

CEFTA WEEK 2025: Trading Together, Towards Europe

AGENDA

**Location Venue - Emerald Hotel, Pristina
1-3 December 2025**

Foreword

Organised under the theme Trading Together, Towards Europe, this year's edition of CEFTA Week focuses on the contribution of CEFTA to competitiveness, digital transformation, and gradual integration into the European Union. It will bring together decision-makers and experts to shape policy discussions on how trade cooperation and market integration under CEFTA can deliver tangible benefits for businesses and citizens while supporting alignment with the EU acquis.

During three days, participants will engage in discussions on CEFTA's evolving role in a changing trade environment, exploring pathways for gradual and functional EU integration and highlighting how CEFTA contributes to the implementation of the Common Regional Market 2025 to 2028 and the EU Growth Plan for the Western Balkans and for Moldova. The programme will feature the main conference on 3 December, complemented by meetings of CEFTA bodies and dedicated side events on 1 and 2 December. Through high-level discussions, technical panels, and exchanges with young people and the private sector, CEFTA Week 2025 will underline CEFTA's role as a framework for inclusive dialogue and evidence-based policymaking.

Underscoring the political and economic significance of CEFTA cooperation, the high-level dialogue will bring together ministers from CEFTA Parties for an exchange on shared priorities and the path towards deeper economic integration. The discussion will explore CEFTA's role in fostering economic resilience, competitiveness, and EU convergence in a period of global uncertainty.

The discussions will focus on policy areas where CEFTA plays a key role in translating commitments into practical measures. These include trade facilitation and customs modernisation, the development of digital and paperless trade systems, and the establishment of recognition frameworks that enable smoother movement of goods, services, and people, such as the recognition of professional qualifications, trusted operators, and electronic signatures. The programme will also highlight the potentials of enhanced cooperation in areas such as e-commerce, consumer protection, and digital innovation, and provide space to reflect on priorities for implementing the new Common Regional Market Action Plan for 2025 to 2028.

CEFTA Week 2025 represents an important moment to take stock of progress, share perspectives, and shape the future direction of trade cooperation within CEFTA. It also marks the conclusion of the CEFTA Chairmanship 2025 and the start of the Chairmanship for 2026, reaffirming the shared commitment of all CEFTA Parties to advance economic integration and to move together towards the EU.

1 DECEMBER 2025**17:30-19:00 From Vision to Action: The CEFTA Path to the EU**

Serving as the opening event of CEFTA Week, this conversation between the CEFTA Chair and the Director of the CEFTA Secretariat with students offers a forward-looking reflection on the CEFTA's path to the EU. The session invites young people to share their visions of the next ten years, discussing how deeper economic integration can accelerate progress towards EU membership and what changes they hope to see for their generation as CEFTA continues to foster economic and social progress along the way.

Participants:

- 30-40 students (*Focus on faculties of Economy, Law, Political sciences*)
- Rozeta Hajdari, Minister of Industry, Entrepreneurship and Trade
- Pranvera Kastrati, Director, CEFTA Secretariat

19:00**Welcome cocktail reception****2 DECEMBER 2025****CEFTA Bodies meetings (invitation only)**

09.00 – 12.30 CEFTA Committee of Contact Points Meeting

14.00 – 16.30 CEFTA Joint Committee Meeting

19:00**Dinner Hosted by the CEFTA Chair-in-Office 2025**

3 DECEMBER 2025***CEFTA Week 2025 Conference: Trading Together, Towards Europe*****9:00-9:30 Welcome and opening remarks**

Description: Brief introductory remarks to set the scene for the CEFTA Week and outline some of the results of the outgoing and plans of the incoming Chair-in-Office, in addition to providing a broader EU perspective.

Master of ceremonies

- Rozeta Hajdari, Minister of Industry, Entrepreneurship and Trade
- Valentina Superti, Director, Directorate-General for Enlargement and Eastern Neighbourhood (online)
- Amer Kapetanovic, Secretary General, Regional Cooperation Council
- Matej Zakonjsek, Director, Transport Community
- Pranvera Kastrati, Director, CEFTA Secretariat

9:30-10:45 CEFTA in a Changing World - What Future for Regional Trade Cooperation?

Description: Moderated high-level panel discussion dedicated to exploring the role of CEFTA and regional trade agreements in an era of heightened uncertainty and shifting trade patterns and alliances. The opening session will set the tone for CEFTA Week 2025 by addressing how regional trade agreements such as CEFTA contribute to economic resilience, competitiveness, and EU convergence at a time of global volatility. Participants will explore the strategic role of CEFTA within the Common Regional Market 2.0 and its alignment with the EU Growth Plan for the Western Balkans. The discussion will highlight key achievements in CEFTA's regional trade integration, emerging challenges from supply-chain disruptions, geopolitical tensions, and climate-driven trade policies, as well as CEFTA's contribution to building a predictable and rules-based trade environment grounded in EU standards.

Panellists:

- Pranvera Kastrati, CEFTA Director (moderator)
- Rozeta Hajdari, Minister of Industry, Entrepreneurship and Trade, CEFTA Chair-in-Office
- Delina Ibrahimaj, Minister of Economy and Innovation, incoming CEFTA Chair-in-Office 2026
- Zoran Dimitrovski, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade
- Ivona Savićević, Director General, Ministry of Economic Development

Chair-in-Office Handover and Family Photo

Description: A symbolic handover of Chair-in-Office roles with a handshake by the two ministers, followed by a family photo.

- Rozeta Hajdari, Minister of Industry, Entrepreneurship and Trade, CEFTA Chair-in-Office
- Delina Ibrahimaj, Minister of Economy and Innovation, incoming CEFTA Chair-in-Office 2026

10:45-11:00 Coffee break**11:00-12:15 Gradual and Functional EU Integration of CEFTA**

Description: This moderated panel discussion will explore practical pathways for the CEFTA region's gradual and functional integration into the EU, focusing on how it can align with EU policies and benefit from "phased" integration even before full membership. The discussion will highlight strategies to deepen integration into the EU single market in incremental steps - for example, participating in select EU programs, adopting EU standards early, and cooperating in specific sectors - to bring tangible benefits sooner ("access before accession"). The panel will appeal to a broad policy audience by linking technical integration steps with the wider EU accession perspective, emphasizing the economic and political benefits of closer integration for citizens and businesses.

Panellists:

- Drita Abdiu Halili, Former State Secretary & Deputy Chief Negotiator with the European Union (moderator)
- David Hudson, Senior Expert, Regional Strategy and Investments, DG ENEST
- Tanja Mišćević, Professor, Faculty of Political Science, Belgrade University (online)
- Odeta Barbullushi, Resident Professor at College of Europe, Former Sherpa and Advisor to the Prime Minister on EU integration and Regional Cooperation.
- Jeton Zulfaj, Sherpa, Prime Minister's Office
- Sanja Praštalo, Commercial Director, Mikroelektronika AD (online)

12.15-12.45 Beyond Digitalisation: AI as a Catalyst for Transformative Trade

Description: An inspirational presentation exploring how artificial intelligence is reshaping trade and redefining the way trade systems operate and evolve. It will highlight AI's potential to optimise customs, streamline procedures, and support evidence-based policymaking for a more resilient and adaptive CEFTA market. The session will show how AI-driven solutions can help CEFTA Parties move beyond traditional trade facilitation towards smarter, data-driven decision-making, fostering more competitive, sustainable, and integrated markets.

Mark Vasić, Head of International Regulatory Affairs, Deutsche Telekom

12:45-14.00 Lunch**14:00-15:00 Make Trade Easier - Paperless, Faster, Recognised (A Practical Trade Facilitation Case Study)**

Description: This technical panel will showcase a practical example of trading a specific good across CEFTA, highlighting how new trade facilitation measures (like electronic data exchange, “paperless” processing, and recognition of standards) can make trade faster and simpler. The title reflects the key aspects: moving away from burdensome paperwork through digital systems, speeding up procedures, and having certificates or authorizations recognised by different administrations. By walking through a realistic end-to-end trade scenario, the panel will illustrate the complexities businesses currently face and how initiatives like SEED+ (Systematic Exchange of Electronic Data) are helping overcome these hurdles. This concrete approach will appeal not only to technical experts but also to a broader policy audience by bringing abstract trade reforms to life in an accessible way.

Panellists:

- Edna Karadza, SEED+ project manager (moderator)
- Mate Gjorgjevski, Desk Officer in charge of transport facilitation
- Pavel Shljahov, Manager, Res-Kom
- Ljupco Celevski, Veterinary Inspector
- Bajram Cakiqi, Head of system and support, Asycuda, customs administration
- Flamur Kadriu, Director of Public Health

15:00-15:15 Coffee Break**15:15-15:45 Mini Debate: Achieving Single Market-Style Recognition by 2026**

Description: A fast-paced Oxford-style mini debate focusing (for example) on whether CEFTA can reach a stage where at least three industrial sectors operate with recognition of standards or qualifications akin to the EU Single Market by 2026. One speaker will argue “Yes, it’s achievable and underway,” and another will argue “No, it’s unlikely by 2026,” providing a clash of perspectives.

Panellists:

- Olivera Ceni Bardiqi, Trade Facilitation Expert, CEFTA Secretariat, (moderator)
- Boguslaw Gertruda, Head of Political, Economic and European Union Section
- Arieta Vula Pozhegu, Executive Director, Wood Processors Association

15:45-16:30 Change through Synergy - Partners in Support of Reforms

Description: This panel brings together development partners (“minor donors” and regional institutions) to discuss how to implement needed policy and institutional changes in the region through better synergy and coordination. CEFTA will act as a framing actor, outlining the reform agenda (e.g. implementing trade agreements, regulatory alignment, capacity building) that requires support. The panel’s aim is to identify ways multiple donors/programs can work in concert rather than in silos, ensuring that external assistance is aligned with priorities and that reforms are implemented effectively on the ground. The discussion will appeal to a broad policy audience by highlighting concrete examples of donor coordination improving outcomes (avoiding overlap, pooling resources) and by showing how international support translates into real-world change for the CEFTA’s EU integration and economic development goals.

Panellists:

- Tanja Boskovic, Head of the Project, RegioTrade, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH (moderator)
- Maja Handjiska Trendafilova, Director, Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA)
- Denise Penello Rial, Economic Affairs Officer, UNCTAD
- David Piegazki, General Secretary, WB6 Chamber Investment Forum
- Beate K. Elsaesser, Head of Cooperation, Embassy of Switzerland.
- Fatmir Curri, Senior Expert, Regional Cooperation Council
- Irfan Lipovica, Director, Directorate of Accreditation

16:30-16:45 OECD Economic Convergence Scoreboard

Description: This session will present the OECD Economic Convergence Scoreboard for the Western Balkans, a new tool to regularly track how the WB economies are progressing toward convergence with the EU and the OECD. Built on more than a decade of OECD policy assessments, the Scoreboard helps policy-makers identify priority areas where targeted reforms can accelerate progress.

Marijana Petrovic, Team Lead and Senior Policy Analyst

Closing remarks, Pranvera Kastrati, CEFTA Director

17:00-19:00 Cocktail