



5TH TIRANA CONNECTIVITY FORUM

weaving the fabric of the union

29 – 31 October 2019

#TCF19



TIRANA CONNECTIVITY FORUM
29 - 31 October 2019
Venue: Rogner Hotel | Antigonea



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The objective of the 5th edition of Tirana Connectivity Forum (TCF19), will be twofold. First it will take stock of the progress made in the Connectivity Agenda with focus on energy, transport, and on people-to-people connectivity. Since the Summit of Vienna in 2015 and the endorsement of the first connectivity projects, project implementation has substantially advanced, while new infrastructure projects have entered the pipeline. As a result, their impact is becoming visible at the same time as new challenges inherent of implementation phase are appearing. Moreover, regional institutional cooperation is showing strains as illustrated by the gap between transposition and implementation. People-to-people component has successfully gone through the “inception phase” – the youth exchanges are becoming the new normal.

However, two external factors are directly impacting connectivity in the Western Balkans (WB6): intra-EU developments such as the rise of populism and Brexit; and the decoupling of global supply chains and the increasing pressures that it puts on globalization. While WB6 region is promoted as an optimal FDI destination, geopolitics is interfering with economics to decide the new value chains or the Balkan countries trade patterns. The slowing down of EU Enlargement has exposed the fragility of deep-cutting reforms engaged by the WB6 institutions, catching those very institutions in the middle of their transformation into well-governed ones.

October 30th panels will cover the Connectivity Agenda spatial component: i.e. energy and transport, as well as p2p. In the energy panel, after the presentation of the achievements in energy infrastructure, the debates will focus on regional institutional cooperation, geopolitics and energy security implications, and on Balkan countries challenges impacting the flow between transposition and implementation of legislative framework.

The transport panel will provide an overview of the implementation of transport projects under the Connectivity Agenda, complemented with the challenges they are meeting during their implementation. Special focus will be given to the local institutional context and of their role in all the phases of project cycle i.e. planning, construction and operations.

Youth exchanges and migration flows will be the subject of the p2p panel discussions. The increasing number of youngsters visiting the neighbor countries and their immersion in neighbors' cultures are the biggest investment for the European future of the region. However many individuals are cutting short their journey to EU by migrating. This phenomenon, which is affecting especially the middle class, is depriving Balkan countries from their best and dynamic part, as well as damaging the functioning of local democracy.

In October 31st, TCF19 will put the connectivity in the larger WB6 context by analyzing its interaction with geopolitics and the deep-cutting reforms engaged in the region in the view of EU membership. After taking stock of the current achievements and upcoming challenges of the Western Balkans for 2020, the participants will focus on region's integration dynamics, consequences of de-globalization and the future scenarios.

As a multi-layered phenomenon, connectivity offers a unique view of the inter-linking between infrastructure projects and the context in which they are implemented. In the panel connectivity and geopolitics, special attention will be paid to emerging patterns of supply chains in the WB6 countries, to the dynamics of regional trade conflicts, as well on the importance that better connectivity has for anchoring the WB6 to EU.

The last panel will focus on regional connectivity and its inter-relations with the **deep-cutting institutional reforms** engaged in WB6. Being "well governed" is a very important transition quality that makes possible an increased institutional efficiency, bigger impact and secured sustainability of any investment in the adoption of Copenhagen Criteria. In an ever changing environment, stronger relations between WB6 and European institutions, increased peer-to-peer scrutiny, sector integration, involvement of WB6 peers to selected EU fora, higher and better inclusiveness, or conditionality based on integrity compliance require an institutionalized connectivity between European and WB6 institutions.

What will be the role of Berlin Process from 2020? How better connectivity can solidify the WB6 achievements during those 25 years, as well as push the Enlargement agenda? The Poznan Summit while underlining the importance of spatial connectivity for WB6 to catch up with EU peers, also recognized the many challenges met during implementation, and especially the role and capacity of local institutions. Planned stock-taking events in Sarajevo and Pristina illustrate the need for intense coordination between WB6. The binary organization by Bulgaria and North Macedonia of 2020 WBS is an opportunity to shift the connectivity vantage point towards Western Balkans.

The event has now become an annual benchmark for experts, researchers, academicians, CSO and policy-makers involved in EU Enlargement in WB6, in Regional Cooperation, and Connectivity dynamics.

AGENDA | 29.10.2019

15:00 – 18:00 **SIDE EVENT. Western Balkans Youth Cooperation Platform (WBYCP) | Closed Session**
In cooperation with Hanns Seidel Stiftung

AGENDA | 30.10.2019

09:30 - 11:30 **SIDE EVENT. “YOUTH CHALLENGES AND DIGITAL ECONOMY: BUILDING ON POZNAN WB SUMMIT”**

Welcome Addresses

- Klaus Fiesinger - Regional Director for Southeast Europe, Hanns Seidel Foundation
- Krisela Hackaj - Western Balkans Youth Cooperation Platform, Executive Director of the Cooperation and Development Institute

Keynote Speaker

- Wieslaw Tarka - Coordinator of the Western Balkans Summit, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland

Panelists

- Daniela Boudinova - Special Coordinator for the Berlin Process Summit 2020, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria
- Florensa Haxhi - Director General, Development Programs and Cooperation Unit, at the Albanian Prime Minister's Office
- Frank Hantke - Country Director of Friedrich Ebert Stiftung - Prishtina Office
- Uranik Begu - Executive Director of Innovation Centre Kosovo*
- Marta Szpala - Coordinator for the Think Tank Event of Poznan WBS, Senior fellow at the Department for Central Europe and the Balkans in the Centre for Eastern Studies (Poland)

Moderator

- Meliha Muherina - Young Bled Strategic Forum Programme Director, Project Manager at Centre for European Perspective (Slovenia)

12:00 - 13:00 **BUFFET LUNCH**

AGENDA | 30.10.2019

STATE OF AFFAIRS OF CONNECTIVITY IN WB6

13:00 – 13:15 REGISTRATION TO TIRANA CONNECTIVITY FORUM 2019

13:15 – 13:30 WELCOME AND RATIONALE

Welcome Addresses

- Ardian Hackaj - Director of Research, Cooperation and Development Institute
- Dr. Tobias Rüttershoff – Head of Albanian Office of Konrad Adenauer Foundation
- Dr. Klaus Fiesinger – Regional Director for Southeastern Europe of Hanns-Seidel-Foundation
- Stine Klapper – Head of Office Friedrich Ebert Foundation Albania

13:30 – 13:45 KEYNOTE ADDRESS: "Albania as a Western Balkans Critical Connectivity Nod for Transport and Energy"
Belinda Balluku - Minister for Infrastructure and Energy of Albania

13:45 – 14:00 KEYNOTE ADDRESS
H.E Luigi Soreca - EU Ambassador to Albania

14:00 – 14:15 KEYNOTE SPEECH
Majlinda Bregu - Secretary General of the Regional Cooperation Council

14:15 – 14:45 SETTING THE SCENE: "Multidimensional Connectivity and Western Balkans"
David M. Gould - Lead Economist and Program Leader in the East Asia and Pacific (EAP) Region, and Lead Author of "Critical Connections: Promoting Economic Growth and Resilience in Europe and Central Asia", World Bank Group

14:45 – 15:10 COFFEE BREAK

15:10 – 16:35 PANEL 1. REGIONAL COOPERATION IN ENERGY

Panelists:

- Marko Radulović - Director General of Directorate for Energy and Energy Efficiency, Ministry of Economy of Montenegro
- Serafino Stajano - Head of Economic and Trade Sector, Embassy of Italy in Tirana
- Besnik Leskaj - CEO of ABCONS, in charge for Land Easement and Acquisition for Trans Adriatic Pipeline
- Matthias Dorndfeldt - Assistant Professor for Energy Policy and Diplomacy at the University of Potsdam

- Moderator: Arben Kllokoqi - Electricity Expert, Energy Community Secretariat, Vienna

16:45 – 18:15 PANEL 2. INSTITUTIONAL CHALLENGES IN TRANSPORT CONNECTIVITY

Panelists:

- David M. Gould - Lead Economist and Program Leader in the East Asia and Pacific (EAP) Region, and Lead Author of “Critical Connections: Promoting Economic Growth and Resilience in Europe and Central Asia”, World Bank Group
- Tiziano Onesti - Chairman of the Board of Directors of Aeroporti di Puglia S.p.A. and Trenitalia S.p.A.
- Nerejda Hoxha - Desk Officer in charge of Connectivity Reforms, Transport Community Treaty, The Permanent Secretariat, Belgrade
- Alessandro Bragonzi - European Investment Bank Representative for Albania, Kosovo*, and North Macedonia

Moderator: Ardian Hackaj - Research Director, Cooperation and Development Institute

16:45 – 18:15 PANEL 3. PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE CONNECTIVITY AND HUMAN CAPITAL

Panelists:

- Đuro Blanuša - Secretary General of the Regional Youth Cooperation Office
- H.E Peter Zingraf - German Ambassador to Albania
- Adelheid Feilcke - Director of international relations at Deutsche Welle, Germany
- Endrit Shabani - Researcher, Academic, Activist / Oxford University, “Thurje” Initiative
- Ema Smolo - Communications and Project Assistant, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Dialogue Southeast Europe

Moderator: Florent Marciacq - Deputy Secretary General, Austro-French Centre for Rapprochement in Europe (Vienna)

08:40 – 09:00 REGISTRATION

09:00 – 10:00 CONVERSATION WITH Former MEPs Eduard Kukan and Knut Fleckenstein
“Western Balkans on their way to EU” | Moderator: **Georgi Gotev** - Senior Editor of EURACTIV

10:00 - 10:20 KEYNOTE SPEECH
Romana Vlahutin – Ambassador at Large for Connectivity in the European External Action Service

10:20 – 10:30 BREAK

10:30 – 11:50 PANEL 4. CONNECTIVITY AND GEOPOLITICS

Panelists:

- Mario Holzner - Director, Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies
- Daniela Boudinova - Bulgarian Coordinator of Western Balkans Summit 2020
- Bojan Marijčik - North Macedonia Coordinator of Western Balkans Summit 2020
- Amanda Rohde - Senior Programme Manager at Friends of Europe, Brussels

Moderator: Dusan Reljic - Head of SWP Brussels Office, German Institute for International and Security Affairs

12:00 – 13:15 PANEL 5. INSTITUTIONAL REFORMS AND CONNECTIVITY

Panelists:

- Sokol Dedja - Deputy Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of Albania
- Marzena Kisielewska - Head of South East Europe Division, Global Relations Secretariat, OECD, Paris
- Steven Blockmans - Head of EU foreign policy, Centre for European Policy Studies, CEPS, Brussels
- Christophe Hillion - Professor of Law, University of Oslo, Norwegian Institute of International studies (NUPI) and Swedish Institute for European Policy Studies
- Pirro Vengu - Head of the Department of Transparency and Anticorruption (DATAK) at the Albanian PM's Office

Moderator: Ardian Hackaj - Director of Research, Cooperation and Development Institute

13:15 – 13:30 Wrap up

17:30 - 19:00 Side Event, WB6 after 2020 - Forward thinking roundtable | Closed session

SPEAKERS | As per appearance in the Agenda



Dr. Klaus Fiesinger is regional director for Southeast Europe of the Hanns Seidel Foundation. In this function, he is responsible for promoting the European idea, international dialogue, cross-border cooperation, political culture and civic education in new EU member states, candidate countries as well as potential candidate countries. Since 1992, he has been head of the Division for Central, East and Southeast Europe and Central Asia at the Hanns Seidel Foundation in Munich. Furthermore, Dr. Fiesinger is member of IDM, the Austrian Institute in Vienna for the Danube Zone and Central Europe as well as of “Südosteuropa Gesellschaft”. Dr. Fiesinger received his Ph.D. in political science from the University of Munich. He is author of the book “Ballhausplatz - Diplomatie 1945-1949.” From 2004 until 2012, he was visiting professor at the Andrassy University in Budapest. Occasionally he gives lectures on Euro-regions, cross-border police cooperation and political education.



Krisela Hackaj is since 2011 Director of the Cooperation and Development Institute, an Albanian independent Think Tank organization that focuses on research in regional cooperation, economic and social development dynamics and institutional governance. Her professional expertise covers EU cross border cooperation programmes and projects, national strategic framework monitoring and budgeting, and regional cooperation. Her main research topics relate to EU Integration process, regional cooperation, connectivity agenda and youth in the Western Balkans. She graduated in “Public Administration and International Organizations” at Bocconi University and holds a Master Degree in “International Career and International and European Institutions” from University of Parma.



Wieslaw Tarka is Ambassador ad personam at the European Policy Department and was the Coordinator of the Western Balkan Summit at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Poland. During 2015-2018, Mr. Tarka served as Poland’s Ambassador to Sweden, whereas during 2012-2017 he was Director of the Foreign Service Inspectorate at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Other positions include that of Poland’s Ambassador to Croatia, office at the Polish Embassy in Stockholm, Undersecretary of State at the Ministry of Interior and Administration and as Deputy Director of Warsaw City Hall. During 2005-2007 he has been chair of Polish Part of Cross-Border Cooperation Committees and is now Chair of the Inter-ministerial Committee of the Outer Border Management Task Group. Mr. Tarka has concluded his studies at the University of Warsaw.



Daniela Boudinova is the special Coordinator for the Berlin Process Summit 2020 in Bulgaria. Her professional experiences include: Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of Bulgaria in Skopje Brussels (NATO), Vienna (OSCE and UN) and Madrid Head of the OSCE and Regional Security Department, MFA - Bulgaria National Point of Contact to the EU Working Party on the OSCE and the Council of Europe Desk officer for Regional and International Security (arms control, non-proliferation, disarmament). National Point of Contact to the EU CONOP and COARM Working Parties, NPT, IAEA, CTBT Head of Unit at the European Integration Directorate, MFA - Bulgaria Chief of Staff of the Bulgarian Chairmanship of the OSCE (2004) - Vienna EU Chef de File for Albania at the OSCE - Vienna Lecturer at the MFA Diplomatic Institute and Sofia Security Forum . She pursued her PhD Research at the University of Corsica, France and her MA of European Studies from the College of Europe - Bruges, Belgium. She also has a MA of French and English Philology from the State University of Sofia, Bulgaria George C. Marshall Centre of Security Studies' Alumni.



Dr. Florensa Haxhi holds the position of the Director General of the Development Programs and Cooperation Unit, at the Prime Minister's Office in Albania, and is responsible of drafting a number of national development programs in different sectors which are translated into concrete executable national strategic projects with a direct impact to the country's economic growth. The last 2 years, she has also been the Program Manager of the Regional Economic Area, focused on the development of the WB region with the aim at developing an economic area where goods, services, people and knowledge move without borders. She is responsible for coordinating work with the relevant national and regional stakeholders involved, ensure a successful implementation of measures under the Multi-annual Action Plan and contribute towards the drafting and signing of regional agreements. She has earned a PhD Degree in Economics (Public Administration focus) from the state university in Albania; owns a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration and Finance (dual major) from the State University of New York and an MBA in International Finance from Ecole Supérieur de Gestion (Paris Graduate School of Management).



Frank Hantke owns a Master in Mechanics, German Language, Pedagogic (Teacher for Vocational Training) in 1983. Later, Mr. Hantke served as the Head of Department, Strategic Issues, HQ of German Trade Union Confederation (DGB) for the period from 1987 to 1989. During 1995 - 1998, he was the Head of Department for International Relations at DGB/ Since 1998, Mr. Hantke has been an expatriate for Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) in the following regions and countries: CEE, Poland, SEE, Serbia, (both regional); Country Director Afghanistan, Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia - recently since 2017 Kosovo, before 2012 - 2017 Albania. Since 1974, Mr. Hantke is a member of IGM (Metal-Union), later IG BCE (Mining and Chemistry Union) and since 1976 a member of SPD (Social Democratic Party of Germany).



Uranik Begu | Currently highly engaged with other partners on enriching the Kosovo entrepreneurial ecosystem and supporting Innovation, through: - Running Innovation Center Kosovo as an Executive Director. Participant of several Strategy Development initiatives, initiated by OECD, Prime-ministers Office of Kosovo, Ministry of Economic Development and STIKK etc. Organizing Global Entrepreneurship Week Kosovo in partnership with Kauffman Foundation, Ambassador to Hello Tomorrow Challenge in Paris, Chapter Director of Startup Pristina powered by Google for Startups - Startup Europe Week - Kosovo Organizer - Startup Europe Awards Ambassador - CodeEU Week Ambassador - Global Ambassador at InBIA - World Bank Consultant.



Marta Szpala | Senior fellow at the Department for Central Europe and the Balkans in the Centre for Eastern Studies. She specialises in the EU and NATO Integration of the Western Balkans, the social and political transformation of the Balkan States, civil society development in post-communist and post-conflict societies. She has collaborated with various Polish state institutions, the Schuman Foundation, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation and think tanks from the Western Balkans. She is a guest lecturer at the University of Warsaw, the Diplomatic Academy and the College of Europe in Natolin. Marta Szpala coordinates main activities of the related to the organisation of experts' meetings in the framework of Western Balkans Summit in Poznań.



Meliha Muherina holds a degree in International Relations from Faculty of Social Sciences, Ljubljana. She is a Project Manager at Centre for European Perspective (CEP) in Slovenia, where she is working on regional development projects in the Western Balkans. CEP is responsible for management of official international development assistance projects by the Republic of Slovenia. She is also part of organizing team of Bled Strategic Forum, one of the leading political conferences in the region, where she is part of the team as a Programme Director of Young Bled Strategic Forum. Apart from that, Meliha also has extensive experience in research and dissemination for H2020 projects.



Ardian Hackaj is the Director of Research at Cooperation and Development Institute – an independent Tirana-based think tank. He has authored research works on the Berlin Process, on youth, migration, connectivity and Belt & Road Initiative in the Western Balkans. During his career, Mr. Hackaj has held management positions at the College of Europe-Bruges, International Organization for Migration, United Nations, and the EU Commission. He holds an MA from College of Europe, a BA in International Economics from Université Lumière, Lyon II, and a University Diploma in European Studies from Institut d'Etudes Politiques, Lyon.



Stine Klapper heads the office of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) in Tirana. Previously, she managed the FES offices in Bangkok and Skopje and worked at the foundation's Prague office. Prior to joining FES she was Research Associate at Freie Universität Berlin. She studied International Relations and European Studies in Berlin, New York and Osnabrück.



Since July 2019 **Dr. Tobias Rüttershoff** is the Director of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) office in Albania. Previously, he was a speaker for East Central Europe in the team Europe / North America. From June 2015 to March 2017 he worked as a desk officer in the Team Domestic Programs, at the Department for European and International Cooperation at Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) in Germany. Mr. Rüttershoff is a former KAS scholar and studied Political Science, Public Law and International Relations in Mannheim, Maastricht and Sheffield before earning his doctorate at the University of Exeter on US Security Policy. Before joining KAS, Dr. Tobias Rüttershoff was an intern at the German Bundestag, in the center Innere Führung der Bundeswehr and as research assistant at the University of Oxford.



Since January 2019, Mrs. **Belinda Balluku** is the Minister of Infrastructure and Energy of Albania. Mrs. Balluku, before her appointment as Minister of Infrastructure and Energy, from September 2013 held the position of Director General at ALBCONTROL JSC, the Air Navigation Services Provider of Albania. Mrs. Balluku has extensive experience in the field of telecommunication, starting from November 2000. Mrs. Balluku has held senior management positions initially as Customer Care Director where she first created the Call Center service in Albania and soon after became Director of Marketing. In 2004, Mrs. Balluku joined the staff of the Municipality of Tirana, initially as Public Relations Advisor and later as the Head of the Mayor's Cabinet. Since 2006, Mrs. Balluku has been a vital part of the Socialist Party. She has participated in election staff, has organized important political events and has served as the Head of the Mayors' Cabinet during Jan. 2011 - Jan. 2012.



Since September 2018, **H.E Luigi Soreca** is the EU Ambassador, Head of the European Delegation to Albania. Prior to this appointment, Mr Soreca was Director for Security in DG HOME of the European Commission, with responsibilities in the fight against terrorism and radicalisation, organised crime, drug trafficking, corruption and cybercrime. He was in charge of the EU support for law enforcement cooperation at European and international level, and Member of the Management Board EUROPOL, CEPOL (police training) and EMCCDA (European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction). In the Juncker Commission, he coordinated the services' efforts for the preparation, adoption and implementation of the European Agenda on Security in April 2015. During the terrorist events in 2015-2017 in the EU, from this position, he has coordinated the EU policy response to the attacks in terms of new legislative and policy initiatives, including the preparation and adoption of the Directives on Terrorism, Firearms and Money Laundering, the Action Plan on Firearms and Explosives and the creation of the EU Counter-Terrorism Centre at EUROPOL. Luigi Soreca has overseen the work of the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) and was the Chair of the EU Internet Forum. In the area of drugs trafficking, he was also responsible for the EU Action Plan on drugs trafficking for 2017-2020. He was the Commission representative in the G7 Senior Officials "Rome-Lyon" Group, which deals with global terrorism and transnational organised crime. He also negotiated several international agreements on behalf of the EU with third countries, including with the USA on PNR and TFTP. During the migration crisis in summer 2016, he was appointed as Special Commission Envoy to Italy for the launch of the relocation process under Council Decision 2015/1523.



Mrs. Majlinda Bregu is an accomplished Albanian Politician, a strong EU believer, and a promoter of women's rights and empowerment. She also has a prominent career as university professor and journalist. Mrs. Bregu was elected as a Member of Parliament for three consecutive legislatures, (2005-2017) as a Democratic Party member. From March 2007 to September 2013, she served as Minister of European Integration and the Government Spoke-person. Both duties, which she passionately accomplished, allowed her to domestically steer the increasing challenges of European Integration membership and promote abroad the importance of the membership perspective for the stability of the region. During 2013 - 2017, Mrs. Bregu chaired the European Integration Committee at Albanian Parliament and the National Council for European Integration. In her parliamentary career, she was consistently working for an all-inclusive approach and far-reaching consensus on the European perspective of Albania and the region. Additionally, she has actively supported and contributed to the civil society forum established under Berlin process. As from April 2018, Mrs. Bregu is appointed as the Secretary General of the Regional Cooperation Council, the operational arm of the South-East Europe Cooperation Process, which mission is to sustain focused in the regional cooperation in South Eastern Europe through a regionally owned and led framework that also supports European and Euro-Atlantic integration.



David M. Gould is currently Lead Economist and Program Leader in the East Asia and Pacific (EAP) Region of the World Bank. David is the author of several books and peer reviewed journal articles on International Trade and Finance, Migration, and Economic Policy. Currently, he is leading a study on the development impacts of technology as well as developing a blockchain application to support peer-to-peer risk mitigation in agriculture. During his past 16 years at the World Bank, he has led teams to deliver country development strategies and analytical and lending operations in Latin American, Europe, Central Asia, and South Asia. He holds a Ph.D. in International Economics from UCLA and is a Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA) charter holder. Prior to the World Bank, David served as the Director of Global Economic Analysis at the Institute of International Finance and Senior Economist and Policy Advisor at the US Federal Reserve. He has held visiting research positions at the Central Banks of Mexico and Chile.



Besnik Leskaj is the Chief Executive Officer and one of the Founding Partners of Abkons. He built and developed Abkons in 2005 and turned it into one of the most successful multi-disciplinary consultancies in Albania and Western Balkans. He oversees all areas of strategic planning, market assessment, public finance management, project management, institutional assessment and capacity building. He has acted project director for the Trans Adriatic Pipeline project, leading planning and execution and creating a framework for the first Land Compensation Study in Albania. He offers his regional expertise to various public and private entities, serving as an advisor for local business and sustainable development initiatives. Besnik holds a MA in Enterprise Economy the University of Calabria, Arcavacata di Rende, Italy and B.A in International Trade from Université Blaise Pascal Clermont Ferrand II, France.



Marko Radulovic was born on 24 May 1977, in Podgorica. He graduated from the Faculty of Electrical Engineering in Podgorica, department for high voltage transmission. From 2002 to 2017, he was the technical manager in the Montenegrin company "Mezon". From 2017 he was the Director General of the Directorate for Energy Efficiency in the Ministry of Economy of Montenegro, and since 21st April 2019 he is Director General of Directorate for energy and energy efficiency. He is involved in the identification, analysis and proposition of technically possible and cost effective policies and measures for energy and energy efficiency, preparation of relevant legal framework, implementation and coordination of several incentive projects, cooperation with international organizations, encouraging and promoting activities directed to savings and other activities aimed at reducing negative environmental impacts caused by energy and energy conversions in energy consumption processes.



Since April 2017, **Mr. Serafino Stajano** is the First commercial secretary at the Italian Embassy in Tirana. Before assuming this position, Mr. Stajano worked as Press and Communication Officer of the Press Service and Institutional Communication of the MAECI. In addition, he was a Second secretary on duty at the I Office of the Directorate General for the European Union of the MAECI for the period from 2013 to 2015. Mr. Stajano started his diplomatic career in 2012 following a competition, for qualifications and exams, of thirty-five places of probationary secretary of legation. He has a Degree in law with specialization in Business Law from the "Luiss" University of Rome. April 2010 – July 2011: Dual L.L.M. in Law and the Global Economy "New York University and National University of Singapore (NUS).



Mathias Dornfeldt is currently Assistant Professor for energy policy and diplomacy at University of Potsdam. He has worked for Aspen Institute Germany, Körber Foundation, UN, OSCE Presence in Albania, Council of Europe in BiH, IOM and the German Federal Foreign Office.



Arben Kllokoqi is currently working as Electricity Expert for the Energy Community Secretariat, supporting market reforms in the Contracting Parties as well as implementation of market coupling, regional balancing mechanism in the WB6 and integration with EU energy market, with a strong emphasize on the sustainability agenda. He is active on designing a working solution and proposal for implementing CACM, FCA and other network codes and guidelines in the Energy Community, including also implementation of REMIT. With more than 15 years' experience in the energy industry, he has previously worked for the Regulator and TSO in Kosovo* in defining and implementing market mechanisms and access to the grid, before joining a London based trading firm, EDF Trading, where he worked as Regulatory Advisor covering regulatory affairs across Europe. During his time at EDF Trading he was involved in a wide range of commercial and compliance activities, including direct involvement through EFET in different stakeholder groups and committees, in particular those related to designing and implementing the Market Network Codes which set the EU target model. REMIT and impact of Financial Regulation on commodity trading is also an area of expertise of A. Kllokoqi.



Tiziano Onesti is a full Professor of Business Administration. He is also the Chairman or Member of the Board of Directors and of the Board of Statutory Auditors of listed and unlisted companies operating in the sectors of industry, services and finance. Currently, he is the Chairman of the Board of Directors of Aeroporti di Puglia S.p.A. and Trenitalia S.p.A. Mr. Onesti is also a member of Institute of Italian Chartered Accountants and Statutory Auditor and business advisor of Italian and international companies, especially for balance sheet, firm's evaluation and business combinations. Mr. Onesti is an advisor for corporate reorganization and governance, for public and private entities; advisor for debt restructuring, criminal and civil proceedings concerning litigations or crimes in financial and accounting matters.



Nerejda Hoxha has more than 20 years' experience in the field of transport and transport planning. She is an observer to PIARC Technical Committees on Road Asset Management and Adaptation Strategies/Resilience. She started her professional career as Project Manager for EU funded projects at Albanian General Road Authority to progress further in several positions as part of EU Technical Assistances teams to Ministry of Transport in Albania. She held the position of Transport and Mobility Director to Municipality of Tirana for 4 years. Further in 2015, she joined SEETO Secretariat, based in Belgrade in the position of Transport Planning Manager. Since May 2019, she was appointed as Desk Officer in charge of Connectivity Reforms within the newly established Permanent Secretariat of Transport Community Treaty. She is responsible to oversee the development of TEN-T Networks in the Western Balkans, monitor the implementation of transport policies, connectivity reform measures and transport investments programs by fostering a regional approach to transport systems in the region.



Alessandro Bragonzi is the representative of European Investment Bank, the EU Bank, in Albania since January 2019. He is responsible for institutional matters for Albania, Kosovo*, and North Macedonia and he is in charge of originating, structuring and executing public and private sector's transactions in Albania, and with banks in the Western Balkans. He has been working at EIB since 2010 where he was responsible for lending operations with international financial institutions across CSEE (Austria, Czech Republic, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary and Turkey), and, previously, in the management and establishment of EU-funded financial instruments in different EU Member States cooperating with national authorities, the European Commission, and local financial intermediaries.



Djuro Blanuša, before his appointment as RYCO Secretary General, served as a Senior Advisor with the Ministry of Youth and Sports of Serbia in the Sector for International Cooperation and European Integration. He has a long track record of activism in civil society and the non-governmental sector with Save the Children and youth organizations. Mr Blanuša was representing Serbia in the European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ), the governmental partner in the co-management structures of the youth sector of the Council of Europe. He is a member of various regional and European expert groups in this field, and he was from the very beginning engaged as the governmental representative of Serbia in the process for the establishment of RYCO. He holds MA in Economics. He is married and has two children.



Since 2019, **H.E. Peter Zingraf** is the Ambassador of Germany to Tirana. Amb. Zingraf has an M.A. in French and Italian literary history from the Universities of Aachen, Poitiers/France and Florence/Italy. Then he conducted Research and teaching at the Universities of Aachen and Freiburg im Breisgau. As for his diplomatic career, it began in 1993 when he joined the Foreign Service at the Foreign Ministry of the Federal Republic of Germany, Bonn, Diplomatic Academy. Later on, in 1994 he worked as Exchange Officer with the Italian Foreign Ministry, Rome, Directorate and then in 1995 he worked at the Foreign Ministry of the Federal Republic of Germany, Bonn, as the Directorate General for Political Affairs, division for Central Asia and Caucasus. Since then, Amb. Zingraf has served in many other diplomatic mission such as he German Embassy in Warsaw, Poland in the political department in 1996, the Foreign Ministry of the Federal Republic of Germany, Berlin, Directorate General for Cultural Affairs in 1999, the German Embassy Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, Deputy as the Head of Mission in 2002, the Foreign Ministry of the Federal Republic of Germany, Berlin, Directorate General for Human resources and administration, personnel development. in 2005, German Embassy Dublin, Ireland, Deputy Head of Mission (European and economic affairs) in 2010, Office of the Federal President, Berlin, Foreign Policy Department, Head of Division in 2013 and Foreign Ministry of the Federal Republic of Germany, Berlin, Directorate General for Human resources and administration, head of division, personnel planning and development in 2016.



Adelheid Feilcke is Head of the European Languages Desk at Deutsche Welle since 2016. The European desk consists of nine East- and Southeast European language departments, including Albanian, Bosnian, Bulgarian, Croatian, Greek, Macedonian, Polish, Rumanian and Serbian. These languages departments have a daily media outlet on different platforms such as online, radio, TV and Social Media. Adelheid Feilcke joined Deutsche Welle in 1992 and became the founding head of the Albanian Service. From 2005 to 2012 she was director of the International Relation Department at DW, from 2012 to 2014 head of the Culture Department and from 2014 to 2016 she headed the department of Strategic Partnership at DW. She has worked as a trainer for DW Akademie since 1995. She is an experienced reporter and editor on crisis and peace journalism. She studied cultural anthropology and has been involved in media since 1981. After obtaining her high school diploma, she obtained a vocational training at the Schleswig-Holsteinischer Zeitungsverlag and then worked as an editor for the newspaper until 1984. She subsequently studied musicology, science of theater, film and television as well as anthropology in Cologne and as a DAAD scholar in Tirana, Albania. She obtained her master's degree in ethnomusicology in 1990 and a second diploma in cultural management at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater in Hamburg in 1993. She worked also as a freelance journalist and cultural manager for regional and national radio stations such as WDR and for the State Music Council of Schleswig-Holstein (Landesmusikrat) before joining DW in 1992.



Endrit Shabani is a lawyer by training, but he gave up his Law career to pursue his graduate studies in Politics at the University of Oxford, where he studied with a full Clarendon scholarship. Endrit combines his academic career with an active role as part of the civil society in Albania.

His teaching career in Tirana, Oxford, Cambridge and Paris, has exposed him to policy assessment and policy evaluation. Additionally, Endrit has consulted various international organisations such as the Council of Europe, the EU, UNICEF, UN Women, UNFPA, Open Society Foundation and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Foundation. As a political activist, Endrit has long fought against corruption in Albania. As the leader of the National Youth Parliament, and later as representative of Transparency International in Albania, Endrit has led various civic initiatives aiming to promote the rule of law. Endrit's activism is featured in many national and international media, including Financial Times, the BBC, Free Europe, Deutsche Welle, Miami Herald and the Voice of America. In recent years, Endrit has joined "Thurje", which is a grass-root movement composed of young academics, lawyers, journalists, architects, medical doctors and artists. Over the past four years, From this September Endrit will lead a national campaign that will tour around Albania to discuss with the public the need for a substantial political transformation and to promote Thurje's manifesto, Charter 2020.



Ema Smolo is a recent graduate of Faculty of Political Sciences in Sarajevo, with a BA in International Relations and Diplomacy (cum laude), that has been working for the FES regional office based in Sarajevo as a Communications (PR) and Project Assistant. Author of "(UN)Locking Youth Participation through the Education System", as commissioned by Bosnia and Herzegovina Association for United Nations. Experienced in political analysis and reporting, equipped with management and communication skills.



Dr. Florent Marciacq is Deputy Secretary General and Research Fellow at the Austro-French Centre for Rapprochement in Europe and Senior Fellow at the Centre international de formation européenne in Berlin and Nice. He is the cofounder and coordinator of the following think-tank track-2 initiatives: the "Western Balkans Reflection Forum", launched in support of the Berlin process, and "Eastern Partnership Reflection Forum", launched in Minsk in 2017. Florent Marciacq holds a Ph.D. in political sciences. He previously worked as an Associate Researcher at the European Governance Research Group of the University of Luxembourg, OSCE Researcher in residence in Prague and Guest researcher at the Austrian Defence Academy in Vienna. Florent Marciacq teaches European politics and regularly publishes academic peer-reviewed contributions, think-tank policy-papers and articles in the press.



Eduard Kukan was a Member of the European Parliament (EPP/SK) during 2014-2019. During the same period, Mr. Kukan was a Member of Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on Security and Defence and substitute Member the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs of the EP. He also served as the Chair of the Delegation to the EU-Serbia SAPC, and substitute Member of the Delegation to the EU-Albania SAPC. Mr. Kukan was an MEP for the EPP/SK Group also during 2009-2014, a period in which he was a member of Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on Human Rights and substitute member of the Committee on Development of the EP. At the same time, he was Chairman of the Delegation for relations with Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo of the EP. Mr. Kukan started his political career since the 1997, when he was the President of Democratic Union (DU) Party in Slovakia. He was a member of the Slovak Parliament (NR SR) from 2006 until 2009, when he became a member of the EP. Mr. Kukan graduated from Moscow State Institute of International Relations in 1964 and earned his Doctor iuris Degree at the Faculty of Law at Charles University in Czechoslovakia. He was awarded as Honorary Professor, Petersburg State University in 2003 and Honorary Doctor of Law, Upsala College New Jersey, USA in 1993. Mr. Kukan speaks Slovak, English, Russian, Czech, Swahili as well as has an intermediate language level of Spanish & French.



Knut Fleckenstein is a former Member of the European Parliament. He was part of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, the Delegation to the EU Russia Parliamentary Cooperation Committee, the Delegation to the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly and to the Delegation to the EU-Moldova Parliamentary Cooperation Committee. During his professional career, Mr. Fleckenstein has worked as executive manager at Workers' Samaritan Federation Hamburg (1994-2009) and has been a member of the executive board of HANSETRANS transport and logistics group. Mr. Fleckenstein has served at the State Parliament of Hamburg as a Spokesperson and Head of Protocol, as well as spokesperson and Head of Cabinet of the Vice Mayor and as Head of European Affairs Department at the State Government Hamburg. He is Member of the SPD party since 1974, member of the Hamburg executive of the SPD and member of the European Affairs Committee of the SPD Executive since 2008. He is the founding President of Cultural Forum Hamburg, Partner and Chair of the Supervisory Board of the Ernst Deutsch Theatre Company Hamburg and member of the Executive for Social Democratic Cultural Forum Berlin and Bertini Prize Association Hamburg.



Georgi Gotev is a journalist and entrepreneur, senior editor of EURACTIV.com and publisher of EURACTIV.bg. Bulgarian and Belgian national (Belgian). He is also a former diplomat, former spokesperson of the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe. Mr. Gotev is a serial blogger for EUelectionsBulgaria.com, BulgarianPresidency.eu and Reuniting Europe. He is considered as one of the 10 most influential journalists, according to the number of MEPs following him on Twitter. His main areas of interest are Pro-EU, pro-enlargement. Anti-corruption (promotes investigative journalism). Mr. Gotev speaks Bulgarian, French, English, Russian Spanish, Portuguese & Romanian.



Ambassador **Romana Vlahutin** is a career diplomat. Before joining Croatian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1999 she worked as an analyst for the Bassiouni UN Commission for former Yugoslavia, the UN Tribunal (ICTY) in The Hague and the Council on Foreign Relations in Washington DC. As a Croatian diplomat she served in embassies in Washington (Head of Political Section) and Belgrade (Deputy Ambassador), and as the Head of Strategic Analysis and Policy Planning at the MFA in Zagreb (2000-2004). She also served as a Political Director of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo (2006- 2007). From 2010-2014 she was the Foreign Policy Advisor to the President of Croatia. Most recently she was posted as the EU Ambassador to Albania (2014-2018). As of 1 March 2019 she has been appointed Special Coordinator and Ambassador at Large for Connectivity in the European External Action Service.



Mario Holzner is executive director at the Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies (wiiw) and responsible for general management, finances and personnel. He is also coordinating economic policy development and communication with a focus on European economic policy. He has recently worked on issues of infrastructure investment in greater Europe, proposing a European Silk Road. Mario Holzner is also a lecturer in applied econometrics at the University of Vienna, Department of Economics. He obtained his PhD in economics at the Vienna University of Economics and Business in 2005.



Daniela Boudinova is the special Coordinator for the Berlin Process Summit 2020 in Bulgaria. Her professional experiences include: Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of Bulgaria in Skopje Brussels (NATO), Vienna (OSCE and UN) and Madrid Head of the OSCE and Regional Security Department, MFA - Bulgaria National Point of Contact to the EU Working Party on the OSCE and the Council of Europe Desk officer for Regional and International Security (arms control, non-proliferation, disarmament). National Point of Contact to the EU CONOP and COARM Working Parties, NPT, IAEA, CTBT Head of Unit at the European Integration Directorate, MFA - Bulgaria Chief of Staff of the Bulgarian Chairmanship of the OSCE (2004) - Vienna EU Chef de File for Albania at the OSCE - Vienna Lecturer at the MFA Diplomatic Institute and Sofia Security Forum . She pursued her PhD Research at the University of Corsica, France and her MA of European Studies from the College of Europe - Bruges, Belgium. She also has a MA of French and English Philology from the State University of Sofia, Bulgaria George C. Marshall Centre of Security Studies' Alumni.



Bojan Marichikj is a Special Adviser to the Prime Minister of the Republic of North Macedonia for Euro-Atlantic Integrations, Berlin Process' National Sherpa and Chief Technical Negotiator with the EU. In 2006, he graduated in International Relations at the Faculty of Law Iustinianus Primus, Skopje. As part of Netherlands' MFA Scholarship Program, he obtained his MA in International and European Law at University of Amsterdam in 2009. Receiving Chevening Scholarship, Marichikj obtained MA in Contemporary European Studies from University College London in 2011. Marichikj has been a teaching assistant in EU Law at Faculty of Law Iustinianus Primus, project assistant on European legislation approximation project at Ministry of Interior, project coordinator and analyst in legal, public administration and EU programs at Foundation Open Society - Macedonia, research assistant on Fulbright Project at Brown University, USA, and Executive Director of Eurothink - Center for European Strategies.



Amanda Rohde manages the work of Friends of Europe's Migration & Integration and Asia programmes. In addition to coordinating publications and debates, she regularly speaks at conferences and authors articles on key issues. Most recently, she co-authored a discussion paper offering recommendations for multilateralising connectivity efforts. Prior to joining Friends of Europe in 2016, she worked in the Research Unit of International Crisis Group in Brussels – tracking conflicts across Africa and Asia – and as a teacher in South Korea. Amanda holds a Master of Advanced International Studies from the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna, where she focused her studies on conflict and crisis analysis, and a BA in linguistics from the University of Florida. In addition to her native English, she speaks German and has also studied Swahili and French, among other languages.



Dušan Reljić is the Head of the Brussels office of Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP), the German Institute for International and Security Affairs – Berlin, since 2013. Dušan works on international relations and security with focus on the EU, NATO and southeast Europe; democratisation, issues of transition in former socialist countries, nationalism and ethnic strife as well as political communication and media performance in situations of tensions and conflict.



Since 30 January 2019, **Sokol Dedja** is the Deputy Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, in charge of accession of Albania to the EU, including the preparatory work for accession negotiations. Mr. Dedja is a career diplomat who holds the diplomatic rank of Minister Counsellor. For sixteen years he has been dealing with Albania's relations with the European Union. Mr. Dedja was the Director for EU Affairs (2016 – 2019). Between 2013-2016 he was the Head of Sector for Political Dialogue with the EU, Advisor in the Ministry for European Integration (2011-2013), Counsellor in the Mission of Albania to the European Union in Brussels (2006-2011), and expert of the EU Integration Directorate in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2003-2006). Sokol Dedja holds a doctoral degree in political science (2012) from the University of Ghent, Belgium with a dissertation that examines the external impact of the EU immigration policy. He completed an M.A. in European Studies from the University of Sussex, United Kingdom (2003) and Bachelor in Modern European History (2000), University of Naples Federico II, Italy. He has published articles on the topic of the external impact of EU policies in several international peer-reviewed journals, such as European Journal of Migration and Law, East European Politics and Societies, Journal of Southeast Europe and Black Sea Studies.



Ms Marzena Kisielewska is the Head of Division for South East Europe in the OECD Global Relations Secretariat. She leads the Organisation's regional program for South East Europe (SEE) working with six Western Balkan economies as well as with Bulgaria, Croatia, Moldova, and Romania, with a view to support the economic development and reforms in the partner countries. Prior to joining the OECD in 2014 Ms Kisielewska was, since 1994, Polish civil servant working in the in the Prime Minister's Office and in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Intensively involved in policy design and coordination she served as, among other roles, Deputy Head of the Chief Negotiator's team during the EU accession negotiations as well as the Head of Cabinet of several Ministers for European Affairs. She also worked in and closely cooperated with the EU institutions and agencies. She is a graduate of the Catholic University of Lublin, the Georgetown University, and the University of Amsterdam as well as of the National School of Public Administration.



Steven Blockmans is Head of the Europe in the World programme at the Brussels-based think tank CEPS and Professor of EU External Relations Law and Governance at the University of Amsterdam. He is the author of 'Tough Love: the EU's relations with the Western Balkans' (Asser Press, 2007), 'The Obsolescence of the European Neighbourhood Policy' (Rowman & Littlefield, 2017) and has published widely on the EU's integrated approach to external action. He participates in track 1,5 processes between the EU and Russia, India and Mexico, is a frequent media commentator and regularly advises governments of countries in wider Europe and in Asia on their relations with the European Union.



Christophe Hillion is Professor of European Law at the universities of Leiden and Oslo, research professor at the Norwegian Institute of International studies (NUPI) and senior researcher at the Swedish Institute for European Policy Studies (SIEPS). He has published on external relations, enlargement and constitutional law of the European Union.



Pirro Vengu is an Aide to the Prime Minister of Albania and heads the Department of Transparency and Anticorruption (DATAK), the Government's internal control and administrative investigation unit. Vengu was educated in Paris where he studied Humanities and International Relations. From 2010 to 2013 he worked for the European Council on Foreign Relations, Europe's pan-European foreign policy think tank. He subsequently returned to Albania where he served as Chief of Staff to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (2013-2017) before joining the Prime Minister's office to work on European integration and rule of law related reforms.



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