

**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING**

**between**

**the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber**

**the Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs**

**and**

**the Western Balkan Six Chamber Investment Forum**

**on mutual cooperation**

The Austrian Federal Economic Chamber (hereinafter “WKÖ”),

the Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs (hereinafter “BMEIA”),

and

the Western Balkan Six Chambers Investment Forum (hereinafter “WB6 CIF”),

hereinafter jointly referred to as the “Sides” or individually as the “Side”,

WHEREAS:

- (1) the WKÖ, based on the Austrian Chamber of Commerce Act, is the official organisation representing the mutual interests of its more than 500,000 members at Austrian national and European levels and provides its members with comprehensive information and services with a global network of about 100 foreign trade centres;
- (2) the BMEIA, as the responsible authority for the strategic alignment of the Austrian Development Cooperation, and the Austrian Development Agency (hereinafter “ADA”), as the operational unit of the Austrian Development Cooperation, together with partner countries, public institutions, civil-society organisations and businesses, seek to ensure that sustainable development works to the benefit of all people in Africa, Asia, South-Eastern and Eastern Europe as well as in the Caribbean. ADA funds projects and programmes currently with a total of EUR 500 million to improve living conditions in developing countries;
- (3) WB6 CIF is the cooperation platform of the Western Balkan Six (hereinafter “WB6”) Chambers of Commerce and represents a business community’s response to political processes in the region, which take place within the Berlin Process. Through its Permanent Secretariat based in Trieste it acts as the key contact, information and development point for implementation of initiatives of the regional business community furthering the creation of a Regional Economic Area and thus giving support to political stability, economic development and regional cooperation in the Western Balkans Region;
- (4) at the margins of the second Western Balkan Summit in Vienna on the 27 August 2015, the WB6 Chambers of Commerce underlined the importance of further developing a close partnership between the WB6 Chambers of Commerce through the associated chamber activities, cooperation and coordinated activities with the aim to create foundation for the sustainable growth of the Western Balkans region in line with the priorities of the Berlin Process. As the Berlin Process brings a new perspective for the Western Balkans region, the WB6 Chambers of Commerce welcomed the focus of the Berlin Process on economic and social issues and aspire to establish a framework for mutual cooperation that will build on strengths of each WB6 Chamber of Commerce with the goal to support developments in the region in line with the European Commission Strategy “A credible enlargement perspective for and enhanced EU engagement with the Western Balkans“ for the Western Balkans and

the Berlin Process, furthering a credible enlargement perspective for an enhanced EU engagement with the Western Balkans;

- (5) the main purpose of this Memorandum of Understanding (hereinafter “MoU”) is to create a framework of mutual cooperation between the Sides through which the Sides can work towards the stated goal and exchange appropriate information and expertise;

have reached the following understanding:

## **I - General Principles of Cooperation**

1. The Sides will cooperate in the area of implementation of the European Commission Strategy “A credible enlargement perspective for and enhanced EU engagement with the Western Balkans” and in light of the European integration process in the Western Balkans.
2. The Sides will seek to explore mutual synergies to strengthen their cooperation. The cooperation between the Sides will reflect complementarity of their activities and programmes.
3. If it is considered convenient, the Sides will take part in or will inform each other of activities that might be beneficial for the other Side.
4. The Sides will cooperate in other activities falling within the framework of their responsibilities whenever the need for cooperation is mutually recognised and a joint decision regarding the cooperation is achieved.
5. The Sides may exchange or develop, within their scope of activities, concrete forms of cooperation in particular in the frame of EU funded projects, or cooperation supported by donor organisations.

## **II - Areas of cooperation**

1. To this effect the Sides will cooperate on economic development of the Western Balkans, creating a better environment for business, with an emphasis on investment, trade and the free movement of goods and services throughout the region.
2. As an initial step the Sides jointly decide to work on the topics in the frame a joint project cooperation:
  - a) developing services for SMEs in the field of digitalisation in order to cope with the primary needs of SMEs in the process of digital transformation,
  - b) developing demand driven practice-oriented vocational educational training programs in order to meet the demands of labour market and private sector in the Western Balkan partners and to enhance the employability, as well as

- c) enabling WB6 CIF and the WB6 chambers to promote clean business and to strengthen their member companies' capacities to strengthen business integrity and prevent corruption, thereby raising their international competitiveness.

### **III - Structure of cooperation**

1. The Sides will jointly develop and conclude a project proposal. The project is intended to establish a multi-annual partnership, entering into effect on 1 April, 2019.
2. WB6 CIF will provide the program management in order to ensure the implementation of the partnership.
3. WKÖ will contribute knowledge and expertise through its in-house capacities and its network.
4. ADA, as implementing agency of the Austrian Development Cooperation, will contribute its development expertise and has the intention to contribute financially for the implementation of the partnership.
5. The set-up of the organizational structure will be further detailed upon mutual written consent of the Sides.

### **IV - Dispute Resolution**

Any dispute related application of this MoU will be resolved by consultations and negotiations between the Sides.

### **V - Effective Date, Revision, Amendments and Termination of MoU**

1. This MoU will be effective from the date of its signature.
2. This MoU may be modified by mutual written consent of the Sides.
3. Either Side may cancel this MoU at any time by written notice to the other Side. In such case the cancellation will take effect one (1) month from the date of receipt of the notice by the other Side.
4. This MoU does not create any legal or financial obligations under national or international law between the Sides.

Signed on 14 January 2019 in Vienna, in three originals, by the Sides' duly authorised representatives.

Dr. Karin Kneissl

Federal Minister for Europe,  
Integration and Foreign Affairs

Marko Čadež

President of the Managing Board  
Western Balkan Six Chamber  
Investment Forum

Dr. Harald Mahrer

President of the Austrian Federal  
Economic Chamber

Mariana Kühnel

Deputy Secretary General of the  
Austrian Federal Economic Chamber