



**WESTERN
BALKANS
Info Hub**

powered by  POLICY ANSWERS

Newsletter

[FOCUS ARTICLE] Embedding Responsible Research and Innovation in the Western Balkans

Diversity and inclusion as well as openness and transparency in the development of Research and Innovation (R&I) policies, programmes and activities are hot topics in the European Research Area (ERA).

[Recent Horizon Europe projects](#), stemming from the ERA 2023 call for proposals, underscore this commitment. These projects cover a spectrum of themes including open science, ethics, foresight, research careers, research assessment, citizen science, research valorisation and gender equality. Notably, the **ongoing ERA call “[Enhancing the European R&I system \(HORIZON-WIDERA-2024-ERA-01\)](#)”** incorporates Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) aspects, demonstrating a collective drive towards inclusive innovation practices. The call remains open until 12 March 2024.

Further calls boosting the implementation of the ERA are also expected for the upcoming Work Programmes in Horizon Europe. Even if the terminology used is changing, the Framework Programme will continue to support these concepts and some projects will provide smaller and more accessible grants as financial support to third parties as well. You can keep yourself updated on new calls by regularly consulting the [WB Info Hub](#).

For example, the **IMPETUS open call** (closing in March) presents opportunities for citizen science enthusiasts in the Western Balkans. Divided into two **sub-calls** - the [Accelerator](#), providing financial support, mentoring and training, and the [European Union Prize for Citizen Science](#) - this initiative seeks to bolster citizen science projects, fostering innovation and community engagement. Find out more about the IMPETUS project [here](#).

Spotlight on WBC-RRI.NET

Let us delve into recent advancements in Responsible Research and Innovation within the Western Balkans, focusing on the “Embedding RRI in Western Balkan Countries: Enhancement of Self-Sustaining R&I Ecosystems - [WBC-RRI.NET](#)” project. This Horizon 2020 funded initiative encompasses [13 partners from 8 economies](#) and focused on five territories in the [Western Balkans](#)¹.

As the project approaches its conclusion, we want to highlight its key endeavours. Aligning with RRI objectives, WBC-RRI.NET has concentrated on six thematic areas, referred to as

¹ Kosovo* was not part of this consortium but the collections presented include elements for Kosovo and several materials are applicable for Kosovo and in general, too.

„RRI keys“: Public Engagement, Gender Equality, Governance, Science Education, Ethics and Open Access.

To grasp the project's regional impact, POLICY ANSWERS has made short interviews with representatives from each participating territory. Moreover, in the following list, you can read more on the project's specific interventions, termed "anchor activities," which address RRI keys and territorial nuances in the Western Balkans. Discover some of the top regional achievements!

Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, Serbia

- [Anchor activities on Public Engagement & Open Access](#)
- [Interview with local representative of Vojvodina Region](#)

Republic of Srpska, Bosnia and Herzegovina

- [Anchor activities on Ethics & Science Education & Open Access](#)
- [Interview with local representative of Republic of Srpska](#)

Skopje Region, North Macedonia

- [Anchor activities on Science Education & Gender Equality](#)
- [Interview with local representative of Skopje Region](#)

Kune-Vain-Tale Lagoon, Albania

- [Anchor activities on Public Engagement \(Open Science\) & Governance](#)
- [Interview with local representative of Kune-Vain-Tale Lagoon](#)

Country of Montenegro

- [Anchor activities on Public Engagement & Governance](#)
- [Interview with local representative of Montenegro](#)

Furthermore, the project has mapped **Gender Equality Plans (GEPs)** in the region, culminating in an overview. You can find these GEPs here: [Albania](#), [Bosnia and Herzegovina](#), [Montenegro](#), [North Macedonia](#), [Serbia](#).

Additionally, a [Collection of Good Practices in RRI](#) from the whole WB region, alongside diverse **audiovisual materials**, enriches understanding and promotes knowledge sharing.

The [Handbook for STEM educators](#) was published by University of Banja Luka with the aim of improving teaching practices in secondary schools using STEM methods. Complemented by [video presentations](#), this resource strives to elevate teaching standards and foster inclusivity in STEM disciplines.

If you are interested in STEM education, do not miss the ['10 recommendations for more inclusive and improved STE\(A\)M education'](#) article, and the **Policy Brief** on [Enhancing Science Education through Citizen Science: Students' Perceptions and Motivations in STEM/STEAM Learning](#) may also be for you.

WBC-RRI.NET has organised various **events**, focusing on [Open Science and Open Access](#), success stories and lessons learned related to implementing Gender Equality Plans (videos



[here](#) and [here](#)) and a special mutual learning event on [Implementing Open Science and Research Ethics](#) with shared lessons learned and personal insights and stories from projects' experience of working on Ethics, Research Integrity, and Open Science. The [recordings](#) are available on the WB Info Hub as well.

As a final series of events, in 2024 three **webinars** have been held, respectively on [Spreading Citizen Science in the Western Balkans](#) (recording available), [Towards Diamond Open Access in Western Balkans](#) and [Core Skills for Effective Science Communication](#). If you want to improve your science communications skills, you will find the Factsheet on "[How to communicate science in a world of misinformation](#)" and the [WBC-RRi.NET Social Media How-to Guide](#) handy. Stay tuned as the recordings of the other two webinars are under preparation!

Final Event and Case Study Competition

The [WBC-RRi.NET Final Conference](#) was organised in Skopje, disseminating project results, highlighting key achievements, and enabling discussions for the continuation of this journey. In the frame of the conference, a case study competition took place on RRI in practice, where students worked in mixed teams on the case. The competition turned out to be a very successful activity. Congratulations to the winners!

To support the sustainability of the project results, an Association organisation has been established: the [Regional Association for Responsible Research, Innovation and Entrepreneurship \(WBRRi\)](#), which is a network of experts from the Western Balkans dedicated to writing project proposals, innovation development, and responsible research and innovation. If you are looking for training or consulting in RRI or entrepreneurship, visit the [WBRRi's website](#) or feel free to contact the organisation via info@wbrii.com.

As we look ahead, sustaining the efforts in embedding RRI in the region will be vital. A series of other projects and initiatives, for example the [EDIRE](#) and [PATTERN](#) projects or the [Center for the Promotion of Science](#), remain active in the upcoming period, supporting parts of the RRI keys as well as anticipation, reflexivity, inclusion and responsiveness for the benefit of the region. By fostering ongoing collaboration also through the Regional Association for Responsible Research, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship and by embracing diversity, openness, and transparency, the Western Balkans can continue to thrive while addressing societal challenges and driving sustainable development, ensuring a brighter and more inclusive future for all stakeholders involved.

Do you have news to share on Responsible Research and Innovation? Contact us via info@westernbalkans-infohub.eu! We invite you to join our community and contribute to fostering open, inclusive and transparent research and innovation practices in the Western Balkans. Stay updated on upcoming events and initiatives by following the WB Info Hub on social media and visiting our [website](#).

For more information on news and opportunities for SME's in the Western Balkans, visit the Western Balkans Info Hub portal within the [Supporting SME Innovation](#) section!