



Regional  
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SEE → 2030  Mid-term Update  
**Turning**  
Commitment  
into **Change**  
**STRATEGY**

# good. better. regional.

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Turning Commitment into Change

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- *The SEE2030 Strategy Mid-Term Update was endorsed by the Strategy's Monitoring Committee at its meeting held on 5 May 2026, following a two-year consultative process with the SEECP participants. The Update was also endorsed by the SEECP Political Directors through written procedure and accepted by the RCC Board at its meeting held on 14 May 2026.*
  - *The Update will be submitted by the RCC Secretary General to the RCC Annual Meeting for approval and subsequently to the SEECP Summit for endorsement.*
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## Abbreviations

<b>AI</b>	Artificial Intelligence
<b>BDTD WB</b>	Biodiversity Task Force of the Western Balkans
<b>CBRN</b>	Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear
<b>CSR</b>	Corporate Social Responsibility
<b>DPPI</b>	Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Initiative for South Eastern Europe
<b>DRR</b>	Disaster Risk Reduction
<b>IFI</b>	International Financial Institutions
<b>ICT</b>	Information and Communication Technology
<b>IGI</b>	Inclusive Growth Index
<b>NEET</b>	Not in Education, Employment or Training
<b>ODA</b>	Official Development Assistance
<b>PE</b>	Private Equity
<b>PPP</b>	Public-Private Partnership
<b>RCC</b>	Regional Cooperation Council
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>SEECF</b>	South-East European Cooperation Process
<b>SME</b>	Small and Medium-size Enterprises
<b>STEM</b>	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
<b>UNDRR</b>	United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
<b>VC</b>	Venture Capital





Executive Summary:  
Updated South  
East Europe 2030  
Strategy

The South East Europe (SEE) 2030 Strategy is undergoing a comprehensive mid-term update to reflect lessons learned since its 2021 launch and to respond to new regional and global realities. Rooted in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the updated Strategy maintains its original headline targets while sharpening its focus on three interdependent themes: resilience, inclusive growth, and regional cooperation.

This revision reaffirms the Strategy as an authentic, region-led initiative under the South-East European Cooperation Process (SEECPP), with political backing from all thirteen SEE participants. The update responds to overlapping pressures - from climate change, demographic decline and brain drain, to public health and disaster risks, financing gaps, and evolving security threats. Its goal is not to expand - or reduce - the Strategy's ambition, but to provide practical instruments, financing models, and implementation mechanisms that will drive results on the ground in a feasible and politically supported manner.

At the heart of the renewed approach is the systematic use of public-private partnerships (PPPs) as a cross-cutting modality for implementation. PPPs are positioned as the key means to mobilise capital, technology, and know-how, ensuring that public policy priorities are matched with private sector resources and innovation. Whether in resilience-building, inclusive growth, or regional cooperation, PPPs provide the bridge between public mandates and market solutions, turning strategic objectives into tangible outcomes.

The Strategy also positions competitiveness as a cross-cutting dimension running through all three pillars. South East Europe's capacity to innovate, attract investment, and build higher value-added industries is inseparable from its resilience, its inclusive growth trajectory, and the depth of its regional cooperation. Shocks that damage economic structures erode competitiveness; inclusive growth that leaves talent untapped squanders it; and fragmented regional markets limit the scale needed to compete globally. The updated Strategy therefore treats competitiveness not as an isolated objective, but as a lens through which each pillar is strengthened - from building resilient and diversified economies, to fostering innovation ecosystems, to deepening the integration that makes the region more attractive and capable as a whole.

## Resilience and Human Security

### **Building resilience is elevated as a strategic priority across all policy dimensions.**

The updated Strategy adopts a human security lens, recognising that environmental (including climate-induced, geological, and marine), economic, and health-related shocks are increasingly interconnected and transboundary in nature. It strengthens mechanisms for joint risk monitoring, emergency preparedness, and resilience-building across SEE.

A central innovation is the proposed **Regional Risk-Sharing Insurance Mechanism**, which will facilitate the access to affordable insurance and reinsurance coverage for disasters such as earthquakes, floods, and droughts for all citizens. Designed as a public-private partnership, it will support affordable risk transfer, fast post-disaster payouts, and financial protection for citizens, businesses, and public infrastructure. By operationalising the long-envisioned disaster-risk-sharing goal, this mechanism will help address the region's insurance protection gap and safeguard broader development goals.

In line with the inputs received during the consultation stage with the SEECP participants, the Strategy also calls for deeper cooperation on emerging threats, including the proliferation of CBRN (chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear) materials and the misuse of dual-use technologies - challenges that require enhanced surveillance, export controls, and capacity-building at the regional level.

## Inclusive Growth and Sustainable Prosperity

**The updated Strategy reinforces inclusive growth as both a developmental imperative and a prerequisite for long-term stability.** Drawing on the preliminary findings of SEE Inclusive Growth Index (IGI), it identifies persistent gaps in employment, education, healthcare, gender equality, environmental transformation, and regional investment, and responds with policies that place people and institutional quality at the centre of development.

People are highlighted as the region's most important asset. To help them flourish, the Strategy calls for establishing a **SEE Network on Building Human Capital** as one of the sub-structures of the SEE2030 Monitoring Committee with the approval of RCC Board. The Network will unite ministries, universities, research institutions, and industry to internationalise higher education - through exchanges, joint degrees, and aligned quality standards - and to foster cooperation in research and innovation, pooling resources in areas such as digital technologies, climate resilience, and biomedical research.

**Technology Transfer** - the strategy proposes the inclusion of an active technology transfer program in Southeast Europe, aimed at facilitating the sharing of knowledge, innovations, and advanced technologies among the participants. Through targeted collaboration between academic institutions, research centres and the private sector, the programme aims to accelerate the deployment of sustainable technologies that support the green transition, digitalisation and biomedical innovations. This approach will strengthen the region's capacity for innovation and competitiveness, supporting long-term inclusive growth.

Alongside this, the updated Strategy promotes closer collaboration between public institutions and the private sector to expand financing for inclusive growth. As foreseen by Priority 5 of the SEE2030 Strategy and in line with the relevant actions foreseen thereunder, a process of **structured dialogue and exploratory exchanges among**

**Development Finance Institutions (DFIs) in the region is proposed**, with the aim of assessing feasibility, identifying common interests, and gradually building the foundations for potential institutionalised cooperation. This engagement will facilitate the sharing of know-how and experience among regional DFIs, international development finance institutions, and private investors, helping to identify pathways for channelling catalytic funding into infrastructure, SMEs, skills, and innovation. By sharing risks more effectively, this partnership can unlock additional capital for projects with high social and economic value - particularly in regions that have so far lagged behind - while working in tandem with the Human Capital Network, the creation of which this update has also called for, to anchor the region's inclusive growth agenda.

## Regional Cooperation and Implementation Partnerships

**The Strategy reaffirms that SEE's development challenges can only be met through deeper regionally all-inclusive cooperation.** It calls for strengthening policy coordination, joint programming, and intraregional initiatives in areas such as biodiversity protection, disaster preparedness, connectivity, and the digital single market. A cluster-based approach will be adopted, with SEECP participants taking leadership roles in specific thematic areas (e.g. disaster resilience, green transition, digital skills and innovation - including deep tech and horizontal technology development). The Strategy also recognises that SEE's development ambitions extend beyond intraregional cooperation: forging partnerships with countries and institutions outside the SEECP framework, including non-EU countries, is an important complement to deepening ties within the region.

Public-private partnerships are promoted as an essential modality across all themes. The private sector should no longer be treated as an observer but as a strategic partner in co-designing initiatives, co-investing in physical and social infrastructure, and delivering services in regional cooperation. To institutionalise this partnership ethos, SEE-wide regional business and finance networks need to be formalised - including a new **SEE Network of Chambers of Economy**, proposed to be established by this update, to unify and integrate the voice of business community into SEE-wide regional cooperation, promote innovation, and advance PPPs. This Network will also serve as a standing channel for private sector inputs and feedback across all other regional networks and cooperation frameworks, ensuring that business perspectives inform and strengthen joint initiatives.

Strengthened multi-stakeholder governance will ensure broader ownership: structures such as the **SEE 2030 Monitoring Committee** will be upgraded with wider representation of SEECP Participants' governmental institutions in a way to facilitate reaching out to some key ministries - such as SEECP participants finance ministries - and more robust monitoring frameworks to strengthen the steering of SEE2030's implementation. SEE2030 Monitoring Committee will remain as the sole steering body, while other new

networks to be created will function under the Monitoring Committee's auspices as its advisory structures. The SEE IGI, once approved by the SEECP participants, together with individual SEE level SDG indicators and RCC tools like Balkan Barometer and Se-curiMeter, will underpin a stronger system of progress tracking and evidence-based decision-making.

## A Strategy for a Transformative Decade

The updated SEE 2030 Strategy reaffirms the region's collective commitment to a sustainable, inclusive, and secure future. It sets out concrete steps to operationalise goals that have a broad political consensus but require clearer pathways for execution. With the support of new instruments, deeper regional partnerships, and a renewed focus on people-centred development, SEE is poised to advance its 2030 vision - delivering tangible results for citizens, communities, and future generations.



Introduction:  
Building Blocks of the  
Renewed SEE 2030  
Vision



*The priorities and instruments of this update are grounded in a comprehensive review of the region's socio-economic situation in 2021–2025, drawing on the SEE Inclusive Growth Index, monitoring data, and RCC's analytical tools. The key findings of this analysis - including persistent competitiveness gaps, demographic pressures, financing shortfalls, and governance challenges - are reflected throughout the chapters that follow.*

**The South East Europe 2030 Strategy stands as a regional commitment to a shared future of resilience, prosperity, and cooperation.** Originally endorsed in 2021 under the auspices of the SEECP, the SEE 2030 Strategy provided a joint roadmap for thirteen SEECP participants to pursue the SDGs through regionally coordinated action. It emerged from a recognition that while SEECP participants vary in size, development level, and institutional capacity, they are united by interlinked challenges and opportunities. With political endorsement at the highest level, the Strategy reflected the region's collective ambition to transform SEE into a zone of peace, stability, and inclusive development by 2030. Its adoption marked a significant milestone: for the first time, SEE governments jointly articulated a regionally all-inclusive long-term sustainable development vision rooted in regional solidarity, the SDG framework, and the principles of the 2030 Agenda.

**The 2025 update of the SEE 2030 Strategy responds to evolving realities, implementation experience, and the urgent need for deeper impact.** In the four years since its adoption, the Strategy has helped align development priorities, launch regional dialogues, and promote SDG awareness across parliaments, institutions, and civil society. However, major shocks – including the aftermath of COVID-19, catastrophic earthquakes, climate-related disasters, a major war at its borders, economic and geopolitical turbulence, and the emergence of artificial intelligence (AI) – have tested the region's resilience and exposed fragilities. Meanwhile, early implementation revealed structural challenges: limited financing, institutional coordination gaps, and the need for closer links between regional priorities and domestic action. These lessons have informed an update that retains the original headline targets but goes further in specifying how they will be delivered. It proposes new tools and instruments to overcome persistent bottlenecks and grounds its priorities in a pragmatic, results-oriented approach.

**Three core themes anchor the updated strategy: resilience, inclusive growth, and regional cooperation.** These pillars were identified through a year-long process of consultation and reflection, drawing on stakeholder input, monitoring reports, and emerging data such as the SEE Inclusive Growth Index. **Resilience** addresses the need to withstand and adapt to shocks – natural, economic, or social – and to safeguard people's livelihoods and dignity. **Inclusive growth** underscores the imperative of equitable development that benefits all segments of society, especially youth, socio-economically excluded groups, and those in lagging areas. As part of this vision, the strategy also includes the promotion of technology transfer – a key mechanism for accelerating innovation, modernizing production processes, and integrating the region into the European research and innovation area. Through the exchange of knowledge,

technologies, and best practices between academia, business, and the public sector, technology transfer will support the creation of high-tech jobs, green solutions, and enhanced competitiveness. **All-inclusive regional cooperation** is the foundation that enables collective action on shared challenges, from climate adaptation and connectivity to disaster preparedness and trade facilitation. Together, these themes reflect a renewed regional consensus: development must be sustainable, participatory, and rooted in solidarity.

Underpinning all three pillars is a recognition that **competitiveness is a cross-cutting imperative**. In a rapidly evolving global economy defined by technological disruption and the race for innovation leadership, the region's ability to strengthen its productive capacity and foster innovation cannot be addressed within any single pillar alone. Whether through resilient economies that absorb shocks without losing productive ground, inclusive growth that harnesses the region's full human potential, or deeper cooperation that creates the scale needed to compete - competitiveness is both a driver and an outcome of the Strategy's integrated approach.

**The Strategy update introduces new regional instruments to drive implementation and crowd-in investment and expertise.** To address the chronic lack of resources, structured deficit in savings, and risk-mitigation tools, the update proposes the creation of a **Regional Risk-Sharing Insurance Mechanism** as a tangible result under the activities in the framework of the SEE Regional Network on Disaster Risk Insurance and Risk Sharing, and the facilitation of structured dialogue and exploratory exchanges among Development Finance Institutions (DFIs) in the region. Both actions have been foreseen by Priority 5 of the adopted SEE2030 Strategy and its actions thereunder. If the creation of Risk-Sharing Insurance Mechanism is agreed by SEECP governments, the mechanism will serve as a financial safety net for natural disasters and other shocks, enabling faster recovery and reducing fiscal strain through public-private partnerships which will make affordable disaster insurance protection accessible for all citizens of SEE. The second aims to foster exchanges and assess feasibility for common approaches in deploying catalytic public-private finance into projects aligned with SEE 2030 goals - particularly in infrastructure, human capital, and innovation. Both initiatives are anchored in public-private partnerships, with governance models that ensure transparency, full SEECP participant ownership and accountability - with governance decisions resting with the participating governments - and the engagement of IFIs, donors, and local financial entities. These tools are designed to move the Strategy's current state of play mainly centred on policy discussions into bankable actions, while remaining cost-effective by leveraging existing institutions and markets.

**The Strategy's vision is grounded in people's needs, regional realities, and shared values.** Demographic trends such as aging and emigration of skilled youth, economic pressures from energy transitions and digital disruption, and environmental risks like floods, heatwaves, and catastrophic earthquakes all underscore that piecemeal responses are no longer sufficient. The updated Strategy centres human security and

dignity – ensuring access to goods and services for capability, opportunity, and environmental sustainability for every person. It also takes seriously the mandate to “leave no one behind”, paying special attention to gender equality, inclusion of persons with disabilities, and the needs of rural communities and youth. The Strategy aligns with domestic reform agendas and the EU integration process, reinforcing synergies with the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans, the Growth Plan for the Western Balkans, the EU-Western Balkans Investment Framework, and other related regional initiatives .

**This is a region-led Strategy, and its success depends on shared commitment and accountability.** The update preserves the spirit of the original document: SEE’s development must be shaped by SEE voices. The SEE 2030 Monitoring Committee, coordinated by the RCC, continues to serve as the ultimate oversight body. SEECF participants’ SDG Coordinators and inter-ministerial bodies play a crucial role in aligning domestic actions with regional priorities. Moving forward, the Strategy calls for expanded roles for private sector entities, municipalities, academia, civil society organisations, and think-tanks – not only as beneficiaries, but as co-creators, implementers and risk-sharing partner in initiatives. Inclusive governance will be complemented by stronger monitoring and evaluation tools, including the new Inclusive Growth Index, once approved, and RCC’s public perception surveys (Balkan Barometer and SecuriMeter). Regular reporting, peer learning, and knowledge exchange are embedded in the implementation framework to ensure transparency and mutual accountability.

**The SEE 2030 Strategy update is not a new beginning - it is a deepening of purpose and an acceleration of progress.** With five years remaining until 2030, the SEE region is at a critical juncture. The Strategy update does not rewrite the region’s goals but clarifies the path towards achieving them. It translates vision into action through a broadened set of instruments - including new regional networks, cooperation mechanisms, structured policy dialogues, and financing tools such as the Regional Risk-Sharing Insurance Mechanism, as detailed in the Key Regional Actions - underpinned by clearer roles and stronger partnerships. It reflects the region’s resilience and adaptability, while reaffirming its core values: cooperation over division, inclusion over marginalisation, and sustainability over short-termism. The following chapters present how this renewed commitment will be delivered - together, with purpose, and in a shared spirit of solidarity with every person in South East Europe.

The background is a solid dark blue. It features several abstract patterns of dots. In the top right, there is a spiral of dots that transitions from blue to orange. On the left side, there is a pattern of dots that transitions from light blue to yellow. In the bottom right corner, there is a pattern of dots that transitions from pink to light blue.

# Strengthening Resilience and Human Security

**Resilience has become the defining imperative for sustainable development in South East Europe.** Over the past decade, the region has experienced multiple overlapping shocks: natural disasters, health emergencies, energy price spikes, inflation, hot wars in its neighbours, and the cascading impacts of geopolitical instability. The COVID-19 pandemic, catastrophic earthquakes, successive floods, and wildfires, and more recently energy and cost-of-living crises have laid bare the region's vulnerabilities. While SEECF participants have shown adaptability, these shocks have often reversed development gains, lowered competitiveness, widened inequalities, and strained institutions and people's trust in those institutions. In response, the updated SEE 2030 Strategy positions resilience not merely as a sectoral issue but as a cross-cutting political requirement for achieving all its sustainable development goals. Resilience and competitiveness are closely linked: shocks that disrupt economic activity, displace skilled workers, or damage infrastructure directly erode the region's productive capacity and long-term competitive standing. Building resilience is therefore also an investment in the region's economic future.

**A more holistic concept of resilience is needed, rooted in human security and system-level preparedness.** Resilience is defined not only as the capacity to recover from crises, but also as the ability to anticipate, prevent, and adapt to future risks – whether environmental, economic, technological, or social. The updated approach integrates seven dimensions of human security: economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community, and political security. By focusing on the security and dignity of individuals and communities, the Strategy seeks to make resilience individual, inclusive, and development-driven. This shift aligns with the UN's 2022 *New Threats to Human Security* framework, reflecting a recognition that complex crises cannot be addressed by physical infrastructure or emergency response alone.

**Climate change and natural disasters remain one of the most urgent and visible threats to the region's stability.** SEE is increasingly exposed to the effects of climate change – rising temperatures, heatwaves, floods, droughts, and wildfires. Southern Europe experienced its hottest year on record in 2024 with an unprecedented heatwave, and 11 out of the 13 largest European wildfires that year occurred in SEE<sup>1</sup>. Infrastructure, agriculture, and vulnerable populations are especially at risk. The updated Strategy calls for a step change in regional **climate adaptation**: integrating climate risk assessments into public planning, scaling up green infrastructure and nature-based solutions, strengthening land and water management systems, and aligning with the EU Green Deal and adaptation policies. The Strategy further recognises that resilience and the low-carbon transition are inseparable: building low-carbon resilience - through clean energy deployment, energy efficiency improvements, and sustainable land use - reduces the region's vulnerability to fossil fuel price shocks and the long-term physical risks of an unmitigated climate. Regional cooperation on resilience-building will be aligned with national NECP (National Energy and Climate Plan) processes and the EU

<sup>1</sup> European State of the Climate Report 2024, <https://climate.copernicus.eu/esotc/2024>

Green Deal's long-term climate objectives, ensuring that the path to resilience is also a path to sustainable, low-carbon development.

**To address these risks, enhanced regional coordination on disaster risk reduction (DRR) must be prioritised.** Many disasters – earthquakes, floods, intraregional wildfires – do not respect individual boundaries, yet DRR capacities across SEE remain uneven and fragmented. Building on the institutional framework of the Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Initiative for South Eastern Europe (DPPI-SEE) and in line with recent SEECF and SEE 2030 Monitoring Committee discussions, the Strategy urges stronger cooperation on early warning systems, hazard monitoring, emergency planning, and civil protection. Particular attention will be given to strengthening regional data interoperability and governance, enabling the development of integrated early-warning and climate-risk monitoring systems across the region. This includes enhanced connectivity with European data infrastructures and services, such as Copernicus and the European Environment Agency (EEA) platforms, as well as the establishment of shared climate-risk information systems. Regional mechanisms such as mutual aid agreements, shared data platforms, and intraregional contingency exercises will be developed and institutionalised, supported by technical exchanges and peer learning to harmonise response protocols. Strengthened regional data governance will support evidence-based policymaking, improve disaster preparedness and resilience, and facilitate the gradual alignment of the non-EU SEECF participants with EU environmental acquis and climate reporting frameworks. Coordination with the EU Civil Protection Mechanism and a quadrilateral platform linking RCC, DPPI-SEE, DG ECHO and UNDRR will ensure interoperability, timely mutual assistance and alignment with international best practices.

**Regional risk-pooling promises to bring down insurance premiums costs and increase financial resilience in SEE.** A key innovation in the updated Strategy is the proposed **Regional Risk-Sharing Insurance Mechanism**, aimed at providing regional reinsurance coverage for sharing SEE domestic-level disaster risks such as floods, earthquakes, and extreme weather events. By pooling risks across multiple participants and facilitating the transfer of regional catastrophe risks to international reinsurance markets, such an approach could improve access to coverage and enhance financial resilience of SEECF participants. At the same time, the Strategy recognises that the development of such a mechanism requires careful technical assessment to ensure its financial sustainability, operational viability and affordability for the participants. Designed as a PPP involving governments, IFIs, and private insurers, the mechanism aims to provide facilitations to the SEE participants in rapid rules-based payouts to affected communities and public infrastructure – helping to avoid fiscal shocks and delays in recovery following disasters. Importantly, the RCC has facilitated the establishment of a **South East European Network on Disaster Risk Insurance and Risk Sharing** in 2025 to support regional dialogue, exchange of data and best practices, and capacity-building in disaster risk insurance and catastrophe risk analytics. . Building

on the agreed analytical approach of the Network, the next step is the preparation of a comprehensive feasibility study to assess the financial, operational and legal viability of establishing a regional disaster risk financing mechanism. The study will examine a model operating at two complementary levels: a regional reinsurance layer with the participation of SEECP Participants to facilitate risk transfer to international markets, and a voluntary sub-regional risk pooling component designed particularly for participants with limited capacities in disaster risk pooling and insufficient economies of scale. Conducted through a structured and phased methodology, the study will analyse disaster risk exposure, insurance market conditions and catastrophe risk profiles across the region, review existing national catastrophe insurance schemes, and assess governance arrangements, financing options and regulatory compliance with relevant EU insurance and reinsurance frameworks. The feasibility study will ultimately provide a detailed technical design, governance structure and implementation roadmap for consideration by SEECP Participants and potential international partners.

**Beyond disasters, emerging risks to human security are being jointly addressed.**

Biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation, long neglected in regional planning, are now recognised as drivers of insecurity and are prioritised for collective action. The updated Strategy explicitly includes biodiversity as a regional priority within the Green Agenda, aligning with EU nature legislation and the concept of ecological connectivity. It supports identifying ecological hotspots and habitat fragmentation, developing regional green infrastructure, and establishing intraregional ecological networks that provide vital ecosystem services and enable sustainable tourism. These actions will not only preserve natural assets but also enhance regional resilience and contribute to inclusive growth. This agenda is coordinated with existing structures like the Biodiversity Task Force for the Western Balkans, ensuring that conservation efforts are regionally harmonised and linked to European environmental goals.

**Meanwhile, man-made and technological risks pose evolving challenges in an uncertain world.**

Recent years have shown that resilience must extend to industrial accidents, technological failures, and security threats. In line with the inputs received from the SEECP participants during the consultation process, the region's stakeholders have called for greater attention to the proliferation of CBRN materials and other non-traditional security risks. The Strategy supports expanded cooperation on CBRN risk mapping, export controls, and illicit trafficking prevention. It proposes building regional capacity for early detection of such threats and coordinated crisis response, leveraging synergies with EU CBRN Centres of Excellence and the relevant international resolution's implementation. By preparing for low-probability but high-impact scenarios – from cyber-attacks to industrial accidents – SEE aims to ensure that resilience encompasses all hazards.

**Health resilience is another cornerstone of resilience and human security.** The COVID-19 pandemic exposed gaps in public health preparedness and the need for stronger regional health cooperation. The updated Strategy emphasizes strengthening

primary healthcare systems, establishing regional disease surveillance networks, and improving emergency public health coordination. Building on digital health successes in the region, SEE governments will expand e-health and telemedicine services to reach socioeconomically excluded communities and population groups. In line with the inputs received from the SEECF participants during the consultation process, the Strategy also encourages joint procurement of critical medical supplies (learning from the EU's joint procurement mechanisms), the creation of shared strategic stockpiles for emergencies, and arrangements for intraregional deployment of health workers during crises. By investing in health system resilience and cooperation, the region will be better equipped to protect human life and well-being against future pandemics or public health emergencies.

**Socio-economic resilience is reinforced through diversified economies and inclusive labour markets.** Economic shocks disproportionately affect informal workers, microenterprises, and those in underserved regions. To reduce vulnerability, the region needs to promote economic diversification, SME development, and financial inclusion. Special attention is paid to youth employment, women entrepreneurship, and social economy models. More flexible and adaptive social protection systems should be encouraged to enable scaling during crises, including through digital platforms. Resilience is seen not only in macroeconomic stability, but in the ability of households and communities to maintain livelihoods and adapt to change. Economic diversification and the development of higher value-added sectors not only reduce vulnerability to external shocks, but also directly strengthen the region's competitive fabric. Building a more diversified, skills-intensive, and technologically capable economy is simultaneously a resilience imperative and a competitiveness strategy.

**A human security approach requires resilience to be built from the ground up.** The municipalities are often the first responders and are closest to the citizens, thus local-level preparedness should be prioritised<sup>2</sup>. In line with the inputs received from the SEECF participants during the consultation process, the renewed Strategy calls for stronger local planning capacities, community risk assessments, and disaster risk awareness campaigns. Local governments would be supported through regional training, technical assistance, and access to climate finance. Moreover, participatory planning and engagement of civil society organisations, youth networks, and vulnerable groups in resilience building should be encouraged. People-centred approaches, especially those incorporating traditional knowledge and gender perspectives, are recognised as crucial to effective risk reduction<sup>3</sup>.

**Digital and infrastructure resilience are essential for safeguarding development gains.** Critical infrastructure in the region, including transportation, energy, water, and ICT systems, is increasingly exposed to physical and cyber risks. Under these cir-

<sup>2</sup> UN (2015), Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, <https://www.undrr.org/media/16176/download?startDownload=20250707>

<sup>3</sup> UNDP (2025). Community-Based Resilience-Building, United Nations Development Programme.

cumstances, investment in resilient and climate-proof infrastructure, aligned with EU technical standards and green transition goals, is imperative. This investment should be coupled with regional cooperation on cybersecurity, especially in essential services and public administration. Digital public services must be designed with continuity and inclusiveness in mind, so that during disruptions, citizens can still access information, health care, education, and emergency support. In a digital age, resilience needs to include data protection, system redundancy, and universal digital access. To give this cooperation practical substance, SEECIP participants will work towards establishing minimum regional cybersecurity standards, compatible operational procedures for essential services and public administration, and a model for coordinated incident response - building on EU frameworks such as NIS2 and ENISA guidance.

**Resilience in the region must be monitored, evaluated, and adapted over time.**

The updated Strategy will track resilience progress through a set of indicators aligned with SDG targets, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, and the SEE Inclusive Growth Index. These will include metrics on insurance coverage, disaster losses, early warning system access, and risk-informed public investment. In line with the inputs received from the SEECIP participants during the consultation process, the Monitoring Committee, supported by RCC, will coordinate annual reviews, regional resilience stocktaking, and peer learning. New tools such as climate and disaster risk dashboards, vulnerability indices, and resilience scoring for major infrastructure projects would be developed and deployed. Evidence-based policymaking will be the foundation of resilience planning.

**Ultimately, resilience is about enabling the people of South East Europe to live with dignity and hope in a world of growing uncertainty.** This frames resilience as a developmental imperative and a unifying priority. It is not an abstract concept but a concrete capability - one that protects lives, livelihoods, and aspirations. In SEE, building and sustaining resilience is an act of solidarity across the region, sectors, and communities. By strengthening resilience and human security, the region can safeguard its 2030 commitments and prepare its people for a future that is sustainable, inclusive, and secure.



Fostering  
Inclusive Growth  
and Sustainable  
Prosperity



**Inclusive growth remains the cornerstone of South East Europe's development strategy but demands renewed focus and transformative yet realistic action.** The SEE region has witnessed periods of robust economic expansion in recent decades, especially prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. The SEE's share of world merchandise trade over the past decade has increased by 0.5 percent, revealing enhanced export capacity and increasing global competitiveness<sup>4</sup>. Yet the benefits of this growth have not been evenly distributed. Youth unemployment remains alarmingly high – averaging about 19.5% at the end of 2024 (and exceeding 30% in some participants)<sup>5</sup>. Income inequality, while lower than in most OECD countries, has been inching up, with the richest 10% of SEE residents now accruing 36.25% of total income on average (2023)<sup>6</sup>. Moreover, economic activity is often concentrated in a few urban centres or sectors, leaving rural and marginalised communities behind and creating small islands of prosperity connected with each other in other economies more than the regions in their own economies. Productivity continues to lag far behind European averages, with average output per hour worked in SEE amounting to only 58% of EU average (2024)<sup>7</sup>. These disparities risk undermining social cohesion, fuelling emigration, increasing radicalisation, and stifling the region's long-term potential. The updated SEE 2030 Strategy responds to these realities by placing inclusive and sustainable prosperity at its heart.

**Limits of fragmented growth can be overcome through regional scaling.** The Western Balkans participants have experienced sluggish growth over the recent years compared to the total SEE. The SEE participants recorded modest growth of approximately 4%<sup>8</sup> annually over the past four years, with their combined GDP in 2024 about 22% above the 2019 level, underscoring resilience. The Western Balkans performed comparatively less, averaging real GDP growth of 3.5% per year over the last four years. The region does not possess the scale to drive robust, sustained growth on its own: in 2024, the total output of the Western Balkans was around USD 119.5 billion<sup>9</sup> – roughly 6% of the broader SEE total. Viewed collectively, however, the wider SEE region represents a USD 2.08 trillion economy with the scale and diversity to deliver higher, more resilient growth. In this sense, a more integrated South East Europe holds significantly greater economic potential than the sum of its fragmented parts.

**South East Europe's competitiveness remains constrained by structural weaknesses and significant internal disparities.** Labour force participation is persistently low across much of the region, with fewer than half of working-age adults employed in most participants. This is further compounded by emigration and demographic decline, which reduce the available skills base and tax revenues needed for long-term investment. Innovation performance is modest across the region, reflecting weakness-

4 RCC calculations based on UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD) data, <https://unctadstat.unctad.org/datacentre/>

5 World Bank, World Development Indicators, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.1524.ZS>

6 World Inequality Database (WID), <https://wid.world/data/>

7 International Labour Organization (ILO), Modelled Estimates database (ILOEST), Output per hour worked (GDP constant 2021 international \$ at PPP), [ilostat.ilo.org/data/bulk](https://ilostat.ilo.org/data/bulk)

8 RCC calculations based on World Bank Data GDP (constant 2015 US\$) | Data and GDP growth (annual %) | Data

9 Constant 2015 USD

es in retaining talents and limited investment in research and innovation: according to the Global Innovation Index, SEE economies mostly rank below the global median. Economic complexity also varies widely. While some economies have made progress in diversifying their export base and increasing value-added production, many others remain dependent on low-productivity, low-skilled, low-paid sectors and external demand, leaving them vulnerable to external shocks.

**The region's structural investment gap and widening internal disparities further limit its capacity for sustained, high-quality growth.** A chronic shortfall in domestic savings compels many SEE economies to rely heavily on foreign investment to finance productivity-enhancing investment, some of which focus on short-term profitability in real estate and construction, reflecting shallow financial markets and limited fiscal space. At the same time, some of the participants generally outperform other economies in industrial diversification, research and innovation investments, and export complexity - reinforcing an emerging two-tier structure in the region. To reverse this trend, the region must strengthen its collective competitiveness by addressing shared bottlenecks - from skills and infrastructure gaps to innovation ecosystems. Closer regional cooperation is essential to pool resources, scale markets, unlock complementarities, and mitigate resilience shocks. Only through coordinated action can South East Europe move from fragmented capabilities toward a resilient, innovation-driven regional economy. To address these bottlenecks concretely, the Strategy proposes a range of targeted instruments: joint R&D programmes, technology transfer schemes, regional innovation hubs, co-investment platforms for early-stage ventures, and public-private partnerships linking industry, financial services institutions with academia and research institutions. The SEE Network on Building Human Capital will serve as the primary coordination platform for these efforts - bringing together education ministries, universities, research centres, financial institutions and the private sector to translate knowledge into innovation, high-value jobs, and sustained economic dynamism. Inclusive growth and competitiveness are mutually reinforcing: a more competitive economy creates better jobs and broader opportunities, while an economy that is truly inclusive harnesses the full productive potential of its people and places - making the region more dynamic and innovation-ready.

**Persistent demographic and human capital challenges that threaten the region's future prosperity need to be tackled head-on.** In this context, the launch of a regional initiative is envisaged, aimed at attracting and retaining young talent through scholarships, internships, and support for start-ups, implemented through public-private partnerships and innovation networks that support technology transfer. Demographic decline, especially the exodus of skilled youth, has become a defining concern across SEE. Populations are aging, fertility rates are falling, and the brain drain continues to erode public and private sector capacities. Long-term demographic projections indicate that the population of South East Europe will shrink by one third by the end of the century. This is evident in the growing concern among SEECF participants over

the deeply negative impact of this trend, as many highly educated individuals leave in search of better opportunities abroad, with entire areas of the region being rapidly depopulated. This needs to be tackled explicitly through a multidimensional approach: aligning education with labour market needs, investing in healthcare infrastructure, creating attractive employment opportunities, and offering incentives for youth to stay, to return, or to contribute remotely. This emphasis reflects a recognition that economic growth without people - even with dramatic increases in productivity - is unsustainable. A prosperous future requires not only financial capital but also attracting, developing, and retaining human capital.

**At the heart of the inclusive growth strategy is a strong commitment to equitable job creation and entrepreneurship.** The Strategy emphasizes the importance of creating decent jobs, particularly for young people, women, and underrepresented communities. It promotes targeted policies to stimulate employment beyond capital cities, with a focus on supporting SMEs, startups, and the social economy in lagging regions. Entrepreneurship is recognised not only as a source of innovation and competitiveness, but also as a driver of empowerment and local development. The Strategy calls for tailored programmes for youth entrepreneurship, mentorship networks, access to seed funding, regional angel investors programme and partnerships with diaspora professionals. By nurturing local business ecosystems and leveraging diaspora investors, these initiatives aim to generate opportunity and hope in communities where out-migration has become a default path.

**Human capital investment is elevated as both a foundation and a driver of growth.** Education systems in SEE must not only expand access but also evolve in quality and relevance. The Strategy calls for modernising curricula, improving teaching quality, and aligning vocational training and higher education with the demands of a rapidly changing labour market. Regional scholarship schemes, research grants, and centres of excellence should be expanded to nurture talent and give people reasons to build their future in the region. Participants that have successfully slowed brain drain or fostered strong diaspora ties will share good practices through regional learning platforms, responding to the widespread call for shared solutions to common human capital challenges. Public-private partnerships involving industry and financial sector in education - such as industry-supported vocational programmes, apprenticeships, research and innovation projects, and digital learning initiatives - are encouraged to ensure that training leads to the skills actually needed by employers.

**Digital transformation and innovation should be seized to lay the groundwork for future prosperity.** The Strategy promotes expanding broadband access, improving digital literacy, and rolling out e-government services to bridge the digital divide. It supports investment in ICT infrastructure, scaling up digital entrepreneurship, and nurturing the emergence of new industries such as the creative economy, artificial intelligence (AI), and green technology. Responding to stakeholder inputs calling for a focus on AI, the Strategy encourages each participant to develop AI initiatives while also exploring a coordinated regional approach - including joint investments in AI research,

ethical frameworks for AI use, and sharing of best practices. Importantly, private-sector innovation is to be linked with public priorities: partnerships between tech companies, universities, financial institutions, and governments (for example, in innovation hubs or tech parks) will help drive research commercialisation and create high-value jobs. These efforts aim to future-proof the SEE region while generating inclusive, high-skill employment.

**The green transition is embraced as a win-win growth strategy that yields environmental and social benefits.** SEE has significant potential in renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and circular economy solutions. The Strategy supports investment in clean energy technologies, energy efficiency, and low-carbon infrastructure. It promotes nature-based solutions and climate-smart agriculture to ensure rural areas benefit from green growth. Green jobs are prioritised, especially in communities affected by industrial decline or environmental degradation. The twin transitions – green and digital – are viewed as interdependent and mutually reinforcing, forming the backbone of SEE's long-term competitiveness and its alignment with EU integration trajectories. The Strategy also encourages regional cooperation in environmental governance, including joint efforts to align with the EU Green Deal, meet EU environmental standards, and develop regional low-emission growth pathways. By actively aligning policies on renewable energy, circular economy, and sustainable agriculture with the EU Green Deal targets and the trajectories set out in national energy and climate plans, SEE can position itself as an active partner in Europe's broader green transformation - while building a more competitive and climate-resilient economy.

**Social inclusion and equity are mainstreamed across all growth-related policies.** Recognising that growth without inclusion breeds fragility, the Strategy reinforces social safety nets, broadens healthcare access, and supports measures to reduce inequality. Particular attention is paid to rural areas, persons with disabilities, ethnic minorities, and low-income households. Gender equality is treated both as a stand-alone priority and a horizontal principle, with targeted support for women's employment, entrepreneurship, and leadership. This includes expanding childcare provision, encouraging flexible work arrangements, and strengthening legal protections against discrimination – ensuring women can participate equally in the economy. The Strategy also underscores the importance of inclusive education and accessible public services in fostering equity across generations.

**Achieving the region's inclusive growth ambitions will require innovative financing and partnerships.** Public resources alone are limited, so the Strategy emphasises collaboration among existing development finance institutions, international partners, and the private sector to unlock additional funding for development priorities. To that end, it **proposes facilitating structured dialogue and exploratory exchanges among Development Finance Institutions (DFIs)** in the region, in line with Priority 5 of the adopted SEE2030 Strategy. Rather than formally launching a network at this stage, the initial focus will be on bringing together SEECP participants' development banks and other DFIs, along with interested IFIs and donors, **to assess feasibility,**

**identify common interests, and gradually build the foundations for potential institutionalised collaboration for regional cooperation development financing.**

Through this process, the region can begin to coordinate development financing approaches and explore possibilities for co-financing projects of regional importance - in areas such as SME support, infrastructure, and innovation. Over time, and on a politically feasible timeline, these exploratory exchanges may lay the groundwork for larger collaborative financing initiatives in the future.

**To further bolster human capital across the region, the Strategy calls for closer collaboration.** As a first step, SEE 2030 calls for establishing a **SEE Network on Building Human Capital** under the SEECP. This network will convene education and science ministries, universities, research institutions, and other stakeholders (particularly representatives of the private sector and financial sector via other SEE networks proposed to be established) to coordinate efforts on two critical fronts. First, it will promote the internationalisation of higher education in SEE. This involves expanding student and faculty exchange programmes, developing joint or dual university degrees recognised across the region, improving credit transfer systems, and cooperating on quality assurance and accreditation standards. By making the region's universities more connected and globally competitive, the network aims to both improve educational quality and make it easier for students and academics to move within SEE rather than leaving the region entirely. Second, the network will foster regional collaboration in research and innovation. It will identify shared R&D priorities that address structural economic gaps – for instance, joint programmes in artificial intelligence, climate-smart technologies, biomedical/biotech research, or other emergent fields where pooled resources can make a difference. By coordinating research efforts and potentially establishing regional innovation hubs or joint funding programmes, SEECP participants can achieve critical mass in innovation that no single participant could attain alone. This cooperation on R&D will help the region stay abreast of technological change and create home-grown solutions (and enterprises) in next-generation industries. To further strengthen the people-centred approach of SEE 2030, lifelong learning and adult upskilling should be explicitly recognised as a horizontal pillar of human capital development. Beyond formal education and higher education cooperation, South East Europe's long-term competitiveness, inclusiveness and resilience will increasingly depend on the capacity of adults to continuously update their skills throughout the life course. Lifelong learning plays a key role in supporting labour market transitions, enabling green and digital transformations, reducing the risk of social exclusion, and enhancing societies' adaptive capacity in the face of demographic and economic change. The SEE Network on Building Human Capital, once created according to the existing rules of procedures of SEE2030, will add value by providing a formal platform for continuous dialogue, project development, and knowledge exchange in education and science. It will build on and complement existing initiatives – for example, the Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe (ERI SEE) for education policy cooperation, or various EU-supported research networks – but with a specific mandate to drive intraregional programmes that directly support SEE 2030 goals. By investing in people through such collabora-

tive frameworks, the region will strengthen its most important asset for long-term prosperity.

**To achieve inclusive growth objectives, the SEE 2030 will need to embed the private sector at each step of the way.** The SEE 2030 Strategy recognises that the scale of investment and innovation required for inclusive growth cannot be met by the public sector alone. Therefore, mobilising private sector expertise and capital is not an option but a necessity. SEE 2030 will need to strategically embed private sector partners at every stage of its efforts, dramatically scaling up Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) to deliver public goods more effectively. From developing climate-resilient infrastructure and modernising education systems to expanding healthcare and financing digitalisation and green energy projects, PPPs are a powerful tool for driving development that leaves no one behind. These partnerships will be rigorously designed to adhere to strict standards of transparency and social responsibility, ensuring that economic growth translates into tangible, inclusive outcomes for the people of South East Europe.

**Stakeholder coalitions will be expanded to make cooperation more inclusive and effective.** Beyond governments, the Strategy seeks to institutionalise regional engagement with the private sector, academia, and civil society. To better involve the business community, the Strategy proposes the creation of a **SEE Network of Chambers of Economy** that would bring together chambers of economy and commerce from all SEECP participants as a dedicated forum for dialogue and coordination. The Network would provide an inclusive space for all chambers across the SEECP participants to exchange views on regional economic priorities and strengthen cooperation within the SEE2030 framework. In particular, it would facilitate structured interaction between the business community and regional cooperation processes under the SEECP and SEE2030 governance framework. Relevant stakeholders and existing initiatives – including the Western Balkans 6 Chamber Investment Forum (WB6 CIF), Association of Balkan Chambers (ABC), Eurochambers and the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) - would be invited to engage in the Network's activities. Through this dialogue-oriented platform, chambers could identify areas of joint interest, particularly the ones related to SEE2030, encourage intraregional business partnerships and contribute perspectives from the business community to regional policy discussions related to investment, innovation and public-private cooperation. In the development finance realm, a new **Regional Network of Development Finance Institutions** will link development banks, export credit agencies, and other financial institutions to co-design and support implementation of inclusive growth and resilience projects (as described in the Inclusive Growth chapter). Academic and research cooperation will be scaled up through regional research consortia, mobility programmes, and joint innovation projects (with coordination through the proposed **Human Capital Network**). Likewise, civil society and youth networks will be empowered and better connected to contribute to monitoring, public awareness campaigns, and grassroots initiatives across the region. Collectively, these broadened coalitions will help operationalise the SDG17 principle

of “partnerships for the goals” – bringing diverse talents and resources to bear on the region’s development challenges and ensuring that cooperation is not limited to government circles.

**Inclusive growth outcomes will be closely tracked through robust monitoring frameworks and tools.** The SEE Inclusive Growth Index (IGI), once formalised based on the approval of SEECP participants, will be a core tool to monitor the quality and distribution of growth, going beyond GDP to track employment, education, financial inclusion, and social equity. Progress will also be measured using SDG-aligned indicators, such as those relating to education (SDG 4), decent work (SDG 8), and reduced inequality (SDG 10). By embedding these metrics into the Monitoring Committee’s reporting, the Strategy ensures a results-oriented approach with built-in accountability. Regional peer reviews, stakeholder consultations, consultations with academia and think-tanks, and learning exchanges will complement data with qualitative insights. In addition, the Strategy promotes local-level scorecards and participatory monitoring tools to ensure communities can assess progress and provide feedback.

**Dialogue with the academia.** The Strategy calls for further strengthening the dialogue with the academia through the establishment of an annual academic conference designed to foster structured dialogue between researchers and policy-makers and to channel scientific evidence into the regional policy agenda. Each year’s conference will serve as a permanent regional platform for academic-policy exchange, addressing a specific theme related to resilience, inclusive growth, and sustainable development in South East Europe. The objective of the dialogue with academia is to feed into evidence-based policy-making by harvesting the outcomes of academic conferences into policy recommendations, which will then be presented to the policy-level in SEECP through regional gatherings facilitated by the RCC. Through this mechanism, academic insights will be distilled into actionable proposals to be presented to SEE2030 Strategy governance structures. Over time, this dialogue will help enhance regional cooperation in research and innovation, strengthen knowledge and evidence-based policy-making, and foster dialogue between academia and policy-makers across South East Europe.

**By 2030, SEE aims to be a region where growth is not only faster, but fairer and more sustainable.** The inclusive growth vision is not merely to raise economic output, but to ensure that prosperity is widely shared, that people are empowered with opportunities, and that no community is left behind. The combined impact of the Strategy’s policies, investments, and partnerships should result in higher employment, reduced poverty, improved public services, and stronger human capital across the region. This vision is ambitious but achievable – provided there is collective resolve, consistent investment, and genuine regional solidarity. Ultimately, inclusive growth is not just one goal of the SEE 2030 Strategy, but a means by which all the other goals will be reached. Through targeted interventions, smart financing, public-private collaboration, and shared knowledge, South East Europe can build an economy that works for everyone – resilient, competitive, and just.



# Deepening Regional Cooperation and Partnerships

**Regional cooperation is the foundation and enabler of the SEE2030 Strategy's success.** From the outset, the Strategy has recognised that the thirteen South East European participants face shared challenges and hold shared aspirations. Climate change, digital transformation, demographic shifts, security concerns, and the imperative to strengthen the region's competitiveness in a rapidly changing global economy are all shared by the SEE region and demand joint responses. Regional cooperation is not only a practical necessity; it is also a political and strategic choice, embedded in the SEECP framework and animated by the principle of solidarity. SEE2030 is a region-owned strategy, and the collective commitment of its members is central to delivering on the 2030 goals.

**SEE2030 cooperation structures must move from discussion and planning to joint implementation.** Notable early achievements include the establishment of the SEE 2030 Monitoring Committee, the formation of thematic networks, and regular multi-stakeholder meetings. These steps built trust and created channels for knowledge exchange. However, the updated Strategy acknowledges that deeper cooperation is required to unlock greater scale, impact, and efficiency. Moving forward, the Strategy promotes a shift from dialogue to delivery—from high-level declarations to joint projects on the ground. The region has already demonstrated the value of solidarity in practice (for example, through coordinated pandemic responses and unified regional advocacy in EU fora). The next phase builds on these lessons by strengthening practical mechanisms for collaboration and problem-solving.

**Strategic collaboration across SEE amplifies the potential for resilience and inclusive growth.** As noted throughout the update process, regional cooperation is not a standalone theme – it underpins the other two pillars. Collective efforts allow SEE participants to pool resources, coordinate policy reforms, and scale up innovations more rapidly than they could alone. Whether it is managing intraregional environmental risks, developing common education standards, or building integrated digital markets, **joint action creates economies of scale and fosters trust** among neighbours. The Strategy integrates this insight by treating cooperation as both a cross-cutting principle and a concrete modus operandi that will accelerate progress across all sectors. Regional cooperation is also a powerful enabler of competitiveness: by deepening integration, SEE economies can expand their effective market size, enable greater specialisation, build critical mass in research and innovation, and present a more attractive and capable destination for investment - individually and collectively.

**Strengthened structured mechanisms on the regional level for institutional learning and knowledge exchange towards sustained progress and shared regional priorities.** To address this, the SEE 2030 Strategy promotes deeper cooperation through the establishment of SEE-level joint training programmes between government institutions across the region. These initiatives are designed to facilitate peer learning and the transfer of practical know-how in support of the SDGs, particularly in areas where coordinated action is critical. For example, joint training on the moderni-

sation of health treatment protocols, particularly for cancer treatment, can strengthen resilience and provide a more consistent quality of care across SEECP participants. **Deepened regional diplomatic training programmes for young diplomats, within the existing RCC-SEECP Young Diplomats Forum** and aligned with UN Agenda 2030 and SEE2030 through RCC, would foster a new generation of foreign policy operators equipped to advance peace, security, and multilateral cooperation in South East Europe. These efforts strengthen institutional capacities while reinforcing a culture of trust, solidarity, and shared responsibility in addressing the region's complex development challenges.

**Regularised dialogue among the SEECP SDG Councils.** The SEE2030 Strategy seeks to promote and advance the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within the SEE region across the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social, and environmental. In parallel, SEECP participants are pursuing the 2030 Agenda by mainstreaming the SDGs into their national policies, legislation, and development initiatives. They conduct their Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) to serve as a basis for the regular reviews at several international forums. Building on the established practice, the recommendations of the SEE2030 Annual Interim Implementation Reports, and the decisions of the SEE2030 Monitoring Committee, the Strategy **promotes a meeting format** among the SEECP SDG Councils or equivalent structures. These meetings represent a regional action and cooperation format to facilitate policy dialogue, peer learning, and experience exchange on SDG-related aspects - particularly in relation to VNR preparation, identification of common challenges, and formulation of regional solutions. They can also serve as a preparatory mechanism for SDG Ministerial meetings when such meetings are agreed upon between the RCC and the SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office. Meetings of this format can also be initiated by the Monitoring Committee on an ad hoc basis, in response to specific implementation priorities.

**Structured dialogue platform with the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) for civil society organisations.** To ensure a whole-of-society approach to regional cooperation, the SEE2030 Strategy will foresee the initiation and maintenance of a structured dialogue with the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) on challenges relevant to South East Europe. Joint efforts would aim to promote and institutionalise regular dialogue among civic organisations, ensuring that the voices of citizens, social partners, and organised civil society are systematically reflected in regional policymaking. Cooperation under this framework would also place strong emphasis on youth, skills, and human capital development, including addressing the pressing challenges of migration and brain drain. Joint initiatives could foster greater youth engagement in socio-economic dialogue, support skills matching for emerging labour market needs, and create opportunities for young professionals to contribute to regional transformation rather than seeking prospects abroad. By linking social dialogue with human capital policies, this partnership would help build a more enabling environment for youth empowerment, job creation, and talent retention across South East Europe.

**To focus and organise collective efforts, a cluster-based model will guide regional collaboration.** The Strategy introduces a cooperation “clusters” approach, grouping activities into key thematic areas such as disaster risk management, energy transition, connectivity, digital transformation, human capital development, and security. Each cluster operates on a voluntary, flexible basis (“variable geometry”), with interested participants taking the lead in coordinating specific clusters. This model encourages leadership and peer learning: for example, one SEECP participant might lead on green energy initiatives while another leads on vocational training improvements. In response to the proposals from SEECP participants, a security-focused cluster will also be established to address issues such as non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and other regional security threats. The cluster approach provides flexibility while maintaining cohesion – allowing like-minded SEECP participants to move forward on certain initiatives without leaving others behind and ensuring that all can benefit from region-wide projects when ready.

**Regional institutions like RCC will have a strengthened coordination and convening role.** The Strategy builds on the RCC’s role as a facilitator and coordinator of regional processes and proposes further institutional enhancements. These include annual SEE 2030 ministerial summits, dedicated thematic forums, and a regional knowledge-sharing platform for real-time data, good practices, and implementation updates. Stakeholders’ proposals to establish a non-proliferation advisory group is endorsed by this SEE 2030 update, with RCC positioned to convene technical expertise and facilitate regional consensus. Clearer communication channels, defined roles, and action-oriented coordination will improve implementation discipline and collective problem-solving.

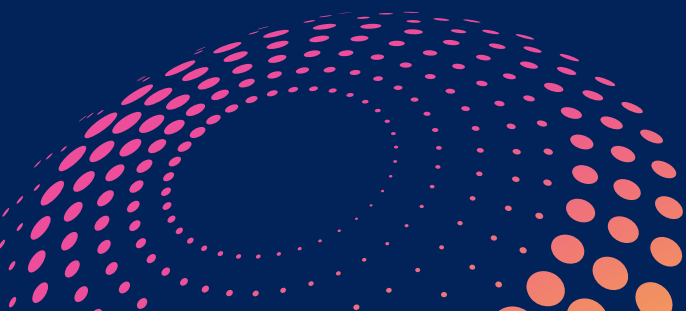
**Enhanced connectivity – physical, digital, and human – remains a top priority under the regional cooperation agenda.** SEE 2030 participants consistently stress that better connectivity is both a driver and a result of cooperation. The Strategy promotes continued investment in regional transport and energy infrastructure (including completing key corridors and interconnectors), while also advancing integration of digital markets (e.g. harmonising telecom regulations and reducing roaming costs) and coordination of cybersecurity measures. It supports joint commitments to interoperable digital systems (such as e-ID recognition) and the development of a regional mobility framework to ease the movement of students, researchers, and professionals. This could include expanding the scope of the existing agreements on recognising academic and professional qualifications (building on existing mutual recognition efforts between the relevant SEECP participants), and programmes like “regional work permits for recognised professional qualification holders” without prejudice to the relevant EU regulations or scholarship schemes that encourage talent exchange within SEE rather than emigration out of the region. In line with the inputs received from the SEECP participants during the consultation stage, the Strategy also encourages expansion of cultural and educational exchanges to foster a sense of regional identity and mutual understanding among people. Together, these actions aim to transform SEE into a tru-

ly connected space – economically, socially, and institutionally – making it easier for ideas, people, and goods to move freely and generate shared prosperity.

**The benefits of cooperation will be tangible, shared, and mutually reinforcing.** By cooperating, SEECP participants can undertake projects and reforms that would be too large, risky, or complex for any single participant to pursue alone. For example, shared investment platforms (like pooled financing for regional infrastructure), regional early warning systems for disasters, or intraregional skills development programmes are all enabled by working together. The realisation of shared investment platforms, where agreed and feasible, will require active cooperation with the EU and engagement with major European and international financial institutions - including the European Investment Bank (EIB) Group and other IFIs - whose financial resources, technical expertise, and professional management capacity are essential for the design, governance, and capitalisation of such regional financing vehicles. Regional cooperation also enhances the region's visibility and credibility on the international stage – a united SEE can attract more funding, forge stronger partnerships, and have a greater policy influence than fragmented efforts would allow. In terms of peace and security, joint action on transnational threats builds trust among neighbours and contributes to regional stability. Indeed, peace and security are both prerequisites for and products of deeper cooperation: the more the SEECP participants work together and integrate, the more secure and stable the region becomes, which in turn allows even closer cooperation.

**By 2030, SEE should be recognised as a region of integrated policies, shared prosperity, and collective resilience.** The Strategy envisions a SEE where cooperation is institutionalised, inclusive, and impactful. Increased intraregional trade and investment, joint programmes in education and innovation, shared infrastructure, and coordinated crisis responses will mark this transformation to a resilient, competitive, smart, and sustainable future. A stronger collective voice on the international stage will reflect the region's growing maturity and unity. As highlighted in the original document and echoed in RCC's feedback, SEE 2030 is not only a framework for development; it is a platform for building a regional community grounded in shared values, mutual respect, good neighbourly relations, and sustainable peace. Through deeper regional cooperation and partnerships, the Strategy aims to make that vision a reality.

# Implementation, Financing and Governance Mechanisms



**Turning strategy into action requires a strengthened, inclusive, and well-resourced implementation framework ready for evidence-based regional cooperation policies.** The SEE 2030 Strategy is ambitious not only in its vision but in its determination to deliver results on the ground based on evidence. Building on lessons from the initial implementation phase, this chapter outlines the improved governance architecture, financing mechanisms, and accountability tools that will guide the next phase of strategy execution. The emphasis is on clear roles, shared responsibility, and partnerships that bring together governments, the private sector, international institutions, and local communities.

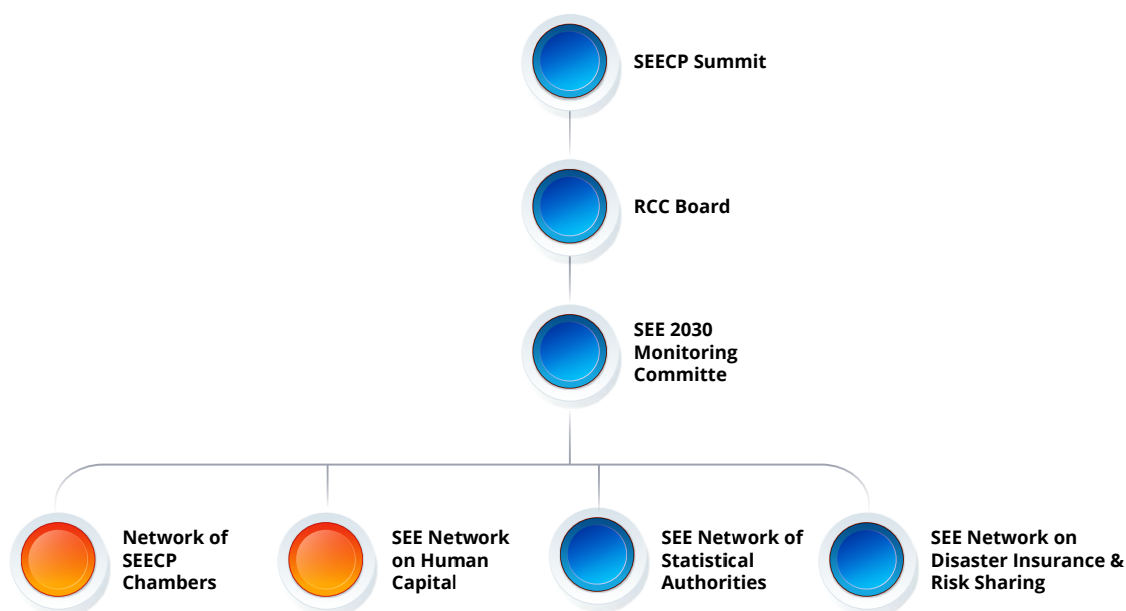
**A reformed governance model will enhance effectiveness and inclusivity.** The SEE 2030 Monitoring Committee will remain the central body for strategic oversight, but its structure and function will be expanded to receive policy support from the regional networks and structures to be created (once formalised based on the approval of SEECF participants) to recommend how to accelerate the implementation of SEE2030 Strategy. The update introduces stakeholder networks under the Committee, bringing together representatives from the financial sector (insurance and development financing), business, and academia. These networks will serve as official forums for recommendation and consultation for problem-solving, addressing ex-ante market gaps, making the Strategy tangible, and deepening the regional cooperation further while ensuring the Strategy stays grounded in real needs and leverages diverse expertise. SEE2030 Coordinators will be further empowered to coordinate cross-sectoral action domestically, and their work may be supported by possible inter-ministerial platforms under the auspices of SEECF.

**A more consistent high-level commitment is essential to sustain momentum.** The first two annual implementation reviews underscored the need to elevate SEE2030 oversight to the political level. In this spirit, the updated Strategy proposes that meetings of ministers responsible for sustainable development may be convened under SEECF auspices, upon agreement between the RCC and the SEECF Chairmanship-in-Office, and depending on the priorities of the Chairmanship. When organised, such an SDG Ministerial meeting would provide a platform for high-level political engagement on the Strategy's implementation, helping to cement SEE2030's place on national agendas and generate the political impetus needed to accelerate progress towards the Strategy's targets.

When convened, the SDG Ministerial meeting would serve as a platform for intergovernmental alignment, peer learning, and joint initiative steering. Ministers could collectively review progress, set implementation priorities, and exchange policy experiences on SDG acceleration. The meeting could also provide political guidance and visibility to flagship regional initiatives emerging under SEE 2030 - for example, reviewing outcomes of the Inclusive Growth Index or peer-learning exercises. In this way, an SDG Ministerial meeting would complement the existing governance structure, particularly the senior-official-level Monitoring Committee, by channelling high-level political en-

agement in support of regional cooperation. Such meetings can also be proposed by the Monitoring Committee on an ad hoc basis, depending on specific priorities or challenges that require ministerial-level attention.

Figure: SEE 2030 Governance and Reporting Framework



**Local-level engagement is essential for meaningful and equitable implementation.** Echoing stakeholders' inputs, the Strategy emphasizes the importance of localisation. Governments are encouraged to cascade SEE 2030 targets to the municipal level - through local SDG action plans, community consultations, and partnerships with local businesses and organisations. Particular attention is given to supporting PPPs in underserved areas and facilitating knowledge-sharing on local success stories. By anchoring the Strategy in communities, SEE 2030 gains legitimacy, traction, and resilience.

**A new, streamlined reporting and peer review system will enhance transparency and coordination.** Each SEE participant will submit regular implementation reports, focusing on progress, bottlenecks, and resource needs in the context of the SEE 2030's annual implementation reports. These reports will feed into an annual regional implementation review, allowing SEECP participants to learn from each other and co-develop solutions. Progress will be informed by objective indicators and regional tools such as the Inclusive Growth Index (IGI) and the SecuriMeter, ensuring data-driven dialogue and course correction.

**Securing results requires a comprehensive and innovative financing strategy.** The update addresses one of the original strategy's gaps - a lack of defined financial instruments - by introducing **two complementary approaches: the Regional Risk-Sharing Insurance Mechanism and a structured process of dialogue and exploratory exchanges among Development Finance Institutions (DFIs).** The former will pool

reinsurable disaster risk across the region, while the latter aims to build foundations for potential cooperation among regional DFIs, gradually identifying common interests and possible joint approaches to financing inclusive and sustainable development. Together, they unlock new resources, reduce risk, and enable transformational investments.

**Private sector engagement is embedded across all levels of implementation.** The Strategy positions businesses not only as funders, but as innovators, implementers, and risk-sharing partners. PPPs will be scaled in infrastructure, education, and health, with attention to transparency and social impact. Innovation challenges and co-creation platforms will be launched, allowing private entities to develop solutions to public challenges - from digital healthcare to green mobility. Regulatory reforms and risk-sharing tools (e.g. guarantees, co-investment) will improve the investment climate and attract private participation. The Strategy also promotes regional CSR networks and local-level PPP replication, especially in areas with limited public capacity. To activate genuine private sector participation, the Strategy encourages SEECF participants to consider targeted incentive frameworks - such as investment facilitation measures, regulatory sandboxes for innovation, and streamlined PPP approval procedures - adapted to their domestic contexts. Recognising that participants differ in administrative capacity and implementation pace, the Strategy also calls for a structured peer-support mechanism through which more advanced participants can assist others in project preparation and regulatory development, reducing the risk of fragmentation in implementation in line with international and European good practices.

**Climate alignment is an integral dimension of the Strategy's financing approach.** Investment priorities - whether channelled through PPPs, the Regional Risk-Sharing Mechanism, or regional DFI dialogue - will be aligned with national NECP processes and EU Green Deal targets, ensuring that regional financing pipelines remain consistent with long-term decarbonisation pathways and energy-transition commitments. The Strategy actively promotes synergies with EU green and climate financing instruments - including green bonds, blending facilities, and Just Transition support mechanisms - to leverage additional resources for climate-smart investments. Equally, climate risk and carbon metrics will be incorporated into project appraisal frameworks for PPPs and publicly supported investments, ensuring that new infrastructure and development projects advance rather than undermine the region's low-carbon transition. In this way, climate adaptation and decarbonisation are treated not as a constraint on financing ambition, but as a cross-cutting quality standard running through the Strategy's entire implementation framework.

**Robust evidence-based monitoring and evaluation will ensure accountability and continuous learning.** A results framework linked to each headline target and theme will guide implementation tracking. The Inclusive Growth Index (IGI) will be a cornerstone of evidence-based outcome monitoring, alongside resilience and cooperation metrics. Annual stock-take meetings and peer reviews will create space for strategic

adjustment and political reinforcement. Biennial high-level progress reports to SEECF leaders will maintain visibility and ownership at the highest level. A regional data portal may be developed to allow real-time monitoring and public transparency. The RCC will ensure that all SEECF participants are kept regularly informed of the state of play regarding the IGI's development and approval process, so that any concerns can be addressed in a timely and inclusive manner.

**All implementation efforts are guided by the principles of the 2030 Agenda.** Inclusivity, sustainability, and partnership are embedded throughout the updated implementation framework. Gender equality, youth engagement, and regional stability are treated not as add-ons but as integral to every project and process. The governance ethos is collaborative, adaptive, and rights-based - ensuring that all groups are heard, that progress is equitable, and that no one is left behind.

**SEE2030 implementation is a shared opportunity, therefore requiring shared responsibility .** With stronger governance, defined financing pathways, and a culture of partnership, the Strategy moves from aspiration to application. Its success will depend on the collective action of regional institutions, governments, local leaders, businesses, and citizens. Implementation is not just about systems-it is about people, leadership, and commitment. Through this chapter, SEE 2030 reaffirms that it is ready not only to plan together, but to deliver together.



# From Strategy to Action: A Region Fit for Future

**The SEE 2030 Strategy update marks a renewed regional commitment to shared delivery and sustained action.** All thirteen participants from SEE, through the South-East European Cooperation Process and with the facilitation of the RCC, have reaffirmed their pledge to work collectively towards a common vision. This is not merely a restatement of ambition - it is a commitment to act together, leveraging solidarity, regional strengths, and institutional coordination to advance resilience, inclusive growth, and deeper cooperation across the region.

**This is a regional strategy in both spirit and execution - requiring joint ownership, responsibility, and implementation.** The updated Strategy highlights that progress can only come through strong partnerships between governments, the private sector, civil society, academia, and international partners. The new governance structures, the enhanced monitoring frameworks, and operational tools such as the Inclusive Growth Index and the annual implementation reporting cycle are designed to promote mutual accountability, learning, and timely course correction.

**Practical implementation and delivery based on partnership with the private sector are the new hallmarks of SEE 2030.** Beyond vision and dialogue, the focus has shifted to private sector involvement in design and execution: the introduction of the Regional Risk-Sharing Mechanism and the exploratory dialogue among DFIs provides practical avenues for advancing projects and protecting gains. Similarly, reforms and initiatives under the three themes - resilience, inclusive growth, and cooperation - now include actionable instruments and policy pathways. These tools will enable the Strategy to move from words to impact, and from ambition to evidence of change.

**Momentum must be maintained - and strengthened - through sustained engagement by all stakeholders.** Progress towards the 2030 goals will require continuous investment in reforms, partnerships, and financing mechanisms. Governments must keep SEE 2030 priorities visible in their planning and budgets. Private sector entities and community-based organisations should be engaged at every step. Academia and media must help foster public understanding, and international partners should align their support to regional objectives. Only through collective effort can the Strategy's potential be realised.

**The updated Strategy aligns ambition with practicality, offering a clear roadmap for transformative results.** While preserving the original document's long-term vision and SDG alignment, the update sharpens priorities and introduces new tools adapted to the complex realities of the late 2020s. Resilience is no longer a secondary concern - it is a thread that runs through every goal, ensuring that progress is durable in the face of shocks. Inclusive growth, meanwhile, is reframed around the quality and distribution of growth, ensuring every person and community shares in opportunity. And regional cooperation is solidified as both a strategic enabler and a moral imperative.

**The interlinkages between the themes - resilience, inclusion, and cooperation - are now fully embedded.** The Strategy reflects the RCC's feedback to make these

connections more visible. Regional cooperation enhances resilience through joint emergency systems and shared infrastructure. Inclusive growth is pursued through cooperative learning and investment. And resilience, in turn, protects inclusive development from being derailed. These synergies are the essence of SEE 2030's integrated approach, and they make the Strategy more than the sum of its parts.

**The true test of SEE 2030 lies not in its design, but in its delivery.** Each chapter of the updated Strategy includes mechanisms, partnerships, and targets to guide action. Public-private collaboration is not optional-it is a central pathway to mobilising the innovation, capital, and capabilities required for delivery. Early wins will be essential to building momentum and trust. Regular monitoring, peer review, and stakeholder feedback will ensure accountability and adaptability.

**Strengthening RCC as a facilitator to SEE2030 is a key to achieve seamless implementation of the final phase of the Strategy.** Despite several bottlenecks in terms of human and financial resources available for the implementation of the SEE2030 Strategy, RCC managed to facilitate the creation of necessary governing structures and functioning of strategic cycles without any interruptions. However, limited availability in human and financial resources particularly enjoyed by the RCC in the first phase still lacks SEECF participants reaching tangible outputs of the Strategy in its first phase. Additional financial resources made available to RCC to support its activities in this regard, and further efforts are still needed, particularly in enhancing its statutory budget to ensure RCC's operational capacity to support the expanded structures of SEE2030 in achieving the ambitious targets of the Strategy. RCC will continue to deliver its best services to facilitate the implementation of the SEE2030 update. In this endeavor, expanding the operational financial and human resources of RCC, as exemplified by the voluntary contributions of two SEECF participants, plays a critical role for the success.

**This Strategy is a recommitment by South East European leaders to the well-being of their people.** It recognises the challenges of a rapidly changing world - from climate volatility and technological disruption to demographic shifts and security threats. But it does not flinch. Instead, it responds with a framework that is ambitious, actionable, and inclusive. It integrates cross-cutting issues like peace, stability, and security - responding directly to the RCC's call to make these priorities more visible and aligned with broader regional needs.

**The path from strategy to action begins here - and will be measured by real improvements in people's lives.** From education access and job creation to climate resilience and regional connectivity, success will not be judged by the number of plans produced, but by the number of lives improved. This Strategy places its bet on cooperation, solidarity, and innovation. It provides a bold, regionally tailored roadmap to 2030.

**With the SEE 2030 Strategy update, South East Europe signals its readiness - not just to plan, but to turn commitment into change, not just to aspire, but to act.** By working together, the region is charting a future that is resilient in the face of crisis,

inclusive in its prosperity, and cooperative in its ethos. The journey from vision to reality has begun—and with the commitments outlined here, the region is poised to move forward further and faster, proving that regional cooperation is the engine of sustainable progress.

## Key Regional Actions (2025–2030)

To translate the updated Strategy into concrete results, the following priority regional actions have been identified. These initiatives, agreed under the SEEC umbrella, will drive implementation in the coming years. Each action is cost-effective, builds on existing capacities, and is designed for collective political support across all 13 SEEC participants.

### 1. Operationalise the Regional Network on Disaster Risk Insurance and Risk Sharing through implementation of the Project Synopsis on disaster financial risk sharing in SEE, such as:

- **Strengthen Network Governance:** Ensure the Network’s long-term mandate and effective functioning by implementing its already adopted Terms of Reference and translating its work programme into practice. (The Network was formally established in March 2025 under the RCC Board.)
- **Enhance Data Sharing & Capacity:** Develop a regional platform for sharing disaster insurance data (coverage, losses) and organise joint training workshops on catastrophe risk modelling and post-disaster cost assessment.
- **Develop Regional Risk-Pooling Mechanisms:** In partnership with the insurance industry and IFIs, design a regional disaster risk-sharing insurance mechanism. Conduct a feasibility study on coverage scope, contributions and payout rules, and pilot the pooled insurance scheme.

### 2. Facilitate Structured Dialogue and Exploratory Exchanges among Development Finance Institutions (DFIs)

- **Convene a first DFI Exchange Forum:** Organise an inaugural forum in for the leadership of domestic development banks, export credit agencies, and relevant IFIs to initiate structured dialogue, share experience, and explore common interests in the activities of SEE2030 as a first step towards assessing the feasibility of deeper institutionalised cooperation in SEE.
- **Map Regional Investment Opportunities and Instruments:** jointly discuss a pipeline of priority regional projects (in infrastructure, green transition, SME development, innovation, etc.) and map out each DFI’s instruments and expertise to identify potential areas for future co-financing. The mapping exercise will cover both ongoing regional projects and those currently facing financing

gaps, providing a comprehensive picture of where DFI cooperation could add the greatest value.

- **Explore Joint Financing Options:** Assess the feasibility of at least one collaborative financing approach – for example, a regional SME guarantee fund or a renewable energy co-investment platform – and, where feasible and agreed, develop a pilot in partnership with IFIs to mobilise capital for high-impact regional projects aligned with sustainable development goals. Any pilot financing approach will be developed in consultation with interested IFIs and donors, with the governance and lead institution arrangements to be determined collectively by participating DFIs at their inaugural exchange forum.

### 3. Establish the SEE Network on Building Human Capital (Education and Science)

- **Launch the Network:** Formally establish the Education and Science Network with representatives from education ministries, science/innovation ministries, universities, and research councils of all SEECP participants. The RCC (in cooperation with ERI SEE and others) will provide secretariat support to coordinate meetings and activities.
- **Promote Academic Mobility & Joint Research:** Adopt a regional action plan to expand student and faculty exchange programmes and to facilitate mutual recognition of diplomas/credits across SEE. In parallel, develop collaborative R&D initiatives in 2–3 priority fields (e.g. IT, AI, biomedical research, or climate-smart agriculture), linking universities and research centres with pooled funding and joint “virtual centre of excellence” projects. The Network will also support active technology transfer between research institutions and the private sector, facilitating the commercial application of regional R&D outputs and the deployment of technologies that advance the green transition, digitalisation, and biomedical innovation.
- **Curb Brain Drain through Brain Gain Programmes:** Implement regional talent retention initiatives – for example, a **Brain Gain Fellowship** scheme offering grants to young professionals or researchers to return and work in their home region after studies abroad, and structured engagement of diaspora scientists/experts in regional projects. SEE participants will share best practices on incentives to retain skilled workers, recognising that continued emigration undermines the region’s human capital and innovation capacity.
- **Facilitate Free Movement of Skilled People and Selective Migration:** Explore the possibility and efficiency in implementing mutual recognition agreements for professional qualifications in select high-demand fields (e.g. doctors, engineers, IT professionals) in a way to extend the privileges with *erga omnes* effect provided that the professional qualifications acquired in the higher education institutions mutually recognised and established in the participants

signing the mutual recognition agreements. This builds on recent Western Balkans agreements on recognising IDs, university degrees and professional licenses and will allow qualified professionals to work more easily in any participating party.

#### 4. Support creation of the SEE Network of Chambers of Economy

- **Unify Chambers & Advocacy:** Formalise the Network of Chambers of Economy, bringing together all SEE 13 chambers of economy and commerce. A memorandum of understanding will outline the network's mission to present a united regional business voice and to foster intraregional business cooperation.
- **Annual Regional Business Forum:** Under the new chambers network, organise yearly **SEE Business Forums** that convene companies, investors, and government representatives including European private sector organisations such as Eurochambers and international chambers such as ICC, without excluding the existing regional initiatives. These forums will connect businesses to partners and opportunities, promote intra-SEE trade, and highlight intra-regional investment or public-private partnership projects – reinforcing the idea that greater regional economic cooperation boosts productivity and competitiveness.
- **SME Support and Policy Input:** Explore the possibilities in coordinating regional programmes to support SMEs and startups, such as a SEE Innovation Fund (through dialogue with the DFIs) to provide financing and mentorship to high-potential small businesses across the region. In addition, establish a mechanism for regular public-private dialogue whereby the chambers collectively advise SEECP governments on improving the business climate. For instance, the network can publish an annual **Regional Business Climate Report** identifying key regulatory and infrastructural barriers to commerce, which is then submitted to SEECP officials to inform policy decisions (e.g. simplifying intraregional procedures or harmonising standards to enable SMEs regional expansion).
- **Advance trade facilitation and sectoral cooperation:** Through the Chambers Network, promote harmonisation of standards and technical criteria across the region, develop sectoral sub-networks in priority areas such as tourism, ICT, agro-industry, and renewable energy, and actively work to improve the integration businesses into EU supply chains. The network will also support the digitisation of chamber services to improve intraregional business interaction and simplify intraregional trade and customs procedures.

#### 5. Dialogue with the academia on resilience, inclusive growth, and sustainable development

- **Establish and regularly organise annual academic conferences in SEE** as a structured platform for dialogue between researchers and policy-makers globally, aimed at integrating scientific evidence into the regional policy agenda.
- **Translate the outcomes and findings of these conferences into concrete policy recommendations** to be submitted for consideration at SEECP policy level.
- **Develop and present actionable proposals derived from the academic insights** to the SEE2030 Strategy governance structures, ensuring that research-based evidence underpins regional policy implementation.

## 6. Regional training programmes for government institutions and diplomatic training programmes for young diplomats across SEECP

- Develop a joint SEE-level training program for government institutions across the SEE region to enable structured institutional learning and exchange of practical know-how in support of the SDGs.
- **Expand regional diplomatic training programmes for young diplomats**, by building upon the existing SEECP Young Diplomats Forum and aligning with the SEECP participants' priorities and regional diplomacy needs, including regional foreign policy, regional cooperation, and key aspects of multilateralism. These activities will be undertaken under the auspices of the SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office and, in coordination with the RCC, will be structurally embedded in the calendar of activities of the SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office..
- **Organise joint capacity-building initiatives**, such as regional training on modernisation of health treatment protocols and their clinical implementation to ensure consistent quality standards and improved service delivery across SEECP participants.
- **Develop policy proposals and recommendations** derived from the outcomes of these joint training initiatives for consideration within SEE2030 Strategy governance structures.

## 7. Dialogue among SEECP SDG Councils/Committees/Structures

- Establish and organise regular meetings of the SEECP SDG Councils or similar structures with different names to facilitate policy dialogue, peer learning, and experience exchange on SDG implementation, including the preparation of Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs), identification of common challenges, and formulation of regional solutions.
- Use the outcomes of these meetings as inputs for SDG Ministerial meetings that may be convened under SEECP auspices, upon agreement between the RCC and the Chairmanship-in-Office, with the aim of generating practical rec-

ommendations for accelerating SDG implementation at SEECP participant and regional levels.

#### **8. Establish dialogue with the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)**

- The RCC, building on the existing Memorandum of Understanding with the EESC, will organise joint meetings and consultations to expand discussions on SEE-related challenges addressed within the SEE2030 Strategy framework.
- Establish a permanent RCC/SEECP–EESC dialogue mechanism to exchange views on SEE2030 implementation priorities, including youth, skills, and human capital development, as well as key challenges related to socio-economic issues relevant to SEE2030, such as migration and brain drain.

The Strategy foresees the creation of additional regional networks under the SEE2030 Strategy, in addition to the current ones. The establishment of newly proposed regional networks will require the consent of the SEE2030 Strategy Monitoring Committee, in line with its Rules of Procedure, as well as the consent of SEECP Political Directors and the formal decision of the RCC Board.

Each of these regional actions will be accompanied by clear timelines, benchmarks, and assigned responsibilities. Progress on these initiatives will be reviewed annually by the SEE 2030 Monitoring Committee and reported to the SEECP political level, ensuring accountability and sustained momentum. By focusing on a limited set of high-impact actions, the SEE 2030 Strategy will move decisively from strategy to action, delivering visible benefits and building trust in the power of regional cooperation.

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