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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	EU-Western Balkans Summit (Brussels, 25 November 2026) - Declaration

EU-Western Balkans Summit

Brussels Declaration, 25 November 2026

We, the leaders of the European Union (EU), in consultation with our Western Balkans partners, today held this Summit in Brussels and concluded the following:

1. Today's Summit, which follows the successful Summit held in Montenegro in June 2026, reaffirms the growing strategic importance of the relations between the EU and the Western Balkans and the benefits it brings to our citizens. The increasingly unstable geopolitical situation, marked by Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, conflicts in the Middle East and intensifying global competition, underscores the need for ever stronger ties between the EU and the Western Balkans.

2. We reiterate our full and unequivocal commitment to the EU membership perspective of the Western Balkans. The future of the Western Balkans is in our Union. Enlargement is a realistic possibility, which should be seized.

3. We reaffirm the importance of enlargement as a geostrategic investment in European peace, security, stability and prosperity. We call on all Western Balkans partners to accelerate decisive and credible reforms, especially in the area of fundamentals, and deliver on the commitments necessary to advance on the EU path. We welcome the dynamism and progress achieved by Western Balkans partners on the EU path since the last Summit. The acceleration of the accession process, based on credible reforms by partners, fair and rigorous conditionality and the principle of own merits, is in our mutual interest. In parallel, and in line with the Granada Declaration, the EU needs to advance its own preparations and reforms for a wider Union.

4. Recalling previous declarations, we reiterate the importance of the Western Balkans partners' commitment to uphold European values and principles, in line with international law, the primacy of democracy, fundamental rights and values and the rule of law. We expect them to demonstrate this commitment through concrete actions by taking ownership and implementing the necessary reforms, notably in the area of fundamentals and the rule of law. Freedom of expression, independent and pluralistic media, gender equality, and a strong role for civil society are crucial to ensure a functioning democracy. We reiterate our call on partners to guarantee the rights and equal treatment of persons belonging to minorities. Any glorification of war criminals, genocide denial, and revisionism contradicts the most fundamental European values. We call on all Western Balkans partners to foster a culture of respect and solidarity with all victims and to respect and comply with the judgments of international and domestic courts relating to war crimes.

5. Inclusive regional cooperation, reconciliation and good neighbourly relations remain key to building a common future as well as implementing international agreements in good faith and with tangible results, including the Prespa Agreement with Greece and the Treaty on Friendship, Good Neighbourliness and Cooperation with Bulgaria. Decisive further efforts are still required to foster reconciliation and regional stability, as well as to find and to implement definitive, inclusive and binding solutions to partners' regional and bilateral disputes and issues rooted in the legacy of the past, in line with international law and established principles. This includes resolving all remaining cases of missing persons and addressing outstanding war crimes-related issues, ensuring accountability and justice. Continued efforts by relevant partners are needed to implement all outstanding obligations under the Agreement on Succession Issues and to solve remaining succession-related questions.

6. The absence of a normalisation of relations between Pristina and Belgrade continues to hold back both partners on their European path. We reaffirm our full support to the EU-facilitated Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue on normalisation of relations, led by the High Representative and supported by the EU Special Representative. We encourage both partners to seize the current political momentum to engage constructively in the Dialogue and to make tangible progress without delay towards the full implementation of all agreements reached. The support under the Western Balkans Reform and Growth Facility is conditioned on the partners' constructive engagement with measurable progress and tangible results in the normalisation of their relations.

7. We will remain resolute in our support for a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine based on the principles of the UN Charter and international law, underpinned by robust and credible security guarantees for Ukraine. We will continue to provide comprehensive support to Ukraine and its people as they defend Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity against Russia's war of aggression, in coordination with like-minded partners. We welcome Western Balkans partners' support in this endeavour. We will continue to invest in multilateralism and cooperate with the Western Balkans partners to uphold international law. In this context, we commend the key principles of European security adopted on the occasion of the European Political Community meeting on 12 November 2026.

8. Recalling previous declarations, the alignment of the Western Balkans partners with the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), including implementing and enforcing the EU's restrictive measures and countering circumvention, remains a strong expression of our partners' strategic choice. We commend those Western Balkans partners who fully align with the EU's CFSP and urge those who have not yet done so to follow suit.

9. We underline the mutual interest in enhancing our cooperation in security and defence, as testified by our Security and Defence Partnerships as well as Security and Defence Dialogues. The EU and the Western Balkans are committed to continuing cooperation under the European Peace Facility to enhance the region's security, stability and resilience. The EU also welcomes partners' contributions to the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy missions and operations and looks forward to further cooperation in this regard.

10. The EU continues to support the Western Balkans in addressing cyber and other hybrid threats, including foreign information manipulation and interference, seeking to undermine democratic institutions and the enlargement process, and to further strengthen cooperation to build resilience, including through the Western Balkans Cyber Capacity Centre (WB3C), enhanced cooperation with the European Union Agency for Cybersecurity (ENISA), and the European Democracy Shield, notably through the European Centre for Democratic Resilience.

11. Bringing partners closer to the EU already during the enlargement process remains a strategic focus. The EU encourages partners to work together to make the most of existing opportunities, while further proposals on gradual integration are being considered, subject to alignment with the relevant EU *acquis*, in a reversible and merit based manner. Closer economic integration will strengthen supply chain resilience, competitiveness and economic security on both sides.

12. In this regard, we welcome the progress on the gradual integration of the Western Balkans partners into the EU single market, based on relevant *acquis* alignment, respecting the integrity of the single market and ensuring a level playing field. This includes, notably:

    - ongoing work to extend the EU's 'Roam like at Home' area to the Western Balkans, allowing citizens to call, message and use mobile data anywhere in the EU and the region at no extra cost;
    - the participation of four partners in the Single Euro Payments Area (SEPA) schemes, together with a recent application, signalling positive momentum towards further expanding its geographical scope;

- the rollout of regional instant payment systems based on the Eurosystem's TARGET Instant Payment Settlement (TIPS) technology, facilitating faster and more affordable payments and greater financial integration;
- promoting technical exchanges with a view to developing industrial dialogues under the Single Market Highway, extending the EU-Western Balkans Green Lanes, and modernising and harmonising border crossings;
- joining or replicating digital initiatives, such as Digital Innovation Hubs, the EU Digital Identity Wallet, as well as completion of 500 public WiFi hotspots in the region under the WiFi4WB initiative;
- establishing the Single Market Academy, which will strengthen administrative capacity and provide learning opportunities for the EU Member States and the Western Balkans partners.

13. The Growth Plan's potential to speed up the socio-economic convergence between the Western Balkans and the EU depends on the effective implementation of EU-related reforms by our partners. The Growth Plan, with up to EUR 6 billion for reforms and investments, has the potential to accelerate economic growth in the region over the next decade. This is in addition to the EUR 29 billion being rolled out through the Economic and Investment Plan.

14. The EU reiterates its call for the Western Balkans partners to make the most of this unprecedented opportunity as it enters its final phase, through timely implementation of reforms. We note that some Western Balkans partners have completed or are on track to complete reform steps planned for the first four six-month reporting periods of the Reform and Growth Facility and we encourage all partners to accelerate their efforts.

15. The EU highlights the importance of the continued implementation of the Common Regional Market under the coordination of the Regional Cooperation Council and constructive cooperation in the context of the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA). We encourage further efforts to remove remaining barriers to intra-regional trade and simplify trade procedures, particularly to facilitate market access for SMEs. The Common Regional Market is a stepping stone to the EU single market.

16. The EU will continue to support the strengthening of connectivity within the region and with the EU, including in the fields of energy, transport and digital as well as ongoing efforts to diversify energy supply sources and routes. This will increase our energy security and reduce dependencies, through stronger cross-border interconnections, diversified supply routes and investments in energy infrastructure. The EU will continue to contribute to the energy transition and infrastructure in the Western Balkans. The Western Balkans partners are at the centre of the Western Balkans – Eastern Mediterranean transport corridor, including the strategically important Corridor VIII connecting the Adriatic and the Black Seas. We encourage the Western Balkan partners to make decisive progress towards its completion as per the September 2026 Work Plan, making timely use of EU support.

17. Similarly, effective cooperation in the area of migration management remains essential, including EU support to managing migratory challenges along the Western Balkans route. Further action is needed by the Western Balkans partners to fully align their visa policy with the EU, to prevent and combat the smuggling of migrants and trafficking in human beings, to further strengthen border management, to improve asylum and reception systems and to enhance returns to countries of origin. The EU will continue to support Western Balkans partners in their efforts to strengthen operational cooperation with the relevant EU Agencies, inter alia Frontex and the EU Agency for Asylum and with third countries, in line with EU and international law.

18. Joint efforts should also continue on preventing and fighting corruption, drug trafficking, and all forms of serious and organised crime, as well as on preventing and countering terrorism and violent extremism in line with the new Joint Action Plan. The EU and the Western Balkans should continue advancing work based on a balanced, comprehensive and evidence-based approach to drug-related challenges, and on reinforcing international cooperation and partnerships, including through synergies with the work of the European Coalition Against Drugs (ECAD), notably to fight drug trafficking and the illicit trade in chemical precursors.

19. Effective strategic communication by the EU and the Western Balkans partners, including on the benefits of enlargement and gradual integration remains crucial. We count on the Western Balkans partners to communicate to their citizens that the EU remains the region's main investor and trading partner, as well as its largest provider of financial assistance and a reliable security partner. Furthermore, the EU contributes to stability and security across Europe.

20. We welcome our Western Balkans partners' alignment[1] with this Declaration.

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[1] Serbia did not align.