
EU-Balkans: summit in Sofia. Várhelyi (Commissioner), “Economic investment plan adopted, €9 billion of funding”

Sofia is the “virtual capital” that is hosting the Western Balkans Summit, co-hosted by Bulgaria and North Macedonia, as part of the “Berlin Process”. Indeed, the event sponsored by the EU is attended in person only by Bulgarian Prime Minister Boyko Borisov, who has just recovered from COVID-19, and his counterpart, Zoran Zaev, while German Chancellor Angela Merkel and European Commissioner for Enlargement Olivér Várhelyi are attending remotely. In his speech, Várhelyi recalled the progress made so far and the previous summit in Zagreb six months ago. He stressed the need to “continue deepening regional economic integration, building on EU rules and standards and thereby creating the necessary conditions for bringing the region and its companies closer to the EU Internal Market”. According to him, “the Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans” adopted today “aims at providing up to €9 billion of grant funding”, which “could potentially rise the region’s real GDP by 3.6%”. In his message, High Representative for Foreign Affairs Josep Borrell stressed that the future of the Western Balkans “is in the European Union”. Regional cooperation, he said, “is the best way to overcome the legacy of the past and to build a better future”. “It is a clear signal to our youth - the High Representative added - that we take their aspirations for green, peaceful, just and prosperous societies seriously”. The “Berlin Process” brings together six Western Balkans partners and nine EU Member States, including Italy.

Iva Mihailova