



# The Economic and Investment Plan for Western Balkans

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“ ... the future of the *whole* region lies in the EU. We share the same history, we share the same destiny.

**The Western Balkans are part of Europe ..”**



# Western Balkans region



## A three-track approach.

- **Feb 2020**, we have adopted a renewed enlargement methodology based on the principles of increased credibility, transparency, predictability and political steer.
- **March 2020**, on the basis of the new methodology we proposed the opening of accession negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia, which was endorsed by European Council in March.
- **6 October**, the EC has adopted a major economic and investment plan for the whole region, together with the annual reports on enlargement.





# The Economic and Investment Plan

“The Plan offers a path for a successful regional economic integration to help accelerate **convergence with** the EU and close the development gap between our regions, ultimately speeding up the process of EU integration.”

*EU Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement, Olivér Várhelyi*

## The Economic and Investment Plan for Western Balkans

- prepared in exceptional circumstances. The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted all our lives in an unprecedented way.
- IMF projections suggest that the economies of the Western Balkans are contracting between 2,5% and 14%. This is a very severe blow, especially when considering that the region's GDP is well below 50% of the EU average.

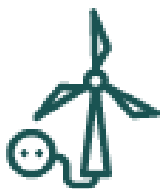


# Six thematic priorities- 10 Flagship



## Sustainable transport

- ▶ FLAGSHIP 1 – Connecting East to West
- ▶ FLAGSHIP 2 – Connecting North to South
- ▶ FLAGSHIP 3 – Connecting the coastal regions



## Clean energy

- ▶ FLAGSHIP 4 – Renewable energy
- ▶ FLAGSHIP 5 – Transition from coal



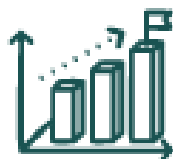
## Digital future

- ▶ FLAGSHIP 8 – Digital infrastructure



## Environment & climate

- ▶ FLAGSHIP 6 – Renovation wave
- ▶ FLAGSHIP 7 – Waste and waste water management



## Private sector

- ▶ FLAGSHIP 9 – Investing in the competitiveness of the private sector



## Human capital

- ▶ FLAGSHIP 10 – Youth Guarantee





# Substantial financial package

- **Up to €9 billion** of EU funding (*IPA III funding, subject to the adoption of the next MFF 2021-2027*)
- Main vehicle for implementation is the **Western Balkans Investments Framework**, which will include the WB EDIF and the new **Western Balkan Guarantee Facility**, which has a potential to mobilize **up to €20 billion**
- Team Europe approach.





# Sofia Western Balkans Summit

- **Green Agenda Guidelines paving the way to the green agenda priorities implementation**
- **Common regional market.** In Sofia on 10 November, the leaders of the Western Balkans Six (WB6), have:

Agreed to enhance economic cooperation in the region by developing Common Regional Market, based on the EU rules and standards, to increase the attractiveness and competitiveness of the region and to bring the region closer to the EU markets.

Endorsed a comprehensive Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans. The Common Regional Market will be greatly facilitated by the investments in productive sectors and sustainable infrastructure envisioned by Plan.



# Roma in the Communication

- The Economic and Investment Plan
  - **Introduction.** *‘Sustained competitiveness inevitably rests on the region’s ability to build its human and entrepreneurial capacity to innovate and develop an economic niche. Thus, investing in the future also means investing in research, innovation, health, education, culture, youth and sport. These are powerful tools to boost not only the region’s economic development, resilience and competitiveness, but also its social cohesion, **meaning full economic participation for all its citizens, including the Roma. The integration of Roma people into society by supporting their full participation in education and in the labour market is of particular importance and will be a key priority of the EU integration process.**’*
  - **Investing in human capital.** *‘Improving labour market participation, especially of young people and women, disadvantaged groups and minorities, **in particular Roma,** will be a priority and can strongly contribute to economic growth.’*







# ..and operationally: few reflections

- Efforts to integrate Roma fully into the labour market would entail to incentivize their involvement, for example, in the construction works of infrastructures stemming from the Economic and Investment Plan investments.
- Exploring different options to address at the same time the shortage of workers in the regions, would provide Roma families with more stability and Roma children with the security to access educational opportunities more fully.





# Thank you!



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