4ᵈ Meeting of MAP REA Coordinators
Operational Conclusions
26 March 2019, Brussels

Appointed MAP REA Coordinators and their representatives gathered for the fourth meeting organized by the Regional Cooperation Council Secretariat on 26 March 2019 in Brussels. Representatives from European Commission (DG NEAR and DG CNCT), CEFTA, Western Balkan Chamber Investment Forum (WB CIF), World Bank Group and Poland were also present.

The meeting took note and discussed the state of implementation of MAP REA, including challenges being faced during implementation, with particular attention to the agreed deliverables for the Belgrade Digital Summit and the WB6 PM's Summit in Poznan as well informed MAP REA Coordinators on the proposed forward looking commitments beyond Poznan Summit.

RCC and CEFTA Secretariats informed the meeting on the key achievements related to the Poznan Summit deliverables, mainly focusing on CEFTA Additional Protocols 5, 6 and 7 (AP5, AP6, AP7)), Digital Summit preparations, all-inclusive Western Balkan Roaming Agreement, Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA) on professional qualifications for 4 selected professions and Recognition of Academic Qualifications.

EC welcomed the commitment, constructiveness and efforts invested by WB6 in implementing the deliverables for Belgrade and Poznan Summits and commended the approach shown in addressing political sensitivities in all MAP REA processes. In addition, EC announced the holding of the upcoming PM Sherpa's meeting planned for 22 May 2019.

The meeting benefited from the detailed presentation of MAP REA Coordinators on the progress of implementation of the Belgrade and Poznan Summits deliverables and reaffirmed their full commitment to push forward all internal processes connected with the implementation thereof.

The meeting acknowledged the progress made in implementation of all deliverables, namely:

a. The progress in implementation of AP5 and need to speed up the ratification process of AP5 in Kosovo*[1]; the adoption of AP6 by the CEFTA CCPs and the launched process of internal procedures of approval in each economy to allow adoption of AP6 by Poznan Summit; AEO Decision finalized;

b. The conclusion of negotiations for an all-inclusive Western Balkan Roaming Agreement and commitment to complete the internal procedures of approval in view of signing during the Digital Summit in Belgrade;

Albania and Montenegro will approve it during this week' Government session, Kosovo* is already ready to sign while the internal procedures in Serbia are ongoing. The other two WB6 economies have already approved the draft text in Government; EC informed the participants on the meeting with operators, highlighting the benefits

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

for the citizens as well as the challenges on implementation. The need to keep close contacts among ICT ministries, Regulators and operators from the region to ensure efficient implementation was highlighted.

c. The progress in the preparations for the Digital Summit;

The meeting benefited from the detailed and thorough presentation of the Host on the organization of the Summit. All participants commended the Host on efforts invested in the organization of the Digital Summit and committed to support any processes needed towards a successful event in Belgrade.

d. The advancement made in both negotiation processes enabling the mobility of professionals and Recognition of academic qualifications;

The negotiation processes - MRA on professional qualifications and Declaration on Recognition of Academic Qualifications - are progressing. The meeting was briefed on the state of play in each economy connected to both processes and the MAP REA Coordinators reiterated their dedication to deliver by Poznan in both agendas.

RCC briefed the MAP REA Coordinators on the inputs received from DG GROW on compliance of MRA with the WTO standards. On this point, Montenegro asked clarifications on the linkages between MRA with CEFTA. RCC explained that linkages with CEFTA are already made through referencing AP6 and CEFTA Agreement in its preamble. In addition, RCC informed the meeting that the WB Platform on Education and Training Ministerial meeting organised by DG EAC will take place end of June or beginning of July where the Declaration on Recognition of Academic Qualifications should be endorsed by the Ministers responsible for higher education.

e. The progress made within the context of translating the Regional Investment Reform Agenda into Individual Reform Action Plans (IRAPs) and adoption by the participating economies, along with progress on the development of the Investor Outreach Initiative, which will be delivered for the Poznan Summit. Until the Poznan Summit, the region will discuss on the necessity, form and scope of the regional instrument on the investment agenda.

WB CIF informed the meeting on the key activities undertaken to support regional dialogue with the private sector, highlighting the good established dialogue and cooperation between WB CIF and all chambers in Western Balkans.

The meeting was briefed by the Coordinator of the WB6 2019 Summit on the state of preparatory work for the Poznan Summit and took note on key organizational aspects of the Summit.

The meeting took note of the proposed forward looking commitments beyond Poznan Summit prepared by RCC and CEFTA Secretariats (*see Annex 1*) based on the discussions held in the meeting of MAP REA Component Contact Points, held in Tirana on 19 March 2019.

MAP REA Coordinators agreed to validate them through national MAP REA structures and submit their comments and suggestion within three weeks. RCC and CEFTA Secretariats will consolidate all comments and suggestions received and share the list with MAP REA Coordinators prior next PM Sherpa's meeting.

MAP REA Coordinators agreed to send their comments on the draft operational conclusions within two weeks.

Annex 1 – List of forward looking commitments/deliverables

Trade

1. Implementation of AP5 - Upon the ratification of the AP5 by all the CEFTA Parties, the implementation of the obligations arising from the AP5 will be the priority. The implementation of the AP5 has already started and it is expected that the Trade Facilitation Committee will further develop the action plan adopted at its meeting of 26 of November 2018 in Pristina. The further development of the action plan will lead to better monitoring of the implementation of the AP5 by the CEFTA Parties.

2. Adoption of the implementation of regional strategy on risk management – Based upon the development of the timeline and the work performed under development of joint risk profiles, the CEFTA Parties will work on the elaboration of the risk management Strategy that will be adopted in the period after Poznan.

3. Development of a time-frame for mutual cooperation between market surveillance authorities - The Exploratory talks between the Market surveillance Authorities will be held and the preparation of the database of unsafe products in the CEFTA Parties (moreover obligation from AP5 and planned under the SEED+) will be developed in the next period. Moreover, the collaboration of the Market Surveillance authorities will identify their needs in the Quality Infrastructure are that will lead to the expansion of the REA MAP to the quality infrastructure issues that are needed for the successful implementation of the Regional Economic Area.

4. Identification of suitable cooperation for cooperation based on the soft laws, recognition of international and EU standards, MRAs – Based on the report that was adopted in 2018, the Parties will engage in the selection of the Sector to pilot a possible way of cooperation between the Parties that should lead to the conclusion of the Arrangements (soft laws, International or EU standards or MRAs) between the CEFTA Parties that would lead to the elimination of the existing regulatory barriers.

5. Assess existing geo-blocking measures - The Chairmanship priorities have prescribed the exploratory talks in the Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) area, arising from the SEE 2020 Strategy, and involving the IPR Authorities in the work of CEFTA. The Assessment will provide for the prevention of unjustified geo-blocking in the CEFTA Parties. This activity will take the account of the work already achieved under the digital component and the CEFTA Secretariat will consult with RCC and digital contact points in this area.

Besides these main outputs, the work of the CEFTA Secretariat will be continuous in the implementation of CEFTA Agreement including its additional protocols, and the commitments of the MAP REA.

Investment

1. Regular update of IRAPs and definition of additional reform actions;

2. Joint Investment Promotion Initiative furthered through:
   a. Regional Sector Scan and investment mapping,
   b. IPAs capacity development,
   c. Investor outreach activities

3. Assessment report of the effects of EU accession on intra-EU and third-party BITs of the WB6 and proposals for reforms of the investment protection agreements;

4. Implementation of the regional strategy and related reforms through the individual action plans for financial markets deepening.

Mobility

1. Recognition of Professional Qualifications:[2]
   o Successful implementation of the Agreement on Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications;
   o Governance and monitoring framework of MRA in place;
   o Transposition of EU standards for education and training in 3 professions completed;
   o Academic programmes aligned with EU standards enrol first students in academic year 2021 (September 2021).

2. Recognition of Academic Qualifications:
   o Successful implementation of the model of automatic recognition of academic qualifications outlined in the Declaration on Recognition of Academic Qualifications;
   o Widen the model of automatic recognition of academic qualifications to include third cycle qualifications and pre-bologna qualifications;
   o Establish a regional network of QA bodies with an aim of supporting full ESG alignment by 2021;
   o Establish a regional QA peer - reviewer's network and produce joint QA guidelines.

3. Mobility of researchers:
   o Launch a regional research cooperation hub which includes a research infrastructure map;
   o Sign a regional open access protocol to research infrastructure.

Digital Integration

1. Establish roaming free region:
   o Successful implementation of the all-inclusive Western Balkan Roaming Agreement and monitoring of impact.

2. Broadband development:
   o Speed up the transposition of the EU Cost Reduction Directive and ensure implementation aimed at greater infrastructure sharing;
   o Intensify work on spectrum harmonization and increase Western Balkan readiness for 5G/NGN networks;
   o Nominate contact persons for the EU BCO network (where do not exist) and participate actively in the capacity-building and knowledge sharing activities of the EU BCO network;
   o Increase the uptake of 30 million Euro earmarked under WBIF for technical assistance in broadband infrastructure projects with the aim of full absorption of the funds;
   o Complete broadband mapping, where is not completed yet;
   o Complete digital switchover, where not competed yet.

3. Digital skills and competences:

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[2] Forward looking commitments connected with MRA negotiations will be revised in line with the ongoing process of negotioations. The formulation will reflect the state of play as of end of June 2019

- o Establish a multi-stakeholder regional working group to support the development of digital skills strategies, priorities and actions on digital skills and ensure full functionality by 2020.

4. Digital economy and society:
   - o Launch regional processes to support the development of the platform for mutual recognition of trusted services, including timeline and process required in each economy for legislative changes;
   - o Take concrete steps aimed at making use of the EU Digital Service Infrastructure and joining ISA2 programme;
   - o Maintain the high level regional dialogue on WB6 digital transformation and monitor implementation of regionally agreed actions through the Digital Summit Concluding Statement;
   - o Launch discussions on networking WB Open Data Portals and facilitate the process of connecting with EU Open Data Portal.

5. Trust and security:

   - o Establish the regional platform for exchange of information among the Western Balkan CSIRTs on cyber threats and incidents and ensure its full functionality within 2019;
   - o Strengthen regional cooperation in area of cybersecurity and extend capacity building for WB CSIRTs in partnership with other specialized institutions;
   - o Launch regional dialogue/cooperation on the new GDPR regulation and e-privacy regulation.

6. Others commitments:
   - o Sustain the EU–Western Balkan ICT Dialogue;
   - o Promote participation of WB EU digital programs, initiatives and frameworks;
   - o Monitor systematically progress on the main areas of the digital transformation and work toward setting a commonly agreed baseline for monitoring the progress, including through the calculation of the Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI);
   - o Ensure smooth implementation of Digital Summit Conclusions as well as permanent monitoring.