



Predsednica Republike Slovenije

NATAŠA PIRC MUSAR

**Address by Nataša Pirc Musar President of the Republic of Slovenia
at the SEECP Summit Meeting**

Tirana, Albania, 16 June 2025

Your Excellency President Bajram Begaj, esteemed colleagues, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me to begin by expressing my heartfelt gratitude to President Begaj and the Government of Albania for hosting this SEECP Summit. Albania holds a special place in my heart. Each visit has strengthened my belief in the immense potential of Albania and the entire Western Balkans region. Slovenia stands as a strong advocate of regional cooperation and EU enlargement. We support continued progress in resolving outstanding bilateral issues among the participants, in a spirit of good neighbourly relations and reconciliation.

I wish to reaffirm Slovenia's unwavering commitment to regional cooperation and dialogue among friends. As a member of the European Union, we remain a firm supporter of enlargement, with all aspiring countries committed to undertaking the necessary reforms.

Today, I would like to speak about a fundamental reality we must face together: GDP per capita in the Western Balkans remains at approximately one-fifth of the EU average of €32,000. This is not just a statistics, it reflects stark differences in opportunities, living standards and prospects, especially for the region's youth.

More than 70% of Western Balkan exports are destined for EU markets, and the EU represents around 70% of foreign direct investment in the Western Balkans. These figures clearly demonstrate that we are economically already deeply interconnected – and now we need to grow even closer.

The Common Regional Market stands as one of the most ambitious and meaningful tools we have to drive this agenda forward. It is about creating a predictable, secure and attractive environment for businesses and citizens alike.

The EU has long worked for better connectivity in the Western Balkans by reducing trade barriers, investing in infrastructure projects that connect our countries, and by promoting innovation and digital transformation. We should now also focus on sustainability within our economic initiatives.

For Slovenia, gradual EU integration is not just a matter of economic benefits; it is a strategic imperative for the entire region. The EU offers a framework of values, standards and opportunities that can truly transform our societies for the better.

When it comes to security, sharing information and coordinating law enforcement efforts to combat cross-border crime and terrorism are vital steps in strengthening our collective resilience. To support these efforts, Slovenia is working together with Montenegro and France, within the framework of the Western Balkans Cyber Capacity Center, to improve cybersecurity capabilities and resilience across the Western Balkans.

In conclusion, let me take this opportunity to express my gratitude to Tirana's dedicated presidency of the SEECP over the past year. Let us use the SEECP to strengthen our regional cooperation, accelerate EU integration and build a future of stability, prosperity and peace for all people of Southeast Europe. Together, we can close the gap and unlock the full potential of this remarkable region.

Thank you.