

BALKAN COUNTRIES: AGREEMENTS TO FACILITATE MOBILITY WITHIN THE BALKANS ARE A STEP FORWARD INTO THE LONG EU INTEGRATION PROCESS



SHARE ARTICLE

Event

On 3 November, the Western Balkan Six (WB6) leaders from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia met with the EU's top officials and Germany. They reached a triple agreement aimed to facilitate the freedom of movement of citizens within the region. It will notably improve labour mobility through recognition of professional qualifications.

Impact

The deal reached under the Berlin Process – launched in 2014 at Berlin's initiative and involving the EU and its major member states – is a major step forward towards a Common Regional Market (CRM) in the Balkans. The latest agreements involve six countries and their scope are thus broader than the similar "Open Balkan Initiative" (Albania, Serbia and North Macedonia). The next EU-WB6 summit is planned to be held in early December.

Besides the welcome economic and political benefits from increased people mobility, the general aim of the process is to establish the four freedoms of the EU – the free movement of people, capital, goods and services – within the WB6 and allow Balkan countries to move forward in their integration in the EU. However, EU membership is still a distant achievement, as the Western Balkan countries are at different stages in their plans. The process is underway for Serbia and Montenegro, whereas negotiations have yet to start with North Macedonia and Albania. At the moment, Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina have no status in the process. EU institutions and main country members are also careful to remain committed to this historically unstable region inside Europe (e.g. recently heightened tensions between Serbia and Kosovo) and reinvigorate their stalled enlargement prospect, especially in the context of the destabilising and uncertain war in Ukraine. The announced EUR 1 billion energy package in support to the WB6 countries is an illustration of their intention to keep Balkan countries in the EU sphere.

Analyst: Raphaël Cecchi – r.cecchi@credendo.com

15/11/2022

Filed under **Region news**