



# Weekly Briefing

**Montenegro external relations briefing:  
European prospective of Montenegro and cooperation with Western  
Balkan countries**  
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## **European prospective of Montenegro and cooperation with Western Balkan countries**

*Relations within the Western Balkan region and the European perspective of Montenegro and the whole region have marked the external relations of Montenegro with other countries during the previous period. In July, Montenegrin officials participated to the major events that dedicated the future of the region, interconnections and mutual cooperation of the region, European integration of the Western Balkan countries, as well as challenges for strengthening the cooperation that are a prerequisite for stability and development of the whole region. The President of Montenegro participated at the annual meeting of South-East European Cooperation Process, while the Montenegrin delegation led by the Prime Minister of Montenegro participated in the Western Balkans Summit.*

### **Montenegro at Western Balkan Summit 2019**

In early July, Poznan in Poland, hosted the Western Balkan Summit. This Summit is being held as part of the Berlin Process and is being held for the sixth time this year. The focus of this year's summit is the implementation of the Multi-annual Action Plan on Regional Economic Area, as well as the other economic themes, integration, security and civil society. The Summit brought together the Prime Ministers of six Western Balkan countries, as well as high representatives of EU institutions, international financial institutions and institutions focusing on the Western Balkans, such as the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) and the Regional Youth Cooperation Office. Within the Western Balkan Summit, five events were held, namely the Think Tank Forum, Business Forum, Civil Society Forum, Ministerial Meetings and Leader's Summit. The Montenegrin delegation was led by the President of Montenegro, Mr. Markovic.

Mutual cooperation and better connections of the countries of the region are key to the progress of the whole region, so this and other similar meetings are a great platform for exchanging views on important economic topics and opportunities for establishing new and improving existing relations between countries. Also, through such meetings, screening of current situation and activities that have been carried out is done, but also presents an opportunity to present the shortcomings and limitations that can be eliminated in the coming

period. A very important segment in this part is the willingness and commitment of all countries to eliminate obstacles and difficulties in relation to regional economic integration. According to the Chair's conclusions of the Western Balkans Summit, the Leaders of the Western Balkan countries see "regional cooperation, good neighborly relations and reconciliation" of great importance in order to achieve progress on its European integration.

Very important message from this Summit is that enlargement policy will remain one of the priorities of the next European Commission. However, despite the positive messages and signals sent from the Summit regarding the accession of the Balkan countries to the EU, this significant issue remains unresolved and unclear, as there are passages in the thinking of European officials. Thus, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Emmanuel Macron do not completely agree on further enlargement of the EU.

In addition to the meeting of Western Balkan country' leaders and EU officials, ministerial meetings were organized at the Summit, where Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Economy and Internal Affairs met. Montenegrin ministers and officials took part in these discussions, too. The main benefits of the meetings can be reflected in the exchange of experience, knowledge and good practices regarding the implementation of the reform programs in the countries of the region and the EU countries in the mentioned above areas. In terms of economic co-operation and integration, Western Balkan countries, including Montenegro, implement the Multi-annual Action Plan on Regional Economic Area in the Western Balkans Six (MAP REA), which is of great importance for the stability of the entire region, but also an essential component of the European integration. RCC in in charge of MAP REA and it is supported by the European Commission. Implementation of the aim of the Plan which are focused on unobstructed flow of goods, services, capital and highly skilled labor, will contribute to increase of attractiveness of the region for investments and trade, accelerating convergence with the EU, as well as bringing prosperity of the whole Western Balkans (RCC, 2018). An important discussion topic of this-year meeting was to stimulate and sustain the economic growth and development of entrepreneurship, as well as improve the business environment.

Beside economic issues, EU enlargement has been discuses at ministerial meeting. Minister of Foreign Affairs of Montenegro, at a meeting of Western Balkan Heads of Diplomacy, stressed the importance of implementing EU enlargement policy and emphasized that enlargement policy does not have alternative for all countries. Participation in the event is of additional importance for Montenegro, since a Memorandum of Cooperation Framework on the South East European International Institute for Sustainable Technologies (SEEIIST) was

signed, which was on the Montenegrin initiative. Namely, more than two years ago, the Government of Montenegro launched this initiative, which includes a research infrastructure based on state-of-the-art technologies to foster scientific excellence, innovation, mobility, internationalization and knowledge transfer, as well as encourage the development of complementary technologies.

In the field of internal security, a meeting of the Ministers of Internal Affairs of Montenegro and the State Secretary of the Federal Ministry of the Interior of Germany was organized. In relations to these two countries, enhanced strategic and operational cooperation between the police services of the Montenegrin and German ministries was agreed, in order to respond more effectively to the global security challenges. Such meetings are a good opportunity to exchange experiences from different fields, dealing with the fight against crime, illegal migration, terrorism and other issues, but also defining cooperation and knowledge transfer from developed countries in Europe, such as Germany.

### **President of Montenegro at SEECP Annual meeting**

A few days after the Western Balkan Summit, leaders from the region have come together at the annual meeting of the South-East European Cooperation Process (SEECP). This year's meeting was held in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Bosnia and Herzegovina chaired this regional initiative during the previous year, while Kosovo will preside over this initiative next year. The main aim of establishing this initiative is to strengthen regional relations between the countries of Southeast Europe (SEE), but also to contribute to their European and Euro-Atlantic integration. Montenegro joined the initiative twelve years ago and this year's meeting was attended by the President of Montenegro.

The meeting of the leaders of the countries of the SEE region is of great importance, taking into account developments in the EU during the previous period, different opinions and discussion of EU officials on its further enlargement, which is of great importance for Montenegro and other countries in the region. Summarizing all developments in the context of countries' progress towards EU integration, it seems that they have not made significant progress. In the process of EU accession negotiations, Montenegro is still waiting for the opening of the last negotiating chapter, although it was expected that will happen this year. The slowdown in the integration process can be observed in other neighboring countries. In this case, gathering Western Balkan countries' officials contributes to defining a common direction and orientation for the whole region in relation to the EU.

Although there are different attitudes of European politicians towards EU enlargement, Montenegro is pursuing a policy towards EU integration. In this regard, President of Montenegro, Mr. Djukanovic stressed that Montenegro believes that the European perspective is the only guarantee that the SEE region can truly be transformed into a zone of peace, safety, security and development, which is a fundamental objective of the cooperation process, but also stressed the concern of slowing down the enlargement process. In addition, Montenegro's external relations are focused on promoting good neighborly policy and regional cooperation in order to strengthen democracy, mutual understanding and trust and interconnectivity.

This meeting is a great opportunity for the leaders of the SEE region to discuss important issues regarding the promotion of mutual cooperation. On that occasion, the President of Montenegro also met with the President of North Macedonia. Given that both countries have the same strategic goals for EU and NATO membership, the meeting of the country leaders is of additional importance. Montenegro has had excellent cooperation with Northern Macedonia for many years. Certainly there is a space for enhancing cooperation and joint action in the process of integration of the Western Balkan region to the EU, but also for enhancing cooperation between Montenegro and North Macedonia in the field of economy.

Finally, the meetings concluded that improving cooperation and cohesion between the Western Balkan countries is an important part of its future progress. The positive signal is that the leaders of the countries are seeing great significance in this. Montenegro also expresses its willingness to establish good neighborly relations, but also resolutely pursues a policy towards EU integration. In this respect, an important segment is the Berlin Process, which focuses on better integration and strengthening of cooperation, significantly encourages the integration of the region into the EU.