

TRAINING MODULES ON CLUSTERS OF THE NEGOTIATION CHAPTERS

CLUSTER 6: EXTERNAL RELATIONS AND THEMATIC GROUP ON EU INTEGRATION MEETING

23-24 SEPTEMBER 2025

Skopje, North Macedonia

Venue: TBC



Background

The European Union has confirmed its unequivocal commitment to the EU membership perspective of the Western Balkans and has called for an accelerated accession process and further advancement of gradual integration. The need for accelerated reforms and economic initiatives expected to benefit the citizens directly and help enhance GDP per capita in PP in the region to match the EU average are in the focus of the most recent policy instrument in this field – reform agendas for the WB Growth Plan. The foundation of the process still lies in the respective Stabilisation and Association Agreements, market integration and alignment with the body of EU law. The prospect of EU membership is an incentive to bring forward and step up with the reforms in the Western Balkans, mostly related to the political and economic governance, the fight against corruption, public administration reform, the rule of law and media freedoms and supported by available financial instruments.

The European Union's role as a global actor is enshrined in its treaties, exercised through a wide-ranging external action framework. Cluster 6 – External Relations encompasses two distinct but interlinked negotiation chapters: Chapter 30: External Relations and Chapter 31: Common Foreign, Security and Defence Policy (CFSP/CSDP). These chapters form the cornerstone of the EU's external engagement, including its trade policy, development cooperation, humanitarian aid, diplomatic representation, restrictive measures (sanctions), and joint foreign and security actions.

The Cluster 6 Training Module is the continuation of the training modules on negotiation clusters designed and developed by ReSPA to help improve the administrative capacities of the negotiation structures in the Western Balkans. It is designed to suit the needs of public servants working in ministries/ departments for European integration and line ministries (economy, trade, foreign affairs, defence and interior) and independent agencies in these fields that are part of negotiation structures in Cluster 6. The training will focus on some of the main challenges in relation to negotiating and aligning with these complex chapters in order to get a comprehensive understanding of the steps that need to be taken to move toward the closure of the cluster. The participants of the program are to learn about the state of the art in each chapter under this cluster, the most recent trends and techniques concerning accession negotiations and further develop skills through exchange with experts in the field. This is an opportunity for civil servants to exchange with peers, connect with their counterparts in the region and engage in discussions with trainers and lecturers.

PROVISIONAL AGENDA

DAY I: TUE 23 SEPTEMBER 2025

08.45-09.00	<i>Registration of participants</i>
09.00-09.30	Welcome and Introductory Addresses
09.30- 10.30	Understanding Cluster 6 and Its Place in the Negotiation Structure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brief overview of where the WB administrations stand per chapter • Main challenges and obstacles that the candidates face in the chapters of Cluster 6 • The most important elements to be taken care of concerning each of the chapters of Cluster 6
10.30-11.00	<i>Coffee Break</i>
11.00-12.30	EU External Relations: Legal and Institutional Framework <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of the EU's exclusive and shared competences in external policy • Trade, development, humanitarian aid, and international agreements • Role of EEAS, European Commission (DG TRADE, DG INTPA), Council
12.30- 13.30	<i>Lunch Break</i>
13.30- 14.30	Common Commercial Policy and Trade Agreements: Obligations of Candidates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WTO alignment, EU MFN and FTA rules • GSP+, trade defence instruments, and impact on third-country relations • Transition from national policy to EU-aligned framework
14.30-15.00	<i>Coffee Break</i>
15.00-16.00	Thematic Group on EU Integration Meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Objectives in the 2026-2028 in the area of European Integration • Discussions on the best-suited self-paced learning courses to be developed on KMP • AOB
16.00-19.00	<i>Free Time</i>
19.00-21.00	Networking Dinner @ TBC

DAY II: WED 24 SEPTEMBER 2025

09.00- 10.30	Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP): Key Principles and Alignment Obligations
10.30-11.00	<i>Coffee Break</i>
11.00-12.00	Candidates and External Representation – Diplomatic Coordination with the EU <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Accession states' obligations in international organisations (e.g. UN votes)• EU statements and demarches: How to prepare and participate?• Examples from WB experience
12.00- 13.00	<i>Lunch Break</i>
13.00-14.00	EU Sanctions and Restrictive Measures <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Legal basis (Art. 215 TFEU, CFSP decisions)• Case studies: Russia, Belarus, Iran• Alignment mechanisms for candidates• Implications for bilateral relations and businesses
14.00-14.30	<i>Coffee Break</i>
14.30-15.30	Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP): Missions, Capabilities and Contributions <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Overview of civilian and military CSDP missions• Participation by candidates (status, frameworks, legal basis)• Examples: EUFOR Althea, EUAM Ukraine, EUMM Georgia
15.30-16.00	Closure of the training module <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evaluation• Final words