CEFTA WEEK
2026 CHAIRMANSHIP

20 years CEFTA
CONNECTING MARKETS

CEFTA WEEK 2026

20 Years of CEFTA: Connecting Markets

PROGRAMME

Tirana, Albania · 9–11 December 2026

DAY 1 **Wednesday, 9 December 2026**
Palace of Brigades, Rruga E Elbasanit 58, Tirana

DAY 2 **Thursday, 10 December 2026**
MAK Albania Hotel, Sheshi Italia 2, Tirana

DAY 3 **Friday, 11 December 2026**
MAK Albania Hotel, Sheshi Italia 2, Tirana

Programme as of 12 November 2026

Co-funded by
the European Union

DAY 1 Wednesday, 9 December 2026

Palace of Brigades · Rruga E Elbasanit 58, Tirana

14:30 – 15:00 *Registration*

15:00 – 15:30 Opening Ceremony – 20 Years of CEFTA: Connecting Markets

Master of Ceremonies: tbd

Formal opening of CEFTA Week and of the twentieth anniversary of the signing of CEFTA 2006. Open with a film commissioned for the event showing CEFTA's evolution and achievements. Short remarks setting out what two decades of CEFTA have delivered for economic operators and people and recognising CEFTA's role in preparing the Parties for EU membership.

PROPOSED PARTICIPANTS

- Prime Minister of the Party holding the Chairmanship (tbc)
- European Commissioner for Enlargement (tbc)
- Amer Kapetanović, Secretary General, Regional Cooperation Council
- Pranvera Kastrati, Director, CEFTA Secretariat

Moderated by the Master of Ceremonies

15:30 – 16:15 CEFTA Research Award: Presentation of the Award

Award ceremony recognising the authors of the three winning papers, one in each thematic area of the CEFTA Research Award. Each winner will briefly take the stage to present the main policy recommendations arising from their research. The ceremony will recognise the contribution of academic research to CEFTA cooperation and encourage closer links between research and policymaking.

PROPOSED PARTICIPANTS

- Delina Ibrahimaj, Minister of Economy and Innovation, Albania
- Miodrag Milosavljević, Deputy Director, Open Society Foundations Western Balkans
- Sofia Moreira de Sousa, EU Ambassador to Albania (tbc)
- Pranvera Kastrati, Director, CEFTA Secretariat
- Three awarded authors, one per thematic area

Moderated by the Master of Ceremonies

16:15 – 16:30 *Coffee break*

16:30 – 18:00 Ministerial Panel: From CEFTA to the Single Market

High-level panel bringing together Ministers from the CEFTA Parties and the European Commission. The panel aims to take stock of what twenty years of CEFTA have built, looking at the results already visible to economic operators, such as waiting time savings at crossing points, the growth of trade within CEFTA, etc. Ministers will share their vision on the way forward focusing on areas where implementation of the Common Regional Market Action Plan 2025–2028 is still ongoing and on the operational issues that need to be addressed. The panel will also inform on priorities of CEFTA Parties to make gradual integration into the EU Single Market practical and operational.

PROPOSED PARTICIPANTS

- Ministers of the CEFTA Parties
- Valentina Superti, Director for Western Balkans, Directorate-General for Enlargement and Eastern Neighbourhood (tbc)

Moderated by Pranvera Kastrati, Director, CEFTA Secretariat

18:00 – 18:20 Chair-in-Office Handover and Family Photo

Handover of the Chair-in-Office role from the 2026 to the 2027 Chairmanship, followed by a family photo.

18:30 **Welcome Cocktail Reception**

DAY 2 Thursday, 10 December 2026

CEFTA Week Conference · MAK Albania Hotel · Sheshi Italia 2, Tirana

09:30 – 10:00 *Registration*

10:00 – 11:30 20 Years of CEFTA: Results That Connect Markets

An evidence-led opening panel marking the 20th anniversary of the CEFTA Agreement. The CEFTA Secretariat will present selected findings from "20 Years, 20 Results", drawing on figures and milestones in intra-CEFTA trade, trade facilitation, and services market opening. The panel will discuss what these results show about CEFTA's contribution to economic integration among the Parties, where implementation gaps remain and what the Parties should prioritise next. It will also consider how cooperation within CEFTA can support gradual integration with the EU Single Market.

CEFTA Secretariat, presentation of a video with results and data

PROPOSED PARTICIPANTS

- Giorgio Zecca, Directorate-General for Enlargement and Eastern Neighbourhood
- Representative from a CEFTA Party
- Representative from Academia
- Representatives of research institutes

Moderated by: tbd

11:30 – 12:30 CEFTA in Practice: One Business, Seven Markets

A story-led session following the journey of a company across the CEFTA Parties, showing where procedures have become easier and where obstacles remain. Rather than treating certification, digital procedures, trust services, payments and consumer confidence as separate technical topics, the session follows them in the order a business actually encounters them: establishing a presence, having qualifications and certificates recognised, moving goods across crossing points, signing and exchanging documents electronically, receiving payment, and resolving problems when they arise.

PROPOSED PARTICIPANTS

- An exporter from North Macedonia
- An importer from Montenegro
- Representative of veterinary and plant administration, Montenegro
- Representative of an administration responsible for recognition of trust services, North Macedonia
- Representative of the WB6 Chamber Investment Forum

Moderated by the CEFTA Secretariat

12:30 – 13:00 Oxford-style Debate: CEFTA's Next Step – Deeper Commitments or Faster Delivery?

Where should the CEFTA Parties focus their efforts next to give businesses greater opportunities to sell goods, provide services and invest across CEFTA? Two speakers take opposing positions on the motion "This House believes that the next phase of CEFTA integration should prioritise new commitments to open markets further."

Following opening arguments, the speakers respond directly to each other and take questions from the audience. Votes before and after the debate show whether the arguments have changed participants'

views.

PROPOSED PARTICIPANTS

- One speaker supporting the motion, able to identify a market opportunity that requires a new CEFTA commitment and explain its value to businesses
- One speaker opposing the motion, able to make the business case for faster delivery of existing commitments

Moderated by the Master of Ceremonies

13:00 – 14:00 ***Lunch***

14:00 – 15:00

From Trade Potential to Value Chains: Unlocking Business Opportunities across CEFTA

Panel organised by WB6 Chamber Investment Forum

As preparation of the Analysis for mapping the supply chain potential in the Western Balkans region is underway, WB6 CIF is using this opportunity to present its findings and organize discussion with the business community, relevant stakeholders and decision makers, academia and trade facilitation bodies. The primary aim of this analysis is to provide actionable data-driven insights and strategic pathways to enhance intraregional trade within the Western Balkan six economies by mapping the potential regional value chains and to identify high-potential sectors for sustainable development of Western Balkan six region. The analysis seeks to foster stronger regional business cooperation, reduce dependency on imports by boosting intraregional trade activities, and support economic diversification across the region by boosting export through enhanced intraregional business cooperation and the creation of new regional value chains. The mapping of the regional value chains with higher potential for boosting further regional cooperation of Western Balkan six will be based on complex and data-driven methodology (trade patterns, supply, demand, market access and sustainable development indicators) initially developed by ITC which include more than 5,300 products, at the 6-digit level of the Harmonized System (HS), classified into inputs and outputs.

Presentation of the study: Mapping Trade Opportunities and Regional Value Chains in the Western Balkans (14:00-14:30)

- International Institute for business analysis Skopje - Prof. Darko Lazarov, Aleksandar Konatar

Panel Discussion: Key Findings and Policy Recommendations (14:30-15:00)

- David Piegazki, WB6 CIF General Secretary
- Sophia Kluge, Regional Project Coordinator-Chamber Partnership Western Balkan
- Representative of CEFTA Secretariat
- Representative of Chamber of Commerce
- Bojan Stanić, Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia (CCIS)

Moderated by: Jadranka Arizankovska, WB6 CIF Project Manager

15:00 – 16:00

From Policy to Practice: Advancing CEFTA Cooperation

Panel organised by GIZ implemented EU4Trade project

Every result has its making, and it takes several stages before it becomes a daily practice that businesses and people can feel. Senior officials from customs and inspection agencies, together with business representatives from across CEFTA, share how concrete achievements were made. These include new procedures, IT systems and training that turned CEFTA decisions into daily practice in trade facilitation areas such as trade in fruit and vegetables, AEO recognition, pre-arrival clearance and coordinated controls.

PROPOSED PARTICIPANTS

- Senior representative of a customs administration
- Senior representative of a phytosanitary administration
- Senior representative of a market surveillance administration
- Business representative

Moderated by: tbd

16:00 – 16:15	*Coffee break*

16:15 – 17:15

Converging with the EU: Investment, Productivity and Market Integration

A discussion on how CEFTA cooperation and the EU accession process can accelerate economic convergence with the EU, narrowing gaps in productivity, incomes and living standards. Drawing on recent analysis, the session examines how productive investment, stronger production networks within CEFTA and with the EU, and better access to competitive services can support this process. It explores the contribution of alignment with the EU acquis, effective implementation and recognition arrangements, and considers how the remaining work under the CEFTA Agreement and the Common Regional Market Action Plan 2025 to 2028 should be sequenced to deliver the greatest economic benefits. The discussion also addresses the implications of Parties joining the EU at different times, including the effects on investment, production networks and conditions for trade, and how to prepare for this transition while preserving practical facilitation and economic links.

PROPOSED PARTICIPANTS

- Tane Dimovski, Director of the Directorate for Economic and Public Diplomacy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of North Macedonia
- Cristina Ceban, Secretary of State and CEFTA Contact Point, Ministry of Economic Development and Digitalization of Moldova
- František Ružička, Deputy Secretary General, OECD (tbc)
- Lura Limani, Open Society Foundations Western Balkans (tbc)
- Anja Quiring, Regional Director SEE, German Eastern Business Association

Moderated by: Samira Sulejmanovic, Head of Department for Bilateral Trade Relations, Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations of Bosnia and Herzegovina (tbc)

17:15 – 17:30	**Master of Ceremonies – Key Takeaways**
19:00	**Dinner**

DAY 3 Friday, 11 December 2026

MAK Albania Hotel · Sheshi Italia 2, Tirana

09:30 – 10:00	*Registration*

10:00 – 12:30

Panel organised by the World Bank

Presentation of the Western Balkans Regular Economic Report and discussion of its principal findings and implications for trade and economic development, also addressing policy areas relevant to CEFTA, including non-tariff measures and trade facilitation, investment facilitation, payments and financial services etc.

12:30 – 13:30	*Lunch*

13:30 – 14:30

Public Aid in the Western Balkans: From Transparency to Fair Competition and Single Market Readiness

Panel organised by Open Society Foundations Western Balkans and WEBecon Network

A discussion on how greater transparency, effective monitoring and stronger institutional capacities for control of public aid measures can support fair competition and preparation for the EU Single Market. Drawing on comparative research covering 2018 to 2024, the session will present key findings on allocation of public aid, institutional practices and transparency, alongside the Aid Scoreboard developed by Finance Think and the WEBecon Network. The panel will examine existing challenges, opportunities for stronger cooperation and priorities for closer alignment with EU competition rules.

PROPOSED PARTICIPANTS

- WEBecon Network Representatives
- Representative of a Ministry responsible for Competition
- Representative of an agency responsible Competition
- Representative of the European Commission, DG Competition

Moderated by Nora Jusufi / Blendi Hasaj, GAP Institute

14:30 – 15:15

FAO–EBRD–CEFTA: Facilitating Trade in Agriculture

Panel organised jointly by FAO, EBRD and the CEFTA Secretariat

Panel discussion on facilitating trade in agriculture across CEFTA, also presenting the forthcoming cooperation project.

15:15 – 15:45

Delivering by 2028: CEFTA Priorities for the Next Phase

Key priorities for the next phase of the Common Regional Market Action Plan 2025–2028 that matter most for businesses, people and the preparation of the Parties towards EU membership, drawing on ministerial panel conclusions from Day 1, the Ambassadors Roundtable conclusions, the business session, the research papers and the proposals put forward by the students.

PROPOSED PARTICIPANTS

- Pranvera Kastrati, Director, CEFTA Secretariat
- Representative of the incoming Chair-in-Office 2027 (tbc)
- Senior European Commission representative