



**ASSESSING AND
STRENGTHENING THE
INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITIES
OF PARLIAMENTS**
OF THE WESTERN BALKANS
REGION RELATED TO THE
COMMON REGIONAL MARKET

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* 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



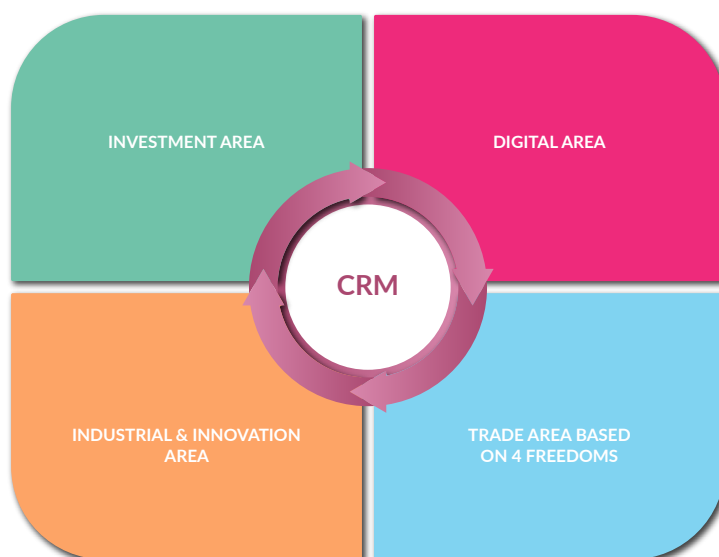
Introduction

Seven years after the launch of the Berlin Process, the Western Balkans (WB) region defined its vision for a common regional market that will ensure regional economic integration and close the divergence gap with the EU. At 2020 Sofia Summit, the WB economies adopted the “Common Regional Market - A catalyst for deeper regional economic integration and a stepping stone towards EU Single Market” as one of the steps towards the future establishment of the Common Regional Market, based on EU

rules, and building upon the commitments and results of the Regional Economic Area.

The Common Regional Market (CRM) initiative, the most ambitious regional integration effort in the WB, seeks to increase the attractiveness and competitiveness of the region, bring the region closer to the EU markets and integrate the region more closely with the EU Single Market already before accession. In light of this, the WB economies approved an Action Plan for CRM for the period 2021-2024. This Action Plan is made up of targeted actions¹ in four key areas:

Common Regional Market in WB economies



¹ <https://www.rcc.int/docs/543/common-regional-market-action-plan>

I Regional Trade Area²



- ✦ introduces and implements, in line with the EU acquis, mutual recognition of certificates and testing results for industrial and agricultural products; Authorised Economic Operators; professional qualifications; and licenses in tourism, selected financial services and other key services sectors;
- ✦ establishes regional e-commerce market by adopting core harmonised rules and internal market principles, facilitating customs clearance of parcels, and removing geo-blocking;
- ✦ adapts the Green Lanes and makes services available 24/7 at expanded network of BCPs/CCPs and introduces the Green Lanes on BCPs with the EU;
- ✦ expands and improves CEFTA Risk Management and systematic exchange of electronic data (SEED) to all agencies involved in clearance of goods;
- ✦ establishes one-stop-shops at selected crossing points and decreases waiting times at BCPs/CCPs to 70% of current waiting times;
- ✦ introduces joint procedures on tariff monitoring and other measures facilitating parcel delivery service;
- ✦ adopts services trade liberalisation package to enable supply of services without obligatory establishment and authorisation, in line with Chapter 3 of the EU acquis;
- ✦ adopts new, more efficient rules on dispute settlement and resolution of not-tariff barriers in CEFTA;

- ✦ reduces the costs of regional payments and prepares for joining the Single Euro Payment Area (SEPA);
- ✦ enables mobility for students, researchers and professors;
- ✦ introduces freedom of movement on the basis of IDs within the WB economies;
- ✦ removes work permits for intracompany transfers and contractual service providers;
- ✦ enables portability of social rights.

II Regional Investment Area³

- ✦ establishes cooperation between national investment promotion agencies and coordinates regional promotion approach for attracting investments in priority target sectors/value chains;
- ✦ enables quick resolution of foreign direct investment disputes;
- ✦ implements regional investment policy reforms and provides transparency of investment incentives.

III Regional Digital Area³

- ✦ provides fixed broadband Internet access for at least 95% of households in each economy;
- ✦ develops a regional 5G roadmap: coverage of main industrial cities and at least one major corridor in the region by the end of 2023 and 2025 respectively;
- ✦ removes roaming charges within WB and reduces roaming charges between WB and EU;
- ✦ identifies WB digital skills needs for target groups (start-ups/youth, adults) and provides appropriate training;
- ✦ promotes digital economy: regional interoperability of toll services, network of smart cities, promotion of artificial intelligence, participation of WB in high-performance computing projects, regional cooperation in developing e-government.

IV Regional Industrial and Innovation Area³

- ✦ integrates the region in the European Research Area (WB Innovation and Research Platform);
- ✦ encourages knowledge transfer from diaspora experts;
- ✦ supports establishment of accelerators and incubators (WB Network of Digital Innovation Hubs);
- ✦ supports start-ups/MSMEs focused on green economy, sustainable food systems, clean energy production and manufacturing;

3 Common Regional Market, A catalyst for deeper regional economic integration and a stepping stone towards EU Single Market

- ✦ connects domestic suppliers with multinational companies across WB;
- ✦ provides a database for market intelligence and important information for SME internationalisation;
- ✦ evolves e competitive advantages of regional automotive industry;
- ✦ develops a framework for implementation of projects targeting green and circular economy;
- ✦ launches a regional Farm to Fork Strategy roadmap and promotes sustainable food production and consumption;
- ✦ raises awareness in the region on the EU food quality standards;
- ✦ upgrades financial support for creative industries;
- ✦ increases competitiveness of metal processing industry by modernising the education curricula and stimulating energy efficiency;
- ✦ promotes regional sustainable tourism.



II

Summary of key findings⁴

Albania

- ✦ High level of support for all initiatives related to CRM, though low level of awareness
- ✦ Strengthening agriculture sectors and their integration need to be a priority
- ✦ Very positive effect expected on tourism through an integrated offer
- ✦ Some concerns expressed on free movement of labour forces across the economies due to existing shortages
- ✦ Low awareness and involvement in legislative acts related to CRM
- ✦ Capacity building programmes would be appreciated, including exchanges, and learning from good practices

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- ✦ Support for most of initiatives related to CRM
- ✦ Knowledge on CRM to be further improved
- ✦ Impact assessments for different initiatives to be conducted
- ✦ Low awareness and involvement in legislative acts related to CRM
- ✦ Joint parliamentary committees most appropriate channel of communication and exchange of experiences
- ✦ Need to further increase awareness

4 Interviews with MPs took place during September–November 2022, before the start of the ratification procedures for the Mobility Agreements of the CRM Action Plan, i.e. the Agreement on Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications; Agreement on Recognition of Professional Qualifications for Doctors of Medicine, Dentists and Architects, as well as the Agreements on Freedom of Movement with Identity Card.

It should be noted that most of the Parliaments of the WB have been highly involved in scrutinizing and ratifying the Mobility agreements during 2023.

Kosovo*

- ✦ Limited information and very low awareness regarding CRM
- ✦ Trade and investment would be most expected benefits
- ✦ Agriculture sector as a priority and in need of support (for exports)
- ✦ Digitalisation and start-ups should be the focus of regional projects
- ✦ The biggest concern of MPs is unemployment - CRM should aim at tackling obstacles and supporting sectors that increase employment
- ✦ Regional workshops with very practical approach and exchange of experiences would be welcome

Montenegro

- ✦ crucial role of Berlin Process
- ✦ impact assessment per initiative per economy
- ✦ schemes to offset negative impacts of certain measures
- ✦ some concern for agricultural goods
- ✦ some concern for the quality of diplomas
- ✦ to include regional initiatives in the scope of work of EI Committees

North Macedonia

- ✦ Strong support for CRM and linked with the Berlin Process
- ✦ CRM seen as instrumental to integration with the EU internal market by preparing economies for standards and competitiveness
- ✦ Joint economic development and integration as key for reconciliation
- ✦ Low level of information regarding specific initiatives of CRM
- ✦ Agriculture, trade, digitalisation and infrastructure are considered key sectors
- ✦ Communication and dissemination of information on CRM need to be improved

Serbia

- ✦ Certain level of understanding of CRM
- ✦ Support for removal of barriers and creation of common market in different sectors
- ✦ Low level of participation in scrutinising legal acts on different CRM initiatives
- ✦ Need to improve MPs knowledge and understanding of CRM
- ✦ Need to implement an awareness campaign
- ✦ Implementation of workshops, joint committees, discussions, public events



III

Methodology implemented

Implementation of the exercise started with the analysis of a number of available documents. Different reports, declarations, resolutions and decisions of the Western Balkans' parliaments and governments were carefully examined in order to draw the necessary conclusions. Documents of economy-level institutions were

supplemented with the research and analytical papers of relevant international organisations and researchers. Specific attention was given to the documents developed in the process of accession to the European Union and the Berlin Process.

The assignment was conducted in several steps:

- ✦ mapping parliamentary committees/ bodies in charge of every given action envisaged by the Common Regional Market Action Plan. On the basis of mapped parliamentary bodies, the participants in the survey were determined. The list included MPs and technical staff of the Parliaments. A list of participants per each economy was defined and their contact details were gathered.
- ✦ based on a number of information analysed, a set of Guiding questions was designed to explore a topic in greater depth. The Guiding questions reflect all crucial areas of CRM and were used to prepare comprehensive information on the level of familiarity of relevant parliamentary committees (MPs and technical staff) with the CRM.
- ✦ most interviews took a form of on-line face-to-face individual interviews and some were implemented in the form of Questionnaire.
- ✦ analysing the responses - results of interviews were noted, carefully processed and analysed. On the basis of the analysis, conclusions and recommendations have been developed and presented in this document.
- ✦ putting the results in writing - all information gathered, results of research and findings identified in the interviews are presented in this Report.



IV

The situation in the Western Balkans

ALBANIA

Map of parliamentary committees in Albania

Albanian Parliament is composed of 140 members. Committees are divided into permanent committees (8 in total) and ad-hoc ones. In addition, permanent committees can have subcommittees on more specific areas. Political parties are all represented in the committees, while chairs are divided according to their political weight in the Parliament. In addition to the committees, Albanian Parliament has a special structure which is focused on building consensus and pushing reforms in the European integration process, which is the National Council for European Integration (with non-state actors as members, as well).

The eight permanent committees are:

1. Committee on Economy and Finance
2. Committee on Foreign Policy
3. Committee on Production Activities, Trade and Tourism
4. Committee on European Integration
5. Committee on Employment, Social Welfare, and Health
6. Committee on Legal Affairs, Public Administration and Human Rights
7. Committee on National Security
8. Committee on Education and Public Information



There are five committees that cover areas related to CRM, as represented in the graph below:



Committee on Economy and Finance follows implementation of economic policies, public budget (and the oversight of its implementation), public finances, privatisations and the banking system, as well as issues of the United Nations sustainable development agenda and the implementation of commitments stemming from it. Within its areas of responsibility the Committee examines draft laws, draft decisions and other issues presented to the Parliament, conducts studies on the effectiveness of laws in force, follows the implementation of laws and oversees the activity of ministries and other central bodies, proposes taking relevant measures to the Parliament or the Council of Ministers, including proposing draft laws, draft statements, or draft resolutions for approval in the Parliament. This Committee is composed of 21 members of parliament, including one chair and three deputy chairs. It is one of the most active in terms of frequency of meetings and extensiveness of agenda topics.

Committee on Production Activities, Trade, and Tourism is also one of the biggest in terms of areas it covers and monitors. More specifically, this Committee oversees sectors such as agriculture, industry, telecommunications, and

territory regulation, trade and environmental protection, as well as issues of the United Nations sustainable development agenda and implementation of commitments stemming from it. Within its areas of responsibility, the Committee examines draft laws, draft decisions and other issues presented to the Parliament, conducts studies on the effectiveness of laws in force, follows the implementation of laws and oversees the activity of ministries and other central bodies, proposes taking relevant measures to the Parliament or the Council of Ministers, including proposing draft laws, draft statements, or draft resolutions for approval in the Parliament. This Committee is composed of 21 members of parliament, including one chair and three deputy chairs.

Committee on Employment, Social Welfare, and Health covers several crucial areas such as labour and employment issues, social issues, social security, family policies, health. Within its areas of responsibility the Committee examines draft laws, draft decisions and other issues presented to the Parliament, conducts studies on the effectiveness of laws in force, follows the implementation of laws and oversees the activity of ministries and other central bodies, proposes

taking relevant measures to the Parliament or the Council of Ministers, as including proposing draft laws, draft statements, or draft resolutions for approval in the Parliament. This Committee is composed of 21 members of parliament, including one chair and three deputy chairs.

Committee on Foreign Policy monitors international relations and cooperation in the bilateral and multilateral commitments, as well as the implementation of international agreements and regional integration agendas. Within its areas of responsibility the Committee examines draft laws, draft decisions and other issues presented to the Parliament, conducts studies on the effectiveness of laws in force, follows the implementation of laws and oversees the activity of ministries and other central bodies, proposes taking relevant measures to the Parliament or the Council of Ministers, including proposing draft laws, draft statements, or draft resolutions for approval in the Parliament. This Committee is composed of 17 members of parliament, including one chair and two deputy chairs.

Committee on European Integration oversees issues related to European integration agenda, including approximation of legislation with the European Union acquis, oversight of implementation of commitments stemming from the Stabilisation and Association Agreement, oversight of the European Union's financial assistance to Albania, as well as monitoring membership negotiations with the European Union. Within its areas of responsibility the Committee examines draft laws, draft decisions and other issues presented to the Parliament, conducts studies on the effectiveness of laws in force, follows the implementation of laws and oversees the activity of ministries and other central bodies, proposes taking relevant measures to the Parliament or the Council of Ministers, including proposing draft laws, draft statements, or draft resolutions for approval in the Parliament. This Committee is composed of 17 members of parliament, including one chair and two deputy chairs.

Result of survey in Albania



Key points:

- ▶ High level of support for all initiatives related to CRM
- ▶ Knowledge on CRM to be further improved
- ▶ CRM could be a very effective instrument for boosting trade and economic integration in the region
- ▶ Strengthening agriculture sectors and their integration need to be a priority
- ▶ Very positive effect expected on tourism through an integrated offer
- ▶ Some concerns expressed on free movement of labour across the economies due to existing shortages
- ▶ Low awareness and involvement in legislative acts related to CRM
- ▶ Capacity building programmes would be appreciated, including exchanges and learning from good practices

Interviews with MPs from Albania demonstrate a general high level of support for CRM. This falls under the general attitude that Albanian politicians have on integration agendas, manifesting interest, and willingness to engage. However, regarding awareness and familiarity with the CRM specifically, they show relatively low level of information. Apart from one MP, who has been involved previously in regional agendas from an executive position, the other interviewees expressed little or no knowledge regarding CRM. Once they got brief information on the areas covered by CRM, they were able to express their reflections, as follows.

Albanian MPs show strong conviction that the CRM would increase regional cooperation and will provide additional boost to economic growth. Integration of regional markets, under the Internal Market model, is seen as a very positive step not just for regional cooperation but also for European integration. In this context, they see CRM as a regional trade area with opportunities to increase exchanges and attract joint substantial investments. One of the main concerns of Albanian MPs is the lack of financial coverage for regional projects. Some of them complain on the lack of focus of EU funding when it comes to regional approach, claiming that there is too much attention to civil society organisations (as an example used by two of them) rather than regional structural projects. They ask for a more inclusive approach of political representatives when designing projects at regional level in order to better inform them and the public.

More specifically on agriculture, Albanian MPs consider the sector very important, and they support creation of a relevant single market. Although a few of them expressed concerns regarding implementation of such endeavour (using the CEFTA example, which according to

their opinion has not been completed yet), they advocate for a practical approach in order to tackle all non-tariff barriers between economies of the region. Learning from the EU approach and adopting a similar strategy for the region could be a valuable solution. However, a strong political support should be ensured by all regional executives. They also express their willingness to be engaged in a discussion at regional level with other parliamentary committees in this regard.

Another sector that would be important for Albanian economy is tourism. MPs are quite positive and optimistic regarding the potential of tourism and think that cooperation in this sector could bring benefits for the region as a whole. In this regard, they discussed the potential for regional projects and joint tourism offers, which the CRM could help with.

MPs are not much aware of SEPA and the Western Balkans Agreement on Social Insurance (only one had information on the latter). However, both are seen as useful in principle and as preparatory stages for integrating into the EU market. On the other hand, most of them were very eager to discuss mutual recognition of professional qualifications. Opinions were quite diverse but mostly falling into two groups. The first group of MPs would consider this component as an important pillar of regional integration and a necessity on the path towards EU membership. They advocate for adopting a more pro-active attitude towards implementation of such agenda. However, another group of MPs expressed concerns regarding the impact this might have on new emigration flows. They claimed that Albania is already undergoing a trend of citizens leaving towards EU and the UK. Their fear is that if qualification recognition and mobility of workers are fully implemented, more Albanian citizens might prefer to move to other economies in the region, damaging the Albanian

economy. Although they recognise the benefits of free movement of labour and services in principle, the current situation of labour market in Albania requires a more cautious approach, in their opinion.

On the other hand, support for access to study is strongly displayed. All interviewed MPs believe that especially exchange programmes, under the example of Erasmus programme, would play a crucial role in bringing the economies together and reducing differences. Reconciliation would be the most likely outcome and they believe that cultural integration could help considerably to also improve cooperation at political level. Albanian MPs suggest allocating adequate resources and attention to this component. In addition, free travel of citizens with ID cards is also supported. When asked about free movement of third-party citizens within the Western Balkans, Albanian MPs do not have strong opinions on the topic and seem quite positive on this as well.

On digital agenda, Albanian MPs view the sector as much interlinked with youth and economic development. They claim to have little knowledge on this area and would be eager to participate and contribute more to developing policies at regional level. Joint actions in this area, especially for strengthening capacities and skills, would be appreciated. In particular, public administration could benefit in this direction, although they consider Albania quite advanced in this area (especially in using e-services).

Albanian MPs have little knowledge of circular economy and green agenda, though they support

regional approach in various sectors, in principle. A key sector mentioned is infrastructure, which should be integrated in regional agendas, to help with boosting trade, economic exchanges, and tourism. Security is not seen as a feasible option to be included in this type of cooperation, since they seem to consider the EU and NATO as the main 'security providers' for the region.

Some of the interviewed MPs could recall scrutinising legislative acts related to CRM areas, though they were not able to provide many details. In a few cases, they would confuse between different areas and initiatives. In terms of receiving information regarding regional initiatives, including CRM, they stated that hearings with ministers in parliamentary committees are usually a good source of information. However, their familiarity with CRM initiatives remains relatively low.

They do not see parliamentary committees across the region being involved in the CRM efforts at present. In this regard, they think it would be a good idea to establish a common platform. This would help them to get more information and give contribution to facilitate legislative initiatives through their committees. It would also help to learn from other experiences and improve the work of parliament. When discussing CRM capacity building formats, most would prefer workshop sessions with a very practical approach. In addition, study visits and exchanges with other committees were mentioned.

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Map of parliamentary committees in Bosnia and Herzegovina

The Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina consists of two Chambers: the House of Peoples and the House of Representatives. The House of Peoples has 15 members and 3 standing committees; the House of Representatives has 42 members and 7 standing committees; and both Houses have 6 common standing committees. All legislative decisions enter into force upon adoption by both Houses.

Standing Committees of House of Peoples are:

1. Constitutional-Legal Committee
2. Committee on Foreign and Trade Policy, Customs, Transportation and Communications
3. Committee on Finance and Budget of the House of Peoples

Standing Committees of the House of Representatives are:

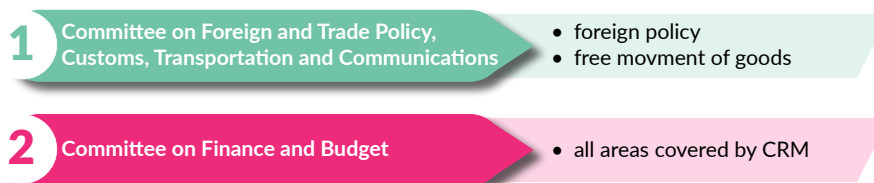
1. Constitutional-Legal Committee
2. Committee on Foreign Affairs
3. Committee on Foreign Trade and Customs
4. Committee on Finance and Budget
5. Committee on Transport and Communications
6. Committee on Gender Equality
7. Committee for the Preparation of Elections of Bosnia and Herzegovina Council of Ministers

Common standing committees of both Houses are:

1. Joint Committee on Defence and Security
2. Joint Committee on oversight of the work of Intelligence and Security Agency
3. Joint Committee on Economic Reforms and Development
4. Joint Committee on European Integration
5. Joint Committee on Administrative Affairs
6. Joint Committee on Human Rights.



House of Peoples has 2 committees involved in the activities included in CRM. Those committees are presented in the chart below.



Committee on Foreign and Trade Policy, Customs, Transportation and Communications, amongst others, follows implementation of foreign policy of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina; considers issues of cooperation of Bosnia and Herzegovina with the United Nations and international community; considers issues of inter-parliamentary cooperation with the relevant parliamentary committees of other economies; considers issues of cooperation with the Council of Europe, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, OSCE and other international organisations; considers the activities of permanent or temporary delegations of the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina in inter-parliamentary institutions; discusses ratification of international treaties, agreements and conventions; etc.

Committee on Finance and Budget considers issues related to: the Central Bank of Bosnia and Herzegovina; banking, except banking

policy; external debt; financing of Bosnia and Herzegovina institutions; functioning of financial institutions at the level of Bosnia and Herzegovina; regulations in the field of finance and budget; fiscal and credit policy; execution and oversight over the execution of the budget of Bosnia and Herzegovina; considering decisions on borrowing, debt rescheduling and other financial obligations of Bosnia and Herzegovina; reports of the Audit Office, monitors implementation of recommendations from the audit report and, in cooperation with the Joint Committee on Administrative Affairs, takes necessary measures to implement recommendations made by the audit report; competencies of the Commission determined by the Law on Audit of Institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina; inter-parliamentary cooperation with similar committees of parliaments of other economies. The Committee also considers other issues in the field of finance and budget in accordance with the Rules of Procedure.

House of Representatives has five standing committees involved in the scope of CRM:

Committee on Foreign Affairs monitors implementation of foreign policy by the Bosnia and Herzegovina Presidency and the Bosnia and Herzegovina Council of Ministers; considers Bosnia and Herzegovina co-operation with the United Nations and international community; considers inter-parliamentary co-operation with the respective parliamentary committees of

other economies; considers cooperation with the Council of Europe, Inter-parliamentary Union, Central European Initiative, Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe and other international organisations; considers issues related to the work of the institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina competent for foreign affairs and international relations; considers activities

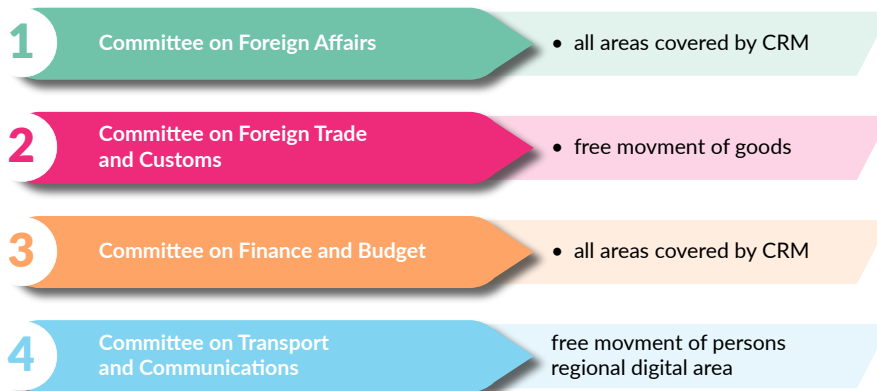
of permanent or temporary delegations of the Bosnia and Herzegovina PA in inter-parliamentary institutions; considers granting and revoking consent to the ratification of international treaties, agreements and conventions.

Committee on Foreign Trade and Customs considers issues related to: foreign trade policy; international trade agreements; customs policy; tariffs, regulations and laws in their field; international obligations of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as relations with international trade institutions.

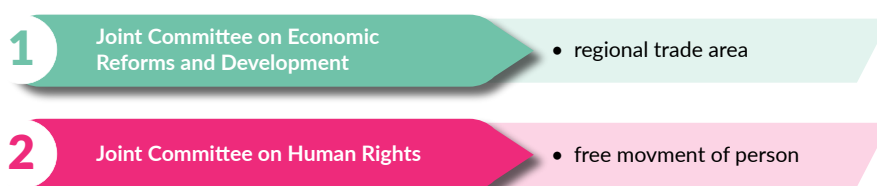
Committee on Finance and Budget considers issues related to: the Central Bank of Bosnia and Herzegovina; banking, except banking policy; external debt; financing of Bosnia and Herzegovina institutions; functioning of financial institutions at the level of Bosnia and Herzegovina; regulations in the field of finance and budget; fiscal and credit policy; execution

and oversight over the execution of the Bosnia and Herzegovina budget; reviewing decisions on borrowing, debt rescheduling and other monetary obligations of Bosnia and Herzegovina; considers reports of the Audit Office of Bosnia and Herzegovina institutions; monitoring the implementation of recommendations from the audit report of the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina and, in cooperation with the Joint Commission for Administrative Affairs, takes the necessary measures to implement recommendations from audit report; inter-parliamentary cooperation with similar committees of parliaments of other economies.

Committee on Transport and Communications considers issues related to: documents; establishment and functioning of joint and international communications; regulation of international and inter-entity traffic; civil aviation; information and communication technologies.



Both Houses have two following joint committees:



Joint Committee on Economic Reforms and Development considers issues related to: economic reforms within the competence of Bosnia and Herzegovina institutions; proposals for reforms or initiatives to amend the law to be submitted to the Commission by: representatives of civil society, i.e. business associations, employers unions, trade unions, regional development agencies, citizens' associations or other non-governmental interest groups; monetary policy; external borrowing policy; relations with international financial institutions; policy and programme of reconstruction and development of Bosnia and Herzegovina; defining economic policy measures; fiscal and credit policy of Bosnia and Herzegovina; banking policy; statistics, measures and standards.

Joint Committee on Human Rights amongst other considers issues related to: citizenship; emigration, immigration, refugees and asylum; rights of aliens; personal data protection and cooperation with the Agency for Personal Data Protection in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Joint Committee on European Integration considers issues related to European integration; monitors implementation of the rights and obligations of Bosnia and Herzegovina arising from international agreements relating to the Council of Europe; coordinates the work of

the committees of Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina in relation to European integration; analyses the results of the implementation of integration strategy for Bosnia and Herzegovina and prepares comprehensive reports; considers plans, programmes, reports and information on the EU Stabilisation and Association Process; monitors implementation of the association strategy, launches initiatives to accelerate implementation of the association strategy within the competence of the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina; monitors harmonisation of domestic legislation with the *acquis*; cooperates with institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina (especially with the Directorate for European Integration), EU institutions and other economies on integration issues; organises presentation of public opinion research on integration issues; collects, stores and systematically presents to the members of the Committee information related to the EU; monitors the use of allocated EU funds; organises public discussion on European integration issues to gather the views of representatives of civil society, NGOs, intellectuals, as well as governmental and non-governmental experts in specific fields; performs other tasks related to European issues.

Results of the survey in Bosnia and Herzegovina



Key points:

- ▶ Support for most of initiatives related to CRM
- ▶ Knowledge on CRM to be further improved
- ▶ Impact assessments for different initiatives to be conducted
- ▶ Low awareness and involvement in legislative acts related to CRM
- ▶ Joint parliamentary committees most appropriate channel of communication and exchange of experiences
- ▶ Need to further increase awareness



- ▶ Parliamentary committees have a crucial role in sharing information on CRM
- ▶ Impact assessment of different initiatives may contribute to better understanding of CRM
- ▶ A stronger communication campaign and awareness raising events are needed

Interviews with MPs demonstrate support for CRM. CRM is seen as initiator of deeper regional economic integration and is an important step towards the EU single market. In that aspect, Bosnia and Herzegovina MPs supported most of the initiatives being discussed in the regional framework. This includes:

- ✦ Green Lanes and services available 24/7 at border/boundary crossing points
- ✦ Mutual recognition of professional qualifications
- ✦ CRM for industry (automotive, green & circular economy, agro-food industry, creative industry, metal processing industry, sustainable tourism)
- ✦ Joint effort in attracting foreign investments
- ✦ CRM of services (such as tourism, financial services, postal services, e-commerce)
- ✦ Western Balkans Agreement on Social Insurance
- ✦ Free access to study for students from WB
- ✦ Integration of WB in free roaming zone of EU

While some representatives from the region have certain concerns regarding the establishment of

single market for agricultural products, Bosnia and Herzegovina MPs expressed full support to this initiative.

The MPs have different views on cooperation at the political level (parliamentary committees) across the region on joint efforts to create CRM. While some MPs assess cooperation as good, some MPs are of the opinion that there is no sufficient political readiness to create CRM. They all see room for further improvement of cooperation.

At the moment, when the interviews for this assessment were conducted, the interviewed MPs were not involved in scrutinising legislative acts related to any of CRM measures.

They have expressed an interest to participate in the areas included in CRM; one MP expressed specific interest to participate in discussion on free access to study.

MPs see parliamentary committees across the region having crucial role in sharing information on CRM amongst the MPs in the region. They are also of the opinion that impact assessment of different initiatives could contribute to better understanding of CRM.

A stronger communication campaign and awareness raising events are very much needed in understanding CRM.

KOSOVO*

Map of parliamentary committees in Kosovo*

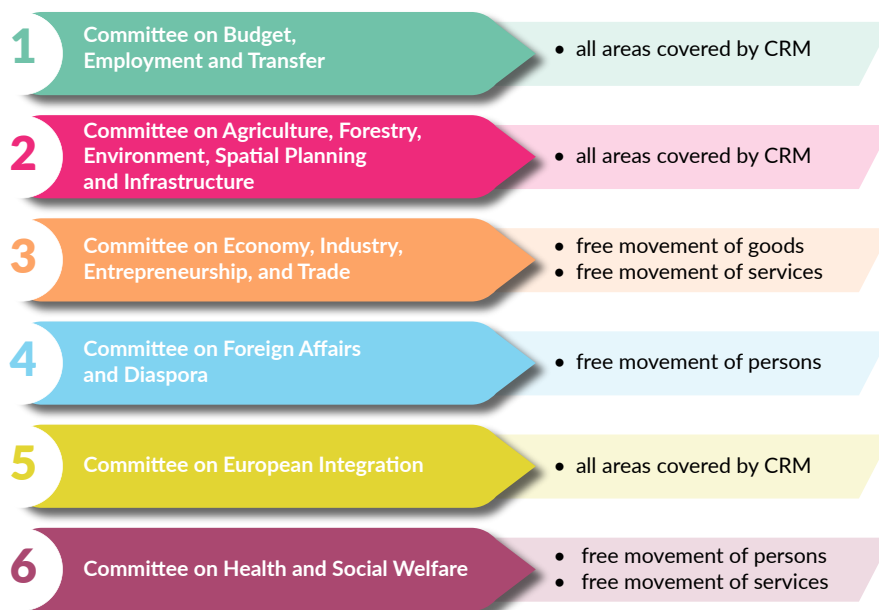
Kosovo* Parliament is composed of 120 members and 14 Committees. The composition and areas covered by the committees reflect political situation and recurrent issues in Kosovo*. In addition to permanent committees, the Parliament can have ad-hoc committees on more specific areas. Political parties are all represented in the committees, while chairs are divided according to their political weight in the Parliament. All committees are composed of 11 members, including the committee chair.

The 14 main committees are:

1. Committee on Budget, Employment, and Transfer
2. Committee on Rights and Interests of Communities and Returns
3. Committee on Legislation, Mandates, Immunities, Rules of Procedure of the Parliament, and Oversight of Anti-corruption Agency
4. Committee on European Integration
5. Committee on Foreign Affairs and Diaspora
6. Committee on Education, Science, Technology, Innovation, Culture, and Sports
7. Committee on Economy, Industry, Entrepreneurship, and Trade
8. Committee on Agriculture, Forestry, Environment, Spatial Planning and Infrastructure
9. Committee on Health and Social Welfare
10. Committee on Public Administration, Local Governance, Media, and Rural Development
11. Committee on Security and Defence Affairs
12. Committee on Human Rights, Gender Equality, Victims of Sexual Violence during the War, Missing Persons, and Petitions
13. Committee on Oversight of Public Finances
14. Committee on Oversight of Kosovo* Intelligence Agency



There are six committees that cover areas related to CRM, as represented in the graph below:



Committee on Budget, Employment and Transfer is key for monitoring, discussing, and approving the annual budget proposal. It also reviews draft laws in the field of public finance and finance in general, examines draft laws for ratification of international agreements and entering into financial obligations. In addition, the Committee reviews draft laws, and proposed amendments, in terms of their budgetary impact, within the framework of its responsibilities as a permanent committee and makes recommendations to the relevant functional committee and the Parliament. As other committees, it has the right to propose and elaborate draft laws. The Committee oversees and reviews annual reports of independent institutions/bodies, which report to the Parliament. Last but not least, this Committee oversees the implementation of public policies and legislation in the field of public finance management, accounting and financial reporting standards, public debt, public procurement, macroeconomic and fiscal policies, as well as state aid. Oversight of budget policies in the execution of salaries, social and pension schemes, in accordance with the legislation in

force is another task of this committee. This includes issues related to the implementation of employment policies/strategies, job opening and professional training. Commitments to the provision of social welfare, including the provision and social protection of war invalids, families of fallen soldiers, work invalids, political prisoners, and all categories of those unable to work, as well as all other categories of social schemes, pensions, etc. are also part of its oversight mandate.

Committee on Agriculture, Forestry, Environment, Spatial Planning, and Infrastructure monitors commitments of the general strategy for development in the areas it covers. It reviews the level of implementation of the Government programme in the field of agriculture, food safety, forestry, rural development, infrastructure, spatial planning, and environment. It also reviews legislation and undertakes legislative initiatives. In addition, the Committee reviews the draft budget and the budget of the relevant ministry and recommends to the Committee on Budget and Transfers its review and approval in the Parliament, including

amendments. The Committee oversees law implementation in the relevant areas.

Committee on Economy, Industry, Entrepreneurship and Trade is responsible for reviewing draft laws within its scope of work. It monitors the general strategy regarding development of economic activities between Kosovo* and other economies by making recommendations to the Parliament and corresponding ministry. Its mission also includes creating legal infrastructure and a safe environment for investments, commercial agreements and concessions in energy and mineral resources in order to develop these economic areas. It is committed to determine and follow up the implementation of general policies in the field of economy, trade, industry, energy, information technology and other fields within its responsibilities. In addition, it monitors implementation of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement - SAA, according to the responsibilities of the ministries and other departments overseen by the Committee. The Committee considers the draft budget and reviews the budget of the line ministry and independent agencies and recommends to the Committee on Budget to have it reviewed and adopted in the Parliament, including amendments. Its oversight mandate also includes implementation of laws within its scope of work. Last but not least, this Committee monitors the work of independent agencies and regulators established by the Parliament as well as considers candidates for boards, and reviews the performance of public enterprises.

Committee on Foreign Affairs and Diaspora builds cooperation with other parliaments and promotes Parliament's membership in regional and international parliamentary organisations. It has an important role in ratification of international treaties and agreements. The Committee follows up the negotiations led by the Government for

its participation in the new treaties and launches the debate on their ratification. It also oversees the implementation of laws related to foreign affairs, Diaspora, and diplomatic immunities, and monitors Government's actions in the area of foreign policy. The Committee considers draft laws proposed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Diaspora. Another competence of the Committee is considering the draft budget and it revises the budget of the corresponding Ministry, and recommends to the Committee on Budget its consideration and adoption by the Parliament, including the amendments.

Committee on European Integration is a permanent one and, within its scope and responsibilities, examines and oversees the process of harmonising any law approved in the Parliament with the legislation of the European Union. According to Article 69 of the Regulation of the Parliament of Kosovo*, the Committee on European Integration is one of the four main parliamentary committees, as well as the main actor in the Parliament of Kosovo* for issues of integration into the European Union. The Committee is involved in the legislative process, where it must review all draft laws and amendments processed in the Parliament from the point of view of approximation and harmonisation of legislation with the EU acquis. The Committee on European Integration oversees Government's activities related to development of relations between Kosovo* and the EU, implementation of SAA, namely implementation of the economy-level Programme for the Implementation of SAA. It also oversees how findings from the European Commission's Annual Report are being addresses, implementation of the European Reforms Agenda, as well as the priorities of the Government regarding European integration process of Kosovo*. In the framework of parliamentary diplomacy, the Committee cooperates and coordinates with EU institutions

and their offices in Kosovo*, cooperates and exchanges best practices with EU members and with participants in the Stabilisation and Association Process. It also participates in regional and international organisations and initiatives.

Committee on Health and Social Welfare

is engaged in determining and following up policies for development and efficient functioning of health care and social welfare. The Committee is involved in overseeing the general strategy for health protection, ensuring a satisfactory welfare in Kosovo*, including security and social protection, social protection of war invalids, families of fallen

soldiers, work invalids, political prisoners and their families, all categories of those who are not capable of working, and developing an effective pension system for all categories. The Committee is also involved in reviewing the Government programme, the manner and level of its implementation in the field of health care and social welfare, and makes relevant recommendations to the Parliament. Finally, the Committee reviews the draft budget and the budget of the relevant ministry, recommending to the Committee on Budget and Transfer to review and adopt it at the Parliament, including amendments. The Committee oversees law implementation in the covered areas.

Results of the survey in Kosovo*



Key points:

- ▶ Limited information and very low awareness regarding CRM
- ▶ Trade and investment would be most expected benefits
- ▶ Agriculture sector as a priority and in need of support (for exports)
- ▶ Digitalisation and start-ups should be the focus of regional projects
- ▶ The biggest concern of MPs is unemployment, hence CRM should aim at tackling obstacles and supporting sectors that increase employment
- ▶ Regional workshops with very practical approach and exchange of experiences would be welcome
- ▶ A series of regional policy papers with comparative take on specific issues regarding the CRM would be very useful for MPs

MPs of Kosovo* show a variety of opinions regarding regional integration in general and the CRM more specifically. First, it appears that they have almost no information on the latter. When explained the CRM areas, they show positive feedback and support for sector integration and creation of a common/single market. They claim that the idea of CRM would certainly boost economy of the region and would improve

cooperation and integration with the EU and global markets. However, they are concerned about bilateral issues and disputes in the region, and how these could be overcome for ensuring implementation of such initiatives.

Kosovo* MPs perceive the CRM as mainly related to trade and investments. Economies of the region need to collaborate and create synergies aiming at strategic regional investments. In this

area there is not much need for support, rather than for awareness and will. On the other hand, two important sectors where they see a big need for support even under the CRM concept are agriculture and digitalisation. They advocate strongly for inclusion of agriculture sector in any regional project/plans for integration. One of their key points is related to support for improving standards and helping with exports. If CRM could help integrating this sector in the region, then the competitive advantage and benefits of working together would become a driving force for establishing an actual single market. On the other hand, digitalisation is seen as linked closely with economic integration. MPs state that Kosovo* has become an interesting hub for start-ups in this area but its market is small, and support is not sufficient. Access to internet should also be a priority. Therefore, CRM should consider this sector as one of the priorities and provide strategic support at the regional level. In their opinion, digital agendas can become an area where the Western Balkans can have potential of competing at global level, if cooperation is in place.

MPs have little or no knowledge regarding social insurance initiatives at regional level. They claim that when it comes to this area and/or employment there is lack of information and often workers fall into predatory schemes which exploit them. There is a need to work more and better on protecting workers in this respect. Mutual recognition of qualifications is appreciated although they fear that some sectors will suffer even more from shortage of labour force. The only regional proposals that MPs mentioned are those related to recognition of pensions. Kosovo* MPs see employment as top priority. Therefore, they see the benefits of CRM linked to an increase in employment and reduction of poverty. Support for industries and

sectors that might help in this direction should be kept into consideration when drafting projects at regional level.

Kosovo* MPs support free travel of citizens with their ID cards and believe that visiting each other's economies should be supported and incentivised, especially for youth. In addition, Kosovo* MPs do not express any concern or opposition towards third party citizens being able to move freely in Kosovo*. They see benefits for their economy overall, especially if they are willing to invest in domestic sectors. Some of the sectors would benefit from labour force and know-how, based also on the experience of diaspora coming back to invest and start businesses in Kosovo*.

Security is a major concern for Kosovo* MPs and they hope that regional initiatives would improve this area. Integrating economies might facilitate a common understanding, especially in the unstable relations between Kosovo* and Serbia, towards a more effective dialogue. However, in this regard, MPs view the role of international community as even more important than regional initiatives.

MPs do not specify cases of legislative acts related to CRM measures but they claim to be involved in their committees for pushing forward any project or agenda that benefits their economy. They admit having a very low level of familiarity with CRM and they suggest that the government is much more involved and has more information in this respect. Exchanges with parliamentary committees from the region are considered very useful and positive experience, based also on the information disseminated. There have been cases when MPs have proposed new legislative acts in economic areas based on learning from other parliaments in the region. This is considered a good practice and should be encouraged under the CRM initiatives.

In relation to capacities for engaging effectively with the CRM activities, MPs require appropriate assistance and support. Although they have technical staff in the parliament that provide information and analytical work, they perceive that their level of understanding is still quite low and therefore external help would be useful. Practical workshops would be an interesting option, based on specific topics and not general areas. Another proposal coming from Kosovo* MPs is the organisation and support of a series of regional policy papers on specific topics related to regional integration and CRM. They find this very useful. Being able to read all the necessary information and assessment on what their economy is doing, what other economies are

doing and what they all should be doing under the CRM initiatives in a condensed document could provide a much more helpful and practical roadmap to addressing many of the challenges faced.

In the case of Kosovo*, awareness on CRM seems particularly low and MPs are more oriented towards practical aspects of the sectors and areas covered by it. There is a need to provide substantial information and strengthen capacities for understanding benefits and implications of such regional approaches and initiatives. Exchange of experiences and study visits have been requested by a majority of interviewed participants.

MONTENEGRO

Map of parliamentary committees in Montenegro

1. The work of Montenegrin Parliament is organised through the following standing committees:
2. Administrative Committee
3. Constitutional Committee
4. Legislative Committee
5. Committee on Political System, Judiciary and Administration
6. Security and Defence Committee
7. Committee on International Relations and Emigrants
8. Committee on European Integration
9. Committee on Economy, Finance and Budget
10. Committee on Human Rights and Freedoms
11. Gender Equality Committee
12. Committee on Education, Science, Culture and Sports
13. Committee on Tourism, Agriculture, Ecology and Spatial Planning
14. Committee on Health, Labour and Social Welfare
15. Anti-corruption Committee
16. Committee for Monitoring and Control of Privatisation Procedures
17. Women's MP Group.



The Parliament of Montenegro has six committees involved in the activities included in CRM. Those committees are presented in the chart below.



Committee on International Relations and Emigrants has the following duties: considers foreign policy and international relations within the competence of the Parliament; considers draft laws in the field of foreign policy, international relations and the diaspora (emigrants) and laws on ratification of international agreements; proposes platforms for talks with foreign delegations and considers reports on completed visits, participation in international gatherings and study visits within the competence of the Parliament; adopts the annual programme and quarterly detailed programmes of international cooperation; cooperates and exchanges experiences with relevant working bodies in other parliaments and international institutions, establishing joint bodies, friendship groups, taking joint actions, harmonising positions on issues of common interest; gives an opinion on the appointment and recall of candidates for ambassadors and heads of other diplomatic missions of Montenegro abroad; considers issues related to the status of emigrants from

Montenegro in other economies and proposes measures for exercise, improvement and protection of their rights; makes contacts and cooperates with organisations of emigrants from Montenegro abroad.

Within its competence, the Committee monitors and evaluates the compliance of Montenegrin laws with the *acquis* and, based on government reports, monitors and evaluates application of laws, especially those arising from the process of accession to the EU.

Committee on Economy, Finance and Budget is responsible for considering proposals for laws, other regulations and general acts and other issues related to: development and strategy of economic development of Montenegro; conditions for the functioning of market and market competition; business, entrepreneurship and investment; natural resources, energy, mining, industry, maritime affairs, transport and trade; budgetary issues; financial rights and obligations of Montenegro; taxes and other

charges; customs; banks; securities; loans, public loans and borrowing of Montenegro; insurance of property and persons; lottery games; property and obligation relations.

Within its competences, the Committee monitors and assesses harmonisation of the laws of Montenegro with the EU acquis, and, based on the Government reports, monitors and assess the implementation of adopted laws, especially those which establish obligations complaint with the EU acquis.

Committee on Education, Science, Culture and Sports considers draft laws, regulations and general acts and other issues related to: preschool, primary, special and secondary education, higher and high education; science and scientific research; culture; art; technical culture; international scientific, educational, cultural and technical cooperation; protection of scientific, cultural, artistic and historical values; sports and physical culture.

Within its competence, the Committee monitors and evaluates the compliance of Montenegrin laws with the acquis and, based on government reports, monitors and evaluates application of laws, especially those arising from the process of accession to the EU.

Committee on Tourism, Agriculture, Ecology and Spatial Planning considers draft laws, other regulations and general acts and other issues related to: tourism development; tourism, hospitality industry and related activities; agriculture; forestry; water management; fisheries; rural development; hunting; plant protection; animal health and other issues in the field of tourism and agriculture; protection and improvement of the environment, nature

and natural resources; national parks; protection against hazardous and harmful substances; protection from other sources of environmental endangerment; spatial planning and urban planning; housing; construction; use of land for construction, as well as other issues in the field of ecology and spatial planning.

Within its competence, the Committee monitors and evaluates the compliance of Montenegrin laws with the acquis and, based on government reports, monitors and evaluates application of laws, especially those arising from the process of accession to the EU.

Committee on Health, Labour and Social Welfare considers draft laws, other regulations and general acts and other issues related to: health care and health insurance; establishment and organisation of health institutions; labour; employment; safety at work; protection of disabled persons, mothers and children; pension and disability insurance; social protection and all forms of social welfare; marriage and family.

In addition, the Committee, within its competence, monitors and evaluates the compliance of Montenegrin law with the acquis and, based on government reports, monitors and evaluates application of laws, especially those arising from the process of accession to the EU.

Committee on European Integration monitors EU accession negotiations of Montenegro; monitors and assesses the course of negotiations and issues opinions and guidelines, on behalf of the Parliament, on prepared negotiating positions; considers information on the negotiation process, and considers and provides opinions on the issues arising in the negotiations; considers and assess the performance of the negotiation team.

Results of the survey in Montenegro



Key points:

- ▶ All initiatives in the framework of CRM should be closely related to the process of EU integration and should lead to the integration in the EU's internal market
- ▶ Awareness on CRM to be further raised
- ▶ Impact assessment on different initiatives should be elaborated in detail and policymakers to be briefed on possible implications and consequences of different interventions
- ▶ In the case of negative effects of certain measures, schemes to remedy the situation should be developed
- ▶ Certain level of concern exists regarding the free movement of agricultural and food products and mutual recognition of diplomas
- ▶ The role of Committee on EI should be expanded

The interviewed MPs see Berlin Process as a crucial initiative in the accession negotiations with the EU and regional cooperation. The Process contributes to the improvement of economic cooperation and mutual reconciliation amongst WB economies and should have a key role in the future.

MPs have a certain level of understanding of CRM and its Action Plan. It is mostly understood as an initiative for free movement in different areas. However, MPs lack detailed information and are not aware of several aspects of CRM.

Montenegrin MPs raised their concerns on the future of their economic development and expressed their willingness to support initiatives that may accelerate economic integration.

They hold a positive attitude towards different initiatives but also underline the lack of proper impact assessment and justification. In other words, MPs are of the opinion that each initiative should be accompanied by an assessment of implications the intervention would have on specific groups of people, businesses, and/or the environment. Impact assessment should be

prepared for each economy and initiative before decisions are taken.

Some MPs expressed their concern about free trade of agricultural and food products and are of the opinion that further integration of WB economies might slow down the process of integration of Montenegrin food sector in the EU single market. Representatives underlined that Montenegro is largely aligned with the EU acquis in chapter 12 Food safety, veterinary and phytosanitary policy. Import of agricultural goods from some WB economies might jeopardise the status of exporting economy to the EU market. MPs are of opinion that concerns of food sector should be examined and duly addressed.

Point of concern is also recognition of professional qualifications amongst WB economies. It was mentioned that the region is faced with 'inflation of universities' and several of those might be of questionable quality. MPs do not oppose recognition of professional qualifications as long as it is happening under the standards similar to those in the EU. MPs provide unvocal support to the increased mobility of students with equal access to study.

As far as labour is concerned Montenegro is facing two different trends, outflow of labour force (employees in the tourism sector mostly emigrate to Croatia and Slovenia), and inflow of employees mostly from Asia. Quite often administrative burdens are a challenge to employers. The movement of workers is a necessity that should not be burdened by administrative barriers. There is a need to keep this process in the framework of negotiating chapter 2 Free movement of workers.

Some MPs stated that the process of integration into the EU, the Berlin Process, and Open Balkan do not have a clear perspective and several initiatives are not properly justified and explained. That leaves room for misinterpretation and many discussions stay in the domain of political talks and are not focused on concrete topics.

Development of CRM and full implementation of its Action Plan require an increased level of information and awareness of MPs but also other relevant stakeholders. In that respect, some

MPs are of the opinion that the role of COSAP should be further strengthened and expressed readiness to have an active role. Some MPs also proposed to organise a parliamentary forum in the framework of Cetinje Parliamentary Forum.

Bearing in mind limited administrative capacities, management of several initiatives is a challenge, especially for small economies. Administration of WB economies should benefit from continues technical support in the future with the aim of further strengthening of administrative capacities.

It was also mentioned that the EI Committee in Montenegro was established before different regional initiatives were launched. In that aspect the role of EI Committee in Montenegrin Parliament should be examined. Committee on EI is a natural environment for discussion on regional initiatives including CRM and many future awareness raising actions might be implemented with the support of the EI Committee.

NORTH MACEDONIA

Map of parliamentary committees in North Macedonia

North Macedonia Parliament is composed of 120 members and 21 Committees. The composition and areas covered by the committees reflect the political situation and recurrent issues in North Macedonia. In addition to permanent committees, the Parliament can have ad-hoc committees on more specific areas

or inquiry committees. Political parties are all represented in the committees and only 2 MPs are not members of a political group. Chairs are divided according to their political weight in the Parliament. Committees are usually composed of 14 members, including a chair and a deputy chair.

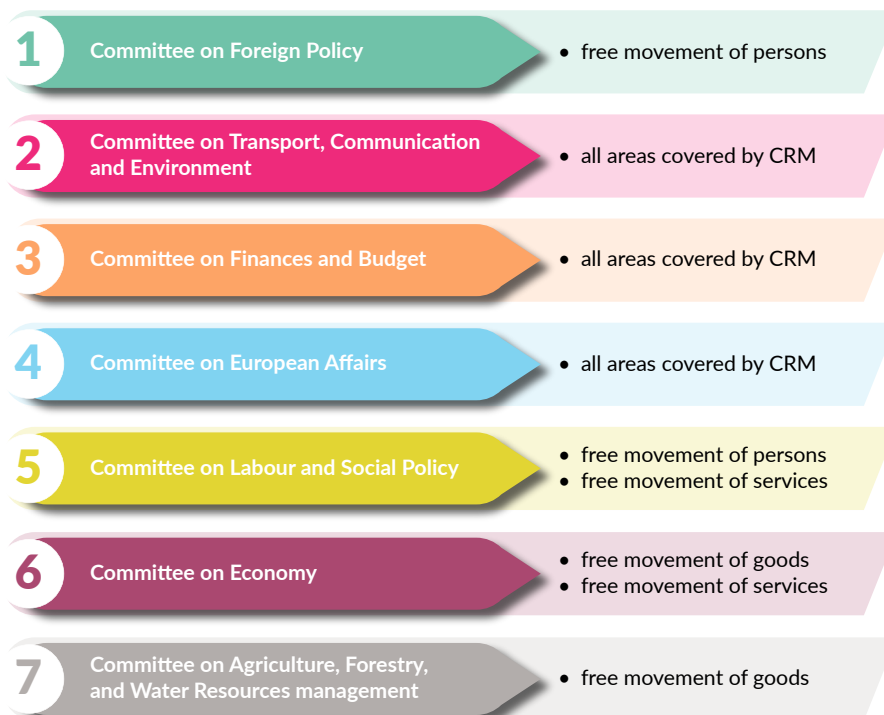
Main parliamentary committees

1. Inter-community Relations Committee
2. Committee on Constitutional Issues
3. Committee on oversight of the implementation of measures for interception of communications
4. Committee on Foreign Policy
5. Committee for overseeing the work of security agency and intelligence agency
6. Committee on Health Care
7. Committee on rules of procedure, and mandatory-immunity issues
8. Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men
9. Committee on Transport, Communications, and Environment
10. Committee on Political System and Inter-ethnic Relations
11. Committee on Finances and Budget
12. Committee on Local Self-government
13. Committee on Culture
14. Legislative Committee
15. Committee on European Affairs
16. Committee on Labour and Social Policy
17. Committee on Defence and Security
18. Committee on Economy
19. Committee on Education, Science, and Sport



20. Committee on Election and Appointment Issues

21. Committee on Agriculture, Forestry, and Water Resources Management



Committee on Foreign Policy is in charge of monitoring external affairs. This Committee monitors international relations and cooperation in bilateral and multilateral commitments, as well as implementation of international agreements and regional integration agendas. The Committee examines draft laws, draft decisions and other issues presented to the Parliament, follows the implementation of laws, and oversees the activity of ministries and other central bodies, proposing taking relevant measures to the Parliament or the Council of Ministers, including proposing draft laws, draft statements, or draft resolutions for approval. This Committee is composed of 14 members of Parliament, including one chair and two deputy chairs.

Committee on Transport, Communications, and Environment oversees commitments of strategies for development in the areas it covers. It reviews the level of implementation of the

Government programme in the field of transport, communication, and environment. It also reviews legislation and undertakes legislative initiatives. In addition, the Committee reviews the draft budget and the budget of the relevant ministry and recommends to the Committee on Finances and Budget its review and approval in the Parliament, including amendments. The committee oversees law implementation in the relevant areas.

Committee on Finances and Budget oversees and approves decisions in the areas related to budget, external debt, monetary policy, financing of institutions and functioning of financial institutions, regulations in the field of finance and budget, fiscal and credit policy, the execution, and oversight over the execution of the budget, etc. It also monitors implementation of recommendations from the audit report and, in cooperation with other committees,

takes necessary measures to implement recommendation made by the audit report.

Committee on European Affairs examines and monitors the process of harmonising any law approved with the legislation of the European Union. The Committee is involved in the legislative process, where it must review all draft laws and amendments processed from the point of view of approximation and harmonisation of legislation with the EU acquis. The Committee on European Affairs oversees Government's activities related to development of relations between North Macedonia and the EU, implementation of SAA, addressing the findings from the European Commission's Annual Report, implementation of the European Reforms Agenda, as well as the priorities of the Government of North Macedonia regarding the European integration process. It also participates in regional and international organisations and initiatives.

Committee on Labour and Social Policy is another important committee, covering several crucial areas. More specifically, labour and social issues, social security, and family policies are some of the main sectors. Within its areas of responsibility, the Committee examines draft laws, draft decisions and other issues presented to the Parliament, conducts studies on the effectiveness of laws in force, follows the implementation of laws and oversees the activity of ministries and other central bodies, proposes taking relevant measures to the Parliament or the Government, including proposing draft laws, draft statements, or draft resolutions for approval in the Parliament.

Committee on Economy is responsible for reviewing draft laws within its scope of work. It monitors the general strategy regarding development of economic activities by making recommendations to the Parliament and competent ministry. Its mission also includes creating legal infrastructure and safe environment for investments in order to develop economic areas. It is committed to determine and follow up the implementation of general policies in the field of economy and other fields within its responsibilities. In addition, it monitors implementation of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement according to the responsibilities of the ministries and other departments supervised by the Committee. The Committee considers the draft budget, reviews the budget of line ministry and independent agencies, and recommends to the Committee on Finances and Budget to have it reviewed and adopted in the Parliament, including amendments.

Committee on Agriculture, Forestry, and Water Resources Management oversees commitments of the general strategy for development in the areas it covers. It reviews the level of implementation of the Government programme in the field of agriculture, forestry, rural development, and water management. It also reviews legislation and undertakes legislative initiatives. In addition, the Committee reviews the draft budget, the budget of relevant ministry and recommends to the Committee on Finances and Budget its review and approval in the Parliament, including amendments. The Committee oversees law implementation in the relevant areas.

Results of the survey in North Macedonia



Key points:

- ▶ Strong support for CRM and linked with the Berlin Process
- ▶ CRM instrumental to integration with the EU internal market by preparing economies for standards and competitiveness
- ▶ Joint economic development and integration as key for reconciliation
- ▶ Low level of information regarding specific initiatives of the CRM
- ▶ CRM should consider elements from Cluster 1 of accession negotiations and contribute at regional level
- ▶ Agriculture, trade, digitalisation and infrastructure are considered key sectors
- ▶ Communication and dissemination of information on CRM need to be improved

North Macedonia MPs expressed strong support for CRM. They seem to have very little general information in this area and would refer mostly to the Berlin Process when speaking of regional integration. They see the latter as an important component to be pursued before EU membership, as a preparatory stage. Most of the information they get on regional matters is case by case and based on individual interest. They receive help and support from their technical staff but there is no adequate structure or platform where they can get the information in a more organised and frequent manner.

MPs identify regional integration and CRM with economic development and reconciliation. They think positively about any effort at regional level to boost cooperation, since this would be the most effective way to integrate the region in the EU. In this context, CRM is seen as an instrument that could help economic growth and put pressure on each economy to improve market standards and competitiveness, preparing the ground for integration into the EU internal market. In addition, CRM is perceived as useful for attracting big and strategic investments in the region by expanding the size of economies through integration in one market.

North Macedonian MPs interviewed do not recall any information on elements such as Green Lanes, SEPA, etc. They claim that they have been exposed very little to CRM and lack knowledge on the areas it covers and how they can contribute to the process. When discussing agriculture, they support the establishment of a single market for agricultural products. However, when thinking of integrating their agriculture sector with the rest of the region, they suggest considering it after a thorough analysis, since each economy has its own approach in place. In principle and in the long term, they see regional integration of agriculture sectors as positive and that it would produce considerable benefits for all economies if planned and implemented adequately.

MPs are much in favour of integration in other sectors such as services, and for agreements such as social insurance or recognition of qualifications. They mentioned the need for stability and reconciliation in the region and integrating sectors would help considerably. Free movement is highly appreciated as a great instrument for ensuring integration. Youth and students exchange is also brought to attention as an area not explored enough in the past. To

make this happen, governments and regional organisations need to establish a structured framework with long-term objectives.

Regional industry is at a poor level, according to North Macedonian MPs, and it would require substantial support. Most strategic sectors should be agri-food industry, energy, and creative industries. They believe that the region has strong potential not explored yet and there should be joint efforts to become a united, hence more competitive, economy in order to cope better with pressures from other markets. A few MPs advocate for a regional approach to the economic model and to work together to slowly phase out from the inward processing sectors to rather build more sustainable industrial activities.

Although not directly related to the topics covered under the assessment for CRM, it is worth mentioning that a few MPs argued strongly regarding the need for working together on Cluster 1 of the accession negotiations. They see the fundamentals as being key to ensuring any sort of regional integration or CRM. Especially the rule of law and public procurement should be a main focus, without which it would be difficult to build a regional market. Hence, they advise to find ways to include these components and this approach into the CRM work. Being a NATO member, North Macedonia seems to worry little about security. MPs appreciate regional initiatives in this area, though they believe that economic integration and a good political understanding amongst respective leaders would be the best way to ensure and improve security.

All MPs state that they have been working on legislative acts involving CRM areas, though they refer mostly to legislation that approximates and transposes the EU acquis. There is a trend

in their discourse to merge regional integration with European integration, claiming that former serves for the purpose of the latter. As mentioned, they showed low level of familiarity with CRM per se, as an initiative. They are aware of general work that the Parliament does in the area of regional economic integration but are not able to recall specific or concrete measures and acts that have been discussed or approved.

When asked about specific areas that they might have more interest in, they name agriculture, trade of goods in general, digitalisation and infrastructure. They would appreciate to receive more information on CRM, its objectives, and any operational aspects that they might be able to contribute to through their legislative activities. They mention a very successful exchange programme with the Swedish Parliament, which has helped to improve the work of North Macedonia Parliament. In this regard, they suggest exchanges, workshops based on best practices, and study visits in relevant counterparts with experience in integration, such as Croatia, Slovenia, etc. Political cooperation initiatives amongst parliaments of the region have been useful (COSAP is mentioned) but they have not been focused on concrete topics. In the future, this approach should be based on specific topics and challenges to be addressed.

Last, communication and dissemination regarding CRM needs to be improved. MPs admit having little knowledge themselves and therefore not in a position to inform the broader public. Although they claim to have very high-level technical staff supporting them in the Parliament, the level of outreach and awareness raising within the Parliament and in society requires more capacities and efforts.

SERBIA

Map of parliamentary committees in Serbia

The work of Serbian Parliament is organised through the committees. Within their individual scopes of work, committees are responsible to: consider draft laws and other acts; monitor the implementation of Government policy; monitor the execution of laws and other acts; consider work plans and reports of competent Ministries and other public authorities, organisations and bodies; consider the Parliament's Annual Work

Plan; issue no-objection to the acts of public authorities, organisations and bodies which will, in accordance with the Law, submit them to the Parliament for its approval; launch initiatives and submit proposals to the Parliament, pursuant to the law and Rules of Procedure; asses initiatives, petitions, complaints and proposals which are within its scope of work; consider other issues within the scope of work of the Parliament.

Serbian Parliament established the following committees:

1. Committee on Constitutional and Legislative Issues
2. Defence and Internal Affairs Committee
3. Foreign Affairs Committee
4. Committee on Judiciary, Public Administration and Local Self-Government
5. Committee on Human and Minority Rights and Gender Equality
6. Committee on the Diaspora and Serbs in the Region
7. Committee on Economy, Regional Development, Trade, Tourism and Energy
8. Committee on Finance, Public Budget and Control of Public Spending
9. Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management Committee
10. Committee on Spatial Planning, Transport, Infrastructure and Telecommunications
11. Committee on Education, Science, Technological Development and Information Society
12. Committee on Kosovo and Metohija
13. Culture and Information Committee
14. Committee on Labour, Social Issues, Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction
15. Health and Family Committee
16. Environmental Protection Committee



17. European Integration Committee
18. Committee on Administrative, Budgetary, Mandate and Immunity Issues
19. Security Services Control Committee



The committees included in CRM in Serbia are presented in the chart below.



Foreign Affairs Committee considers acts and proposals of other general acts, as well as other issues regarding the following: foreign policy; relations with other economies, international organisations and institutions; ratification of international treaties in the area of foreign policy; regulation of the procedure of concluding and enforcing international treaties; protection of the rights and interests of Serbia and its citizens and national legal entities abroad.

Committee on Economy, Regional Development, Trade, Tourism and Energy considers acts and proposals of other general acts and other issues in the following areas: economy and economic development, equal regional development,

business companies and other forms of businesses, business and financial restructuring; entrepreneurship, bankruptcy, investments, standardisation, accreditation; foreign economic relations, international trade agreements, foreign trade, foreign investments, concessions; economic, bilateral and regional co-operation of Serbian institutions with international trade organisations; industry, except the food industry; mining, geological and seismological research; energy sector, oil and natural gas economy; operation of public enterprises in the areas of industry, mining and energy; trade and supply of goods and services, control of services, standards and units of measurement;

use of trademarks and service marks, quality marks and denominations of origin of products; functioning of the market, prevention of monopolistic activities and unfair competition; commodity reserves and consumer protection; establishment and functioning of commodity markets; tourism development planning, zoning plans, protection and use of areas intended for tourism and promotion of tourism; measures and precious metals; privatisation.

Committee on Finance, Public Budget and Control of Public Spending considers acts and proposals of other general acts and other issues in the following areas: system of financing public functions, taxes, duties and other public revenues; public budget and financial plans of compulsory social insurance organisations; Budget Financial Statement, final financial statements of financial plans of compulsory social insurance organisations and audit of the final financial statements; loans, guarantees and lottery; public debt and financial assets of Serbia; public procurement; credit and monetary, banking, foreign-exchange and customs systems; insurance of assets and persons; ownership relations and expropriation; payments and payment operations, securities and money market; prevention of money laundering and combating corruption; accounting and auditing; other issues in the field of finance.

Committee on Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management considers acts and proposals of other general acts and other issues in the following areas: agriculture and the food industry; agricultural cooperatives and rural development; veterinary medicine and plant protection; forestry and water management.

Committee on Spatial Planning, Transport, Infrastructure and Telecommunications considers acts and proposals of other general acts and other issues in the following areas:

railway, road, water and air transport; urbanism and spatial planning, and housing and utility issues-related activities; construction and civil engineering, regulation and use of buildable land and land surveying and land register; postal traffic and telecommunications.

Committee on Education, Science, Technological Development and Information Society considers acts and proposals of other general acts and other issues in the following areas: pre-school, elementary and secondary education; college and university education; schoolchildren's and students' standards of living; scientific research activities; scientific and technological development and innovation policies; nuclear energy research and security of nuclear facilities; production and storage of radioactive materials, except in nuclear power plants; developing an information society and information infrastructure; sports and physical culture, status of the youth and protection of their interests.

Committee on Labour, Social Issues, Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction considers acts and proposals of other general acts and other issues in the following areas: labour relations and rights stemming from labour, occupational health and safety; employment; the right to strike and trade union organisation; social protection system; system of pension and disability insurance, social insurance and protection of insured military personnel; protection of ex-servicemen, disabled military personnel, civilians with disabilities and war victims, members of their families and members of families of conscripted servicemen.

European Integration Committee considers acts and proposals of other general acts and their compliance with the EU acquis and the Council of Europe legislation and issues preliminary

opinion on justification of the abbreviated procedure; considers plans, programmes, reports and information on the EU Stabilisation and Association Process; monitors implementation of Association Strategy, proposes measures and launches initiatives for accelerating the implementation of Association Strategy within

the competences of the Parliament; proposes measures for the establishment of a general, domestic agreement on Serbia's association with the European institutions; develops international co-operation with parliamentary committees of other jurisdictions and parliamentary institutions of the European Union.

Results of the survey in Serbia



Key points:

- ✦ Certain level of understanding of CRM
- ✦ Free movement with ID card and abolition of roaming are the biggest achievements of the process
- ✦ In general, providing support for removal of barriers and creation of common market in different sectors
- ✦ Low level of participation in scrutinising legal acts on different CRM initiatives
- ✦ Highest potential for cooperation: agriculture and food industry, tourism, IT, green industries
- ✦ Need to substantially improve knowledge of MPs on different CRM initiatives
- ✦ Support for mutual recognition of qualifications and free access to study
- ✦ Awareness of CRM to be raised and different workshops, joint committees, discussions, public events to be organised

Interviewed MPs have a certain level of knowledge and understanding of CRM. They are of the opinion that gradual introduction of CRM leads to the removal of barriers to free movement of goods, people, and services and consequently may boost economic development of WB economies. Broadly speaking they connect CRM with the Berlin Process but are not fully informed on the economic aspects of initiatives taken within the Berlin Process.

At a general level, the interviewed MPs support the process of integration of different segments of WB economies. Removal of barriers to free movement of goods, people, and services may contribute to further development of the economy. Integration of the markets in the WB will enhance competitiveness and boost the export of different industries. The sectors

with the highest potential for cooperation are agriculture and food industry, tourism, IT, green industries. Free movement of services can also improve competitiveness of the economy in WB. MPs are aware of small size of individual markets in the WB region and support a joint/coordinated regional approach to attract foreign investment in targeted sectors.

MPs also support free access to study for students from WB region as well as mutual recognition of qualifications. Such approach enables easy access to higher education and the quality jobs for the citizens of WB.

Interviewed MPs support creation of a regional framework which enables citizens to travel freely with ID cards within the region. In addition to the abolition of roaming some MPs see it to be

the most important achievement which brings benefits to all citizens. When it comes to the free movement of third party citizens within WB, additional clarifications are needed to better understand the process and consequences of such approach.

Most MPs have not been involved in scrutinising legislation related to the CRM initiatives and recognise the need to improve awareness of CRM at all levels. This applies to MPs but also to the different interested groups.

In that aspect, they see the need to organise workshops on different CRM initiatives, joint sessions of parliamentary committees,

conferences, public debates, and different events. Some MPs are also of the opinion that preparation of briefing and information materials, and different guides might be useful to better understand CRM and its implications.

It can be concluded that all MPs recognise the need to improve their understanding of CRM as well as implications and consequences of different initiatives in the framework of CRM. There is also a need to implement an awareness campaign with the goal to provide understandable information to different interested groups and wider community on the benefits of CRM approach.



V

Conclusions and Recommendations

Regional economic integration appears to manifest great support amongst the parliaments of the Western Balkans. There is a widespread awareness of the importance of increasing cooperation and sector integration amongst the economies, with the aim of strengthening regional competitiveness. In view of EU membership, regional instruments are seen as useful for also preparing the economies towards the EU market. In general, MPs seem to have clear priorities and ideas on the expectations from regional integration.

However, when referring specifically to the Common Regional Market, a very low level of awareness and information was registered during the interviews. MPs would refer mostly to the Berlin Process but would not be able to provide further elements. Despite of the framework of CRM and several areas it covers, MPs were focused mostly on the following sensitive topics on which they expressed concerns, such as: agriculture, employment and migration. On the other hand, broad support could be identified for all main components of CRM, though manifested very little knowledge and understanding in these areas, and with weak engagement in parliamentary committees work CRM related legislation.

In view of the evident need for strengthening capacities and involvement of MPs in promoting and advancing legislative work on regional integration and CRM more specifically, the following recommendations and actions have been formulated:

Maintain effective communication with Parliaments through stronger communication campaign and awareness raising events in support of adequate understanding of CRM and its potential. These events can strongly contribute to increased transparency and involvement of the parliamentarians in pushing forward CRM implementation.

Preparation of tailor-made needs assessment for the technical staff in order to facilitate the work of pertinent parliamentary committees when scrutinising legal initiatives with CRM relevance.

A tailor-made capacity building programme for MPs and technical staff should be elaborated with the aim of providing necessary information, skills and knowledge regarding the CRM content, its components and their actual work related to it. It is advised that the overall approach of the programme is unified across the economies, with a relatively few elements adapted to the specific characteristics of the selected context.

A series of comparative analyses for the most sensitive sectors and the expected CRM impact in each economy could be organised. These papers/briefs for each economy should aim to provide data based findings and conclusions and aim at promoting and advocating for CRM in each parliament. Regional roundtable discussions based on sector level approach could then be organised based on the paper series, with participation of representatives of the respective committees.

Exchange experiences and study visits should be encouraged and planned, especially in parliaments which have worked on regional integration previously. MPs were very keen on learning from colleagues with such experiences and find it a more useful and hands-on approach.

A specific attention should be paid to promoting joint efforts for investments attraction and export promotion. In the medium and long-term, raising awareness on the importance of the region as one single market and its competitive

advantages would also help further reconciliation and joint growth.

A clear roadmap for main processes under the CRM and its relation to preparations for the EU internal market could be provided to MPs. A few workshops with practical approach and with EU experts could be organised with the aim of bringing MPs on the same page and contributing further to their collaboration through sharing same information and socialising.

Regular update of MPs on CRM through COSAP meetings as a regional parliamentary forum or through joint sessions of parliamentary committees on different CRM initiatives and their implications. This regular update might contribute significantly to better understanding of CRM by parliamentarians.

Relevance of the preparation of impact assessment of CRM measures on specific groups of people, businesses, and/or the environment may be thoroughly assessed by RCC and other organisations tasked with coordination of CRM.

Annexes

- ✦ List of parliamentary committees that scrutinised the mobility agreements within the Common Regional Market (CRM) framework.
- ✦ Guiding Questions for the interviews.



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