

# **Towards a Stronger European Research Area: Lessons and Pathways for the Western Balkans' Participation**

## **Agenda**





## Towards a Stronger European Research Area: Lessons and Pathways for the Western Balkans' Participation

*Final public event by POLICY ANSWERS to present the project's main outcomes and their contribution to the Western Balkans Agenda*

*Agenda version: 29 January 2026*

**Thursday, 19 March 2026**

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**Venue: Tirana International Hotel & Conference Center**  
**Sheshi Skënderbej 8, Tirana, Albania.**

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**Registration for the meeting:**

<https://toward-a-stronger-era-policy-answers-final-event.konfeo.com>

**Streaming connection will be made available in due time to registered online participants.**

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**09:00 - 09:30**      **Onsite Registration and Welcome Coffee**

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**09:30-10:00**      **Welcoming Speeches**

Mirela Muca, Director, National Agency for Scientific Research and Innovation (NASRI), Host

Armela Baka, Deputy Minister of Education and Science, Albania (tbc)

Martin Kajo, Deputy Minister of Economy and Innovation, Albania (tbc)

Linda Pustina, Head of Smart Specialisation Strategy Team, Albania (tbc)

N.N., EU Delegation to Albania (tbc)

Mina Stareva, Deputy Head of Unit, European Commission, Directorate General Research and Innovation

Elke Dall, Project Coordinator, Centre for Social Innovation (ZSI)

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10:00-11:00

## **POLICY ANSWERS: Results and Insights from the Western Balkans Part 1**

Moderator: Sanja Popovic-Pantic, Institute Mihajlo Pupin (IMP)

*This session presents the main outcomes and lessons learned from capacity building activities of the project through a series of highlights and “lightning talks” by project partners and experts.*

- **Albania**, Robert Dumi, NASRI
- **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, Maja Arslanagic-Kalajdzic, UNSA
- **Kosovo**<sup>\*</sup>, Alma Bajramaj, RIINVEST
- **Montenegro**, Andjela Radulovic, Ministry of Education and Science (tbc)
- **North Macedonia**, Gabriela Kostovska Bogoeska, MIR
- **Serbia**, Sanja Popovic-Pantic, IMP

11:00-11:30

## **POLICY ANSWERS: Results and Insights from the Western Balkans Part 2**

Moderator: Elke Dall, ZSI

*This session presents highlights from cross-cutting activities by project partners.*

- **Policy lessons from the Western Balkans Innovation Vouchers**, Andrijana Tasevska, INOVA
- **Policy lessons from the Western Balkans Mobility Scheme**, Ralf Hanatschek, DLR
- **Aligning priorities: Success and opportunities in Horizon Europe**, Janine Halder, FFG
- **Key results from monitoring and analysis: Progress in implementing the Western Balkans Agenda**, Ulrike Kunze, DLR
- **Key results from Policy Dialogue: Conclusions from Ministerial Meetings**, Desiree Pecarz, ZSI

11:30-11:45

## **Coffee break**

11:45-12:10

## **Exploring Policy Impacts of Past Initiatives and Perspectives for the Future Collaboration**

Keynote Speakers: Mina Stareva and Bernhard Fabianek, European Commission

Interviewer: Elke Dall, Project Coordinator, ZSI

*An in-depth conversation with Mina Stareva and Bernhard Fabianek, highlighting strategic insights and lessons for research and innovation in the Western Balkans from the past period and discussing opportunities for future collaboration.*

<sup>\*</sup> 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.



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12:10-12:45

## Stakeholder Reactions and Open Panel

Moderator: Elke Dall, ZSI

*Cooperation partners and stakeholders from the audience are invited to share their perspectives and join the discussion.*

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12:45-13:00

## Looking ahead: Introducing POLICY ENLARGE

Béla Kardon, Chief Scientific Officer, Regional Centre for Information and Scientific Development (RCISD)

*An overview of the follow-up project POLICY ENLARGE, highlighting its objectives, planned activities and anticipated contributions to research and innovation development in the Western Balkans and other enlargement countries*

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13:00

## Family Photo

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13:00-14:00

## Lunch break

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14:00

## Transfer to Barleti University

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14:30-16:30

## Exploring 5 Helix: Digital Future Hub at Barleti University

*This study visit introduces participants to Barleti University's approach to innovation, co-creation, and digitalisation. Through guided visits to key laboratories and a concluding discussion, the programme aims to encourage knowledge exchange and explore opportunities for collaboration between academia, research, and industry.*

*Welcome by the Rector*

*Visit of the University facilities:*

- [TRIANGLE Co-creation Lab \(Transforming Research, Industry & Academia into Networks for Growth & Leadership\)](#)
- [Creative Industries Lab - Creative Makerspace](#)

*Concluding discussion*

*Light farewell cocktail*

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