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giz Deutsche Gesellschaft
für Internationale
Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH



Regional Business-Friendly Environment (BFE) Platform



WHAT IS THE BFE PLATFORM?

BFE Platform is envisaged to be a network consisted of organizations that strive to create business enabling environment in their respective economies and the region as a whole, and support objectives of the Common Regional Market and EU enlargement agenda. It particularly focuses on local economic development, based on green, socially responsible and modern/ digital solutions.

BFE Platform is seen as an **efficient mechanism for regional cooperation and knowledge exchange** on implementation of reform processes for economic growth on both national and local level, particularly promoting dialogue and valuing knowledge and expertise.

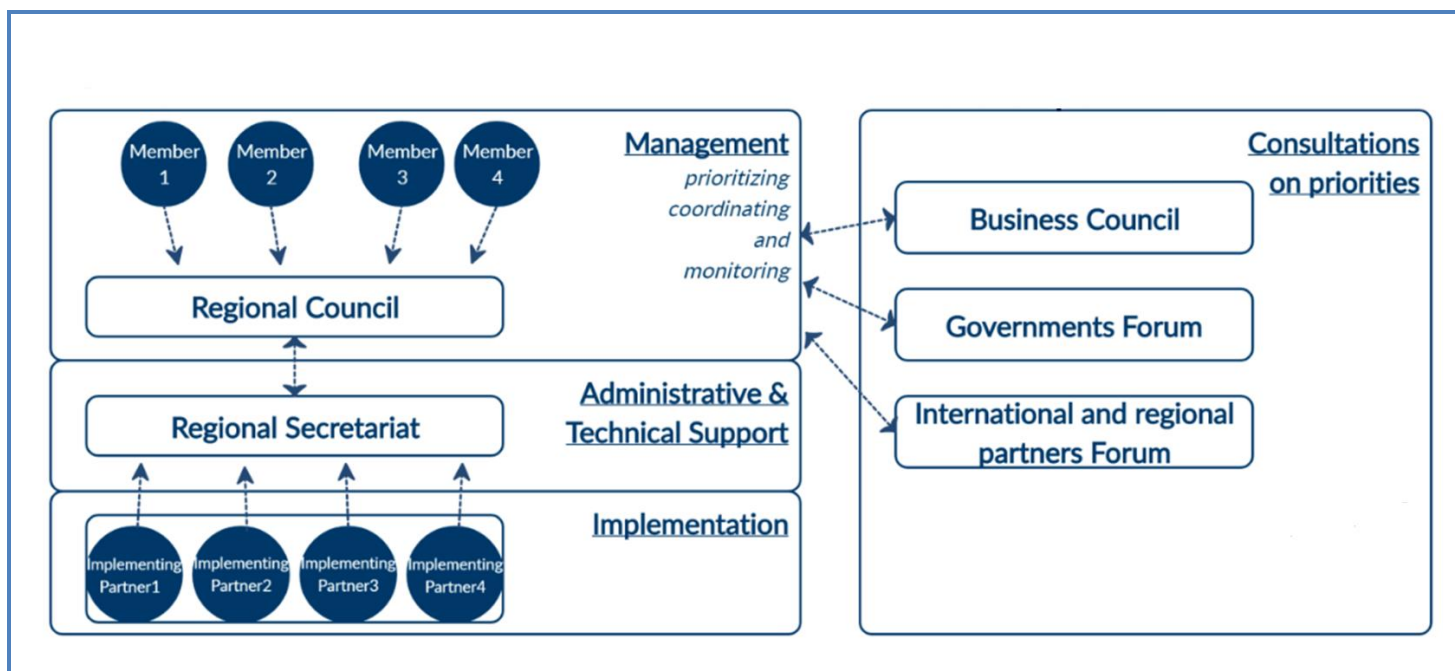
OUR VISION

More harmonized business environment among Western Balkan economies and with EU Member States, based on sharing best practices and contributing to the region's competitiveness, economic growth and EU integration process, for the benefit of all citizens.

OUR MISSION

To facilitate partnerships between public and private, national and subnational stakeholders in the region to enable exchange and implementation of business enabling and public administration reforms aligned with EU standards and best regional practices by helping shape public policies and build stakeholders' capacities to implement them.

BFE PLATFORM STRUCTURE



WHAT WILL THE PLATFORM DO?

Platform will seek to ensure effective and efficient exchange of experiences and best practices in the region and implement policy reforms pertinent to economic development, including the continuation and expansion of the Business-Friendly Certification process for Local Self Government Units.



THREE PILLARS

The scope of the Platform's activities will include the following **three pillars**:

Pillar One: Local Economic Development	Pillar Two: Doing Business environment	Pillar Three: Public-Private Dialogue and Partnership Promotion
Implementation of the BFC SEE Program	Support to central governments to coordinate and monitor business environment reforms	Develop mechanisms to facilitate dialogue , understanding and partnerships between the public and private sectors on development of business environment
Support subnational governments to mobilize EU and bilateral resources (focus on public-private sector partnerships for development)	Developing solutions for business environment reforms (exchange of best practices)	Promotion of BFE reforms, reformers and business friendly towns and municipalities
Technical support and mentoring for local governments to improve business environment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ exchange of best practices; help to develop and implement local economic development policies/actions ✓ support work of business councils (public-private dialogue on local level) ✓ work with capital cities to implement reforms 	Support implementation of business environment relevant reforms such as e-construction permitting, real-estate registration, seasonal work, etc.	Monitoring development of business environment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Business Environment Reports and recommendations; ✓ Creating on-line Local Business Environment Map for the region: access to info on BE, economic data; knowledge-sharing platform

Blue: regular core activities of Regional BFE Platform

White: project-based activities

WHY REGIONAL BFE PLATFORM?

The six Western Balkan economies continue to express their commitment towards the EU integration process and seek to undertake reforms across a variety of fields which would facilitate their alignment with the EU and international standards. The EU Enlargement Strategy for "A credible enlargement perspective for and enhanced EU engagement with the Western Balkans" acknowledges that all Western Balkan economies face challenges in terms of economic growth and competitiveness. An unpredictable regulatory framework, insufficient local lending and weak private sector necessitate the **creation of a business-friendly environment** which would spur economic activity and increase the competitiveness across the region.

However, although there is a clear commitment on policies harmonization and regional partnership to spur economic development, functional mechanism for the multi-stakeholder and multi-sector dialogue on policies harmonization and exchange best practices on fostering economic growth on national and local level has not been set up yet.



BUILDING ON EXISTING BFC SEE NETWORK

The BFE Platform will build on the existing BFC SEE Network (Business-Friendly Certification in South-East Europe) which brings together over 20 members from five countries - Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Croatia, including representatives of line ministries, chambers of commerce, association of municipalities, development agencies, CSOs and academic institutions.

The current BFC SEE Network represents an encompassing mechanism that aims at boosting competitiveness in SEE countries through exchanging best practices, transferring knowledge and designing and implementing reforms.



ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE BFC SEE NETWORK

This mechanism established from 2012 has achieved some outstanding results in terms of improvement of business environment in municipalities in participating economies. In addition to improvement of the doing business condition on local level in participating municipalities, the Network spurred important regional initiatives for harmonizing regional investment policies such as for example speed and transparency of obtaining building permits (e-permitting) and registration of seasonal workers (**fighting grey economy**) and **cadastre reform**.

Business-Friendly Certification as a flagship initiative developed and implemented by the BFC SEE Network represents a unique mechanism for introducing a joint standard of efficient and transparent local administration in countries of the region.



The **Business-Friendly Certification Programme (BFC Programme)** for town and municipalities is the most visible programme implemented by the BFC SEE Network. **More than 100 local self-government units** from the region had joined the Programme, out of which **63 were certified as business friendly**.



Implemented by



The **EBRD** and **GIZ** have recognised the importance of bringing stakeholders together to deliver on business environment related reforms and, in 2019 and 2021, provided support to the BFC SEE Network in order to analyse the achievements, strengths and gaps and propose optimal model for maximizing its impact and ensuring long-term sustainability.

BFC SEE Network, comprising over 20 organizations from 5 countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia) has proved to be a functional regional cooperation mechanism for improving doing business conditions. It efficiently delivered on registration of seasonal workers (fighting grey economy); speed and transparency of obtaining building permits (e-permitting); business- friendliness of towns and municipalities (63 awarded BFC SEE certificate), etc.

As a result, BFE Platform was conceptualized, aiming to capitalize on results and capacities of the existing Business Friendly Certification in South-East Europe (BFC SEE) Network, and be instrumental in bringing stakeholders together to deliver on business environment related reforms.

BFE Platform will not only build on the already established BFC SEE initiative and results and provide for its improved organizational framework and new impetus to implementation of geographically expanded programs, but will aim to extend, deepen and institutionalize work in the wider field of business-friendly environment.

Stepping up the engagement in improving doing business conditions and business friendly environment could result in deepening and institutionalizing work in a wide array of fields, such as: fighting grey economy and illicit trade, registration of seasonal labour, public private partnerships, cadastre reform (digitalization), para-fiscal charges, doing business and country competitiveness, investment promotion and attraction, etc.

