In the context of rapid digitalisation and the exponential growth of cyber-attacks, it is clear that strengthening cyber resilience of the EU and the Western Balkans partners has become both an essential enabler of sustainable growth and an urgent precondition for security of the whole European continent.

As part of promoting EU’s vision on cyberspace, May 2022 Council Conclusions on Cyber Posture stressed the importance of making cyber issues an integral part of the Union accession negotiations and of the EU’s strategic and political dialogues with international partners. Recent EU-Western Balkans leaders’ meeting reaffirmed EU’s commitment to improve the resilience of the Western Balkans partners to hybrid threats and in particular cyber-threats and disinformation. In this vein, a Cybersecurity Study on the Western Balkans was carried out by the e-Governance Academy in the first semester of 2022.

Despite growing geostrategic challenges, progress has been slow towards developing adequate regulatory frameworks, establishing new institutions and enhancing operational capacities to respond to cyber crises. Building collective resilience will require integrating cybersecurity into broader national and regional development strategies, and a sustained financial and operational commitment to building institutional, political, regulatory and technical capacity.

This event aims to consider the current state of cooperation in the Western Balkans while advancing a concrete and action-oriented agenda that builds on the past engagements between the EU and partners in the Western Balkans.

The questions that will be addressed include:

1. What have partners from the region identified as the most pressing challenges and priorities for strengthening their cyber resilience?
2. What plans and commitments have the EU and other partners made in the region, and how do we monitor their progress?
3. What concrete mechanisms can help leverage existing technical cooperation into enhanced political cooperation?
13:00-14:00
Light lunch & registration

14:00-14:15
OPENING REMARKS
Jitka LÁTAL ZNAMENÁČKOVÁ
Ambassador, Permanent Representative to the EU Political and Security Committee, Czechia
Gustav LINDSTROM
Director, European Union Institute for Security Studies
Anna VEZYROGLOU
Deputy Head of Unit for Western Balkans Policy & Regional Strategy, Directorate-General for Neighbourhood & Enlargement Negotiations, European Commission

14:15-15:30
STATE OF PLAY: AN OVERVIEW OF THE CURRENT COOPERATION, CHALLENGES, AND PRIORITIES
Chair
Dan CIMPEAN
General Director, Romanian National Cyber Security Directorate
Speakers
Vilma TOMCO
Director General of National Authority on Electronic Certification and Cyber Security, Albania
Maja LAKUSIC
Senior Advisor for Cyber Security Promotion, Regulatory Agency for Electronic Communications and Postal Services, Serbia
Vladimir RADUNOVIC
Director, E-diplomacy and Cybersecurity Programmes at DiploFoundation

15:30-16:00
Coffee Break

16:00-17:30
FROM WORDS TO ACTION: OUTLINING AN AGENDA AND CONCRETE MECHANISMS FOR FUTURE COOPERATION
Chair
Nils BERGLUND
Coordinator of Outreach and Public Engagement, EU Cyber Diplomacy Initiative – EU Cyber Direct
Speakers
Denisa KURTAGIC
Cyber Threat Analyst, National Security Authority, Ministry of Defence, Montenegro
Mitko BOGDANOSKI
Dean and Full Professor, Military Academy, Ministry of Defence, North Macedonia
Tadej RUPEL
Ambassador for Cyber Issues, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Slovenia
Merle MAIGRE
Programme Director of Cyber Security at the e-Governance Academy, Estonia

17:30-17:45
CONCLUSIONS FOLLOWED BY A GLASS OF WINE
Richard KADLČÁK
Special Envoy for Cyberspace and Director of Cybersecurity Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Czechia