

# **Western Balkans Research & Innovation Youth Awards**

## **A POLICY ANSWERS Pilot Programme**

### **Guidelines For Participants**

#### **Call for Participants: Western Balkans R&I Youth Awards and Western Balkans R&I Youth Campaign**

**Deadline: 18 April 2025 (23:59 CET)**

## About the Awards

The **Western Balkans R&I Youth Awards** recognise and celebrate outstanding youth-focused initiatives from the Western Balkans that have significantly managed to get youth involved in research and innovation between 2020 and 2024.

These awards aim to increase the visibility of Western Balkans (WB) youth-focused R&I success stories, showcase inspiring WB initiatives that encourage careers in R&I and, promote learning and professional upskilling opportunities in research and innovation (R&I).

The **Western Balkans R&I Youth Awards** are organised by FITD under the WP5, Pilot Activates - of the Horizon Europe funded project POLICY ANSWERS. “R&I POLICY making, implementation ANd Support in the WEsteRn BalkanS”, Grant Agreement 101058873. A project launched on 1 March 2022 for a period of four years.

## Why Participate?

The “Western Balkans R&I Youth Awards” offer participants the chance to:

- Be one of six award winners from the region
- Win an up to EUR 8,000 award for your success story
- Gain regional recognition for your impactful youth-focused initiatives
- Showcase successful models of involving youth in R&I
- Inspire the next generation of young professionals
- Network with students, educators, innovators, and industry leaders, creating potential partnerships and collaborations

## Who Can Apply?

This call is open to legally established organisations (Micro enterprises, SMEs, CSOs, schools, universities, or other entities) based in or focused on the WB (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo\*, Montenegro, North Macedonia or Serbia).

\* 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.

**Eligible initiatives must:**

- I. Be youth-focused (targeting individuals aged 15-29, typically in secondary school, high school, or early university/career stages)
- II. Have been implemented between 2020 and 2024
  - Focus on involving youth in one or more of the following areas:
    - Research (e.g., in STEM fields, digital or green technologies)
    - Innovation (e.g., innovative entrepreneurship, business development, endeavours in creative sectors)
- III. Demonstrate tangible outcomes and substantial impact evidenced by data.

To demonstrate tangible outcomes and substantial impact, the participants are asked to provide evidence e.g., for:

- Measurable results: Increased participation in STEM activities, higher enrolment in relevant educational programmes, or successful startups launched by young people.
  - Compelling Stories: Sharing stories of young people whose lives have been positively impacted by the initiative.
  - Recognition and awards: Any previous recognition or awards received by the initiative.
  - Endorsements: Letters of support or testimonials from educators, community leaders, or other stakeholders.
  - Sustainability: Evidence that the initiative has a plan for continued impact beyond the funding period (if applicable).
- IV. Be WB-focused

**Selection Process**

<b>Phase 1: Call for Applications (18 February 2025)</b>
Interested organisations (micro-enterprises, SMEs, CSOs, schools, universities and other entities) based in or focusing on the WB region that have participated in public research and innovation projects between 2020 and 2024 are invited to submit their project details via the online application.
<b>Deadline: 18 April 2025, 23:59 CET</b>
<b>Phase 2: Participant Selection (Announcement:30 April 2025)</b>

A judging panel will select 12 participating initiatives (two from each WB economy: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, or Serbia) based on the following criteria:

- **Impact (30%):** The demonstrable tangible outcomes and substantial impact of the initiative on young people and the community.
- **Innovation (25%):** The originality and creativity of the approach.
- **Relevance (20%):** The alignment of the initiative with the focus areas of the “Western Balkans R&I Youth Campaign” (see below).
- **Sustainability (20%):** The potential for long-term impact and continued success.
- **Clarity and Presentation (5%):** The quality and clarity of the application materials.

The selected participants will be publicly announced at [www.westernbalkans-fohub.eu](http://www.westernbalkans-fohub.eu) and [www.fitr.mk](http://www.fitr.mk) on 30 April 2025. Following the announcement, participants will be invited to sign a participation statement. Teams of two members from each participating initiative will be invited to travel to Skopje on 29 and 30 May 2025. All participation costs, including travel, accommodation, and meals, will be covered.

### Phase 3: Live Pitching and Award Ceremony (29-30 May 2025)

Each of the 12 participating initiatives will deliver a pitch (3, 5 or 7 minutes depending on the complexity of the project) to the judging panel on 29 May 2025 in Skopje.

#### Award Criteria:

- **Winners of each WB economy (6 total, 1 per WB economy):** The initiative that best demonstrates excellence in all judging criteria (impact, innovation, relevance, sustainability and clarity/presentation) within their respective WB economy.
- **Grand Winner (1 total):** The initiative that best demonstrates excellence across all judging criteria and demonstrates the most balanced geographic impact throughout the WB region.

On 30 May 2025, the winners will be announced at the Gala Lunch Event.

#### Prizes:

- **Grand Winner:** EUR 6,000 (1 award)
- **Winners of each WB economy:** EUR 2,000 each (6 awards total)
- **Participation:** All travel, accommodation, and meal costs are covered for two team members from each participating initiative.

## Phase 4: Western Balkans R&I Youth Campaign

Award recipients will receive their awards in Q3 of 2025, provided they have successfully contributed to the “**Western Balkans R&I Youth Campaign**” by developing and disseminating engagement content showcasing youth involvement in R&I.

Examples of acceptable content include, but are not limited to:

- **Written content:** Blog posts, articles, personal stories, interviews, opinion pieces, social media posts, website copy, or reports focused on youth in R&I.
- **Visual content:** Videos (e.g., short documentaries, interviews, explainer videos, animated content), infographics, photos, illustrations, memes, GIFs, or other visual media showcasing youth involvement.
- **Interactive content:** Quizzes, polls, surveys, live streams, webinars, Q&A sessions, podcasts, or other interactive formats that encourage audience participation.

Content should be relevant to the campaign's themes, which include: Enhancing the efforts of students and educators to keep pace with the skills required for the future; Addressing students at various educational levels and youth to encourage careers in R&I from each WB economy; Inspire young people to develop future-proof skills through participation in hands-on activities, vocational training, internships, volunteering, mentorship programmes, and other capacity-building opportunities; Showcase the talent and potential of WB youth to EU Member States and the European Commission, contributing to a more positive perception of the region; And foster collaboration and networking among young people, educators, and organisations working in the fields of R&I across the WB.

It should also be of high quality, engaging, and suitable for dissemination across various platforms, with a minimum of two pieces of content per month. Further guidelines on content creation will be provided with the award contract.

## How to Apply?

The application process involves two simple steps:

### Step 1: Complete the Online Application (approx. 10 minutes)

Access the online application form in English and answer all questions in English. The form is designed to be quick and easy to complete.

## Step 2: Submit Supporting Documents

If your initiative is shortlisted, you will receive an invitation to submit supporting documents upon completing Step 1.

As outlined above, to demonstrate tangible outcomes and substantial impact, the participants are asked to provide evidence, e.g., for:

- **Measurable results:** Increased participation in STEM activities, higher enrolment in relevant educational programmes, or successful startups launched by young people.
- **Compelling stories:** Sharing stories of young people whose lives have been positively impacted by the initiative.
- **Recognition and awards:** Any previous recognition or awards received by the initiative.
- **Endorsements:** Letters of support or testimonials from educators, community leaders, or other stakeholders.
- **Sustainability:** Evidence that the initiative has a plan for continued impact beyond the funding period (if applicable).
- **Administrative documents:** Up-to-date registration extract issued from the Trade Register (not older than 3 (three) months) and Proof that the applicant is not in situations of exclusion criteria

The invitation will provide further instructions for submission. If you have any questions or need assistance, please contact [youth-awards@fitr.mk](mailto:youth-awards@fitr.mk)

## General Data Protection

FITD is committed to protecting the personal data of all applicants in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (General Data Protection Regulation). The information collected during this application process for the WB R&I Youth Awards, which is part of the project funded by the European Union under Grant Agreement No. 101058873, will be used solely for the purpose of evaluating applications and for the “Western Balkans R&I Youth Campaign”. Your data will be retained for 10 years following the conclusion of the project. You have the right to access, rectify, and erase your personal data, as well as the right to restrict processing and the right to data portability. To exercise these rights, please contact [info@fitr.mk](mailto:info@fitr.mk). We will share your data with members of the judging panel and members of the project consortium (list available at [www.westernbalkans-infohub.eu](http://www.westernbalkans-infohub.eu)). We will not share your data with any third parties for marketing purposes.

We have implemented appropriate technical and organisational measures to protect your data against unauthorised access, use, or disclosure. For any questions or concerns regarding data protection, please contact us at: [info@fitr.mk](mailto:info@fitr.mk)

### Further terms and conditions

The selection process takes place at FITD in North Macedonia. FITD will notify each applicant of the outcome of their application. Applications that do not meet the specified conditions may be rejected as untimely, incomplete, inadmissible, or for other legitimate reasons. Applicants whose applications are rejected will be notified by email, with a clear explanation of the reason for rejection. The live pitching sessions will be filmed for archival purposes, promotional use, and dissemination on project platforms. By participating in the Awards, applicants consent to be filmed during their pitch. Photographs will be taken throughout the event for promotional and reporting purposes. Participants consent to the use of these photographs by FITD and its partners for these purposes. Participants who do not wish to be filmed or photographed should inform FITD in writing prior to the event. Reasonable efforts will be made to accommodate such requests, but it may not be possible to guarantee that a participant will not be incidentally filmed or photographed.

Now go to the  
[Application Form](#)

or 😊

Contact Us  
[youth-awards@fitr.mk](mailto:youth-awards@fitr.mk)