkages module (including data about the economic activities of all companies)

All these databases, tools and platforms are used in order to prepare sectorial reports, tailor-made national reports, foreign investors, etc.

14. WB6 CIF Newsletter

Regularly WB6 CIF newsletters have been prepared throughout 2024, and sent to more than **12.000 addresses**.

V. Organizational activities of the WB6 CIF

1. Meetings of the WB6 CIF Managing Board

29th Meeting of the WB6 CIF Managing Board

On 15 March, the members of WB6 CIF Management Board held a session in Sarajevo, discussing amongst other topics, on the Annual Report for the activities of the Western Balkans 6 Chamber Investment Forum in 2023 and the WB6 CIF involvement in the preparation of the new Common Regional Market 2.0.

30th Meeting of the WB6 CIF Managing Board

On 15 May, the members of WB6 CIF Management Board held a session in Kotor, Montenegro, discussing amongst other topics, organizational issues of the association and the organization of several events organized within the framework of the Regional Supplier Development Programme.



31st Meeting of the WB6 CIF Managing Board

On 23 September in Berlin, Germany, the WB6 CIF Managing Board held its meeting, where the implementation of the current project „EU support to WB6 CIF for the Development of a Common Regional Market 2024/454-229“ and preparation of the new project were discussed, as well as the involvement of the WB6 CIF in the preparation of the new Common Regional Market Action plan 2025-2028.

32nd Meeting of the WB6 CIF Managing Board

On 15 November 2024, online, the WB6 CIF Managing Board held its meeting, discussing amendments related to the Regional Challenge Fund.

33rd Meeting of the WB6 CIF Managing Board



On 17 December 2024 in Skopje, North Macedonia, the WB6 CIF Managing Board held its meeting, where the Annual Plan for 2025 and thematic initiatives supporting the needs of regional companies were discussed.

2. Other meetings

2.1. Project Management Team meeting in Sarajevo



On 13 and 14 March, the members of the Project Management Team under the EU funded project “EU Support to the Western Balkans 6 Chamber Investment Forum for the Development of the

Common Regional Market” met in Sarajevo for an official kick-off meeting of the project. The Project Team members, jointly with the participation of DG Near representatives discussed and exchanged on the intervention logic, and planned activities per working packages, and jointly agreed on concept proposals and concrete elements for the implementation of particular actions.

2.2. Meeting with the Chamber of Commerce Industry Crafts Agriculture Venezia Giulia



On 10 October 20204, Mr. Lulzim Rafuna, Wb6 CIF Chairman, held a productive meeting with Mr. Antonio Paoletti, President of the Chamber of Commerce Industry Crafts Agriculture Venezia Giulia, at the premises of the Venezia Giulia Chamber of Commerce. They discussed perspectives for cooperation in areas of mutual interest and agreed to continue cooperating.

2.3. Working meeting with Eurochambres and Albanian institutions



To discuss the role of Chambers of Commerce in fostering regional cooperation and their collaboration with European Chambers through Eurochambres, with a particular focus on the importance of connecting and expanding Albanian and Regional businesses within the #European market, Western Balkans 6 Chamber Investment Forum (WB6 CIF) participated in a meeting held on 24 October 2024 in Tirana.

The meeting was attended by Mr. Lulzim Rafuna, Chairman of the WB6 CIF Managing Board; Ms. Ines Muçostepa, President of the Bashkimi i Dhomave të Tregtisë dhe Industrisë të Shqipërisë and Member of the WB6 CIF Managing Board; Ms. Delina Ibrahimaj, Minister of State for Entrepreneurship and Business Climate of the Republic of Albania; Mr. Eduart Shalsi, Chairman of the Economy & Finance Committee, Parliament of the Republic of Albania ; Mr. Vladimír Dlouhý, President of Eurochambres; and Mr. Ben Butters, Chief Executive Officer of Eurochambres.

3. Institutional cooperation

3.1. Signing the new project contract with the EU

On 13 March, the WB6 CIF Chairman Lulzim Rafuna signed the Contract for the implementation of the new project “EU Support to the Western Balkans 6 Chamber Investment Forum for the Development of the Common Regional Market”, supporting enhancing competitiveness of WB6 companies in the next 12 months. Jointly with the six member chambers of commerce and with the support of the European Commission, the Western Balkans 6 Chamber Investment Forum continues with efforts for the development of the Common Regional Market.



3.2. Signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with Sustineri Partners

During the ESG Adria Summit 2024, on 24 April 2024, the WB6 CIF signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Sustineri partners, with the view to promote ESG standards compliance, sustainability, and responsible business practices in the Western Balkans region.

Key focus areas of the MoU include providing resources, expert insights, and research to enhance collaborative projects; joint collaboration on educational projects focused on improving understanding of ESG integration and reporting methodologies; and organizing joint events to raise awareness and foster comprehension of ESG principles among businesses, investors, and stakeholders in the Western Balkans region. This partnership underscores the WB6 CIF’s commitment to advancing sustainability and responsible business practices, contributing to the region’s development.



3.3. Signing of Memorandum of Understanding with CEFTA Secretariat



On 27 April 2024 in Brussels, the WB6 CIF signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the CEFTA Secretariat, with the aim of enhancing cooperation with the businesses and strengthening their role in the regional economic integration. This agreement sets a foundation for strengthened cooperation and information sharing that will foster the creation of a Regional Common Market under the auspices of the Berlin Process.

Key elements of this cooperation include strengthening public-private dialogue, promoting trade facilitation, supporting digitalization, and organizing joint events to increase the visibility of reform processes that promote a unified market and investment destination in the Western Balkans.

3.4. Memorandum of Understanding signed with the Saudi South East Europe Business Council (SSEE)



Mr. Lulzim Rafuna, Chairman of the Managing Board of the Western Balkans 6 Chamber Investment Forum (WB6 CIF), and Mr. Dr. Abdulrahman Ahmed Almufarreh, Chairman of the Saudi South East Europe Business Council (SSEE), signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), during the International Fair “Pristina 2024,” organized by the Kosovo Chamber of Commerce.

In the framework of this MoU, a Joint Business Council (JBC) will be set up in order to enhance continuous interaction, trade, and economic cooperation between the Western Balkans 6 and Saudi Arabia. The purpose of this Joint Business Council will be to provide assistance to Saudi and Western Balkans 6 Chamber Investment Forum (WB6 CIF) businesses and to maintain regular and effective communication on bilateral commercial relations with a view to stimulating two-way trade and investment flows.

Annex 1:

List of the organized meeting of the WB6 CIF Thematic Groups

THEMATIC GROUP	Chamber	Coordinator	Organized meetings
TG 1 on Trade in Goods and Services	FTC B&H	Belma Alihodžić	Date - 7.3.'24 online Date- 18.7.'24 online Date – 23.12.'24 online
TG 2 on Tourism	FTC B&H	Darko Pehar	Date - 27.2.'24 online Date- 30.09.'24 online Date- 04.12.'24 online
TG 3 on Transport	FTC B&H	Kristina Cosic	Date - 27.2.'24 online Date – 24.09.'24 online Date- 25.10.'24, Sarajevo
TG 4 on Investments and Access to Finance	KCC	Besim Mustafa	Date- 23.04.'24 online
TG 5 on Digital Transformation and IT	CCIS	Jelena Jovanovic	Date - 8.3.'24 online Date- 02.04.'24 online
TG 6 on Green Transition and Energy Efficiency	ECNM	Kristina Kuzeska	Date - 8.2.'24, Pristina Date- 16.5.'24, Podgorica
TG 7 on Internationalization	CCIS	Tijana Kilibarda	Date - 23.2.'24 online Date- 25.04.'24 online

TG 8 on Quality Infrastructure	CCIS	Dusan Stokic	Date - 5.3.'24 online Date- 15.5.'24, Bar Date- 12.12.'24 online
TG 9 on Human Capital	CEM	Mladen Perazic	Date - 23.2.2024 online Date- 22.04.'24 online
Additional online meetings of TGs	Date: 14.6.'24 Time: 09:00 Consultations on CRM AP 2.0- TG coordinators, WB6 CIF and RCC		
	Date: 14.6.'24 Time: 12:30 Consultations on CRM AP 2.0- TG coordinators and WB6 CIF on CRM		
	Date: 17.6.'24 Time: 10:30 Technical consultations on CRM AP 2.0- RCC, CEFTA, TCT, WB6 CIF and TG coordinators		
	Date: 18.6.'24 Time: 09:30 Consultations on CRM AP 2.0- RCC with TG on Human Capital		
	Date: 18.6.'24 Time: 10:00 Consultations on competitiveness (CRM AP 2.0)- RCC with TG on Internationalization, TG on Investments and access to finance, TG on Tourism, TG on Green transition and energy efficiency and TG on Quality infrastructure		
	Date: 18.6.'24 Time: 14:00 Consultations on CRM AP 2.0- CEFTA with TG on Trade in goods and services		
	Date: 19.6.'24 Time: 10:00 Consultations on CRM AP 2.0- RCC with TG on Digital transformation and IT		



U.C.C.I.A.L.

BASHKIMI I DHOMAVE TË TREGTISË DHE INDUSTRIË SË SHQIPËRISË
UNION OF CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY OF ALBANIA



VANJSKOTRGOVINSKA KOMORA BOSNE I HERCEGOVINE
СПОЉНОТРГОВИНСКА КОМОРА БОСНЕ И ХЕРЦЕГОВИНЕ
FOREIGN TRADE CHAMBER OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA



ODA EKONOMIKE KOSOVA CHAMBER
OF KOSOVO'S OF COMMERCE



СТОПАНСКА КОМОРА
НА СЕВЕРНА МАКЕДОНИЈА
ECONOMIC CHAMBER
OF NORTH MACEDONIA



CHAMBER OF
ECONOMY OF
MONTENEGRO



CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE AND
INDUSTRY OF SERBIA
1857



CAMERA DI COMMERCIO
VENEZIA GIULIA
TRIESTE GORIZIA