ROADMAP
for Effective Implementation of the Common Regional Market and Accelerating Western Balkans EU Single Market Access

Prepared for and discussed at the Berlin Process Business and Chamber Forum[1]
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Purpose and Context

Five years after the launch of the first Common Regional Market (CRM) Action Plan, and one year into the renewed 2024-2028 CRM Action Plan, businesses across the Western Balkans (WB6) continue to face barriers that limit trade, investment, and mobility.

Key issues:

- **Borders and Infrastructure:** Long queues, manual inspections, insufficient infrastructure and staffing at border crossings, incompatible SPS/veterinary schedules with customs working hours, and only partial use of electronic pre-arrival systems.
- **Regulatory Fragmentation and Technical Barriers:** Certificates and lab results are not mutually recognized across the region; Conformity Assessment Bodies (CABs) are under-resourced; rules and standards diverge from EU norms.
- **Labour Mobility and Services:** Mutual recognition of qualifications is inconsistent; fragmented labour markets hinder cross-border service provision.
- **Digital and E-Commerce Trade:** Slow parcel clearance, fragmented VAT procedures, inconsistent trust services and limited interoperability across WB6 economies.

Impact: Despite political commitments, **delivery on the ground remains limited**, constraining cross-border trade, regional competitiveness, and EU integration progress.

Strategic Priorities

1. Regional Political Leadership & Accountability

- Establish a **Regional CRM Implementation Task Force** of ministers responsible for Economy, Trade, Digital, Agriculture, Transport.
- **Report quarterly** to a high-level political forum; **involve business chambers** to ensure private sector relevance and accountability.

2. Integrate CRM reforms into EU Accession Roadmaps

- Embed CRM priorities into national EU accession roadmaps with measurable outcomes.
- Apply a **"Recognition by Adoption"**: EU-aligned rules, once adopted in one WB6 economy, are recognized regionally, avoiding duplication and accelerating Single Market alignment.

3. Prioritize High-Impact Reforms

- Focus reforms on **border efficiency, mutual recognition, digital services, labour mobility, e-commerce**.
- Emphasize actions that directly **reduce costs, delays, and regulatory burdens**, particularly for SMEs.

[1] For further reference, see the full Policy Brief: Implementing the Common Regional Market and Accelerating EU Single Market Access.

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Immediate Actions and Priority Areas

Borders and Trade Facilitation

WB6 Actions:

- Expand border crossings, modernize inspection, 24/7 operations, **multi-lane processing**.
- Harmonize **SPS/veterinary working hours** with customs.
- Full electronic exchange of SPS certificates via SEED+, including sanitary certificates**.**
- Implement **mutual recognition of AEOs** (Authorized Economic Operators) across the region.

WB6-EU Coordination:

- Mutual recognition of **AEO status with EU**.
- **Adapt Entry/Exit System (EES, Oct 2025)** to WB6 realities; provide transitional arrangements to prevent congestion.
- Exempt professional drivers from **90/180-day limits** or calculate stays by hours.
- Joint and integrated border controls on **key EU-WB6 routes**.

Regulatory and Technical Alignment

WB6 Actions:

- Upgrade **Conformity Assessment Bodies (CABs)**, adopt EU rules on **product safety, labelling, and environmental standards**
- Implement **mutual recognition agreements** for products and professional qualifications.
- Implement mutual recognition of test results from labs for plant, animal and mixed-origin products**.**

WB6-EU Coordination:

- Mutual recognition of test reports, certificates, and conformity assessments with EU
- EU technical assistance and funding to support CABs capacity.

Labour and Services Mobility

WB6 Actions:

- Harmonize professional qualifications and licensing in key sectors (construction, tourism, ICT, business services) across the region
- Enable **cross-border electronic signatures and trusted digital identity**
- Align licensing and labour mobility frameworks with EU professional mobility rules

WB6-EU Coordination:

- Implement schemes for cross-border recognition of professional qualifications and licensing

Digital and E-Commerce

WB6 Actions:

- Harmonize VAT, parcel delivery, consumer protection rules
- Implement **regional e-signature framework**, align with EU Digital Services Act
- Accelerate b**roadband and 5G rollout**

WB6-EU Coordination:

- Align regional **digital systems with EU Digital Services Act, Consumer Rights Directive, and eCommerce Package**.
- Support interoperable **e-filing, customs declarations**, and **cross-border e-commerce**