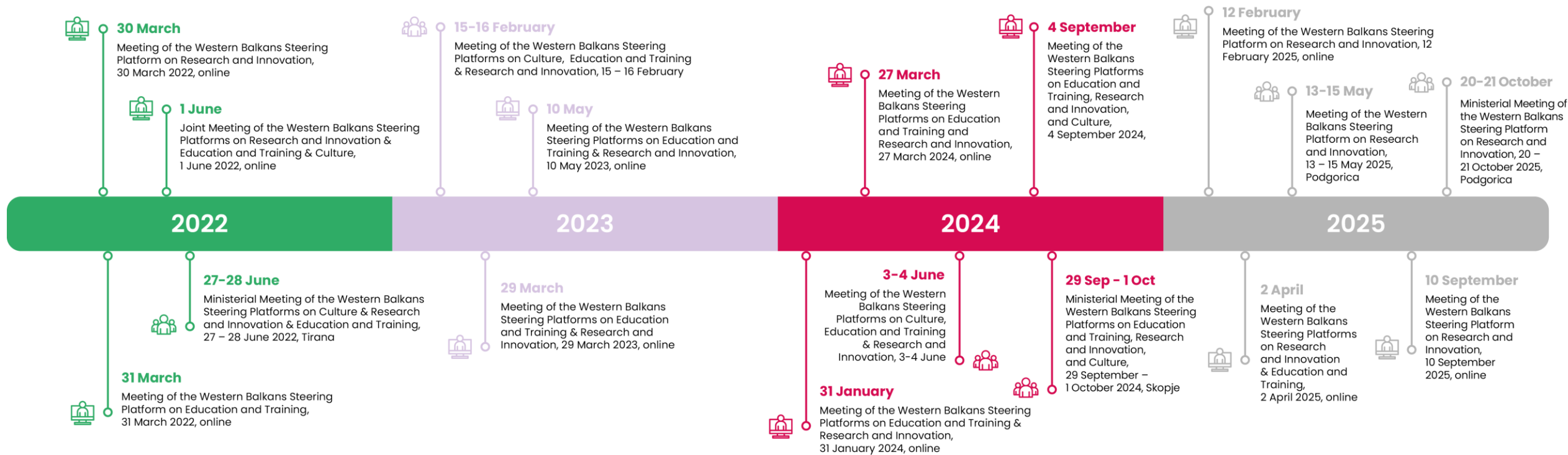




## **Update and highlights from the POLICY ANSWERS project and the Western Balkans Info Hub**

Meeting of the Western Balkans Steering Platform on  
Research and Innovation  
2 April 2025

## Steering Platforms and Ministerial Meetings



# Western Balkans Steering Platform Meeting on Research and Innovation

Podgorica

## Programme highlights

- 13 May: Technology-oriented research infrastructures workshop at the Science and Technology Park Montenegro
- 14 May: Steering Platform at Hilton Hotel
  - Updates on Research, Innovation & Smart Specialisation Strategies
  - Reports from WB economies, EC services, EU Member States & International Organisations
- 15 May: Technical workshop on MSCA + session tbc

Event is upon invitation (10 sponsored delegates from WB)  
Registration open until 11 April 2025



# Research Infrastructure Workshop

Open to public

Location:  
Science and Technology Park  
Montenegro

Registration:

A graphic poster for the workshop. It features a blue background with a map of the Western Balkans at the bottom. On the right, there is an illustration of a computer monitor displaying various icons: a Wi-Fi symbol, a cloud with upload and download arrows, a folder with an upload arrow, a pie chart, and gears. Above the monitor is a security camera icon. To the left of the monitor are icons for a person, a padlock, and a fingerprint. The text on the poster is as follows:

**POLICY ANSWERS Workshop  
on Technology-Oriented  
Research Infrastructures:  
Opportunities for the  
Western Balkans**

PODGORICA, MONTENEGRO, 13 MAY 2025

Organised in the frame of the Meeting of the  
Western Balkans Steering Platform  
on Research and Innovation.

Logos for the European Commission and POLICY ANSWERS are at the bottom.



# Western Balkans Mobility Scheme in operation

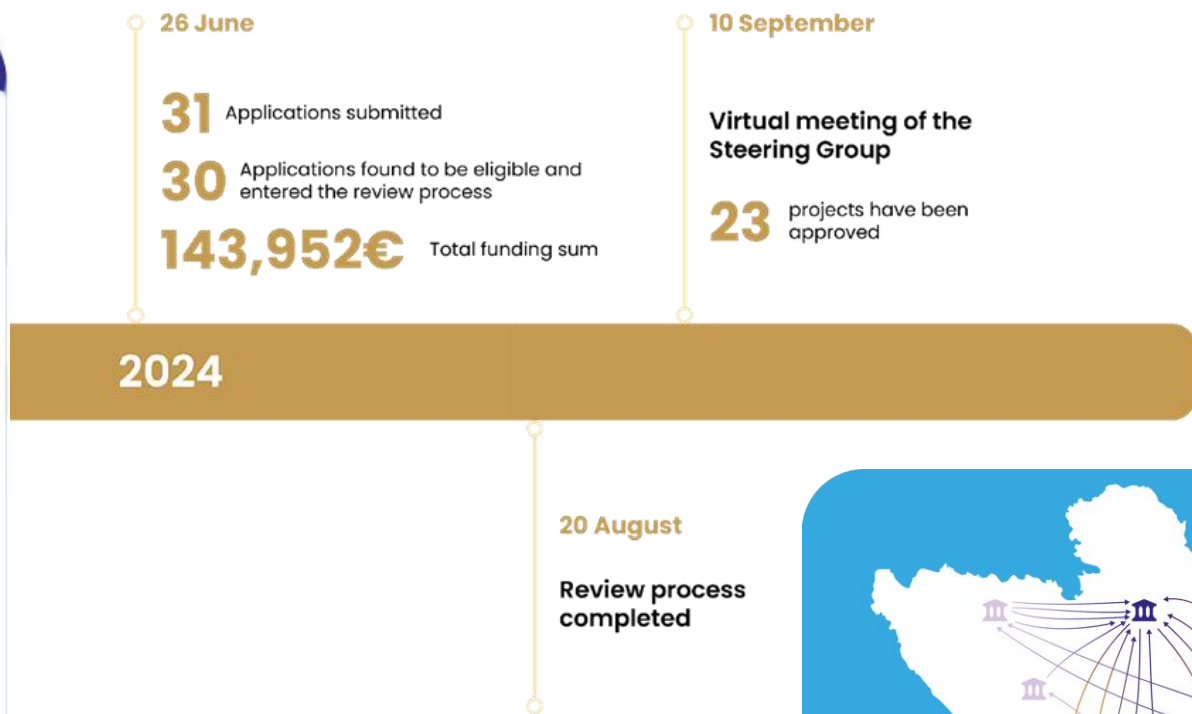


**POLICY ANSWERS**

## Research in Motion

Empowering Innovation in the Western Balkans through the POLICY ANSWERS Western Balkans Mobility Scheme for Early-Career Researchers

 POLICY ANSWERS "R&I POLICY making, implementation AND Support in the WEsteRn Balkans", Grant Agreement N° 101058873.



# WB Innovation Vouchers



→ **24** innovation voucher applications (EUR 8,000 each) have been evaluated



- **20** IVs were awarded
- **19** contracts issued (one SME declined)
- **10** contracts have been signed, and
- **2** service providers received pre-payments.

Contracting will continue in early April.

# Western Balkans R&I Youth Awards

Call opened: 18 Feb 2025  
Call deadline: 18 April 2025

Participation sign-ups received so far:  
approximately 30

Good initial turnout, strong interest and  
engagement



**POLICY ANSWERS**

## Western Balkans R&I Youth Awards

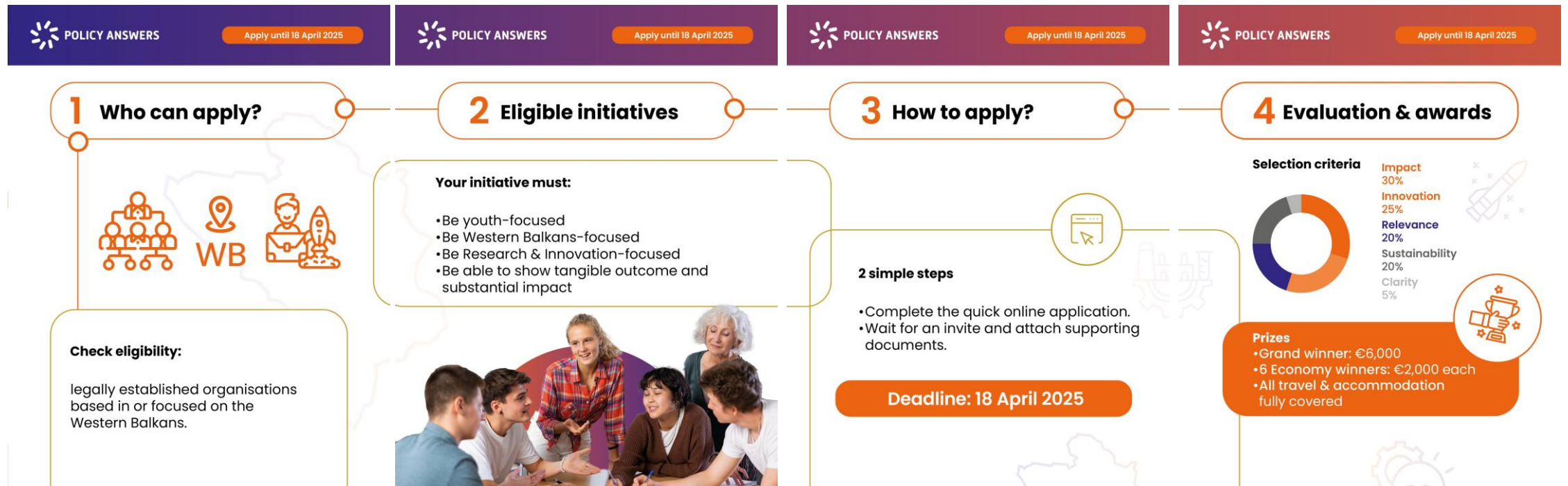
**Inspire the next generation. Win a prize for your impact!**

Call for participation  
Prizes of up to  
EUR 8,000

**Apply until 18 April 2025**

POLICY ANSWERS "R&I POLICY making, implementation AND Support in the Western Balkans", Grant Agreement N° 101058873.

## Western Balkans R&I Youth Awards





# Western Balkans R&I Youth Awards

For further information:



**Join us in Skopje!**  
29–30 May 2025



Live pitch & award  ceremony  
Network, showcase your work & get recognized!

**Apply Now!**

[www.westernbalkans-infohub.eu](http://www.westernbalkans-infohub.eu)

## Regional Innovation Academy



Resources are grouped into four main Categories

24 resources have been published online across four main categories:  
**Tools, Insights, Resources and Courses, and Case Studies**

# Western Balkans Agenda - third monitoring round

## Preliminary findings:

### 1. Research and Innovation

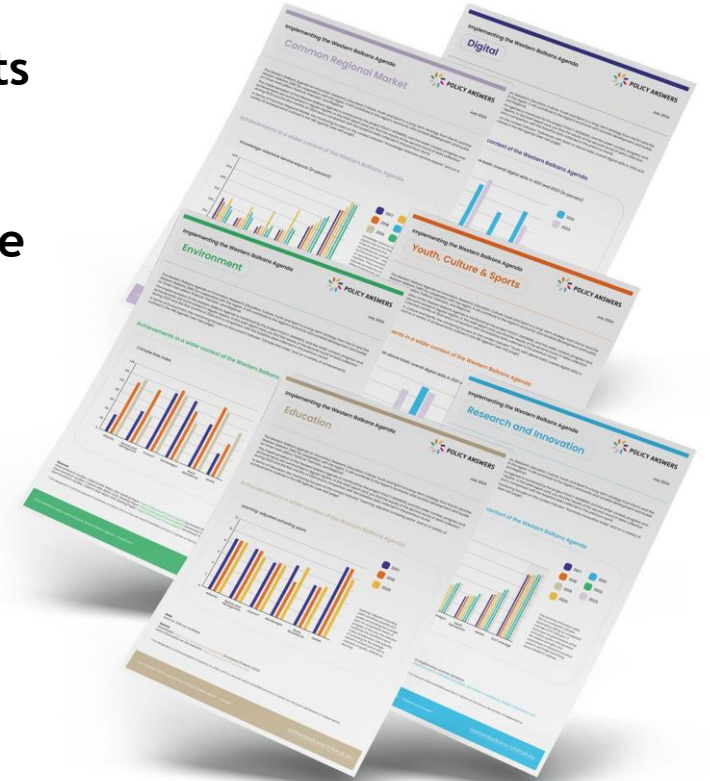
Strong areas = (1) Integration in the new ERA through joint projects and mobilities with EU MS and WB + (2) Participation in EIT initiatives

Moderately improving, challenges remain = (1) Technical assistance (projects & missions) in Chapter 25 + (2) Participation in Partnerships and Joint Undertakings

Major challenges = Public investment schemes, GDP share in R&I

#### Highlights

Strong participation of the Western Balkans in 2024 EIT Jumpstarter cohort  
Improving innovation support and trans-national R&I cooperation by continuous growth of the EIT Community



### 2. Digital competitiveness

Strong area = Participation in Digital Europe programme

Moderately improving, challenges remain = (1) DIHs + (2) Digital Edu Hub activities + (3) Digital skills development + (4) WB economies joining EuroHPC JU

Little development in = Strategic approach to AI

#### Highlights

7 EDIHs from Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia are invited to join the EDIH network  
All Western Balkans economies are associated to the Digital Europe Programme (DIGITAL)

### 3. Environment

Improvement in the area = Disaster risk management

Moderately improving, challenges remain = (1) Transition in energy sector + (2) Just transition + (3) NECPs + (4) EU Mission: 100 climate-neutral and smart cities

Little development in = Transition to sustainable transport

#### Highlights

Western Balkans Six endorse Hamburg Declaration on Green Agenda for the Western Balkans (GAWB)  
Successful participation of the Western Balkans partners in the New European Bauhaus



### 4. Education and skills

On track = Participation in E+ University Alliances + POLICY ANSWERS capacity building  
Moderately improving, challenges remain = (1) VET + (2) MSCA + (3) Non-research based innovation  
Little development = twinning projects & TAIEX missions

#### Highlights

Agreement on Access to Higher Education and Admission to Study in the Western Balkans signed by WB6 leaders at 10th Berlin Process Summit  
Increasing WB interconnectedness and mobility-driven R&I by successfully piloting the POLICY ANSWERS WB Mobility scheme

### 5. Youth, Culture, Sports

Strong areas = Culture Moves Europe programme + European week of sports  
Moderately improving, challenges remain = E+ and twinning projects/missions  
Little development in = Joining SHARE 2.0 initiative

#### Highlights

Great success of the Western Balkans partners in the Culture Moves Europe initiative  
Increased participation in the European Heritage Hub by including WB economies in the Policy Monitor and Montenegro hosting the third European Heritage Hub Forum “EU Enlargement: Cultural Heritage as a Key Resource for Cities & Civil Society” (3-4 April 2025)

### 6. Common Regional Market

**On track = Involvement in EEN and EYE, innovation vouchers scheme piloted, improvement in activities of national IPR support organisations**

**Moderately improving, many challenges remain: preparation and implementation of S3, participation in COST and Eureka, support to R&I infrastructure, and Reform Agenda**

**Persistent challenges = access to finance for SMEs**

#### Highlights

**Three regions from Western Balkans (Tuzla Kanton – BIH, Montenegro and North Macedonia) selected as Regional Innovation Valleys**

**Collaborative grants for innovation, managed by the Innovation Fund of Montenegro certified for the Plug-In scheme to the EIC Accelerator**

**New phase of the Common Regional Market Action Plan 2025–2028 (CRM 2.0) signed by Western Balkan leaders**

## Ongoing capacity building activities

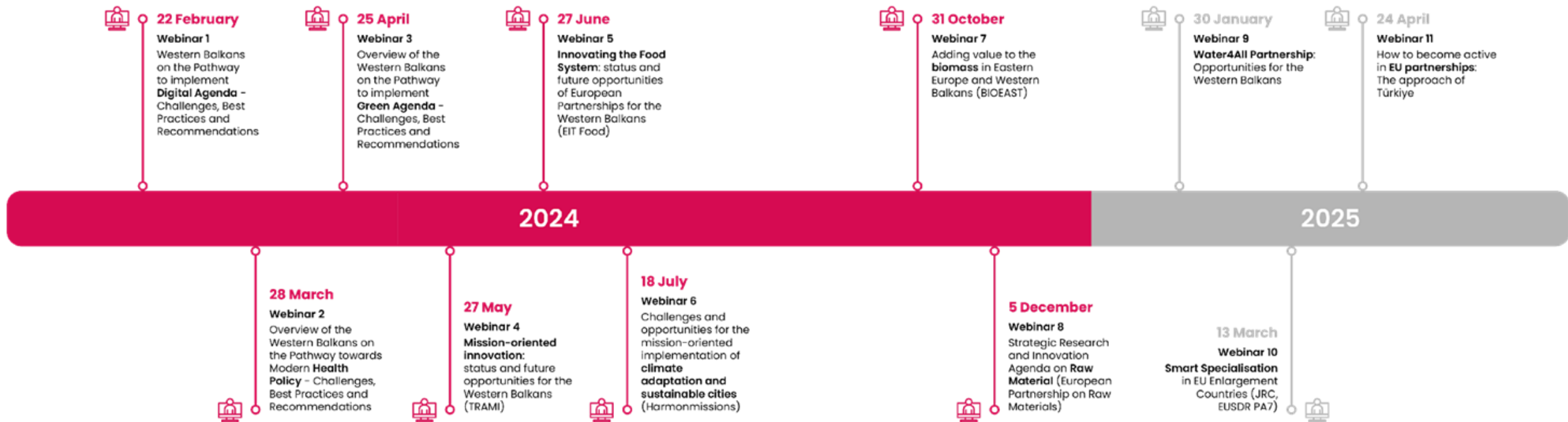
Upcoming activities include:

- **Info days** (e.g. upcoming Info Day in Albania 14 April)
- **Trainings** (e.g. on Support the Development of Sustainable Agriculture and the Food Value Chain in Montenegro in Tivat 8 and 9 April 2025)
- **Workshops** (e.g. Monitoring and Evaluation workshops in Nis 2 April and 16 April in Kragujevac, etc.)
- **Study visits** (e.g. peer learning in UK on support programmes and policies for research, innovation, start-ups and sustainability by NM)
- **Policy documents** (e.g. Report on State of Play regarding digital transformation in Kosovo)
- **Consultations** (e.g. fact finding and needs assessment on libraries as enablers of scientific research in the era of open science in BiH)
- **Videos and infographics** (e.g. Green talks in Kosovo)

## Webinars

Regularly organised to promote missions and partnerships and align priorities.

Recordings are available on the [WB Info Hub Youtube channel](#) and the [Policy Stakeholder Platform](#).





# Upcoming webinar

Public online event on 24 April 2025

Registration open:



 POLICY ANSWERS  Funded by the European Union

**WEBINAR 11**

**How to become active in EU partnerships: The approach of Türkiye**



**Serhat Melik**  
Horizon Europe National Contact Point for Cluster 5: Climate, Energy & Mobility (TÜBİTAK)

**24 April 2025**  
**15:00–16:00 CET**



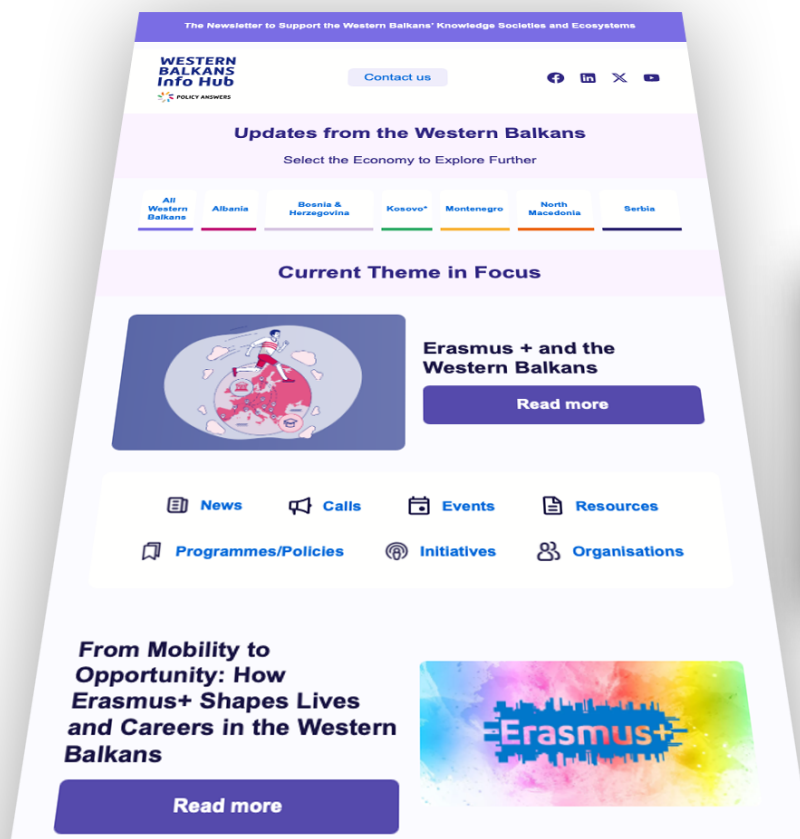
**#WBvision2030**

**WESTERN BALKANS Info Hub**

## Monthly newsletters

Most recent theme: Entrepreneurship and Innovation Management

Next one: European Institute for Innovation and Technology



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## Check out our results





Contact us at any time:  
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[policy-answers@westernbalkans-infohub.eu](mailto:policy-answers@westernbalkans-infohub.eu)



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**THANK  
YOU!**