



## **DIGITAL CROSSBORDER DEBATES**

**#EU4Balkans**

21 April 2021

**Interreg**  
**IPA CBC**



co-funded by the  
**EUROPEAN  
UNION**



# Contact details

**Location:** online and in studio

## **Address of the studio**

IPC building (opposite to Berlaymont)  
Boulevard Charlemagne 1, 1000 Brussels  
at INS-Instant News Services on the 6th floor

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## Balkan Trafik team

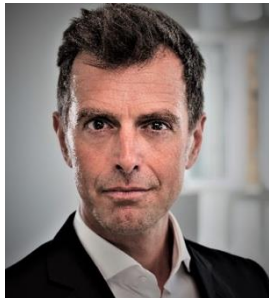
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The objective of the event is to organise 6 debates on topics relevant for Interreg IPA programmes with stakeholders from the Western Balkans and a sample of key opinion leaders, experts and guests from the EU and the Western Balkans (Balkan Trafik 2021 participants). Due to the Covid-19 pandemic these debates will take place in a hybrid form, combining the physical presence of a moderator and 1 or 2 experts, with the digital presence of guests/stakeholders from the Western Balkans via digital cross-border video conferencing.

#### MODERATOR debates #1-5:



##### **Olaf Bruns**

Olaf is a Brussels-based journalist. A former Deputy Head of the Brussels office of the international Tv news broadcaster Euronews, he now works as a freelancer. Amongst others, he writes for the European Green Journal and is the deputy editor-in-chief of the quarterly magazine Progressive Post. He provides Media Training via Crown Media and teaches journalism at the Brussels-based media school IHECS. He holds a master's degree in Social Anthropology from Paris VIII University with several years of social science research work in various African countries.

## DEBATE #1: TOGETHER WITH OUR DIVERSITIES

11:00 to 11:45 (GMT+2 Brussels)

#EU4Balkans

In collaboration with European Commission - DG REGIO-Interreg

### GUEST SPEAKERS:



#### **Philippe Close**

Mayor of Brussels – Belgium **(In the studio, Brussels)**

After graduating in law from the Université Libre de Bruxelles, Philippe Close began his career as a parliamentary assistant in charge of institutional matters for Senator Roger Lallemand. In 2009, Philippe Close was elected to the Parliament of the Brussels-Capital Region, where he chaired the Social Affairs Committee. In June 2017, he became Mayor of the City of Brussels and in order to devote himself entirely to his mission, he resigned from his position as MP and group leader in the Brussels Parliament. At the end of the legislature, he was re-elected on 14 October 2018 as Mayor for the next 6 years.



#### **Normunds Popen (In the studio, Brussels) to be confirmed**

EU Deputy Director General,  
Regional & Urban Policy in the European Commission

Normunds Popen is currently Deputy Director General for Implementation in the Directorate General Regional and Urban Policy of the European Commission in charge of overseeing the implementation of structural and cohesion fund programmes in EU member states and candidate countries. Before joining the European Commission in March 2011 he has occupied several posts in the Latvian diplomatic services. He has been also responsible for the issues of foreign trade and transatlantic relations and has worked as an Ambassador in Norway, Iceland and in the USA as a diplomat.



#### **Ekrem İmamoğlu**

Mayor of Istanbul - Turkey

Ekrem was born in 1970 in Turkey's Black Sea province of Trabzon. He joined the Republican People's Party (CHP) in 2009 and became a member of the party's Beylikdüzü District Organization. Following the local elections that year, he was elected as the District Head of CHP Beylikdüzü. After 5 years, Ekrem was nominated as a candidate for Beylikdüzü District Mayor in 2013, and won the elections in 2014. Until 2019, he realized a wide range of projects that transformed Beylikdüzü's appearance. Following the positive impact he made, he captured the attention. He was then nominated as the Mayoral candidate for Istanbul by the CHP in the local elections of March 31, 2019. In the rerun election on June 23, he received 54.2% of the total votes – the highest rate achieved in the last 35 years in Istanbul and he has been in office since 27 June 2019.



**Jasna Gabric**

Mayor of Trbovlje and European Young Leader - Slovenia

Jasna is the mayor of Trbovlje, a former mining town in Slovenia. A member of the municipal council since the age of 25, she was the youngest Slovenian mayor when elected. Unemployment in her town has fallen by almost half thanks to her role in implementing a successful incubator for start-ups. Her effort also focussed on reforming the municipality to make it more efficient and responsive. These achievements have received widespread recognition, in particular from the City Mayors Foundation which named her Mayor of Distinction. She is seen as a role model for young female politicians.



**Dominic Fritz**

Mayor of Timișoara - Romania

Dominic is the mayor of Timisoara, Romania's third-largest city. Before that he studied Political Sciences in different universities in Paris, Kontanz and York. Afterwards he started working as adviser to the German Agency for International Cooperation until 2012, then he became personal adviser to the former German President for two years. In 2016 he became civil servant in the Presidential Administration of Germany for three years. In 2019 he moved to Romania but his story with the country started way before that. He first came to Timisoara in 2003, on a voluntary social year. Since then, he kept going back to Romania, he learned Romanian and he started different things in his new city. Now, Dominic wants to create a project for the future that follows up on the city's own past and its own values.



**Anuela Ristani**

**Deputy Mayor of Tirana for International Affairs**

Anuela is the Deputy Mayor of Tirana in charge of International Affairs and Sustainable Development. She joined the City in 2015 as Chief of Staff to the Mayor, Erion Veliaj, and was appointed Deputy after he was re-elected in 2019. During her work for the city she has overseen the Green City Action Plan, the Tirana Child Friendly agenda and the Resilience and Sustainability strategies. Prior to joining local government she established the National Youth Service where she also co-founded RYCO -Regional Youth Cooperation Office with the participation of the six Western Balkan Countries. Ms. Ristani joined public service from more than a decade of experience with multinational corporations and International Organizations where she's served as Marketing and Communications expert.

## DEBATE #2: FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

12:30 to 13:15 (GMT+2 Brussels)

#EU4Balkans

In collaboration with European Commission - DG REGIO-Interreg

### GUEST SPEAKERS:



#### **Slawomir Tokarski (in the studio, Brussels) tbc**

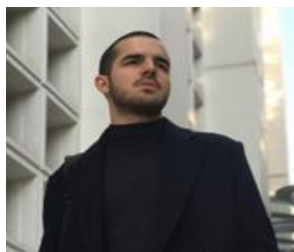
EU Director, Regional & Urban Policy

Slawomir has a PhD at the European University Institute. In 2004 he was member of cabinet, as EU Commissioner for Regional Policy, for 5 years. And now he's been working for 12 years at the European commission as Directorate General Grow.



#### **Fjoralba Caka**

Fjoralba is the former Albanian deputy-minister of Justice, covering European integration and anti-corruption policies. Having started her career as an academic teaching EU Law, she has maintained an ongoing cooperation with civil society organisations. She also served as a lawyer on issues related to strategic litigation and offered legal aid for people in need and for marginalised communities. In addition, she was one of the founders and first President of the Youth Council and led campaigns such as "Fighting Corruption in the Higher Education System" and "Bookworm Project – outdoors mini-library".



#### **Vojin Cetkovic**

Young European Ambassador from Montenegro

Vojin is a fresh graduate of Ankara University's Communication Faculty, in the Journalism Department. He speaks five languages fluently and he loves film and photography, music, youth activism, environment and sport. His biggest wish is to lead the younger generation into a safer future that we all build together.

<https://www.webalkans.eu/en/voting/vojin-cetkovic>

#### **Milena Raznatovic**

Project Manager of Ministry of Culture of Montenegro, representative of the Project MONET – culture in Motion in Adriatic NETWORK of Museums of the Italy-Albania-Montenegro Programme.



**Kristina Dimitrova** – Aspiring journalist writing articles on the topic Countering disinformation as part of the SEE Youth Newsroom established by the Centre for Development of Youth Activism (CROA) under the UNESCO EU-funded project ‘Building Trust in Media in South East Europe and Turkey – Phase 2’. Also, a project writer and coordinator at Youth Council Next Generation – a youth organisation providing mobility opportunities covering different social issues affecting youth based on non-formal education.



## DEBATE #3: ENVIRONMENT

14:00 to 14:45 (GMT+2 Brussels)

#EU4Balkans

In collaboration with European Commission - DG REGIO-Interreg

### GUEST SPEAKERS:



#### **Jean-Pierre HALKIN** | Head of Unit

European Commission | DG REGIO – Unit D.1 Macro-regions, Transnational/Interregional/External Cooperation, Enlargement **(to be confirmed) (In the studio, Brussels)**

Jean-Pierre studied at the ULB (Université Libre de Bruxelles) in Brussels. He has been at the European Commission for 15 years. In 2006 he was Head of Unit of Natural Resources for five years. Afterwards he became Head of Unit of Rural Development, Food and Nutrition Security for another five years. End now, since 2017, he's Head Of Unit of Competence Centre Macro-regions and Territorial Co-operation.



#### **Marko Milutinovic**

Young European Ambassador from Serbia

Marko is a graduate law student of the University of Belgrade. The protection of human rights and the environment are his main concerns. Marko believes that all of us should do what we possibly can to live in a world in which nobody's rights are infringed.

<https://www.webalkans.eu/en/voting/marko-milutinovic>



#### **Jadranka Lacković, (In the studio, Brussels)**

Painter, mural artist

Jadranka is a Croatian painter graduated at the Academy of Applied Arts in Rijeka. She is the co-founder and leader of ArtMašina, a creative studio for informal learning of art techniques and she has been involved in numerous actions and projects in the field of art culture in Croatia and abroad. One of her most important murals is the one in collaboration with Mosk on a mural "A Familiar Place", done for the opening of the European Capital Of Culture 2020. Jadranka is creating the most recent Balkan Trafik mural in Brussel for the festival's 15th edition.

Mirjana Bartula

(speaker in the video for environment) confirmed

## DEBATE #4: INCLUSION

15:30 to 16:15 (GMT+2 Brussels)

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In collaboration with European Commission - DG REGIO-Interreg

### GUEST SPEAKERS:



#### **Elisa Ferreira**

European Commissioner **(In the studio, Brussels) to be confirmed**

Elisa is a Portuguese politician but she first started as a professor at the university of Porto for more than 15 years. In 1995 her political career started when she became Minister for Environment for 4 years and then Minister for Planning for another three years in Portugal. From 2002 to 2004 she was a member of the Portuguese Parliament and then she became a member of the European Parliament for 12 years. In 2016 she was the representative of Portugal at the single supervisory mechanism's supervisory board and in 2017 she also became Vice-Governor of Portugal's Central Bank until 2019. Then she became European Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms until now.



#### **Danela Kortoci**

Young European Ambassador – Albania

Danela is passionate about Arts and design, Film and photography, Youth activism and Environment. But what really moves her is female empowerment. As a young graduate civil engineer she knows the importance of an educated woman in today's world.

<https://www.webalkans.eu/en/voting/daniela-kortoci>



#### **Jelena Plavetić**

Head of Department for Horizontal Affairs, Directorate for European Territorial Cooperation Ministry of Regional Development and EU Funds of the Republic of Croatia.



#### **Dragan Ristić**

Artist

Dragan is a Serbian artist graduated from the Faculty of Dramatic Arts, University of Belgrade. He holds a master's degree in the 'Theory of Drama Art and Media'. He is the founder of the band KAL-recognizable by its musical style Rock 'n' Roma, in which he appears as lead singer and guitarist. Dragan has been the director of The Romani Cultural Centre in Belgrade since 1998.

Corina Raceanu **confirmed ( waiting her bio)**

## DEBATE #5: YOUTH

17:00 to 17:45 (GMT+2 Brussels)

#EU4Balkans

In collaboration with European Commission - DG REGIO-Interreg

### GUEST SPEAKERS:



#### **Mariya Gabriel**

European Commissioner **(In the studio, Brussels) to be confirmed**

Mariya is a Bulgarian politician, she was in the European Parliament from 2009 until 2017 and she has a lot of interest in gender equality. Since 2012 she's Vice-President of the EPP (European People Party) Women and in 2013 she received the MEP Award category Gender Equality. Afterwards, in 2014 she was Vice-President of the EPP Group in the European Parliament for 3 years. She then became European Commissioner for Digital Economy and Society for 2 years. And since November 2019 she's First Vice-President of the EPP until now.



#### **Dona Srdikj Lazarevska**

Young European Ambassador from North Macedonia

Dona chose the political path because she's coming from a minority ethnic group and living in one of Europe's lesser-developed economies. She graduated with a degree in Political Science and she did a lot of activities like traineeships, competitions, workshop which gives her a lot of experiences. Besides, Donas main interests are gender equality and the environment.

<https://www.webalkans.eu/en/voting/dona-srdikj-lazarevska>



#### **Bojana Lalatovic**

Young European Ambassador- Montenegro

Bojana's main interest is youth activism. She graduated of the Faculty of Political Science, and holds a LLM in European Union Law. At the moment she's in the second year of a PhD in International Public Law.

<https://www.webalkans.eu/en/young-european-ambassador/bojana-lalatovic/>



**Boris Lalić**

Boris is a writer and journalist from Sarajevo.

He published five books of prose and also wrote the comedy "Mirna Bosna", which plays for the fourth season in Kamerni teatar 55 from Sarajevo. He received several awards for his works.



**Toni Jakimovski** Toni is a Communication Officer in the Interreg - IPA

Cross-border Cooperation Programme between Republic of Bulgaria and Republic of North Macedonia. MSc in International Marketing Management and Public Relations Expert, employed in the Joint Secretariat in Bulgaria since 2014.

## **DEBATE #6: Young European Ambassadors**

18:30 to 19:15 (GMT +02:00)

### **Thematic: Youth activism in the Online and Offline world - how to stay active?**

The Young European Ambassadors (YEA) platform is a creative network of future young game changers from across the Western Balkans. Although YEAs come from different backgrounds, all of them share an interest in learning about the EU's values and opportunities. They are also eager to advocate for different topics such as intercultural learning, joint regional youth initiatives, local community initiatives, arts and culture, sport, digital technologies, environmental protection, human rights protection. Most importantly, YEAs are open to sharing ideas and developing their talents – towards inspiring change within their communities, the Western Balkans region, and across the EU. Youth activism lies in the heart of YEA. Inspiring others and spreading the message of activism are the core values of YEAs. This is why our panel will be dedicated to activism in the online world, the only world we have had in the times of the global pandemic. Some of the crucial questions we will address are: Is there activism under COVID measures? How can we use online tools to send our message? Does creativity stop with the pandemic? What can young people do in the online world to bring about positive change? Can social media and ZOOM become our unique creativity centers for those who think alike? Many more interesting questions will come up. Make sure you join us!

In partnership with European Commission, Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR)

#### **MODERATOR:**



#### **Milica Crkvenjakov (In the studio, Brussels)**

Milica Crkvenjakov is a writer and production coordinator in film and animation, studying Marketing and Public Relations at DOBA Faculty of Applied Business and Social Studies. Her online profiles "Draga Devojciце/Dear Girl" focus on empowering girls and explaining all the intricacies of being a young woman under the slogan "everything I wish I knew 10 years ago". She is an active member of feminist and LGBTQ+ communities in Serbia and loves doing interactive workshops with young people.

## GUEST SPEAKERS:



### **Maciej Popowski (in studio in Brussels)**

DG NEAR acting Director General

Maciej is a Polish politician who speaks five other languages. He had different political experiences as a diplomat or ambassador before joining European institutions in 2016. He first started as Deputy Director-General of DG NEAR and now he's Acting Director-General since 2020.



### **Selena Tasic (in the studio in Brussels)**

YEA Public Diplomacy Manager, Moderator & Speaker

Public Diplomacy Manager on the Young European Ambassadors project which is a part of Regional Communication Programme for the Western Balkans, funded by the European Commission.

Selena has been active in the field of media, communications and project management for the last 15 years, mainly working on the initiatives dedicated to EU integrations of the Western Balkans. Selena has started her career as a young activist and a journalist, dedicating her energy to the projects that dealt with youth and media. When she acquired her Master's degree in International Relations, she pursued her activism in the field of civil society's role in the reform processes in the Western Balkans. Staying true to her early memories from the NGO sector in Serbia, she never stopped believing that youth and only youth can change the world for the better.

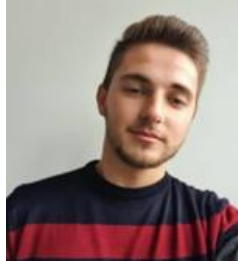


### **Amina Kaja**

Young European Ambassador Kosovo

Amina wants to become a neurosurgeon and is passionate about poetry. She also loves to draw, paint, debate, play volleyball and swim. Amina sees herself as a positive and social person. She volunteers and participates in every project she can, including working with organizations such as OSCE, USAID, YIHR and many others.

<https://www.webalkans.eu/en/voting/amina-kaja>



### **Armin Poljak**

Young European Ambassador Bosnia and Herzegovina

19-year-old Armin is mainly interested in peace and youth activism. He's now a second-year undergraduate student in International Relations and Diplomacy at the Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Sarajevo. He's also part of the folklore club "Sanski Biseri" since 2012. According to Armin both his volunteering experience with NGOs and his membership in the folklore club have helped him develop his communication and organizational skills.

<https://www.webalkans.eu/en/voting/armin-poljak>



**Ali Mahmutćehajić**

LBO Program Assistant, RYCO, Sarajevo, B&H for RYCO

Ali studies International Relations and Diplomacy at the Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Sarajevo. He's actively engaged in the work of CSO since 2013. His previous work involved organizing and coordinating projects for the Youth Initiative for Human Rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina (YIHRBiH) where he worked as a Program

<https://www.rycowb.org/?team-member=ali-mahmutcehajic>



**Arron Pirku**

18-year-old student from Prizren (Kosovo) living and studying robotics in Prishtina. Dealing with social anxiety from an early age he started volunteering, now starting his very own podcast named Pirk's View, centred around young successful people. Currently, he is working on 'Në gjuhën tonë', a project helping deaf people with online studies.

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OUR 15TH  
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ONLINE**

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APRIL**

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FT. **THEODOSII SPASSOV & IBRAHIM MAALOUF**

**THE ROCKING BEEZ** FT.

**AMPARO SÁNCHEZ & NELE KARAJLIĆ**

**SHANTEL & BUCOVINA CLUB ORKESTAR** ◆

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**BERNARD ORCHESTAR** ◆ **MEC YEK** ◆ **NAKED** ◆

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