



## Joint Statement

### Conference

#### Labour Migration: Supporting Economic Growth in the Western Balkans

15-16 May 2025 | Budva, Montenegro

1. We, the Ministers and High-Level Representatives, gathered in Budva on 15 and 16 May 2025 at the Conference “Labour Migration: Supporting Economic Growth in the Western Balkans” co-hosted by the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Dialogue of Montenegro and the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Delegation the European Union to Montenegro, welcome the objective of the Conference to build a shared understanding of the economic potential of well-managed labour migration.
2. We consider the existing frameworks, such as the Common Regional Market and the EU Growth Plan for the Western Balkans, to be essential for advancing socio-economic convergence of the region with the European Union. We acknowledge that labour mobility and inclusive labour migration policies are fundamental to the region’s short-, medium-, and long-term economic growth prospects, as part of a comprehensive and adequate policy mix to address the labour market impacts of the demographic transition. In pursuing this agenda, we also aim to build on the principles and achievements of the Skopje Declaration on Sustainable Migration Governance.
3. We recognise the growing significance and need for effective migration management — including in economies of origin, transit, and destination — for socio-economic development, social cohesion, security and stability of the Western Balkans, ensuring full respect for the human rights and social inclusion of migrants and their families.
4. We welcome the Conference as an opportunity to advance alignment with the EU acquis and relevant international labour standards, and to strengthen regional coordination through regular policy dialogues, knowledge exchange, analysis of labour and skills shortages, and the dissemination of good practices.
5. In this context, we underline the importance of mainstreaming labour migration policies into broader economic, social, environmental, development and security strategies, addressing migration management through a co-operative, inclusive and comprehensive approach. This Whole-of-Government, tripartite, and Whole-of-Society approach to labour migration involving all relevant government bodies (e.g., Labour, Interior/Security, Foreign Affairs, Economy, Education, Human Rights and Gender, Statistics, as well as line Ministries in key sectors such as Health, Agriculture, Energy, Tourism, etc.) and social partners, ensures that all actors, including civil society organizations and private sector, play an active role in shaping inclusive and effective migration policies.



6. In addressing comprehensive, sustainable, and solution-oriented approaches to managing labour migration to, from, and within the Western Balkans, we, the Ministers and High-Level Representatives, in collaboration with our partners—the RCC, IOM, and ILO— commit to ensuring that our labour migration policies and practices continue to be aligned with our respective obligations and commitments.
7. We will also work to enhance regional coordination and implementation of comprehensive and effective labour migration policies and action plans on a sectoral basis, taking into account respective economic and developmental strategies and underpinned by national social dialogue and evidence-based policy analysis. This will ensure safe, fair, and rights-based approaches, promoting economic growth while protecting labour migrants.
8. We will promote inclusive, forward-looking, and data-driven policy dialogues at the regional level, focusing on labour mobility and governance, while anchoring these efforts in key regional frameworks such as the Berlin Process, the Common Regional Market, the EU Growth Plan for the Western Balkans, and the Skopje Declaration.
9. We will support and contribute to the production and exchange of relevant comparable data on labour governance, mobility trends, and demand, to ensure informed public policies and discourses, while increasing trust and confidence that labour and migration governance frameworks effectively contribute to the long-term growth of the region and are beneficial for host communities.
10. In addition to improving understanding of labour shortages and imbalances across sectors and occupations, these efforts will lay the groundwork for informed policymaking. They will also promote social dialogue and exchange of good practices to ensure labour migration policies respond effectively to critical challenges and help define targeted measures to attract and retain workers in the region.
11. We also encourage the establishment of regional governance structures in partnership with the RCC, IOM, and ILO, aimed at enhancing coordination, knowledge sharing, streamlining administrative procedures, reducing barriers, and facilitating fair and ethical recruitment. Integrating services such as migrant information, orientation, and support programmes will be essential for enabling migrants to thrive and contribute fully to host communities.
12. We reaffirm our commitment to ensuring the full enjoyment of human, labour, and social rights of labour migrants and their families. We will intensify efforts to combat discrimination, xenophobia, and intolerance, and foster inclusive societies where both host communities and labour migrants can thrive.



13. We will continue to monitor the situation regarding the labour migration and invest efforts to continue working in this regional format to build stronger partnerships, align policies, and develop a forward-looking agenda positioning regular labour migration as a driver of sustainable growth. This will also highlight the role of labour migration in advancing the region's integration into the EU, particularly under the EU Growth Plan, through alignment with ILO standards and EU acquis and addressing key labour market needs.

Budva, Montenegro  
16 May 2025