

# EU - Western Balkans relations

October 2022  
#WesternBalkans

The EU enlargement policy is a **geo-strategic investment** in Europe's peace, security, stability and prosperity.

Russia's aggression against Ukraine underlines the **need to accelerate the accession process** of the Western Balkans.

The EU will continue its **strong political, technical, and financial support to all six Western Balkan partners**, to help them advance key political, institutional, social and economic reforms that are necessary to progress on their path toward the EU.

## The EU is the biggest investor and trading partner in the Western Balkans



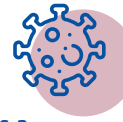
EU companies are by far the **leading investors**, accounting for **over 61% of FDI stock** in the region in 2020



EU accounts for **almost 70%** of the region's **total trade** in 2021



Western Balkans is a market of **18 million consumers**



The European Commission and the European Investment Bank mobilised **€3.3 billion** to tackle COVID-19 pandemic and socio economic recovery in the Western Balkans

up to  
**€30 billion**

in total public and private investments



Under the **Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans**, the EU supports the post pandemic socio-economic recovery of the region and helps the region closing the development gap with the EU.

So far the EU approved funding for **24 flagship investments**, worth **€3.3 billion** in total investment

## Key developments of EU-Western Balkans relations

**Bosnia and Herzegovina** – Population: 3.5 million  
**Potential candidate**  
May 2019: Commission Opinion on EU membership application  
Dec 2019: EU Council conclusions endorsed the 14 key priorities to fulfill before opening EU accession negotiations

**Montenegro** – Population: 0.6 million  
**Candidate country**  
Opened chapters - 33  
Provisionally closed chapters - 3

**Albania** – Population: 2.9 million  
**Candidate country**  
March 2020: EU decides to open accession negotiations  
July 2022: first Intergovernmental Conference on accession negotiations and start of the screening



**Serbia** – Population: 7 million  
**Candidate country**  
Opened chapters - 22  
Provisionally closed chapters - 2

**Kosovo\*** – Population: 1.8 million  
**Potential candidate**  
April 2016: Stabilisation and Association Agreement enters into force

**North Macedonia** – Population: 2.1 million  
**Candidate country**  
March 2020: EU decides to open accession negotiations  
July 2022: first Intergovernmental Conference on accession negotiations and start of the screening