

Draft agenda as of December 17, 2024

8:45 Arrival of Guests - Registration

9:30 Welcome Remarks

9:40 Von der Leyen 2.0:

What direction for the new European Commission in light of the Draghi Report

The new EU Commission is already in place, marking President Von der Leyen's second term in office. What can we expect from the new configuration at the top of the bloc's leadership? How does the Draghi report inform and influence policy priorities and direction?

- ✓ **Sergei Stanishev**, PM of Bulgaria (2005-2009); Member of the European Parliament for Bulgaria (2014-2024)
- ✓ **Mariya Gabriel**, Minister of Foreign Affairs (2023–2024), Republic of Bulgaria
- ✓ **Nataša Bergelj**, Ambassador of the Republic of Slovenia to the Republic of Bulgaria

Chair:

10:25 Shifting paradigms:

How does the new US administration plan to interact with the region?

Following a consequential US Presidential election, a new US administration is bound to alter the country's policy towards the region. What's in store for South East Europe with a second Trump Presidency?

Ivan Kondov, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Bulgaria

- ✓ **Rossen Plevneliev**, President of the Republic of Bulgaria (2012-2017)
- ✓ **Vessela Tcherneva**, Deputy Director, ECFR Sofia
- ✓ **Ino Afentouli**, Executive Director, Institute of International Relations

Chair:

SOFIA

ECONOMIC FORUM

JANUARY 20, 2025
SOFIA BALKAN HOTEL



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10:55 The dawn of a new era? Bulgaria's long awaited entry to the Eurozone

After years of preparation and political deliberations, Bulgaria is on the brink of fully acceding to the Eurozone, thereby positioning itself at the core of the EU. What remains to be finalized, and how will this dual accession reshape Bulgaria's future?

- ✓ **Irene Maria Plank**, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to the Republic of Bulgaria
- ✓ **Lilyana Pavlova**, Vice President of the European Investment Bank (2019–2023)

Chair:

11:40 Coffee Break

12.00 In Conversation with

Boyko Borisov, Prime Minister of the Republic of Bulgaria (2017-2021)

12.30 Boosting Bulgaria's Economic Competitiveness: Challenges and Opportunities

Ways of unlocking Bulgaria's economic potential to become a more competitive player in SE Europe and the global market.

Petko Nikolov, Minister of Economy & Industry, Republic of Bulgaria

- ✓ **Assen Vassilev**, Minister of Finance (2023-2024), Republic of Bulgaria
- ✓ **Ivan Mihaylov**, CEO, American Chamber of Commerce in Bulgaria
- ✓ **Teodor Radonov**, Head, European Investment Bank Group office in Sofia

Chair:

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13:15 Navigating the Migration Challenge: Bulgaria's Perspective and the country's European future

Bulgaria faces a complex migration challenge, with increasing numbers of migrants seeking asylum and opportunities. As Bulgaria aims to strengthen its position within the EU, particularly through Schengen accession, can effective migration management become crucial in ensuring its future within the European bloc?

✓ **Solomon Passy**, Founding President, Atlantic Club of Bulgaria

Chair:

13:45 Light Lunch

14:30 In Conversation with

Ekaterina Zaharieva, Commissioner for Startups, Research & Innovation, Republic of Bulgaria (*video message*)

15:00 Scaling up with FDI: Status of the Bulgarian economy and the role of investments

Bulgaria's economic landscape is evolving, with FDI playing a pivotal role in its growth trajectory. How can Bulgaria further leverage FDI to achieve sustainable economic growth and prosperity?

Tsvetan Simeonov, President, Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Ioannis Bratakos, President, Hellenic Chamber of Commerce

Denys Strobyki, General Manager, Philip Morris International, Bulgaria

✓ **Roberto Santorelli**, President, Confindustria

✓ **Plamen Panchev**, CEO, Trakia Economic Zone

Henrik Linders, Managing Director, Environment and Sustainability Department, EBRD

Chair:

15:45 In Conversation with

Kiril Petkov, Prime Minister of the Republic of Bulgaria (2021–2022)

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16:15 Counting on energy: South East Europe's chip for a seat at the global table

With strategic investments in renewable energy and energy infrastructure, South East Europe is poised to become a key player in the global energy landscape. Can South East Europe harness its energy potential to drive sustainable economic growth and regional cooperation, amid geopolitical tensions and energy security concerns?

- ✓ **Vladimir Malinov**, Minister of Energy, Republic of Bulgaria
 - ✓ **Kalin Peshov**, Chairman of the Management Board, Glavbolgarstroy Holding
 - ✓ **Maria-Rita Galli**, CEO, DESFA
 - ✓ **George Christidis**, Acting President, Canadian Nuclear Association (*online*)
 - ✓ **Martin Georgiev**, Executive Director, National Electricity Company
 - ✓ **Teodora Georgieva**, Executive Director, ICGB
 - ✓ **Konstantin Konstantinov**, CEO, Independent Bulgarian Energy Exchange
- Huawei

Chair: Georgios Satlas, Chairman, Hellenic Business Council in Bulgaria

17:15 Vertical Realignment: Infrastructure Development in Southeast Europe as a Bridge Between South and North

South East Europe's strategic geographic location positions it as a crucial energy and transport corridor between South and North. Can the region strengthen its role in facilitating the flow of energy resources and goods by leveraging initiatives like the Vertical Gas Corridor.

Krassimira Stoyanova, Minister of Transport & Communications, Republic of Bulgaria
Christos Staikouras, Minister of Infrastructure & Transport, Hellenic Republic

- ✓ **Ioannis Kirkinizis**, Vice President and Managing Director, Balkans Hill International
 - ✓ **Angelos Vlachos**, CEO, Port of Kavala
 - ✓ **Caballero Pinto**, CEO & Chairman of the BoD Sofia Airport
 - Ioannis Tsaras**, CEO, Thessaloniki Port Authority
 - Ivaylo Gavrailov**, CEO, Port of Varna
- ✓ *Chair: Iliya Lingorski*, Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, Sofia University

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18:00 Is the future circular? Circular economy as a blueprint for sustainable growth

The circular economy offers a sustainable model for economic growth by minimizing waste and maximizing resource efficiency, creating new opportunities, and driving innovation. But can we truly transition to a circular economy, and what systemic changes are needed to ensure its long-term success?

- ✓ **Julian Popov**, Minister of Environment and Water (2023–2024), Republic of Bulgaria
- ✓ **Borislav Malinov**, Chairman of the Management Board, Bulgarian Recycling Association
- Apostolos Siskos**, Managing Director, Environmetrics
- ✓ **Evelina Tsileva**, President, NGO “More Women in Power”
- ✓ **Monika Stanishena**, Founder of Green Transition Forum, Member at European Sounding Board on Innovation

- ✓ *Chair:* **George Kremlis**, Ambassador of the European Public Law Organisation to Bulgaria

20.30 Official Dinner *(by invitation only)*

Guest of Honour and Speaker

- ✓ **H.E. Rumen Radev**, President of the Republic of Bulgaria