



UNIVERZA V LJUBLJANI
University of Ljubljana

RECTORS' FORUM
OF SOUTHEAST EUROPE
AND WESTERN BALKANS



Fostering Research and Educational Synergies Across Southeast Europe and the Western Balkans

12 June 2025 | 10:30 – 16:00

Permanent Representation of the Republic of Slovenia to the European Union,
Rue Joseph II 14, 1000 Brussels
(on-site, in-person event)

The conference "Fostering Research and Educational Synergies Across Southeast Europe and the Western Balkans" brings together academic leaders, policymakers, and stakeholders to foster dialogue and strengthen partnerships across borders. Taking place on 12 June 2025 at the Permanent Representation of the Republic of Slovenia to the European Union in Brussels, this in-person event aims to explore strategic opportunities for enhancing collaboration in higher education and research between EU and Western Balkan institutions. Through keynote speeches, panel discussions, and shared project presentations, the conference will address key issues such as legislative alignment, quality assurance, and joint initiatives that support regional integration and academic excellence.

Programme

10:00 – 10:30 **Registration & Welcome Coffee**

10:30 – 10:45 **Introductory Words**

- **Ambassador Andreja Viher White** – Deputy Permanent Representative of the Republic of Slovenia to the European Union
- **Assist. Prof. Dr. Draško Veselinovič** – President of the Management Board, Slovenian Business & Research Association
- **Prof. Dr. Gregor Majdič** – Rector of the University of Ljubljana (Slovenia)

10:45 – 11:00 **Welcome Speech**

- **Prof. Dr. Vladimir Božović** – Rector of the University of Montenegro and future President of the Rectors' Forum of Southeast Europe and Western Balkans (Montenegro)
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11:00 – 11:20 **The Role of the Rectors' Forum in Fostering Cooperation Between Universities in EU Member States and Non-EU Western Balkan Countries**

- **Prof. Dr. Snježana Prijić-Samaržija** – *President of the Rectors' Forum of Southeast Europe and the Western Balkans*

11:20 – 11:40 **The State of Higher Education in Serbia**

- **Prof. Dr. Vladan Đokić** – *Rector of the University of Belgrade (Serbia)*

11:40 – 12:00 **Bridging Countries: The Academic and Cultural Importance of Engaging with the Western Balkans**

- **Prof. Tiziana Lippiello** – *Rector of the Ca' Foscari University of Venice (Italy), delegate international relations CRUI (Conference of Italian University Rectors)*

12:00 – 12:25 **Keynote Speech: The Importance of University Cooperation in the Western Balkans for the EU and How the EU Can Help Accelerate It**

- **Ekaterina Zaharieva** – *EU Commissioner for Start-ups, Research, and Innovation*

12:25 – 12:40 **Coffee Break with Refreshments**

12:40 – 13:40 **Panel Discussion 1: Higher education legislation and quality certification system in the non-EU countries of the Western Balkans and How to accelerate the approximation processes to the EU system**

Moderator:

- **Prof. Dr. Gregor Majdič** – *Rector of the University of Ljubljana*

Speakers:

- **Prof. Dr. Marta Žuvić** – *Vice-Rector of the University of Rijeka for Studies, Students and Quality Assurance (Croatia)*
- **Prof. Dr. Boštjan Markoli** – *Vice-Rector of the University of Ljubljana for Internationalisation and Quality (Slovenia)*
- **Aleksandar Šušnjar** – *Director of the European Quality Assurance Register*

13:40 – 14:40 **Panel Discussion 2: Different ways of academic cooperation between universities in the Western Balkans and how it can be improved**

Moderator:

- **Prof. Dr. Snježana Prijić-Samaržija** – President of the Rectors' Forum of Southeast Europe and the Western Balkans

Speakers:

- **Prof. Dr. Ivan Svetlik** – Secretary-General of the Rectors' Forum of Southeast Europe and Western Balkans (Slovenia)
- **Dr. Gazela Pudar Draško** – member of the Rectors' Forum Secretariat and Chair of the WG on Education and Science Policies Advancement in SEE University of Belgrade (Serbia)
- **Lana Par** – Vice-President of the European Students' Union
- **Lucian Brujan** – Senior Scientific Officer for International Relations at the German National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina

14:40 – 14:55 Q&A and Open Discussion

14:55 – 15:00 Conference Conclusions

15:00 – 16:00 Networking Luncheon