

**Civil Society High-Level Conference**

**Continuing the success story of EU enlargement –**

**Bringing benefits to the Western Balkans in advance of accession**

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| **Friday, 24 May 2024**  **GRAND PLAZA HOTEL & CONGRESS CENTER, Ljubljana, Slovenia** | |
| **08:30** | Registration of participants |
| **09:00** | **Opening session - EU accession path for the Western Balkans: focus on fundamentals**  Moderator: **Neža Repanšek**, EESC member   * **Oliver Röpke**, President of the EESC * **Tanja Fajon**, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of Slovenia (tbc) * **Olivér Várhelyi**, Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement (tbc) * **Majlinda Bregu**, Secretary General of the Regional Cooperation Council (tbc)   **DISCUSSION** |
| **10:30** | Coffee break and press conference |
| **11:00** | **EU accession path for the Western Balkans: reforms needed to ensure a successful next enlargement**  Moderator: **Neža Repanšek**, EESC member   * **Dubravka Šuica**, Vice-President of the European Commission for Democracy and Demography (tbc) * **Luka Mesec**, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities of Slovenia (tbc) * **Klemen Grošelj**, Member of the European Parliament (tbc) * **Krisela Hackaj**, Executive Director, Cooperation & Development Institute (CDI) * **Strahinja Subotić**, Programme Manager for the Our Europe programme area, European Policy Centre (CEP), Belgrade, Serbia     **DISCUSSION** |
| **13:00** | Lunch |
| **14:30** | **Contribution of oragnised civil society to the implementation of the new growth plan for the Western Balkans** |
| **14:30** | **Session I: *Lessons learned from the EU’s Recovery and Resilience Fund (RRF)***  Moderator: **Ionuţ Sibian**, Vice-President of the EESC's Western Balkans Follow-up Committee   * **Marjan Trobiš**, President of the Association of Employers of Slovenia (tbc) * **Elena-Alexandra Calistru**, EESC member: EESC opinion on Mid-term evaluation of the Recovery and Resilience Facility * **Tea Jarc**, Confederal Secretary, European Trade Union Confederation (tbc) * **Ljudmila Novak**, Member of the European Parliament (tbc)   **DISCUSSION** |
| **15:30** | **Session II: *Accelerating the socio-economic convergence of the region with the EU***  Moderator: **Dragica Martinović** **Džamonja**, Vice-President of the EESC's Western Balkans Follow-up Committee   * **Saška Kumer**, Vice President, Association of Free Trade Unions of Slovenia, and chair of the Regional Trade Union Council Solidarnost * **Tatjana Shterjova Dushkovska**, Secretary General, Western Balkans 6 Chamber Investment Forum (WB6 CIF) (tbc) * **Zdravko Ilić**, Senior Technical Expert, Central European Free Trade Association (CEFTA) Secretariat * **Branimir Jovanović**, economist, The Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies (wiiw) * **Andi Dobrushi**, Director of Open Society Foundations (OSF) – Western Balkans   **DISCUSSION** |
| **16:30** | Coffee break |
| **17:00** | **Contribution of civil society to EU accession path for the Western Balkans:**  **Conclusions on the implementation of the new growth plan for the Western Balkans**  **DISCUSSION** |
| **17:30** | **Summary of main messages and closing remarks**  Chair: **Andrej Zorko**, President of the EESC's Western Balkans Follow-up Committee |

**Interpreting: EN/SL/BS-HR-MN-SR/MK/SQ into EN/SL/BS-HR-MN-SR/MK/SQ**

**More information on the EESC:**

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<http://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/tags/western-balkans>

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