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RCC STRATEGY AND WORK PROGRAMME

2026 - 2028

Smart, Skilled and Sustainable:
Resilience through Transformation and Development

good.
better.
regional.

Title: RCC STRATEGY AND WORK PROGRAMME 2026-2028
SMART, SKILLED, AND SUSTAINABLE: RESILIENCE THROUGH
TRANSFORMATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Publisher: Regional Cooperation Council
Trg Bosne i Hercegovine 1/V, 71000 Sarajevo
Bosnia and Herzegovina

Tel: +387 33 561 700;

Fax: +387 33 561 701

E-mail: rcc@rcc.int

Website: www.rcc.int

Design: Samir Dedić

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), acting as the operational arm of the South East European Cooperation Process (SEEC), continues to advance its core mission of promoting regional cooperation, inclusive dialogue, and sustainable development across South East Europe (SEE). The Strategy and Work Programme (SWP) 2026-2028, developed in full alignment with the RCC Statute, SEEC political guidance and RCC Board operational guidance, sets out a shared regional pathway to build a resilient, cohesive, and future-ready SEE. This vision is grounded in the understanding that resilience - the ability to withstand, adapt to, and recover from economic, political, social, environmental, and security challenges - is essential to ensuring long-term stability and prosperity in SEE. At a time of increasing complexity and transformation, the region's capacity to act collectively and strategically becomes ever more vital. The SWP responds to this imperative by placing resilience at the core of its approach and by fostering the conditions necessary for inclusive, sustainable, and future-oriented development.

To achieve this, the RCC's strategic agenda for 2026-2028 is framed around three interdependent and mutually reinforcing objectives: fostering Smart development through innovation and digital transformation; enabling Skilled societies by investing in human capital and inclusive opportunities; and supporting a Sustainable future by advancing environmental resilience and socio-economic cohesion. These pillars provide a coherent and flexible structure through which the RCC will engage, support, and connect regional efforts across a broad spectrum of policy areas.

The Strategy and Work Programme closely aligns with the overarching frameworks endorsed by the region, the Common Regional Market (CRM) Action Plan 2025-2028, the South East Europe 2030 Strategy, and the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans (GAWB), each of which contributes distinct yet complementary value to the region's long-term objectives. Together, they reflect a commitment to deeper regional cooperation, sustainable development, and convergence with shared European principles, while recognising the diversity

of pathways among SEE Participants. Through this iteration of the SWP, in the next three years, RCC will focus on leveraging synergies of all three key frameworks in order to streamline and improve implementation of each one of them.

In delivering on this vision, the RCC will apply a horizontal, adaptive, and integrated implementation approach, one that reflects the interconnected nature of regional priorities and enables strategic coherence across sectors. Through inclusive dialogue, regional coordination, and evidence-based policy-guidance, the RCC will support a policy environment where transformation is not only possible but achievable. The RCC's role as a trusted regional convener remains central, helping to align and synchronise diverse efforts, mobilise knowledge, and maintain continuity amidst shifting circumstances.

Internal organisational development will accompany these efforts, ensuring that the RCC remains responsive, credible, and always prepared to meet evolving regional needs. Transparency, accountability, and impact will be ensured through a monitoring and reporting system that enables learning, adaptation, and strategic adjustment. At the same time, the RCC's commitment to inclusive stakeholder engagement and open communication will reinforce trust and shared ownership across all levels of cooperation.

Looking ahead to 2028 and beyond, the RCC reaffirms its mission to serve the region with neutrality, strategic foresight, and inclusive spirit. The SWP 2026-2028 positions the RCC not only to deliver tangible results but to contribute meaningfully to a more stable, sustainable, and better integrated South East Europe - one that is prepared to navigate the challenges of today while shaping the opportunities of tomorrow.

1. Strategic Vision

The Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) serves as an all-inclusive, regionally owned and led framework for promoting cooperation, dialogue, and sustainable development in South East Europe. In its role as the operational arm of the South-East European Cooperation Process (SEECP), the RCC guides, monitors, and supports regional cooperation efforts aimed at fostering stability, prosperity, and advancing cooperation with European and Euro-Atlantic structures.

The Strategy and Work Programme (SWP) 2026-2028 has been developed in full accordance with the Statute of the Regional Cooperation Council, as a *sine qua non* for the RCC, and in close cooperation with its participants from South East Europe, the European Union, and international partners. As such, it translates the region's shared priorities into coordinated action, supports inclusive and sustainable economic and social development and better integration, and promotes human security across South East Europe (SEE). The SWP 2026-2028 is guided by a shared vision of a resilient, cohesive, and forward-looking SEE, grounded in democratic governance, innovation-driven economic growth, strengthened human security, and deepened regional and international cooperation. This vision acknowledges that resilience, the ability to anticipate, withstand, and adapt to economic, political, social, environmental, and security challenges, is fundamental to ensuring the region's long-term stability and prosperity. Sustainable economic development and enhanced human security are substantial for building inclusive, competitive, and future-ready societies.

Guided by this vision, the RCC aims to support the region's collective efforts to foster dynamic and resilient economies, strengthen social cohesion, empower institutions, and enhance the capacity of societies to manage risks and seize opportunities in an evolving European and global environment.

The SWP reinforces this vision by closely aligning with and encompassing three regionally endorsed frameworks:

- ▶ The Common Regional Market Action Plan 2025-2028 (CRM 2.0),
- ▶ The SEE 2030 Strategy,
- ▶ The Green Agenda for the Western Balkans (GAWB).

These frameworks reflect the collective commitment of SEE and the Western Balkans Six as its integral part to deepen regional cooperation and integration, promote sustainable socio-economic development, and advance convergence with EU standards and values. In this role, the RCC will continue to facilitate coordination, foster inclusive policy dialogue, and, through its convening power, bring together regional and international stakeholders to advance the implementation of shared priorities across the region.

Three interrelated and future-oriented objectives emerge from the three frameworks to guide RCC's work.

2. Objectives: Resilient Region through Smart, Skilled, Sustainable Development

The overarching theme of this SWP: **Smart, Skilled, and Sustainable: Resilience through Transformation and Development** serves as the conceptual framework through which RCC supports the region's transformation.

These objectives reflect and operationalise the region's collective agenda by strengthening security cooperation, regional resilience, and long-term human security and socio-economic developments:

Smart

Advancing forward-looking, evidence-based, and adaptive approaches to regional development. This includes fostering innovation ecosystems, accelerating digital transformation, and applying smart, scalable, and future-proof solutions to improve governance, strengthen institutional capacities, and ensure the region remains agile and competitive in a rapidly evolving global environment. RCC will support development of a regional digital market through enhancing e-services and digital infrastructure, improving cybersecurity, and encouraging the adoption of EU-aligned digital standards—positioning the region to fully leverage the benefits of the digital economy.

Skilled

Building a resilient and adaptable society by strengthening inclusive education systems, future-oriented skills, and responsive labour markets. Empowering individuals—especially youth, women, and vulnerable groups— and enabling labour mobility will unlock the region's human capital and ensure inclusive participation in economic transformation across all levels of society. RCC will also support efforts to harmonise educational qualifications and professional standards across the region, facilitating regional labour mobility (both internal but also external in order to support growth strategies), reducing skill

mismatches, and aligning workforce development with evolving market needs and EU practices.

Sustainable

Promoting just and inclusive green transition, environmental resilience, and socio-economic cohesion. This entails supporting low-carbon development, circular economy models, and stronger environmental governance, ensuring that transformation is fair, equitable, and aligned with both regional and global sustainability commitments. RCC will also promote renewable energy projects, enhance energy efficiency, and encourage the alignment of environmental regulations with EU directives, helping the region meet its climate goals while supporting green growth and energy security.

These objectives are not separate from the region's existing commitments, they stem from and support the implementation of the CRM 2.0, GAWB, and SEE 2030 frameworks. They also form the basis for the thematic areas and operational modalities outlined in the sections that follow.

3. RCC Delivery Enablers: Operating Model for Impact

To successfully deliver on its strategic objectives and ensure the effective implementation of its Work Programme, the RCC will rely on a coherent set of delivery enablers. These enablers reflect RCC's core institutional strengths, its operational logic, and the principles that guide how it engages with regional and international stakeholders. Collectively, they shape RCC's contribution to inclusive policy development and reinforce its capacity to produce tangible impact.

3.1 RCC as a Regional Convener

The RCC has established itself as a trusted and neutral platform for regional cooperation, using its convening power and agreed political language to build bridges across diverse policy areas and stakeholders. This convening capacity is a cornerstone of RCC's role and is instrumental in aligning regional priorities and fostering coordination at all levels of governance.

In this role, the RCC will continue its mission to bring together key stakeholders from across the region, including executive authorities, legislative bodies, the private sector, academia, civil society, and other international organisations for constructive dialogue. Through the facilitation of inclusive policy dialogues, the RCC should ensure broad participation in shaping regional agendas and collaborative solutions.

The RCC will contribute to strengthening evidence-based policymaking through knowledge-sharing and analytical inputs, helping to inform regional cooperation efforts and further establishing its position as a trusted partner in the region.

3.2 Governance & Political Dialogue

Building on its established role as a trusted regional player, the RCC will continue to foster an environment conducive to constructive political engagement and consensus-building across South East Europe. Its efforts in this domain will be shaped by a commitment to inclusive governance, political neutrality, and responsiveness to shared regional priorities.

To that end, the RCC will pursue the following activities:

- ▶ Strengthening mutual trust among stakeholders by promoting inclusive, transparent, accountable, and consensus-based processes that facilitate genuine cooperation and confidence in regional dialogue mechanisms;
- ▶ Leveraging political support from its governance structures, including the RCC Board Participants, SEECP Participants, and international partners, to ensure alignment, reinforce legitimacy, and maintain momentum in the implementation of shared regional priorities;
- ▶ Maintaining RCC's neutrality and offering clarity and predictability through adherence to politically agreed language, which will remain critical to fostering trust and enabling sustained, inclusive, and constructive dialogue across diverse political contexts and actors in the region.

3.3 Support Evidence-Based Policymaking & Research

The RCC will continue to strengthen its capacity to support evidence-driven decision-making to reinforce its work with timely, credible analysis that enhances strategic relevance. This is to be done by:

- ▶ Enhancing analytical capacity to support regional policy formulation with reliable evidence;
- ▶ Strengthening existing research capacities to inform strategic decision-making and increase policy credibility of regionally endorsed frameworks;

- ▶ Leveraging this capacity to position RCC as regional provider of evidence-based policy recommendations, supporting coherence, innovation, and trust among its stakeholders.

Knowledge assets of the existing instruments implemented by RCC via established flagship initiatives (such as Balkan Barometer, SecuriMeter, Balkathon, Butterfly Innovation Award, etc.) or other instruments to be developed in the future will be incorporated to support the capacity of evidence-based policymaking and research.

3.4 Stakeholder Engagement

To reinforce inclusive regional cooperation and strengthen the ownership of its initiatives, RCC will engage stakeholders to ensure policy coherence and accountability, but also to foster long-term trust through the following key activities:

- ▶ Engaging a broad range of partners through a bottom-up, participatory approach to policy design and delivery, ensuring ownership and that the voices of diverse stakeholders are reflected in regional priorities and implementation processes;
- ▶ Ensuring close internal alignment and coordination with donor compliance expectations and strategic reporting mechanisms, reinforcing transparency, credibility, and the effectiveness of RCC-led initiatives;
- ▶ Promoting inclusive governance by fostering cooperation with media, civil society, and youth, recognising their critical role in shaping public discourse, driving accountability, and enhancing the sustainability and legitimacy of regional cooperation efforts.

3.5. Regional Cooperation in Support of EU and Euro-Atlantic Integration

- ▶ Sustaining regional cooperation, a key strategic instrument for advancing both European Union and Euro-Atlantic integration, as outlined in RCC's Statute.

- ▶ Supporting regionally owned agendas, CRM 2.0 and GAWB, with EU priorities and standards, in line with these strategic paths.
- ▶ Facilitating implementation of political commitments made within the Berlin Process through ensuring coordination between high-level political decisions and operational delivery.
- ▶ Serving as an operational platform for bridging political frameworks with implementation mechanisms in a coherent, regionally owned manner.

4. Thematic Workstreams: Advancing Regional Priorities

To operationalise its strategic objectives, the RCC will focus its actions on a set of thematic workstreams. These reflect the region's collective agenda as defined by the CRM 2.0, the GAWB, and the SEE 2030 Strategy.

Each workstream is embedded in the Smart, Skilled, and Sustainable objectives and directly contributes to enhancing human security, regional cohesion, and long-term resilience.

4.1 Advancing Regional Economic Integration of the Western Balkans Six (CRM 2.0 Implementation)

Objective: Deepen regional economic integration in the Western Balkans Six and unlock the developmental potentials of the region by supporting full implementation of CRM 2.0 Action Plan through actions that boost socio-economic convergence between the Western Balkans Six and the EU, promote four freedoms, advance business enabling environment, thrive human capital and enhance digitalisation and innovation ecosystems. CRM 2.0 will help advance economic development and integration, societal advancement and cohesion across WB6.

Relevance: CRM 2.0 represents a regionally-owned framework based on the EU rules and standards aimed at enhancing competitiveness and economic development and cooperation in the Western Balkans Six. It serves as a catalyst for growth and attractiveness, contributing to the long-term economic growth of the region and supporting its fair, green and digital transition. CRM 2.0 is an integral part of the EU's Growth Plan for the Western Balkans Six and complements the efforts of phasing-in to EU policies with the ultimate goal of integrating the WB6 in the EU Single Market and fostering regional cooperation and convergence with the EU.

Key Actions:

- ▶ Promote human capital development as a foundation for long-term economic resilience by supporting labour mobility and facilitating equitable access to economic opportunities, closing the skills gap, and supporting education quality assurance.
- ▶ Support future-proof regional economic development by addressing structural inequalities to ensure equal opportunities and benefits and enable social cohesion.
- ▶ Create a robust and competitive economic landscape aligned with EU standards by promoting a conducive environment for investment and business.
- ▶ Boost regional digitalisation by bringing the region closer to the EU Digital Single Market and offering better e-services for citizens and businesses.
- ▶ Develop a comprehensive monitoring mechanism for CRM 2.0 by establishing a defined set of measurable indicators for each pillar to systematically assess outcomes, track progress, and generate actionable insights that support evidence-based decision-making and promote regional integration.

4.1.1. Human Capital Development

Objective: Strengthen human capital as a cornerstone of socio-economic resilience and development by enhancing skills development, enabling labour mobility, fostering innovation, and aligning social protection systems with EU standards. This will contribute to the creation of a dynamic, competitive, and sustainable regional economy and support the region's progressive integration into the EU Single Market.

Relevance: The Western Balkans Six face acute demographic shifts, skills mismatches, and persistent emigration. While the implementation of the CRM Action Plan has facilitated important steps in academic and professional recognition and internal mobility, more decisive action is required to retain and attract talent, close skills gaps, and boost innovation. Human Capital

Development under CRM 2.0 builds on previous achievements, emphasising education quality, social rights portability, reliance on innovative practices, and skills for green and digital transitions. These efforts are vital to making the region more attractive for workers and businesses and ensuring meaningful socio-economic convergence with the EU.

Key Actions:

- ▶ Enhance education and vocational training to strengthen the Western Balkans Six workforce by expanding higher education access, accelerating qualification recognition, unifying standards, and fostering inclusion, ensuring competitive growth and sustainable socio-economic resilience across the region.
- ▶ Modernise labour and social protection framework in line with EU standards by easing work permit procedures, harmonising licensing and ensuring social rights portability.
- ▶ Strengthen regional innovation ecosystem through targeted policies, fostering academia-business collaboration, accelerating start-up readiness, and expanding commercialisation pathways in common Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3) priorities.
- ▶ Foster socio-economic resilience by advancing sustainable green and deep tech solutions, mitigating brain drain, establishing and employing competitive research and innovation facilities, and streamlining industry services across the Western Balkans Six.

4.1.2. Business Enabling Environment and Competitiveness

Objective: Establish a robust, competitive economic landscape that aligns with EU standards, while fostering sustainable development through sustainable, digital and consumer finance, promoting sustainable investments, and driving the greening of industries and development of SMEs in line not only with the CRM 2.0 but with GAWB, and as a contribution to the implementation of SEE2030.

Relevance: Establishing an enabling environment, with a focus on financing, investment, industry, and SMEs—viewed through the lens of sustainability and inclusivity — is a critical precondition for achieving robust, long-term, and sustainable convergence with the EU. A favourable and competitive environment has the potential to increase annual GDP growth by 2%, attract up to 6.5% more investment, and raise the employment growth rate by up to 1% per year, while enhancing SME productivity by 5% to 10%.

Key Actions:

- ▶ Support mobilisation of capital for sustainable initiatives by creating an enabling environment and tools for sustainable finance.
- ▶ Promote proliferation of digital finance solutions by facilitating regional exchange of know-how and networking.
- ▶ Advance consumer finance by modernising and integrating payment systems in the region to enable faster, cost-effective transactions and support financial education.
- ▶ Attract sustainable FDI and maximise the impact of existing FDI by establishing regional benchmarks for upgrading investment policies, promotion, and facilitation.
- ▶ Strengthen regional capacities by providing advisory support for the prevention and management of investment disputes.
- ▶ Enhance regular monitoring of industrial development and regional industrial cooperation by creating a Regional Economic Observatory and collecting regional intelligence on industrial developments.
- ▶ Support industrial transformation by promoting green industries and sustainable practices.
- ▶ Support business sector competitiveness and SME access to finance.
- ▶ Enhance competitiveness of the tourism sector.
- ▶ Advance women economic empowerment for inclusive growth and competitiveness.

4.1.3. Digital Transformation

Objective: To accelerate digital transformation through a structured high-level regional dialogue by promoting investment in broadband and 5G, improving interoperability and e-service delivery for citizens, fostering development of emerging technologies, supporting evidence-based policy and cyber resilience with the ultimate goal of bringing the WB6 closer to EU Digital Single Market.

Relevance: Digital transformation is a catalyst for achieving inclusive, sustainable, and resilient development across the region. Leveraging digital technologies will streamline administrative processes, reduce bureaucracy, offer citizens and businesses convenient online access to public services and boost economic competitiveness. Promoting broadband deployment, fostering digital literacy, improving interoperability, and strengthening data management are essential for driving innovation across multiple sectors. Tracking the digital progress and fostering development of emerging technologies will create new economic opportunities, while prioritising cybersecurity and aligning regulatory frameworks with EU standards and frameworks will contribute to reducing some of the gaps and needs in the region. These advancements will not only create a more attractive and interconnected environment for businesses and investments across the Western Balkans Six, including better skilled workforce but will also help align the region more closely with the EU's broader digital objectives.

Key Actions:

- ▶ Support accelerated digital connectivity by coordinating regional processes aimed at advancing digital infrastructure developments, and reducing further roaming prices between the EU and WB6 and costs of intra-WB6 calls, while promoting digital literacy.
- ▶ Promote effective use of open data, digital public services and people-centric solutions, foster development of regional interoperable services and use of smart governance solutions, including through the advancement in using Artificial Intelligence (AI) and other emerging technologies.
- ▶ Strengthen regional dialogue on digital transformation through high-level and structured dialogue within annual WB6 Digital Summit, enhanced participation of private sector and academia in addressing digital

transformation challenges, and facilitated cooperation with international community and other stakeholders.

- ▶ Support evidence-based policymaking by establishing an agile monitoring framework, including through the measurement of digital economy and society index (DESI).
- ▶ Build cyber resilience by promoting regional solutions and response, networking and peer-to-peer learning, enabling experience and best practices exchange, promoting whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach, etc.

4.2 Enabling Green Transformation (GAWB Implementation)

Objective: Advance implementation of the GAWB 2021–2030 Action Plan, strengthening regional cooperation, monitoring, and stakeholder engagement to align the WB6 with European and global sustainability goals.

Relevance: The GAWB serves as the key framework guiding the region's transition towards climate neutrality and sustainable development. Its successful implementation strengthens the WB6 alignment with the European Green Deal, supports the EU accession processes, and promotes long-term social and economic resilience. Led by the RCC, the process remains inclusive, coordinated, and result-oriented, and fosters partnerships across governments, regional partners, donors, private sector, and civil society.

Key Actions:

- ▶ Provide strategic leadership for the Green Agenda by convening annual GAWB Ministerial Meetings, regular Regional Working Group and Biodiversity Task Force sessions, and coordinate 2028 revision of the GAWB Action Plan.
- ▶ Operationalise GAWB Observatory Platform as a regional tool for tracking progress, sharing knowledge, and promoting transparency, and continue producing Annual GAWB Implementation Reports to assess progress and propose adaptive measures.

- ▶ Support finalisation and implementation of key regional frameworks – including the WB6 Climate Adaptation Roadmap, the Western Balkans 6 Biodiversity Strategic Plan, and the Regional Action Plan on Plastic Pollution Prevention, including Marine Litter – while promoting Nature-Based Solutions in line with the Hamburg Declaration to strengthen climate resilience and energy efficiency.
- ▶ Prioritise activities that highlight the public health benefits of decarbonisation and depollution – including reducing premature mortality linked to coal combustion, advancing regional cooperation on emissions reduction commitments, and fostering equitable opportunities across the region.
- ▶ Promote circular economy transition by facilitating structured dialogue among governments, businesses, and stakeholders through the RCC-Western Balkans 6 Chamber Investment Forum (WB6CIF)-led Western Balkans Green and Circular Economy Stakeholders Platform, and support its integration into the European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform to enhance regional and EU- level cooperation.
- ▶ Strengthen donor coordination frameworks and foster strategic partnerships to align financing with GAWB priorities, close existing funding gaps, and enhance absorption capacities in the WB6.

4.3 Facilitating All-Inclusive Regional Cooperation to Promote Resilient and Sustainable Development in South East Europe (SEE 2030 Strategy Implementation)

Objective: Co-steering the governance structures of SEE2030 Strategy in continuous and attentive consultation with the rotating SEECF Chairmanships-in-Office and other SEECF Participants to ensure transparent and accountable regional cooperation platforms for the implementation of regional bottom-up initiatives promoting a resilient and inclusive development, decelerating depopulation through enhancing human security conditions and quality of life in the SEE region.

Relevance: The SEE 2030 Strategy is regionally owned initiative, stemming from the jointly shared challenges faced by all SEE Participants, as identified in

their strategies aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Agenda 2030, and in the policy areas where regional action is justified. SEE 2030 Strategy envisions SEE as a single integrated region of Europe comprising both EU Member States and EU aspirant Participants, all committed to enhancing regional cohesion within SEE and accelerating convergence with the European Union. The UN SDGs, EU policies, and other international best practices guide the region's collective efforts to achieve resilient, sustainable and inclusive growth with social equity, ensuring that no one is left behind.

Key Actions:

- ▶ Support alignment of SEE2030 actions with the needs of the SEE region by consulting closely with SEECF Participants and regularly adapting governance structures, priorities, and actions to the evolving needs of regional cooperation.
- ▶ Assist in developing regional initiatives to respond to the needs shared by all, designed by joint consultation, which are to be implemented through evidence-based policy instruments.
- ▶ Concentrate on prioritising actions, particularly those aimed at creating sustainable mechanisms - preferably through public-private partnerships - to achieve tangible and long-term results.
- ▶ Facilitate regional networking and intra- and extra-regional connectivity to utilise the collective capacities of SEE region to leverage its scale in developing innovative and regionally tailored tools to achieve its objectives adopted by SEE2030 governance structures in line with the guidance provided at SEECF Summits.

4.4 Consolidating Security Cooperation and Regional Resilience in South East Europe

Objective: Build on the RCC's established role in regional security cooperation by maintaining and further supporting existing frameworks, enhancing institutional resilience where relevant, and promoting coordinated responses to evolving security risks in line with regional and European priorities.

Relevance: A stable, secure, and resilient South East Europe—and the Western Balkans Six in particular—remains a prerequisite for sustainable development and European integration. Building on RCC’s established role as a political facilitator of regional security cooperation, preservation and adaptability of existing cooperation frameworks remain crucial in the face of evolving challenges. Resilience and citizen-centred security are essential to sustaining progress in a region facing complex political, social, and climate-related challenges.

Key Actions:

- ▶ Consolidate strategic dialogue and evidence-based approaches by advancing the Annual Regional (Jumbo) Security Conference and the SecuriMeter survey as key tools for regional dialogue, security policymaking and trust-building.
- ▶ Maintain and support existing security cooperation platforms (Integrative Internal Security Governance (IISG), South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC), Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Initiative for South East Europe (DPPI SEE), South East Europe Military Intelligence Chiefs’ Forum (SEEMIC), South East Europe National Security Authorities (SEENSA)) to ensure continued regional dialogue, coordination, and effectiveness.
- ▶ Promote regional parliamentary dialogue and cooperation to strengthen democratic processes, reinforce institutional trust, and promote alignment with European governance standards.
- ▶ Foster regional cooperation in justice and rule of law to support trust, institutional effectiveness, and alignment with European legal and democratic standards.
- ▶ Promote regional dialogue and cooperation on internal security, cross-border/boundary coordination, and crisis response to strengthen coordination, enhance preparedness, and support alignment with European approaches to comprehensive security.

5. Leveraging complementarities between CRM, GAWB, and SEE2030 for comprehensive sustainable development

The synergy between RCC and SEEC, as defined by the RCC Statute, constitutes one of the main cornerstones of an all-inclusive regional cooperation framework. The complementarities among SEE2030, CRM 2.0, and the GAWB, despite their varying geographic scopes, offer significant benefits for building a multidimensional and coherent platform for regional development.

SEE2030 serves as a framework that brings SEEC Participants together for collective action across the SEE region. It focuses on fostering policy coherence from a whole-of-society perspective and aims to enhance regional cooperation towards a sustainable and resilient South East Europe, as one of Europe's regions. Accordingly, strengthening connectivity within SEE, and between SEE and its neighbouring European and non-European regions, can be achieved by enhancing collaboration between RCC and SEEC mechanisms.

SEE2030 also interacts with CRM 2.0 and GAWB. Through SEE2030, SEEC enhances synergy and complements the implementation of CRM 2.0 and GAWB, while the WB6 deepen their regional cooperation not only in pursuit of EU integration but also in achieving the SEE2030 targets and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through the implementation of CRM 2.0 and GAWB.

The RCC will stand at the intersection of these three initiatives and their respective governance structures. Therefore, its deepened, evidence-based actions in the policy clusters that connect the three strategic initiatives will be of critical importance. Clustering RCC's institutional capacity across cross-cutting policy areas and coordinating the three initiatives through these policy clusters will maximise synergies among them, contributing to a more coherent and integrated approach for South East Europe as an integrated region.

This alignment mechanism will be based on three interlinked components:

5.1 Institutional Coordination Approach

RCC will undertake the following steps to improve coordination among these three strategic initiatives through its internal resources and reporting structures.

1. **RCC Regular Reporting to SEECF:** regular meetings of SEECF Political Directors, convened by the rotating SEECF Chairmanships-in-Office, will serve as the main platform through which the RCC provides verbal updates on the consolidated implementation of its strategic initiatives. Written updates on each initiative will also be made available upon request from any SEECF Participant.
2. **Facilitating Monitoring of Coordinated Implementation:** SEE2030 structures will receive consolidated verbal reports on the coordinated implementation of relevant priorities across SEE2030, CRM 2.0, and the GAWB, particularly those highlighted during the SEECF Skopje Summit, such as strengthening human capital, decelerating brain drain, enhancing the rule of law, and fostering sustainable economic development.
3. **Clustering Policy Areas within the RCC:** wherever feasible and appropriate, the RCC will consider restructuring its internal capacities by establishing thematic policy clusters. These clusters will facilitate cross-initiative alignment and reduce fragmentation, replacing initiative-specific resource allocation with a more integrated and impact-oriented approach. Clear internal guidelines should be developed to define the scope, timeline, and functional role of each cluster.

CRM 2.0 and GAWB follow a structured institutional coordination approach aimed at streamlining the process of delivery and monitoring of the results. The institutional coordination has three dimensions:

1. **Technical coordination:** enabling structured and coordinated regional dialogue on each respective agenda through regional working groups and networks and engaging with institutions of the WB6.
2. **Political coordination:** engaging regularly with WB6 Prime Minister's Sherpas to define regional priority actions under CRM 2.0 and GAWB,

discuss the main challenges and way forward. The meeting of PM Sherpas serves also to review the progress made across different policy agendas and build on the needs and developments across the region, in line with EU integration process as well as sustainable development goals. Ministerial discussions on respective agendas are also instrumental to the decision-making and endorsement of key deliverables. In this context, a dedicated Ministerial meeting on GAWB has been introduced in 2024 to enhance political visibility and governance of the GAWB, complementing other Ministerial processes across the RCC-led regional cooperation framework.

3. **Intra-regional institutional coordination:** engaging with regional partners such as CEFTA, WB6 Chamber Investment Forum, Transport Community Secretariat, Energy Community Secretariat, International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Standing Working Group on Rural Development, Regional Youth Cooperation Council (RYCO) and Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA) to ensure synergies and complementarities in the implementation of CRM 2.0 and GAWB.

5.2 Results Monitoring and Shared Reporting

The RCC will ensure that regional initiatives remain focused, coherent, and aligned with EU priorities. Systematic monitoring and reporting will enable beneficiaries, stakeholders, partner organisations, and donors to assess real progress, while the RCC will be able to adjust actions where necessary. These efforts will cover all major thematic workstreams – CRM 2.0, GAWB and SEE2030 Strategy. Each framework, while maintaining its own specific tracking tools and reporting mechanisms, will be further aligned to contribute to an overarching objective: achieving resilience through economic development and transformation.

Data collection and performance monitoring will be anchored within existing structures, such as working groups, contact points and steering bodies, and will be conducted in close collaboration with beneficiaries and partner organisations. Methodologies will continue to combine both quantitative and qualitative approaches, adapted to the thematic workstreams concerned. Drawing on multiple sources of information, the RCC will systematically track

progress under CRM 2.0, GAWB, and SEE2030, identifying key achievements as well as bottlenecks and delays. Monitoring outputs will be enhanced not only to assess progress but also to generate targeted, actionable recommendations that address challenges and accelerate implementation across all thematic workstreams.

To ensure coherence, transparency, and to reduce administrative burden, the RCC will maintain its inclusive, consolidated reporting framework. The Annual Report of the Secretary General will remain the cornerstone of RCC's monitoring and evaluation efforts, integrating progress from CRM 2.0, GAWB, and SEE2030 into a single, comprehensive report. This approach will offer beneficiaries, partner organisations, stakeholders and donors a clear, holistic view of regional developments, while reinforcing accountability and ownership. In addition, annual reports on implementation are to be produced for each workstream to allow for detailed tracking of progress. By doing so, the RCC will ensure that its monitoring and reporting system remains a vital tool for promoting effective regional cooperation and guiding evidence-based policymaking.

6. Implementation Approach

Complementing its strategic facilitative coordination role in the implementation of regionally endorsed frameworks SEE2030, CRM 2.0, and GAWB (as outlined in Section 5.1), the RCC's implementation model for 2026–2028 will prioritise strengthening its internal delivery mechanisms, institutional agility and adaptability, and operational effectiveness. While building on the established logic of the previous SWP cycle, this new phase leverages a renewed emphasis on resilience, agility, and future-readiness.

To deliver on its objectives in a complex and evolving regional environment, the RCC will apply a horizontal, flexible, and integrated implementation approach. This model will support the pursuit of strategic priorities in a parallel and coordinated manner, fully aligned with RCC's convening and facilitation mandate.

It reflects the understanding that regional development must be inherently interconnected. To support effective delivery of its mandate, the RCC will rely on a set of complementary implementation practices designed to promote coherence, alignment, and adaptability across its activities. This will include sustained engagement with regional and institutional partners, coordinated planning across thematic areas, and efforts to strengthen alignment with broader programming and political processes. Enhanced internal coordination, the use of monitoring tools, and regular dialogue with relevant governance structures will contribute to maintaining strategic focus and ensuring responsiveness to evolving regional needs.

This forward-looking implementation model will ensure that the RCC remains adaptive, collaborative, and results-oriented, while maintaining coherence and generating tangible impact across all areas of its mandate.

In parallel, the RCC will invest in targeted institutional development to reinforce its position as a credible, responsive, and future-ready regional factor. These efforts are more than administrative, they represent a strategic investment in RCC's ability to meet higher standards of delivery and accountability. The focus

will include advancing preparations for a successful Pillar Assessment as well as looking for better models of organisational and financial sustainability, within the provisions of the RCC Statute and other relevant governing documents and under the guidance of the RCC Board.

By following this capacity-building trajectory, the RCC will be well-positioned to meet the institutional standards required for expanded partnerships, greater policy influence, and enhanced responsiveness to regional priorities. In doing so, the RCC will emerge as a truly resilient, flexible, and relevant regional factor – fully prepared to navigate change and lead regional cooperation in a rapidly evolving context.

7. Risk Prediction and Mitigation

Implementing the RCC SWP will occur in a complex evolving environment shaped by political, security, economic, and social factors. Delivering on RCC's strategic goals will require a flexible, adaptive, and resilient approach. Risks are recognised not as obstacles, but as assumptions that frame the operational environment within which RCC will continue to perform its coordination role responsibly.

The RCC assumes that regional political volatility occasionally might challenge consensus on certain initiatives. While Participant-level political cycles may introduce periods of instability, RCC will continue to rely on its established dialogue mechanisms through SEECF, the RCC Board, and diplomatic channels to sustain regional cooperation even during fluctuating political contexts.

The RCC further assumes that brain drain and youth emigration will persist as structural challenges across SEE. Although reversing these trends lies beyond RCC's direct control, RCC will continue supporting youth engagement initiatives and advocating for regional policies that invest in human capital as a pillar of resilience and sustainable development.

Finally, it is assumed that uneven progress in digital transformation could impact the region's capacity to leverage innovation-driven growth fully. While RCC cannot directly accelerate Participant-level reforms, it will foster digital innovation dialogue through its agendas, highlighting the importance of modernisation under frameworks like SEE2030.

In addition to these regional dynamics, RCC recognises internal risks such as resource limitations and institutional capacity strain. Limited resources and potential staffing challenges may affect the pace and scope of RCC's actions; therefore, RCC will prioritise phased implementation, internal reforms aligned with institutional development goals (e.g. Pillar Assessment), and strategic use of partnerships to maintain operational agility.

Reputational risks are also acknowledged, particularly around CRM 2.0, GAWB, and SEE2030 coordination expectations. To mitigate these, RCC will maintain transparent communication, realistic goal-setting, and expectation management, ensuring that outputs are measurable and that messaging is transparent and credible.

Lastly, external geopolitical and economic shocks may redirect attention and funding away from regional cooperation. RCC assumes that such shocks will occur periodically but will build flexibility into its work programming, reinforce its role as a trusted coordination platform during crises, and continue advocating for the regional cooperation agenda as an essential element of stability.

The RCC will monitor its risk landscape regularly through Annual Reports, political consultations with SEECF and RCC Board Participants, and donor coordination processes. Strategic and operational adjustments, if needed, will be proportionate, timely, and entirely consistent with RCC's mandate and character, ensuring that RCC remains adaptive, credible, and forward-looking.

8. Strategic Communication and Outreach

Objective: To maintain strong visibility of the RCC and its regional and international profile, and foster a shared sense of ownership of and trust in regional cooperation by communicating the value, results, and impact of its work to key audiences across South East Europe and beyond.

Relevance: In an increasingly complex information environment, strategic communication is critical not only to keep raising awareness of RCC's role and initiatives but also to build support for regional cooperation, EU integration, people-oriented tangible deliverables, and shared development goals. Clear, transparent, and timely communication reinforces RCC's credibility as a trusted regional actor and amplifies the impact of its convening and coordination efforts.

Key Actions:

- ▶ Keep RCC's public voice amplified through proactive storytelling, public campaigns, and media engagement that highlight success stories, shared goals, regional achievements, and RCC's role in connecting agendas and people.
- ▶ Keep RCC's digital presence strong by using web, social media, and multimedia tools (short videos, photos, infographics, animations) to engage broader audiences in an accessible and relatable way.
- ▶ Promote transparency and accountability through regular updates on activities, key results, and strategic priorities, including the use of digital dashboards and visual reports.
- ▶ Tailor messages to diverse audiences including regional governments and policymakers, SEE citizens, EU institutions, regional and international organisations, donors, media, private sector, and civil society, ensuring that communication supports political buy-in, grassroots understanding, and regional ownership.

- ▶ Partner with regional organisations to boost reach and relevance, especially among young audiences, including co-creating content that promotes RCC-led initiatives such as the Common Regional Market, Green Agenda, and SEE2030 Strategy.
- ▶ Ensure visibility of donor support by aligning communication around shared goals and showcasing the impact of strategic partnerships.
- ▶ Support strategic events and campaigns across the SEE that position RCC as a platform for dialogue, innovation, and regional solidarity.

9. Towards 2028 and beyond: Sustaining momentum for regional transformation

The RCC remains firmly committed to fostering regional dialogue across SEE. Driven by a spirit of partnership, innovation, and inclusiveness, the SWP 2026–2028 charts a bold course towards sustainable and inclusive economic development, while advancing the region's alignment with EU priorities. At the heart of these efforts lies a vision for forward-looking South East Europe - grounded in economic integration, human security, inclusive growth, and deepened regional and international cooperation.

By the end of 2028, the RCC will drive the delivery of tangible results across its strategic priorities, strengthening South East Europe's economic development, competitiveness, and cohesion. It will promote human capital development as the foundation of long-term economic sustainability, foster inclusive labour mobility and economic participation, and work to address structural inequalities that hinder social cohesion. The RCC will champion region's digital and green transformation, support development of a more competitive and diversified economy, and promote sustainable industrial growth. In parallel, the RCC will deepen regional security cooperation, recognising that strengthening stability and resilience is essential amidst ongoing geopolitical shifts. Equally important, the RCC will support efforts to achieve regionally sustainable economic growth, reduce poverty and inequality, improve social inclusion, empower women, decelerate depopulation, and enhance the overall quality of life for citizens. Throughout, the RCC will remain guided by the principles of inclusiveness, transparency and accountability, recognising that these require sustained investment, coordination, and political commitment.

Looking beyond 2028, the RCC will work to adapt to emerging challenges and opportunities by strengthening its strategic adaptability, agility, and future-readiness. As the region evolves, so too must the RCC. The coming years will be critical not only for delivering results under current frameworks but also for preparing the RCC for what is to come. This will involve consolidating the

RCC's role as a regional convener and trusted facilitator of political dialogue and consensus-building. It will also require investing in institutional reforms to enhance operational capability and financial sustainability, and strengthening its capacity to act in times of volatility and opportunity alike. The RCC will pursue targeted actions to strengthen operational flexibility, financial resilience, and long-term credibility as a trusted partner. This represents a strategic investment in the RCC's future, designed to prepare RCC and create necessary conditions for a successful Pillar Assessment. Reaching these objectives will be pivotal for unlocking new funding opportunities, increasing operational flexibility, and reinforcing the RCC's influence as a catalyst for deeper regional cooperation and European integration.

Abbreviations list

Abbreviation	Full Form
AI	Artificial Intelligence
BDTF WB6	Biodiversity Task Force of the Western Balkans 6
CEFTA	Central European Free Trade Agreement
CoE	Council of Europe
CRM	Common Regional Market
DPP	Digital Product Passport
DPPI SEE	Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Initiative for South East Europe
DESI	Digital Economy and Society Index
EC	European Commission
EISMEA	European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency
EIT	European Institute of Innovation and Technology
eIDAS	Electronic Identification, Authentication and Trust Services
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
EQAR	European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education
ERISEE	Education Reform Initiative of Southern East Europe
ESG	Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area
EU	European Union

FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FinTech	Financial Technology
GAWB	Green Agenda for the Western Balkans
GiZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
HEI	Higher Education Institution
IFC	International Finance Corporation
IISG	Integrative Internal Security Governance
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
JTIs	Judicial Training Institutes
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
MARRI	Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PM	Prime Minister
PSP	Payment Service Provider
QA	Quality Assurance
RCC	Regional Cooperation Council
ReSPA	Regional School of Public Administration
RSI	Responsible Sustainable Investment
RYCO	Regional Youth Cooperation Office
S3	Smart Specialisation Strategy

SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SEEMIC	South East Europe Military Intelligence Chiefs' Forum
SEENSA	South East Europe National Security Authorities
SEESAC	South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons
SEE	South East Europe
SEE2030	South East Europe 2030 Strategy
SEECF	South-East European Cooperation Process
SEPA	Single Euro Payments Area
SMEs	Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
SWG RRD	Standing Working Group for Regional Rural Development
SWP	Strategy and Work Programme
TCPS	Transport Community Permanent Secretariat
TIPS	TARGET Instant Payment Settlement
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
VC	Venture Capital
WB6	Western Balkans Six
WB6 CIF	Western Balkans 6 Chamber Investment Forum
WBCIF	Western Balkans Circular Economy Initiatives Forum
WBBSP	Western Balkans Biodiversity Strategic Plan

ANNEX 1.

Work Programme 2026-2028

Area of intervention	Description of actions	Expected results	Partners	Timeframe
4.1. Advancing Regional Economic Integration of the Western Balkans Six (CRM 2.0 Implementation)				
4.1.1. Human Capital Development				
Standards in education and quality assurance	Facilitate access for WB6 students to EU public HEIs through streamlined admissions and qualification recognition; extend recognition frameworks to private HEIs; facilitate alignment of WB6 QA agencies with ESG; facilitate implementation of digital evaluation platforms and promote quality culture across HEIs.	Improved academic mobility and qualification recognition; recognition extended to private HEIs; ESG-aligned QA agencies registered with ENQA/EQAR; enhanced quality assurance via digital platforms and institutional capacity-building.	EC, ERISSE, WB6	2026-2028
Closing the skills gap	Promote the free movement of workers within the WB6 by enabling portability of social rights and simplifying work permit procedures; harmonise regional STEM education policies and develop standard curricula through multi-stakeholder partnerships.	Improved regional labour mobility; STEM education systems aligned with global standards; increased collaboration between education and industry; expanded practical learning opportunities.	CEFTA, WB6, ERISSE, EU STEM Coalition	2026-2028

Area of intervention	Description of actions	Expected results	Partners	Timeframe
Labour market reform for economic opportunities	Facilitate coordination of WB6 social security systems to align with EU social security standards.	Improved regional cooperation on social security; increased portability and equal treatment of benefits; progress towards alignment with EU Regulation 883/2004; enhanced planning of health workforce supply and demand.	EC, Specialised social security agencies, WB6	2026-2028
Boost Regional Innovation	Establish a Regional Academia-Business Innovation Policy Lab and develop innovation toolkits; support deep-tech start-up readiness and connections with the EU ecosystem; implement Smart Specialisation Strategy (S3) priorities; foster green tech knowledge transfer and support regional research infrastructure.	Improved innovation policy frameworks; increased commercialisation of research and academia-business collaboration; greater participation of WB6 in the EU deep-tech ecosystem; regional research infrastructure strengthened to attract talent and reduce brain drain; sustainable jobs created through green tech innovation.	EC, WB6CIF, EIT, EISMEA, WB6	2026-2028
4.1.2. Business Enabling Environment and Competitiveness				
Sustainable and Digital Finance	Develop a regional framework for sustainable finance taxonomy and green bond standards aligned with EU practices; establish a Virtual FinTech Network to support innovation and expand digital finance solutions.	EU-aligned sustainable finance and green bond frameworks adopted; broader investor base for green projects secured; regional FinTech ecosystem enhanced.	World Bank Group, WB6	2026-2028

Area of intervention	Description of actions	Expected results	Partners	Timeframe
Consumer Finance	Support WB6 integration into SEPA and the ECB's TIPS system; engage international PSPs to expand payment services; develop a regional financial literacy framework for youth, adults, and SMEs.	Increased financial inclusion and faster, cheaper payments across the WB6 and with the EU; improved consumer choice in payment systems; enhanced financial capabilities across target groups.	World Bank Group, EC, WB6	2026-2028
Investment	Adopt a regional recommendation on FDI qualities; establish RSI certification standards; promote green investment incentives; launch the InvestWB6 portal and advisory network for dispute resolution.	Stronger regional framework for sustainable FDI; increased investor confidence and transparency; investment attraction tools and support systems operational; investment disputes reduced.	WB6 CIF, World Bank Group, WB6, GiZ, ReSPA	2026-2028
Regional Intelligence on Industrial Cooperation	Establish a Regional Economic Observatory; prepare sectoral roadmaps based on feasibility studies and industrial foresight to support cooperation and integration into EU value chains.	Continuous monitoring of regional industrial development; strategic alignment of key sectors with EU supply chains; actionable roadmaps for industrial integration adopted.	WB6CIF, WB6G, IFC, UNIDO, WB6G, WB6	2026-2028
Green Industry	Pilot Digital Product Passports (DPPs) at the economy level; promote industrial symbiosis through eco-industrial parks.	Product sustainability and traceability improved; harmonised green procurement criteria piloted; circular economy practices advanced through industrial cooperation and waste reuse.	EC, CEFTA, WB6CIF, IFC, UNIDO, OECD, GiZ, WB6	2026-2028

Area of intervention	Description of actions	Expected results	Partners	Timeframe
SME Access to Finance	Introduce regulatory frameworks for alternative finance instruments (VC, angels, crowdfunding); adopt co-investment scheme guidelines to support start-ups and SMEs.	Improved access to early-stage financing; financing gaps addressed for SMEs; stronger public-private investment mechanisms in place.	EC, WB6CIF, WB6	2026-2028
Business Sector Competitiveness	Establish regional criteria for product innovation entities and digital nomads; develop a toolkit to help businesses integrate economic security into risk management.	Clear eligibility standards for innovation actors and remote workers established; businesses more resilient to economic security threats.	EC, WB6CIF, WB6	2026-2028
Regional Tourism Policies and Competitiveness	Develop a strategic regional approach for green and digital tourism; promote and diversify the regional tourism brand; support smart tourism destinations and climate adaptation measures.	Sustainable tourism practices expanded; new cross-border tourism routes promoted; regional tourism competitiveness and investment appeal strengthened.	EC, GiZ, WB6CIF, WB6	2026-2028
Women Economic Empowerment	Strengthen the regional women entrepreneurship network; establish guidelines for women's access to finance; improve regional data collection on women entrepreneurship.	Enhanced support infrastructure for women entrepreneurs; better access to finance tools and training; harmonised gender-disaggregated data for informed policymaking.	EC, WB6 CIF, UN agencies, GIZ, WB6	2026-2028

Area of intervention	Description of actions	Expected results	Partners	Timeframe
4.1.3. Digital Transformation				
Connectivity	Facilitate the reduction of roaming charges between the WB6 and the EU; assess and reduce retail charges for intra-WB6 fixed and mobile calls; streamline deployment of Very High Capacity Networks through harmonised permitting and digitalised processes; enhance radio spectrum cooperation; and conduct public awareness campaigns on new technologies.	Roaming costs between WB6 and the EU reduced; intra-WB6 call charges lowered; broadband and 5G coverage expanded; deployment of infrastructure accelerated; regional coordination on radio spectrum enhanced; public understanding of digital technologies increased.	EC, telecom operators, WB6	2026-2028
Digital Economy	Maintain digital economy statistics aligned with DESI; harmonise digital market and services regulations in line with the EU Digital Markets Act and Digital Services Act; foster AI development and regulatory readiness; support integration into EU trust services (eIDAS), enhance e-signature recognition, and develop a regional Digital Identity Wallet; prepare for integration into the EU Digital Single Gateway; and establish a regional data governance framework in line with GDPR.	Improved monitoring of digital economy performance; regulatory and market alignment with the EU digital framework; regional AI strategies and digital identity solutions operational; enhanced trust services and cross-border recognition of e-signatures; streamlined access to public digital services; and harmonised, GDPR-compliant data governance across WB6.	Eurostat, EC, ITU, CEFTA, WB6	2026-2028

Area of intervention	Description of actions	Expected results	Partners	Timeframe
Cybersecurity	Facilitate WB6 participation in the Digital Europe Programme to support cybersecurity capacity; develop a regional cybersecurity framework and platform; support WB6 integration into the EU cybersecurity certification framework; establish a university network for cyber training and knowledge exchange; and promote awareness, capacity-building, and regional cooperation in cybersecurity with international partners.	Improved regional cybersecurity infrastructure and cooperation; WB6 alignment with EU cybersecurity certification standards; enhanced cyber skills development through university networks; and strengthened cybersecurity awareness, training, and strategic partnerships across the region.	EC, IISG, WB6, donors	2026-2028
4.1.4. Monitoring & Evaluation				
	Develop and sustain a comprehensive CRM 2.0 monitoring mechanism, including KPIs and open data-based reporting tools.	Regular CRM 2.0 implementation updates produced; accountability and transparency mechanisms improved.	EC, WB6	2026–2028
4.2 Enabling Green Transformation (GAWB Implementation)				
GAWB coordination and governance	Provide strategic leadership for coordination and governance of GAWB, including convening annual GAWB Ministerial Meetings, regular Regional Working Group (RWG) and BDTF WB6 meetings, and coordinating the 2028 revision of the GAWB Action Plan.	Regional coordination and governance strengthened; political visibility maintained; updated and streamlined GAWB Action Plan aligned with evolving EU priorities and funding frameworks, reflecting regional priorities.	WB6, EC, EnCS, TCPS, IUCN, SWG RRD	2026-2028

Area of intervention	Description of actions	Expected results	Partners	Timeframe
GAWB Monitoring & Reporting	Prepare and publish Annual GAWB Implementation Reports that include key performance indicators, gaps, and adaptive policy recommendations. Operationalise and maintain the GAWB Observatory Platform as a regional digital tool to track implementation progress, promote transparency, and share best practices.	Observatory online and updated; data and implementation status accessible to public and stakeholders; annual reports disseminated; evidence-based policy cycles supported through regular reporting.	WB6, EC, other regional partners	2026-2028
Donor Coordination on GAWB	Conduct a comprehensive mapping of bilateral/multilateral donors supporting regional projects and programmes related to the GAWB. Create regional donor coordination mechanism on GAWB and foster strategic partnerships to ensure alignment of financial and technical support with GAWB priorities. Raise awareness among donors about existing regional initiatives and improve visibility of active donors among WB6.	Increased and better aligned climate and environment funding; stronger and more coordinated donor engagement; improved implementation of funds across WB6; enhanced transparency and visibility of donor-supported initiatives; increased awareness among WB6 of regional programmes and active donors.	Donors, WB6	2026-2028

Area of intervention	Description of actions	Expected results	Partners	Timeframe
Climate Adaptation and Resilience	Finalise development of the WB6 Climate Adaptation Strategy in 2026. Align adaptation efforts with the regional priorities, EU Adaptation Strategy, European Climate Law, and Paris Agreement goals. Support implementation of three priority measures at the regional level.	WB6 Climate Adaptation Strategy finalised and endorsed in 2026; Implementation of three key regional priorities initiated.	WB6, EC, Regional Climate Partnership of Germany with WB6; regional partners	2026-2028
Public health and just transition	Promote awareness of the health and social co-benefits of green transition, including reduced air pollution, premature mortality from coal combustion, and equitable access to green jobs. Advocate for integrated approaches to decarbonisation and social protection in vulnerable regions.	Public health benefits integrated into green transition dialogue; regional initiatives on just transition launched; emissions reduction targets tied to health and labour impacts.	WB6, regional partners	2026-2028
Circular Economy	Facilitate regional transition to a circular economy through the RCC–WB6CIF Green and Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform. Advance integration of the Platform into the European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform. Promote green business models, eco-innovation, sustainable public procurement, and circular value chains (plastics, construction, agri-food, textiles).	Circular economy institutionalised; private sector and civil society actively engaged; knowledge and technology transfer increased; circular business models developed and promoted; CE indicators integrated into WB6 reporting.	WB6CIF, EC, donors, WB6	2025-2028

Area of intervention	Description of actions	Expected results	Partners	Timeframe
Pollution Prevention and Marine Litter	Endorse, promote and support implementation of the Regional Action Plan on Plastic Pollution Prevention (including Marine Litter). Facilitate behavioural change campaigns, policy harmonisation, and investment in waste infrastructure.	Action Plan endorsed by WB6; reduction of single-use plastics and marine litter improved; pollution policies aligned with EU directives; community engagement and regional monitoring in place.	WB6, donors	2025-2028
4.3 Facilitating All-Inclusive Regional Cooperation to Promote Resilient and Sustainable Development in South East Europe (SEE 2030 Strategy Implementation)				
Governance of SEE2030 Strategy	Coordinate SEE2030 governance in consultation with SEECF Chair-in-Office and participants	Transparent and inclusive implementation of SEE2030 with regional buy-in	SEECF Participants	2026-2028
SEE2030 Regional Initiatives	Facilitate development of evidence-based, regionally owned bottom-up initiatives under SEE2030	Regionally aligned development programmes launched in priority areas	SEECF Participants, donors	2026-2028
Regional Connectivity & Capacity Building	Develop regional innovation tools and promote public-private partnerships to deliver SEE2030 targets	Improved service delivery and uptake of SEE2030 across sectors	SEECF Participants, private sector, donors	2026-2028
4.4 Consolidating Security Cooperation and Regional Resilience in South East Europe				
Regional Security Dialogue	Organise Annual Regional Security Conference and SecuriMeter survey	Evidence-based dialogue and trust-building on regional security trends	EU, SEECF and RCC Board Participants	2026-2028
Support to Regional Platforms	Support IISG, SEESAC, DPPI SEE, SEEMIC, SEENSA, and others through RCC convening role	Regional security cooperation mechanisms maintained and strengthened	EU, donors, SEECF Participants	2026-2028
Regional Justice Cooperation	Promote dialogue on the rule of law, judicial cooperation, and institutional trust	Enhanced legal cooperation and EU alignment	ReSPA, EC, CoE, JTIs, SEECF Participants, governments	2026-2028

Area of intervention	Description of actions	Expected results	Partners	Timeframe
4.5 Strategic Coordination Mechanisms				
	Develop internal thematic clusters within RCC Secretariat to align CRM, GAWB, and SEE2030 implementation and reporting	Reduced fragmentation, improved delivery efficiency, consolidated strategic reporting	RCC	2026-2028
	Monitoring of implementation of SWP 2026-2028 and its constituent parts (including CRM, SEE 2030 and GAWB)	Monitoring process supported with quantitative and qualitative data collection, including through Balkan Barometer editions and cooperation with statistical offices of the Participants. Regular reports on the implementation of RCC activities (Annual Report of SG, CRM Report on Implementation, Report for RCC Board, etc.) produced.	Board members administrations, statistical offices, external consultants, regional partners	2026-2028
	Annual donor coordination	Annual donor coordination meeting on topics of CRM and GAWB organised with an objective to inform the wider community on ongoing and future initiatives planned in the field as well as to have the priorities of governments and donor community aligned so as to enable more efficient coordination between all stakeholders involved.	Donor community active in the region, international financial institutions, regional and international partners, private sector, European Commission	2026-2028

Area of intervention	Description of actions	Expected results	Partners	Timeframe
5. Communication and Visibility				
	Design and implement cross-cutting communication campaigns to enhance visibility of CRM, GAWB, and SEE2030 outcomes at local and regional levels.	Increased awareness and stakeholder engagement; improved public understanding of regional cooperation impacts.	SEECF Participants, governments, media, CSOs	2026-2028



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Regional Cooperation Council Secretariat

Trg Bosne I Hercegovine 1/V

71000 Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

T: + 387 33 561 700

www.rcc.int



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