Common Regional Market Action Plan 2025-2028

Common Regional Market Action Plan 2025-2028 (CRM 2.0) represents a **regionally-owned framework based on the EU rules and standards with the objective to consolidate and enhance competitiveness and economic cooperation**. With **its scope and ambition of going beyond four freedoms provisions**, it contributes to the **long-term economic growth of the region, supporting its fair, green and digital transition, fostering regional cooperation and convergence with the EU**.

Serving as a **powerful catalyst for growth and attractiveness**, the CRM 2.0 seeks to further **boost the socio-economic convergence** between the region and the EU and paves the way for **closer integration with the Single Market.**

This Action Plan is an integral part of the Growth Plan for the Western Balkans, aimed at boosting economic growth and increasing socio-economic convergence of the region, bringing it closer to the EU Single Market. In particular, it contributes to its Pillar II: Regional Cooperation, **which is an essential element of boosting economic development of the region, already identified in the Action Plan 2020-2024 as a stepping stone to the Single Market**.

CRM 2.0 **operationalises the second pillar of the Growth Plan for the Western Balkans: Regional economic integration through the Common Regional Market,** grounding future collaborative endeavours not only to strengthen integration within the Western Balkans Six (WB6), but important - to be the **stepping stone for broader integration with the Single Market**. The actions within the Plan seek to help make markets more attractive for investors; increase the number of opportunities for companies and workers in the region; accelerate the alignment with EU rules and standards and facilitate each of the WB6 preparedness for integration into the EU Single Market in line with New Growth Plan for the Western Balkans.

In a challenging and substantially shifted geopolitical and socio-economic landscape, the current **level of convergence between the WB6 and the EU remains stubbornly slow**, with average GDP per capita in purchasing power still standing at almost 40% of the EU average. While the region is expected to **return to its pre-pandemic trend in 2024** from a slowed economic growth of 2.6% in 2023, this is still **insufficient to enable meaningful convergence** with EU income levels over the medium term. Despite slightly increased growth projections for the medium term, being relatively small, the path of the WB6 towards higher income, improved living standards and convergence with the EU clearly depends on economic integration within the region, and between the region and the EU.[1]

Small fragmented markets that are unable to exploit economies of scale, and suffer from limited attractiveness to investors, thinning human capital and other profound systemic challenges (i.e. related to governance, education, infrastructure, etc.) have necessitated that CRM2 **zooms in through an opportunity lens.**

Therefore, **unlocking the potential of the region**, via action-oriented agendas for **seamless four freedoms of movement, advanced business enabling environment, thriving human capital, boosted digitisation and innovation ecosystems,** can **add 10%[2]** to the WB6 and markedly **drive economic integration, societal advancement and development across the region**.

With the adoption and implementation of EU standards, underpinning the measures within the CRM2, this Action Plan serves as an important **access gateway towards the EU's Single Market** in many sectors and as a **tool to advance the EU accession process**. This role is essential given that the **EU Single Market continues to be a cornerstone of European integration and values** and the **integration with it has been the main driver of economic growth** for all countries that joined the EU, with clearly demonstrated positive impacts.

CRM2 builds on **the results of CRM 2021–2024 Action Plan**, which has represented the **cornerstone** and **key unifying and by far the most elaborate regional cooperation and integration framework** since its endorsement by the WB6 Leaders at the 2020 Berlin Process Sofia Summit. In particular, priorities and actions of CRM 2.0 are designed under the assumptions that relevant measures under CRM are agreed and implemented.

Boasting some truly **landmark tangible socio-economic transformative impacts** in numerous regional policy agendas (such as the intra-regional trade boost, attained recognition of academic and professional qualifications, facilitated freedom of movement, slashed communication costs, enhanced private sector joint collaborations, etc.), it **unequivocally demonstrated the concrete benefits and potential of EU-rules based regional cooperation and integration**.

Some of the key **CRM 2021-2024 successes and highlights** include: 19% increase of trade in goods and services; doubling of intra-regional trade volume (goods) in 5 years; overall 3% increase in GDP per capita as a percentage of the EU average from 2017 to 2022; whooping 500% increase of volume of usage of roaming within WB6; over 20 years saved in queuing in 2023 due to reduction in waiting times by establishment of Green Lanes at crossing points within the region and leading to the establishment of Green Lanes and Blue Lanes between the region and EU member states; nearly 1,200 new companies participated in intra-regional trade; facilitated workforce mobility and addressed evolving labour market dynamics and demographic shifts with the higher education qualifications and seven professions collectively recognised as a pillar of this process.

The implementation of CRM also **pointed to the yet untapped economic integration potentials** that can still be unleashed, necessitating additional decisive actions to finalise the transformation of a **Sustainable and Seamless Common Regional Market for all** into a reality.

Accelerated implementation tempo, unyielding commitment to **reforms, undivided political commitment and follow-through of commitments** remain crucial as a **true** and **fully functional Common Regional Market** can be **the region's drive to regional economic integration and its vessel to the Single Market**, as it is the region's **future prospect** until a completed EU accession process.

The Areas that form the building blocks of the CRM2 centre around the following:

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[1] WB Regular economic report Spring 2024 Invigorating growth

[2] Gomez Ortiz Maria Del Mar; Zarate Vasquez,Roman David; Taglioni,Daria. The Economic Effects of Market Integration in the Western Balkans (English). Policy Research working paper; no. WPS 10491 Washington, D.C.

Free movement of goods - *make trade in goods more efficient and less costly* through harmonising and simplifying procedures, thereby fostering greater market integration and competitiveness.

Free movement of services – *allow people and businesses in the service sectors to operate and grow* across multiple regional markets by improving market access, removing discrimination and addressing regulatory challenges. In doing so, it promotes competitiveness and modernisation of the service economy.

Horizontal trade measures – *underpin trade in goods and services* including important areas for an integrated and competitive regional market such as reduction of waiting times, digitalisation and paperless trade, intellectual property rights, trade dispute settlement, consumer protection, statistics, environment and export promotion.

Human capital development – in a region challenged by significant demographic shifts, brain drain and skills gaps, a multifaceted approach is required to enhance mobility and economic opportunities, workforce adaptability and innovation, while targeting social dimension.

Business enabling environment and competitiveness – aiming to create a conducive and competitive economic environment with a focus on sustainable, digital and consumer finance; attracting quality investments; and supporting the inclusive greening of industries, including enhancing entrepreneurship.

Digital transformation - bringing the region closer to the EU Digital Single Market in the areas of digital connectivity, digital economy and cybersecurity.

The agendas under CRM2 will exert an **important contribution to Growth Plan's** overall aim to help the Western Balkans Six partners **double the size of their economies within the next 10 years**. As a case in point, facilitating the free movement of labour within the WB6 could potentially increase the region's GDP by 1.3% by 2025, while a favourable and competitive environment is expected to contribute to an annual growth increase of 2%, attract up to 6.5% more investment, and boost the job growth rate by up to 1% per year, while increasing SME productivity by 5% to 10%.

The agendas entailed in this **future-proof regional economic integration plan** have been developed via strong collective efforts and **comprehensive reflection, coordination and consultation process** within the WB6 administrations, the key regional sectoral organisations (Regional Cooperation Council - RCC, CEFTA Secretariat, Transport Community Permanent Secretariat - TCT, Western Balkans 6 Chamber Investment Forum – WB6 CIF), EU services and other relevant partners. The implementation of CRM2 will likewise **hinge on strong regional ownership**, underpinned by **adequate institutional and administrative capacities for an enhanced impact**.

Creating a Common Regional Market is a **dynamic, ongoing process** which must address emerging contexts and as such should see its **agendas iteratively evolving at a par with the contexts, opportunities and challenges, with cooperation as the crux of the matter.**

While regional economic integration cannot be the key convergence vehicle for such an important juncture WB6 find themselves in, it is essential that **bolder, comprehensive integration into Single Market sector and policies proceeds in parallel,** in line with the new methodology of EU accession and the Growth Plan. Moreover, it remains equally important that **economic integration remains firmly aligned with political understanding, based on shared values.**

Notwithstanding the scope of challenges and reform needs, with the **additional investments and financial and structural reforms impetus ensured in the frames of the Growth Plan**, this new phase of the Common Regional Market outlined in its AP can invigorate the **region's growth and strengthen its security,** and represents **a big stake in the region's stability, empowering and thriving societies.**

I.   FREE MOVEMENT OF GOODS

Trade in goods within CEFTA contributes approximately 8.5 billion euros to exports, accounting for nearly 6% of the Western Balkans GDP. However, there is a great untapped potential for growth, as a deeper economic integration similar to EU Single Market could lead to annual trade growth of 10% in the Western Balkans. To tap into this potential, the region needs to deepen facilitation of trade in goods, making trade easier, faster and cheaper. **The main objective of "Free movement of goods" priority area is to facilitate free movement of goods based on the EU Single Market's rules and cooperation mechanisms namely from EU Chapters 1, 12 and 29.**

Key instruments to achieve these objectives include harmonisation of documents and procedures, extending recognition programmes, and developing stronger relations with the EU. These measures are rooted in the principles of the Single Market and are crucial for reducing costs, eliminating duplicate testing, and speeding up the time-to-market for products.

The proposed actions are vital for increasing trade and developing regional and European value chains. By simplifying regulatory compliance and reducing the level of controls, companies can source components and materials from different suppliers at lower prices without the burden of redundant testing, thereby fostering efficiency and innovation in production processes. With this, companies can achieve economies of scale and lower production costs. Additionally, companies are incentivised to innovate and improve their products to meet EU standards, as all measures are based on best EU practices. This leads to higher quality and more competitive offerings. Finally, consumers benefit from a broader selection of high-quality products.

SOME OF THE EXPECTED RESULTS UNDER FREE MOVEMENT OF GOODS

1.   Free movement of agri-food products

- Facilitated trade of live animals and products of animal origin through simplified procedures, harmonisation and acceptance of relevant documents, including piloted harmonisation of certificates in selected sectors.

- Recognised and accepted aligned procedures for reduction of relevant controls at crossing points for fruit and vegetables.

- Established list of EU compliant establishments across CEFTA, trade of products for human consumption produced in these establishments allowed, and business operators recognized.

- Procedures for trade of organic products fastened and electronic certification implemented.

- Diagnostic protocols unified and laboratory analysis results recognised.

2. *Free movement of (non-food) industrial goods*

- Recognised and accepted conformity assessment results performed by the other's designated conformity assessment bodies based on the relevant EU rules in the selected sectors (i.e. electrical products, machinery, construction products).

- Harmonised labelling rules for selected products, including chemicals.

- Goods in the selected sectors that are not subject to EU harmonised legislation accepted across CEFTA, with respect to Articles 34-36 TFEU and Regulation EU 2019/515.

- Improved cooperation in the quality infrastructure, particularly amongst market surveillance agencies.

3. *Strengthening customs and tax cooperation*

- Implemented rules of origin aligned across CEFTA and with the EU and other trading partners.

- Recognised and extended benefits of authorised economic operators (AEOs) across CEFTA.

- Simplified and accelerated customs clearance of e-commerce parcels.

- Established cooperation and ensured good governance in the tax with the specific focus on Value Added Tax (VAT) refund procedures, fighting customs and tax fraud, and overcoming barriers to online sales.

- Improved customs environment with specific focus on the Single Window and coordination with SEED, availability of 24/7 online payments, creation of a network of customs laboratories, etc.

4. *Other trade facilitation measures*

- Fees and charges imposed in connection with trade harmonised and reduced.

- Non-tariff measures identified, and trade distorting practices addressed.

FREE MOVEMENT OF SERVICES

Western Balkans Six are primarily service-based, with the service sectors generating the largest share of economic output, growth, and employment. In 2022, CEFTA parties collectively exported services worth approximately 4 billion euros, equivalent to around 3% of their GDP. For some Parties, services exports to CEFTA exceed 10% of GDP. World Bank reports that deepening economic integration through the Common Regional Market, aligned with EU rules and standards, could potentially boost Western Balkans Six by an additional 10%, with much of this growth opportunity concentrated in the services sector. To fully capitalise on this potential, Parties should prioritise extending market access commitments, eliminating remaining discriminatory practices, and resolving regulatory barriers. This building block aims to incorporate the EU's rules and standards for free movement of services (notably from Chapters 3, 9, 10, and 14) into the CEFTA framework, ensuring the seamless provision of services across all CEFTA markets without obstacles.

The actions will centre on deepening commitments based on the CEFTA Additional Protocol 6 on Trade in Services by expanding it to new sectors such as audio-visual services and transposing EU rules such as the ones on licensing or professional qualifications. It further seeks to address key enabling sectors such as financial and transport services. Finally, the special attention will be given to deepening CEFTA e-commerce market for businesses and consumers with transposed EU compliant regulation of marketplaces and social networks, recognition of electronic signatures, portability of online content and updating CEFTA rules on telecommunication services. Together, these measures should promote competitiveness and modernisation of the service sectors, which can be leveraged not only in the European context, but in the global market too.

SOME OF THE EXPECTED RESULTS UNDER FREE MOVEMENT OF SERVICES

1. *Freedom to provide services within CEFTA modelled after the EU Services Directive*

- Enabled freedom of establishment of service suppliers including recognition of authorisation requirements.

- Removed obstacles to provide services for suppliers established in CEFTA, such as obligations to obtain an authorisation or have a commercial presence, in some sectors.

- Points of Single Contacts established to provide support to people and businesses.

2. *Professional qualifications*

- The general system of recognition applied in new sectors.

- Enabled recognition of professional qualifications based on the experience.

- Database of regulated professions created and professional card introduced.

3. *Financial and related services*

- - Simplified provision of financial services through EU-based equivalence of regional and supervision.

- - Enabled CEFTA QR code-initiated payment services and simplified licencing procedures for payment services.

- - Recognised Motor Third Party Liability Insurance to enable travelling without green cards in the region.

4. Audio-visual Services

- - Extended scope of the Schedule of Commitments to include audio-visual services.

- - Harmonised rules for audio-visual commercial communications and a level playing field between traditional television and online services.

5. Transport Services

- - Finalisation and adoption of the roadmap that will further enhance the road transport liberalisation for partners within the Western Balkans Six.

6. Electronic commerce and related information society services

- - Cooperation expanded to issues related to digital services, fairness and transparency on online platforms, online content portability and improving parcel delivery.

- - Enhance recognition of electronic signatures and other trust services.

- - Updated CEFTA telecommunication disciplines to harmonise authorisation rules for electronic communication services.

HORIZONTAL TRADE MEASURES

Regulatory areas which have an impact on trade in both goods and services present valuable opportunities for enhancing trade. For example, the World Bank reported that a simple reduction of the waiting time at crossing points by 3h can bring savings equal to 2% of the value of the transported goods. This is why **this priority area seeks to promote paperless trade and reduce waiting times at crossing points by building on the success of CEFTA-TCT Green Lanes**. This initiative will be expanded to include perishable goods and Authorised Economic Operators, and collaboration with EU Member States will be strengthened. Special attention will be given to improving risk management, inter-agency cooperation, expedite clearance through streamlining controls, and increase in inspection availability. These efforts will be coupled with improved regulatory frameworks, facilitating better trade policy measurement and capacity building. Furthermore, after the successful development of the CEFTA TRACES NT, the focus will shift to going fully paperless, involving the digital signing of certificates issued in CEFTA TRACES. There will also be an enhanced exchange of data on non-safe products to improve consumer safety.

Additionally, **CEFTA plans to upgrade cooperation in areas such as intellectual property rights, consumer protection, trade-related environmental issues and dispute settlement to remove and prevent trade barriers based on the EU rules, procedures and best practices (Chapters 7, 8, 18, 20 and 27)**. Strengthened intellectual property rights and quality schemes will foster innovation and promote unique local products, increasing their competitiveness in both CEFTA and EU markets. Improved consumer protection frameworks will boost trust in multi-market operations, incentivising traditional trade and e-commerce. Improving cooperation in the area of statistics will provide input for evidence-based policy making, while dialogue on trade related aspects of environmental issues will prevent trade distortions. Coordination and sharing of knowledge, expertise, and best practices in trade related environmental issues will further promote sustainable trade. Streamlined dispute resolution mechanisms will ensure efficient and fair handling of trade issues, fostering a predictable and attractive business environment. Finally, promoting export will empower business sector to benefit from regional and EU integration activities.

SOME OF THE EXPECTED RESULTS UNDER HORIZONTAL TRADE MEASURES

1. Green Lanes and reduction of waiting times at crossing points

- - Reduced waiting times and increased capacities of the busiest crossing points (i.e. additional lanes, equipment, etc.).

- - Improved cooperation amongst relevant agencies involved in the clearance of goods to extend the benefits of risk management throughout the entire clearance procedure.

- - Reduced physical controls based on risk management and trust building.

- - Recognised customs controls (e.g. scanner images, data on truck/cargo weight, cash declaration forms, customs security seals, etc.).

- - Pre-arrival checks enabled by electronic exchange of all relevant documents.

- - Established list of agri-food products that are excluded from controls at crossing points.

2. Digitalisation and paperless trade through CEFTA SEED

- - Electronic exchange of data and documents amongst relevant agencies involved in clearance of goods enabled, including introduction of e-certificates and paperless trade.

- - Upgraded CEFTA Notification system for agri-food products and improved exchange of information on non-compliant and unsafe products.

- - CEFTA Transparency Pack and Statistical Portal upgraded and expanded to widen the scope and quality of available information.

- CEFTA System for Electronic Exchange of Data (SEED) upgraded based on the Internal Market Information System to enable exchange of data and relevant documents between relevant institutions of CEFTA Parties involved in the implementation of Common Regional Market measures.

3. *Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) and quality schemes*

   - Further aligned legal and policy frameworks with the EU acquis, strengthened administrative capacities, introduced single point of submission of applications for custom's interventions.

   - Increased awareness of the value of IPR and its potential to enhance business operations of SMEs.

   - Recognition of Geographical Indications (GI).

4. *Consumer Protection*

   - Improved support to consumers in all CEFTA markets through better cooperation and alternative dispute resolution mechanisms.

   - Established cooperation and coordination in the field of enforcement of consumer protection.

   - Harmonised rules for the sale of goods and supply of digital content and digital service.

5. *Trade Statistics*

   - Harmonisation of the quality and scope of statistical data produced (e.g. e-commerce, tourism, etc.) and their timely exchange within the CEFTA Statistical Portal with increased scope of shared data to support CRM activities.

6. *Trade-related Environmental Issues*

   - Pre-empted possible barriers due to uncoordinated harmonisation with CBAM.

   - Established cooperation in relation to managing environmental issues, developing the expertise and infrastructure to comply with CBAM and ETS.

   - Harmonised and digitalised procedures for the shipment of non-hazardous waste aligned with the best EU practices.

7. *Dispute Settlement*

   - Additional Protocol 7 on Dispute Settlement fully implemented to efficiently resolve emerging trade issues and prevent the emergence of non-compliant measures with impact on trade.

   - CEFTA Electronic Communication System for Dispute Settlement established enabling streamlined communication and documentation exchange between disputing parties, reducing administrative burdens and enhancing efficiency.

8. *Promoting export in CEFTA and EU*

   - Business opportunities arising from the Common Regional Market communicated and taken up with the business community.

   - Trade opportunities made more accessible for selected vulnerable groups leading to economic and social empowerment of these groups.

   - Established CEFTA training programmes for providing technical assistance and guidance in implementation of EU and EU-based CEFTA rules underpinning free movement of goods and services.

   - Strengthened and strategically defined export goals and potentials that enhance competitiveness of the region's economy for entering the EU Single Market.

   - Practical tools and regulation helpdesk created to support exporting companies in their activities.

HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT

In the past decade, WB6 have experienced an accelerating rate of emigration, with about 20% of the population now living abroad (OECD, 2022)[3], reducing significantly the available labour force, and emphasizing the need to both retain and attract talent. These demographic shifts have profoundly affected mostly the WB6 businesses. 70% of businesses advocate for public policies to retain the workforce, while 25% are looking to recruit from other WB6 (Balkan Barometer 2024).

The region's performance in skills development lags behind, with most indicators almost half of the EU and OECD averages. A significant majority, 80% of population[4], view improving digital skills as essential for meeting workforce demands. Investment in research and development (R&D) is also critically low; in vast majority of WB6, R&D spending as a percentage of GDP is less than 20% of the EU average[5], which hampers innovation and development of skilled researchers in the region.

The measures under this pillar aim to enhance job opportunities and combat brain drain by aligning more closely with the European Union and accelerating the Western Balkans Six economic integration into the EU Single Market.

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[3] OECD (2022), Labour Migration in the Western Balkans: Mapping Patterns, Addressing Challenges and Reaping Benefits, OECD Publishing, https://www.oecd.org/south-east-europe/programme/labour-migration-report.pdf, p. 24.

[4] https://www.rcc.int/balkanbarometer/results/2/public

[5] OECD (2024), Western Balkans Competitiveness Outlook 2024: Regional Profile. https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/western-balkans-competitiveness-outlook-2024-regional-profile_170b0e53-en.html

Building on the positive results achieved under CRM, which assisted in removing barriers to mobility through agreements on moving with ID cards within the WB6, mutual recognition of professional qualifications, and recognition of higher education qualifications, this initiative seeks to create a more interconnected and competitive region. By continuing to implement these agreements and simplifying access to higher education, we aim to retain talent, foster innovation, and cultivate a region with more dynamic job opportunities.

For the first time, the region is committed to facilitating intra-WB6 social portability, in line with EU social security standards. This alignment will support the free movement of professionals and ensure that workers in the Western Balkans Six are afforded necessary social protections, including the portability of social rights across the region. These adjustments will create more robust economic opportunities, making the region more attractive to both workers and employers.

Human Capital Development pillar also positions the WB6 as an attractive hub capable of nurturing talent, preparing the workforce for modern economic challenges, and contributing to sustainable development. Compared to the current CRM, this new iteration emphasizes skills development, focusing on skilling and upskilling in emerging green and digital industries, and unifying educational programmes for vocational education and training (VET) across the region, thereby addressing weak spots in regional businesses, equipping the workforce with the skills necessary for the green and digital transitions shaping the future job market. Special attention will be paid to improving the region's innovation performance and competitiveness by facilitating closer academia-business collaboration to create added value.

SOME OF THE EXPECTED RESULTS UNDER HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT

1. **Standards in education and quality assurance:**

   - Facilitate access to higher education and study admission for students from WB6 in EU public higher education institutions (HEIs).

   - Ensure WB6 students have unrestricted access to study and admission opportunities within the WB6.

   - Accelerate recognition of WB6 academic qualifications at the EU level.

2. **Close the skills gap**

   - Enable portability of social rights.

   - Agreement on relaxation of work permit procedure within the WB6.

   - Adopt a regional declaration for vocational education and training (VET).

   - Create three common regional bases for occupational standards for VET in the WB6.

   - Eliminate unnecessary licensing and harmonise licensing requirements for occupations that will remain under the licensing system.

   - Develop unified regional STEM education policies and guidelines at all educational levels.

   - Achieve 10% participation of VET learners in mobility programmes, with 25% of them being people with fewer opportunities.

3. **Labour market reform for economic opportunities**

   - Prepare the WB6 for alignment with EU social security standards by facilitating agreements on social security system.

   - Establish a Regional Social Security Network.

   - Explore opportunities to align pension-related matters across the region, where feasible.

   - Discuss the portability and equal treatment of pension benefits.

4. **Boost Regional Innovation**

   - Facilitate 18 initiatives focused on knowledge transfer and commercialisation from academia to businesses.

   - Increase expenditures in research and innovation (R&I) by 20%.

   - Increase readiness of deep-tech start-ups by five times for effective pre-acceleration within the EU deep-tech ecosystem.

   - Enable one-stop-shop services for the industry through Digital Innovation Hubs.

BUSINESS ENABLING ENVIRONMENT AND COMPETITIVENESS

The primary objective of this block is to establish a robust, competitive economic landscape that aligns with EU standards, while fostering sustainable development through sustainable, digital and consumer finance, promoting sustainable investments, and driving the greening of industries and development of SMEs. Creating a favourable and competitive environment has the potential to increase annual GDP growth by 2%, attract up to 6.5% more investment, and raise the employment growth rate by up to 1% per year, while enhancing SME productivity by 5% to 10%.

Financial markets in the WB6 are still developing, with credit extended to corporations representing approximately 23% of GDP, compared to 40% in the EU.[6] A recent EIB study estimated the region's financing gap at around USD 2.8 billion, equivalent to about 2.5% of nominal GDP.[7] More financing needs to be mobilised for the green transition. To address this, CRM 2.0 aims to facilitate diversification of financing, particularly for environmentally and socially beneficial initiatives, while enabling faster and more cost-effective transactions for consumers and SMEs, both within the WB6 and with the EU.

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[6] EIB (2023). *The impact of the EIB's intermediated lending to businesses in the Western Balkans.*
[7] IBID.

FDI inflows in the WB6 have been increasing at a compound annual growth rate of approximately 6.7% in recent years.[8] However, its contribution to sustainable development has been modest. Building on the achievements of the current CRM regarding investment, CRM 2.0 will place greater emphasis on creating a conducive environment for sustainable investments.

Moreover, CRM 2.0, through this building block, also aims to support industries in embracing the green transition, closely linked with enhancing business sector competitiveness, by creating pre-conditions and frameworks that align with EU standards and practices and drive the green transition. According to the World Bank Group's Western Balkans Climate Report[9], the region would require an estimated $90 billion in investments to achieve net-zero objectives by 2050—equivalent to an annual investment of 1.9% of GDP until 2050. There can be no net-zero without SMEs and inclusivity. Hence, CRM 2.0 incorporates support to SMEs to be better positioned to adopt sustainable practices, which are critical for driving green industrial transformation, as well as a gender-inclusive approach aimed at women economic empowerment. Gender equality carries significant economic value as narrowing the gender gap in labour markets could increase GDP in emerging markets and developing economies by up to 8% (IMF, 2024)[10].

With its far-reaching spill over effects across all industries, tourism will play an important role in driving competitive sustainability. The upward trend in tourism, reflected by a 23.5% rise in arrivals and a 27% growth in overnight stays across the region in 2023, highlights the need for continued focus on sustainability.[11] Building on previous successes, CRM 2.0 aims to support responsible tourism to attract investment and shape a unique regional identity.

CRM 2.0 will also continue efforts under the Regional Supplier Development Programme, focusing on establishing regional and EU supply chains. It will support local producers and service providers in partnering with multinational companies and developing cooperation at the local level, including micro and family businesses in rural areas. Moreover, industrial product placement, capacity building, digitalisation, and joint branding of WB6 companies will be enabled.

SOME OF THE EXPECTED RESULTS UNDER BUSINESS ENABLING ENVIRONMENT AND COMPETITIVENESS

1. Sustainable and Digital Finance & Consumer Finance:

- Common Regional Framework for Sustainable Finance Taxonomy developed and endorsed.

- Regional Green Bond Standards developed and endorsed.

- Cheaper and faster payments for businesses and individuals within the WB6 and with the EU, mainly through SEPA, enabled.

- New international PSPs present in the region to provide (inward and outward) payment services both regionally and internationally.

- Regional Financial Literacy Framework for Youth, Adults, and SMEs developed.

2. Investment:

- Regional framework for certification of RSI endorsed and at least 60 investors certified at the WB6 level.

- 300 million EUR of sustainable investment proportionally attracted to the region.

- Voluntary standards for Green Incentives developed.

- Agreement on CEFTA framework for investment facilitation modelled on the basis of the WTO Agreement on Investment Facilitation for Development.

3. Regional Intelligence on Industrial Cooperation & Green Industry

- Feasibility and foresight studies (link to REO above) for key industrial sectors prepared and support modalities identified.

- A set of unified criteria for green public procurement developed.

4. SME Access to Finance & Business Sector Competitiveness

- A comprehensive guidebook on angel investing in the region developed.

- Minimum regional eligibility criteria for Digital Nomads developed.

- Regional Toolkit to Enhance Security in Due Diligence and Risk Management Processes of Businesses developed.

- Regional Investment Readiness Programme for SMEs developed.

5. Regional Tourism Policies and Competitiveness

- Strategic Regional Approach to sustainable tourism, green & digital transition developed.

- Regional Smart Tourism Destinations development through promotion of eco-friendly/smart tourism solutions & regional strategic guidelines for climate change.

- New regional tourism products developed and marketed.

6. Women Economic Empowerment

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[8] RCC calculations based on official statistics from WB6.

[9] World Bank Group (2024). Western Balkans 6 Country Climate and Development Report. June 2024.

[10] International Monetary Fund (2024), Interim Guidance Note on Mainstreaming Gender at the IMF. January 2024.

[11] RCC calculations based on statistical data published by the statistical offices of WB6.

- WEE network enhanced.

- Regional guidelines to facilitate access to finance for women-led enterprises developed.

7. *Regional Supplier Development Programme*

- WB6 Export Club established, guiding companies into regional and EU supply chains.

- Digital tools supporting companies in placement of industrial products on the market developed.

- Western Balkans Six regional brand developed;

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

The goal of this building block is boosting the process of digital transformation in WB6 and bringing the region closer to the EU Digital Single Market. The proposed measures aim to align Western Balkans Six with the EU standards and initiatives in order to unlock new opportunities for businesses, empower individuals through digital access, and last but not least, strengthen collaboration between the WB6 in all digital aspects.

Digital transformation remains a key priority for the Western Balkans Six. The access to fast broadband speeds in the region is progressing. However, although Very High Capacity Networks (VHCN) coverage in WB6 increased from 29% in 2020 to 48% in 2021, it was still much lower than in the EU, i.e. around 70% in 2021.[12] The region is actively supporting the deployment of fixed broadband infrastructure networks, with a strong emphasis on expanding coverage in rural areas, while WB6 is still lagging behind the EU in 5G developments.

Building on the results of CRM, the new Action Plan prioritises the improvement of **connectivity** by **reducing further data roaming charges between the EU and WB6** and by extending the reduction to other roaming services, which will bring additional positive effects for consumers, businesses and international trade. Furthermore, the Action Plan puts emphasis on the **improvement of business environment** in the telecom sector **aiming to facilitate faster deployment of** VHCN.

Bringing **digital economy** at the forefront of digital transformation will bring tangible results. Hence, the Action Plan has prioritised **creation of a safer, more functional and trustworthy online environment** for Western Balkans Six users and maintenance of an evidence-based policy formulation enabled through **permanent monitoring** of digital transformation. **Integration of the Western Balkans into the EU trust services** will enhance access and use of electronic identification and support processes for the **recognition and acceptance of eID schemes, including regional recognition of e-signature.** Development of a **regional Digital Identity Wallet**, also supported by the new Growth Plan, is vital for strengthening the interoperability amongst relevant systems and improving the conditions for providing services to population. **Cybersecurity** is one of crucial components aiming to establish a **secure and resilient regional cyber space** by addressing needs and strengthening regional cooperation and dialogue.

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[12] Western Balkans Digital Economy Society Index • WB DESI 2022 Report, May 2023

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SOME OF THE EXPECTED RESULTS UNDER DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

1. Connectivity

- Data roaming charges between the WB6 and EU further reduced, roaming charges reduction extended to other roaming services under EU-WB6 Roaming Declaration & number of signatories increased.

- Prices of intra-WB6 fixed and mobile calls reduced.

- Streamlined administrative procedures (i.e. permit granting procedures) to speed up deployment of VHCN.

- Improved connectivity in the WB6: 70% of households covered with fixed VHCN and 80% of populated areas covered with 5G signal in WB6.

2. Digital Economy

- Synchronisation with EU Digital Compass established.

- A policy roadmap/plan to achieve Artificial Intelligence (AI) goals developed.

- Regional recognition and use of e-signatures enhanced.

- Measures for adoption of Digital Identity Wallet (DIW) developed and activities for the development of pilot project(s) for testing DIW facilitated.

- Integration of the Western Balkans Six in the European Data Innovation Board (with an observer status) facilitated.

3. Cybersecurity

- Digital Europe Programme for WB6 extended to cybersecurity.

- A regional database on cybersecurity needs fully operational.

- Integration of WB6 in the EU cybersecurity certification framework facilitated and capacity of certification bodies and competent authorities enabled.

- A network of WB6 universities for exchange of experiences and programmes in cyber created.

- Regional alumni group with young professionals in the field of cyber security established.

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Role of Regional Organisations

The RCC and CEFTA Secretariats will serve as the primary regional bodies responsible for leading the regional efforts and facilitating the implementation of CRM 2 Action Plan, with the support from WB6 CIF and TCT on their respective priority policies. Other relevant organisations will be involved in specific actions aligned with their mandates and programmes.

The RCC will focus on initiatives aimed at enhancing human capital in the region through upskilling, improving labour market opportunities, and fostering intra-regional mobility of professionals, as well as mobility between the EU and the Western Balkans Six. The RCC will also work on improving the business environment by creating conditions conducive to sustainable investments and a competitive economic landscape. Additionally, it will expedite digital transformation to bring the region closer to the EU Digital Single Market, particularly in the areas of digital connectivity, digital economy, and cybersecurity.

Meanwhile, CEFTA Secretariat will coordinate implementation of activities of the building blocks related to trade: free movement of goods, free movement of services and horizontal trade issues by relying on legal, policy and institutional framework based on CEFTA 2006. Moreover, CEFTA Secretariat will provide technical support in relation to other relevant trade organisations and initiatives, with a view to enhancing the region's economic integration with the European Union's Single Market and maximising impact of the Common Regional Market. The private sector will play a crucial role in the implementation and monitoring of results, with input incorporated through close collaboration with WB6 CIF. These efforts will be further aligned with European partners to maximise impact.

The implementation of this Action Plan will allow the WB6 to reap the full benefits of the Growth Plan and will hinge upon constructive cooperation between all partners, as well as technical support from CEFTA and the RCC. In addition to facilitating the relevant agreements and decisions, the support provided by RCC and CEFTA includes assisting WB6 in preparations to access the EU's single market and to work with EU bodies, and relevant organisations necessary to ensure that the CRM creates a level playing field for all WB6 for the implementation of CRM2 Action Plan and EU Growth Plan for WB6.

Each measure in CRM2 is assigned to a lead regional organisation responsible for coordinating, facilitating, and supporting its implementation. Supporting organisations are also identified for each measure to ensure synergies with other initiatives. Each lead organisation will contribute to progress monitoring. The outlined measures and expected results provide a clear roadmap for developing detailed implementation strategies in each priority area.

Governance framework – coordination, monitoring and reporting

The successful implementation of CRM2 requires robust governance, clear communication channels, and regular progress monitoring. The RCC Secretariat is responsible for overall coordination and oversight of the Action Plan, working closely with the CEFTA Secretariat, which oversees the implementation of trade-related actions and WB6 CIF overseeing the private sector led measures. Following the endorsement of the CRM2, a detailed methodology for monitoring and reporting, including KPIs, as well as a governance structure matrix, will be developed by June 2025.
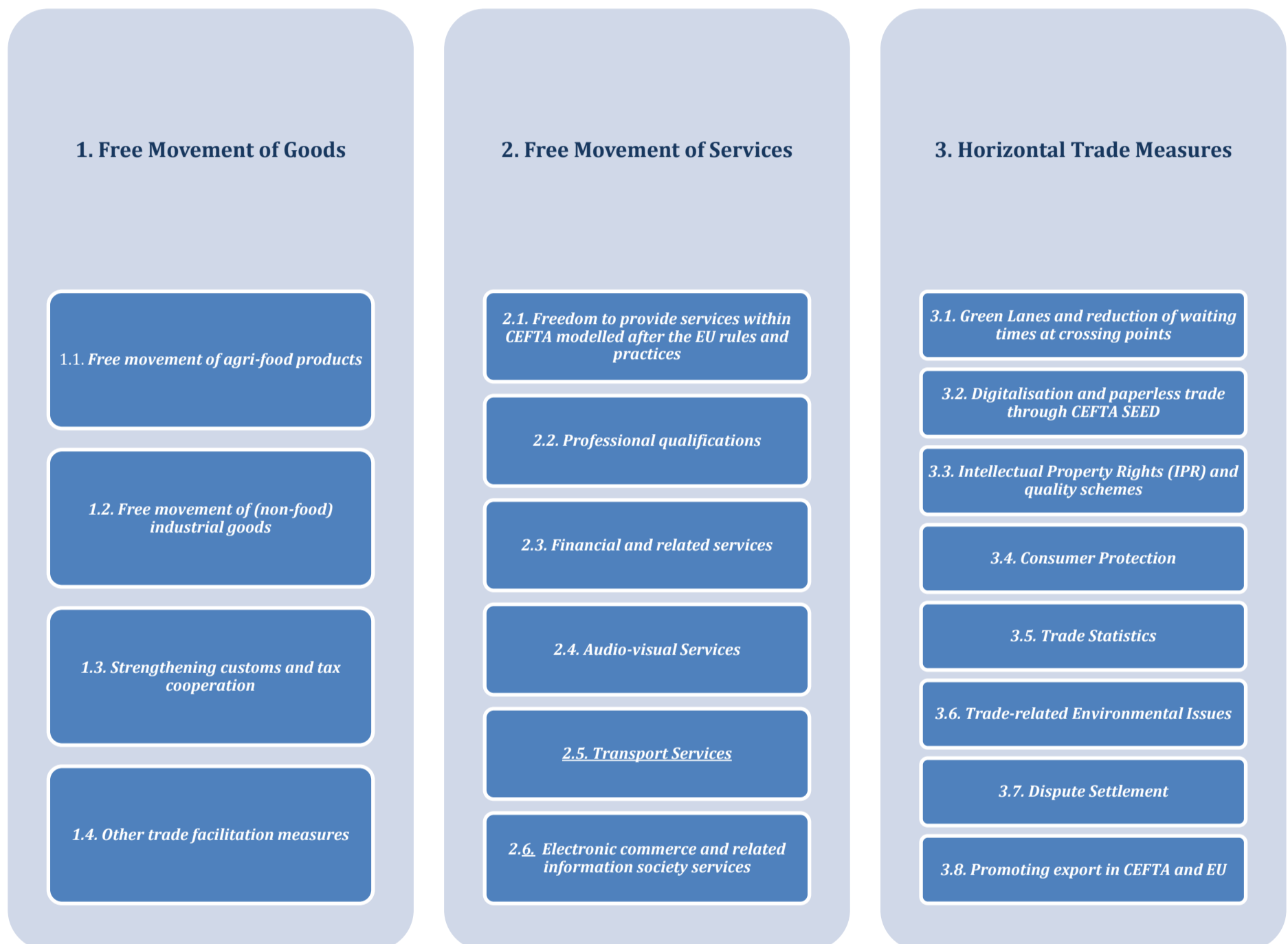
To avoid unnecessary reporting burdens, the RCC will create an efficient monitoring tool, including a dynamic scorecard designed to reflect real-time changes. This tool will track the implementation of measures outlined in the CRM2 Action Plan, support policy reforms where necessary, and allow stakeholders, including the public, to provide feedback on the effectiveness of actions taken. This approach will enhance the transparency, visibility, and inclusiveness of CRM2 implementation.

The responsibility for CRM2 implementation lies primarily with public institutions in WB6, particularly relevant authorities leading efforts at the domestic level. Governing structure and framework in WB6 should reflect the needs and practices of WB6 under the guidance and strategic leadership of the appointed Sherpa's.

In collaboration with the CEFTA Secretariat and WB6 CIF, the RCC Secretariat is tasked with regularly reviewing and updating the progress of implementation and preparing the annual report. All supporting organisations and WB6 will contribute to the preparation of the reports, and any challenges encountered will be reported along with proposed solutions.

Achieving the full potential of CRM2 will require a shared commitment from the WB6, as well as the European Commission and relevant IFIs.

The CRM2 is defined as below:

1. Free Movement of Goods	2. Free Movement of Services	3. Horizontal Trade Measures
1.1. *Free movement of agri-food products*	2.1. *Freedom to provide services within CEFTA modelled after the EU rules and practices*	3.1. *Green Lanes and reduction of waiting times at crossing points*
1.2. *Free movement of (non-food) industrial goods*	2.2. *Professional qualifications*	3.2. *Digitalisation and paperless trade through CEFTA SEED*
1.3. *Strengthening customs and tax cooperation*	2.3. *Financial and related services*	3.3. *Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) and quality schemes*
1.4. *Other trade facilitation measures*	2.4. *Audio-visual Services*	3.4. *Consumer Protection*
	2.5. *Transport Services*	3.5. *Trade Statistics*
	2.6. *Electronic commerce and related information society services*	3.6. *Trade-related Environmental Issues*
		3.7. *Dispute Settlement*
		3.8. *Promoting export in CEFTA and EU*

4. Human Capital Development

4.1. Standards in education and quality assurance

4.2. Close the skills gap

4.3. Labour market reform for economic opportunities

4.4. Boost Regional Innovation

5. Busienss Enabling Environment & Competitiveness

5.1. Sustainable and Digital Finance

5.2. Consumer Finance

5.3. Investment

5.4. Regional Intelligence on industrial cooperation

5.5. Green Industry

5.6. SME access to finance

5.7. Business sector competitiveness

5.8. Regional Tourism Policies and Competitiveness

5.9. Women Economic Empowerment

5.10. Regional Supplier Development Programme

6. Digital Transformation

6.1. Connectivity

6.2. Digital Economy

6.3. Cybersecurity

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[1] WB Regular economic report Spring 2024 Invigorating growth

Common Regional Market Action Plan 2025-2028

Priority Area	Regional Actions	Lead Organisation	Supporting Organisation	Timeframe	Expected Results
1. Free Movement of Goods					
1.1 Free movement of agri-food products	1.1.1. Agreement[13] on facilitating trade in agricultural products of animal origin and live animals in a pilot sector	CEFTA	EC	2025-2026	- Facilitated trade, simplified and harmonised procedures and reduction of costs; - Recognised and accepted aligned documents such as contingency plans, surveillance programmes and their results, monitoring plans, samples testing results, trustworthy operators, etc.; - Harmonisation and reduction of official controls by implementing risk-based approach based on EU Regulation; - Harmonising health veterinary certificates; - Enabled electronic exchange of relevant trade documents.
	1.1.2. Extend trade benefits of the Decision on facilitation of trade of fruits and vegetables	CEFTA	EC	2025-2027	- Recognised and accepted aligned procedures for reduction of official controls at BCPs/CCPs by implementing risk-based approach and reduction of official controls; - Trade facilitated and simplified through recognition of professional operators and their production, including the establishment of database/register of these operators; - Recognised and accepted aligned documents such as contingency plans, surveillance programmes and their results; - Recognised and accepted aligned documents such as monitoring plans, samples testing results, etc.; - Enabled electronic exchange of data and acceptance of electronic trade documents in accordance with relevant agreements, protocol, etc.; - Action Plan for the production of pest-free potatoes amongst CEFTA Parties, harmonised with EU legislation and standards; - Increased transparency through exchange of lists of laboratories for plant health, lists of tests and related methods used, designation of contact persons regarding laboratories, etc.
	1.1.3. Agreement on recognition of food-producing establishments in pilot sectors authorised for trade modelled after EU practices	CEFTA	EC	2025-2026	- Allowed trade of products for human consumption produced in EU compliant establishments and recognition of business operators; - Technical support for assessment, categorisation and upgrade of establishments of food of animal origin; - Incentivised investment in food producing establishments by offering trade opportunities in CEFTA; - Electronic exchange of relevant data on operators through CEFTA TRACES NT.
	1.1.4. Agreement on facilitation of trade of organic products, including electronic exchange of e-COI (certificate of inspection) for organic production	CEFTA	EC	2025-2027	- Trade facilitated and simplified through recognition of control bodies, organic operators and their production, including the establishment of database/register of these operators/control bodies; - Accelerated trade procedures by digitalisation and implementation of the appropriate electronic certificate of inspection (e-COI) through CEFTA TRACES NT.
	1.1.5. Establish a CEFTA Network of Reference Laboratories	CEFTA	EC WB6 CIF	2025-2027	- Reduced trade costs for economic operators; - Recognition of testing reports; - Enhanced cooperation amongst reference laboratories in CEFTA; - Organising inter-laboratory testing in CEFTA Parties according to EU reference laboratory.
1.2 Free movement of (non-food) industrial goods	1.2.1. Extension of the scope of CEFTA Decision on the recognition of Results of Conformity Assessment of Industrial Products	CEFTA	EC WB6 CIF	2025-2027	- Accepted certificates and testing results and inspection reports; - Recognition conditioned on harmonisation with relevant EU *acquis;* - Reduced red tape and trade related costs, improved security and safety and optimised procedures; - Wider sectoral scope (e.g. machinery and construction) and/or depth of recognition programme; - Improved cooperation between quality infrastructure, market surveillance, metrology, accreditation, and customs administrations.
	1.2.2 Harmonisation of labelling rules of chemical and other products	CEFTA	EC	2025-2027	- Facilitated movement of chemical products across the region by harmonising labelling rules, classifications e.g. CLP and REACH regulation /evaluation, authorisation, restrictions, etc.; - Facilitated movement of pesticides, biocides, fertilizers according to best EU practices.
	1.2.3. Agreement on acceptance of goods in non-harmonised sectors marketed in one Party to be sold in others	CEFTA	EC	2025-2028	- Access to markets without additional requirements for products for which there are no harmonised EU rules, based on Articles 34-36 TFEU and Regulation EU 2019/515.

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[13] In CEFTA, agreements normally take the form of Additional Protocols to the agreement or Joint Committee Decisions, or Joint Committee Recommendations if they are not legally binding.

	1.2.4 Establish cooperation on market surveillance	CEFTA	EC	2025 - 2026	- Information exchange and cooperation; - Joint initiatives promoting compliance and enforcement; - More efficient use of resources; - Strengthening market surveillance of products to ensure that only compliant products that fulfil requirements providing a high level of protection of public interests reach the market of the Parties.
1.3 Strengthening customs and tax cooperation	1.3.1. Ensure implementation of common rules of origin within CEFTA and uninterrupted cumulation of origin with the EU and other trading partners	CEFTA	EC	2025-2028	- CEFTA rules of origin updated in line with the developments under the system of Pan-Euro-Mediterranean cumulation of origin (PEM); - Parties supported in updating the rules of origin with the EU and other trading partners to maximise the potential of preferential trade.
	1.3.2. Recognition of the programmes of authorised economic operators (AEOs) for the remaining CEFTA Parties and review of the current rules with the aim of their improvement	CEFTA	EC	2025-2027	- Recognition of trustworthy economic operators across CEFTA, so that all holders of AEOS status can enjoy the benefits in all CEFTA markets; - Establish CEFTA AEO customs group responsible for CEFTA AEO matters; - Extending the benefits for the economic operators including priority lines and reduced controls.
	1.3.3. Facilitate electronic commerce through enhanced customs cooperation and the implementation of Import Control System (ICS2)	CEFTA	EC	2025-2028	- Electronic Advance Data (EAD) shared between customs administrations and postal operators based on digital data from customs CN23; - Simplified and accelerated customs clearance of e-commerce parcels; - Improved compliance with the Universal Postal Union and World Customs Organisation tools, standards and regulation; - Inbound customs administrations are enabled to target items of interest in advance, while ensuring continuous flow of legitimate postal traffic.
	1.3.4. Establish CEFTA Advisory Body for Customs Cooperation on classification and rules of origin	CEFTA	EC	2025-2026	- Aligned implementation of the rules regarding classification of goods for customs purposes and determination of their origin so that business operations could be facilitated through creating predictable environment for trade in goods, and enabling companies to plan their costs more effectively and efficiently.
	1.3.5. Agreement on cooperation in the tax area	CEFTA	EC	2025-2028	- Ensured good governance in the tax area, i.e. implementation of principles of transparency, exchange of information aimed at ensuring effective revenue collection (customs and tax duties at the importation) with the specific focus on Value Added Tax (VAT) refund procedures and fighting customs and tax fraud; - Established VAT one-stop-shop to overcome the barriers to online sales and address challenges related to the VAT regimes for distance sales of goods and for the importation of low value consignments; - Enhanced cooperation with a view to facilitate revenue collection (customs and tax duties at the importation) through exchange of experiences and best practices in combating customs and tax fraud, and in particular carousel fraud.
	1.3.6. Support the Parties to improve customs environment	CEFTA	EC	2025-2028	- Enhanced capacity of the Parties through peer-to-peer learning for establishing the Single Window in coordination with SEED; - 24/7 available online payments of customs duties, taxes, fees and charges and online submission of proof of payment; - Development of integrated tariff management system based on the EU's TARIC; - Establish the network of customs laboratories.
1.4 Other trade facilitation measures	1.4.1. Agreement on harmonisation and reduction and removal of fees and charges	CEFTA	EC	2025-2026	- Harmonised and reduced trade related fees and charges seeking to decrease the costs for economic operators; - Uniform rates throughout a day for inspections at BCP/CCP; - Better access to information on fees and charges for all stakeholders.
	1.4.2. Removal of non-tariff measures (NTMs) and trade distorting practices	CEFTA	EC, WB6 CIF	2025 - 2028	- Identified NTMs and trade distorting practices to be addressed; - Tools for removal of NTMs and trade distorting practices in line with EU Directives and regulations; - Improved business environment.
2. Free Movement of Services					
2.1 Freedom to provide services within CEFTA modelled after the EU rules and practices	2.1.1. Agreement on general rules on establishment (mode 3) and free provision of service (mode 1 and 2) based on the Services Directive[14] rules and sector coverage	CEFTA	EC	2025-2026	- Framework for unrestricted movement of services; - Companies are enabled to provide temporary services within CEFTA without establishment and authorisation requirements (Article 16-21 of the Services Directive); - Reduced uncertainties and enhanced predictability of service provision within CEFTA; - Harmonised authorisation schemes and procedures with EU standards; - The principle of non-duplication of requirements and controls (Articles 9-15 of the Services Directive) to enable freedom of establishment agreed and implemented; - Simplified regulatory environment for companies operating in more than 1 CEFTA market.

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[14] Directive 2006/123/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 December 2006 on services in the internal market

	2.1.2. Establishment of Points of Single Contacts in CEFTA Parties in line with the Services Directive and PSC Charter[15] and set up a network in CEFTA modelled on EUGO network of coordinators	CEFTA	EC	2025-2027	- Increased regulatory transparency for companies which want to get establishment or provide service in other CEFTA markets by providing them with full information on regulatory requirements and procedures, as well as facilitate access to regulatory procedures by digital means (Articles 6-8).
2.2 Professional qualifications	2.2.1. Extend the scope of the general system to match the scope in the Directive[16]	CEFTA	RCC EC	2025-2028	- Benefits of the general system of recognition extended to most of regulated professions; - More business opportunities for the young and educated population; - Monitoring and reporting system on the recognition of professional qualifications; - More growth opportunities for businesses built on knowledge.
	2.2.2. Agreement on recognition based on professional experiences in crafts, commerce and industry in line with the EU Directive[17]	CEFTA	RCC EC	2025-2027	- Simplified and accelerated recognition of professionals in craft, commerce and industry; - New markets for professionals and businesses in craft, commerce and industry; - More jobs for people in craft, commerce and industry - Increased mobility.
	2.2.3. Set up the Regulated Professions Database	CEFTA	RCC EC	2025-2026	- Increased transparency for all people and businesses who seek access to other CEFTA markets; - Facilitated recognition of professional qualifications.
	2.2.4. Enable the professional card for pilot professions (e.g. general care nurses, physiotherapists, pharmacists, and real estate agents)	CEFTA	RCC EC	2025-2027	- Facilitated recognition of professional qualifications; - Decreased administrative burden of recognition; - Digitalisation of recognition procedures; - Open discussion on creating a database of professionals with general and/or specific professions.
2.3 Financial and related services	2.3.1. Agreement on the CEFTA framework for facilitating trade in financial (or related) services and reduction of costs of these services based on the equivalence of regulatory and supervisory regimes in one pilot sector (e.g. accounting, audit, reinsurance, banking, securities)	CEFTA	RCC World Bank EC	2025-2027	- Benefits for both companies and supervisory authorities by reducing or even eliminating overlaps in compliance requirements and relying on supervised entities' compliance in other markets; - May also provide benefits such as reduction of costs.
	2.3.2. Agreement on the CEFTA framework for harmonisation of authorisations for non-bank payment service providers	CEFTA	RCC World Bank EC	2025	- Simplified licencing procedures; - Recognition of licencing requirements for non-bank PSPs; - CEFTA markets more attractive for fintech non-bank payment service providers; - Enabled greater competition, leading to more and better financial products and services.
	2.3.3. Enable the use of payments initiated by QR codes by setting up common standard and interoperability framework	CEFTA	RCC World Bank EC European Payments Council	2025-2027	- Action plan on QR code-initiated payments agreed and implemented; - Faster and cheaper payment transactions; - Online trade and tourism within CEFTA promoted and supported; - CEFTA body in charge for payments initiated by QR codes established; - Digitalisation of payments.
	2.3.4. Recognition of Motor Third Party Liability (MTPL) insurance within CEFTA modelled after the EU system to enable travelling without the Green Card or equivalent documents	CEFTA	EU Council of Bureaux	2025-2026	- Agreed and implemented CEFTA arrangements on MTPL in line with the EU standards; - Facilitated movement of people, goods and services with CEFTA; - Reduced administrative burdens related to the movement of people and decreased waiting time at crossing points; - Decreased cost of transport and travel within CEFTA.
2.4 Audio-visual Services	2.4.1. Extend the Schedule of Commitments[18] to include the audio-visual sector	CEFTA	EC	2025-2027	- Commitments in audio-visual sector included in the AP6; - Legal certainty to companies operating in multiple CEFTA markets; - Opened the possibility to address more practical issues in the future.
	2.4.2. Agreement on CEFTA framework based on the EU Audio-visual Services Directive[19]	CEFTA	EC	2025-2028	- Promotion of the European content in audio-visual outlets (e.g. TV) and the products of the European culture; - Protection of vulnerable groups such as minors and women from sexist hate speech and hurtful content; - Harmonised rules for audio-visual commercial communications, including advertising, sponsorship, and product placement; - Ensured a level playing field between traditional television and online services.

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[15] Charter for the Electronic Points of Single Contact under the Services Directive, Ref. Ares (2016)226518 - 15/01/2016

[16] Directive 2005/36/EC on the recognition of professional qualifications

[17] ibidem

[18] Annex III to the Additional Protocol 6 on Trade in Services

[19] Directive (EU) 2018/1808 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 November 2018

2.5 Transport Services	2.5.1. Liberalising transport market of the region by eliminating transport permits for partners within the Western Balkans	TCT	EC CEFTA	2025-2026	- Finalisation and adoption of the roadmap that will further enhance the road transport liberalisation for partners within the Western Balkans region; - Launch the dialogue between South East European Parties (as defined in Transport Community Treaty) on liberating transport market of the region by easing/eliminating procedures of transport permits. Outcome of the dialogue shall produce a joint Roadmap, covering the following aspects: - Legal steps needed towards market opening - Deadlines for each step (defining actions in short-, medium- and long-term); - Trial or testing period (piloting) for two or more regional partners.
2.6 Electronic commerce and related information society services	2.6.1. Extend CEFTA framework to include harmonisation with EU Digital Services Act[20] and SME-to-Platform Regulation[21]	CEFTA	EC RCC	2025-2026	- Further harmonised regulatory framework to facilitate online business operations; - Decreased regulatory compliance cost for accessing all CEFTA markets; - Internal processes of providers of online intermediation and online search engines are more transparent and allow more informed business decisions; - A training and a roadmap for establishing the Digital Single Coordinators provided.
	2.6.2. Agreement on CEFTA framework for portability of online content services modelled after the EU Regulation[22] based on the feasibility study	CEFTA	EC	2025-2027	- Enabled use of online content services, such as streaming, e-books and music access while travelling; - Enhanced consumer convenience and satisfaction and expanded opportunities for online businesses; - Reduced incentives for illegal access to online content (pirating).
	2.6.3. Agreement on CEFTA framework for recognition of electronic signatures for trade documents and other trust services for trade documents in line with EU acquis (e.g. eIDAS Regulation[23])	CEFTA	RCC EC	2025	- Use of electronic identification for trade documents is enabled; - Facilitated paperless trade and the full potential of CEFTA SEED; - Encouraged growth of digital services by providing a legal framework for the use of electronic signature for trade documents; - Reduced administrative burden through the support of online trade document; - Increased efficiency and reduces overhead costs for businesses.
	2.6.4. Enhance parcel delivery within CEFTA through implementation of regulatory and non-regulatory measures in line with the EU *acquis* and practices	CEFTA	EC	2025-2027	- More affordable prices for delivery of packages and higher quality of service; - Digitalisation of the process of data sharing and assessments of prices; - Increased capacities of both public and private stakeholders for the new regulatory environment; - Improved standardisation and implementation of relevant EN standards.
	2.6.5. Revision of CEFTA framework for electronic communications services in line with relevant EU acquis (European Electronic Communications Code[24])	CEFTA	RCC EC	2025-2028	- The same set of authorisation rules applied across CEFTA; - Agreement on updated CEFTA Telecommunication Disciplines[25]; - Reduced barriers and simplified service provision of intra-CEFTA electronic communications services; - Parties supported to harmonise framework for electronic communication services in line with EU acquis (European Electronic Communication Code).
3. Horizontal Trade Measures					
3.1. Green Lanes and reduction of waiting times at crossing points	3.1.1. Implement CEFTA commitments related to Green Lanes Roadmap, i.e. enhance inter-agency cooperation and maintain and adjust intra-CEFTA priority system for key products and trust-worthy economic operators, pilot electronic queues and build parking lots near BCP/CCPs intra-CEFTA and with the EU	CEFTA	TCT EC	2025-2027	- Shorter waiting times for selected types of goods (e.g. perishable goods, fruit and vegetables, live animals, raw material, etc.) and for trustworthy economic operators (e.g. AEOs) within CEFTA and with the EU; - Support to the activities leading to the recognition of AEOs with the EU; - Simplified formalities, improved risk management, improved inter-agency cooperation, and faster clearance at crossing points, including those with the EU; - Coordination of working hours and 24/7 availability of inspection at key BCPs/CCPs; - Established coordinated controls in line with relevant WCO and EU standards.

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[20] Regulation (EU) 2022/2065 on a Single Market For Digital Services and amending Directive 2000/31/EC

[21] Regulation (EU) 2019/1150 on promoting fairness and transparency for business users of online intermediation services

[22] Regulation (EU) 2017/1128 on cross-border portability of online content services in the internal market

[23] Regulation (EU) No 910/2014 on electronic identification and trust services for electronic transactions in the internal market

[24] Directive (EU) 2018/1972 establishing the European Electronic Communications Code

[25] Annex II - Regulatory Principles Regarding Telecommunications of the Additional Protocol 6 on Trade in Services

	3.1.2. Upgrade CEFTA Strategy on Risk Management and related Action Plan	CEFTA	EC	2025	- Simplified and aligned formalities performed by the agencies involved in the clearance of goods; - Improved cooperation amongst all agencies involved in the clearance of goods to extend the benefits of risk management throughout the entire clearance procedure; - Emerging global threats, such as health crises and cybersecurity risks are tackled; - Reduced controls and waiting times while maintaining safety and security; - Improved cooperation and trust-building amongst customs administrations; - Implementation of the best EU and global standards; - Increased capacities to use new technologies; - Joint actions in regard to Common Risk Profiles (i.e. Wood Packaging Material, etc.); - CEFTA SEED upgraded to further strengthen customs cooperation.
	3.1.3. Agreement on recognition of customs controls	CEFTA	EC	2025	- Simplified and facilitated clearance procedures through recognition of customs controls (e.g. scanner images, data on truck/cargo weight, cash declaration forms, customs security seals, etc.).
	3.1.4. Improve management of release and waiting times, including through better quality of data	CEFTA	EC	2025-2026	- More efficient and effective identification of trade flow bottlenecks for proper resolution; - Automatic collection, data warehousing and analysing to monitor and evaluate the implementation of trade facilitation instruments; - Galileo piloted for measuring queuing time; - Electronic queue management system piloted.
	3.1.5. Agreement on the list of agri-food products that are excluded from controls at BCP/CCPs	CEFTA	EC	2025-2026	- Shortened time of controls at BCP/CCPs; - Efficient allocation of resources and focusing on other categories of high-risk products which require more specific controls; - Improved distribution of priorities between inspectors.
3.2. ***Digitalisation and paperless trade through CEFTA SEED***	3.2.1. Electronic exchange of data and documents amongst all agencies involved in clearance of goods, including introduction of e-certificates and paperless trade	CEFTA	EC	2025-2027	- Simplified and shorter procedure (through digitalisation) for issuing phytosanitary certificates, e-COI certificates, veterinary health certificates, Common Health Entry Document, entry and exit permits for medicines containing controlled substances; - Enhanced efficiency, improved transparency and traceability and improved risk management along the food chain; - Enabled regulatory framework for digitalisation in trade and/or paperless trade throughout CEFTA; - Pre-arrival, risk management, cash and VAT refund declaration forms data exchange amongst customs, sharing of control tests, laboratory test result, scan images, weigh result, dual use goods data/documents, etc.; - Acquisition of necessary equipment (laptops, mobile phones, internet access, etc.); - Compliance with the Single Window; - Expanded regulatory framework (at CEFTA and at Parties' level) where needed to support the exchange, sharing and/or publication of relevant data, information, and documents.
	3.2.2. Upgrade CEFTA Notification system for agrifood products	CEFTA	EC	2025-2027	- Improved the existing data exchange following the EU practices (Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed, Europhyt, Animal Disease Information System) to enhance data sharing on risks to public health resulting from the food chain.
	3.2.3. Improve rapid and reliable exchange of information on non-compliant and unsafe products detected on the CEFTA market and support the establishment and functioning of information points on products and applicable regulation	CEFTA	EC	2025-2027	- Improved existing data exchange following EU like practices (Safety Gate, Information and Communication System for Market Surveillance, European Product Registry for Energy Labelling) to enhance data sharing for better consumer protection.
	3.2.4. Upgrade and expand CEFTA Transparency Pack and Statistical Portal	CEFTA	EC	2025-2026	- Sustainable, automatic and up-to-date exchange and sharing of important trade information through CEFTA Transparency Pack and Statistical Portal; - Improved market access, facilitated trade, enhanced compliance; - Regulatory environments made more accessible, predictable, and efficient; - Interoperability and exchange of information with other existing and planned information portals; - Wider scope of quality information available to the public.
	3.2.5. Pilot implementation of e-freight	CEFTA	EC TCT	2025-2028	- Implementation of the concept of paperless trade; - Faster supply chains through pre-arrival receipt of documents, reduction of costs, increased security, and environmental friendliness.
	3.2.6. Upgrade SEED to enable selected functionalities of the Internal Market Information System (IMI) to support trade facilitation activities	CEFTA	EC	2025-2028	- Facilitated exchange of information and communication between relevant authorities involved in trade in goods and services; - Facilitated identification of relevant peers in authorities across other CEFTA Parties; - Fields that can benefit it services: professional qualifications, services (tourism), e-commerce, etc.

3.4. Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) and quality schemes	3.4.1. Adopt Action Plan to enhance cooperation on IPR based on CEFTA Joint Committee Decision to further align legal and policy frameworks with the EU acquis, strengthen administrative capacities and raise public awareness	CEFTA	EU IPO	2025	- Legal certainty and predictability for businesses and investors; - Level playing field for businesses fostering innovation and seamless trade in goods and services within CEFTA and between CEFTA and the EU; - Strengthened IPR institutions, networks, and tools for a more efficient IPR protection system; - Increased awareness of the value of IPR and how it can enhance business operations of SMEs in CEFTA.
	3.4.2. Enhance cooperation in the field of enforcement of IP Rights in line with EU practices (e.g. digitalisation of procedures, exchange of information, joint operation of customs administrations and other agencies)	CEFTA	EU IPO OLAF	2025-2028	- Digitalised and simplified submission of applications for customs interventions; - Digital exchange of information facilitating coordination amongst agencies responsible for IPR enforcement, fostering collaboration and synergy in combating infringement; - Support to joint operations of customs administrations (CA) and other relevant agencies (market surveillance, sanitary inspections, medicinal agencies etc.); - Increased capacity and effectiveness of CAs and other relevant agencies.
	3.4.3. Agreement on the framework for recognition of Geographical Indications (GI) within CEFTA	CEFTA	EU IPO EC	2025-2026	- Promotion and protection of the unique industrial and agrifood products and traditional production methods associated with specific regions; - Recognition of protected GIs with periodic reviews of the lists of recognised GIs; - Enhanced visibility and competitiveness of products in CEFTA and EU Single Market; - Local and traditional businesses owning GI supported; - Promotion of cultural heritage by sustaining traditional production practices and strengthening capacities needed for further marketing of products on the CEFTA and EU markets; - Created leverage for the recognition of GIs with the EU.
3.5. Consumer Protection	3.5.1. Establish framework for cooperation in consumer protection along with a network of Consumer Protection Centres within CEFTA modelled on the European Consumer Centres Network (ECC-Net)	CEFTA	EC	2025-2026	- Cooperation and coordination in the field of enforcement of consumer protection; - Provision of free information, advice and assistance to consumers on purchases in other CEFTA markets; - Increased consumer trust in online shopping across CEFTA; - Consumers and traders are incentivised to take advantage of the new opportunities the Common Regional Market offers; - Enable additional support in settling disputes between consumers and companies within CEFTA; - Enabled exchange of experiences and know-how through joint studies and reports providing input to policy development.
	3.5.2. Harmonise consumer protection rules for the sale of goods and the supply of digital content and digital services with EU *acquis*	CEFTA	EC	2025-2026	- Harmonised regulatory framework ensuring consumers across CEFTA receive consistent protection and remedies; - Clear rules regarding the rights and obligations of both sellers and consumers, reducing legal disputes and enhancing predictability in business operations; - Enhanced consumer confidence and facilitates trade across CEFTA markets; - Reduced complexity and cost of complying with different regulations by enabling companies to operate under a single set of rules across CEFTA.
	3.5.3. Agreement on CEFTA framework on alternative dispute resolution mechanisms between consumers and traders modelled on EU rules	CEFTA	EC	2025-2027	- Established alternative dispute resolution mechanisms (ADR) ensuring that consumers have access to entities that can handle disputes for both intra-Party and inter-Party transactions; - Established procedures that are less expensive than traditional litigation, making them accessible to a broader range of consumers; - Accessible means for consumers to seek redress, including those who may be intimidated by formal proceedings or those living in remote areas; - Enhanced trust and consumer confidence in inter-Party e-commerce transactions; - Breaches of consumer rules are addressed in a coordinated way.
3.6. Trade Statistics	3.6.1. Ensure harmonisation of the quality and scope of statistical data produced and their timely exchange within the CEFTA Statistical Portal	CEFTA	Eurostat	2025-2028	- High-quality statistical data exchanged and published to enable informed business decisions and strategic planning; - Increased scope of shared data to support CRM activities (e.g. e-commerce, tourism, etc.); - Increased capacity of the statistical offices and central banks; - Statistical models harmonised with EU standards; - Enhanced transparency and attractiveness for foreign investments by providing reliable and consistent statistical data for investment evaluations; - Harmonised data allows for effective monitoring and evaluation of economic policies and programmes, ensuring they achieve desired outcomes.
3.7. Trade-related Environmental Issues	3.7.1. Launch a dialogue between the Parties on trade and competitiveness related environmental issues with a focus on perspectives for carbon pricing and coordinated response to EU ETS and Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM)	CEFTA	Energy Community RCC WB6 CIF EC	2025	- Coordinated approach in prioritising policies and measures aimed at decarbonisation of CBAM covered industries within the individual WB6 policies (in particular cement, iron-steel, aluminium, fertilisers); - Enabled sharing of knowledge, expertise, and best practices, building technical capacity and enhancing overall competence in managing environmental issues as well as developing necessary expertise and infrastructure to comply with CBAM and ETS and remain competitive at the EU Single Market;

					- Coordinated approach to CBAM pre-empting possible trade barriers related to CBAM covered sectors .
	3.7.2. Adopt a CEFTA framework to facilitate the trade of non-hazardous waste for recycling and re-use in line with the EU acquis	CEFTA	EC	2025-2028	- Harmonised implementation of existing procedures for the shipment of non-hazardous waste aligning them to the EU acquis and best practices; - A platform for digitalisation and electronic exchange of prior notification and consent procedures within CEFTA established; - Harmonised requirements for pre-consented facilities; - A registry of pre-consented facilities at the CEFTA level established along with the fast-track procedures for shipments to registered facilities; - Launch discussion on a roadmap towards achieving higher percentages of recycling and establishment of Deposit Refund System.
3.8. Dispute Settlement	3.8.1. Fully implement CEFTA Additional Protocol 7 on Dispute Settlement to efficiently resolve emerging trade issues and prevent the emergence of non-compliant measures with impact on trade	CEFTA	UNCTAD EC	2025-2028	- Predictable, transparent, and swift dispute resolution in CEFTA fosters intra-CEFTA trade growth that reduces barriers to trade and contributes to a stable business environment leading to better product availability and competitive pricing; - Accessible legal recourse for inter-Party disputes ensuring that disputes are resolved impartially; - Enhanced legal certainty and efficiency encouraging both domestic and foreign investments due to improved investor confidence; - Facilitated implementation of all commitments under CEFTA framework.
	3.8.2. Establish CEFTA Electronic Communication System for Dispute Settlement	CEFTA	UNCTAD EC	2025-2026	- Streamlined communication and document exchange between disputing parties, reducing administrative burdens and enhancing efficiency; - Automatic notifications to Parties regarding upcoming deadlines, procedural steps, and case developments, ensuring timely compliance and procedural adherence; - Ensured integrity and confidentiality of communications, enhancing trust and confidentiality in the dispute resolution process.
3.9. Promoting export in CEFTA and EU	3.9.1. Establish cooperation with the networks of the business/export promotion organisations with a view of promoting business opportunities based on CRM	CEFTA	WB6 CIF EC EASME	2025	- Information exchange and coordination efforts to reduce trade barriers, harmonise regulations, and improve market access within CEFTA; - Business opportunities arising from the Common Regional Market communicated with the business community; - Amplified voice of businesses in advocating for policy reforms, regulatory harmonisation, and implementation of the CRM AP, thereby creating a more conducive business environment; - Established CEFTA Trade Contact Group.
	3.9.2. Agree and implement a programme of activities promoting trade opportunities to vulnerable groups, i.e. women, young and people from rural areas, create CEFTA networks for these groups	WB6 CIF, CEFTA	CEFTA EC	2025-2028	- Trade opportunities made more accessible for the selected vulnerable groups; - Promotion of trade in CEFTA; - Economic and social empowerment of the marginalised groups; - Reduced inequality across key divide lines such as urban-rural, gender and age; - Promotion of inclusive economic growth;
	3.9.3. Establish CEFTA training programmes for providing technical assistance and guidance in implementation of EU and EU-based CEFTA rules underpinning free movement of goods and services, and ensure equal access to the training programmes	CEFTA	EC WB6 CIF RESPA	2025-2026	- Identical implementation of rules in CEFTA, aligned with the EU best practices; - Strengthened capacities of public and private sector to transpose and implement relevant EU and CEFTA rules; - Training to the relevant implementing agencies, including those in charge of animal and plant health, food safety, quality infrastructure, etc. - Enhanced capacities of the parties to transpose EU harmonised standards; - Strengthening the administrative capacities of reference laboratories in CEFTA Parties by joint training, workshops, regional projects, etc.; - Training to the economic operators and business organisations; - Strengthened implementation of rules and standards within and between the Parties.
	3.9.4. Develop a WB export info platform (portal)	WB6 CIF		2025-2026	- WB export portal developed and integrated into the existing WB CIF tools / database with necessary information and guidelines on WB markets for exporting companies - practical information tool for businesses, including details on customs, taxes, procedures, formalities and requirements, rules of origin, statistics, trade barriers, available supporting programmes and similar; - Tutorials for WB businesses integrated into the platform; - EU legislation helpdesk for WB SMEs created; - Platform (possibly) linked with the EU access to market portal.

	3.9.5. Development and adoption of regional export approach - creation of Export Strategies of WB6	WB6 CIF	Development agencies, Export promotion agencies	2025-2028	- Bearing in mind the efforts of the Western Balkans region to create a common regional market, the Export Strategies will, in their approach to the formulation of strategic export goals, contain a regional character of the region's export potential, making it more competent for entry and placement of products and services in more demanding markets, building up on the export policy documents in each of the WB6; - Strategically launched products in international markets; - Strengthened and strategically defined export goals and potentials that enhance competitiveness of the region's economy for entering the EU Single Market; - Adoption of this approach would lead to long-term regional growth; - Assisting WB6 businesses, in particular SMEs, in utilising distribution channels; - Strengthened WB6 presence in EU markets through appropriate orientation of WB6 foreign networks and strategic consolidation of support programmes for WB6 companies.

4. Human Capital Development

4.1. Standards in education and quality assurance	4.1.1. Facilitate the WB6 access to higher education and admission to study at EU HEI	RCC	EC, ERISEE	2026-2028	- Access to higher education and admission to study for the people of the WB6 to the EU public HEI facilitated.
	4.1.2. Facilitate the recognition of WB6 academic qualifications in EU	RCC	EC, ERISEE	2026-2028	- Simplified and accelerated recognition of WB6 academic qualifications at EU level; - Supported EU harmonisation (Professional Qualifications Directive) and implementation of EU Growth Plan.
	4.1.3. Explore the extension of the recognition of academic qualifications of private higher education institution in the Western Balkans	RCC	ERISEE	2026-2027	- Prepared assessment for potential extension of the recognition of academic qualifications to the private higher education institutions in the WB6; - Enabled expansion of the Regional Recognition Database (RRD) to include the private HEI.
	4.1.4. Support alignment of the standards of Western Balkans 6 Quality Assurance Agencies with the European Standard and Guidelines (ESG)	RCC	ERISEE	2025	- Western Balkans Quality Assurance Agencies aligned with ESG and full members of European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education.
	4.1.5. Support WB6 Quality Assurance Agencies towards implementing the practice that enhances quality culture amongst HEIs	RCC	ERISEE,	2025	- WB6 QA agencies established a mechanism for enhancing Quality Culture amongst Higher Education Institutions.
	4.1.6. Support WB6 Quality Assurance Agencies in developing a digital platform for conducting evaluation procedures	RCC	ERISEE	2026-2027	- WB6 QA agencies equipped with digital platforms to increase their effectiveness of conducting the evaluation procedures.
	4.1.7. Support WB6 employers to align their systematisations with all higher education levels of the National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs*)*	WB6 CIF	RCC, ERISEE	2026-2028	- Facilitated alignment of WB6 employers' systematisations with NQFs; - Joint regional Declaration for encouragement of all employers' to align their HR recruiting process with the domestic NQFs.
4.2. Close the skills gap	4.2.1. Facilitate the free movement of workers in the WB6 in alignment with EU legislation	RCC	CEFTA	2026-2027	- Portability of social rights and more lenient approach to working permits issues within the WB6 enabled.
	4.2.2. Support the alignment of WB6 VET policies with labour market in the Western Balkans	WB6 CIF	RCC, ERISEE, ETF	2026-2028	- Declaration for VET education adopted; - Exchange mechanism between the WB6 educational authorities established - the RRD functionality expanded; - Quality assurance initiatives at the regional level through EQAVET further developed; - Simplified procedures and methodology established for the development and inclusion of qualifications/ occupational standards from various learning settings in the Digital National Qualification Framework (NQF) Register.
	4.2.3. Create common regional basis for occupational standards for certain VET curricula	WB6 CIF	RCC, ERI SEE	2026-2028	- At least one common regional basis for occupational standard per year created; - At least one awareness campaign organised for the region's business community regarding the benefits and the need for harmonised VET education programmes.
	4.2.4. Improve framework for the development of dual education in the WB6	WB6 CIF	RCC, ERISEE, ETF	2026-2028	- Increased number of educational institutions and end users in dual educational programmes; - Increased number of companies in dual education programmes.

	4.2.5. Develop a regional online platform for mapping the needs of businesses related to certain qualifications and skills	WB6 CIF	RCC, EC	2025-2028	- Comprehensive online platform created; - Analysis of the data at the economy and regional levels prepared and used for tailoring strategic documents and developing training; - WB6 skills need analysis prepared; - Workforce development boosted.
	4.2.6. Facilitate improvement of licensing system for different occupations	WB6 CIF	RCC	2025-2028	- Regional mapping of licensing needs conducted; - Joint regional declaration for elimination of necessary licencing, and harmonisation of the licencing requirements for the occupations that will remain under the licencing system; - Established regional framework for the regulation of exams system that is a requirement for licenses.
	4.2.7. Facilitate regional STEM education approach	RCC	ERISEE, ETF	2025-2028	- Harmonised regional STEM education policies /guidelines at all levels of education developed; - Facilitated collaboration amongst educational institutions, industry partners, and relevant stakeholders to develop standardised STEM curricula that align with regional needs and global standards; - Established partnerships between educational institutions and industry to explore possibilities for providing practical experience for STEM students.
	4.2.8. Enhance learning mobility in WB6 based on the EU acquis and practices	RCC	EC, WB6 CIF		- Increased cooperation at regional levels through systemic roundtables, workshops, and joint projects on skills development, innovation, and digital transformation; - 10% of VET learners participate in mobility programmes and 25% of them are people with fewer opportunities; - Learning mobility integrated into education, including for 14-16-yearsolds, to foster regional mobility in the WB6.
4.3. Labour market reform for economic opportunities	4.3.1. Facilitate coordination of WB6 social security systems to align with EU social security standards.	RCC	EC, specialised social security agencies	2025-2028	- Signing of a joint statement for cooperation; - Regional cooperation on social security initiated and Regional Social Security Network established; - Formalisation of an agreement to recognise pension contributions across the region envisioned; - Portability and equal treatment of pension benefits discussed; - Supply and demand of health workers/professionals in WB6 assessed; - The Comprehensive Regional Coordination Plan aligned with Regulation (EC) No 883/2004 on the coordination of social security systems developed.
4.4. Boost Regional Innovation	4.4.1. Western Balkans Academia-Business Innovation Policy Lab	RCC	EC, WB6 CIF, EIT	2026-2027	- Developed a regional toolkit and six individual toolkits for effective innovation policies; - Facilitated 18 initiatives focusing on knowledge transfer and commercialisation from academia to businesses; - 20% increase in R&I expenditures.
	4.4.2. WB6 Deep-Tech Innovation Facility	RCC	EC, WB6 CIF, EISMEA	2026-2027	- Increased readiness of 5 times more deep-tech start-ups for effective pre-acceleration within the EU deep-tech ecosystem; - Formed connections between regional and EU deep-tech start-ups and supporting organisations.
	4.4.3. Facilitate implementation of Smart Specialisation Strategy (S3) common priorities in the region	RCC	EC, WB6 CIF, EISMEA	2025-2027	- Streamlined regional initiatives to support implementation of S3 priorities; - Supported establishment of dedicated joint Horizon Europe and Digital Europe offices; - Facilitated uptake of underperforming Cities Missions.
	4.4.4. Green Tech in Manufacturing Knowledge Transfer Framework	RCC	EC, WB6 CIF	2025-2028	- Green tech knowledge sharing enabled to increase the innovation capacity of green tech companies through academia-business collaboration; - Cleaner production methods introduced benefiting the environment; - Specialised jobs created.
	4.4.5. Support development of regional research and innovation infrastructures	RCC	EC, WB6 CIF	2025-2028	- Regionally dispersed research facilities established to support cutting-edge research initiatives in the WB6; - Brain drain mitigated by attracting and retaining skilled workforce in the WB6; - One-stop-shop services to the industry enabled through Digital Innovation Hubs; - Marketed innovative products and technologies generating high-income employment opportunities in healthcare, sustainable agriculture, transportation, and the circular economy,

5. Business Enabling Environment and Competitiveness					
5.1. Sustainable and Digital Finance	5.1.1. Develop a Common Regional Framework for Sustainable Finance Taxonomy aligned with the EU Taxonomy Regulation	RCC	World Bank Group	2026-2028	- Common Regional Framework for Sustainable Finance Taxonomy developed and endorsed; - Institutional, data management and assessment tools/models for sustainable taxonomy established; - Framework and support for sustainable finance reporting and disclosure provided; - Efforts to create a unified classification system supported to avoid market fragmentation in green financing.

	5.1.2. Develop Regional Green Bond Standards aligned with the European Green Bond Standard	RCC	World Bank Group	2025-2026	- Regional Green Bond Standards developed and endorsed; - Better access to a broader and more diverse pool of investors for green projects enabled.
	5.1.3. Establish a Virtual FinTech Network to facilitate the proliferation of financial technology solutions	RCC	World Bank Group	2026-2028	- Virtual FinTech Network established; - Cooperation with innovation hubs operating in the region established; - Proliferation of fintech solutions in the WB6 market enabled.
5.2. Consumer Finance	5.2.1. Support WB6 to meet the requirements for SEPA membership and integration into SEPA schemes	World Bank Group	RCC, EC	2025-2028	- Geographical Zone of SEPA extended to include WB6; - Main PSPs from the WB6 integrated into the four main SEPA schemes; - Cheaper and faster payments for businesses and individuals within the WB6 and with the EU enabled.
	5.2.2. Support to facilitate integration of the WB6 into the ECB's TARGET Instant Payment Settlement (TIPS) system	World Bank Group	RCC, EC	2025-2028	- Integration of WB6 into the ECB's TIPS system achieved; - Instant payments enabled by financial institutions.
	5.2.3. Engage with international Payment Service Providers (PSPs) to support payment services both regionally and internationally	RCC	World Bank Group	2025-2027	- At least 2 new international PSPs in the region to provide (inward and outward) payment services both regionally and internationally; - A wider range of payment services for consumers and businesses offered in the region.
	5.2.4. Develop a Regional Financial Literacy Framework for Youth, Adults, and SMEs aimed at improving financial literacy in line with the EU framework	RCC	WB6 CIF	2025-2027	- Regional Financial Literacy Framework for Youth, Adults, and SMEs developed and endorsed.
5.3. Investment	5.3.1. Develop the Western Balkans Recommendation on FDI Qualities for Sustainable Development	RCC	WB6 CIF	2025-2027	- WB6 Recommendation on FDI Qualities for Sustainable Development endorsed; - A set of overarching recommendations validated at regional level; - A follow-up set of recommendations in line with the EU directives and regulations; - Green and sustainable practices and aligning investment policy with that of the EU supported.
	5.3.2. Establish a regional certification framework for Recognised Sustainable Investors (RSI) for foreign and local investors operating in the Western Balkans, by defining regionally agreed criteria	RCC	WB6 CIF, World Bank Group	2026	- Regional framework for certification of RSI endorsed; - At least 60 investors certified at the regional level with RSI.
	5.3.3. Support attractng sustainable FDI to the region through promotional means, in alignment with the agreed Recommendation on FDI Qualities and RSI certification	RCC	World Bank Group, WB6 CIF	2025-2028	- 300 million EUR of sustainable investment proportionally attracted to the region.
	5.3.4. Set voluntary Standards for Green Incentives to effectively attract sustainable FDI in the region	RCC	WB6 CIF, World Bank Group	2026-2027	- Voluntary standards for Green Incentives developed; - Increased investment and reinvestment in sustainability sectors, leading to an overall increase in green competitiveness.
	5.3.5. Agreement on CEFTA framework for investment facilitation modelled on the WTO Agreement on Investment Facilitation for Development	CEFTA	RCC, World Bank Group, EC	2028	- More transparent, efficient and predictable business climate for investors created; - Information on investment rules made public and easily available; - Delays in obtaining licenses, permits and approvals reduced; - Regulatory coherence improved; - Unlocking of investment opportunities for SMEs supported; - EU harmonisation (Chapter 30) and harmonisation with WTO rules promoted.
	5.3.6. Create Regional Baseline Guidelines (Roadmap) on Investment Facilitation	RCC	CEFTA, WB6 CIF, World Bank Group	2026	- Regional Baseline Guidelines (Roadmap) on Investment Facilitation developed as a practical tool to encourage establishment of a more predictable business environment; - Administrative procedures related to investment simplified.
	5.3.7. Develop InvestWB6 Portal to connect investors and project promoters on a single WB6-wide platform, offering an easily accessible and user-friendly database of investment opportunities available in the Western Balkans	RCC	WB6CIF, World Bank Group	2027	- InvestWB6 Portal developed; - Information flow related to investment opportunities in the WB6 facilitated.

	5.3.8. Establish an Advisory Network for Investment Dispute Settlement in the Western Balkans	RCC	World Bank Group, GIZ, ReSPA	2025-2028	- Advisory network (consisting of experts from the WB6) for investment dispute settlement, contributing to knowledge sharing, established; - Regional framework for prevention of investment disputes endorsed, leading to increased legal certainty and predictability and reduced costs associated with legal disputes; - Investment disputes prevented from escalating to arbitration.
5.4. Regional Intelligence on industrial cooperation	5.4.1. Create a Regional Economic Observatory (REO)	RCC	WB6CIF, WB6G/IFC	2026 -2028	- Regular monitoring of industrial development and regional industrial cooperation enabled.
	5.4.2. Develop Roadmaps for Action for key sectors in the Western Balkans	RCC	WB6CIF, IFC, UNIDO(tbd), WB6G (tbd.)	2027	- Feasibility and foresight studies (link to REO above) for key industrial sectors prepared and support modalities identified (i.e. market-based opportunities, cluster development, industry-academia linkages, business support services, opportunities of technology upgrading, etc.); - Regional cooperation strategies for alignment and integration of key sectors into European value and supply chains provided; - At least 2 sectorial roadmaps developed.
5.5. Green Industry	5.5.1. Pilot Digital Product Passports (DPPs) at the economy level	RCC	EC, CEFTA, WB6CIF, IFC, UNIDO (tbd)	2025– 2028	- Data on product sustainability, materials used and carbon footprint collected, at economy level; - Info-sharing and sustainable reporting on product-level data facilitated; - At least 3 sectors piloted.
	5.5.2. Develop guidance for implementation of Green Public Procurement (GPP) / Adopt regional voluntary Green Public Procurement criteria	RCC	EC, OECD (tbd), GIZ (tbd)	2027	- Further guidance on GPP, based on existing practice in WB6 and in line with European industrial policy developed; - A set of unified criteria for green public procurement developed; - Piloting in few product categories on voluntary level initiated.
	5.5.3. Identify industrial symbiosis opportunities, and promote through eco-industrial parks (EIPs)	RCC	WB6 CIF, IFC, UNIDO (tbd.), WB6G (tbd)	2025– 2028	- Industrial innovation increased and R&D on usage of industrial waste and by-products encouraged; - Cooperation between enterprises in EIPs enhanced; - Industrial waste and by-products generated in the region mapped and published in a register; - Data on regional material flow and industrial waste improved; - Investments in EIPs promoted aimed at creating industrial symbiosis.
5.6. SME access to finance	5.6.1. Introduce regulatory framework targeting alternative financing options	RCC	EC, WB6CIF	2027	- Alternative financing instruments promoted (venture capital, business angels, crowdfunding); - A comprehensive guidebook on angel investing in the region developed.
	5.6.2. Adopt guidelines for establishing co-investment schemes (government, business angels)	RCC	WB6CIF	2028	- Early stage start-ups supported; - Access to finance gaps for start-ups and SMEs addressed; - Transaction costs for public sector reduced.
5.7. Business sector competitiveness	5.7.1. Establish regional criteria for product innovation entities	RCC	EC, WB6CIF	2027	- Registry of entities established (useful for investors, partnerships for EU Programmes, etc.); - Introduced annual comparative assessments; - Set of criteria developed.
	5.7.2. Adopt minimum regional eligibility criteria for Digital Nomads	RCC	EC, CEFTA	2026	- Minimum regional eligibility criteria for Digital Nomads developed.
	5.7.3. Develop a Regional Toolkit to encourage business to integrate economic security risks in their due diligence and risk management processes	RCC		2026	- Regional Toolkit to Enhance Security in Due Diligence and Risk Management Processes of businesses developed; - Knowledge of businesses related to economic security aspects enhanced.
	5.7.4. Develop a Regional Investment Readiness Roadmap for SMEs	WB6 CIF	RCC	2026	- Regional Investment Readiness Roadmap for SMEs developed; - SMEs investment programmes published and promoted to potential investors via WB6 CIF InvestInSEE platform.
	5.7.5. Transfer of technologies and knowledge of international companies while investing in WB6 region	WB6 CIF	Development agencies	2025-2028	- For the mutual fulfilment of potential cooperation of international investors and domestic companies in the region, the expected result of the cooperation is the transfer of know-how, technological knowledge, as well as the training of professional personnel with an emphasis on middle and higher management levels.
5.8. Regional Tourism Policies and Competitiveness	5.8.1. Develop Strategic Regional Approach to Green and Digital Tourism Transition	RCC	EC, WB6 CIF	2025-2027	- WB6 Strategic Regional Approach for Sustainable Tourism and G&D Transition developed; - Job creation and boost of local economies through sustainable tourism practices increased.
	5.8.2. Develop a regional approach for regulating accommodation services and rentals through online platforms aligned with the EU STR regulations	RCC	EC, UN Tourism, WB6 CIF	2025-2026	- Transparency in the regional tourism market, building trust amongst consumers and providers increased; - Responsible tourism practices that benefit WB6 and boost public funds supported.

	5.8.3. Promotion and enhancement of Regional Brand	RCC	WB6 CIF, GIZ	2025-2028	- New regional tourism products developed and marketed by each WB6 economy; - Diverse tourism routes, including cultural, historical, adventure, and culinary routes connecting the region promoted; - Rural tourism products created and promoted.
	5.8.4. Establish a Blueprint for Educational and Vocational Skills Reform in WB6 Tourism	RCC	WB6 CIF ERISEE, ETF,	2026	- A regionally-supported framework for high school and university curriculum with incorporated green, digital, and other modern skills needed for tourism professionals and experts developed and adopted.
	5.8.5. Improving quality of service for adventure and cultural tourism amongst WB6	WB6 CIF		2026-2028	- Networking of organisations, tour operators and travel agencies dealing with adventure and culture tourism.
	5.8.6. Regional Smart Tourism Destinations development	RCC	EC	2026-2027	- Sustainable practices promoting eco-friendly/smart tourism solutions enhanced; - Regional strategic guidelines for climate change adjustments developed; - Appeal to investors focused on sustainable and tech-driven tourism projects enhanced.
5.9. Women Economic Empowerment	5.9.1. Enhance the Regional Network of Women in Entrepreneurship	RCC	EC, WB6 CIF, UN agencies, GIZ	2025– 2028	- A regional body for advocacy and promotion of women economic empowerment in the region promoted; - Progress monitored by a dedicated regional body; - Creating an infrastructure to support and develop women's entrepreneurship; - Ensuring the capacity to use incubators, accelerators and technology parks by women entrepreneurs.
	5.9.2. Establish regional guidelines to facilitate access to finance for women-led enterprises	RCC	EC, GIZ, Association of Banks in the region (tbd)	2026	- Quality criteria established to facilitate both monitoring and application; - Development of modern programmes for education and training for entrepreneurship with a special focus on women entrepreneurs.
	5.9.3. Improve gender-disaggregated data for women entrepreneurship	RCC	Eurostat, Regional Statistics Offices	2025– 2028	- Methodology for collecting women entrepreneurship data introduced/improved and harmonised at regional level; - Gender disaggregated data on women entrepreneurship improved/collected.
5.10. Regional Supplier Development Program	5.10.1. Establish an Export Club leveraging a pool of experts from different industries to provide guidance to companies interested in joining regional and EU supply chains	WB6 CIF		2025-2027	- Regional industry digital training plan (including metal industry, raw materials, etc.) created; - Companies interested in joining regional and EU supply chains received better guidance; - Compliance with foreign market requirements ensured; - Evidence on export potential of the WB6 region provided.
	5.10.2. Develop a joint and comprehensive knowledge database including online platform /digital technical assistance for SMEs	WB6 CIF	EC	2025-2027	- Placement of industrial products to the market in accordance with technical rules and standards enabled; - Regional CE marking Digital Platform upgraded.
	5.10.3. Further develop a regional brand	WB6 CIF	RCC	2025-2027	- WB6 regional brand developed; - WB6 CIF product/services promotion in EU facilitated; - Placement of WB6 CIF products in the EU based retailers enabled.
	5.10.4. Establish networking channels for developing database of local farmers and hotels/restaurants interested in local supply food chains	WB6 CIF		2025-2028	- Development of micro and family businesses from underdeveloped and rural areas in Western Balkans supported; - Interlink and cooperation between local farmers i.e. family businesses with hotels and restaurants established.
6. Digital Transformation					
6.1. Connectivity	6.1.1. Reduce roaming charges between the WB6 and EU	RCC	EC,	2025-2028	- Discussions on reduction of roaming charges between the WB6 and the EU facilitated; - Roaming charges reduction extended for other roaming services under EU-WB6 Roaming Declaration; - Number of signatories of EU-WB6 Roaming Declaration increased; - Regional approach to the reduction of mobile termination rates between the WB6 and EU discussed and agreed.
	6.1.2 Reduce retail charges for fixed and mobile intra-WB6 calls[26]	RCC	EC	2025-2028	- Assessment on reduction of retail charges for fixed and mobile intra-WB6 calls prepared; - Approach to the reduction of fixed and mobile termination rates between the WB6 discussed and agreed; - Charges for fixed and mobile intra-WB6 calls reduced.

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[26] Roaming calls not included

	6.1.3.Enhance business climate in the telecommunications sector by creating more favourable conditions for investments and innovation	RCC	EC	2025-2028	- Streamlined administrative procedures to speed up deployment of Very High Capacity Networks (VHCN) such as:
					  o Permit granting procedures harmonised between municipalities;
					  o Digitalised Single Information Point (SIP) established in each economy, in line with Gigabit Infrastructure Act (GIA);
					  o Permit applications submitted through SIP by electronic means and granted within deadlines prescribed in GIA;
					- Costs for deployment of VHCN lowered by increasing coordination of civil works and reusing existing infrastructure, including public infrastructure;
					- Grant schemes to incentivise substitution of cooper and cable infrastructure with fibre created.

	6.1.4 Improve connectivity in the WB6 through fixed and mobile broadband projects between WB6	RCC	EC	2025-2028	- 70% of households covered with fixed Very High Capacity Networks in each economy; - 80% of populated areas covered with 5G signal in each economy, as well as main regional corridors; - Regional dialogue on best practices and challenges in the roll-out of broadband networks enhanced and broadband projects between WB6 discussed.
	6.1.5. Foster cooperation in the area of radio spectrum management amongst WB6 and between the region and the EU	RCC	Radio Spectrum Policy Group, CEPT	2025-2028	- The regional discussions related to the cooperation in the radio spectrum area facilitated; - Future usage of different spectrum bands discussed, in line with best EU practices; - Regional approach at the WRC-27 discussed.
	6.1.6. Enhance people's understanding of new technologies and services and their impact	RCC, ITU		2025-2026	- Promotional campaign on new technologies and services, such as 5G, AI, etc., organised in each economy and on the regional level; - General awareness of WB6 population of new technologies and services raised.
6.2. Digital Economy	6.2.1. Maintain regional monitoring of high quality digital economy statistics	RCC	Eurostat EC ITU	2025-2028	- Building on EU's DESI, synchronisation with EU Digital Compass established; - WB6 DESI Report prepared annually; - Regional platform for DESI data collection developed.
	6.2.2. Ensure a safer, more functional and trustworthy online environment for WB6 users	RCC	EC CEFTA	2025-2028	- Regulatory framework for enabling the proper functioning of the Western Balkans market and ensuring operational readiness for the implementation of the Digital Market Act and synchronisation with the EU market enabled; - Facilitated harmonisation of the rules applicable to intermediary services in the Western Balkans market, and ensuring operational readiness for the implementation of the Digital Services Act and synchronisation with the EU market.
	6.2.3. Facilitate process to enable conditions for Artificial Intelligence (AI) development and uptake in the WB6, in line with the EU practice and rules on AI	RCC	EC	2025-2028	- Start a regional dialogue on AI; - WB6 approach to Artificial Intelligence fostered; - A policy roadmap/plan to achieve AI goals developed, in line with EU AI Act; - Based on EU policy and practice, guidelines developed to support outlining of each economy's vision, goals, and plans for the development and integration of AI technologies, including the preparation of AI Strategy.
	6.2.4. Support integration of the WB6 region into EU trust services in compliance with eIDAS	RCC	EC	2025-2027	- Enhanced cooperation to reach compliance with electronic identification, authentication and trust services (eIDAS); - Enhanced access and use of electronic identification for the entire WB6 population; - Facilitated recognition and acceptance of eID schemes; - Regional interoperability strengthened through the support to implementation of identified use cases in cooperation with existing and upcoming projects.
	6.2.5. Enhance regional recognition of e-Signature	RCC	EC	2025-2028	- Elevating action under current CRM AP at an EU level and phasing-in action; - Process on WB6 mutual recognition of qualified trusted services and registered electronic identification schemes improved; - Conditions and legal framework for regional recognition and use of electronic signature created; - Regional recognition and use of e-signatures in WB6 region through established legal framework in cooperation with existing and upcoming projects enhanced; - Facilitated regional dialogue to qualify the Western Balkans as eligible for joining the EU third countries trusted list for the validation of electronic signatures as advanced electronic signature to achieve legal effect of handwritten signature in the EU, as a first step towards pursuing mutual recognition of qualified trust services.

	6.2.6. Development of a regional Digital Identity Wallet	RCC	RCC, EC (EC Digital Identity Wallet)	2026-2028	- Measures to stimulate the adoption of digital identity developed by the private sector, and new digital identity services developed; - Interoperability amongst government systems strengthened; - Improved conditions for data sharing in the Western Balkans market, and created harmonised framework for data exchange through enhanced cooperation between WB6, following the EU practice and in line with the European Data Governance Act and DATA Act; - Activities for the development of pilot project(s) for testing Digital Wallet facilitated.
	6.2.7. Facilitate regional processes towards integration of WB6 into EU Digital Single Gateway	RCC	EC	2025-2028	- Facilitate processes for establishing single digital gateway to provide information sharing between public administrations across WB6; - Facilitate regional dialogue towards integration of WB6 into the work of Data Space Support Centre; - Support the WB6 to prepare the basis for the implementation of once-only system.
	6.2.8. Create Data Governance Framework for WB6 with guidelines and policies on data management, data privacy in line with the GDPR, data sharing, data security and interoperability	RCC	EC	2025-2028	- Working group on open data datasets, data governance, data sharing, data security, creation and alignment of standards on regional level established; - Data Governance Framework for WB6 created; - Integration of the Western Balkans in the European Data Innovation Board (with an observer status) facilitated; - Harmonisation of domestic legislation with GDPR enhanced; - Regular and continuous exchange of experience at the regional level or amongst different regions ensured.
6.3. *Cybersecurity*	6.3.1. Expand the Digital Europe Programme for the WB6 to reduce digital divide in cybersecurity at the regional level	RCC	EC	2026-2027	- WB6 supported to take part in projects that deploy digital technologies across the WB6 in the area of cybersecurity.
	6.3.2. Develop cybersecurity framework/platform for regional needs on cybersecurity	RCC	EC, IISG, different donors	2025-2028	- Regional database on cybersecurity needs fully operational and needs monitored regularly; - Regional framework/platform on cybersecurity promoted.
	6.3.3. Integration of WB6 in the EU cybersecurity certification framework	RCC	EC	2025-2028	- Capacity of WB6 to integrate into the EU cybersecurity certification framework: sufficient capacity of certification bodies and competent authorities; - Increased regional cooperation and capacities with the aim to meet requirements and standards related to cybersecurity certification framework; - Integration of the Western Balkans Domestic Cybersecurity Certification Authorities in the European Cybersecurity Certification Group ECCG (with an observer status) facilitated.
	6.3.4. Create a network amongst WB6 universities for exchange of experiences and programmes in cyber, like TTX- Table Top Examples, CTF- Catch the Flags Scenarios and Cyber Drills	RCC	WB6	2025-2027	- A WB6 vibrant community/network that supports career advancement, knowledge sharing, industry advocacy, and societal impact in the field of cybersecurity established; - Engagement in other initiatives for the region, such as unifying Core Courses University programmes in cyber enhanced; - Regional alumni group with young professionals in the field of cyber security established.
	6.3.5. Promote WB6 cybersecurity activities and initiatives	RCC	WB6	2025-2027	- Cybersecurity regularly promoted under different topics, including awareness raising, cybersecurity capacity building, training programmes, trust in the field of information exchange between WB6, regional activities and initiatives, encouraged private sector participation through incentives, etc. - Promote and expand regional cooperation with different partners and stakeholders dealing with cybersecurity, such as Western Balkans Centre for Cyber Capacities (WB63C), GFCE, e-Governance Academy, etc., in order to improve cyber capacities in the region through activities and training on cyber security, cyber-crime, cyber diplomacy, etc.

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[1] In CEFTA, agreements normally take the form of Additional Protocols to the agreement or Joint Committee Decisions, or Joint Committee Recommendations if they are not legally binding.

[2] Directive 2006/123/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 December 2006 on services in the internal market

[3] Charter For The Electronic Points Of Single Contact Under The Services Directive, Ref. Ares(2016)226518 - 15/01/2016

[4] Directive 2005/36/EC on the recognition of professional qualifications

[5] Directive (EU) 2015/2366 on payment services in the internal market

[6] https://www.cobx.org/sites/default/files/2022-11/2002%20-%202008%20Multilateral%20agreement.pdf

[7] Annex III to the Additional Protocol 6 on Trade in Services

[8] Directive (EU) 2018/1808 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 November 2018

[9] Regulation (EU) 2022/2065 on a Single Market For Digital Services and amending Directive 2000/31/EC

[10] Regulation (EU) 2019/1150 on promoting fairness and transparency for business users of online intermediation services

[11] Regulation (EU) 2017/1128 on cross-border portability of online content services in the internal market

[12] Regulation (EU) 2017/1128 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 June 2017 on cross-border portability of online content services in the internal market

[13] Regulation (EU) No 910/2014 on electronic identification and trust services for electronic transactions in the internal market

[14] Annex II - Regulatory Principles Regarding Telecommunications of the Additional Protocol 6 on Trade in Services

[15] Directive (EU) 2018/1972 establishing the European Electronic Communications Code

[16] Regulation (EU) 2024/1143 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 April 2024 on geographical indications for wine, spirit drinks and agricultural products, as well as traditional specialties guaranteed and optional quality terms for agricultural products

List of Acronyms:

AP – Action Plan

CEFTA – Central European Free Trade Agreement

CRM – Common Regional Market

CRM 2.0 – Common Regional Market Action Plan 2025-2028

DESI – Digital Economy and Society Index

EU – European Union

GDP – Gross Domestic Product

MS – Member States

OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

RCC – Regional Cooperation Council

R&D – Research and Development

SEED - Systematic Exchange of Electronic Data

SEPA – Single Euro Payments Area

SME – Small and Medium Enterprises

TCT – Transport Community Treaty

VET – Vocational Education and Training

VHCN - Very High Capacity Networks

WB6 – Western Balkans Six

WB6 CIF – Western Balkans 6 Chamber Investment Forum