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# **POLICY REPORT ON THE GREEN TRANSITION IN THE WESTERN BALKANS (Edition 2024)**

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## **POLICY REPORT ON THE GREEN TRANSITION IN THE WESTERN BALKANS**

This Policy Report presents a comprehensive analysis of the green transition in the Western Balkans (WB), addressing various dimensions including infrastructure, skills, governance models, strategic frameworks, and legal and regulatory frameworks.

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An Executive Summary of this Policy Report is available in the form of a Policy Brief at this link:

<https://www.westernbalkans-infohub.eu/documents/policy-answers-policy-report-and-brief-green-transition-in-the-western-balkans/>

## Table of Contents

1	Introduction.....	5
2	Overview on the green transition activities in the Western Balkans.....	7
2.1	Relevant documents.....	7
2.2	Previous and current activities: Instruments, initiatives, projects and events.....	8
3	Assessing the framework conditions and the implementation of the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans (GAWB): Alignment with the European Green Deal .....	13
3.1	Quantification of the GAWB framework aligned with the European Green Deal .....	13
3.2	Insights from conducted interviews: Progress in framework alignment with the European Green Deal .....	17
3.3	Assessment of the implementation of the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans: Progress across pillars .....	19
4	Identified challenges and barriers for GAWB implementation.....	24
4.1	Outcomes from the Policy Dialogue Conference in Sarajevo.....	24
4.2	Outcomes from conducted interviews .....	26
4.3	Outcomes from other projects and reports .....	28
5	Achievements (good examples) from implementing the GAWB .....	31
6	Recommendations for the implementation of the GAWB .....	33
6.1	Recommendations for the overall Western Balkans region .....	33
6.1.1	Outcomes from the interview with the RCC expert .....	33
6.1.2	Outcomes from the Stakeholder Policy Dialogue Conference in Sarajevo .....	34
6.1.3	Outcomes from other reports .....	35
6.2	Recommendations per Western Balkans economy .....	40
6.2.1	Outcomes from interviewed key experts .....	40
6.2.2	Outcomes from the EC Reports for each of the Western Balkans economies .....	42
7	Key Recommendations.....	46
8	Conclusions.....	47
9	Acknowledgement.....	49
10	List of abbreviations .....	50
11	Annex .....	52

## List of Figures

Figure 1: Quantification of the green transition in the Western Balkans economies aligned with the European Green Deal, specifically focussed on Pillar 1 (Decarbonisation) and associated roadmaps. Djatkov’s elaboration (see Annex), adapted from RCC (2022). .....	14
Figure 2: Quantification of the green transition in the Western Balkans economies aligned with the European Green Deal, related to Pillars 2-5. Djatkov’s elaboration (see Annex), adapted from RCC (2022). .....	15
Figure 3: Overall quantification of the green transition in the WB economies aligned with the European Green Deal. Djatkov’s elaboration (see Annex), adapted from RCC (2022). .....	16
Figure 4: Policy Dialogue Conference held in Sarajevo on 13 September 2023. Sections from the opening ceremony and the World Café session dedicated to the topic ‘Green Deal’. .....	24
Figure 5: The most concerning problems for the green transition. Source: Prelec et al. (2023)..	29
Figure 6: Assessment of EU requirements to reform the WB energy systems. Source: Prelec et al. (2023) .....	30

# 1 Introduction

This Policy Report provides an overview on the green transition in the Western Balkans (WB), encompassing Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo\*, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia. It delves into various aspects of green transition, including infrastructure, skills, governance models, strategic frameworks, and legal and regulatory frameworks.

The rapid climate change and the deterioration of the environment represent a global existential threat. In response, the European Green Deal<sup>1,2</sup> aims to transform the EU into a modern, resource-efficient, sustainable, and competitive economy. Serving at the EU's development strategy for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the European Green Deal places central emphasis on environmental sustainability and climate change mitigation - that is, how to make the EU's economy develop in an environment- and climate-friendly way.

The Green Agenda for the Western Balkans (GAWB, The Green Agenda)<sup>3</sup> is a shared commitment between the region and the European Union. Adopted alongside the Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans (EIP)<sup>4</sup> and endorsed by the leaders of the region through the Sofia Declaration in November 2020<sup>3</sup>, the GAWB serves as a blueprint for achieving climate neutrality and environmental sustainability by 2050. Structured along five pillars - Decarbonisation, Circular Economy, Depollution, Sustainable Agriculture, and Protection of Nature and Biodiversity - the agenda outlines the following objectives:

- 1) Cleaning energy sources and protecting the climate
- 2) Moving to a circular economy
- 3) Depolluting air, water, and soil
- 4) Building sustainable agriculture and food systems
- 5) Protecting biodiversity and ecosystems

Aligned with the ambitions of the European Green Deal, the GAWB relies on urgent regulatory reforms and significant investments. It is further supported through EIP for the Western Balkans, focusing on key flagships<sup>4,5</sup> such as environment and climate, clean energy, sustainable transport, and private sector development.

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\* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

<sup>1</sup> European Commission (EC). (2019). COM(2019) 640 final: The European Green Deal. [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:b828d165-1c22-11ea-8c1f-01aa75ed71a1.0002.02/DOC\\_1&format=PDF](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:b828d165-1c22-11ea-8c1f-01aa75ed71a1.0002.02/DOC_1&format=PDF). Accessed 10 April 2024.

<sup>2</sup> European Commission (EC). (2019). COM(2019) 640 final: The European Green Deal, Annex. [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:b828d165-1c22-11ea-8c1f-01aa75ed71a1.0002.02/DOC\\_2&format=PDF](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:b828d165-1c22-11ea-8c1f-01aa75ed71a1.0002.02/DOC_2&format=PDF). Accessed 10 April 2024.

<sup>3</sup> Regional Cooperation Council (RCC). (2020). Sofia Declaration on the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans. Sarajevo. [www.rcc.int/download/docs/Leaders%20Declaration%20on%20the%20Green%20Agenda%20for%20the%20WB.pdf/196c92cf0534f629d43c460079809b20.pdf](http://www.rcc.int/download/docs/Leaders%20Declaration%20on%20the%20Green%20Agenda%20for%20the%20WB.pdf/196c92cf0534f629d43c460079809b20.pdf). Accessed 10 April 2024.

<sup>4</sup> European Commission (EC). (2020). COM(2020) 641 final: An Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans. [https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2020-10/communication\\_on\\_wb\\_economic\\_and\\_investment\\_plan\\_october\\_2020\\_en.pdf](https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2020-10/communication_on_wb_economic_and_investment_plan_october_2020_en.pdf). Accessed 10 April 2024.

<sup>5</sup> European Commission (EC). (2020). SWD(2020) 223 final: Guidelines for the Implementation of the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans - An Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020SC0223>. Accessed 10 April 2024.

The Green Agenda for the Western Balkans has emerged as a comprehensive framework, promoting environmental conservation, green growth and resilience. Its implementation is important for WB policies, relevant strategic documents, Programmes of Accession of the WB to the EU, Economic Reform Programmes, and industrial policies. Smart Specialisation Strategies, whether adopted or in development, hold pivotal roles in aligning with the Green Agenda and corresponding Sustainable Development Goals.

Despite potential political headwinds, including geopolitical complexities and major elections across the globe in 2024, the year offers meaningful opportunities for progress towards a new clean energy economy in the Western Balkans and beyond.

This Policy Report is based on extensive research, including individual interviews conducted for each Western Balkans economy, as well as insights gathered from the World Café discussions held during the Policy Dialogue Conference organised in Sarajevo in 2023. It is the result of the engagement of the regional expert and main author of this report (Djordje Djatkov) as well as interactions with colleagues from the region focused on the Green Agenda, aiming to address the major challenges of climate change and promote sustainability across various policy areas. By systematically exploring contributions from different sectors and fostering coordination, the report provides valuable recommendations for decision-makers in the region, based on identified challenges, barriers, and best practices for implementing the GAWB.

## Quick guide through the Report

**Chapter 2:** Provides an overview of activities related to the green transition in the Western Balkans. This includes an examination of relevant documents, projects, initiatives, and organised events contributing to the region's sustainability efforts.

**Chapter 3:** Evaluates the framework conditions for the implementation of the GAWB and assesses the level of compliance with the EU Green Deal. Drawing from official reports related to the WB, conducted interviews, and stakeholders' inputs gathered during the event organised in Sarajevo on 13 September 2023, this chapter offers insights into the current status of green transition efforts in the region.

**Chapters 4 and 5:** Identify the challenges and barriers to GAWB implementation and highlight the best examples of successful GAWB implementation.

**Chapters 6 and 7:** Present recommendations for decision-makers aiming at facilitating the efficient implementation of the GAWB. These recommendations are generated through interviews, stakeholders' inputs during the event in Sarajevo, and a thorough assessment of identified challenges and possible solutions. Recommendations are tailored to both the Western Balkans region and individual Western Balkans economies.

**Chapter 8:** Serves as a conclusion, summarising the main findings and key conclusions derived from the investigation conducted throughout the report. It offers insights into the overall status of the green transition in the Western Balkans and highlights areas for future action and improvements.

**Annex:** Includes the assessment approach for the green transition, detailing the methodology and criteria used to evaluate progress in line with the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans and the EU Green Deal.

## 2 Overview on the green transition activities in the Western Balkans

### 2.1 Relevant documents

The European Green Deal, introduced by the European Commission on 11 December 2019, serves as a comprehensive roadmap toward achieving a sustainable economy. It aims to address pertinent climate and environmental challenges by transforming them into opportunities, all while ensuring that this transition is conducted in a fair and inclusive manner. This overarching objective of this new growth strategy is to achieve zero net emissions of greenhouse gases by 2050, alongside fostering economic growth that is decoupled from resource consumption. Additionally, it aims to protect and enhance natural capital, as well as to protect the health and well-being of citizens from environment-related risks and impacts. Recognising the complexity and interconnectivity of these challenges, the European Green Deal underscores the imperative of collaboration among citizens, economy-level, regional, and local authorities, civil society and industry.

However, achieving these ambitious objectives cannot solely rely on the EU's actions, as the challenges transcend borders of economies. Hence, a comprehensive and coordinated policy response is indispensable to maximise the benefits related to health, quality of life, resilience, and competitiveness.

To facilitate the realisation of these goals, significant investments are imperative, facilitated through the EU Green Deal Investment Plan, also known as the Sustainable Europe Investment Plan<sup>6</sup>. Serving as the investment pillar of the EU Green Deal, this plan is designed to address significant investment requirements. To reach the 2030 climate targets (40 % GHG reduction) and energy targets (32 % share of renewable energies and 32.5 % improved energy efficiency) necessitates additional investments of EUR 260 billion annually. Complementing this initiative, the Just Transition Mechanism (JTM)<sup>7</sup> is an additional tool aimed at supporting the most affected regions, complementing the Investment Plan which supports all regions. It mobilises EUR 55 billion until 2027 to mitigate the socio-economic impact of the transition in these highly affected areas.

The Green Agenda for the Western Balkans, endorsed during the Western Balkans Sofia Summit on 10 November 2020, serves as a pivotal mechanism to align the Western Balkans region with the objectives of the EU Green Deal. In recognition of the region's unique circumstances and certain delays in the implementation of relevant EU policies and alignment processes, an Action Plan<sup>8</sup> has been developed. This Action Plan is tailored to address the specific challenges faced by the region and aims to reverse negative environmental practices while fostering the transformation of all economic sectors in accordance with green transition principles.

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<sup>6</sup> European Commission (EC). (2020). COM(2020) 21 final: Sustainable Europe Investment Plan - European Green Deal Investment Plan.

[https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/api/files/attachment/860462/Commission%20Communication%20on%20the%20European%20Green%20Deal%20Investment%20Plan\\_EN.pdf.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/api/files/attachment/860462/Commission%20Communication%20on%20the%20European%20Green%20Deal%20Investment%20Plan_EN.pdf.pdf). Accessed 10 April 2024.

<sup>7</sup> European Commission (EC). Just Transition Mechanism.

[https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/funding/just-transition-fund/just-transition-platform\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/funding/just-transition-fund/just-transition-platform_en). Accessed 10 April 2024.

<sup>8</sup> Regional Cooperation Council (RCC). (2021). Action Plan for the Implementation of the Sofia Declaration on the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans 2021-2030. Sarajevo. [www.rcc.int/docs/596/action-plan-for-the-implementation-of-the-sofia-declaration-on-the-green-agenda-for-the-western-balkans-2021-2030](http://www.rcc.int/docs/596/action-plan-for-the-implementation-of-the-sofia-declaration-on-the-green-agenda-for-the-western-balkans-2021-2030) Accessed 10 April 2024.

The implementation of the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans is further bolstered by the Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans. This comprehensive plan seeks to support the long-term recovery of the region by fostering a green and digital transition, thereby promoting economic growth and advancing the Western Balkans towards integration with the EU Single Market. Recognising the region's significance as both an important market for the EU and a key transit area, the Plan emphasises the importance of leveraging the untapped economic potential of the Western Balkans and fostering increased regional economic cooperation and trade.

To this end, the Plan sets out a substantial investment package for the Western Balkans region. The European Commission has proposed to mobilise up to EUR 9 billion for the period 2021-2027 to support productive investments and sustainable infrastructure, enhance competitiveness and inclusive growth, facilitate sustainable connectivity, and drive the twin green and digital transition. Additionally, the investment capacity is expected to be augmented through the mobilisation of a new Western Balkans Guarantee facility, potentially raising investments of up to EUR 20 billion.

## 2.2 Previous and current activities: Instruments, initiatives, projects and events

Below are some examples of financial instruments, initiatives, projects, and events related to the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans (GAWB).

### Financial instruments

The implementation of the GAWB is a complex cross-sectoral system of activities, projects, and funding mechanisms. One significant initiative is the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA II) 2014-2020 Multi-Country EU4 Green Recovery<sup>9</sup>. Through this programme, the EU supports the sustainable recovery and green economic growth in the context of the post-COVID-19 pandemic. It also implements specific actions outlined in the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans, including decarbonisation, circular economy, and biodiversity.

The action includes a governance, coordination and monitoring scheme for the Green Agenda that facilitates a more substantial and more prominent high-level political dialogue at a regional level. Its role ensures proper technical discussion, as well as coordination and monitoring of the implementation of the different components of the Green Agenda. Moreover, this scheme strengthens cooperation between the Western Balkans and vis-à-vis the EU and other stakeholders. The main expected results of this initiative include: 1) empowering beneficiaries in the implementation of green recovery plans through a fit-for-purpose setup; 2) operational monitoring and reporting processes; 3) development of sustainable, resilient and green recovery plans; 4) citizen awareness of the EU's efforts and contribution to improving living conditions and green recovery plans in the beneficiaries' implementation.

The Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans (EIP)<sup>10</sup> is a significant initiative by the EC aimed at advancing the implementation of the Green Agenda through four flagships:

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<sup>9</sup> European Commission (EC). (2020). Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA II) 2014-2020 Multi-Country. EU4 Green Recovery. [https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/4929c59d-d324-4614-a480-e9746adbc2fc\\_en?filename=ipa\\_2020-042-350.01-mc-eu4green\\_recovery.pdf](https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/4929c59d-d324-4614-a480-e9746adbc2fc_en?filename=ipa_2020-042-350.01-mc-eu4green_recovery.pdf). Accessed 23 October 2024.

<sup>10</sup> European Commission (EC). (2020). Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans. [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_20\\_1811](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_1811). Accessed 10 April 2024.



1) Environment and climate; 2) Clean energy; 3) Sustainable transport; 4) Private sector development. The EU supports hundreds of projects in various ways, improving people's lives, protecting the environment, creating business opportunities, and facilitating regional cooperation. Since 2021, the EC has committed EUR 1.25 billion to support the implementation of the GAWB, including technical assistance and investments in energy efficiency, renewable energy, the transition from coal, and investments in environmental management. Further investments and grants under the Western Balkans Investment Framework (WBIF)<sup>11</sup> will support the green transition, together with the recently adopted Energy Support Package for the Western Balkans.<sup>12</sup>

The Environment and climate flagship is supported, for example, through the EU4Green programme<sup>13</sup> for the region, which operates across the pillars of the Green Agenda. It focuses on improving awareness and communication on the Green Agenda, developing strategies to finance the green transition, and fostering green skills. Another example is the project EU for Green Agenda in Serbia<sup>14</sup>. This project has yielded results tied to supported project proposals, including: 1) Innovations for Improving Air Quality<sup>15</sup>; 2) Innovative Solutions for Decarbonisation of the Economy and Depollution of the Environment<sup>16</sup>; 3) Innovative Solutions - Forests and Green Infrastructure for improving natural capital and resilience to climate change<sup>17</sup>; 4) Innovative Solutions in the Field of Circular Economy<sup>18</sup>.

Additionally, IPARD (IPA Rural Development) programmes in Albania, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia support agribusiness and farms in their green and digital transition, as well as the implementation of more sustainable models of food production. In North Macedonia, the EU4Prespa project<sup>19</sup> supports the implementation of the Green Agenda in the transboundary Prespa lake area, focusing on greening agriculture and local businesses, as well as biodiversity conservation. Further, EIT Climate-KIC, EIT RawMaterials, EIT Health, EIT Food, EIT Manufacturing,

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<sup>11</sup> Western Balkans Investment Framework. <https://www.wbif.eu/>. Accessed 23 October 2024.

<sup>12</sup> European Commission. (2023). The EU disburses €450 million to the Western Balkans partners delivering on the Energy Support Package for the region. [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ac\\_23\\_3196](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ac_23_3196). Accessed 10 April 2024.

<sup>13</sup> EU4Green. (2023). [https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-10/factsheet%20green%20agenda%20oct2023%20final\\_0.pdf](https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-10/factsheet%20green%20agenda%20oct2023%20final_0.pdf). Accessed 10 April 2024.

<sup>14</sup> EU for Green Agenda in Serbia. <https://www.euzatebe.rs/en/projects/eu-for-green-agenda-in-serbia> Accessed 10 April 2024.

<sup>15</sup> EU for Green Agenda in Serbia. (2022). Innovations for Improving Air Quality. [www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2022-10/list\\_of\\_selected\\_projects\\_improving\\_air\\_quality.pdf](http://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2022-10/list_of_selected_projects_improving_air_quality.pdf). Accessed 10 April 2024.

<sup>16</sup> EU for Green Agenda in Serbia. (2022). Innovative Solutions for Decarbonization of the Economy and Depollution of the Environment. [www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2022-10/list\\_of\\_selected\\_projects\\_decarbonization\\_of\\_the\\_economy\\_and\\_depollution\\_of\\_the\\_environment.pdf](http://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2022-10/list_of_selected_projects_decarbonization_of_the_economy_and_depollution_of_the_environment.pdf). Accessed 10 April 2024.

<sup>17</sup> EU for Green Agenda in Serbia. (2022). Innovative Solutions - Forests and Green infrastructure for improving natural capital and resilience to climate change. [www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2022-10/list\\_of\\_selected\\_projects\\_forests\\_and\\_green\\_infrastructure.pdf](http://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2022-10/list_of_selected_projects_forests_and_green_infrastructure.pdf). Accessed 10 April 2024.

<sup>18</sup> EU for Green Agenda in Serbia. (2022). Innovative Solutions in the Field of Circular Economy. [www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2022-10/list\\_of\\_selected\\_projects\\_circular\\_economy.pdf](http://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2022-10/list_of_selected_projects_circular_economy.pdf). Accessed 10 April 2024.

<sup>19</sup> EU Prespa project. <https://www.undp.org/north-macedonia/projects/eu-prespa-restoration-natural-resources-and-enhancing-sustainable-agriculture-and-tourism>. Accessed 10 April 2024.

EIT Digital and EIT Urban Mobility have joined forces in a Cross-Knowledge and Innovation Community (cross-KIC) initiative. This initiative aims to strengthen cooperation and increase the uptake of circular economy principles in the Western Balkans region. As of now, 700 actors across the region have participated, and more than 460 actions in the circular economy sector have been identified.

The Clean Energy Flagship focuses on investments in renewable energy sources, energy efficiency and supporting the transition from coal, all of which contribute to the decarbonisation objectives outlined in the Green Agenda and the 2030 climate and energy targets. The Western Balkans Investment Framework (WBIF) is actively supporting 17 flagship investment projects, including the development of solar and wind energy plants, rehabilitation of existing hydropower plants, and improvements of the electricity transmission network. Furthermore, the Regional Energy Efficiency Programme<sup>20</sup> drives the renovation wave by scaling up comprehensive energy efficiency measures in public, residential and private buildings across the region. In support of the transition away from coal, the EU is backing the platform for Coal Regions in Transition in the Western Balkans<sup>21</sup>.

The Sustainable Transport Flagship is closely related to connectivity, which is at the heart of the EU's Economic and Investment Plan (EIP) for the region. In the Western Balkans, efforts are also underway to implement the Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy. The execution of this strategy and the modernisation of existing infrastructure receive support through the Safe and Sustainable Transport Programme. This programme is aimed at promoting smart and sustainable mobility solutions through decarbonisation and digital initiatives. Priority projects within the transport sector will focus on extending the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T)<sup>22</sup> with one of the primary objectives being to encourage the adoption of greener modes of transport.

The private sector development flagship centres on the development and growth of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which play a crucial role in transitioning towards a sustainable, circular, energy-efficient, renewable energy-based, climate-neutral, and resilient economy. The EIP focuses on supporting SMEs and channels significant investments towards innovation and promoting green growth within this sector.

## Initiatives and Projects

### Civil Society Support and Advocacy

One of the primary challenges in implementing the Green Agenda is recognised to be the raising awareness, education and research complex. It is fundamental to raise awareness about the importance of climate, energy, and the environment - both among the general population and at the policy level.

An exemplary initiative addressing this challenge is the Green Incubator Project - Development of a competent civil society to support the application of the acquis of the European Union in the

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<sup>20</sup> Regional Energy Efficiency Programme.

[https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2022/08/oecd-blended-finance-guidance-for-clean-energy\\_69d21d35/596e2436-en.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2022/08/oecd-blended-finance-guidance-for-clean-energy_69d21d35/596e2436-en.pdf). Accessed 10 April 2024.

<sup>21</sup> Coal regions in the Western Balkans and Ukraine. [https://energy.ec.europa.eu/topics/oil-gas-and-coal/coal-regions-western-balkans-and-ukraine\\_en](https://energy.ec.europa.eu/topics/oil-gas-and-coal/coal-regions-western-balkans-and-ukraine_en). Accessed 10 April 2024.

<sup>22</sup> Trans-European Transport Network. [https://transport.ec.europa.eu/transport-themes/infrastructure-and-investment/trans-european-transport-network-ten-t\\_en](https://transport.ec.europa.eu/transport-themes/infrastructure-and-investment/trans-european-transport-network-ten-t_en). Accessed 10 April 2024.

field of environment<sup>23</sup>. In cooperation with young researchers of Serbia and environmental protection engineers, Belgrade Open School implemented this three-year project. The primary objective of the project was to enhance the capacity of civil society organisations dealing with environmental protection issues. Especially, the project aimed to strengthen the monitoring of the European integration process of Serbia; foster the growth of local informal groups; explore the potential for and offer recommendations on the socio-economic development of local communities based on the principles of the green (circular) economy. The project results are reflected through:

- Empowerment of at least 100 civil society organisations and informal groups in the implementation, advocacy, and communication of the importance of EU environmental standards and their benefits for local communities.
- Active involvement of citizens and relevant stakeholders from at least 40 local communities in dialogues on environmental issues and development opportunities.
- Increased transparency and availability of environmental information at both the local and economy level.
- Establishment of dialogues between civil society organisations and decision-makers regarding opportunities to address challenges in environmental protection and promote sustainable local development.
- Preparation of recommendations for the development of circular economy initiatives at the local level.

Another example is the Balkan Green Foundation (BGF)<sup>24</sup>, a regional organisation that promotes inclusive and equitable progress in the Western Balkans within the sustainable development domain. Along with its partner organisations, BGF places a strong focus on advocating for solutions that promote development policies aligned with the world's latest developments, global challenges, and economies' agendas for EU integration. The new project 'Decarbonisation for Climate Resilience' is focusing on the challenges faced by Kosovo in addressing the impacts of climate change, with a particular emphasis on sectors related to security and regional stability. In Kosovo, climate change is not adequately prioritised, nor given due attention, and there is a lack of capacities to effectively respond to its consequences.

On 15 December 2023, in Skopje, North Macedonia, a panel discussion on the Green Agenda was hosted by the Center for Sustainable Development ALKA. The event, titled 'Advocacy for the Green Agenda: Strategies and success stories from the Western Balkans'<sup>25</sup>, brought together stakeholders to discuss strategies and share success stories related to advancing the Green Agenda in the region. The conference concluded on a note of urgency, emphasising the critical need for immediate measures to avert the adverse impacts of climate change.

### Scientific projects

'Fostering excellence in the Western Balkans' green transition' (GreenFORCE) is a project<sup>26</sup> funded by the Horizon Europe programme coordinated by Co-Plan, Albania. As also the title says, the

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<sup>23</sup> Belgrade Open School. Green Incubator - Development of a competent civil society to support the application of the acquis of the European Union in the field of environment. <https://downloads.bos.rs/lzvestaji/r2022.pdf>. Accessed 10 April 2024.

<sup>24</sup> Balkan Green Foundation. [www.balkangreenfoundation.org/en-us/current-projects](http://www.balkangreenfoundation.org/en-us/current-projects). Accessed 10 April 2024.

<sup>25</sup> Advocacy for the Green Agenda: Strategies and success stories from the Western Balkans. <https://www.balkangreenfoundation.org/en-us/press/>. Accessed 10 April 2024.

<sup>26</sup> GreenFORCE. <https://legalinstruments.oecd.org/en/instruments/139>. Accessed 23 October 2024.

project aims at fostering excellence in scientific research and innovation related to the Western Balkans' green transition. It seeks to enhance the research profiles of its partners, strengthen the research and management capacities of their staff, and contribute to the convergence between Western Balkans and EU research capacities. It contributes to the impacts of the destination 'Improved access to excellence' by facilitating pathways of cooperation, exchange, co-design, and co-creation with academia, civil society, and policymakers at the regional level. The project adopts a quadruple helix approach, involving more than 200 stakeholders.

### Events

From 23-26 October 2023, the twelfth edition of the annual 'Balkan Green Ideas' programme was held in the town of Budva, Montenegro. The theme of the event was 'Nurturing Innovation for a Sustainable Future'<sup>27</sup>. This dynamic platform brought together 18 finalists from all six Western Balkans economies, all united by a common goal, to champion innovative green concepts that promise to shape a more sustainable tomorrow.

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<sup>27</sup> Balkan Green Foundation. (2023). Balkan Green Ideas. Nurturing Innovation for a Sustainable Future. [www.balkangreenfoundation.org/en-us/press/602/balkan-green-ideas-2023-nurturing-innovation-for-a-sustainable-future/](http://www.balkangreenfoundation.org/en-us/press/602/balkan-green-ideas-2023-nurturing-innovation-for-a-sustainable-future/). Accessed 10 April 2024.

### **3 Assessing the framework conditions and the implementation of the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans (GAWB): Alignment with the European Green Deal**

#### **3.1 Quantification of the GAWB framework aligned with the European Green Deal**

The assessment of the green transition aligned with the European Green Deal is based on the results presented in the ‘Green Agenda for the Western Balkans (GAWB) Action Plan Implementation Report’, prepared by the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC). This comprehensive assessment pertains to the progress made in 2022 concerning the framework, including law, strategies, and action plans. To facilitate the objectives outlined in the Sofia Declaration, the RCC, in collaboration with WB authorities and the EC, has developed seven roadmaps:

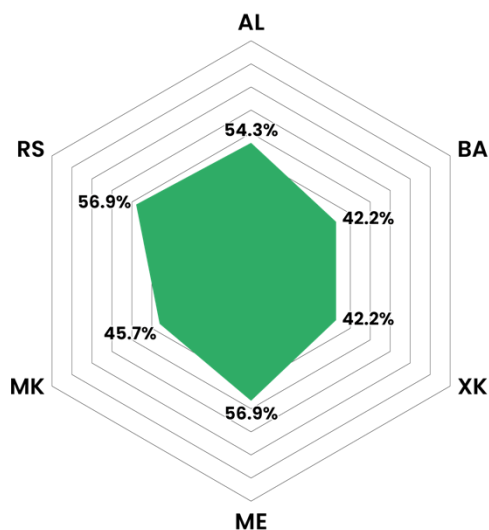
- 1) Climate Action Roadmap
- 2) Energy Roadmap
- 3) Sustainable Transport Roadmap
- 4) Circular Economy Roadmap
- 5) Depollution Roadmap
- 6) Sustainable Agriculture Roadmap
- 7) Protection of Nature and Biodiversity Roadmap.

These roadmaps provide a structured approach for implementing the commitments outlined in the Sofia Declaration, thereby fostering ecological and social sustainability in the Western Balkans. Quantified results are derived using a self-developed assessment approach outlined in the Annex.

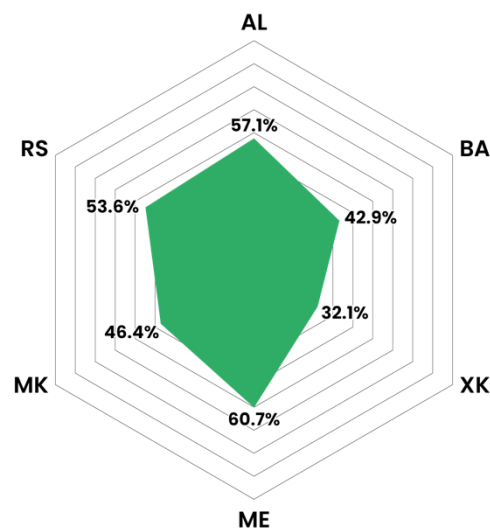
## Assessment according to Green Deal Pillars

### Pillar 1 - Decarbonisation

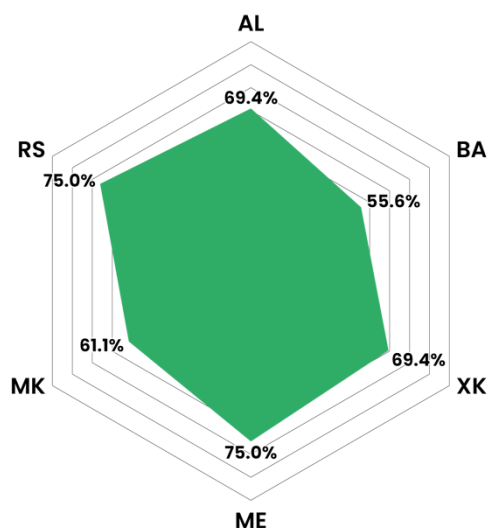
The assessment of progress within Pillar 1- Decarbonisation, presented in Figure 1, illustrates an overall achievement for the WB at 49.7 %. Notably, the Energy Roadmap emerges as the most advanced component with the WB achieving 67.6 %. It is followed by the Climate Action Roadmap (WB at 48.8 %) and the Sustainable Transport Roadmap (WB at 37.8 %).



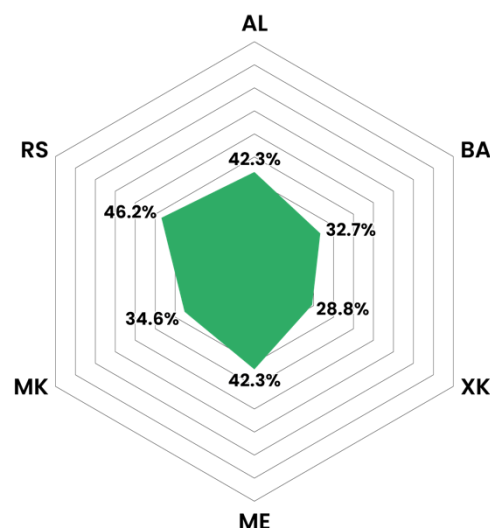
Pillar 1: Decarbonisation



Pillar 1: Climate action roadmap



Pillar 1: Energy roadmap



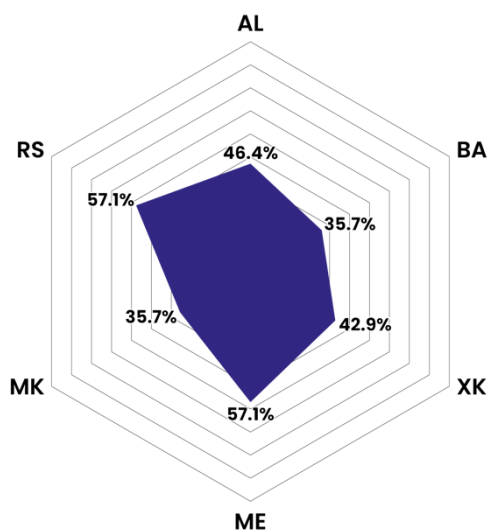
Pillar 1: Sustainable transport roadmap

Figure 1: Quantification of the green transition in the Western Balkans economies aligned with the European Green Deal, specifically focussed on Pillar 1 (Decarbonisation) and associated roadmaps. Djatkov's elaboration (see Annex), adapted from RCC (2022).

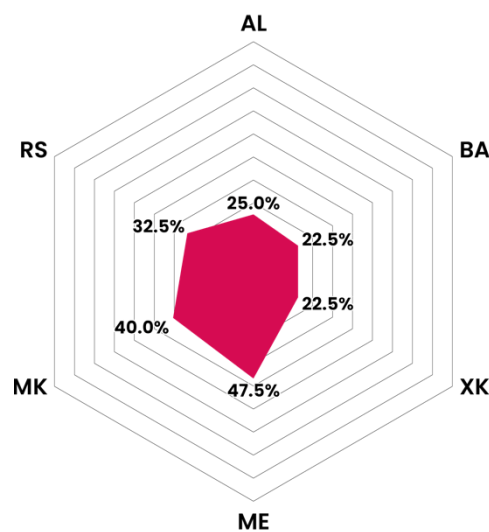
## Pillars 2 - 5

However, when assessing the remaining pillars, as presented in Figure 2, the level of achievements is notably lower, with the following results:

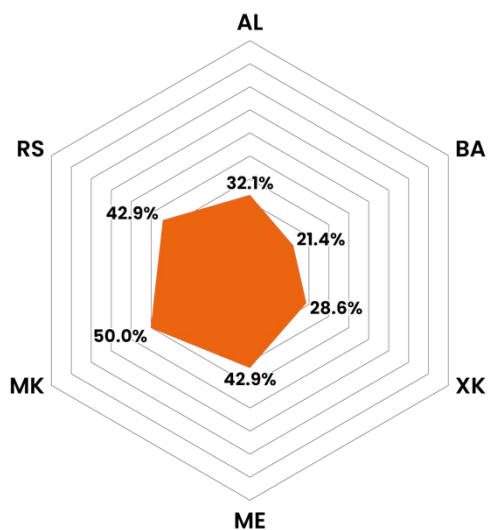
- Transition to a Circular Economy: WB at 45.8 %
- Protection of Biodiversity and Ecosystems: WB at 37.9 %
- Building Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems: WB at 36.3 %
- Depolluting Air, Water and Soil: WB at 31.7 %



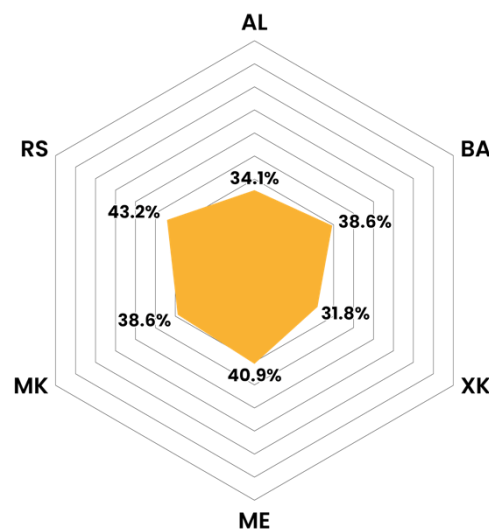
Pillar 2: Moving to a circular economy



Pillar 3: Depolluting air, water and soil



Pillar 4: Building sustainable agriculture and food systems



Pillar 5: Protecting biodiversity and ecosystems

Figure 2: Quantification of the green transition in the Western Balkans economies aligned with the European Green Deal, related to Pillars 2-5. Djatkov's elaboration (see Annex), adapted from RCC (2022).

## Overall quantification

The assessment of the achievement per Western Balkans economy, shown in Figure 3, indicates varying levels of progress:

- Montenegro: 51.2 %
- Serbia: 49.2 %
- North Macedonia and Albania: 43.0 %
- Kosovo: 35.9 %
- Bosnia and Herzegovina: 35.5 %

On average, the overall achievement across all the Western Balkans economies stands at 43.0 %.

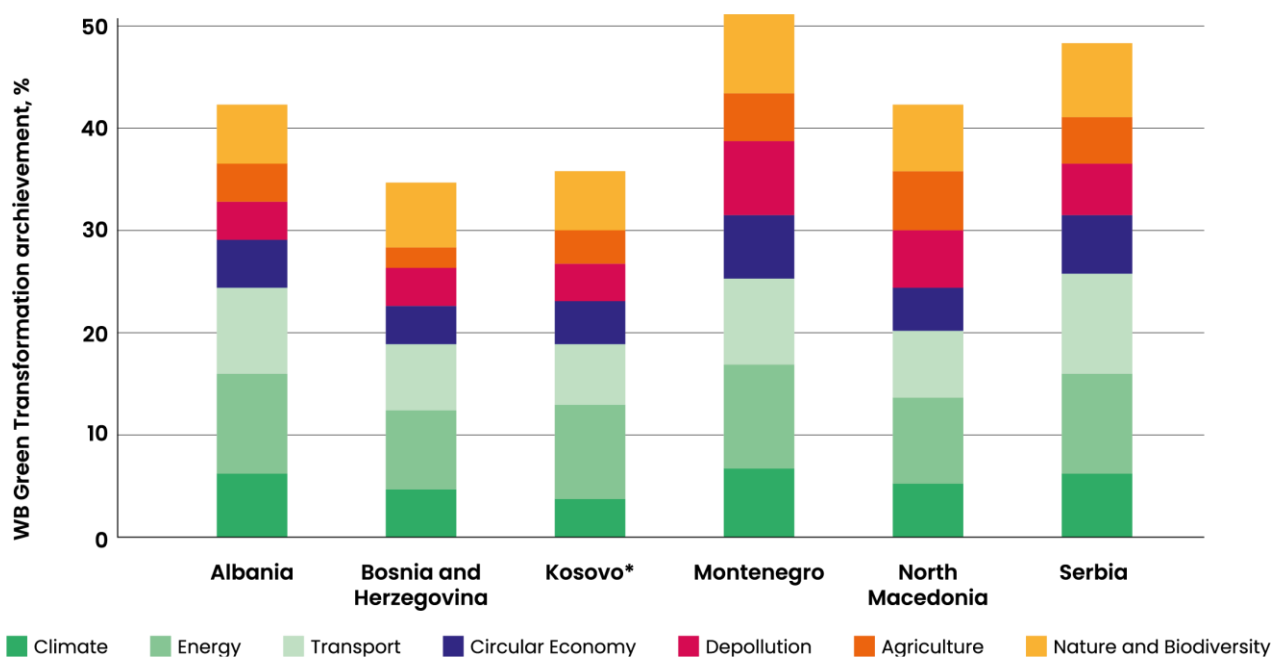


Figure 3: Overall quantification of the green transition in the WB economies aligned with the European Green Deal. Djatkov's elaboration (see Annex), adapted from RCC (2022).

## Summary of Assessment Findings for each Roadmap

### Climate actions and energy sector

**Overview:** The Western Balkans economies are making commendable progress in climate actions, particularly in the developing of robust legal frameworks and their alignment with the EU Climate Law. Notable advancements include the establishment of energy and climate goals, with the adoption of Integrated National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs) underway in two economies. While the introduction of the Emission Trading Scheme (ETS) is pending, the anticipated Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) is expected to accelerate this process. As the EU prepares for CBAM's full application in 2034, with initial steps in 2026, some Western Balkans economies are facing delays in integrating these requirements into their legal frameworks.

**Energy Sector Progress:** Across all Western Balkans economies, significant strides have been made in setting ambitious energy and climate targets for 2030. Concurrently, efforts to implement Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Directives are well underway. However, there remains a need for more comprehensive assessments of the socioeconomic impact of decarbonisation. Additionally, greater emphasis is required on conceptualising just transition strategies and



addressing issues of energy poverty, which are currently underrepresented in policy considerations.

### **Sustainable transport**

Progress is being made in the implementation of regional action plans for sustainable transport. However, infrastructure availability remains low. Additionally, alignment with the Alternative Fuel Infrastructure Directive and climate-proof of infrastructure have not been achieved. Moreover, the lack of availability of advanced fuels in the transport sector poses challenges to sustainable efforts.

### **Circular economy and waste management**

Progress and needs: Efforts to establish a regional railway market require progress in enacting necessary laws and by-laws. Despite advancement, most economies in the WB still lack circular economy roadmaps, strategic plans and programmes. Additionally, there is a pressing need for further harmonisation of waste management policies.

Challenges and Solutions: Current waste management practices in the region demonstrate low recycling rates and excessive landfilling. Addressing this requires significant infrastructure investments. However, there is a positive development in regional efforts to combat plastic pollution, indicating a step forward in environmental sustainability.

### **Depollution and environment protection**

In the depollution sector, improving air quality and enhancing monitoring capabilities are critical objectives across all Western Balkans economies. Limited capacities and investments have resulted in the low implementation of relevant EU legislation concerning industrial pollution. Additionally, harmonising water management legislation with EU standards and enhancing water-monitoring networks are ongoing challenges in all economies in the Western Balkans. While efforts to integrate soil protection activities exist, a comprehensive legal framework is missing. Serbia stands as the only economy with legislation on soil protection (Law on Soil Protection), albeit not fully implemented.

### **Sustainable agriculture and biodiversity**

Progress is being made in aligning Western Balkans policies with EU standards in sustainable agriculture and sanitary controls. However, full alignment with EU legislation on organic production remains a pending task. Notably, roadmaps for sustainable rural development particularly focusing on funding implementation through IPARD III have been established. A recent study assessing the impact of climate change on agriculture has been published. Additionally, preparations are underway for the Regional Western Balkans Biodiversity Report.

Biodiversity strategies: While biodiversity strategies with nature protection targets have been formulated, the absence of restoration plans is notable. On the positive note, there is ongoing exploration into the use of nature-based solutions to enhance ecosystem and community resilience in the region.

## **3.2 Insights from conducted interviews: Progress in framework alignment with the European Green Deal**

In this subchapter, the key results excerpted from the conducted interviews are presented, focusing on the specific aspects highlighted below. This part is related to the assessment of framework conditions, from the point of view of an interviewed expert for the GAWB.

## Status of legal framework conditions in the Western Balkans economies and involvement in European initiatives supporting Green Deal implementation

### Bosnia and Herzegovina

Bosnia and Herzegovina currently lacks a specific Law on climate change. The new strategy should be adopted with clear obligations and targets and goals. There is ongoing work to adopt and adapt legislation, with a focus on continuous harmonisation with the EU legal framework. While principles aligned with the GAWB are indirectly integrated, full harmonisation remains partially achieved thus far. Areas such as soil protection, food safety, official controls, waste management, and sustainable pest management demonstrate varying degrees of harmonisation. Similarly, the policy for rural development is also partly harmonised with EU standards.

### Kosovo

**Decarbonisation challenges:** The adopted Energy Action Plan and Energy Development Strategy are the most important documents relevant for decarbonisation activities. However, coal is still considered as a primary energy source, and there has not been significant progress towards decarbonisation in that sense. Concrete measures to attain decarbonisation haven't been adopted yet. While solar photovoltaic and wind power are planned, they are not considered reliable energy sources due to the low-capacity utilisation rates and unpredictable energy generation.

**Biodiversity documentation and conservation:** The legal framework related to biodiversity and ecosystems is rather satisfactory. There has been good progress in the adoption of laws and by-law documents. The Law of Nature Protection was adopted in 2006 and adapted in 2010, serving as the most important legislative document. Additionally, there are many other laws and by-laws covering the regulatory framework, aligning with EU directives. There are two economy-administered parks in Kosovo, which constitute 95 % of its protected areas. The first one is Sari mountain, initially spanning 30,000 ha but expanded to more than 50,000 ha. The second one, Bjeshkët e Nemuna National Park, is the larger, covering 61,000 ha. Spatial plans have been developed for both parks, including three zones (buffer, development, strict). A Red Book has been prepared for animal and plant species, containing a Red List with the most threatened species.

### Montenegro

Due to the unstable political situation, there are currently no ongoing activities related to the Green Agenda. Over the past two years, Montenegro has not adopted any new policy documents addressing environmental concerns, and existing legislation is outdated. For example, the Waste Management Law and the Law on Forests both date back to 2017. Although the Law on Nature Protection has been published for public discussion, the Constitution of Montenegro does not facilitate regular meetings, preventing the adoption of appropriate documents.

**Renewable Energy:** Montenegro is in the process of drafting a new Law on Renewable Energies, expected to be adopted alongside the National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP) in 2024. However, the Law on Efficient Use of Energy has already been adopted and is in effect.

**Waste Management:** Efforts to improve waste management are underway, with a new law being drafted to align with EU legislation. However, implementation remains a challenge, and Montenegro aims to establish a recycling system for 30 % of generated waste, a significant increase from the current level of around 1 %. Despite the launch of the Roadmap for Circular Economy in 2022, progress has been slow, with the Action Plan for 2023 and 2024 remaining unimplemented.

**Biodiversity and Nature Protection:** Montenegro lacks ongoing activities and strategies in the field of biodiversity, with the expiration of the Biodiversity Strategy in 2020. The absence of comprehensive measures threatens the preservation of Montenegro's rich natural heritage and ecosystems.

**Air and Water Quality:** Legislation related to air quality (emissions, quality, and depollution) is fully harmonised in Montenegro, reflecting progress in this area. However, the harmonisation of legislation concerning water quality is somewhat less efficient, with approximately 90 % considered harmonised. Harmonisation of legislation regarding soil quality is questionable.

#### **North Macedonia**

Circular economy is a popular topic, although considered to be at the very beginning. The status of the legal framework conditions for alignment with EU laws is satisfying. The most important law and by-law documents have been adopted and harmonised with EU policy, a process that spans 5-20 years. However, the implementation in all aspects remains at a very low level.

#### **Serbia**

In Serbia, efforts to integrate into the EU Emission Trading Scheme (EU ETS) or establish an equivalent system are ongoing but have not yet been realised. The Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism was scheduled to commence on 1 October 2023, with penalties expected from 2026. Notably, the decarbonisation pillar is more advanced in Serbia compared to other pillars. However, the Climate change law adopted in 2021 is deemed outdated, necessitating updates to align with evolving EU standards. Although ongoing activities aim to harmonise domestic legislation with EU principles, there is a lack of appropriate by-laws to ensure implementation of existing laws, particularly in the energy sector.

Recent developments include the adoption of a new Strategy for Carbon Development and public hearings for the National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP). Anticipated initiatives include the Strategy for the Development of the Energy Sector until 2035 and related legislations.

Furthermore, Serbia has enacted laws on climate change, renewable energies, and waste management, with ongoing development of related by-laws. Progress has been made in the circular economy pillar, marked by the establishment of the Sector for Circular Economy within the Ministry of Environmental Protection, and the adoption of relevant strategies and laws, including the Strategy for Circular Economy, Roadmap for Circular Economy, and the Law on Waste Management. However, the policy framework for the fourth pillar, Agriculture, remains inadequate as the strategy for agriculture is still pending adoption.

### **3.3 Assessment of the implementation of the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans: Progress across pillars**

The excerpt from the Action Plan Implementation Report<sup>8</sup> (Annex) serves as the assessment of the implementation of the GAWB and provides descriptions of indicators relevant for each roadmap, i.e. pillar. Therefore, this subchapter describes the resulting outcomes from the GAWB implementation (e.g. resulting GHG reduction in recent years in the sector of decarbonisation, or similar and relevant for other pillars).

#### **Climate Action Roadmap**

In all economies in the Western Balkans, reports on indicators regarding climate action are released annually. Data related to the total GHG emissions for Kosovo are available for the period 2017-2019. Analysis related to the change of the GHG emissions from 2016 to 2019 showed stagnation across all the Western Balkans economies, indicating minimal changes during the respective period. Thereby, emissions from the energy sector are dominant in each economy, accounting for approximately 80 % of total emissions, with electricity and heat generation contributing nearly 70 %. The adoption of renewable energy sources has led to a slight decrease in total GHG emissions in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia. The ongoing transition period in the region is expected to result in increased consumption of heat and electricity for development

purposes. Albania, Montenegro, and North Macedonia have the lowest GHG emissions per capita in Europe.

The 2006 OECD Declaration on Integrating Climate Adaptation into Development Cooperation<sup>28</sup> mandates OECD members to incorporate climate change adaptation into their development policies, both domestically and in collaboration with partner economies. Notably, Albania and North Macedonia made significant progress in 2020, due to the adoption of National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs). Progress continued in 2021 and 2022, with economies advancing in the transposition of parts of the Governance Regulation related to NECPs. In terms of legislative action, Albania adopted the Law on Climate Change in 2020, followed by Serbia in 2021, while Kosovo, Montenegro and North Macedonia are currently in the drafting phase. Bosnia and Herzegovina has yet to initiate efforts in this regard. It is worth noting that Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina have the lowest percentage of sectoral policies.

### Energy Roadmap

The following assessment is based on the historical trend of energy indicators in the period from 2016 to 2022. Notably, there has been consistent improvement in electricity-related implementation across all the Western Balkans economies. However, progress was initially hindered by stagnation until 2019 due to slow implementation of the power market mechanisms, after which the first cases of market coupling were recorded. Noteworthy advancements occurred in Kosovo and Albania during the period 2020 to 2022, since these economies established a wholesale electricity market and fostered mutual regional connections.

Renewable energy projects were implemented more intensively until 2020. In 2020, Kosovo made a significant step forward by moving towards abandoning coal, while North Macedonia publicly announced a coal phase-out programme. However, over the past three years, only Serbia has made notable progress in this aspect, primarily through the drafting and adoption of the Law on the Use of Renewable Energy Sources. Other Western Balkans economies have either stagnated or witnessed worsened implementation. This is the consequence of failures to meet the mandatory 10 % of renewable energy in transport target by 2020. Albania achieved 100 % electricity consumption from renewables, yet its share in heating, cooling, and the transport sector is very low.

Insufficient progress in the field of gas implementation can be attributed to several factors, including the low share of district heating systems in rural areas, lagging reforms of energy markets, and the absence of unbundled energy operators. Across all the Western Balkans economies, there has been noticeable stagnation in the last three years. The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina is the most critical because of the economy's internal structure. Kosovo has made progress by establishing interconnectivity with neighbouring economies. Serbia has adopted gas network codes but needs energy market reforms to achieve higher gas implementation rates. In Montenegro, a detailed plan is needed to increase implementation ratios. North Macedonia needs to revise its economy-level code and undertake the unbundling of transmission system operators.

### Sustainable Transport Roadmap

The analysis pertains to the implementation status of the transport roadmap following the period of the adoption of the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans. The status regarding the implementation of regional action plans for rail and road, transport facilitation, road safety and waterborne transport shows advancements in the previous years.

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<sup>28</sup> Development and Environment Ministers of OECD Member Countries. (2006). Declaration on Integrating Climate Change Adaptation into Development Co-operation. [www.oecd.org/dac/environment-development/44229637.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/dac/environment-development/44229637.pdf). Accessed 10 April 2024.

Rail electrification compliance stands at 74 % on the Core Network and 55.5 % on the Comprehensive Network, based on 2022 data. Segments that are still under construction are excluded from this analysis. There have been no significant differences between electrification compliance rates in 2021 and 2022.

ERTMS (European Railway Traffic Management System) deployment is included in some future projects, but improvement by 2027 is planned for just one quarter of the Core Network. In 2022, only 2.7 % operational ERTMS were on the Core Network, largely due to the newly-reconstructed Belgrade - Novi Sad line.

The assessment of alternative fuels' availability indicates that only a few stations are located on the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T), all of which are in Serbia (eight electrical charging points on Corridor X, of which three are ultra-fast).

The adoption of the Road Action Plan is expected to lead to the deployment of Intelligent Transportation System (ITS).

The Port of Vlore in Albania is the only comprehensive maritime port in the Western Balkans, with no comprehensive inland waterway ports identified. However, some of the ports along the Danube and Sava rivers show promising potential to become core or comprehensive ports.

The only currently non-compliant indicator for inland waterway ports is the availability of alternative fuels, which has not been planned for the near future. It is expected that none of the core inland ports will achieve compliance with this indicator before 2030.

### **Circular Economy Roadmap**

The following assessment is based on the historical trend of circular economy indicators in the period from 2016 to 2020, whereby data for 2021 and 2022 are still being prepared. Albania is the only economy where domestic material consumption (DMC) per capita decreased by 31.6 %, due to lower domestic extraction in 2020. Bosnia and Herzegovina and North Macedonia show stagnation, whereas Serbia increased DMC per capita values by 13.6 %. Overall, the average level of DMC per capita remains lower in the WB area (11.6 t per capita) compared to the EU average (13.4 t per capita). The data for Montenegro and Kosovo are not provided.

With respect to the resource productivity (EUR/kg), an overall increase of more than 10 % could be observed, despite a slight decrease in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and North Macedonia between 2019 and 2020 due to the COVID-19 recession. Albania was an exception, with resource productivity constantly increasing and more than doubling. Overall, the WB region shows a lower average level of resource productivity (0.52 EUR/kg) compared to the EU average (2.21 EUR/kg). GDP increased in all economies between 2016 and 2020, as did resource productivity. However, except for Albania, domestic material consumption is increasing, indicating that the Western Balkans economies have achieved only a relative decoupling of economic growth from resource consumption.

Only Kosovo and Montenegro reduced their amount of waste by 9 % and 26 % respectively, while also increasing GDP. This indicates that these two economies managed to decouple waste generation from economic growth. On the contrary, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Serbia continued to generate increasing amounts of waste.

### **Depollution Roadmap**

The annual ambient concentrations of air pollutants are evaluated in relation to the EU and World Health Organization (WHO) standards. Overall, there has been a general decreasing trend in the annual ambient concentrations of Particulate Matter (PM) 2.5 across all the Western Balkans economies, except for Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2020. Strategic measures to reduce PM 2.5 emissions lag in the region's economies. It is noteworthy that PM 2.5 annual ambient

concentrations in the Western Balkans economies have surpassed both the EU standard (25  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ ), and the WHO guideline (5  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ ).

A positive trend in  $\text{SO}_2$  annual concentrations was observed in Bosnia and Herzegovina from 2016 to 2020, in Serbia from 2018 to 2021, in Montenegro from 2016 to 2019. As of 2021, concentrations in Montenegro remain amongst the lowest in the region, and North Macedonia is the only economy in the region with zero concentrations of  $\text{SO}_2$ .

The annual ambient concentrations of  $\text{NO}_x$  generally show a positive trend across all Western Balkans economies, except for Serbia. However, the exception is noted in the year 2020 when COVID-19 restrictions led to less intensive transport. None of the economies exceeded the given threshold of 24  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ .

Regarding  $\text{SO}_2$  emissions from Large Combustion Plants (LCP), which fall under Large Combustion Plants Directive (LCPD), the largest absolute values are related to Serbia (17 LCPs, emitting 280,652 t of  $\text{SO}_2$  in 2021) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (13 LCPs, emitting 213,539 t of  $\text{SO}_2$  in 2021). All Western Balkans economies showed a decreasing trend until 2021. Concerning  $\text{NO}_x$  emissions, there is no clear decreasing trend in the region; on the contrary, Kosovo shows an increasing trend. The largest contributors in the region are again Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Dust emissions (PM total) in North Macedonia and Serbia are decreasing, while in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Montenegro, they are increasing.

Data regarding the population connected to the public water supply is not available for Kosovo, Montenegro, and North Macedonia. For other Western Balkans economies, the data is available from 2016 to 2020, except for 2020 for Bosnia and Herzegovina. The percentage is the highest in Serbia, at 89.9 % in 2020 (similar to the EU average of 90 %), which increased from 85.8 % in 2016. In Albania, in 2018, it was 78.0 %, however, decreased from 80.4 % in 2016. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, it amounted to 69.7 % in 2019, increasing from 66.2 % in 2016.

The share of the population connected to wastewater treatment plants is the largest in Bosnia and Herzegovina (around 35 %), while in Serbia (around 15 %) there is an increasing trend and expected progress in the future. Albania shows the largest decrease, dropping from around 35 % in 2016 to approximately 25 % during the period 2017-2020. Data is not available for Montenegro and North Macedonia, while for Kosovo data is missing for 2020, 2017 and 2016.

The data regarding nitrate in groundwater is only provided for Serbia. The highest amount was recorded in 2016 (16.89 mg/l), which is significantly higher than the amounts in 2018 and 2019 (7.56 mg/l). Values in 2017 and 2020 are similar, at 11.6 mg/l. The Nitrates Directive (91/676/EC) and the Drinking Water Directive (98/83/EC) regulate nitrogen contamination in groundwater sources, defining the maximum acceptable level of nitrate as 50 mg/l.

### Sustainable Agriculture Roadmap

The data available for analysing sustainable agriculture cover the period from 2016 to 2020. Generally, the area under organic farming with respect to the total utilised agriculture area in all the Western Balkans economies increased from 2016 to 2020, although not with a regular trend. Montenegro and Kosovo made the most progress, with relative increases of 0.51 % and 0.24 %, respectively, while other economies achieved increases of less than 0.10 %. Only Serbia showed slightly decreased values in the last year. The indicator's value of 2.0 % for all the WB economies is generally low compared to the EU-27 (9.1 %).

The total GHG emissions from agriculture show no significant changes in the respective period overall. Therefore, the economies in the Western Balkans with the highest population cause the largest emissions (i.e. Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina show the highest and Montenegro the lowest values). Since there are no data specified by e.g. agricultural land used, different crop production, or agricultural practices, further analyses could not be provided.

## Protection of Nature and Biodiversity Roadmap

The data available for analysing biodiversity and nature protection cover mostly the period from 2016 to 2022, with occasional gaps where data for 2022 are not available. There has been an overall growth in the number of protected and conserved areas, except for Albania, which has not significantly expanded its protected areas network. On the other hand, Serbia and Kosovo have been actively working to increase protection by designating new protected sites.

Serbia has the largest number of potential Natura 2000 sites at 362, followed by Bosnia and Herzegovina with 122 sites. The number of proposed sites in Albania, Montenegro, and North Macedonia is significantly lower, at 43, 33, and 12 respectively.

The Species Protection Index (SPI), which measures the relationship between the number of terrestrial protected areas and the extent to which protected terrestrial vertebrate species are represented, generally shows an increase. Serbia, Albania, and North Macedonia possess a high number of protected sites and therefore have an SPI higher than 50. Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo have an SPI of less than 10, while Montenegro's value has dropped below 1.

Protected Area Management Effectiveness shows no change in the number of assessments performed, with all evaluations carried out in 2016 or prior. North Macedonia has assessed more than 55 % of its protected areas. Albania, Montenegro, and North Macedonia have a very low number of assessments performed, impacting less than 1 % of their protected sites. Although Serbia shows a higher absolute number of assessments, due to the high total number of protected areas, the rate of assessments is only carried out for 0.07 % of them.

Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Montenegro have not yet updated their Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans (BSAPs). The current strategies for these economies have already expired in 2020.

## 4 Identified challenges and barriers for GAWB implementation

### 4.1 Outcomes from the Policy Dialogue Conference in Sarajevo

The Policy Dialogue Conference held in Sarajevo in 2023 facilitated collaborative discussions among experts from both the WB and the EU regarding the green and sustainable future of the WB. During the World Café sessions, which were dedicated to addressing key challenges hindering effective green transition in the WB, experts proposed potential solutions and recommendations. Each session, focusing on the five pillars of the Green Agenda, was moderated by Western Balkans experts. This subchapter outlines the key challenges excerpted from the World Café discussions related to identified challenges and barriers.

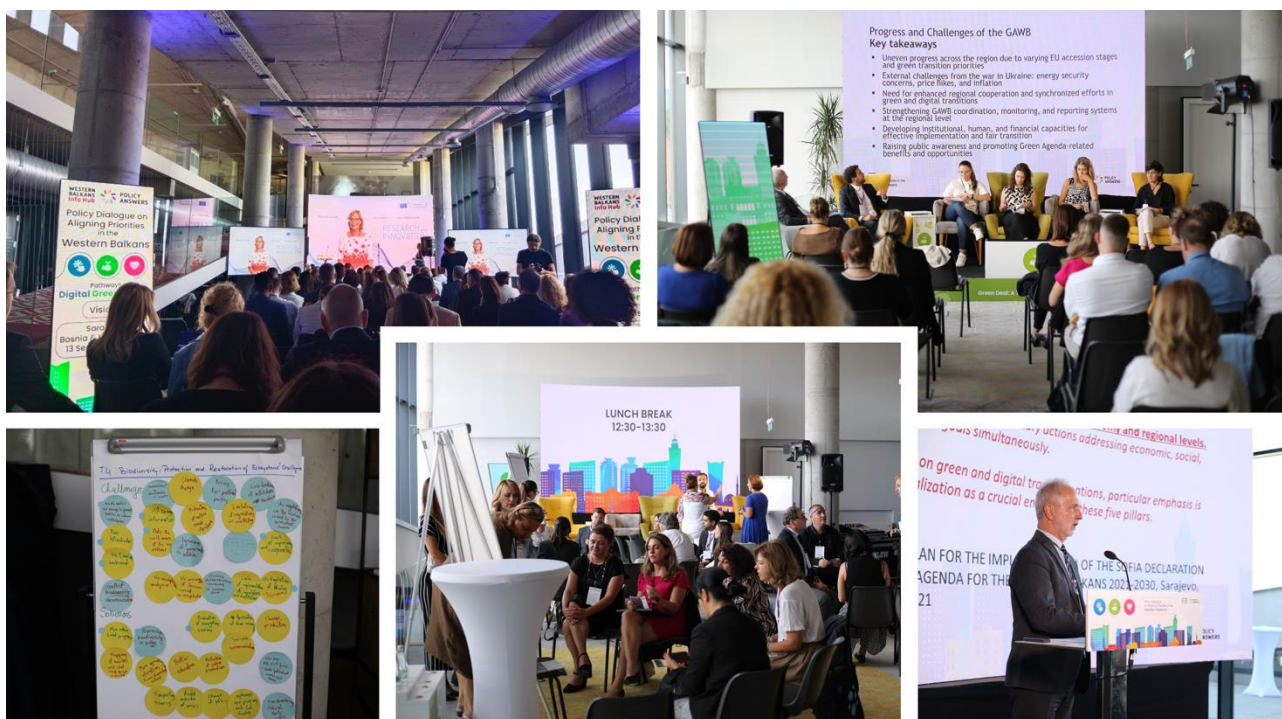


Figure 4: Policy Dialogue Conference held in Sarajevo on 13 September 2023. Sections from the opening ceremony and the World Café session dedicated to the topic ‘Green Deal’.

#### Topic 1: Challenges from the Session ‘Decarbonisation: climate, energy, mobility’

- Lack of implementation of strategic documents
- General mistrust of people, energy insecurity (Ukraine)
- Lack of political willingness, awareness, and strategic planning (evidence)
- Lack of courage, communication channels
- Exclusion of local communities
- Economic dependency
- Disinformation of costs

#### Topic 2: Challenges from the Session ‘Moving to a circular economy’

- Slow alignment of legislation, absence of specific laws
- Lack of roadmap and strategy



- Absence of a platform for stakeholder collaboration (businesses, civil society organisations (CSO))
- Insufficient understanding and coordination, particularly regarding a multisectoral approach, standardisation, mapping, and availability of skilled personnel, as well as the perception of the importance of the problem
- Inconsistent management practices
- Need for consistency, recognising and acknowledging the iterative nature of the Circular Economy
- Lack of a standardised ‘Deserve the label’ criteria
- Reluctance to begin with major companies and corporations, and hold them accountable first

### **Topic 3: Challenges from the Session ‘Depolluting air, water and soil / Building sustainable agriculture and food systems’**

- Short-sightedness of politicians
- Lack of interest from authorities and society
- Implementation gaps
- Inadequate inspection and supervision
- Absence of infrastructure for business partners
- Lack of communication and coordination among authorities
- Insufficient waste management infrastructure, data accessibility and reporting
- Questionable credibility of institutions, low public awareness, poverty
- Lack of incentives and co-financing for research and development (R&D)
- Inappropriate education system and lack of education
- Impact of climate change influence on agriculture
- Lack of leadership and transparent management
- Absence of an information system for environmental data
- Lack of exchange of good practices
- Insufficient incentives for circular economy initiatives (involving universities and governments)
- Limited application of science solutions

### **Topic 4: Challenges from the Session ‘Protecting biodiversity and ecosystems’**

- Political biases influencing decision-making
- Limitations in regulations and conflicts between them
- Lack of implementation of regulations and institutional frameworks
- Absence of regulations on government-issued licenses
- Inadequate regulation of hunting activities
- Insufficient coordination among institutions
- Conflict between biodiversity conservation and decarbonisation efforts
- Poor infrastructure for biodiversity protection
- Inadequate wastewater management to prevent pollution of natural water bodies
- Lack of financial support
- Low knowledge and awareness in society, with insufficient information available
- Lack of microplastics analyses and awareness of illnesses caused by microplastics
- Inability to protect native seeds in the face of climate change
- Lack of experience and corporation.

## 4.2 Outcomes from conducted interviews

### Bosnia and Herzegovina

- Previous activities relied on foreign experts, whose recommendations (though credible in EU Member States) may not be suitable for the local context, since foreign experts are not appropriately informed about local situations. Bosnia and Herzegovina should prioritise engaging local experts who have a better understanding of the specific challenges and opportunities within the economy. This can lead to more tailored and effective solutions.
- Bosnia and Herzegovina faces significant challenges due to inadequate capacities and a lack of solutions for viable energy alternatives if decarbonisation will be fully followed. Shutting down coal power plants would particularly affect communities and economies in small municipalities which completely depend on coal mines and coal power plants for employment.
- Outdated coal power plants, lacking proper desulphurisation and dust removal, continue to operate despite not meeting technical and environmental criteria.
- Challenges include raising awareness, inadequate capacities, and a lack of political will.
- Bosnia and Herzegovina heavily relies on food imports, prioritising productivity over sustainability and environmental concerns, with decision-makers largely unaware of the threats posed by inactivity in this field.
- The Ministry of Agriculture's perception of obligations is notably low, with employees delegated to participate in regional working groups failing to effectively convey information and messages.
- Insufficient investments in the green transition of agriculture, including the absence of subsidies for renewable energies, hindered progress. The agriculture budget moderately supports environmental protection measures, including organic production.

### Kosovo

- The solution for cleaner energy technologies lies in natural gas, in the form of syngas produced from coal. Kosovo does not have direct access to natural gas, instead, it relies on a gas pipeline network. While this could mitigate pollution, it does not address decarbonisation concerns.
- Kosovo's decision to introduce electric batteries production seems illogical given that only 20 % of its energy is imported, with the remainder supplied by coal-based power plants. Moreover, coal-based power plants in Kosovo do not conduct desulphurisation or NO<sub>x</sub> removal, although one of the two plants does carry dust removal.
- A strategy for decarbonisation would involve developing common projects in the field of hydropower plants with Albania. However, the implementation of measures for nature protection and biodiversity is poor, resulting in a gap between legislation and implementation.
- The appropriate budget for implementing nature protection and biodiversity measures is lacking. The administration of parks is weak in measures for conservation. In 2022 the budget for environmental protection was the lowest among the others.
- There is a shortage in the implementation, available funds, human resources, and awareness on all levels, as well as trained personnel.

### Montenegro

- Institutions' performance does not align with actual challenges.
- Lack of the capability to assess feasibility and implementability of desired goals when adopting legislation.
- Key stakeholders from the specific field are not included, and adopted law is not implementable.

- Financing for protected areas is at a very low rate, with tourism revenue not sufficient to make these areas self-sustainable as originally planned. EU projects intended to enable such financing were not approved, indicating low quality concepts and impacts.
- Continuous and reliable monitoring processes for the environment (air, water, soil) are crucial, but financial constraints have led to discontinuity in monitoring in certain years.
- Missing infrastructure and lack of long-term effective measures in environmental protection are significant barriers.
- Financial constraints pose the most substantial barrier, making funds unattainable at the moment. Additionally, citizens and small companies without a green portfolio face challenge in applying for fundings, as existing models like the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) model are more oriented towards larger companies.
- Project activities supported by international funds primarily focus on technical assistance and consulting services, with co-financing or similar activities failing to materialise.

### North Macedonia

- In North Macedonia, the implementation of the circular economy is at a very low level. Municipalities in North Macedonia are rather small in terms of territory and population, and they are not functional in the sense that they are unwilling to collect waste at the local transfer station within the municipality. This obstacle arises because the local administration does not want to centralise waste collection at a single site, making it difficult to monitor the waste produced in the municipality.
- There is a need for the appropriate implementation of the existing legislation.
- The government does not effectively cooperate with the NGO sector and citizens. Although existing opportunities related to international funds for projects are utilised to create and harmonise economy-level legislation, the government does not invest resources in these activities. In consequence, when it comes to implementation, there has been no positive step forward.

### Serbia

- The absence of appropriate funds for decarbonisation activities.
- Lack of an established financial mechanism for decarbonisation.
- Insufficient capacities and knowledge at all levels, including implementation responsibilities.
- Frustration among local-level stakeholders due to rapid changes in strategies, often influenced by political environments.
- Challenges arising from the un-harmonised approach and linkage among the policy documents.
- Serbian industries (especially steel, cement, energy, etc.) face challenges due to the EU's C-Ban, given Serbia's heavy reliance on fossil-based resources, especially coal in power plants.
- Potential barriers include complex administrative procedures, unambiguous information systems regarding investment potentials, and slow service responses for obtaining permits.
- Challenges specific to the circular economy pillar include inadequate capacities for waste disposal or processing, waste quantity reduction, and proper hazardous waste disposal.
- Challenges specific to nature protection include the lack of spatial plans, strategies for invasive species, and public awareness.
- The primary barrier in the sector of agriculture is the lack of knowledge across all levels and stakeholders in the agricultural production value chain, resulting in insufficient utilisation of opportunities such as the IPARD programme. Organic agriculture poses the most significant challenge in aligning with the Green Agenda.

### 4.3 Outcomes from other projects and reports

The main challenges identified in the ‘Status of environment and climate in the Western Balkans’<sup>29</sup> report are related to several pillars or roadmaps of the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans. Air quality remains a critical issue in the Western Balkans economies, despite some improvements related to PM concentrations in certain areas. Coal-based power plants in the energy sector are the major sources of SO<sub>2</sub> and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, as well as other pollutants. Therefore, this sector provides an opportunity for resolving air depollution and mitigating the impact of climate change. The status of waterbodies is unsatisfactory, since most of them failed to reach good status.

Aquatic ecosystems, particularly large fluvial rivers, are facing significant anthropogenic pressure due to antibiotics and pollutants. Soil degradation is prevalent and intensive, primarily caused by erosion and pollution resulting from unsustainable land management practices and natural factors.

The study conducted by the Balkans in Europe Policy Advisory Group (BiEPAG) related to the geopolitics of the green energy transition in the Western Balkans resulted in the policy paper titled ‘Green Power Politics: External actors and energy transition in the Western Balkans’<sup>30</sup>. One significant outcome of the study was the identification of the most concerning problems hindering the green transition in the Western Balkans economies and the macro-region. These results were collected by a regional public opinion survey conducted on a representative sample of over a thousand respondents per Western Balkans economy, totalling 6,047 respondents.

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<sup>29</sup> Belis CA, Djatkov Dj, Lettieri T, Jones A, Wojda P, Banja M, Muntean M, Paunovic M, Niegowska M, Marinov D, Poznanovic G, Pozzoli L, Dobricic S, Zdruli P, Vandyck T. (2022). Status of environment and climate in the Western Balkans. Publications Office of the European Union, Luxemburg. ISBN 978-92-76-52723-7, EUR 31077 EN, JRC129172. doi:10.2760/294516.

<sup>30</sup> Prelec T, Tzifakis N, Bechev D. (2023). Green Power Politics: External actors and energy transition in the Western Balkans. Balkans in Europe Policy Advisory Group (BiEPAG). <https://biepag.eu/publication/green-power-politics-external-actors-and-energy-transition-in-the-western-balkans>. Accessed 10 April 2024.

## Which of these problems is more concerning to you personally?

Multiple responses, maximum three answers [%]

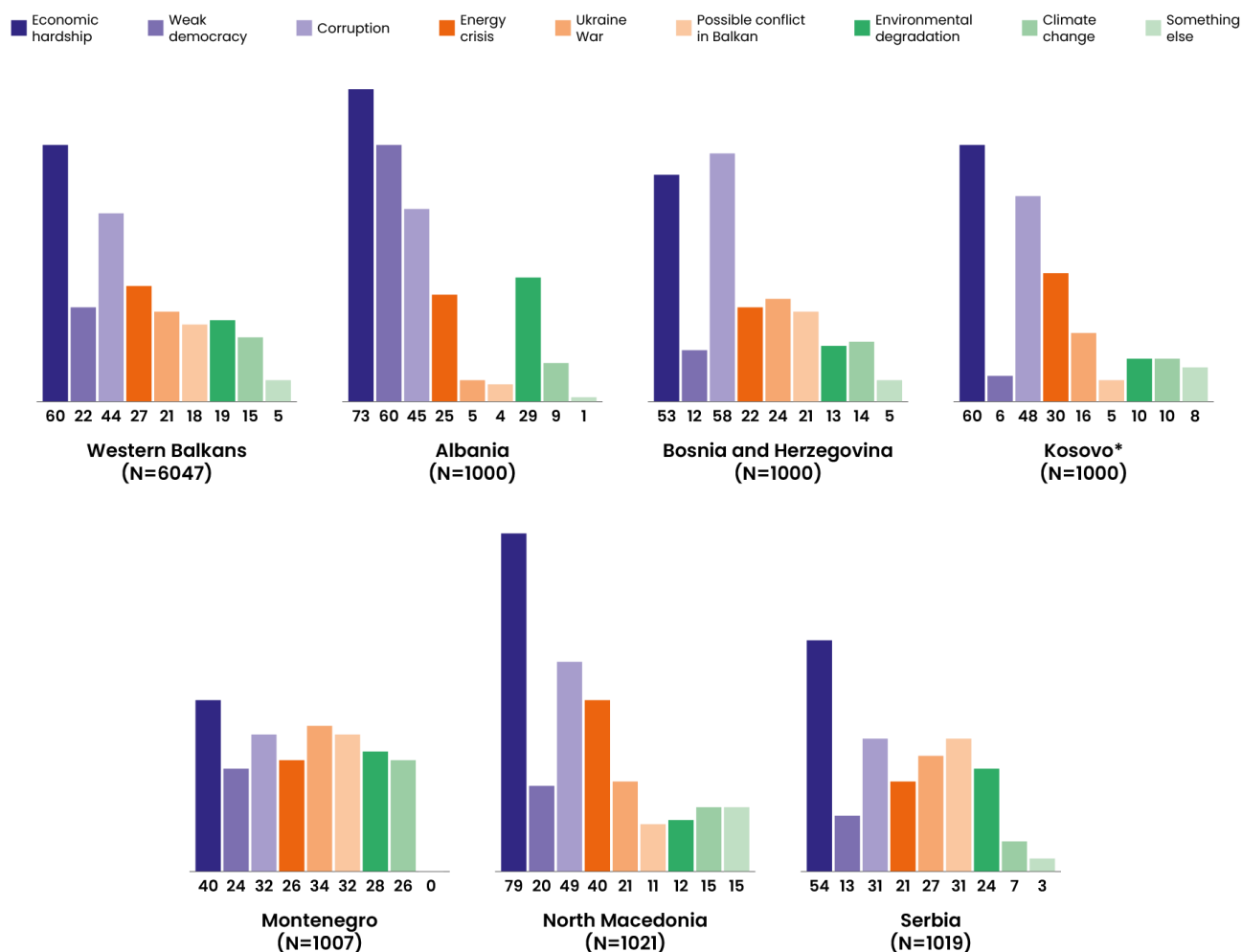


Figure 5: The most concerning problems for the green transition. Source: Prelec et al. (2023)

Overall, the survey highlighted that economic hardship, corruption, and energy crisis are the most relevant (Figure 5). Interestingly, environmental and climate aspects were not perceived as significant concerns by the respondents. This poses a potential threat to public support for renewables, as there is a prevailing opinion that the energy transition is a costly policy that could impact the wider population. Additionally, in some economies in the region, the potential for conflict in the Western Balkans was identified as one of the most relevant problems, further complicating the transition to green energy.

The assessment of the EU requirements to reform energy systems in the Western Balkans economies, as shown in Figure 6, indicates that a significant portion of respondents felt that the EU demands were excessive. Specifically, 49 % of respondents from Serbia and 44 % from North Macedonia expressed this sentiment. However, in the same two economies, 32 % and 38 % of respondents respectively believed that the EU requirements were adequate or insufficient. In Kosovo, public opinion on this matter was nearly evenly split.

## How do you assess the EU requirements to our country to reform the energy system?

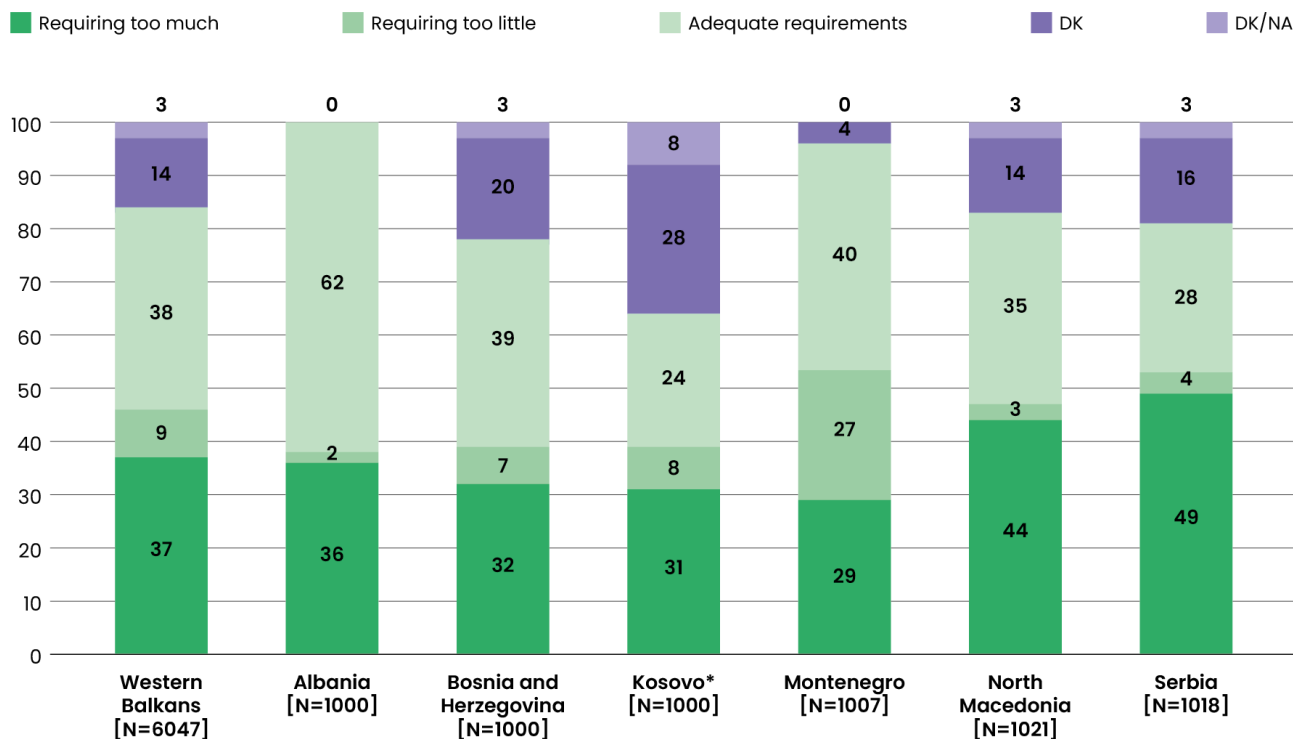


Figure 6: Assessment of EU requirements to reform the WB energy systems. Source: Prelec et al. (2023)

## 5 Achievements (good examples) from implementing the GAWB

This chapter highlights success stories resulting from the implementation of the GAWB, based on interviews and input from additional experts.

### Albania

Albania leads the region in renewable energy auctions and has already achieved the 2020 renewable energy target, with ongoing projects such as the pre-phase of the wind farming auction and the construction of the first photo voltaic (PV) power plants with market-based support. Two PV projects began operations in 2023, and a notable project has been launched for the production of battery energy storage systems. Albania has implemented mandatory 15 % energy-saving targets for the public sector and introduced new measures for households, including a financing scheme for subsidising the installation of solar water heaters. Albania is deploying e-charging stations and supports the Green Transport Tirana project. Finally, it has undertaken tree-planting projects to restore areas affected by forest fires and is implementing a Forestry Policy Document for sustainable forest management to prevent biodiversity loss.

### Bosnia and Herzegovina

Good examples of environmental initiatives include the commissioning of a large solar power plant, alongside the successful installation of a biogas plant, implemented without the need for investment subsidies. Two wind farm projects have been approved as part of the sixth package within the Economic and Investment Plan for the WB and are set to be completed in 2027 and 2028 respectively. Bosnia and Herzegovina has also made significant investments in the modernisation of farms, including digitalisation and automation of processes.

### Kosovo

Kosovo has made significant strides in environmental conservation, with 11 % of its territory now legally protected.

Kosovo's mid-term energy strategy does not include new investments in coal-based power plants. Instead, it initiated auctions for renewable energies, with the first auction resulting in investments for a solar power plant to be installed on a coal ash dump.

Moreover, Kosovo plans two auctions for battery energy storage projects. Building natural gas pipelines from North Macedonia and/or Albania, with diverse supply origins, stands out as a promising strategy for energy diversification and depollution in the region, which could significantly reduce reliance on lignite and lower emissions, aligning with the goals of the Green Agenda.

Kosovo has adopted its first Law on Climate Change and is progressing in the incorporation of CBAM requirements into its legal framework.

### Montenegro

Montenegro is recognised as a regional green energy hub, highlighted by its electricity interconnection with Italy via a submarine cable, and it is enhancing its green energy potential with a new wind farm. One more example is the promotion of protected coastal areas. Moreover, the Porto Montenegro marina stands out as a frontrunner in waste management, thanks to facilities such as a wastewater treatment plant and an engine oil collection and treatment system. Significant environmental protection projects include the ongoing industrial waste management system and the remediation of three hazardous industrial material landfills.

Additionally, another significant step forward is the establishment of a Circular Economy Hub, which includes a digital platform for education and networking.

### North Macedonia

North Macedonia launched the Just Energy Transition Investment Platform to enable the complete phase-out of coal-based power plants, which will be replaced by renewable energies by 2030.<sup>31</sup> Supported by the Climate Investment Funds, this initiative aims to ensure energy security while respecting just transition requirements. Additionally, North Macedonia has joined the LIFE programme<sup>32</sup> for environment and climate action activities. Moreover, the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) project 'Green Business Facility' is scheduled to start in 2024, aiming to boost green business initiatives. North Macedonia is also progressing in sustainable waste management through public-private partnerships.

### Serbia

Serbia is progressing in renewable energy infrastructure. Notable achievements include the construction of several renewable energy facilities, such as PV plants, wind farms, and biogas power plants (with organic waste disposal). Future efforts in decarbonisation and depollution include investments in biomethane as a substitute for natural gas and exploring renewable hydrogen options.

Serbia has adopted the Low Carbon Development Strategy for 2023- 2030 and is currently drafting its National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP).

Serbia is progressing in the incorporation of CBAM requirements into its legal framework. The transition period for the CBAM in Serbia began in 2023 and continues until 2025. Additionally, Serbia has seen notable successes in the agricultural sector. One success story is the establishment of a PV facility to generate electricity for wastewater purification and fruit refrigerators.

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<sup>31</sup> Bennet, V. (2023). North Macedonia launches just energy transition investment platform at COP28. <https://www.ebrd.com/news/2023/north-macedonia-launches-just-energy-transition-investment-platform-at-cop28.html#:~:text=North%20Macedonia%20launches%20just%20energy%20transition%20investment%20platform%20at%20COP28,-By%20Vanora%20Bennett&text=North%20Macedonia%20today%20launched%20a,transition%20of%20the%20electricity%20sector>. Accessed 23 October 2024.

<sup>32</sup> LIFE programme. [https://cinea.ec.europa.eu/programmes/life\\_en](https://cinea.ec.europa.eu/programmes/life_en). Accessed 23 October 2024.



## 6 Recommendations for the implementation of the GAWB

### 6.1 Recommendations for the overall Western Balkans region

#### 6.1.1 Outcomes from the interview with the RCC expert

**Agreement on Targets:** The Western Balkans region should agree on specific targets set by the Energy Community Secretariat for energy supply, including the share of renewable energy sources, and greenhouse gas emission targets for 2030 and 2050. This agreement will provide a common framework for action.

**Improved Regional Cooperation:** Strengthening regional cooperation is crucial for achieving these targets. This could involve regular meetings, joint projects, and sharing of best practices among the economies.

**Enhance Coordination:** Coordination among stakeholders within each economy and across the region should be improved. This could include establishing better communication channels, task forces, and working groups dedicated to energy and climate issues.

**Monitoring and Reporting System:** A robust methodology and reporting system are essential for tracking progress towards targets. Harmonising methodologies for data acquisition will ensure consistency and comparability of data across the region.

**Clear roles for Public Authorities and Partners:** Clearly defining the roles of public authorities and regional partners will facilitate the implementation. This could involve assigning specific responsibilities and ensuring accountability.

**Utilise existing Mechanisms and Projects:** Leveraging synergies with projects such as EU4GREEN, and with mechanisms installed by the EC's Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR) can support coordination efforts among stakeholders for the development of infrastructural projects. These initiatives provide valuable resources and expertise to help achieve energy and climate goals.

**Public Discussions and Awareness:** Encouraging and facilitating public discussions on the importance of the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans is crucial. This could involve organising public forums, educational campaigns, and media outreach to raise awareness about the benefits of green initiatives.

**European Initiatives:** Considering the impact of EU initiatives such as the Emissions Trading Scheme and the potential introduction of the Carbon Border Adjusting Mechanism (CBAM), it will significantly affect the region, since the EU is the main trading partner of the Western Balkans. In the Western Balkans economies, products are often carbon-intensive (such as electricity, cement, steel, textile, etc.), all of which fall under the scheme of CBAM regulation. Therefore, the priority is to establish an adequate carbon pricing mechanism.

**Addressing Governance Challenges:** Ongoing discussions and negotiations within the Energy Community Secretariat aim to harmonise the WB region with the EU carbon trading scheme or to create its own Emission Trading System (ETS), which could be later be harmonised with the EU. Different levels of EU accession and varying approaches to implement the GAWB highlight the need for improved governance and alignment of strategies.

**Promoting Government Actions:** Governments should play a more active role in promoting and implementing the GAWB, with civil society engagement being essential for supporting public authorities.

**Navigating Political Considerations:** Implementation efforts are often hindered by political considerations, while capacity constraints in public authorities pose additional challenges.

**Overcoming Chapter 27 challenges:** Chapter 27 of the EU accession negotiations, focusing on environmental standards, presents complex financial and resource challenges. Decarbonisation should be conducted in a just and a fair way.

**Highlighting positive examples:** Positive examples include initiatives for coal transition in the WB region and Ukraine, as well as platforms like the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group in Southeast Europe (SWG)<sup>33</sup>, facilitating networking and cooperation.

**Investing in Environmental initiatives:** One positive aspect of the planned implementation is the emphasis on investing in wastewater treatment plants, in line with the objectives of the Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans (EIP). The main mechanism for the investment plan is the Western Balkans Investment Framework (WBIF), which facilitates implementation in various areas, including environment, green transition, wastewater treatment plants, and transport.

## 6.1.2 Outcomes from the Stakeholder Policy Dialogue Conference in Sarajevo

### T1: Decarbonisation: climate, energy, mobility

- To address the lack of concern among politicians through the election process
- To establish centres for green action spaces
- To involve local communities in the decision-making processes
- To facilitate the collection and subsequent respect of public opinion and public figures
- To continuously develop a communication strategy

### T2: Moving to a Circular Economy

- To include subvention for the implementation of a circular economy
- To encourage private investment in research (experiments)
- To promote knowledge sharing and awareness
- To incorporate nature-based solutions
- To establish waste management with increased funding for local initiatives
- To implement a return protocol
- To enable education and public-private partnerships to educate and upscale workers

### T3: Depolluting air, water and soil / Building sustainable agriculture and food systems

- To establish an information system for environmental data
- To enhance research activities in the circular economy and implement an appropriate waste management system
- To facilitate a green and sustainable transition
- To enable and boost exchange of good practices
- To introduce incentives for circular economy (in collaboration with universities and governments)
- To enact legislation, documentation, and reports

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<sup>33</sup> Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group in Southeast Europe. <https://seerural.org>. Accessed 23 October 2024.

- To promote changes in the population's eating habits
- To contribute to a One Health approach
- To increase energy efficiency
- To improve air quality by resolving small household heating systems
- To leverage opportunities from participating in European partnerships
- To align with the prioritisation direction of SDGs
- To implement scientific solutions

#### T4: Protecting Biodiversity and Ecosystems

- To implement additional nature-based programmes
- To map habitats and identify areas for protection
- To prioritise biodiversity in policy making
- To introduce more agricultural education, starting from elementary school
- To prevent the extinction of species
- To conduct evaluations of ecosystem services
- To enable the protection of native production to sustain transboundary natural parks (Bosnia and Herzegovina)
- To facilitate a change of politics and establish an attitude of appreciation of free resources
- To increase communication efforts
- To implement new programmes, secure funding, and utilise WB EIP funds with clear political will and involvement of civil society.
- To transition production methods towards sustainability.

### 6.1.3 Outcomes from other reports

#### Report: Status of environment and climate in the Western Balkans

The report of the Joint Research Centre (JRC)<sup>29</sup> from 2022 primarily focuses on environmental issues. Achieving full alignment with EU environment acquis requires strong political commitment. Despite improvements in monitoring and reporting legislation, there's a need to enhance implementation steps related to depollution activities. Integrating environmental measures into other sectors such as energy, industry, transport and waste management is essential for effective implementation of environmental legislation. Furthermore, there is a continued need to establish monitoring networks with sufficient data coverage (space and time) and analysis of parameters in line with legislation.

To achieve the EU's zero pollution targets as defined in the EU Action Plan - Towards Zero Pollution for Air, Water and Soil<sup>34</sup> which falls under the framework of the EU Green Deal, addressing transboundary pollution in South-East Europe and the Western Balkans is crucial. Relevant international cooperation is essential to engage all relevant actors and stakeholders in both the design and implementation of environmental policies. This is particularly crucial considering the region's relatively small area but high interconnectedness between ecosystems across and beyond the region. Rapid climate change underscores the necessity for designing appropriate adaptation measures, including the establishment of monitoring and early warning systems. Continuous and

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<sup>34</sup> European Commission (EC). (2021). COM(2021) 400 final. Pathway to a Healthy Planet for All- EU Action Plan: 'Towards Zero Pollution for Air, Water and Soil'. [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:a1c34a56-b314-11eb-8aca-01aa75ed71a1.0001.02/DOC\\_1&format=PDF](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:a1c34a56-b314-11eb-8aca-01aa75ed71a1.0001.02/DOC_1&format=PDF). Accessed 10 April 2024.

concerted efforts are needed to promote capacity building, especially through collaboration involving experts from within the region and from the EU.

### **Report: External actors and energy transition in the Western Balkans**

The report of the Balkans in Europe Policy Advisory Group (BiEPAG) in 2023<sup>30</sup> recommended launching public awareness campaigns to emphasise the benefits of decarbonised energy systems, predominantly through online platforms to omit the influences of anti-reform elites. Additional financial support should be allocated to local civil society organisations and vulnerable groups to foster their active participation in the transition process and mitigate potential negative outcomes. Greater transparency and regulation of foreign investments should be demanded, primarily to combat corruption. Regional cooperation among the Western Balkans economies and their EU neighbours should be promoted, particularly in grid interconnection and cross-border investments. More targeted support for investments in the region should be provided to facilitate the transition to sustainable energy systems.

### **Report: Chaotic and Fake Decarbonisation of Power Sectors in the Western Balkans - Evaluation of International Policies**

In the report<sup>35</sup>, published by the Center for Sustainable Energy Transition (RESET) in 2023, recommendations are provided to address the shortcomings of the EU approach to decarbonising power sectors in the Western Balkans. This includes an initial list of possible improvements in the EU energy and climate policy for the Western Balkans region, proposed by regional experts. However, the main recommendation of this research is to initiate a ‘forward-looking’ dialogue called the REPowerWB (REPower Western Balkans) programmes between EU representatives and key local stakeholders such as governments, the expert community, coal regions, local communities, and NGOs.

The EU institutions should:

- Evaluate the activities of the Energy Community (at European and Western Balkans economies’ parliaments) based on the reviews of independent evaluators to encourage wide debate
- Initiate explicit inclusion of the economies’ parliaments of the Energy Community members in decision-making procedures, thus ensuring a democratic, inclusive, and just policy-making process
- Facilitate the inclusion of external contributors (NGOs, professional organisations, think tanks) in policymaking, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation, thus ensuring expertise and transparency
- Support the decentralised energy transition by increased technical and financial assistance programmes to initiate more active participation of local actors to decarbonising local energy consumption and increasing supply security
- Provide support to improve professional capacities by facilitating the organisation of specialised events to increase the adoption of new technologies and business models
- Initiate the integration of the Western Balkans economies into the EU rather than the regional ETS system within the Energy Community to allow for free allocation of the CO<sub>2</sub> certificates, leading to initial funding for those economies ready to adopt and implement the coal phase-out date

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<sup>35</sup> Kusljagic M, Miljevic D, Rajakovic N. (2023). Chaotic and fake decarbonization of power sectors in the Western Balkans (Evaluation of international policies). Center for Sustainable Energy Transition (RESET). [https://reset.ba/images/2023/11\\_novembar/Chaotic%20and%20fake%20decarbonization%20on%20WB%20RESET%20web.pdf](https://reset.ba/images/2023/11_novembar/Chaotic%20and%20fake%20decarbonization%20on%20WB%20RESET%20web.pdf). Accessed 10 April 2024.

- Provide long-term technical and financial assistance to programmes for energy poverty mitigation that will result in sustainable solutions
- Establish a dedicated EU fund to co-finance projects and restructuring programmes in coal regions in transition, like the Just Transition Fund

### **Report: Green Agenda for the Western Balkans- The Road Toward Effective and Sustainable Implementation**

The report from the Aspen Institute Germany<sup>36</sup>, published in 2022, provided policy recommendations for governments in the Western Balkans economies in various fields, including implementing the Green Agenda and ensuring a just transition, energy transition and energy security, sustainable agriculture and food security, and circular economy. These recommendations are specified for the local, economy and regional levels. Additionally, the report provided policy recommendations for the European Union and the EU-27, as well as for experts, civil society, and the media.

#### ***Recommendations for governments in the Western Balkans***

##### Implementing the Green Agenda and Ensuring a Just Transition

###### *Local level:*

- Strengthening local governance capacities to improve the ability of local administrations to conduct thorough environmental impact assessments and decentralise implementation
- Raising awareness about the importance of clean energy and environmental protection among both the population and at the policy level through educational initiatives. More public campaigns addressing climate change are essential
- Addressing public apprehensions of being confronted with unsightly renewables technologies in their immediate vicinity through decentralised energy grids, strategic landscaping, educational campaigns, and positive messaging

###### *Economy-level:*

- Decentralise implementation by incorporating local municipalities and the private sector to relieve some of the burden on economy-level public administration
- Review and adjust economy-level industrial policies to align with new objectives and EU acquis
- Strengthen collaboration with the banking system to promote green financing
- Ensure the sustainable sourcing of materials for renewable energy infrastructure
- Prioritise transitioning in the heating and transportation sectors, emphasising energy efficiency in the construction sector
- Develop a comprehensive long-term transition strategy
- Find a sustainable balance between economic growth and environmental interests
- Ensure that social impact finds consideration in all mechanisms

###### *Regional level:*

- Strengthen regional cooperation to facilitate the green transition by reducing costs and avoiding inefficient parallel structures in implementation. Regional alliances are crucial,

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<sup>36</sup> Mildner S-A, Bories T, Sass M, Engstrom A, Neumann-Wengler S, Gordon-Forbes D. (Eds.). (2022). Green Agenda for the Western Balkans. The Road Toward Effective and Sustainable Implementation. Aspen Institute Deutschland e.V. ISSN 2940-4169. [www.aspeninstitute.de/wp-content/uploads/Green-Agenda-for-the-Western-Balkans\\_2023.pdf](http://www.aspeninstitute.de/wp-content/uploads/Green-Agenda-for-the-Western-Balkans_2023.pdf). Accessed 10 April 2024.

both between the Western Balkans economies and the EU, as well as among these economies

- Maintain momentum by aligning WB markets more closely with EU schemes and reorganising processes, as the implementation is a crucial step in the EU accession process

### Energy Transition and Energy Security

#### *Local level:*

- Promote the decentralisation of energy supplies to counteract the vested interests of brown and black industries and empower private households to produce energy
- Ensure that future energy strategies are transparent and enable functional and meaningful public participation
- Encourage the scaling up of smart strategies that include local populations

#### *Economy-level:*

- Accelerate and decisively implement the energy transition, reaffirming existing commitments
- Recognise renewable energies as the primary means to secure energy independence
- Transition from short-term plans (relying on brown and black energy supplies) towards long-term visions favouring renewables, despite initial higher costs
- Develop more profitable incentives to encourage companies and private investors to install and operate renewable capacities
- Adapt ad-hoc efforts to mitigate the current energy crisis
- Ensure that energy transition strategies are coordinated and multidisciplinary
- Cease economy-level subsidies for dirty energy sources that undermine competitiveness
- Move beyond the misconception that coal is a cheap energy source
- Seek expert-informed recommendations during the policy-making process
- Foster innovation more rigorously by incentivising private energy production and improving property rights to prevent companies from relocating abroad

#### *Regional level:*

- Establish robust platforms for regional cooperation and exchange
- Facilitate pragmatic regional integration of energy markets to reduce volatility in electricity prices
- Utilise the energy crisis as a catalyst for a green transition

### Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security

#### *Local level:*

- Focus on the practical implementation of measures at a more local level
- Reduce food waste throughout the supply chain (farm to fork) to improve food security
- Support small farms to increase the region's international competitiveness (implement urgent land reform to prevent further land fragmentation)

#### *Economy-level:*

- 1) Develop and adopt economy-level food-security strategies to ensure adequate and acute provision of food to domestic markets during critical situations
- 2) Make available large expanses of unused agricultural land to produce strategic crops, whereby a long-term solution for the management of land owned by the government is needed
- 3) Provide support for the industrialisation of food production and distribution to create employment opportunities and enhance efficiency

- 4) Strengthen the rule of law and combat corruption to prevent unnecessary hindrances in implementation
- 5) Give civil society a more prominent role to steer the discussion and help apply more pressure on economy level
- 6) Promote integration into the European Union as this is a *conditio-sine-qua-non* for enhancing farmers' global competitiveness

*Regional level:*

- 1) Improve university curricula and foster regional cooperation to promote research and innovation (R&I) in the agricultural sector through a regional research collaboration framework
- 2) Promote the exchange of knowledge and resources at a regional level (useful for cross-border practices in responding to the climate crisis)
- 3) Shift the research focus from technology generation to technology transfer

Circular Economy

*Local level:*

- Promote Circular Economy (CE) approaches at all levels of the region and across the entire value chain
- Raise awareness for CE to boost public support through campaigns that introduce the full prices of products, such as implementing the Pay As You Throw scheme
- Counteract the public misconception of CE as a form of waste management with awareness and education campaigns to explain its complexity and highlighting its benefits

*Economy-level:*

- Incorporate CE principles into legislation and strategic documents
- Ensure relevant data on CE approaches is readily available
- Allocate increased funds for CE, particularly through environment schemes
- Foster broader dialogue with businesses and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to cultivate compromise and partnerships in securing energy and raw resources, as well as protecting employment

***Recommendations for the European Union and EU-27 (relevant for the Western Balkans)***

- Address discrepancies between the objectives set by the EU through the Green Agenda and their practical implementation in the Western Balkans
- Increase EU support for long-term implementation, extending beyond the allocated EUR 9 billion for the 2021-2027 budget and the EUR 1 billion energy support package aim at alleviating the short-term energy crisis
- Incorporate WB partners into EU mechanisms designed to mitigate the energy and decarbonisation crises exacerbated by the war in Ukraine
- Emphasise the need to address energy security questions jointly with the EU
- Address common threats such as the energy crisis, cross-border pollution, and rising inflation with a joint response (the Berlin Process<sup>37</sup> is a key component)
- Counter Western Balkans' reluctance to relinquish lignite energy sources with regional solidarity and EU support
- Seek a broader exchange between politics, business, and non-governmental organisations to find compromises in securing energy, raw materials and protecting employment

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<sup>37</sup> Berlin Process. <https://www.berlinprocess.de>. Accessed 23 October 2024.

- Increase efforts to raise understanding and incentives for implementation, both within civil society and at the policy-making level
- Clarify that delays in enacting the Green Energy Plan would also delay EU accession for the Western Balkans economies

### ***Recommendations for Experts, Civil Society, and the Media***

- The media need to improve their expertise and reporting on climate change to effectively educate the public
- Experts in the field of environment and energy transition need to be more vocal to uphold pressure and prevent governmental inertia
- Experts should liaise with activists to assist them in formulating clear messages and calls to action in order to overcome lack of awareness and misconceptions
- Experts should provide recommendations to policymakers who may lack specific expertise and cannot be expected to draft detailed solutions to the energy crisis

Raise awareness among parliamentarians about the benefits of the Green Agenda and Circular Economy (CE).

## **6.2 Recommendations per Western Balkans economy**

### **6.2.1 Outcomes from interviewed key experts**

*What would be the recommendations for policy- and decisionmakers in the Western Balkans economies to improve the implementation of the GAWB?*

#### **Bosnia and Herzegovina**

Concrete suggestions and recommendations for policymakers and decision-makers include the need to systematise the employee structure, provide capacity building through training programmes, and upgrade laboratories of public institutions along with enhancing the capacities of their staff.

Adequate finances should be allocated to public institutions to achieve the aforementioned goals. Synchronisation of the activities of public institutions is crucial and should be prioritised as a key measure.

Restrictions should be imposed on the export of agricultural products produced. Farmers should not be restricted to local markets or subsidies if they fail to adhere to environmental protection principles, such as sustainable soil use, animal welfare, and responsible pesticide management. This needs to change in order to improve effectiveness and contribute to broader sustainability goals.

It is recommended to adopt a system of punishment and reward at economy-level to incentivise compliance with environmental regulations.

#### **Kosovo**

To improve and boost the implementation of nature protection and biodiversity conservation, it is crucial to prioritise regionally connected and cross-border ecosystems, especially those of significant size. These ecosystems should be collectively protected. Additionally, ecosystems should be transferred from centralised systems to municipalities for more effective management and preservation.



## Montenegro

To invest in the missing infrastructure related to wastewater treatment and waste processing. Implement strict measures in the inspection process and enforce penalties for non-compliance, especially for generators of pollution that dispose their streams into water and soil. Enhance capacity building for all players, ranging from economy-level administration to industry. To address low air quality, it is recommended to invest in district heating systems to mitigate pollution from individual combustion plants. Additionally, replacing outdated vehicles with diesel engines can help reducing air pollutants emissions.

Raise awareness and educate citizens, including within universities, by introducing new subjects and courses. However, activities related to this have thus far been supported by international funds.

## North Macedonia

To establish an efficient waste management system encompassing the selection, collection, transportation, disposal, and utilisation (recycling, incineration, etc.) of waste. A recommendation for better implementation in small communities is through private-public partnerships, where companies should handle all necessary processes to secure profitability. Education plays a crucial role in facilitating environmental protection by establishing new business opportunities in this field.

The NGO sector could be included in this process informally, but also formally to introduce new subjects and even study programmes in high schools and universities. It is imperative to combat corruption to ensure environmental protection standards are upheld, with effective inspections and penalties in place. Activities are needed among the general public to decrease EU scepticism.

Additionally, there is a need to incorporate centrally set-up activities in advancing the circular economy, which is currently functional only at a micro level within companies, largely without significant involvement of the central administration.

## Serbia

Establishment of political will is paramount. Additionally, support should be secured to finance necessary activities and invest in concrete measures for decarbonisation - emphasising sustainable financing. The economy's administration should establish mechanisms to force or motivate different economy-level and local level actors to participate actively in decarbonisation efforts. Information should be shared with all stakeholders, and market players should be encouraged to engage in decarbonisation initiatives. Inclusivity is crucial, with all relevant stakeholders, including administration on economy level, scientific institutions, industries, and EU initiative members being involved. Administration on economy-level should actively facilitate their inclusion and promote knowledge transfer and capacity building. Political will is the key factor, and capacity building of all potential players is among priorities to ensure effective implementation of actions leading to carbon neutrality and energy transition. Popularisation of the Green Agenda goals and targets shall be conducted for all potential players and their cooperation shall be improved. The Green Deal should not be considered as a pure obligation for Serbia, it presents an opportunity to transform energy sector and industry to mitigate climate change. Additionally, targets from the Sustainable Development Goals should be included in Serbia's strategy beside those of the Green Agenda. Inspection activities should cover protected areas and species, as well as land use and environmental impact assessment studies. Feedback from these activities should be provided to the general public and all interested parties.

A potential solution to address the lack of capacities is the outsourcing for experts from industry or academia. Ministries should also constantly educate their employees to ensure they possess an appropriate knowledge base for the tasks. Additionally, there is a need, apart from technical experts, to provide appropriate PR experts, which today are completely lacking, to effectively

communicate and promote the green transition. A recommendation for the policy aspect is the continuous harmonisation and reconsideration of measures and their effects (by an economy-level body, council or committee). The general public should be informed and consulted through public hearings.

Another potential effective measure should be the establishment of a dedicated economy-level institute tasked with dealing with such topics. This institute would be responsible for conducting analyses, monitoring progress, and proposing implementation measures. The most important recommendation for policymakers in the agriculture sector is to facilitate appropriate education at all levels and among all stakeholders in the value chain. This would enable the implementation of measures that would positively impact the environment and socio-economic aspect.

## 6.2.2 Outcomes from the EC Reports for each of the Western Balkans economies

Every year, the EC publishes a series of documents titled ‘Communication on EU Enlargement policy’, accompanied by the Commission Staff Working Document. The documents are published for each enlargement economy and analyse various aspects of policy alignment. The following sections present aspects related to the Green Agenda for each of the Western Balkan economies separately, extracted from the economy reports published in 2023<sup>38,39,40,41,42,43</sup>.

**Albania** is currently in the stage of preparation in the areas of transport, trans-European networks, environment, and climate change. In the sector of energy, it has achieved a moderate to good level, but it still needs to adopt all missing implementing legislation on energy efficiency. On the environment and climate, further efforts are needed in the areas of water and waste management, environmental law enforcement, and nature protection. Concerning the Drini-Buna and Vjosa river basins, and in line with the GAWB, Albania should increase efforts to strengthen transboundary basin management with neighbouring economies<sup>38</sup>.

**Bosnia and Herzegovina** is at an early stage of preparation in most areas related to the Green Agenda and sustainable connectivity, namely on energy, environment and climate change. It made some or limited progress in the Green Agenda and sustainable connectivity cluster, where it is at an early stage on energy, environment and climate change. The implementation of the Economic

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<sup>38</sup> European Commission (EC). (2023). SWD(2023) 690 final: 2023 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy- Albania 2023 Report. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52023SC0690>. Accessed 10 April 2024.

<sup>39</sup> European Commission (EC). (2023). SWD(2023) 691 final: 2023 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy- Bosnia and Herzegovina 2023 Report. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52023SC0691>. Accessed 10 April 2024.

<sup>40</sup> European Commission (EC). (2023). SWD(2023) 692 final: 2023 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy- Kosovo\* 2023 Report. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=SWD:2023:692:FIN>. Accessed 10 April 2024.

<sup>41</sup> European Commission (EC). (2023). SWD(2023) 694 final: 2023 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy- Montenegro 2023 Report. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=SWD:2023:694:FIN>. Accessed 10 April 2024.

<sup>42</sup> European Commission (EC). (2023). SWD(2023) 693 final: 2023 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy- North Macedonia 2023 Report. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52023SC0693>. Accessed 10 April 2024.

<sup>43</sup> European Commission (EC). (2023). SWD(2023) 695 final: 2023 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy- Serbia 2023 Report. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52023SC0695>. Accessed 10 April 2024.

and Investment Plan and the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans needs to be accelerated. It is strongly recommended to adopt legal framework related to gas, electricity, renewable energy and energy efficiency and further accelerate the implementation in the upcoming period. It is very important to strengthen administrative capacity and monitoring systems, implement structural reforms, and improve inter-institutional coordination. It is needed to adopt an environmental protection strategy. Special attention should be paid for a strategy for waste management, particularly the circular economy context. Awareness-raising measures are required to reduce waste generation and promote reuse and recycling. Alignment with the acquis on sewage sludge, batteries, packaging, polychlorinated biphenyls, polychlorinated terphenyls and end-of-life vehicles is required. A consistent and harmonised strategy and sustainable investment plan on water management and urban wastewater management are still missing. There is no progress on alignment with the acquis on nature protection. The level of alignment with the EU climate acquis remains limited. It is necessary to adopt a climate strategy to align with the new EU climate acquis as per the important modifications brought in by the Fit for 55 package<sup>44</sup> and develop an economy-level framework law on climate change. Bosnia and Herzegovina is urged to take the necessary steps to prepare alignment with the EU Emissions Trading System (ETS) to advance the implementation of the EU acquis, prioritise alignment with the new governance regulation, and adequately prepare for the EU Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism<sup>39</sup>.

**Kosovo** made some progress in policy areas related to the Green Agenda and sustainable connectivity, especially in the energy sector (including by adopting an energy strategy for 2022-2031). On transport, environment and climate change, it made only limited progress. It adopted an ambitious energy strategy (increased share in renewables, launched the first solar auction), but it remains heavily reliant on coal. It is strongly recommended that strategies, action plans and legislation in these sectors need to be more consistent and in line with the principles and objectives of the GAWB and the Economic and Investment Plan. The enhancement of transport climate resilience and the use of alternative fuels, in line with the Green Agenda and the Smart Sustainable Mobility Strategy for the Western Balkans should be facilitated. Kosovo needs to increase its political commitment and administrative capacity to address the issues related to environmental degradation and climate change, as well as to improve the implementation and enforcement of its legislation. In the coming period, it should in particular: increase the waste collection coverage; implement the climate change strategy and the action plan on climate change; prepare a roadmap for alignment with the GAWB and the acquis on climate; adopt the economy-level energy and climate plan; finalise the drafting the long-term de-carbonisation strategy and prepare for alignment with the EU Emissions Trading System (ETS). It needs to take ownership and all the necessary measures in the environmental sector, and to increase the capacities of the environmental authorities at the central and local level, implement structural reforms and ensure inter-institutional cooperation. The progress to align the water legislation with the EU acquis is limited, as well as for the industrial pollution and risk management. There was no progress on chemicals and the related alignment remains at a low level. The law on climate change is still not adopted. The central administration should start drafting a Decarbonisation Strategy, including actions related to energy, agriculture, forestry. It needs to get prepared for alignment with the climate acquis as per the important modifications brought in by the Fit for 55 package and to take the necessary steps for the establishment of a mechanism on carbon pricing and adequately prepare for the EU Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM). Administrative and inspection capacities in the sector need to be significantly strengthened and structural reforms need to be implemented. Awareness raising needs to be enhanced<sup>40</sup>.

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<sup>44</sup> Fit for 55. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/green-deal/fit-for-55/>. Accessed 23 October 2024.

**Montenegro** made the progress in creating a day-ahead energy market and on port economy-level control, but progress was limited concerning environment and climate change. It should focus on the strategy for green transition in the energy sector, including just transition plans for a phase-out of the Pljevlja power plant; on the adoption and implementation of the railway law; start a revision of the Transport Development Strategy and on significantly stepping up efforts on waste management, water and air quality, nature protection and climate change, including the adoption of the National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP). Some level of preparation in the area of environment and climate change has been conducted, but the limited progress was made in further alignment with acquis on water, nature protection and climate change. Significant efforts are still needed on implementation and enforcement, particularly on waste management, water and air quality, nature protection and climate change. In the coming years, this economy should in particular: intensify implementation in particular in the water, nature protection, air quality, industrial pollution and climate change sectors; adopt and start implementing the Waste Management Law and the economy-level Waste Management Plan and the Strategy on Air Quality Management for 2021-2029; finalise, adopt and start implementing the economy-level energy and climate plan in a transparent manner. It is benefitting from the rural development programme IPARD III, providing a significant contribution to the implementation of the Economic and Investment Plan<sup>41</sup>.

**North Macedonia** has a good level of preparation on trans-European networks and some level of preparation on environment and climate change. It needs to accelerate implementation of the Economic and Investment Plan (EIP) and of the GAWB. Due to the lack of capacity and no effort on the operational and administrative capacity building, the implementation is ineffective. The previous recommendations by the EC were not fully implemented. Thus, in the coming year this economy should: ensure coherent energy policy, improve governance and institutional capacity, improve strategic investment programming, accelerate transition towards green energy, update and implement economy-level energy and climate plan, and adopt and implement the energy efficiency implementing legislation. It is strongly recommended that in the coming year, it should in particular: implement concrete measures to reduce air pollution and to reduce point and diffuse pollution of freshwater resources; make operational the regional waste management system in the eastern and north-eastern regions; implement the Paris Agreement by adopting a Climate Law and the economy-level adaptation plan; strengthen significantly the administrative and inspection capacities, implement structural reforms in all the sectors and ensure the alignment with the GAWB action plan of the prepared National Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development (NSARD).<sup>42</sup>

**Serbia** achieved some progress particularly on trans-European networks, and on climate change with the adoption of the Low Carbon Development Strategy 2023-2030. In the coming period, this economy is invited to focus on: urgently implement its action plan on gas unbundling and further diversify gas routes and supplies to decrease dependence on Russia; adopt an ambitious National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP) and step up efforts on implementing and enforcing environment and climate legislation, in particular on environmental impact assessment, waste management, air and water quality, transboundary cooperation and law enforcement by inspectorates. In 2023, the economy's budget for environment and climate action was increased by 18 %. Replace of heating equipment, afforestation, and purchase of electric and hybrid vehicles activities are being implemented. Although the investment in environmental protection is substantially increasing, an effective institutional set-up and transparent procedure are lacking, and all income generated from environmental fees should be earmarked for environmental purposes. Transboundary cooperation with neighbouring economies did not improve. Legislative alignment on environmental liability and environmental crime acquis has not progressed. In the field of air quality, a good level of alignment was achieved, but implementation and enforcement should be further strengthened. The first Air Protection Programme for the period 2022-2030 and an action plan have been adopted, but the daily limits of air pollution continue to be exceeded. There is a need to speed

up implementation of air quality plans and further improve air quality monitoring, whereby the State Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) improved its communication on air quality. The legislation for the economy's emission ceilings has not been aligned, whereby alignment on volatile organic compound emissions needs to continue. Adequate staffing of SEPA needs to be ensured. Some level of preparation in climate change legislation has been conducted, but enforcement is at a very early stage. Efforts to integrate climate action into other sectors and ensure policy coordination are needed. Efforts for diversification of energy sources, development of renewables and decrease of energy intensity to are needed as well, which should include the introduction of carbon-pricing instruments and phasing out coal subsidies. Carbon pricing mechanisms need to be established, to adequately prepare for the EU Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM). The drafted economy's spatial plan includes also new thermal power plants. A coal phase-out date needs to be set. Full alignment of legislation on monitoring, reporting, and verifying greenhouse gas emissions is still pending. Serbia needs to considerably strengthen its administrative and technical capacity at all levels and further increase investment in its green energy transition<sup>43</sup>.

## 7 Key Recommendations

The key recommendations for the implementation of the GAWB in the WB economies are the following:

- Enhance cooperation with the banking sector to support sustainable investments and innovations
- Set specific targets for energy supply, including renewable energies shares and greenhouse gas emissions targets
- Establish a comprehensive and harmonised reporting system to track progress towards climate targets
- Focus on reducing food waste across the supply chain
- Enhance the competitiveness of small farms by implementing land reforms
- Advocate for circular economy practices at all levels
- Improve cooperation and coordination at local, regional, and economy level to boost R&I in all relevant sectors
- Raise public awareness and initiate public discussions
- Improve the skills of all relevant stakeholders
- Enhance knowledge management by employing e.g. academia
- Introduce additional financial support to actively include vulnerable groups in the transition process and mitigate negative outcomes
- Enhance the competitiveness of small farms by implementing land reforms
- Include external organisations such as NGOs, professional organisations, and think tanks in policymaking

Some recommendations focus specifically on the CBAM:

- Expedite the implementation of EU climate initiatives, such as the Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) and the CBAM, by adopting appropriate carbon pricing mechanisms
- Provide training programmes for SMEs to ensure they comply with CBAM regulations
- Support SMEs' adjustments and investments into green technologies, ensuring compliance with CBAM standards
- Foster collaboration among WB economies to share expertise in CBAM compliance and carbon reduction strategies

A crucial measure for successful implementation, particularly related to concrete projects and activities, would be cooperation between economy-level administration, industry, municipal-level authorities, and academia.

## 8 Conclusions

The Green Agenda for the Western Balkans (GAWB) was designed with the same objectives as the EU Green Deal: to transform the Western Balkans economies into modern, resource-efficient, sustainable, depolluted, climate resilient, and competitive societies. Its structure, reflected through the five defined pillars, aims to address actual challenges related to sustainable energy sources, climate change adaptation and mitigation, and environmental protection with the ultimate goal of securing a healthy living environment and wellbeing for the Western Balkans and neighbouring citizens.

The transition related to the decarbonisation (encompassing of climate, energy, transport) appears to be the most complex, requiring the largest financial investments and capacities, while facing the most intensive challenges. Moreover, the overall green transition is further complicated, where only a comprehensive approach, comprising of cross-sectoral solutions integrated into several or all pillars, can yield successful outcomes in each of the pillars and bring about a long-term positive impact on society. Notably, connections and interactions related to the fields of digitalisation and health, along with relevant activities, should be considered to attain desired results in the transition.

While there are numerous ongoing activities, financial instruments, initiatives, projects, and organised events in the Western Balkans economies supporting the implementation of the GAWB and its objectives, there is still a need to intensify their implementation. The opportunities of the existing financial instruments, mainly through the adopted Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans (EIP), are not being sufficiently utilised.

Although the decarbonisation is considered as the most complex pillar with the most demanding objectives, the assessment of the framework conditions for the GAWB reached the highest grade among the other four pillars. Consequently, the Energy Roadmap is the most advanced one, indicating that economies have recognised the seriousness of conducting transition in this field and have prioritised it to some extent. Additionally, the tasks defined for this pillar are more concretely defined, making it easier for economies to follow the required procedures. On the other hand, the least advanced roadmap is related to depollution, indicating that complexity and its multi-sectoral nature have led to insufficient performance. Nevertheless, advancements in the alignment of all the GAWB pillars should be boosted. It is crucial to enhance efforts across all pillars to ensure a comprehensive and effective transition towards a greener and more sustainable future.

The assessment of the implementation of the GAWB, based on the relevant indicators presented in the Action Plan Implementation Report by the RCC (2022), showed that investments in renewable energy projects were implemented more intensively until GAWB came into force. This led to only exceptional increases in renewable electricity in the energy mix in some Western Balkans economies and, to some extent, contributed to GHG emissions reduction.

On the other hand, it is premature to acknowledge significant advancements in the Energy and Climate Roadmap, as well as for other pillars. Within the Transport Roadmap, alternative fuels and the necessary infrastructure are not yet available. In terms of circular economy indicators, historical data indicate that resource consumption is not decreasing, and the Western Balkans economies have failed to achieve economic growth without increased resource consumption.

The indicators related to the most intensively monitored environmental aspect of the depollution, i.e. air quality, did not show alarming aspects. However, it is worth noting that only annual concentrations for all pollutants were presented and assessed. For some pollutants, assessment of daily and hourly values could lead to different conclusions.

The share of population connected to wastewater treatment plants remains low in all Western Balkans economies, with an expected increase in the future. However, the status of drinking water has not been fully facilitated, primarily due to the absence of data regarding nitrate concentrations in groundwater in most of the economies. The share of agricultural area under organic farming remains rather low, and there has been no noticeable decrease in GHG emissions from this sector. However, progress has been made in protection of nature and biodiversity, due to the increased number of protected and conserved areas.

The biggest challenges among all of the pillars are lack of capacities of all kinds and at all levels; low public awareness; low implementation of regulations; insufficient coordination among institutions and stakeholders across the pillars; lack of financial instruments (at the moment); and lack of political willingness. These excerpts are the opinions of the stakeholders (interviewed relevant experts for the specific GAWB pillars and the participants of the Policy Dialogue Conference in Sarajevo). Upon that, the results of the regional public opinion survey showed that economic hardship is the most influential challenge for the energy transition, followed by corruption and energy crisis. Moreover, the EU requirements to reform the energy systems in the Western Balkans economies are assessed as high standards.

The best practices achieved in the Western Balkans economies so far are primarily individual examples which need to be replicated and multiplied to form a complete picture in the field of green transition. These practices are mainly related to strategies, platforms, and established organisations, rather than infrastructure (with exception seen in renewable energies mostly and in energy efficiency).

The recommendations for improving the implementation of the GAWB in the Western Balkans economies are as follows:

- Improve cooperation and coordination at regional, economy- and local level
- Raise public awareness and initiate public discussions
- Improve the capacities of all relevant stakeholders
- Enhance the utilisation of the existing financing instruments and projects
- Introduce additional financial support to actively include vulnerable groups in the transition process and mitigate negative outcomes
- Include external organisations, such as NGOs, professional organisations, and think tanks in policymaking

A crucial measure for successful implementation, particularly related to concrete projects and activities, would be cooperation between economy-level administration, industry, municipal-level authorities and academia.



## 9 Acknowledgement

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Expert name	Pillar code	Pillar name
<b>Albania</b>		
Kejt Dhrami	1	Decarbonisation: climate, energy, mobility
<b>Bosnia and Herzegovina</b>		
Predrag Ilic	1	Decarbonisation: climate, energy, mobility
	2	Moving to a circular economy
	3	Depolluting air, water and soil
Gordana Rokvic	4	Building sustainable agriculture and food systems
<b>Kosovo</b>		
Luan Shllaku	1	Decarbonisation: climate, energy, mobility
	3	Depolluting air, water and soil
Zeqir Veselaj	5	Protecting biodiversity and ecosystems
<b>Montenegro</b>		
Azra Vukovic	2	Moving to a circular economy
	5	Protecting biodiversity and ecosystems
Gordana Djukanovic Lidija Scepanovic	3	Depolluting air, water and soil
Milena Rmus	1	Decarbonisation: climate, energy, mobility
	2	Moving to a circular economy
<b>North Macedonia</b>		
Nikola Neskoski	2	Moving to a circular economy
<b>Serbia</b>		
Danijela Bozanic	1	Decarbonisation: climate, energy, mobility
Slobodan Cvetkovic	1	Decarbonisation: climate, energy, mobility
	2	Moving to a circular economy
	5	Protecting biodiversity and ecosystems
Vlado Kovacevic	4	Building sustainable agriculture and food systems
<b>RCC</b>		
Marv Barbullushi	1	Decarbonisation: climate, energy, mobility
	2	Moving to a circular economy
	3	Depolluting air, water and soil
	4	Building sustainable agriculture and food systems
	5	Protecting biodiversity and ecosystems
<b>EU</b>		
Teodor Vintila	1	Decarbonisation: climate, energy, mobility

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## 10 List of abbreviations

ALKA	Center for Sustainable Development (North Macedonia)
BGF	Balkan Green Foundation
BiEPAG	Balkans in Europe Policy Advisory Group
BSAP	Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans
CBAM	Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism
CE	Circular Economy
COM	Commission
CSO	Civil Society Organisations
DMC	Domestic Material Consumption
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EC	European Commission
EC DG NEAR	European Commission's Directorate-General for Neighborhood and Enlargement Negotiations
EIP	Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans
EIT	European Institute for Innovation and Technology
EIT KIC	Knowledge and Innovation Communities of the EIT
ERTMS	European Railway Traffic Management System
ETS	Emission Trading Scheme
EU	European Union
EU4Green	EU programme supported by DG NEAR
GAWB	Green Agenda for the Western Balkans
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GHG	Green House Gas
GreenFORCE	EU project supported by Horizon Europe
IPA	Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance
IPARD	IPA Rural Development
ITS	Intelligent Transportation System
JRC	Joint Research Centre
JTM	Just Transition Mechanism
LCP	Large Combustion Plants
LCPD	Large Combustion Plants Directive
NECP	National Energy and Climate Plan (Montenegro)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NO <sub>x</sub>	Nitrogen oxide

NSARD	National Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PM	Particles matter
PPPs	Public-private partnerships
PV	Photo Voltaic
R&D	Research and Development
R&I	Research and Innovation
RCC	Regional Cooperation Council
RESET	Center for Sustainable Energy Transition (Bosnia and Herzegovina)
S3	Smart Specialisation Strategy
S4+	Smart Specialisation Strategy for Sustainability
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SEPA	State Environmental Protection Agency (Serbia)
SMEs	Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
SO <sub>2</sub>	Sulphur dioxide
SPI	Special Protection Index
SWD	Staff Working Document
SWG	Standing Working Group
TEN-T	Trans-European Transport Network
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
WB	Western Balkans
WBIF	Western Balkan Investment Framework
WHO	World Health Organization

# 11 Annex

## Green transition assessment approach and results

### Assessment approach for green transition in line with EU Green Deal

Quantified results are derived using a self-developed assessment approach, specifically designed to evaluate progress on the green transition in alignment with the EU Green Deal. This method allows for a systematic evaluation of actions and outcomes, ensuring a comprehensive and data-driven analysis.

The scoring system for the Action Plan Implementation of the Sofia Declaration on the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans (GAWB) uses a scale of 0.00, 0.25, 0.50, 0.75, and 1.00. Each defined action in the plan (A1-A58) was evaluated based on the GAWB Action Plan Implementation Report, which describes compliance levels with the European Green Deal.

A specific scoring scheme was then developed for each action. To assess progress for each pillar or roadmap, individual scores for each action were summed up. The final results, presented as percentages, reflect normalised values based on the maximum possible score for each pillar or roadmap (e.g., for a pillar with 7 actions, the maximum total score is 7). No weighting was applied to calculate the overall score, which aggregates results across all pillars, roadmaps, and economies.

### Climate Action Roadmap

#### A1 Align with EU Climate Law with a vision of climate neutrality by 2050

- 1.00 Climate Law and by-law adopted
- 0.75 Law adopted and by-law not adopted
- 0.50 Law drafted
- 0.25 Law drafting started
- 0.00 no action yet

#### A2 Set forward-looking 2030 energy and climate targets

- 1.00 Energy and Climate targets set
- 0.00 Energy and Climate targets not set

#### A3 Develop and implement integrated Energy and Climate Plans

- 1.00 Integrated NECP adopted
- 0.75 Integrated NECP drafted
- 0.50 Integrated NECP in the development
- 0.25 Integrated NECP planned
- 0.00 Integrated NECP development not started

#### A4 Prepare and implement climate adaptation strategies

- 1.00 Climate adaption strategy prepared and implemented
- 0.75 Climate adaption strategy prepared
- 0.50 Climate adaption strategy in the development

- 0.25 Climate adaption strategy planned
- 0.00 Climate adaption strategy not started

#### **A5 Align with EU ETS and/or introduce carbon pricing instruments**

- 1.00 Carbon pricing instruments introduced
- 0.25 Carbon pricing instruments planned
- 0.00 Carbon pricing instruments not introduced

#### **A6 Increase opportunities for NBSs deployment- mitigate/adapt climate change**

- 1.00 NBS to mitigate and adapt to climate change opportunities increased
- 0.75 NBS to mitigate and adapt to climate change explicitly in policy
- 0.50 NBS to mitigate and adapt to climate change studies performed
- 0.25 NBS to mitigate and adapt to climate change studies in the process
- 0.00 NBS to mitigate and adapt to climate change not deployed

#### **A7 Ensure participation of WB economies in the European Climate Pact**

- 1.00 European Climate Pact or similar mechanism official participation
- 0.75 European Climate Pact or similar mechanism unofficial participation
- 0.50 European Climate Pact / similar mechanism participation officially pledged
- 0.25 European Climate Pact / similar mechanism participation unofficially pledged
- 0.00 European Climate Pact / similar mechanism participation not pledged

### **Energy Roadmap**

#### **A8 Review and revise all relevant legislation to support decarbonisation**

- 1.00 Further activities
- 0.75 Three fields activities (Energy efficiency; Renewables; Electricity & gas market)
- 0.50 Two fields activities (Energy efficiency; Renewables; Electricity & gas market)
- 0.25 Single field activities (Energy efficiency; Renewables; Electricity & gas market)
- 0.00 No activities

#### **A9 Prepare an assessment of socio-economic impact of decarbonisation**

- 1.00 Socio-economic impact of decarbonisation national/regional level assessed
- 0.75 Socio-economic impact of decarbonisation regional level started
- 0.50 Socio-economic impact of decarbonisation national level assessed
- 0.25 Socio-economic impact of decarbonisation assessment started
- 0.00 Socio-economic impact of decarbonisation assessment not started

#### **A10 Prioritise energy efficiency and improve it in all sectors**

- Energy efficiency targets and policy measures
- Percentage assessment, above the threshold is the next level assessment

#### **A11 Transposition and full enforcement of the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive**

- Implementation of energy efficiency in buildings
- Percentage assessment, above the threshold is the next level assessment

### **A12 Support buildings renovation schemes and secure financing**

- 1.00 Financing secured
- 0.75 Financing initiated
- 0.50 Renovation schemes supported
- 0.25 Renovation schemes initiated
- 0.00 No activities

### **A13 Increase RES share and provide investment conditions**

Percentage assessment, above the threshold is the next level assessment

### **A14 Decrease and gradually phase out coal subsidies**

- 1.00 Phased out
- 0.75 Phasing out
- 0.50 Trend decreased
- 0.25 Trend no change
- 0.00 Trend increased

### **A15 Ensure participation in the Coal Regions in Transition initiative for WB**

All economies participate in the initiative

### **A16 Develop programmes for addressing energy poverty and financing schemes for household renovation and providing basic standards of living**

- 1.00 Programmes developed
- 0.75 Energy poverty defined and included in strategy
- 0.50 Financing schemes
- 0.00 No activities

## **Sustainable Transport Roadmap**

### **A17 Support the development of smart transport infrastructure, promote fostering of innovative technologies**

- 1.00 CTS established
- 0.75 CTS prepared
- 0.50 ITS Directive fully transposed
- 0.25 ITS Directive partly transposed
- 0.00 No activities

### **A18 Implement the Regional Action Plan for Rail Reforms**

Assessment based on the descriptive appraisal on the achievements

### **A19 Define rail freight and inland waterway transport corridors**

Assessment based on the descriptive appraisal on the achievements

### **A20 Define an overall strategy to shift traffic from road to more environmentally-friendly modes**

Assessment based on the descriptive appraisal on the achievements

**A21 Identify the EU technical standards and ensure their implementation and digitalisation of all transport modes**

Assessment based on the quantified assessment in the table

**A22 Implement the Regional Transport Facilitation Action Plan**

Assessment based on the descriptive appraisal on the activities conducted

**A23 Implement the Regional Road Safety Action Plan**

1.00 Fatalities reduced 20 %

0.75 Fatalities reduced 10 %

0.50 Action Plan prepared

0.25 Action Plan initiated

0.00 No activities

**A24 Implement the Road Action Plan**

Assessment based on the descriptive appraisal on the achievements

**A25 Implement the Regional Road Safety Action Plan**

Assessment based on the descriptive appraisal on the activities conducted

**A26 Promote preparation and implementation of Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans for urban areas in the Western Balkans**

Assessment based on the descriptive appraisal on the activities conducted

**A27 Define sustainable mobility solutions at the regional level including plans for deployment of alternative fuels**

Assessment based on the descriptive appraisal on the activities conducted

**A27a Define a plan for deployment and building of charging stations for electric vehicles**

Assessment based on the descriptive appraisal on the activities conducted

**A28 Increase regional cooperation in the area of alternative fuels infrastructure development**

Assessment based on the descriptive appraisal on the activities conducted

**Circular Economy Roadmap**

**A29 Improve sustainability of primary production of raw materials**

Regional initiative partly implemented = 0.50

**A30 Apply an industrial ecosystem approach to attain economic recovery**

0.25

Implementation of measures remains limited

Lack of sufficient access to capital is important barrier to business growth  
Green public procurement measures introduced, but implementation is insufficient.

### **A31 Develop circular economy strategies**

- 1.00 Action Plan /Programme adopted
- 0.75 Circular economy roadmap adopted
- 0.50 Circular economy roadmap drafted
- 0.25 Circular economy roadmap development started
- 0.00 Circular economy roadmap development not started

### **A32 Progress in waste management infrastructure**

- 1.00 Waste management statistics improved
- 0.75 Waste management practices improved
- 0.50 Implementation of waste separate collection improved
- 0.25 Waste legislation for separate collection adapted
- 0.00 No progress

### **A33 Initiatives to raise awareness of citizens**

- 1.00 Initiatives implemented
- 0.50 Initiative documents designed
- 0.00 No activities

### **A34 Conclude/implement regional agreement on plastic pollution prevention**

- 1.00 Measures implemented
- 0.50 Legal framework established
- 0.00 No activities

### **A35 S3 agendas implementation for sustainability**

- 1.00 S3 implemented
- 0.75 S3 launched
- 0.50 S3 initiated
- 0.25 S3 planned
- 0.00 S3 activities not started

## **Depollution Roadmap**

### **A36 Finalise the process of ratification of CLRTAP and its protocols**

- 1.00 CLRTAP all protocols ratified
- 0.75 CLRTAP ½ protocols ratified
- 0.50 CLRTAP ¼ protocols ratified
- 0.25 CLRTAP ratified
- 0.00 CLRTAP not ratified

### **A36a Support modelling to establish emission reduction commitments**

Use of modelling to establish economy-wide emission reduction commitments in WB economies is not widespread = 0



### **A37 Develop and implement Air Quality Strategies**

- 1.00 National Air Quality Strategy implemented
- 0.50 National Air Quality Strategy developed
- 0.25 National Air Quality Strategy partly developed
- 0.00 No activities

### **A37a Increase uptake of BAT in accordance with Industrial Emissions Directive**

- 1.00 BAT uptake increased
- 0.75 Transposition of IED completed
- 0.50 Transposition of IED partly achieved
- 0.25 Transposition of IED started
- 0.00 No activities

### **A38 Establish AQ monitoring system and accreditation of AQ networks**

- 1.00 National reference laboratory established
- 0.75 Reporting to EEA
- 0.50 AQ network economy-wide established
- 0.25 AQ network several cities established
- 0.00 AQ network no existence

### **A39 Implement relevant EU water-related acquis**

- 1.00 Acquis implemented
- 0.75 Three Directives transposed
- 0.50 Two Directives transposed
- 0.25 One Directive transposed
- 0.00 No implementation

### **A40 Modernise monitoring infrastructure, reach good status for water bodies**

- 1.00 Good status of water bodies reached
- 0.75 Status of water bodies improved
- 0.50 Monitoring infrastructure modernised
- 0.25 Monitoring infrastructure exists
- 0.00 No activities

### **A41 Build the necessary infrastructure for wastewater treatment**

- 1.00 Needed WWTPs are constructed
- 0.75 Majority of WWTPs are constructed
- 0.50 New WWTPs are being constructed
- 0.25 WWTPs are planned
- 0.00 No planning activities

### **A42 Improve soil protection from pollution and degradation**

- 1.00 Regional soil partnership established
- 0.75 Regional soil partnership initiated
- 0.50 Soil protection integrated in other policy areas
- 0.25 Soil protection integration ongoing in other policy areas
- 0.00 No activities

**A43 Prepare and sign regional agreements on transboundary air and water pollution**

- 1.00 Agreements signed
- 0.75 Agreements prepared
- 0.50 Agreements being prepared
- 0.25 Initial activities
- 0.00 No activities

**A44 Align the agri-food and primary production with the EU standards**

- 1.00 Agri-food and primary production sector alligned with EU
- 0.75 Allignement advanced progress
- 0.50 Allignement good progress
- 0.25 Allignement started
- 0.00 Allignement not started

**A45 Strengthen the official sanitary controls**

- 1.00 Official sanitary controls strengthened
- 0.75 Strengthening of infrastructure started
- 0.50 Strengthening of administrative capacity started
- 0.25 Official control legislation alignment started
- 0.00 Strengthening not started

**A46 Promote environmentally-friendly food production**

- 1.00 Organic farming established
- 0.75 Infrastructure secured
- 0.50 Support measures implemented
- 0.25 Legal framework alignment started
- 0.00 Legal framework not aligned

**A47 Transfer to innov./environ.-friendly technologies and farming methods**

- 1.00 Transfer activities commonly implemented
- 0.75 Transfer activities commonly defined
- 0.50 Roadmaps and action plans defined
- 0.25 Cooperation established
- 0.00 Cooperation not established

**A48 Waste reduction in rural and coastal areas**

- 1.00 Actions implemented
- 0.50 Actions defined
- 0.00 Actions not defined

**A49 LEADER implementation for sustainable development of rural areas**

- 1.00 Support investments conducted
- 0.75 Support investments defined
- 0.50 Support investments not defined
- 0.25 Rural areas identified
- 0.00 Rural areas not identified

### **A50 Support investments in RES, GHG reduction, climate change adaptation**

- 1.00 Support investments conducted
- 0.75 Support investments defined
- 0.50 Support investments not defined
- 0.25 Rural areas identified
- 0.00 Rural areas not identified

### **Protection of Nature and Biodiversity Roadmap**

#### **A51a Develop a Western Balkans Biodiversity Report**

- 1.00 Biodiversity Report developed
- 0.75 Biodiversity Report drafted
- 0.50 Report to CBD submitted
- 0.25 Report for CBD prepared
- 0.00 No activities

#### **A51b Develop a Western Balkans Biodiversity Strategic Plan**

- 1.00 Plan developed
- 0.75 Plan drafted
- 0.50 Plan initiated
- 0.25 Initial activities
- 0.00 No activities

#### **A52 Prepare nature protection and restoration plans including for marine areas**

- 1.00 Nature restoration plans prepared
- 0.75 Nature restoration plans initiated
- 0.50 Nature protection plans prepared
- 0.25 Nature protection plans initiated
- 0.00 No activities

#### **A53a Prepare Restoration Opportunities Assessment Report**

- 1.00 Report prepared
- 0.75 Report drafted
- 0.50 Restoration targets defined
- 0.25 Restoration projects ongoing
- 0.00 No activities

#### **A53b Prepare Forest Landscape Restoration Plan (including a financial plan)**

- 1.00 Financial plan prepared
- 0.75 Financial plan drafted
- 0.50 Plan prepared
- 0.25 Plan drafted
- 0.00 No activities

#### **A54 Analyse biodiversity benefits of NBSs and opportunities for integration**

- 1.00 National program
- 0.50 Regional project

0.00 No activities

**A54a Report on climate change and biodiversity linkages**

1.00 Report prepared

0.75 Report drafted

0.50 Linkage defined

0.25 Biodiversity loss identified

0.00 No activities

**A55 Strengthen the mechanisms for regional cooperation and strategic planning on biodiversity conservation and implementation of commitments under the Convention on Biological Diversity**

1.00 Commitments implemented

0.75 Report drafted

0.50 WB Cooperation established

0.25 SEE Cooperation established

0.00 No activities

**A56 Reinforce the engagement with the United Nations Rio Conventions (and synergy between the three), and join efforts in preparing a regional position on a global post-2020 biodiversity agenda**

1.00 Reports submitted

0.75 COP meetings attended

0.50 Conventions implemented

0.25 UN Rio Conventions participation

0.00 No activities

**A57a Biodiversity Monitoring and Evaluation Framework**

1.00 WB HUB established

0.75 SEE HUB established

0.50 National evaluation established

0.25 National monitoring established

0.00 No activities

**A58 Development of green infrastructures and ecosystem connectivity**

1.00 Green infrastructures developed

0.75 Green infrastructures initiated

0.50 Ecosystem connectivity established

0.25 Ecosystem connectivity initiated

0.00 No activities

## Assessment results of the green transition in line with EU Green Deal

DECARBONISATION							
Roadmap	Action no.	Progress in implementing the Roadmap across actions and region					
		Albania	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Kosovo	Montenegro	North Macedonia	Serbia
CLIMATE ACTION	1	0.75	0.00	0.25	0.50	0.25	1.00
	2	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
	3	1.00	0.50	0.75	0.75	1.00	0.50
	4	0.75	0.75	0.00	0.75	0.25	0.50
	5	0.00	0.25	0.00	1.00	0.25	0.00
	6	0.25	0.50	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.50
	7	0.25	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.25	0.25
ENERGY	8	0.50	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.50
	9	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25
	10	0.75	0.50	0.75	1.00	0.75	1.00
	11	1.00	0.75	1.00	1.00	0.50	0.75
	12	0.25	0.50	1.00	0.75	0.50	1.00
	13	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.75	1.00
	14	1.00	0.25	0.50	1.00	0.75	0.50
	15	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT	16	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.75	0.75
	17	0.50	0.25	0.00	0.50	0.75	0.75
	18	0.50	0.25	0.25	0.50	0.25	0.50
	19	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.50
	20	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50
	21	0.50	0.25	0.25	0.50	0.25	0.50
	22	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50
	23	0.50	0.50	0.25	0.50	0.75	0.50
	24	0.50	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.50
	25	0.50	0.00	0.00	0.50	0.00	0.50
	26	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50
	27	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	27a	0.75	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.00	0.75
28	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	

MOVING TO A CIRCULAR ECONOMY							
Roadmap	Action no.	Progress in implementing the Roadmap across actions and region					
		Albania	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Kosovo	Montenegro	North Macedonia	Serbia
CIRCULAR ECONOMY	29	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50
	30	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25
	31	0.25	0.50	0.50	1.00	0.25	1.00
	32	0.75	0.75	0.50	0.50	0.75	0.75
	33	0.50	0.00	0.50	0.50	0.00	0.00
	34	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50
	35	0.50	0.00	0.25	0.75	0.25	1.00

DEPOLLUTING AIR, WATER AND SOIL							
Roadmap	Action no.	Progress in implementing the Roadmap across actions and region					
		Albania	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Kosovo	Montenegro	North Macedonia	Serbia
DEPOLLUTION	36	0.50	0.25	0.00	0.50	1.00	0.50
	36 a	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	37	0.25	0.25	0.00	0.25	0.00	0.25
	37 a	0.75	0.50	0.25	1.00	0.75	0.00
	38	0.50	0.25	0.50	1.00	0.75	0.75
	39	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.75	0.50	0.50
	40	0.25	0.25	0.50	0.25	0.25	0.25
	41	0.00	0.00	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.25
	42	0.00	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.50
	43	0.00	0.25	0.00	0.25	0.00	0.25

BUILDING SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SYSTEMS							
Roadmap	Action no.	Progress in implementing the Roadmap across actions and region					
		Albania	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Kosovo	Montenegro	North Macedonia	Serbia
SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE	44	0.25	0.00	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.75
	45	0.25	0.50	0.50	0.75	0.75	0.50
	46	0.50	0.25	0.25	0.75	0.75	0.50
	47	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50
	48	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	49	0.75	0.25	0.25	0.50	1.00	0.75
	50	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

PROTECTING BIODIVERSITY AND ECOSYSTEMS							
Roadmap	Action no.	Progress in implementing the Roadmap across actions and region					
		Albania	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Kosovo	Montenegro	North Macedonia	Serbia
PROTECTION OF NATURE AND BIODIVERSITY	51 a	0.50	0.50	0.00	0.50	0.50	0.50
	51 b	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25
	52	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50
	53 a	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.50	0.50	0.25
	53 b	0.25	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50
	54	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	1.00
	54 a	0.25	0.50	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25
	55	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25
	56	0.25	0.25	0.00	0.25	0.25	0.25
	57 a	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25
	58	0.50	0.50	0.75	0.75	0.50	0.75



## ABOUT POLICY ANSWERS

POLICY ANSWERS (R&I POLICY making, implementation ANd Support in the WEsteRn BalkanS) supports policy coordination in the Western Balkans and with the EC and the EU. 14 partner organisations, representing network nodes in the region and EU expert organisations, support policy dialogue through formal meetings (such as ministerial and steering platform and ad-hoc policy meetings), monitoring and agenda setting, capacity building and implementation of the EU's Western Balkan Agenda, as well as the alignment of thematic priorities. The project implements regional pilot activities and offers an information hub based on the [westernbalkans-infohub.eu](http://westernbalkans-infohub.eu) online information platform.

The partners provide analytical evidence via monitoring and mapping activities of the stakeholder ecosystem, of the implementation of the Western Balkans Agenda and of the Western Balkans' integration into the European Research Area as well as via strategic foresight. POLICY ANSWERS also allows for tailored and targeted capacity building activities in the Western Balkans as well as regional alignment of priorities in relation to the digital transformation, the green agenda and towards healthy societies. Pilot activities provide learning opportunities on policy and programme level and reach out to final beneficiaries related to improved academia-industry cooperation, researcher mobility, inclusion of youth in policy processes, promotion of research infrastructures and increased innovation skills in all areas.

