

EU- Western Balkans Zagreb Summit **6 May 2020**

EU heads of state or government and the leaders of the Western Balkans - Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Republic of North Macedonia and Kosovo* - will gather on 6 May 2020 for an EU-Western Balkan Zagreb Summit. Initially foreseen to take place in Zagreb, the meeting will now take the form of a video conference due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

It will be chaired by the President of the European Council, Charles Michel who, together with the President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen, will represent the European Union. The President of the European Parliament, David Sassoli, the EU High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell, will also attend the summit.

Above listed partners will be represented by Edi Rama, Šefik Džaferović, Hashim Thaçi, Milo Đukanović, Oliver Spasovski, and Aleksandar Vučić.

Representatives of the European Investment Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the World Bank, and the Regional Cooperation Council will also participate.

The summit will reaffirm the **European perspective** of the Western Balkans region as well as the region's continuous **commitment for the political, economic and social transformation**.

Due to the current situation, the summit will also discuss support and co operation between the EU and the Western Balkans in **the fight against the coronavirus** and its socio-economic consequences.

The leaders of the European Union are expected to adopt a declaration. The Western Balkans partners have been invited to align themselves with this declaration.

[EU - Western Balkans Zagreb Summit webpage](#)

Media programme

16:30 - Start of the video conference

at the end of the meeting - Press conference by Presidents Michel, von der Leyen and Prime Minister Plenković.

¹ This note has been drawn up under the responsibility of the press office.

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

Response to COVID-19 and recovery plan

Leaders will discuss how the EU and the Western Balkans have united and cooperated together in a spirit of mutual solidarity to tackle the current health crisis and its socio-economic consequences. The EU has already confirmed its solidarity with the region by quickly mobilising a substantial financial package of €3.3 billion and allowing privileged access to EU instruments, going far beyond what any other partner has provided to the region.

This includes immediate support for the health sector, in particular through delivering essential supplies to save lives and significant support for the social and economic recovery needs of our partners, as well as a €750 million package of Macro-Financial Assistance and a € 1.7 billion package of assistance from the European Investment Bank.

EU leaders will also acknowledge the valuable support the Western Balkans have given during the pandemic to their immediate neighbours and to the EU.

Leaders will agree that cooperation and coordination should continue throughout the exit and recovery phase. They will discuss EU long-term support in the form of an Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans.

[EU response to the coronavirus pandemic in the Western Balkans](#)

European perspective

The summit will be an opportunity for the leaders to reaffirm their unequivocal support for the European perspective of the region. It will equally be an occasion for the Western Balkans partners to recommit themselves to this perspective and the transformational reform process that comes with it as their clear strategic choice. The credibility of this commitment depends also on clear public communication and the implementation of the necessary reforms.

On 26 March 2020, members of the European Council endorsed the opening of accession negotiations with Albania and the Republic of North Macedonia. However, the enlargement and stabilisation and association process will not be discussed during the summit. Instead, it will be assessed in line with established practice. The General Affairs Council is expected to adopt conclusions on enlargement and stabilisation and association process in June.

[EU enlargement \(background information\)](#)

Western Balkans commitment to reform agenda

Leaders will recognise that the current crisis should not deflect attention from key reforms. The recovery from the current crisis will only work if the partners continue to deliver on their reform commitments and produce tangible results in their implementation.

For Western Balkans partners, the summit is a further opportunity to confirm again their commitment to carry out necessary reforms and to uphold European values and principles, despite the introduction of special and extraordinary measures to contain the coronavirus pandemic, whilst strengthening inclusive regional cooperation and neighbourly relations.

In addition to continued economic reform, this requires a stronger focus on the rule of law, the functioning of democratic institutions and public administration.

Leaders will also address the issue of **disinformation** and other **hybrid** activities originating in particular from third-state actors seeking to undermine the European perspective of the region. They will discuss **resilience-building, cyber security and strategic communication**.

EU and the Western Balkans leaders will address **common security challenges**, including countering terrorism, radicalisation and the return of foreign fighters.

Particular emphasis is expected to be put on the need for Western Balkans partners to fight corruption and organised crime, including efforts to fight human trafficking, drug cultivation and the smuggling of human beings, drugs and arms.

The Western Balkans partners contribution and alignment to the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy is also likely to be discussed.
