

Europe Day in Subotica – Networking with Academia

16th May 2024, from 13:00 – 14:45

Faculty of Economy, Subotica, Segedinski put 9-11

Panel Discussion

Europe is our home: Growth Plan for the Western Balkans

“Europe is our home. In it, we have always lived together, we travel the same roads, and we are driven by the desire for a better life.”

Aim:

The Delegation of the European Union to Serbia aims to initiate a societal dialogue regarding how Serbia should utilize the funds from the Growth Plan. This topic will be discussed during panel events scheduled for May in Subotica and Niš, coinciding with the celebration of Europe Day and the Europe is Our Home campaign.

Introduction:

The Growth Plan for the Western Balkans is part of the aspiration to make Europe a better place to live for all people together. The region has always been historically, culturally and economically linked to the European Union, which is the largest donor in Serbia, but also the most important trade and economic partner. About 65 percent of Serbian exports go to EU member states, and more than half of the total import of goods to Serbia is from the EU.

The European Union created a unique Growth Plan to bring the region and Serbia closer economically to the Union and to contribute to the accelerated development of the region. Not only will the investment help the economies of the region to grow and develop faster, but the Growth Plan will also lead to the acceleration of the expansion process, i.e. the implementation of the necessary reforms in the countries of the region. More integration means a better quality of life for all citizens of the region.

A total of 6 billion euros have been allocated, which will be used to finance some of the most important projects in the Western Balkans. The European Commission estimates that the Growth Plan could double the region's economy in the next 10 years.

Serbia, as the largest country in the region, will have the opportunity to apply for the largest part of the funds, and out of six billion, two represent non-reimbursed aid, while 4 billion will be allocated through very favourable loans. Joining the single European market has always been one of the main drivers of the integration process because it is also the main driver of the economic growth of countries when they become members of the European Union. When we talk about Serbia, its GDP per capita is

currently only 44 per cent of the EU average, and the goal of the Growth Plan is to reduce that gap.

Through the Growth plan, some of the most important projects in the region will be financed, and the countries of the Western Balkans should make individual plans with detailed reforms that they will implement.

Panel Discussion in Subotica

Event Title: Europe is our home: Growth Plan for the Western Balkans - advancing Serbia's Future: Leveraging the Growth Plan for Enhanced Regional Integration

Date and Time: Thursday, 16th May, from 13:00 PM to 14:45 PM

Location: Faculty of Economy, Subotica, Segedinski put 9-11, Amphitheatre

For more details about the venue, please visit <https://www.ef.uns.ac.rs/>

Proposed Panellists:

1. Mr. Nikola Bertolini, Head of Cooperation, EU Delegation to Serbia
2. Representative of the Ministry of European Integration
3. TBD representative of the Chamber of Commerce of Vojvodina
4. Ms. Bojana Selaković, Coordinator of the National Convention on the European Union
5. Prof. Novica Supic, Professor, Department of Economic Theory and Politics, Faculty of Economy Subotica
6. Ms. Biljana Stepanović, Editor-in-Chief of New Economy

Moderator: Filip Lukić

Schedule:

- **12:30- 13:00** – Arrival and Networking: Participants and audience assemble, with light refreshments served.
- **13:00 - 13:10** – Opening Remarks: Welcoming address by the Dean of the Faculty of Economics, Subotica.
- **13:10 - 13:20** – Keynote Address: Presented by Mr. Nikola Bertolini, with a focus on the Growth Plan and its opportunities for Serbia.
- **13:20 - 13:55** – Remarks by Panellists: Brief introductory comments from each panellist, setting the stage for the discussion.
- **13:55 - 14:20** – Panel Discussion: A moderated dialogue offering expert insights into the Growth Plan and related topics.
- **14:20 - 14:35** – Q&A Session: Opportunity for the audience to pose questions and engage directly with the panelists.

- **14:35 - 14:45** – Closing Remarks: Final thoughts and session wrap-up by the moderator.

Discussion Topics:

- Economic Integration with the EU's Single Market: Strategies for enhancing the region's economic ties and benefits with the European Union.
- Collaboration through the Common Regional Market: Exploring cooperative ventures in the Western Balkans to foster a unified market.
- Sustainable Economic Growth: Tactics for attracting foreign investments and boosting regional economic stability.
- Financial Support from 2024-2027: Discussing upcoming financial assistance and its potential impacts on the Western Balkans.
- Growth Plan Benefits for Serbia: Detailed analysis of the Growth Plan's advantages specifically for Serbia and its economy.

Event Objectives:

- Provide a platform for dialogue among key stakeholders about enhancing regional cooperation and integration with the European Union.
- Foster relationships between regional leaders and European representatives to support economic growth and stability in Serbia.
- Highlight the strategic importance of Serbia and its neighbouring countries in the broader context of European economic dynamics.

Target Audience:

Students of economics and international relations, other interested students and academics, business leaders, policy makers and professionals interested in European integration and economic development in the Western Balkans.

Additional Information:

- **Open event for the public and media**
- English and Serbian language simultaneous translation available.
- All participants must sign before entering (name, surname, occupation) with a GDPR disclaimer on the Participation list clearly visible