

# SOFIA

## ECONOMIC FORUM

JANUARY 20, 2025  
SOFIA BALKAN HOTEL



*agenda as of January 19, 2025*

*\*Due to the composition of the new Government, changes may occur in the agenda*

### 8.30 Arrival of Guests - Registration

### 9.15 Welcome Remarks

- ✓ **Symeon G. Tsomokos**, Delphi Economic Forum
- ✓ **Alexios Marios Lyberopoulos**, Ambassador of the Hellenic Republic to the Republic of Bulgaria

### Statement

- ✓ **Grozdan Karadjov**, Deputy Prime Minister & Minister of Transport & Communications, Republic of Bulgaria

### Statement

- ✓ **Christos Staikouras**, Minister of Infrastructure & Transport, Hellenic Republic

### 9.45 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, Republic of Bulgaria (2023-2024)
- ✓ **Nataša Bergelj**, Ambassador of the Republic of Slovenia to the Republic of Bulgaria
- ✓ **Andrea Ikić-Böhm**, Ambassador of Austria to the Republic of Bulgaria
  
- ✓ *Chair:* **Solomon Passy**, Founding President, Atlantic Club of Bulgaria

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### 10.30 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?*

- ✓ **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: Elena Poptodorova*, Vice President & Founding Member of the Board, Atlantic Club of Bulgaria

### 11.00 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)
- ✓ **Asen Yagodin**, Deputy CEO, Member of the Management Board and Head of Wholesale Sector

✓ *Chair: Elena Poptodorova*, Vice President & Founding Member of the Board, Atlantic Club of Bulgaria

### 11.30 Coffee Break

### 11.50 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 (2024-2025)
- ✓ **Emil Angelov**, CEO & VP of BoD, Glavbolgarstroy Holding AD
- ✓ **Ivan Mihaylov**, CEO, American Chamber of Commerce in Bulgaria
- ✓ **Teodor Radonov**, Head, European Investment Bank Group office in Sofia
- ✓ **Anastasios Anastasatos**, Group Chief Economist, Eurobank
- ✓ **Sergey Vlaykov**, Senior Finance Director, Sofia Med

✓ *Chair: Kaloyan Staykov*, Chairman of the Board of Managers, Energy Management Institute

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### **13.05 The role of Businesses in Boosting European Economic Growth through Investments in Science, Technology and Innovations**

✓ **Kostas Salvaras**, Vice-President South East Europe, Philip Morris International

✓ *Chair:* **Ruja Raycheva**, Journalist, OFFNews

### **13.20 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

✓ **Thorsten Geissler**, Honorary Director for Regional Cooperation, Atlantic Club of Bulgaria

✓ **Dina Jebali**, Managed Services Division Director, Yettel Bulgaria

✓ **Andrey Bachvarov**, Founder, Anthill

✓ **Seda Kuzucu**, Representative, UN Refugee Agency

✓ *Chair:* **Bisserka Benisheva**, Ambassador, PanEuropa Bulgaria

### **14.10 Light Lunch**

### **14.40 Statement on Startups, Research & Innovation**

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

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### **14.45 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?*

- ✓ **Milena Stoycheva**, Minister of Innovation & Growth, Republic of Bulgaria (2023-2024)
- ✓ **Tsvetan Simeonov**, President, Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- ✓ **Emmanouil Fountoukis**, General Manager, Etem Gestamp, Chairman, BoD Automotive Cluster Bulgaria
- ✓ **Roberto Santorelli**, President, Confindustria
- ✓ **Plamen Panchev**, CEO, Trakia Economic Zone
- ✓ **Lubomir Stanislavov**, CEO & Member of the Board, Automotive Cluster of Bulgaria
- ✓ **Emilija Timmis**, Senior Economist, World Bank
  
- ✓ *Chair: Mila Nenova*, Director, InvestBugaria Agency

### **15.45 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?*

- ✓ **Zhecho Stankov**, Minister of Energy, Republic of Bulgaria
  
- ✓ **Vladimir Malinov**, Minister of Energy, Republic of Bulgaria (2024-2025)
- ✓ **George Christidis**, Acting President, Canadian Nuclear Association (*online*)
- ✓ **Konstantin Konstantinov**, CEO, Independent Bulgarian Energy Exchange
- ✓ **Costis Stambolis**, Chair, Institute of Energy for SE Europe
- ✓ **Martin Georgiev**, Executive Director, National Electricity Company
- ✓ **Teodora Georgieva**, Executive Director, ICGB
  
- ✓ *Chair: Georgios Satlas*, Chairman, Hellenic Business Council in Bulgaria; Executive Officer & Board Member, ICGB

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### **16.50 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.*

- ✓ **Ioannis Kirkinetis**, Vice President and Managing Director, Balkans Hill International
- ✓ **Angelos Vlachos**, CEO, Port of Kavala
- ✓ **Jesus Caballero**, CEO & Chairman of the BoD, Sofia Airport
- ✓ **Michael B. Christides**, Amb.(a.h.) Sec.General, Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (2015 - 2021)
  
- ✓ *Chair: Iliya Lingorski*, Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, Sofia University

### **17.25 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, Republic of Bulgaria (2023–2024)
- ✓ **Borislav Malinov**, Chairman of the Management Board, Bulgarian Recycling Association
- ✓ **Evelina Tsileva**, President, NGO “More Women in Power”
- ✓ **Vangelis Karamintzios**, Chairman, Hellenic Recycling Agency
- ✓ **Monika Stanisheva**, Founder of Green Transition Forum, Member at European Sounding Board on Innovation
  
- ✓ *Chair: George Kremlis*, Ambassador of the European Public Law Organisation to Bulgaria

### **18.20 End of Conference**

### **20.00 Official Dinner** *(by invitation only)*

#### **Guest of Honour and Speaker**

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