

***Communication Plan on the Reform Agenda of the Republic of Serbia and the Growth Plan  
for the Western Balkans***

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The EU enlargement is a strategic investment in peace, security and stability. Full EU membership for the Western Balkans is in the mutual political, security and economic interests of both the EU and the region. For these reasons, the European Commission launched a **Growth Plan for the Western Balkans** on 8 November 2023, providing the possibility for acceleration of membership preparations.

[EU membership is a strategic goal of the Republic of Serbia](#) and the Government of Serbia continues to fulfil all the existing criteria by implementing reform processes in a dedicated manner, which are notably beneficial for Serbian citizens and economy<sup>[1]</sup>, all for the purpose of speeding up the pace of reforms with a new time horizon. This new horizon refers to the end 2026 as a cut-off date for all reforms necessary to align with the EU acquis and deliver on RA-related reforms. Timely, transparent and fact-based communication of Serbia's strategic choice to become full member of the European Union is a crucial element for the success of the 25-year long European integration process. Communicating this strategic choice, its costs, benefits and opportunities arising from it, and all the reforms the membership is conditioned by, as well as the impact of EU pre-accession funds and programmes available to the Serbian citizens, are also key elements of the official narrative that promotes European values and standards in all areas of society. Given that European integration is not "business as usual" and that the Reform Agenda will enable the unlocking of additional social and economic potentials of Serbia, as well as the fact that the Government is determined to implement reform steps and make the most of the €1.586 billion made available to Serbia under the Growth Plan, Serbian citizens should be informed about the benefits of EU accession and the gains even before joining the membership.

Republic of Serbia committed to prepare and implement the *Communication Plan on the Reform Agenda of the Republic of Serbia and the Growth Plan for the Western Balkans (hereinafter referred to as the Communication Plan)* based on the following domestic and EU decisions and documents:

- the [Facility Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Serbia on specific arrangements for implementation of Union support to the Republic of Serbia under the Reform and Growth Facility, ratified by the Serbian Parliament in December 2024](#) (Article 23) requires from the beneficiary partner a dedicated Communication Plan. It is also acknowledged that "visibility, communication, publicity and information measures shall comply with the guidance for EU external actions "Communicating and raising EU visibility".
- the [New Growth Plan for the Western Balkans](#)<sup>1</sup>, presented by the European Commission on 8 November 2023, and which consists of four pillars:
  1. Faster integration into the EU Single Market,
  2. Regional integration is a prerequisite for faster EU integration,
  3. Acceleration of fundamental reforms (Reform Agenda),
  4. Financial assistance through the Reform and Growth Facility<sup>2</sup>, i.e. as announced, EUR 2 billion in grants and EUR 4 billion in soft loans (these amounts are for the entire region of the Western Balkans).

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[1] Exposé of Prime Minister Miloš Vučević, May 1<sup>st</sup> 2024.

<sup>1</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52023DC0691>

<sup>2</sup> [https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/eu-budget/performance-and-reporting/programme-performance-statements/reform-and-growth-facility-western-balkans\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/eu-budget/performance-and-reporting/programme-performance-statements/reform-and-growth-facility-western-balkans_en)

Following the New Growth Plan for the Western Balkans the Government of the Republic of Serbia adopted the [Reform Agenda of the Republic of Serbia](#)<sup>3</sup> (RA) on 3 October 2024. This document contains 98 steps in four areas: Business environment and private sector development, Green and digital transition, Human capital and Fundamentals. One of the commitments in implementing the Reform Agenda is communicating the reform measures related to the Growth Plan, as well as to EU funds from the Reform and Growth Facility, which partially or fully finance the implementation of those measures in accordance with the European Union's guidelines "[Communicating and Raising EU Visibility: Guidance for External Action](#)"<sup>4</sup>, published in July 2022 as well as with the recommendations of the European Commission's Joint Communication Plan on the Growth Plan for the Western Balkans<sup>5</sup>, from July 2024.

- [Report on Serbia for 2024 of the European Commission](#)<sup>6</sup> states that Serbian authorities need, as a matter of priority, to take more responsibility for proactive and objective communication on Serbia's EU accession process and the EU, which is Serbia's main political and economic partner, and for countering disinformation in its national media.
- the [Communication Strategy for the Accession of the Republic of Serbia to the European Union](#)<sup>7</sup> and the Manual of Procedures for the Implementation of the IPA III Programme<sup>8</sup> from which the Strategic Communication Framework for the Implementation of the IPA III Programme<sup>9</sup> derives, requires a comprehensive and coordinated communication on these issues, as Serbia stated EU membership as its strategic foreign policy objective. This would enable greater public participation in Serbia's EU accession process.

The primary goal of the Communication Plan has a double direction, first to explain to citizens and all relevant actors how the Growth Plan will provide them with the practical benefits of EU membership even before accession and second, in what way the reforms supported by the EU through the Growth Plan until 2027 will enable Serbia's progress in the European Union integration process. The Plan aims to highlight the positive effects that the reforms and investments will bring to citizens, especially from the Single Market and with accelerating of the reforms with the clear path to the EU membership.

Clear, open, permanent and coordinated communication of the key messages will contribute to building trust of the Serbian citizens in the intentions of the European Union and in the process of European integration. The well planned communication activities will contribute to the increase of Serbian citizens' support for these processes, as well as to a better understanding of the Reform Agenda for the further progress of Serbia. Also, well-planned, coordinated and targeted communication by key governmental and non-governmental actors will increase knowledge and better understanding of the opportunities provided by the European Union's development assistance in key sectors both on national and local level.

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<sup>3</sup> [https://www.mei.gov.rs/upload/documents/nacionalna\\_dokumenta/adopted\\_reform\\_agenda\\_narrative\\_-\\_republic\\_of\\_serbia.pdf](https://www.mei.gov.rs/upload/documents/nacionalna_dokumenta/adopted_reform_agenda_narrative_-_republic_of_serbia.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/knowledge-hub/communicating-and-raising-eu-visibility-guidance-external-actions\\_en](https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/knowledge-hub/communicating-and-raising-eu-visibility-guidance-external-actions_en)

<sup>5</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52023DC0691>

<sup>6</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52024SC0695>

<sup>7</sup> Communication Strategy for the Accession of the Republic of Serbia to the European Union– has been adopted by the Government on 1 December 2011

[https://www.mei.gov.rs/upload/documents/nacionalna\\_dokumenta/communication\\_strategy\\_2011.pdf](https://www.mei.gov.rs/upload/documents/nacionalna_dokumenta/communication_strategy_2011.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Manual of Procedures for Implementation of IPA III Programmes, Chapter G, Publicity and Visibility, October 2023

<sup>9</sup> [https://www.mei.gov.rs/upload/documents/publikacije/komunikacioni\\_strateski\\_okvir\\_dec\\_2024.pdf](https://www.mei.gov.rs/upload/documents/publikacije/komunikacioni_strateski_okvir_dec_2024.pdf)

One of the key aims of the Communication Plan will be to clarify the functioning of the Reform and Growth Facility, and, not only to ensure the visibility of EU funds and financial support, but to assure Serbian citizens that the intention of the EU and member states is to invest in their future members and common future of our continent. It must be clear to everyone that this instrument represents a strong incentive for the efficient implementation of domestic reforms in key areas. It is important that the public becomes familiar with the Reform Agenda content and mechanisms and how the implementation will affect the socio-economic development of Serbia. It must be communicated in a way to be clear that "[reforms are backed by investments](#)" as stated by the President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen on December 19 2024 following the EU-Western Balkans Summit.

Considering that the financing for the implementation of the Reform Agenda is carried out through direct budget support to the Republic of Serbia in the amount of approximately half of the funds allocated for our country, while the other half is intended for infrastructure projects through WBIF, communication will be conducted in accordance with relevant contracts/agreements with financial institutions, which serve as the basis for the implementation of individual projects in the areas of transport, energy, social infrastructure, and digital infrastructure.

The Communication Plan will be implemented by a Government of the Republic of Serbia and its institutions. Organized platforms of civil society and the business community, such as National Convention on EU in Serbia (NCEU), Standing Conference of Towns and municipalities (SCTM), Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia (CCIS), Foreign Investment Council (FIC) and other representative social partners, as key partners at the national, regional, and local levels, should contribute to the strategic communication of the Serbian Government about the EU. Therefore, CSOs and social partners are the target groups of the Communication activities, and on the other side, they have served as partners and multipliers of key messages in communication activities from the very beginning of the negotiation process with the EU on membership.

As already emphasised by high-level EU officials, support to Serbia and the importance of further and as soon as possible enlargement is a strategic goal for the EU as well. So, the economic and social growth and development of Serbia will be communicated through key messages in a way to explain every reform move as a common success and joint effort made by both the EU partners and Serbian Government, with common aim to accelerate reforms and move faster towards full membership in the EU.

Visibility of the Growth Plan and Reform Agenda content and purpose is very important for the Government. All communication activities will be made available on the official digital platform of the Government of Serbia, as a one stop shop which will be scattered across the governmental platforms (Ministry of European Integration/MEI) and other relevant institutions, which are administrated by the main beneficiaries of GP AND WBIF assistance. The Plan contains key objectives and messages to be communicated, institutions responsible for concrete reforms and communication of those messages, as well as target groups, communication channels and indicators for monitoring and reporting on the communication results.

### **1.1. Coordination with the institutions**

The Communication Plan will be implemented in coordination (see further explanation at 2.1) with the Prime Minister's Cabinet, MEI and other relevant institutions. It is composed of

representatives from MEI in the positions of the Head and the Secretary of the Group, a representative from the Prime Minister's Cabinet as a Deputy Head of the Group, as well as representatives from the institutions in charge of communications involved in the implementation of RA<sup>10</sup>.

The Special Working Group is established by the Minister for European Integration for the period from 1 December 2024 to 31 December 2027, for the purpose of planning, implementing, monitoring and coordinating the communication of authorities and institutions involved in the implementation of the RA, as well as for the tasks of raising visibility of EU development aid under the Growth Plan for the Western Balkans, i.e. under the Reform and Growth Facility for the Western Balkans.

Once the **Communication Plan** is adopted, its implementation will be regularly reported to the [Coordination Body Council for the EU accession process](#), which will review, monitor its implementation and make suggestions regarding the Communication Plan, as it is envisaged in the Article 8 of the Decision on the Coordination Body and [Coordination Body Council for the EU accession process](#). Coordination between different departments and institutions is essential to ensure consistency and alignment of messages, as well as effective management of communication resources.

The Communication Plan activities will be harmonised with the work and activities of the Delegation of the European Union to Serbia, which has, together with member states representatives a key role in monitoring and supporting Serbia's accession process to the EU.

Activities in connection with information and communication of the Growth Plan as an initiative to stimulate economic growth and accelerate socio-economic convergence with the Union will be designed to raise the awareness of specific or wider public about the reasons for its implementation, EU support, significant socio/economic, political and security advantages of the EU integration process as well as the achieved results and the scope of those financial and political support. The communication goals will be highlighting the benefits of European integration even before the Republic of Serbia's full membership in the EU, as well as strengthening the capacity of communicators in the Serbian public administration, civil society and the media to convey coordinated messages to the public in a clear and informative way.

## 2. THE COMMUNICATION PLAN

This Communication Plan provides the adjustment of key messages and communication structure to the specific needs of Serbia. The Communication Plan narrative part is followed by the Annex I table with the detailed plan of specific Government communications activities adopted by SWG. All activities are listed by line ministries and structured by RA and GP content pillars.

The Plan covers the period of implementation of the Reform Agenda of the Republic of Serbia, from the creation of the Plan in March 2025 until the end of December 2027. For each single year (2025, 2026, 2027) the Communication Plan will be updated annually following the

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<sup>10</sup> Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Environmental Protection, Ministry of Mining and Energy, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, Ministry of Education, Ministry for Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs, Ministry of Information and Telecommunications, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Science, Technological Development and Innovation

implementation of the reforms and based on evaluation results. Updates will be proposed by relevant institutions and adopted by the Special Working Group for coordinating the development and implementation of the Communication Plan for the Reform Agenda of the Republic of Serbia and the Growth Plan for the Western Balkans.

## **2.1. Coordination mechanism**

- **Institutional responsibility:** The Special Working group of the MEI established by the Minister assumes a key role in planning, coordinating and implementing communication activities on the Reform Agenda and the Growth Plan for the Western Balkans. The Council of the Coordinating Body for the EU Accession Process monitors and reviews the implementation and makes suggestions regarding the Communication Plan, its annual iterations and make sure that the highest officials have key informations of delivery and impact of communications.
- In the process of coordinating communication for the Reform Agenda, each government department has been reviewing the relevant sections of the document that pertain to their competencies, after which they defining the key priorities they plan to achieve. Next, the departments are listing the key events within their jurisdiction, such as the adoption of strategies, important laws, or the opening of infrastructure projects, which contribute to the implementation of these priorities. The priorities are then linked to the existing communication plan, considering strategies for engaging relevant stakeholders. Finally, the departments filled out a table attached as an Annex I to this document that includes goals, activities, target groups, communication channels, key messages, and funding sources, ensuring consistency and efficiency in communication, thereby enabling faster implementation and monitoring of results.
- **Cooperation with the EU Delegation:** The EUD and MEI will regularly exchange key information, synchronise messages and jointly organise activities that contribute to better visibility of all the benefits that European integration brings to Serbia.
- In cooperation with other high Government officials, MEI will organise biannual information sessions on Serbian Government communication activities to EU Member States on the ground to demonstrate reform progress and communicate towards EU MS decision makers.
- **Visibility of financial support:** In cooperation with national institutions, the Special Working group and the EU Delegation ensures that the beneficiaries of the funds comply with the obligation to display the EU logo and the appropriate declaration of funding in their promotional materials in accordance with existing rules.

## **2.2. Communication objectives by key Reform Agenda areas**

### **2.2a Overall objective**

**Raising awareness about relevance of the EU integration process:** Explaining how EU-related reforms will enable Serbia to progress in integration through socio-economic growth and strengthening of fundamental rights and made clear that reform efforts will result with full membership in the EU with number of benefits for both

Serbian and European citizens and economy. Ensuring the visibility of EU funding through clear messages and visual elements (EU logo, slogan, etc.) in communication with the public.

## 2.2b Specific objectives

- **Highlighting the benefits of reforms under the RA:** Informing the citizens of Serbia about the positive effects that investments from the EU, combining with domestic efforts and institutional efficiency can bring even before the membership to the EU to all, especially to entrepreneurs and the business community through Single Market.
- **Highlighting the benefits of the Common Regional Market:** informing all stakeholders to clearly understand the benefits, goals, and implementation process of regional economic integration based on EU rules and standards, making the Western Balkans economies more competitive for the single market.
- **Creating Awareness on Accelerating Fundamental Reforms:** Inform stakeholders about the necessity and benefits of fundamental reforms for long-term economic and social growth.
- **Promotion of the Reform and Growth Facility:** Explaining the functioning and rationale of the Reform and Growth Facility, adapted to local conditions and needs, by explaining that every specific national, regional or local problem or need has an European solution and support available from various EU funds.

## 2.3. Target Groups

Communication activities should be organized in such a way as to make better use of available communication tools and channels, with the participation of all stakeholders who can contribute to the overall success of implementation of the RA. In order to improve communication on RA and GP between the general public, the end users of funds, the media, and relevant government institutions at the national and local levels, including decision-makers, the business sector and civil society organizations, a cross-sectorial approach will be taken into account.

Communication activities will be aimed toward several key target groups:

### 1. Institutions and the Economy

- Target Group Description: Business sector, economic institutions and key stakeholders involved in economic development.
- Specific Communication Objectives:
  - Promote the economic benefits of EU integration, such as access to the EU Single Market.
  - Highlight opportunities for businesses to expand markets, increase competitiveness, and align with EU standards.
  - Communicate how reforms will facilitate a more favorable business environment, reduce costs, and create investment opportunities.

### 2. Social Partners (Trade Unions, Syndicates, Professional Associations, Universities)

- Target Group Description: This group includes trade unions, professional associations, academia, and other civil society organizations.
- Specific Communication Objectives:
  - Encourage active cooperation with social partners in the creation and dissemination of key messages.
  - Ensure that key social partners are involved in formulating messages for their respective members and the broader public.

- Highlight the role of social partners in promoting the benefits of EU integration and the Reform Agenda across various sectors.

### **3. Civil Society and Media**

- Target Group Description: This group includes civil society organizations (CSOs), media outlets, journalists, and platforms that play a key role in raising awareness and engaging the public.
- Specific Communication Objectives:
  - Foster inclusive communication, ensuring the active participation of CSOs in the reform process.
  - Promote transparent monitoring of reforms and create channels for open discussions about their impact.
  - Use media as a platform to multiply key messages, especially through national CSO networks, such as the National Convention on the European Union (NCEU).
  - Encourage open discussion in media to build support for the reform agenda, raise awareness of reforms, and enhance public engagement.

### **4. Citizens and Local Communities**

- Target Group Description: This includes the general public, with a focus on citizens at local levels, especially those directly impacted by reforms.
- Specific Communication Objectives:
  - Communicate the practical benefits of reforms in everyday life, such as cost savings, business facilitation, and access to new opportunities.
  - Illustrate how reforms will impact citizens in specific sectors, including education, healthcare, and public services.
  - Ensure that local communities, especially rural areas, are aware of how reforms will enhance their socio-economic development and improve living standards.

### **5. International Actors, EU Institutions**

- Target Group Description: This group includes EU institutions, international actors, and bilateral/multilateral partners involved in the EU integration process.
- Specific Communication Objectives:
  - Inform international actors and EU institutions about Serbia's progress in implementing reforms and meeting EU standards.
  - Strengthen Serbia's relationships with EU stakeholders by demonstrating progress in key reform areas and the socio-economic benefits of EU integration.

### **6. General Public**

- Target Group Description: Citizens of Serbia, who will be clearly, timely, and objectively informed primarily by the Government, but also by other social partners and relevant actors about the benefits of the Single Market, about reforms which contribute to speeding up economic growth and integration, boosting regional economic integration through the Common Regional Market, as well as the ways in which these reforms will improve everyday lives of Serbian citizens in every specific area defined by the Reform Agenda.
- Specific Communication Objectives:
  - Provide clear, timely, and accessible information on how reforms will benefit the general public.
  - Focus on the practical impact of reforms, such as improved business conditions, cost savings, and enhanced regional economic integration.
  - Engage specific groups (youth, farmers, local SMEs) by tailoring communication strategies that address their needs and interests.

### **7. Multipliers**

- Target Group Description: Media, which plays a key role in disseminating information to the public about reforms and EU integration (journalists, editors, and owners of media companies).

Representatives of public broadcasters (RTS, RTV), digital media (portals), cable televisions, news agencies, radio, and the podcast community.

- National Convention on the European Union with more than 800 pro-European CSO members as a permanent body within which a thematically structured debate on the accession of Serbia to the EU is led in accordance with regular and existing Government and Parliament consultation procedures, as well as other civil society organizations or their associations that can play a role as a multiplier or creator of key messages in promoting reforms and enabling citizen participation.
- Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia, their regional branches as well as industry associations (Construction Industry, Electronic Communications and Information Society, energy and mining, FIC, CEBAC, Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities, Trade, Transport...), and other business associations.
- Representative trade unions such as the Alliance of Independent Trade Unions of Serbia, the United Branch Trade Unions "Independence", the United Trade Union USS SLOGA, etc.
- Specialized groups, such as public opinion makers, the academic community, experts that can influence wider public discussions and which, like distinguished members of civil society, are multipliers of key messages.
- Academic and Art community – Universities, Faculties, prominent experts, and artists from various sectors.
- Rural population - associations of agricultural producers are an important channel of communication. Serbia is the biggest agricultural producer in the WB. Reform Agenda measures and reforms can contribute to fostering a sustainable, balanced, equitable, and inclusive development of rural areas and food supply security for the WB region as well as the entire EU.
- Specific Communication Objectives:
- Ensure that media outlets are informed and equipped to disseminate accurate and engaging content on reforms.
- Foster collaboration with influential organizations, like NCEU, to spread key messages and enhance public participation in reform processes.
- Engage specialized groups, including academia and public opinion makers, to help influence wider public discussions and promote the Reform Agenda.

Each Government institution or body leading in given policy area proposed communication to different target groups (please see Annex I – Comms Table Serbia), with special emphasis on the accessibility of information and the use of appropriate channels, which will be defined through specific plan of activities for each area of Reform Agenda. Specific communication materials and activities, such as handbooks, video, infographics, digital campaigns, articles and briefings will be developed by the same institutions for each target group so that the messages are communicated timely and effectively in accordance with the regular government communication practice. A Special working group, coordinated by MEI, will identify and adopt general and joint sectoral messages, after which they will become mandatory for institutions to adhere to in their further communication activities. The timeline and frequency of the communication activities will be agreed in accordance with the inputs from the ANNEX 1 table.

## **2.4. Key Messages**

These messages aim to inspire understanding, raise awareness, and increase the current level of support for Serbia's accession to the EU and key EU-related reforms listed in the Reform

Agenda among different parts and levels of society, highlighting the specific benefits they will bring to everyday life, business, and civil society engagement.

***The EU is committed to Serbia's integration in the EU:***

The Growth Plan is not a substitute for the accession process; in this way, the EU provides additional support to Serbia for accelerated social and economic development, i.e. for achieving EU membership as quickly as possible, but on a merit basis. By investing in Serbia, the EU is investing in the future of the Union with the aim for Serbian citizens to reach the level of EU standards of living as soon as possible and for the EU to extend the safety and security zone to the nearest neighborhood and make Europe bigger and stronger, which will be able to play an even more significant role on the international stage.

## **2.5. Specific Target Groups and Key Messages by Pillars**

### **2.5.1 Enhanced Economic Integration with the EU– *Unlocking a Prosperous Future***

The Growth Plan offers EUR 1.6 billion in donations and favourable loans, as well as economic benefits from the EU Single Market even before becoming an EU member state.

The Reform Agenda of the Republic of Serbia provides for the adoption and implementation of key structural reforms, contributing to Serbia's socio-economic and democratic institutions development, regional stability, common growth, safety, and security of our continent.

#### **Socio-Economic Growth – The Heartbeat of Reform**

Aim to improve the standard of living of the Serbian population: The goal is for the citizens of Serbia to reach the standard of living of citizens of the European Union as soon as possible by implementing the measures from the Reform Agenda.

#### ***SEPA – The Bridge to Europe's Financial Future***

Accelerated integration into the Single Market will bring benefits to the economy and citizens. Serbia has submitted an application to join the Single Euro Payments Area (SEPA), whose membership will reduce remittance costs. It is estimated that a cost reduction of about three percent would result in savings of half a billion euros at the level of the Western Balkans region.

- Serbia will become part of a Europe-wide system, allowing money to be transferred instantly across the geographic scope at little to no extra cost. This will not only benefit remittances but also facilitate all transactions. This integration will make citizens feel less "outside" of the EU and bring them closer to the European economic space. For example:
- Transferring €200 from Serbia to Germany currently costs €43, but after SEPA, the fee could drop to just €2—a 21-fold decrease.
- Sending €200 from Germany to Serbia currently incurs a fee of €27.5, which can decrease to €2 after joining SEPA—a 14-fold decrease.

***Green lanes – A Shortcut to Prosperity:*** By simplifying/harmonising customs and other border procedures and improving infrastructure on border crossings, we aim to reduce waiting time at the border by at least three hours per truck, which would be similar to lowering tariffs by around 2% across all economies. The existing Green Lanes have already reduced waiting time at border crossing points. A total of 20 years of waiting time was saved only in 2023 thanks to the intra-

regional Green Lanes; ensure continued functioning of supply chains, boost trade, and make the region more attractive to investors.

***Wifi4WB/Digital single market – Connecting Communities, Empowering Citizens:*** Increase deployment of internet access in public buildings and urban public spaces and rural areas (grey zones) in the region with Wifi4WB. Empower local communities in the Western Balkan region to bring connectivity closer to citizens, allowing them to benefit from the opportunities of digitalisation, as a concrete step towards the realisation of the Common Digital Market.

- **Agreements on Conformity Assessment and Acceptance of Industrial Products (ACAAs)** – Conformity assessment agreements will boost trade and reduce lab costs, while certifying the safety and quality of WB products in the EU market. They will provide the Western Balkans with full access to the Single Market in selected areas when fully aligned with the EU acquis.

### ***Digital Wallet and Reduced Roaming Charges***

Additionally, Digital Wallet integration will be another key flagship benefit. The introduction of the eIDAS system (mutual recognition of electronic IDs) will enable Serbia's e-Gradjanin ID to be valid for use across all EU services. This move will integrate Serbian citizens more effectively into the digital governance system of the EU. Furthermore, reducing roaming charges (i.e., "roam like at home") will bring substantial benefits to citizens traveling within the EU, creating a seamless digital and physical experience for Serbian citizens across the region.

## **2.5.2 Economic Integration within the Western Balkans: The Common Regional Market - A stronger Serbia in a stronger region**

Easier trade, more investments and jobs, and a stronger economy are the key benefits of regional economic integration. Serbia retains its sovereignty while benefiting from a larger, unified market, making it more attractive for EU accession and global trade.

**Key Message:** The Reform Agenda is not business as usual; it represents a transformative approach. Implementation will accelerate economic integration among Serbia and other Western Balkan countries, paving the way for common benefits by 2027.

The Common Regional Market is vital to overcome small fragmented markets, make businesses competitive, and retain workers, fighting brain drain.

A fully functioning common regional market could bring an additional 10% GDP growth. An integrated market of 18 million people is more competitive and attractive for investors than 6 smaller ones.

## **2.5.3. Fundamental Reforms - Reforms that Transform Lives**

**Key Message:** Serbia stands to gain significantly from the collaborative efforts in implementing the Reform Agenda, aligning with EU standards, and fostering substantial socio-economic growth alongside its Western Balkan neighbours.

The reforms accelerate Serbia's integration into the EU and bring socio-economic benefits through stable economic development and strengthening of fundamental rights. The reforms that are necessary for joining the EU should be carried out even if full membership is not imminent, for the sake of creating a better, prosperous, and more secure Serbia for ourselves.

The EU Reform and Growth Facility is an additional source of EU funding to Serbia: It helps Serbia implement reforms more easily and enables faster progress toward EU standards and membership. Focus will be on the benefits of priority areas so far identified: Single Euro Payments Area (SEPA), Green Lanes, digital single market and WiFi4WB, European Digital Innovation Hubs (EDIH), conformity assessments, critical medicines, digital wallet, and Common Regional Market.

Reforms contribute to socio-economic and balanced regional development: The reforms listed in four Reform Agenda areas (98 measures are foreseen, the fulfillment of which is a condition for disbursements: 1. Business environment and private sector development with 26 steps for disbursement, 2. Green and digital transition with 39 steps for disbursement, 3. Human capital with 12 steps for disbursement, 4. Fundamentals, i.e. measures in the area of the rule of law with 21 steps for disbursement) contribute to economic growth, bringing specific benefits to citizens such as increased employment, strengthening the rule of law, and better integration into the EU market, i.e. the movement of people, money, and goods without delays and additional costs.

#### **2.5.4. Increased Financial Assistance through the Reform and Growth Facility - Funding for Progress**

Key Message: The urgency of these reforms ensures that Serbia, together with other Western Balkan countries, will experience rapid advancements in economic conditions and quality of life by 2027, thereby sharing the advantages of European integration ahead of full membership.

#### **2.6. Communication Channels**

Different communication channels will be used to achieve the widest possible effect, ensuring that Serbia's EU integration journey is well communicated across various sectors of society. These channels will cater to a broad audience, from the general public to specific target groups, ensuring that key messages reach those who are most affected by the reforms.

##### **Websites:**

All documents and communication activities related to the Growth Plan (GP) and Reform Agenda (RA) will be made available on the official digital platform of the Government of Serbia, acting as a one-stop shop for access to these resources. These platforms will be scattered across governmental websites such as the Ministry of European Integration (MEI) and other relevant institutions, ensuring transparency and providing easy access to important information for citizens, business stakeholders, and civil society organizations.

##### **Social Networks:**

Social networks such as Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, and LinkedIn will be used to engage with both the general public and specific target groups. The official accounts of the Government of Serbia, relevant ministries, and ministers will regularly share updates and key messages about the reforms and Serbia's progress in the EU accession process. These platforms will allow us to distribute infographics, videos, success stories, and other engaging content to ensure broad visibility of key reforms like SEPA, Green Lanes, Digital Wallet, and the Common Regional Market.

***Audio-visual Media, Public Broadcasters, and Regional Coverage:***

Integrated campaigns will be launched on television and radio, as well as promotional videos and documentary materials showcasing the tangible benefits of EU integration. These campaigns will focus on the Growth Plan, Reform Agenda, and their positive effects on citizens' daily lives. TV and radio news shows will feature high-level officials who will discuss Serbia's path to the EU and the role of these reforms in shaping the future. Local and regional media will also participate in spreading these key messages through interviews and reports.

***Digital and Print Media:***

Press articles, press briefings, and the distribution of brochures, posters, and other promotional materials will be tailored to specific target groups. These will include podcasts, video materials, infographics, and photographs to present the benefits of reforms in an easily digestible format. By leveraging both digital and print media, we will ensure wide outreach to various communities, informing them about key reforms such as SEPA and the Digital Wallet and their benefits.

***Participation in Local Public Events:***

Regular participation in local public events will play a significant role in informing citizens about the reforms. Meetings in cooperation with the EU Delegation in Serbia and local authorities and CSOs will be organized to facilitate public discussions and raise awareness of the Reform Agenda and Serbia's EU accession process. These seminars will target local media, community leaders, public servants, and schools, helping to create a dialogue on how reforms will positively impact local communities.

***Serbian Government Officials:***

Government officials will actively communicate the benefits and opportunities presented by the Growth Plan and Serbia's EU accession process, both in formal and informal settings. High-level officials will also use every appropriate occasion, including official visits, public speeches, and events, to highlight the importance of reforms and the country's progress toward EU membership.

***Joint Media and Online Appearances:***

Collaboration with EU officials, the EU Delegation, MS embassies and civil society organizations will feature prominently in joint media campaigns. These campaigns will be run across official websites of the ministries, the Government of Serbia, and specialized websites for the Reform and Growth Facility. The campaigns will focus on SEPA, Green Lanes, the Digital Wallet, and the Common Regional Market, highlighting their impact on Serbia's future and the tangible improvements they will bring. Online campaigns will utilize social media, websites, and video content to communicate the benefits of these reforms in a visual and accessible manner.

**2.7. Monitoring and evaluation**

One of the key aspects of the Plan is the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of communication activities. A special working group is therefore in charge for monitoring the implementation of the Communication plan, as well as for consolidating reports on progress in communication. In addition, success indicators compared with the baseline (please see Annex I – Communication Plan table, will enable evaluation of the effectiveness of communication and adaptation of the CP according to achievements. Semi-annual and annual reports on achievements in communication will be submitted to the Council of the Coordinating Body for

the Accession Process, as well as to the Delegation of the European Union and other relevant actors.

- *Qualitative and quantitative indicators:* Monitoring communication effects by measuring public support for EU integration<sup>11</sup> (Baseline December 2024: support to the EU membership 43%, personal (36%) and country (37%) benefits from the EU accession, support to the reforms 75%, 37% have heard of some of the projects financed by the EU and on the Growth Plan for the WB 18%).
- *Analysing media content* by the Ministry of European Integration and other line ministries in accordance with existing practice (monthly and annually qualitative and quantitative research on topics – general number of news releases and percentage according to topics, attitudes towards the topic and within the selected topics and proportion on analytical releases on EU Integration of Serbia, number of analytical releases per day), social networks insights and event results (number of events, number of participants, press coverage). One of the topic that will be followed and analyzed is RA (including WBIF).
- Regular updating of the Communications Plan: Annual adaptation and updating in compliance with the analysis of achievements and current needs, to ensure that communication is relevant, timely and effective.
- Reporting and transparency: Communication Plan will be publicly displayed at MEI website, with the obligation of the SWG to regularly report on activities and achieved results to the [Coordination Body Council for the EU accession process](#) and to inform on the achievements the NCEU and the EUD in Serbia.

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<sup>11</sup> European Orientation of Serbian Citizens, MEI, Public Opinion Poll (December 2024)