



EU-Western Balkans cooperation through Erasmus+:

What is Erasmus+?

Erasmus+ is the European Union (EU) programme for education, training, youth and sport for the period 2021-2027. Erasmus+ funds academic mobility and cooperation projects between (a) the 27 EU Member States plus six¹ other European countries associated to the Programme and (b) countries not associated to the programme who are located all over the world.

Erasmus+ and the Western Balkans

North Macedonia and **Serbia** have **associated to the Erasmus+ programme** for the 2021-2027 period. As associated countries they can take part fully in all the actions of the Programme.

The remaining four economies in the region, namely **Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*** and **Montenegro benefit from the international dimension of the Programme**, funded predominantly by the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) III. This means they can partner up with one or more of the 27 EU Member States and six other European countries associated to the Programme and perform activities in the fields of Higher education, Vocational Education and Training, Youth and Sport.

In the four non-associated Western Balkan economies, the EU supports a National Erasmus+ Office to help promote the available opportunities, while North Macedonia and Serbia have a National Erasmus+ Agency in place, which manages the decentralised part of the Erasmus+ Programme.

This factsheet looks at how successful the international dimension initiatives with the non-associated Western Balkans have been so far.

More information about the implementation of the Erasmus+ programme in North Macedonia and Serbia could be found in the dedicated country factsheets:

- [North Macedonia factsheet 2022](#)
- [Serbia factsheet 2022](#)

¹ In 2023 these six countries are Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Türkiye.

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

International Credit Mobility (ICM)

Since 1987, Erasmus has enabled students to study part of their course in a university in a different European country. With Erasmus+ this type of short-term mobility for students and staff is also possible beyond Europe.

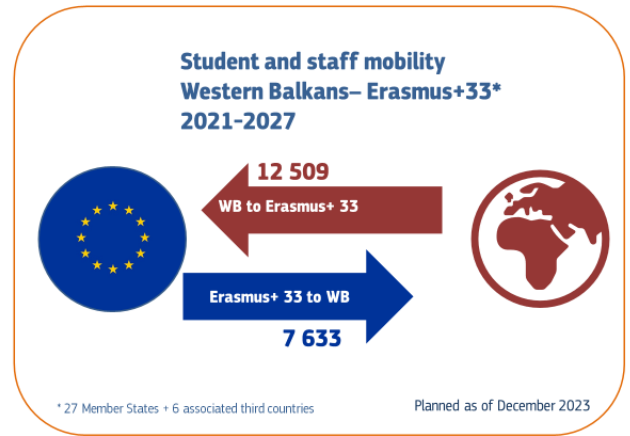
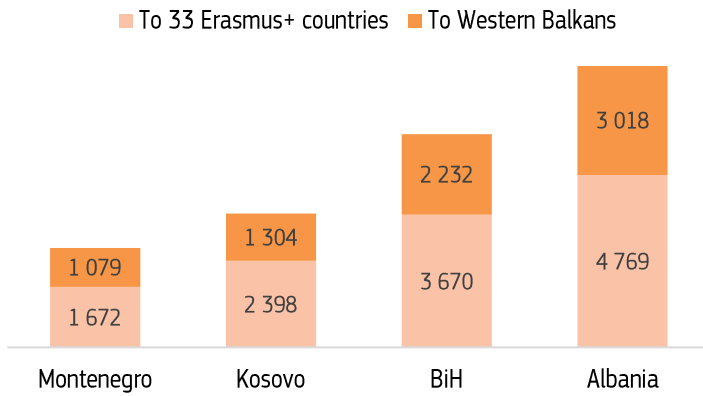
Through the International Credit Mobility (ICM) action students can carry out a study period or a traineeship abroad, lasting from 2 to 12 months or between 5 and 30 days, if part of blended mobility². Academic activities at the institution abroad are recognised and contribute to students' degree once they return to their sending institution. Additionally, ICM supports mobility periods of academic and administrative staff (5 to 60 days) at partner institutions throughout the world to deliver teaching or training, or to follow training for career development purposes.

² Blended mobility is a combination of physical mobility with a virtual component facilitating a collaborative online learning exchange and teamwork.

There are distinct budgets for different regions of the world that are divided between the 33 Erasmus+ countries. European institutions make up bilateral partnerships with universities in the Western Balkans and apply on behalf of their partners.

The first two annual selections of mobility projects have resulted in over 887 projects with more than 141 universities in the four Western Balkans economies. As a result, **mobility periods for more than 20 000 students and staff were planned.**

Over the two years, Western Balkan economies have forged mobility partnerships with the 33 Erasmus+ countries. For example, in 2023, 48 Albanian universities were involved in mobility agreements with 280 universities in 29 European countries, from Sweden to Ireland. One of these universities, Masarykova Univerzita (Czechia) also has partnerships with Kosovar and Bosnian and Herzegovinian universities.



Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters (EMJMs)

Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters (EMJMs) award full-degree scholarships to Master students from around the world covering tuition, travel, and a living allowance. The programmes last from one to two years during which students' study in at least two different European countries. Upon graduation, they are awarded a joint, double degree or multiple degrees.

Institutions from Western Balkans can also deliver these programmes: as applicants setting up the consortia; as full partners who officially award degrees; or as associated partners, where they participate in the programme in some kind of capacity – providing lecturers, hosting fieldwork, promoting the course – but do not award the actual joint degree.

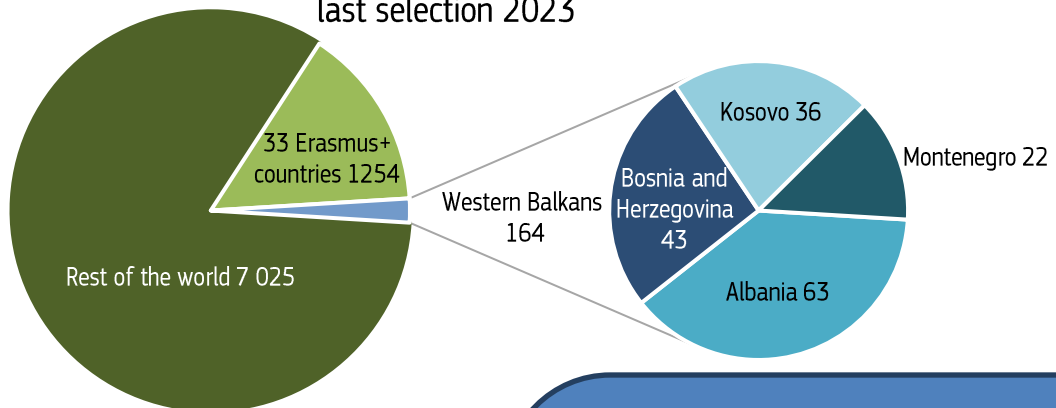
Students can apply to these programmes even if the university where they studied is not involved in any of them. They have to look for the available programmes in the EMJM Catalogue and apply directly to the programme coordinator: <https://ec.europa.eu/erasmus-mundus>

The EU funds additional scholarships for students from Western Balkan partners.

Partners from Western Balkans

So far, we have seen one case of Western Balkan university from Albania being involved as full hosting partner in EMJMs selected between 2021 and 2023.

EMJM Scholarships 2021-2027 last selection 2023



EMSSE - Master in Sustainable Systems Engineering is a 2-years integrated program involving 4 Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) across Europe (France, Italy, and Spain) and Western Balkans (Albania), aiming for a wide and in-depth education process on Systems Engineering (SE) topics and perspectives, related to both industrial applications and research investigations. A special focus is given on sustainable systems engineering that are efficient, cost-effective, and environmentally friendly, that is considering the environmental, economic, and social impacts of a system before and during its design, operation, and maintenance. The EMSSE consortium involves 4 full partners: University of Technology of Compiègne (Coordinator, France), University of Genoa (Italy), Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya (Spain), Polytechnic University of Tirana (Albania).

Find more about all project examples at <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/projects>

Erasmus Mundus and Western Balkans 2021-2023



164 scholarships
for nationals of Western Balkans partners



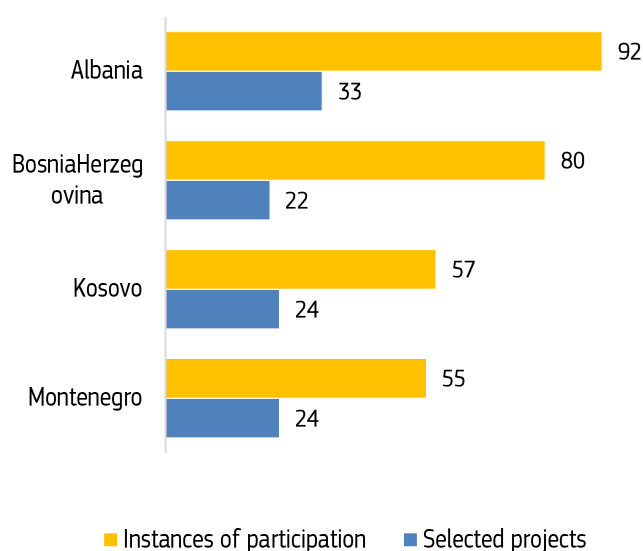
1 organisation from Western Balkans
involved as full partner

Capacity Building in Higher Education (CBHE)

Capacity-Building projects in Higher Education are 2 to 3 year-long projects implemented by multilateral partnerships of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) from both programme countries and Western Balkan economies with the aim of modernising Higher Education Institutions and systems in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Montenegro.

Capacity-Building projects not only promote cooperation between the Western Balkans and the 33 Erasmus+ countries, but they also contribute to curriculum development activities, modernisation of governance and management of HEIs and systems and strengthening relations between higher education and the wider economic and social environment.

Over the two selections since 2021, there have been 274 instances of participation by institutions from the Western Balkans in 45 projects selected to benefit higher education in this region.



Capacity-building projects for higher education 2022-2023



45 projects



274

Instances of participation
from Western Balkans

Examples of CBHE projects

The **SMART** project aims to support partner HEIs from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro, to transcend their role as knowledge providers and become active shapers of the regional innovation ecosystem. Coordinated by Slovenia, the project aims at supporting the professional development of HEIs academic staff in the field of innovation and entrepreneurship, setting up 7 SMART Innovation Centres and facilitating sustainable cooperation between HEIs and the business sector.

GEAR - Gender Equality in Academia and Research. The project aims to tackle gender and intersectional imbalances in STEM fields within the Higher Education sector of the Western Balkans. This will be achieved by creating and implementing gender equality plans at Higher Education Institutions, increasing the participation of women and girls in STE(A)M studies, supporting and involving women and girls with fewer opportunities in Higher Education, and addressing the needs of the most vulnerable female students, such as the Roma.

Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange

Virtual exchanges are online people-to-people activities that promote intercultural dialogue and soft skills development between young individuals from Western Balkans economies and their peers in Erasmus+ 33 countries.

This type of project aims at making it possible for every young person to access high-quality international and cross-cultural education (both formal and non-formal) without physical mobility. They take place in small groups and are always moderated by a trained facilitator, including activities such as online-facilitated discussions, trainings, interactive open online courses, etc.

41 organisations from Western Balkan economies are involved in 13 Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange projects addressing various topics. Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania are the most involved countries. Projects not only focus on digital skills, but also on soft skills development, critical thinking and media literacy among other topics.

DevelopMENS is a transnational project that brings together a consortium of partners from Italy, Croatia, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, and Kosovo. The project aims at enhancing the personal and social development of young people through the integration of self-determination theory, critical thinking, and media literacy into formal and informal education. It aims at conducting scientific research and focus groups on self-determination theory, intrinsic motivation, and soft skills, developing educational content based on the research findings and creating a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) to disseminate the knowledge and skills acquired.

Capacity Building for Vocational Education and Training (VET)

This action is new to the international dimension of Erasmus+. It supports multilateral partnerships of organisations active in the field of VET between the 33 Erasmus+ countries and different regions in the world, including the Western Balkans.

Digi4Wearables - Digital Tools for Wearable Products for the Shoe Industry. Lead by Portuguese organisation this project aims at developing an innovative training methodology using emerging and inclusive practices to improve the knowledge of workers in footwear companies in Albania on digital manufacturing. The project educational package will consist of a website with online material structured in thematic sections, videos and reports with guidelines, and course materials divided in seminars according to the thematic topic.

GTECH - Green Tech Entrepreneurship Challenge Hub for work-based learning. The project aims to build capacity of VET staff and promote entrepreneurship and innovation in green tech among VET providers and students in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The project will establish a challenge-based learning platform called "Challenge Hub" that will host innovation challenge competitions, connect VET providers with industry partners, and provide educational content on entrepreneurship and green tech. The project will also provide mobility training for VET staff members to Croatia and Slovenia to professionally develop their skills.

These projects aim to support the relevance, accessibility and responsiveness of VET institutions and systems in these regions and as a driver of sustainable socio-economic development.

Out of the 126 projects selected worldwide, 37 projects were selected with 137 instances of participation from Western Balkan economies.

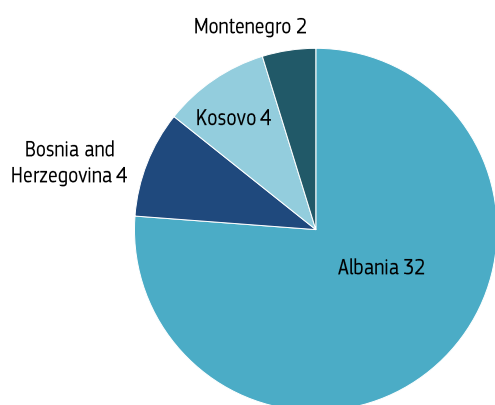
Capacity Building for Vocational Education and Training in the Western Balkans, 2022-2023



37 projects
137 instances of
participation from Western Balkans

Jean Monnet Activities

Jean Monnet (JM) activities aim to develop EU studies worldwide. Since 1989 they have been supporting **Modules, Chairs, and Centres of Excellence** to promote excellence in teaching and research on the European integration process at higher education level. The programme also supports policy debate with the academic world through networks. These opportunities elicit great interest from countries outside Europe too and figures refer to the



Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence

EUfutur - Enhancing EU Integration process literacy among university students in Western Balkans. This project aims to create and run a center of excellence at the European University of Tirana, in cooperation with other partners: Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia and Italy. Such a consortium will focus primarily on the promotion of the European Union studies and policies in the region, with a particular emphasis on the prospects of each individual WB economy for EU membership.

higher education activities opened to third countries, to international networks and to other discontinued types of international projects.

Since 2021, 952 projects have been selected globally across three distinct categories. Among these, 42 projects are managed by HEIs from the Western Balkans, with Albania leading the chart with 32 projects. As for now, there is 1 Jean Monnet Network where an HEI from the Western Balkan (namely Bosnia and Herzegovina) is participating.

Jean Monnet Networks

ValEUs Research & Education Network on Contestations to EU Foreign Policy aims to address the challenges faced by the EU in upholding its values and creating a peaceful future. It seeks to understand and provide a realistic account of contestations of EU values and foreign policy, develop counterstrategies, and promote a new role for universities in supporting democracy and engaging with endangered regions like Ukraine. The project involves 21 partner institutions from 18 countries and aims to build research capacity, develop innovative teaching collaborations and engage in policy debates to provide recommendations for EU and non-EU stakeholders.

Jean Monnet Module

Green FIB - Enhancing knowledge of EU green finance policies in insurance and business valuation. The module aims to promote the EU financial resilience policies to businesses and the banking and insurance industry under their transformation towards green initiatives, through teaching and research activities. The module comprises two existing courses: "Insurance Markets" and "Business Financial Evaluation." These courses are designed for students in the Professional Master Program in Finance, as well as a short intensive course tailored for undergraduate students majoring in "Finance" and "Business Administration."

Opportunities in the field of Youth and Sport

Mobility Projects for Young People and Youth Workers

Organisations from the Western Balkans can participate as partners in mobility projects for young people and youth workers. Three types of activities can be supported under this Action.

Youth Exchanges

Between 2021 and 2023, 1 970 young people from the Western Balkan economies have participated in youth projects in Europe, while 790 participants were hosted in the Western Balkans.

Youth Workers Mobility

Between 2021 and 2023, 790 youth workers from the Western Balkan economies carried out a mobility in Europe (including training, job shadowing), while 531 youth workers were hosted in Western Balkan economies.

Youth participation activities

Erasmus+ also supports activities outside formal education and training that encourage, foster and facilitate young people's participation in Europe's democratic life at local, regional, national and European level. Projects can take the form of meetings, conferences, public consultations and thematic events. Between 2021 and 2023, 142 young people from the Western Balkan economies participated in such projects.

Capacity Building in the field of Youth

Capacity Building in the field of Youth projects are international cooperation projects based on multilateral partnerships between organisations active in the field of youth in the EU and countries associated to the Programme, on the one hand, and in third countries not associated to the Programme, on the other hand. Projects aim at supporting international cooperation in the field of youth and non-formal learning, as a driver of sustainable socio-economic development and well-being among youth organisations and young people and aim at raising the capacity of organisations working with young people outside formal learning.

Since 2021, in the Western Balkans, 67 projects for the region have been selected, involving 125 organisations from the different Western Balkan economies. You can find out more about those projects [here](#).

Capacity Building in the field of Sport

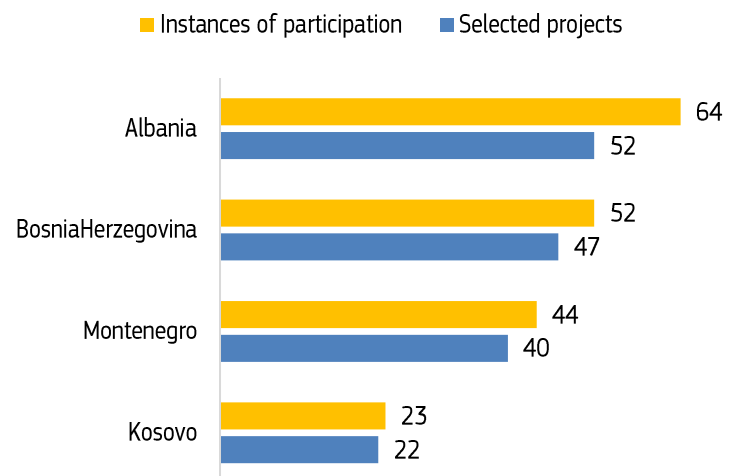
This action supports multilateral partnerships between organisations active in the field of sport and aims to support sport activities and policies in the Western Balkans as a vehicle to promote values and an educational tool to promote the personal and social development of individuals and build more cohesive communities. The first selection of projects was in 2022.

Since 2021, in the Western Balkans, 11 projects for the region have been selected, involving 25 organisations from the different Western Balkan economies.

Erasmus+ for Youth is moving
2 902 people from Western Balkan economies



1 321 people to Western Balkan economies



More information:

Erasmus+ website: http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/node_en

Erasmus+ projects & results: <http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/projects>

Erasmus+ funding opportunities: http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus/funding_en

Erasmus+ National Offices: <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/contacts/national-erasmus-offices>