

Common Regional Market

A catalyst for deeper regional economic integration and a stepping stone towards EU Single Market

Western Balkans Six (WB6) share a common ambition: a democratic, prosperous region that promotes open societies based on shared values of pluralism, solidarity and justice, underpinned by a strong rule of law. Western Balkans is determined to work together to fulfil this ambition and rise to the economic, societal, environmental, security and political challenges faced by the region. WB6 are confident that the only appropriate answer to these challenges lies in regional cooperation and integration in the European Union (EU).

The European Union remains the region's key partner in this undertaking. The Zagreb Declaration (6 May 2020) reaffirmed the unequivocal support for the European perspective of the Western Balkans, noting that *“the EU will continue to support such inclusive regional cooperation and urges the Western Balkans leaders to fully exploit the potential of regional cooperation to facilitate the economic recovery after the crisis. This requires strong commitment by the entire region to continue deepening regional economic integration, building on EU rules and standards and thereby bringing the region and its companies closer to the EU Internal Market. Developing this dimension, including through the Regional Economic Area (REA), can help make the region more attractive for investment”*.

To this end, the WB6 aim to build a Common Regional Market, based on EU rules. It will build on the achievements of the Regional Economic Area (REA), which has been a successful initiative. Establishing the Common Regional Market will contribute to putting the region on the map for global investors seeking to reduce the distance to the EU markets and diversify their suppliers, thereby creating jobs, offering greater choices at lower prices for its consumers, and enabling people to work throughout the region. This larger regional market will be a steppingstone for WB6 firms to better integrate into the European value chains and strengthen their competitiveness in the European and global marketplace. Some estimates show that regional economic integration can generate 2.5% of GDP should the level of integration reach EFTA level and 6.7% in case of EU level of integration¹.

The WB6 are confident that the implementation of this agenda will have a transformative effect, shortening the time for recovery and rekindling new sources of sustainable growth for the future. A strong economic base remains a key determinant of future prosperity and places the Western Balkans firmly on the European stage. Now more than ever, the Western Balkans needs to accelerate regional economic integration and deepen economic cooperation with the EU, towards the Common Regional Market. This transformative agenda is firmly anchored in EU's own recovery effort. But more importantly, it stems from Western Balkans shared commitment to a better and more prosperous future for all Europeans.

Regional economic integration - Expected deliverables, 2021-2024

The Covid-19 pandemic has further accelerated the ambition towards a greater regional integration, showcasing the important links between markets in the region as well as between the EU and the WB6 economies. During these challenging times, the region worked together to swiftly and efficiently establish Green Lanes at critical border/common crossing points, ensuring an unobstructed flow of goods throughout the crisis. Green Lanes initiative is a successful example that motivates the region to embark on new regional initiatives aimed at bringing the Western Balkans closer to the EU Internal Market. The Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated the twin green and digital transition at a time when the global competitive landscape is fundamentally changing. Therefore furthering the integration of the Western Balkan digital economy to the EU Digital Single Market will play a central role in relaunching and modernising the economies of the region.

¹ World Bank, Western Balkans Regular Economic Report, Fall 2019

In light of this, the WB6 are putting forward an **Action Plan for a Common Regional Market (CRM)** to be implemented by the end of 2024. This ambitious agenda is made up of targeted actions in four key areas:

- **regional trade area: free movement of goods, services, capital and people**, including crosscutting measures, such as the Green Lanes, to align with EU-compliant rules and standards and provide opportunities for companies and citizens;
- **regional investment area**, to align investment policies with the EU standards and best international practices and promote the region to foreign investors;
- **regional digital area**, to integrate the Western Balkans into the pan-European digital market; and
- **regional industrial and innovation area**, to transform the industrial sectors, shape value chains they belong to, and prepare them for the realities of today and challenges of tomorrow.

This agenda will bring tangible and concrete results to the benefit of citizens and companies from the region. The WB6 are committed to implement the necessary measures (detailed in the action plan here below) that will lead to the following results:

A. Closely aligning rules and regulations with the core principles governing the EU Internal Market based on the four freedoms approach through mutual recognition arrangements, removing obstacles, and cutting costs and time needed for goods, services, capital and people to move freely across the region. Growth and employment opportunities will be improved, as trade liberalisation, capital flows and mobility lead to market expansion, technology sharing, and more investments between WB6. Great potential of economies of scale will remain untapped unless transfer of goods, services, capital and people becomes unhindered throughout the region.

More specifically, by implementing actions enabling “four freedoms” in the regional trade area, the WB6 shall seek to:

- Introduce and implement, in line with EU *acquis*, mutual recognition of: certificates and testing results for industrial and agricultural products; Authorised Economic Operators (AEOs); professional qualifications; and licenses in tourism, selected financial services and other key services sectors;
- Establish regional e-commerce market by adopting core harmonised rules and internal market principle, by facilitating customs clearance of parcels and by removing geo-blocking;
- Adapt the Green Lanes and make services available 24/7 at expanded network of BCPs/CCPs and introduce the Green Lanes on BCPs with the EU;
- Expand and improve CEFTA Risk Management and systematic exchange of electronic data (SEED) to all agencies involved in clearance of goods;
- Establish one-stop-shops at selected crossing points and decrease waiting times at BCPs/CCPs to 70% of current waiting times;
- Introduce joint procedures on tariff monitoring and other measures facilitating parcel delivery service;
- Adopt services trade liberalisation package to, *inter alia*, enable supply of services without obligatory establishment and authorisation, in line with Chapter 3 of the EU *acquis*;
- Adopt new, more efficient rules on dispute settlement and resolution of not-tariff barriers in CEFTA;
- Reduce the costs of regional payments and prepare for joining the Single Euro Payment Area (SEPA);

- Enable mobility for students, researchers and professors;
- Introduce freedom of movement on the basis of IDs within the Western Balkans Six;
- Remove work permits for intracompany transfers and contractual service providers;
- Enable portability of social rights.

B. Increasing the attractiveness of the region for foreign investors and facilitating higher investment inflows through joint investment retention and promotion activities to foster sustainable industrial activity, trade and ultimately, jobs.

International investors increasingly operate regionally, basing investment decisions on market size, regional production and supply networks, availability of talent in Western Balkans, and infrastructure linkages. Greater regional alignment of investment policies and better coordinated investment promotion, particularly in most promising value chains, holds significant potential for the economies of the Western Balkans to increase their attractiveness for foreign direct investment (FDI). It is of utmost importance for the region to join forces in removing existing barriers to regional investment as investors look at the region and the potential of its markets as a whole. Western Balkans is particularly well positioned to offer nearshoring alternatives for EU-based investors looking to adopt a more balanced distribution and diversification of supply sources and develop means of production closer to consumers.

More specifically, by implementing actions in the priority area of a Regional Investment Area, the WB6 shall seek to:

- Conduct a regional investment promotion campaign through the cooperation of region's investment promotion agencies for the retention and promotion;
- Develop regional guidance criteria and procedures for screening mechanisms at the economy level for quick reaction to FDI concerns based on the emerging EU standards and policy and taking into account the individual economy and region's policy priorities;
- Attract new investment leads in promising sustainable regional value chains for the WB6 region;
- Conclude economy-specific International Investment Agreements (IIAs) between EU and each of Western Balkans Six.

C. Integrating the Western Balkans into the pan-European digital area by providing broadband internet access for the vast majority of households, aligning with EU Digital Single Market principles and practices, finalising the process of enabling the WB6 free roaming region, over time significantly reducing the roaming costs between WB6 and the EU, coordinating data protection approaches, introducing mutual recognition of trust services, and embarking on new challenging practices, such as Artificial Intelligence, smart cities, high-performance computing, etc.

Unleashing the potential of the digital economy in the WB6 would facilitate exchanges of goods and services and intensify trade by enabling more products and services to be exported to more markets, often by younger firms. The internet is also reducing transaction costs, offering an avenue for the WB6 to accelerate their integration within the region, as well as with the EU and other developed markets. To integrate the Western Balkans into the pan-European digital space, the region needs to remove obstacles to e-Commerce, introduce interoperability and mutual recognition of electronic identification schemes across the Western Balkans, and upgrade digital infrastructure.

More specifically, by implementing actions in the priority area of a Regional Digital Area, the WB6 shall seek to:

- Provide fixed broadband internet access for at least 95% of the households as well as at least 90% of the households with the speed of at least 30Mbps in each economy;
- Establish free roaming region and reduce roaming charges between Western Balkans and the EU;
- Establish a regionally coordinated process of spectrum harmonisation of European 5G pioneer bands and apply a coordinated approach in the process of awarding 5G radio frequencies and regional 5G piloting;
- Develop digital skills strategies to support uptake in digital skills and support digital upskilling and reskilling;
- Adopt a framework for mutual recognition of electronic signatures as well as other forms of eIDs and trust services based on the relevant EU acquis;
- Align regional actions to ensure the protection of personal data and privacy in Western Balkans.

D. Upgrading the industrial base and innovation infrastructures by supporting youth entrepreneurship, start-ups and early stage firms, introducing mechanisms for diaspora knowledge transfer, fostering green and women entrepreneurship and supporting sustainable regional supply chains and their integration into European and global networks in the context of realigned and regionalised value and supply chains. Promoting economic growth and job creation in the Western Balkans requires a shift towards a more productivity-based, export-oriented growth model in which research and innovation are integral to industrial development.

More specifically, by implementing actions in the priority area of a Regional Industrial and Innovation Area, the WB6 shall seek to progress along three areas:

1) **Innovation**

- Integration of the region into the European Research Area;
- Support the implementation of different actions stemming from the *Agenda for the Western Balkans on Innovation, Research, Education, Culture, Youth and Sport* which the European Commission is planning to adopt during the first semester of 2021;
- Launch regional start-up and early stage innovation support scheme, blending public and private sector financing;
- Create a regional Network of Digital Innovation Hubs;
- Upgrade regional SME online platform to support the innovation and internationalisation of SMEs.

2) **Inclusion in international supply and value chains**

- Conclude regional Supply Chain Protocols in select industries/value chains;
- Map out and upgrade automotive supply chains in the region to mitigate industry disruptions;
- Develop new regional value chains in green and circular economy to seize yet untapped potential;
- Develop packaged tourism offer for the region and conduct joint promotional efforts;
- Support the development of agro-food industry in the region in line with the EU standards;
- Support the development of regional creative industries;
- Enhance the competitiveness and energy efficiency of metal processing industry.

3) **Human capital development and fighting the brain drain**

- Create a Regional Diaspora Knowledge Transfer Initiative to tap into the potential of the region's diaspora and encourage brain circulation;
- Facilitate establishment of Green Start-up Western Balkans Network to accelerate the growth of green economy;
- Set up Regional Network of Women in STEM for the Next Decade to encourage increased participation of girls and women in STEM education and careers;
- Create Western Balkans Women Entrepreneurs Network to encourage women to pursue entrepreneurship careers.

Role of regional organisations

The implementation of this Action Plan will be carried out in cooperation with already existing regional and international structures. RCC and CEFTA Secretariats will be the leading regional organisations to facilitate the implementation of this Action Plan, while other regional and/or international structures are included in specific actions in line with their scope of work and programme. In particular, the RCC will support implementation of actions which seek to increase the attractiveness of the region for foreign investors, integrate the Western Balkans into the pan-European digital area, upgrade the industrial base and innovation infrastructure, and advance towards free movement of people and capital. CEFTA Secretariat will support carrying out the actions which seek to implement CEFTA 2006 and extend commitments and benefits to the EU and other trading partners. The private sector perspective and contribution will be ensured through close cooperation with WB6 CIF with a view to facilitating implementation of joint actions. At the same time, these actions will provide linkages and seek synergies with their European partners.

Each of the actions outlined in the Action Plan has a clearly identified regional structure that will serve to coordinate, facilitate and support the implementation of the regional activities in this domain and assist with the monitoring of progress, also in line with their own activity plans and work programmes. Key actions, instruments and activities indicated in the Action Plan should provide for a clear roadmap in preparing and executing detailed implementation plans in each of the respective priority areas. The regional coordinating structures are also encouraged to participate in the programming efforts related to the priority areas within their functional responsibilities.

Governance, coordination and monitoring

The successful implementation of the Common Regional Market Action Plan requires solid governance, clear lines of communication and regular monitoring of progress. RCC Secretariat is tasked with the overall coordination and monitoring of the Action Plan in close cooperation and consultation with CEFTA Secretariat, which is in charge of implementation of trade-related actions. To this end, detailed methodology for monitoring and reporting, including the matrix of governance structure should be developed following the endorsement of CRM 2021-2024 Action Plan. Without creating redundant reporting requirements, the RCC will develop an appropriate monitoring tool, including by establishing a dynamic scorecard, designed to reflect changes in real time; track the implementation of measures agreed in CRM Action Plan; support policy reforms where needed and allow stakeholders, including citizens, to provide input on the effectiveness of steps taken. In such a way, transparency, visibility and inclusiveness of the implementation of the Action Plan will be further ensured.

The implementation of CRM 2021-2024 Action Plan remains within the realm of responsibility of public institutions in each WB economy, in particular ministries and institutions leading the implementation effort at the economy level.

RCC Secretariat, in cooperation with CEFTA Secretariat, is invited to review and inform the WB6 on regular basis on the progress achieved as regards the deliverables defined in the Action Plan. The regional structures charged with coordination will provide inputs for RCC's consolidated reporting to the WB6. Any obstacles identified shall be reported to the WB6 with a proposal for remedial action.

Only a shared commitment from the WB6, industry and all other relevant stakeholders in a renewed partnership, as well as the implementation of the Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans, in close cooperation with the European Commission, and other relevant international financial institutions will allow the Western Balkans to make the most of the Common Market.

The Action Plan for the Common Regional Market is organised through the building blocks outlined in Figure 1. The activities, indicative timelines and coordination and implementation responsibilities under each of the above priority areas are presented in the Action Plan for the Common Regional Market.

Figure 1



Action Plan 2021-2024

<i>Priority area</i>	<i>Regional actions</i>	<i>Timetable</i>	<i>Supporting organisation</i>	<i>Expected results</i>
Regional Trade Area – Cross-cutting trade measures				
1.1. Maintain the Green Corridors/Lanes and streamline BCPs/ CCPs controls	1. Adapt the Green Lanes, i.e. priority system at the Green Corridor BCPs/CCPs for key products and trust-worthy economic operators and expand to other BCPs/CCPs	2021	CEFTA (supported by TCT)	Enable faster crossing for certain types of goods (e.g. perishable goods, fruit and vegetables, live animals, etc.) and economic operators (e.g. AEOs); Make services available 24/7 at all BCPs/CCPs, where this is possible to accelerate movement of goods;
	2. Harmonise working hours of the agencies involved in clearance of goods	2020-2021	CEFTA (supported by WBG)	More efficient clearance of goods and less waiting times;
	3. Establish integrated controls – one-stop-shop – to ensure all formalities can be completed in one place and to enable agencies involved in the process of clearance of goods (and other agencies present at BCPs/CCPs) from two neighbouring parties to operate from a single office, including sharing control equipment	2022	CEFTA (supported by TCT, WBG)	Simplified formalities and shorter waiting times will be achieved on selected BCPs/CCPs upon the agreement of the Parties;
	4. Set up appropriate BCP/CCP lane management system at selected BCPs/CCPs, with supporting equipment and infrastructure allowing for separation of cars, busses, and trucks, and for accommodating traffic flows during peak times	2021	TCT (supported by CEFTA)	Accelerated flow of goods; shorter waiting times;
	5. Establish full connectivity between SEED+ and electronic queuing management system (eQMS) if put into operation, to maximise the benefits of both systems for the economic operators	2022	CEFTA (supported by TCT)	In case one or more Parties introduces eQMS, this measure will enable full interconnectivity between the IT systems making them interoperable and enabling exchanging of data in real time; simplified and accelerated procedures at BCPs/CCPs;
	6. Expand Green Lanes to the BCPs with the EU	2021	CEFTA/TCT /EC	Simplified formalities and shorter waiting times for certain types of goods in trade between the EU and CEFTA;
1.2. Elimination of Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs)	1. Adopt efficient and effective Dispute Settlement Mechanism	2021	CEFTA (supported by GIZ and UNCTAD)	More effective mechanism of resolving trade disputes between the Parties; enhanced transparency of trade issues;
	2. Institutionalise practice of annual reports on NTBs			

Priority area	Regional actions	Timetable	Supporting organisation	Expected results
1.3. Trade related aspects	1. Set up CEFTA Body to deal with competition and state aid	2023	CEFTA (supported by EC)	Enhanced transparency on competition and state aid;
	2. Establish regional cooperation in the area of public procurement	2023	CEFTA (supported by EC)	Established intra-CEFTA regulatory cooperation in the public procurement and first instance appeal bodies; enhanced transparency in public procurement and other regional measures based on the EU <i>acquis</i> ;
	3. Establish regional cooperation of consumer protection and market surveillance authorities	2022	CEFTA (supported by EC)	Increase trust of consumers in regional market by harmonising key rules and strengthening regional enforcement and cooperation between consumer protection and market surveillance authorities;
	4. Expand the scope of the statistical data exchanged between the Parties	2023	CEFTA (supported by Eurostat)	More data exchanged and higher quality of data based on the agreement between the Parties; timely gathering of information; promoting portal as information tool for the wide public, policy makers and businesses in the Parties;
	5. Establish regional cooperation on trade-related environmental issues (i.e. CO2 measurement, taxonomy, etc.) in line with the EU best practices	2023	CEFTA (supported by EC)	Regional cooperation established with a view to promote development of regional trade in a way so as to contribute to the objectives of sustainable development;
	6. Adopt regional framework on trade related aspects of intellectual property and related rights	2023	CEFTA (supported by EUIPO)	The framework should set up the harmonised rules or minimum standards of legal protection in different areas of IPR, as well as enforcement rules taking into account EU and global (TRIPS) practices; strengthened cooperation between IP offices;
1.4. Private sector dialogue	1. Establish cooperation with the representatives of business community and other stakeholders to improve evidence-based policy making and support policy output take-up	2020-2024	CEFTA (supported by the WB6 CIF and other associations)	Improved awareness of economic operators on trade opportunities; improved access to relevant information supporting the decision-making process by the policy makers; bringing trade benefits closer to the SMEs through tools, such as market access databases;
1.5. Reduction of trade costs and transparency	1. Adopt notification procedure linked with CEFTA Services Regulatory Database to enhance Transparency Pack	2021	CEFTA (supported by ITC and GIZ)	Sustainable and up-to-date mechanism for exchange of information on key measures affecting trade in services in most important sectors; maintain and enhance exchange of data through Transparency Pack;
	2. Start exchanging information on fees and charges and review fees and charges with a view to reducing their number and variety	2021	CEFTA (supported by WBG)	Better access to information on fees and charges for businesses and other interested parties;
	3. Start exchanging data on average release times, including the methodologies used	2021	CEFTA (supported by WBG)	More efficient and effective identification of bottlenecks in trade;

<i>Priority area</i>	<i>Regional actions</i>	<i>Timetable</i>	<i>Supporting organisation</i>	<i>Expected results</i>
Free movement of goods				
2.1. Mutual Recognition Programmes (MRPs)	1. Adopt the MRPs for industrial products in line with the EU acquis (for example toy safety, low voltage, GPSD, machinery)	2021 2022 2023 2024 ²	CEFTA (supported by GIZ, EC)	Facilitated movement of industrial goods through reduced formalities (e.g. acceptance of certificates and testing results), cutting red tape and trade related costs, improved security and safety, optimisation of procedures;
	2. Adopt the MRPs for agricultural products (veterinary) in line with the EU acquis	2023	CEFTA (supported by GIZ, EC)	Facilitated movement of agricultural goods through reduced formalities (e.g. acceptance of certificates and testing results) and improved security and safety in trade and cutting red tape and trade related costs; optimisation of procedures; shorter waiting times at BCPs/CCPs;
	3. Implement existing MRPs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AEOS³ • fruits and vegetables⁴ 	2023 2022	CEFTA (supported by GIZ, WBG, EC)	Reduced formalities (e.g. acceptance of testing results) and improved security and safety in trade without hampering trade flows; optimisation of procedures; shorter waiting times;
2.2. Risk Management	1. Implement CEFTA Customs Risk Management Strategy by introducing mutual recognition of controls, common risk profiles and supporting domestic authorities, including deployment of new ICT solutions for customs	2024	CEFTA (supported by GIZ, EC)	<p>Common risks profiles developed and results shared, mutual recognition of controls, reduced controls at the BCP/CCPs without hampering safety and security, thus reduced waiting times and facilitated trade.</p> <p>The actions, among others, include establishment of Risk Management Standard Operating Procedures by the Parties; concluding agreements with supply chain actors and stakeholders and customs agencies for cooperation on data exchange to improve risk management capabilities; defining Joint Risk Management Actions dealing with joint BCP/CCP approach based on mutual recognition of controls and cooperation and implementation of common risk criteria together with other competent authorities for full range of risks associated with goods movements;</p>

² At least one MRP per economy will be adopted

³ Authorised economic operators for security and safety

⁴ The JC Decision on facilitation trade in fruits and vegetables No. 1/2020

<i>Priority area</i>	<i>Regional actions</i>	<i>Timetable</i>	<i>Supporting organisation</i>	<i>Expected results</i>
	2. Extend scope and improve CEFTA Risk Management following EU best practices to involve all agencies dealing with clearance of goods	2024	CEFTA (supported by GIZ, WBG EC)	Extension of risk management from customs to all agencies involved in clearance of goods will extend benefits of risk management to entire clearance procedure. Namely, common risk profiles will be developed, and results shared, mutual recognition of controls will be enabled to result in reduced controls at the BCP/CCPs without hampering safety and security, reduced waiting times and facilitated trade;
2.3. System of Electronic Exchange of Data (SEED+)	1. Adopt legal and regulatory framework for inter-agency cooperation needed for electronic exchange of information and promotion of paperless trade in line with the EU <i>acquis</i>	2022	CEFTA (supported by EC)	Optimisation of procedures; streamlined controls, promotion of paperless trade based on data exchanged and risk assessment;
	2. Expand systematic data exchange to all agencies involved in clearance of goods within each Party and between the Parties	2022	CEFTA (supported by EC)	Interoperability and data exchange extended from only customs authorities to all agencies involved in clearance of goods; support to paperless trade; CEFTA TRACES NT operational;
	3. Supply data to CEFTA regional databases as provided for in the AP5 ⁵ (AEOs, certificates/licenses/ permits management, unsafe/noncompliant products, etc.) and other CEFTA provisions	2022	CEFTA (supported by EC)	A number of operational regional databases accessible to authorities and public facilitating safe and free movements of goods, CEFTA risk management, paperless trade and transparency and shortening waiting times;
2.4. Harmonisation and cooperation with the EU	1. Ensure implementation of common rules of origin within CEFTA and uninterrupted cumulation of origin with the EU and other trading partners	2021	CEFTA (supported by EC)	Benefits of CEFTA and SAAs maximised for economic operators;
	2. Initiate MRP(s) between CEFTA, EU and other trading partners based on EU best practices	2021	CEFTA (supported by EC)	Benefits of MRP(s) extended to the EU market and other trading partners, e.g. BTIs, AEOs, etc.;
<i>Free movement of services</i>				

⁵ Additional Protocol 5

<i>Priority area</i>	<i>Regional actions</i>	<i>Timetable</i>	<i>Supporting organisation</i>	<i>Expected results</i>
3.1. Additional Protocol 6 (AP6) on Trade in Services	1. Adopt review of AP6 to further liberalise trade in services to, <i>inter alia</i> , enable temporary service supply without establishment and authorisation requirement in line with the Chapter 3 of the EU <i>acquis</i>	2023	CEFTA (supported by ITC, GIZ and EC)	Further elimination of trade barriers beyond current AP6 commitments by extending MA and NT commitments and by enabling companies that offer temporary supply of services in other Parties to do it without obligation to set up local commercial presence and licence and other authorisations as in relevant Chapter 3 of the EU <i>acquis</i> , including its restrictions and derogations;
	2. Adopt Regional Disciplines on Domestic Regulation based on the EU position in the WTO	2021	CEFTA (supported by ITC, GIZ and EC)	Joint rules on authorisation schemes and technical standards across CEFTA to facilitate operating in multiple CEFTA markets;
3.2. Tourism	1. Adopt CEFTA framework for trade in tourism services addressing key barriers, including mutual recognition of licences	2021	CEFTA (in cooperation with RCC, supported by ITC, GIZ and EC)	Addressing key trade barriers on the basis of reciprocity, including: licenses, insurance requirements, establishment requirement, technical standards, etc.;
	2. Align and adopt voluntary quality of service standards for adventure and cultural tourism among WB6 and with relevant EU/international guidelines and standards	2023-2024	RCC (in cooperation with CEFTA)	Common or mutually recognised voluntary standards of services, product delivery guidelines, self-regulatory industry guidelines and requirements;
3.3. Financial services	1. Scanning of financial markets of the Western Balkans, covering <i>inter alia</i> : feasibility of an EU-compliant mechanism for market integration (such as passporting, equivalence, internal market treatment) of relevant markets and/or products with the objective of regional market integration and closer cooperation with EU; feasibility of cooperation in insurance sector; elaboration of a common regulatory framework for the development of Fintech	2021	RCC CEFTA, WBG	Availability of long-term finance increased; Expedited establishment and service supply enabled through ‘passporting’ or similar trade facilitation system; Decreased insurance related costs of movement of people, goods and services in the region; Making financial markets more attractive for investments;
	2. Development of selected, regional financial markets and/or products, with appropriate EU-compliant mechanism for market integration, with the objective to achieve both regional market integration and closer cooperation with EU, on case by case basis.	2023-2024	WBG, RCC, CEFTA	Based on the assessment, the Parties will select specific markets/products, as well as appropriate mechanism for selective market integration in the region and possibly with the EU;

Priority area	Regional actions	Timetable	Supporting organisation	Expected results
3.4 Postal services	1. Agree on joint procedures on tariff monitoring and other facilitating measures for regional parcel delivery service, in line with EU <i>acquis</i> and best practices	2022	CEFTA (in cooperation with GIZ, EC and WB6 CIF)	Enabling cheaper, more efficient and better quality intra-CEFTA parcel delivery service; facilitate intra-CEFTA electronic commerce;
3.5. Professional qualifications	1. Adopt and implement framework for recognition of professional qualifications for 7 professions based on the EU system of automatic recognition	2022	RCC CEFTA	Recognition of professional qualifications for nurses, midwives, doctors, dental practitioners, pharmacists, architects, and veterinary surgeons;
	2. Adopt framework for recognition of professional qualifications based on the EU general system of recognition in pilot sector and gradually extend to other sectors	2022	CEFTA RCC	Recognition of professional qualifications in pilot sector to be agreed by 2022, and gradual extension every year to include other sectors covered by EU general system of recognition;
3.6. Enabling environment	1. Enable electronic exchange of documents between regulatory authorities by extending SEED+ to trade in services	2022	CEFTA (supported by EC)	Promotion of paperless trade in key services sectors; Facilitation of mutual recognition agreements and other regional measures facilitating trade in services; Supporting administrative cooperation between regulatory authorities and simplifying their work;
	2. Adopt framework for mutual recognition of electronic signatures as well as other forms of eIDs and trust services based on the relevant EU <i>acquis</i>	2022	CEFTA RCC	Enabling use of electronic signatures and other trust services;
3.7. Electronic commerce	1. Adopt framework to harmonise key regulatory rules and set up key principles for regional electronic commerce based on the relevant EU <i>acquis</i>	2021	CEFTA (supported by GIZ and EC)	Simplified and more efficient intra-CEFTA electronic commerce in line with EU standards;
	2. Adopt regional trade facilitation measures for parcels based on EU practices (e.g. VAT e-commerce package) and WCO standards	2023	CEFTA (supported by GIZ and EC)	More efficient and cheaper customs clearance of parcels in CEFTA, generated by regional electronic commerce;
	3. Adopt regional measures against geo-blocking	2022	CEFTA (supported by EC)	Levelled up portable rights of access to online goods and services for consumers across the region;
Free movement of capital				
4.1. Development of a modern payment system	1. Align domestic legal/regulatory framework pertaining to payment services and instruments with that of the EU <i>acquis</i> in order to create equal playing field for the regional payment system and adopt and implement domestic instant payments and enable linkages of those systems in the region	2022-2024	EC, WBG, RCC, CEFTA	Development and implementation of the EU <i>acquis</i> in the area of payment fostered (i.e. Payment Accounts and Payment Services Directives, the E-Money Directives and the Settlement Finality Directives);
	2. Establish cost-efficient payments within the economies of Western Balkans and with the EU and set up regional	2024	EC, WBG, RCC,	Cost-efficient payments (including remittances) within the economies of Western Balkans and with the EU through the Single Euro Payment Area (SEPA)

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	framework seeking to limit cost of intra-CEFTA payments based on the relevant EU <i>acquis</i>		CEFTA	facilitated; Limiting the cost on intra-CEFTA payments;
4.2. Strengthening regional cooperation and coordination on COVID-19 response as part of relief, recovery and resilience	1. Enhance regional coordination and cooperation on topics such as partial credit guarantees and use of public financial institutions; pre-insolvency and insolvency frameworks; NPL resolution; and other topics of joint relevance for the region, stemming from development of banking and non-banking finance to agriculture financing, invoice financing, sustainable & impact finance (e.g. green financing)	2021-2024	WBG, RCC, CEFTA, EIB, EBRD, Vienna Initiative	Exchange enabled on development of products or solutions focusing on areas of market failure and opportunities for market creation; Use of available EU funds and IFI funding to provide support to local institutions actively explored/enhanced; Adaptation and further progress on insolvency reforms, including financing; Exchange of experiences on exit strategies and repercussions of various borrowers' measures that have been implemented as part of COVID-19 response; Cooperation enabled at the regional level as part of COVID-19 measures through exchange of policies, practical solutions, and products;
Free Movement of People				
5.1. Mobility of students, researchers and professors	1. Western Balkans Framework Agreement on Access to Study	2023	RCC, EC ERI SEE, ETF	Regional assessment and guidelines for legal adjustments completed; Recommendations endorsed and implemented; WB Working Group on Access to Study established; Western Balkans Framework Agreement on Access to Study signed; Number of students with equal access to study within WB increased;
	2. Recognition of academic qualifications in the Western Balkans and enhanced quality of recognition of academic qualifications	2022	RCC, ERI SEE, EC	Feasibility study for recognition of primary and secondary level qualifications completed, including guidelines for possible legal adjustments; Feasibility assessment for recognition of VET completed; Regular meetings and trainings for ENIC/NARIC Centres; Expansion of Joint Information System (JIS) and Regional Recognition Database (RRD); Expert guidelines on domestic qualifications framework (NQF) to facilitate recognition of academic qualifications implemented; Expert recommendations on pre-Bologna qualifications and third cycle academic degree's implemented; Fast track recognition of higher education qualifications (expanded Regional Recognition Database (RRD) and

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				developed joint procedure to verify qualifications within 2 weeks) enabled; Negotiations on WB Agreement on Recognition of Academic Qualifications (based on draft text circulated by Albania) facilitated, including the proposal for introduction of Diplome system on automatic recognition of academic qualifications; WB Agreement on Recognition of Academic Qualifications signed; Academic qualifications in WB automatically recognised;
	3. Support all Western Balkans Quality Assurance Agencies for membership in ENQA and EQAR	2024	RCC, EC, ERI SEE, ETF	External Quality Assurance performance demonstrating compliance with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) completed; The ESG, key Bologna process commitments for quality assurance, and those of the European approach for quality assurance for joint programmes implemented; Monitoring progress in aligning with ESG completed; Quality Assurance Agencies bilateral and multilateral exchanges with partners with mature quality assurance systems increased; Participation of Western Balkans Quality Assurance bodies in European and regional networks and associations increased; Operational guidelines and procedures for quality assurance (accreditation and re-accreditation of institutions and programmes) completed;
	4. Encourage participation of the Western Balkans in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), while preparing the region to benefit from the European Education Area (EEA): European Universities Initiative open to Western Balkans Universities	2023	EC, RCC, ERI SEE	Possibility to open the European Universities Initiative to Western Balkans Universities announced; Number of Western Balkans Universities applications and participation in EUI increased;
5.2. Mobility of individuals on the basis of IDs	1. Western Balkans Agreement on Freedom of Movement and Stay	2021	RCC, EC	Regional WG on Freedom of Movement and Stay established; Agreement on Freedom of Movement and Stay signed; Regional simplified administrative procedures for entry, movement and stay enforced;
	2. Western Balkans Agreement on Freedom of Movement of Third Party Citizens	2021	RCC, CEFTA, EC	Regional WG on Freedom of Movement of Third Party Citizens established; Agreement on Freedom of Movement of Third Party Citizens (coordinated removal of visas or multiple economy visa for long haul visitors) signed;

<i>Priority area</i>	<i>Regional actions</i>	<i>Timetable</i>	<i>Supporting organisation</i>	<i>Expected results</i>
				Regional procedures for coordinated removal for long haul tourist/visitors established and operationalised;
5.3 Portability of social rights and removal of working permits	1. Western Balkans Agreement on Social Insurance	2022	CEFTA RCC, CIF,	Feasibility Study/Assessment of current state of play completed; Regional WG established; Western Balkans Agreement on Social Insurance signed; Regional procedures adopted; Number of people benefiting from the Agreement increased;
	2. Western Balkans Agreement on Removing Work Permits for intracompany transfers and service suppliers	2022	CEFTA, RCC, WB6 CIF, EC	Agreement on Removing Work Permits for intracompany transfers and service suppliers concluded; intracompany transfers in the WB increased; facilitated inter-Party supply of services;
Regional Investment Area				
6.1. Regional investment promotion	1. Develop regional value propositions for 2-3 priority target sectors/value chains, including a regional promotional webpage (www.investinsee.com), under the proper denomination and labelling of each economy	1 st half of 2021	RCC, WB6 CIF, WBG, EBRD	2-3 strategic sectors/value chains selected based on clearly defined criteria to be agreed upon by the JWGI; Developed work programme on regional investment promotion which will be done through Sub-working group on Investment Promotion which will be established under JWGI;
	2. Implement a regional investor lead generation campaign, including investment roadshows in key target markets, participation in relevant global and regional industry events, and one-on-one meetings with potential investors	2022	RCC, WB6 CIF, WBG	A set of regional promotional materials completed, including online sector brochures, investor presentations, pitch books; Regional promotional webpage established in line with international best practice standards; New investor leads in targeted priority sectors/value chains generated; the lead generation campaign will target firms in priority sectors/value chains and take into account the specificities and differences among the WB6 economies; New FDI attracted in targeted priority sectors/value chains; Visibility of the region increased in key target markets for investment attraction as measured by media mentions;
	3. Organise a high-level investor conference in the WB6 region to promote the region to targeted multinational corporations (MNCs)	2023	RCC, WB6 CIF, WBG	Concreted business and investment opportunities in the region presented to at least 50 key decision makers from MNCs in targeted priority sectors/value chains; Three investment conferences to promote foreign investments into the region organised;

<i>Priority area</i>	<i>Regional actions</i>	<i>Timetable</i>	<i>Supporting organisation</i>	<i>Expected results</i>
	4. Promote investment opportunities in the region to investors from the region to increase intra-regional investments and support the expansion of existing and revitalisation of strategic regional value chains	2023	RCC, WB6 CIF, WBG, EBRD	Intra-regional investments increased to support the expansion/ revitalisation of targeted priority regional value chains;
6.2. Regional investment policy reforms	1. Negotiate economy-specific International Investment Agreements (IIAs) between EU and each of Western Balkans Six economies based on the Regionally Accepted Standards for IIA negotiations	2024	EC, WBG, RCC	Enhanced alignment with the investment standards of the EU; Modernised investment policy framework in line with the EU standards; Enhanced investor confidence as measured by various international reports;
	2. Develop regional guidance criteria and procedures for screening mechanisms at the economy level for quick reaction to FDI concerns based on the emerging EU standards and policy, and taking into account the individual economy and region's policy priorities	2023	EC, WBG, RCC	Enhanced alignment with the investment standards of the EU; Modernised investment policy guidance, taking into account as much as possible EU standards;
	3. Deepen regional cooperation and peer-to-peer exchange for capacity building in international investment treaties, ISDS and other relevant topics for investment policy reforms	2024	WBG, RCC, GIZ	Enhanced capacities of investment experts in the region;
	4. Develop a regional database of investment incentives to enhance incentives transparency	2022-2023	WBG, RCC, CEFTA	Enhanced transparency and predictability of incentive policies;
6.3. Regional investment retention and expansion	1. Establish regular exchange of information between Investment Promotion Agencies (IPAs) with the aim to increase resilience to global shocks and facilitate re-investments in strategic sectors/value chains	2021	WBG, RCC, WB6 CIF	Strategic anchor investments de-risked and retained in targeted sectors/value chains; Re-investments in regional value chains increased;
	2. Review COVID-19 response measures taken by the WB	2021	WBG, RCC	Risk mitigation enhanced, leading to lower risk of costly

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	economies for possible mid- to long-term ISDS risks and other legal risks			investor state disputes (ISDS);
	3. Lower the risk of costly investor state disputes (ISDS) by strengthening (improving/establishing where non-existent) the grievance mechanisms and building on RIRA/IRAP activities	2021	WBG, RCC	Enhanced investor confidence and re-investments;
Regional Digital Area				
7.1. Digital infrastructure and connectivity	1. Provide fixed broadband internet access for the vast majority of households	2024	RCC, EC, IFIs	Upgraded digital infrastructure, including through increased uptake in WBIF funds and other potential instruments with particular focus on covering white areas; Fixed broadband internet access for at least 95% of households in each economy provided; Fixed broadband internet access for at least 90% of households with the speed of at least 30Mbps in each economy provided; Fixed broadband internet access for at least 75% of households with the speed of at least 100Mbps upgradable to 1Gbps in each economy provided;
	2. Establish Broadband Competence Offices (BCOs) in WB (where they do not exist) and strengthen their capacities to support broadband deployment	2021	RCC, EC	Strengthened capacities of WB BCOs including through setting up one-to-one cooperation with EU BCO, their mutual cooperation and greater integration in EU BCO network;
	3. Interconnection of academic and research networks in WB6, with the support and cooperation of GEANT	2022	RCC, EC	Interconnectivity of academic and research networks in WB6 achieved; Regional collaboration and innovations encouraged;
	4. Develop 5G roadmap for Western Balkans and ensure effective implementation in line with the timeline defined therein	2023	RCC, EC	5G strategy(ies)/Action Plan(s) developed in each economy; Agreed regional actions (example: aligned time and steps in harmonisation and assignment of European 5G pioneer bands, coordinated approach on selected aspects of 5G awarding, i.e. minimum licence duration, use of harmonised spectrum, etc.); Cover at least one main regional corridor with 5G by the end of 2025 Cover key industrial cities with 5G in each WB6 by the end of 2023
	5. Reduce roaming charges intra-WB6 and EU-WB through implementation of WB Roaming Agreement and the Roadmap for lowering the roaming charges between EU and WB			

<i>Priority area</i>	<i>Regional actions</i>	<i>Timetable</i>	<i>Supporting organisation</i>	<i>Expected results</i>
	5.1. Complete the final phase of the Regional Roaming Agreement	2021	RCC, EC	Zero retail roaming charges within WB6 as of 1 July 2021;
	5.2. Finalise the Roadmap for lowering the roaming charges between EU and WB and effective implementation in line with the timeline defined therein	2021	RCC, EC, WB6 CIF, telecom operators	Reduced roaming charges between WB and EU in line with milestones agreed in the Roadmap;
7.2. Digital skills and competence	1. Develop digital skills strategies and agree on short and mid-term regional actions for digital upskilling	2022-2023	RCC, EC, ITU, ETF, ERI SEE	Regional actions to support closing of digital skills gap defined; Gaps/needs for digital skills for targeted groups (citizens, start-ups, youth, women, public administration, etc.) mapped;
	2. Establish a repository of courses and other training programmes developed by different organisations, including MOOCs with established universities based on WB gap analysis and digital skills needs for targeted groups	2022	RCC, EC, ReSPA, ERI SEE, ETF, WB6 CIF	Increased digital skills for targeted groups (i.e. start-ups/youth, adults, basic digital skills for citizens, etc.); Pilot upskilling activities to address ICT market needs conducted by 2021; At least 50 people per economy trained annually;
	3. Develop Digital Education Action Plans and promote equality in access, in particular for disadvantaged groups and minorities, particularly Roma	2022	RCC, EC, ERI SEE	Aligned actions in digital education in the region; Aligned standards with EU Digital Competence Framework;
7.3. Digital economy in the era of new ICT technologies	1. Organise regular high-level meetings, including Annual Digital Summit, to ensure digital agenda stands at the forefront of regional transformation	Annually	RCC in cooperation with all partners	High-level government-business collaboration on digital transformation challenges maintained through Annual Digital Summit; Competitive, innovative digital ideas and solutions based on regionally agreed targets/business needs promoted;
	2. Align standards for metadata for open data at regional level based on EU standards to be implemented throughout the region and foster open data principle	2023	RCC, CEFTA, EC, ReSPA	Standards for open data based on EU applied at regional level; Use of data for governmental and wider public sector needs and research enabled;
	3. Reach an agreement on regional interoperability of toll services in WB	2022-2024	RCC, TCT, WB6 CIF	Regional interoperability of toll services enhanced; Data exchange criteria and rules agreed; Shortened travel time for citizens and transport operators while crossing throughout the region;
	4. Agree on principles and standards used for smart cities, based on EU standards, with a view to ensure data and services interoperability	2023	RCC, EBRD, NALAS	Improved exchange of standards applied for key services, best practices, etc.; Established network of smart cities across WB;
	5. Undertake regional actions to promote Artificial Intelligence (AI) in selected aspects and based on EU practices	2024	RCC, EC, WB6 CIF, ITU, ISO, UNESCO,	WB High-level Group on AI established; Aspects of AI agreed at regional level; Action plan prepared for the agreed aspects; Synergies with EU-led activities on AI ensured;

<i>Priority area</i>	<i>Regional actions</i>	<i>Timetable</i>	<i>Supporting organisation</i>	<i>Expected results</i>
			OECD	
	6. Undertake regional activities to facilitate participation of WB in EU HPC	2023-2024	RCC, EC, WB6 CIF	All WB economies connected with EU HPC by 2024; Increased uptake of WBIF for HPC projects and investments;
	7. Undertake regional activities to improve availability, analysis and monitoring of high quality digital economy statistics, building on EU's DESI and ITU's ICT Development Index	2022	RCC, Eurostat, EC ITU	Progress regarding regional digital competitiveness tracked; Priority areas for data collection to calculate DESI indicators identified; Use of data collection for reporting purpose enhanced;
	8. Regional cooperation in regard to exchange of good practice in the field of digital transformation, in particular e-government	Annually	RCC	New and improved already existing forms of partnerships established, based on the dissemination of knowledge and mutual strengthening of capacities needed for digital transformation and support for the development of e-government; At least 2 regional events organised annually;
7.4. Trust and security	1. Agree on minimum technical standards and specifications to allow an exchange of data and documents, and conduct pilot activities	2021 Pilots 2022-2023	RCC, CEFTA, EC	Facilitated movement of services across the region; Exchange of data and documents piloted;
	2. Align regional actions to ensure the protection of personal data and privacy in Western Balkans, based on EU standards	2023	RCC, EC	Protection of personal data and privacy in a uniform manner throughout the region ensured;
	3. Develop mentoring programmes for WB CSIRTs and other institutions as longer-term cooperation with advanced CSIRTs and other partners	2023	RCC, EC	Upgraded capabilities of economy and other authorities (primarily CSIRTs) to prevent and detain cyber threats, to deal with cyber incidents and attacks and ensure quick recovery process in case of incidents;
	4. Strengthen cybersecurity capacities in the WB region through cooperation with ENISA	2021-2024	RCC and ENISA and interested EU Member States	Increased capacities of CSIRTs, technical education and training, common methodology of assessment, strengthened cooperation and information sharing to protect infrastructure and networks from cyber threats; Joint events organised, information sharing and regular assessment of progress ensured;
	5. Enhance resilience of cyberspace in the WB through increased participation of business community in strengthening cybersecurity capacities in WB	2022-2023	RCC, WB6 CIF, SOCs	Increased support and cooperation with the private sector, cyber specialists and other stakeholders to support information sharing and knowledge exchange; Cooperation models developed to better and adequately address cyber security in the region;
Regional Industrial and Innovation Area				

<i>Priority area</i>	<i>Regional actions</i>	<i>Timetable</i>	<i>Supporting organisation</i>	<i>Expected results</i>
8.1. Regional innovation	1. Introduce Western Balkans Innovation and Research Platform	2021-2024	RCC, EC, EUREKA, WB6 CIF, WEF	Integration of the region in the European Research Area; Facilitated establishment of regional centres of research excellence; Encouraged alignment with the EU Open Science practices; Assistance extended to the WB6 economies to develop and implement their smart specialisation strategies; Regional cooperation promoted between the quintuple helix actors to boost economic sustainability and transition towards green economy; Facilitated exchange of information and good practices with the European Institute of Innovation & Technology; Development of entrepreneurial universities in the region fostered; Annual regional foresight reporting and linking with the future EU-wide Foresight Network enabled;
	2. Support development of regional innovation infrastructure	2021-2024	RCC, EC, EUREKA, WB6 CIF	A Regional Network of Digital Innovation Hubs created; Facilitated growth and establishment of incubators and accelerators; Networking of technology transfer offices of research organisations in the region encouraged;
	3. Establish Regional Diaspora Knowledge Transfer Initiative	2022	RCC, EC, EUREKA, WB6 CIF	Existing initiatives at economy levels to tap into considerable potential of the region's diaspora scaled up; Encouraged brain circulation; Diaspora experts encouraged to transfer knowledge and build capacity to foster innovation and entrepreneurship; Deepened regional economic cooperation and integration in the EU Internal Market owing to transfer of knowledge from the WB diaspora residing in the EU Member States;
	4. Launch Regional Early Stage Innovation Funding Scheme	2021	RCC, EC, EUREKA, WB6 CIF	A new model of support to start-ups and MSMEs with innovative ideas in attractive niches such as green economy, clean energy production & manufacturing, safe food production ensuring Europe's food self-sustainability, etc. created and implemented; Private capital from businesses in the region and beyond mobilised; MSMEs recruited through quality pipeline for existing equity-based expansion financing and guaranty schemes financed under WB ENIF;
	5. Set up Regional Network of Women in STEM for the Next Decade	2021	RCC, EC EUREKA,	Encouraged increased participation of women in STEM fields by 2030 through:

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			COST, WB6 CIF	Awareness raised on the importance of women participating in STEM for sustainable economic development; A deeper STEM talent pool created in the region; Girls guided towards tech careers by giving role models and teaching future-proof skills;
8.2. Regional industry development	1. Conclude Regional Supply Chain Protocol as a result of a regional supplier development programme within the Regional Investment Area	2021	RCC, CEFTA, WB6 CIF	Regional economic interconnectedness fostered by overcoming enterprise supply chains challenges in the post-COVID era; The effects of coronavirus on the region's businesses mitigated; Safeguarding supply chains against the future disruptions; Enabling complex collaboration between enterprises in the region;
	2. Upgrade existing regional SMEs online platform www.wb6cif.eu including creation of market intelligence database for key product/market portfolios	2022	WB6 CIF, RCC, EBRD	Important information provided to WB SMEs to be able to compete internationally; Support provided to WB6 CIF members in delivering services supporting internationalisation and innovation of SMEs fostered in the region; Joint database created and used by at least 300 companies by the end of 2022; Regional automotive industry database developed;
	3. Support growth of SMEs in niche markets by fostering cluster cooperation and networking of women and youth	2021-2024	WB6 CIF, RCC, EC, EN Contact points, EBRD	Pilot projects based on regional industrial niche strengths supported; Mapping of manufacturers clusters in the Western Balkans economies; Establishment of Regional Manufacturers Cluster facilitated; Western Balkans Women Entrepreneurs Network established;
	4. Implement a regional supplier development programme to facilitate linkages of domestic suppliers and multinationals between Western Balkans Six in targeted sectors/supply chains	2023	WBG, RCC, WB6 CIF, EBRD	Increased number and value of international/regional supplier contracts through enhanced supplier linkages and opportunities for domestic suppliers between Western Balkans Six; Technical assistance provided to SMEs in WB6 to support their integration in European and global value chains (by WB CIF); Joint participation of WB6 SMEs in three fairs/business events and three B2Bs and B2F events organised to facilitate linkages within supply chains (by WB CIF);

<i>Priority area</i>	<i>Regional actions</i>	<i>Timetable</i>	<i>Supporting organisation</i>	<i>Expected results</i>
8.3. Automotive industry value chains	1. Create regional automotive digital training plan	2022	WB6 CIF, RCC	Links with the global automotive industry partners established to co-create automotive specific digital training modules and increase employability and competitiveness;
	2. Map existing/establish regional automotive cluster initiatives	2021	WB6 CIF, CEFTA, RCC	Clustering in regional automotive industry fostered; Regional automotive industry's competitive advantages developed; Automotive value chains upgraded to absorb key upcoming trends in automotive industry, such as electric and autonomous driving; Encouraged relocation of production to the region.
	3. Introduce Regional Automotive Manufacturing Fair	2022	WB6 CIF, RCC	Development of regional automotive industry fostered by promoting the existing automotive industry potential in the region; Direct regional cooperation encouraged, aimed at entering more demanding global markets; Facilitated multiplier effect and linking with upstream and downstream industries;
8.4. Green & circular economy value chains	1. Establish Regional Framework on Common Standards in Circular Economy/ sustainable production and consumption	2022	WB6 CIF, RCC, EIB	Green and sustainability standards as a tool for effective implementation of circular economy principles promoted; frameworks and support tools related to the implementation of circular economy projects developed;
	2. Create Regional Green & Circular Economy Roadmap	2023	WB6 CIF, RCC, EIB	Regional green & circular economy mapping completed; Green & circular economy platform of stakeholders established; Green & circular economy monitoring mechanisms aimed at encouraging environmentally sustainable economic growth introduced;
	3. Reach a common agreement on Green & Circular business value chains in the Western Balkans through an MoU	2022	WB6 CIF, RCC	Support provided in identifying and building of green & circular regional value chains to seize untapped economic potential aimed at supporting transition towards green & circular economy; Green & Circular Industry Advisory Council of the Western Balkans created to spur investments in green technologies; WB6 integrated into EU raw materials supply chains; Innovation along raw materials value chains, in particular at extraction, processing and metallurgy stages, supported for more sustainable and greener production;

<i>Priority area</i>	<i>Regional actions</i>	<i>Timetable</i>	<i>Supporting organisation</i>	<i>Expected results</i>
	4. Facilitate establishment of a regional Green Start-up Network based on already existing domestic start-up programmes	2022	RCC	Existing start-up ecosystems to identify key business pitfalls and help ease business networked; Start-up coordination committee established; WB6 Forum for start-ups established;
8.5. Agro-food industry development	1. Align key processes with the EU's Farm to Fork Strategy	2021-2024	WB6CIF, RCC, EC	"Farm to Fork" regional roadmap developed; Increased public awareness in the WB6 on sustainable food production and consumption, in line with the EU Green Deal and the EU Farm to Fork Strategy; Environmental standards promoted through sustainable food production and processing;
	2. Support marketing of EU quality standards in the agro-food industry	2021-2024	WB6CIF, RCC, EC	Branding and promotion of regional products strengthened; Increased regional awareness about the EU food quality standards; EU quality standards introduced and implemented in order to foster export potential of regional products to the EU market;
	3. Strengthen agro-food education and innovation systems	2021-2024	WB6CIF, RCC, EC	Increased incentives for regional innovation and technology diffusion for increased productivity; Technologies and techniques that increase productivity promoted; University partnerships with public and private entities related to agro-food established, both within and outside the region; Regional key gap areas in agro-food development identified and addressed;
8.6. Creative industry	1. Support development of creative industries	2021-2024	WB6 CIF, RCC, EC	Film industry encouraged; Increased contribution of film industry to overall growth and jobs creation; Investments into the creative industries infrastructure fostered; New sources of financing of creative industries developed; Increased number of regionally-based business suppliers able to provide quality services to the industry; Online regional knowledge bank created;
8.7. Metal processing industry	1. Support competitiveness in European value chains	2021-2024	WB6 CIF, RCC	Partnerships with the EU partners established; High-quality secondary and higher education curricula that meet the demands of metal industry (design, product

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				engineering, use of carbon capture and storage technologies, energy management, recycling, etc.) developed;
	2. Encourage investments in energy-efficient and modern technologies to ensure transition towards green economy	2021-2024	WB6 CIF, RCC	Energy management systems to improve metal processing industry's energy efficiency implemented;
8.8. Sustainable tourism	1. Sustainable regional tourism development and management framework	2024	RCC	Common regional framework for sustainable tourism development and management developed and adopted; Sustainable tourism road maps for pilot destinations (6) developed and under implementation; Sites and facilities certification with internationally recognised sustainable tourism schemes adopted/agreed on;
	2. Integrate existing and new sustainable transnational tourism products into EU tourism route and promote trail networks, including branding and promotion of regional tourism product in the EU and international markets	2021-2024	RCC (supported by CEFTA)	Certification with EU tourism route networks initiated (i.e. CoE European cultural routes, Leading Quality Trials) - at least three routes integrated; Common regional identity (brand) developed and implemented; Regional product promoted at international markets; Increased awareness of the regional tourism destination and increased number of tourists from the EU;
	3. Establish Western Balkans Tourism Crisis Committee (WBTCC) and develop Tourism Emergency Plans and Crises Management Strategies	2022	RCC	Tourism Emergency Plans and Crisis Management Strategies developed for each WB6 economy (mutually complementary) and emergency/crisis protocols of cooperation adopted;
	4. Establish informal regional tourism forum to support digital transformation and exchange of good practices, boosting the innovation capacity of entrepreneurs and SMEs	2022-2024	RCC	Informal forum (virtual) established, built upon the regional Joint Platform for Tour Operators and Services (JPTOS initiative enabling quick exchange of best practices, cooperation opportunities and strengthening industry digital capacity);
	5. Develop common occupational standards for tourism	2023	RCC, CEFTA, ERI SEE,	Mutual recognition of qualifications and skill certifications for tourism industry enabled;
	6. Pilot mutually-recognised practical training programmes	2022-2024	RCC, ERI SEE	
	7. Improve regional tourism data and statistics	2022-2024	RCC (supported by CEFTA)	Tourism data and statistics improved; Exchange of data protocols adopted; Improvement in data collection, analysis and sharing towards establishing an environment that would support introduction of TSA, once the domestic conditions are met.