

PRESS RELEASE

Strengthening social dialogue for better work and life in the Western Balkans

Tirana, 2 April 2025 – The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), the European Training Foundation (ETF), and Eurofound are joining forces on 3 April in Tirana for a high-level event focused on promoting effective social dialogue and collaboration in the Western Balkans. Titled *Enhancing quality of work and life through effective social dialogue in the Western Balkans*, the by-invitation-only event will bring together key stakeholders to explore challenges and opportunities in the region's labour markets and social policies.

The event will open with contributions from representatives of Albania, the European Union, and the three organising institutions. These will include **Majlinda Dhuka**, Minister of State and Chief Negotiator of Albania; **Olta Manjani**, Deputy Minister of Economy, Culture and Innovation of Albania; **H.E. Silvio Gonzato**, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to Albania; **Oliver Röpke**, President of the EESC; **Pilvi Torsti**, Director of the ETF; and **Ivailo Kalfin**, Executive Director of Eurofound.

Pilvi Torsti, Director of the ETF, explained: "This initiative couldn't come at a better time – for both the EU and the Western Balkans. It really highlights just how important social partners are when it comes to pushing forward and keeping up momentum on reforms. Social dialogue isn't just about boosting the economy – it's also one of the best ways to protect democracy and maintain stability. The ETF is fully committed to continue its long-term support for the region to make social dialogue a building block of effective and sustainable skills and qualifications policies."

Oliver Röpke, President, European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), underlined: "This event is a timely and important step towards strengthening social dialogue in the Western Balkans. The EESC's commitment to supporting EU candidate countries is firmly grounded in a strong and effective social dialogue. It is not a luxury or an afterthought—it is a cornerstone of the European Social Model and the Pillar of Social Rights. In a changing global context, social dialogue is essential to build resilience and boost inclusive and sustainable growth. The time to integrate it fully, well ahead of accession, is now."

Ivailo Kalfin, Executive Director of Eurofound, emphasised: "The future of the Western Balkans is of crucial importance for Europe, particularly in the context of EU enlargement. Working together with social partners and other actors in the industrial relations field is fundamental and this event provides a key opportunity in this regard. Eurofound is a key knowledge hub for the role of the social partners for improving the living and working conditions in the EU. We look forward to presenting our analysis and best practices how

workers' and employers' organisations can contribute to addressing the main policy challenges in a country.”

A platform for exchange and action at a regional level

The event will highlight how social dialogue supports resilient labour markets, better working conditions, and the green and digital transitions. Discussions will focus on improving living and working conditions, providing the workforce with the skills they need, and expanding opportunities for young people through initiatives such as the Youth Guarantee.

The initiative is timely, as social dialogue is key for the Western Balkans to navigate economic transitions and EU accession. By working together, trade unions, employers, and governments can uphold EU social and economic principles, as highlighted in the European Pillar of Social Rights and the Union of Skills. Strong tripartite partnerships, as well as involvement of civil society, are crucial for addressing labour and skills challenges.

For media accreditation, please reach out to the press contacts below.

Background

- The [European Training Foundation \(ETF\)](#) is an EU agency supporting countries in and around the EU in reforming education, training, and labour market systems.
- The [European Economic and Social Committee \(EESC\)](#) is an EU advisory body representing organised civil society and contributing to EU policy and law-making.
- [Eurofound](#) is a tripartite EU agency, whose mission is to provide knowledge to assist in the development of better social, employment and work-related policies.

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