

**Advancing gradual integration for the Western Balkans**  
**Non Paper by AT**

**1. Institutional instruments:**

- **Action Plan** to set **concrete implementation** steps of gradual integration until 2024 and beyond;
- **Country-specific Priority Action Plans for WB6** (according to the Priority Action Plan for UA) based on a gap analysis between the Stabilisation and Association Agreements and the three Association Agreements in order to reach DCFTA standards; full exploration of the SAAs;
- Appointment of a **Special coordinator for gradual integration** in the General Secretariat of the Commission and appointment of focal points/“one entry points” in the DGs.

**2. Gradual political and administrative integration:**

- Keep rhythm of **annual EU-WB6 summit meetings**;
- Increase regular informal **participation of WB6 in Council meetings** (building on example of regular invitation of Ukraine to segments of FAC meetings), following the model of COMIX/ Schengen associated countries and expand “structured dialogue” (e.g. through establishing a list by EU Council Presidencies of informal Council meetings open for WB6 involvement);
- Explore options for further **informal WB6 involvement in EU fora** (COWEB and PSC meetings; other Working Groups where issues of common interest such as migration, science and education, climate and energy etc. are discussed; EU Agencies, European Economic and Social Committee, EP, Comitology Committees, Commission Expert Groups);
- Hold **informal Council meetings** in the Western Balkans region;
- Increase EU visibility in the WB region through **targeted and coordinated travel by MS to WB6**;
- Establish **internships for WB6 nationals in EU institutions** (based on example of Ukrainian interns).

**3. Financial support:**

- Dynamization through an **enhanced incentive system** modeled on recovery and resilience plans and through increased support to strengthen the recipients’ absorption capacity (in conjunction with corresponding reform/strengthening of IPA);
- **Consistent approach in EU’s external financing for candidate and potential candidate countries**, including through an even stronger performance-based IPA and closer cooperation with international financial institutions (IFIs);
- **Support the participation in EU programmes** through IPA co-funding.

**4. Examples of possible policy areas for advancing gradual integration:**

- **Single market:** e.g. industrial and consumer goods, public procurement, eCommerce, participation in the Single Euro Payments Area (SEPA), eID, geographical scope of the geo-blocking-regulation, issue “EU candidate country” labels as opposed to “third country”;
- **Trade and customs:** e.g. further facilitation of trade through customs cooperation, consider WB6 as partners in Critical Raw Materials, Net-Zero Industry and EU Open Strategic Autonomy;
- **Climate, environment, energy and agriculture:** e.g. Copernicus/ESA, EU Biodiversity Strategy, EU Strategy “From Farm to Fork”, LIFE Programme; EU4Energy (create platform as with Eastern partnership countries), Strategic Dialogues on Renewable Energy;
- **Transport:** e.g. enhance integration into TEN-T standards and the EU rail market;
- **Health:** e.g. EU4Health, joint procurement for critical medicines;
- **Education, science and youth:** e.g. European Higher Education Area (EHEA), European Cooperation in Science and Technology (COST), DiscoverEU;
- **Migration and home affairs:** e.g. participation in European Migration Network (EMN), enhance cooperation with FRONTEX and EUROPOL;
- **Justice:** e.g. participation in European Judicial Network (EJN), European Judicial Network in civil and commercial matters and European Judicial Training Network (EJTN); expand cooperation with EUROJUST.