



# 6<sup>th</sup> TIRANA CONNECTIVITY FORUM

Connectivity in Pandemic Times:  
Threats and Opportunities

1-2 OCTOBER 2020

LIVE

euronews.  
ALBANIA

**AGENDA**

(Last update 28.09.2020)

**ONLINE EVENT**

## Organiser



## In partnership with



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## With the support of



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## Background Note

World connectivity has suffered the most from Covid19 pandemic. Infrastructure projects, p2p exchanges, supply and value chains, and institutional cooperation have all been halted in their progress, and in some cases even retracted.

In the South East Europe Six (SEE6) the lockdown of cities and countries has severed the supply lines; the social distancing stopped the social contact; the quarantine drastically slowed the work of public institutions and of private businesses; the emergency situations have altered the democratic processes and slowed the pace of reforms.

The public management of the health crisis and of recovery measures have exposed the structural weaknesses proper to the Western Balkans states. At the same time, in this time of adversity SEE6 regional cooperation has come up with success stories such as the successful establishment of "Green Corridors".

In case of a 2nd wave this Fall, a widespread quarantine will hardly be applicable. The SEE6 economy will not be able to support it and citizen may revolt – as the Serbian July riots show. We will need to be accustomed to live with this virus, and adapt. But if this de-connection trend becomes a permanent fixture, how the SEE6 development model can cope with it? How the Reforms and Enlargement will be affected?

This natural disaster has demonstrated that everything is connected. Infrastructure, political, economic, social, ecological systems are changing, and impacting each other in the process. Disasters as this, constitute a litmus test of what matters and what doesn't, what's corrupt and what's healthy, what's strong and what's weak. They take of the veil of interpretation from what's around us.

Our Balkan countries have weathered relatively well the first pandemic shock, and have continued their institutional reforms and progress towards EU membership. Albania and North Macedonia are expecting their 1st Intergovernmental Conference to be organised during the German Presidency of the EU. Meanwhile, the EU Commission is wrapping up the Economic and Investment Plan where connectivity - in transport, energy, digital, and in value chains - is the keyword.

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Yet, throughout history disasters and cataclysmic moments have also offered opportunities of systemic change. Being in a crossroad, our task now is to understand de-connection consequences, identify new possible scenarios, and what is required from us to cope, resist and develop.

Enriched with this sense of knowing what's important, we need to reassess the criticality of our relations, and the resilience of our connections.

In this regard, we at CDI believe that TCF2020 will be the opportunity to carry such an exercise.

Under the theme "Connectivity in Pandemic Times: Threats and Opportunities", this edition will be composed by two blocks: i) stock-taking of Covid19 pandemic on the implementation of EU Connectivity Agenda in SEE6, and on its winners and losers; and, ii) how SEE6 space and socio-economic fabric should develop to face and also profit from this situation, and how local institutions would need to be reformed towards EU set of standards and values.

TCF 2020 is part of the official calendar of activities of the German Presidency of the European Union. The forum will gather experts, researchers, academicians, CSO, Western Balkans Summit coordinators and other policy-makers involved in EU Enlargement in SEE6, in Regional Cooperation, and in Connectivity dynamics.

Due to the challenges presented by the global pandemic Covid19 and its restrictions, this year, TCF will take place online, in partnership with Euronews Albania. The event will be livestreamed and more information on how to connect will be available on our Social media channels and official website.

This edition will continue to be organized in partnership with our long-term partners: Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung and Hanns Seidel Stiftung. Since 2015, these three German political foundations remain the key supporting institutions of Tirana Connectivity Forum, the only such event covering connectivity, reforms and enlargement in the South Eastern Europe region.

## STOCK-TAKING: RESILIENCE AND ADAPTATION UNDER CURRENT CONNECTIVITY AGENDA MODEL

### 14:15 – 14:30 WELCOME NOTE

**Ardian Hackaj**, TCF Coordinator

**Stine Klapper**, Head of Office, Friedrich Ebert Foundation Albania

**Dr. Tobias Rüttershoff**, Head of Albanian Office, Konrad Adenauer Foundation

**Dr. Klaus Fiesinger**, Regional Director for Southeastern Europe, Hanns Seidel Foundation

**H.E Peter Zingraf**, German Ambassador to Albania

### 14:30 – 14:45 KEYNOTE SPEECH

**Olivér Várhelyi**, European Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement

### 14:45 – 16:00 PANEL 1. CONNECTIVITY IN SOUTH-EAST EUROPE 6: FALL 2020

#### Panel members:

- **Matej Zakonjšek**, Director, The Permanent Secretariat of Transport Community
- **Odetta Barbullushi**, Advisor to the Albanian Prime Minister and National Coordinator for the Regional Economic Area
- **Luc T'Joen**, Senior Administrator, Head of Task of Special report on EU transport infrastructures, European Court of Auditors

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

### 16:00 – 17:15 PANEL 2. WINNERS AND LOSERS OF COVID-19 IN SOUTH-EAST EUROPE 6

#### Panel members:

- **Michele Geraci**, Former Under-Secretary of State for International Trade, Ministry of Economic Development Italian Government, Conte I
- **Majlinda Bregu**, Secretary General, Regional Cooperation Council
- **Marco Čadež**, President of the Managing Board, Western Balkan 6 Chamber Investment Forum

**Moderator: Shada Islam**, Managing Director, New Horizon Project, Brussels

## BETTER CONNECTIVITY FOR VIRTUOUS GROWTH

- 10:00 – 10:20**    **STRENGTHENING THE EU-SEE6 PARTNERSHIP IN COVID-19 TIMES**  
**H.E Luigi Soreca**, Ambassador of EU to Albania
- 10:20 – 10:35**    **REFORMS AND ENLARGEMENT – THE GERMAN PRESIDENCY OF EU**  
**Peter Beyer**, Member of Parliament and Coordinator of Transatlantic Cooperation of the Federal Government, German Bundestag and Federal Foreign Office
- 10:35 – 11:30**    **“WHICH DEVELOPMENT MODEL FOR SEE6 AFTER THE PANDEMIC?”**  
**Talk with Branko Milanović**, Presidential professor at The Graduate Center, CUNY  
**Moderator: Dušan Reljić**, Head of Office SWP (German Institute for International and Security Affairs) in Brussels
- 11:30 – 12:30**    **“RETHINKING EU-SEE6 CONNECTIVITY: THE CASE OF ALBANIA”**  
**Talk with President Romano Prodi**  
**Moderator: Steven Blockmans**, Director ad Interim, Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS), Brussels and **Ilva Tare**, News Director, Euronews Albania

# SIDE EVENT

*(Online)*

With the support of



**14:00 – 15:30 SIDE EVENT | “DIE JUGEND SCHAFFT DAS”**

**Regional Youth Cooperation Office & Western Balkans Youth Cooperation Platform**

*Session in partnership with Regional Youth Cooperation Office, Polish Presidency of Poznan Summit and Western Balkans Youth Cooperation Platform*

In its Chairs Conclusions, the Western Balkans Summit in Poznan of 5th of July 2019 clearly highlighted that the youth of the region needs to be better equipped with a wide range of entrepreneurship and soft skills. Meanwhile Youth Work and ensuring the participation of young people is also one of the main priorities of the German Presidency of the Council of EU. On the brink of the Western Balkans Summit 2020, this event aims to enhance a structured discussion among EU and regional stakeholders on youth inclusion on the EU dialogue and the concrete actions that are being taken in the region.

**Opening remarks:**

**Krisela Hackaj**, Executive Director, Cooperation and Development Institute

**Đuro Blanuša**, Secretary General, Regional Youth Cooperation Office

**Panel Members**

- **Gjorgi Tasev**, Adviser for Youth and Sport, Office of the Prime Minister, Government of the Republic of North Macedonia
- **Jochen Rummenhüller**, Head of International and European Youth Policy, German Federal Youth Council (DBJR)
- **Andrea Mićanović**, Coordinator for Montenegro of Western Balkans Youth Cooperation Platform

**Moderator: Loneta Progni**, Journalist, Euronews Albania





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