

POLICY ANSWERS

“R&I POLICY making, implementation AND Support in the WEsteRn BalkanS”

The POLICY ANSWERS consortium

Coordinator: Centre for Social Innovation (ZSI) from Austria, ZSI



14 beneficiaries from:

Albania

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Kosovo*

Montenegro

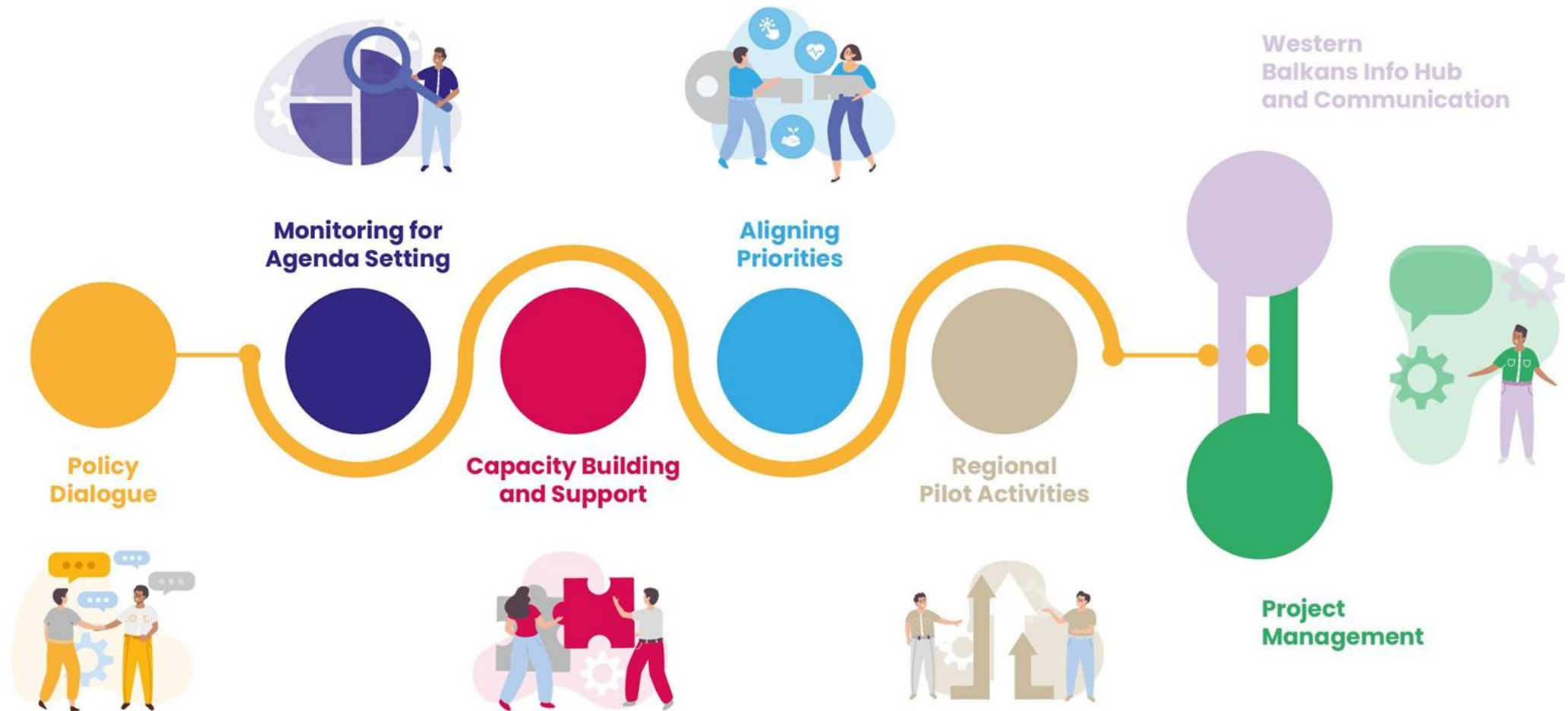
North Macedonia

Serbia

Austria, Croatia, Germany and Italy

* 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.

Project overview





Invitation to all of you to the project's final event

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



Tirana • 19 March 2026

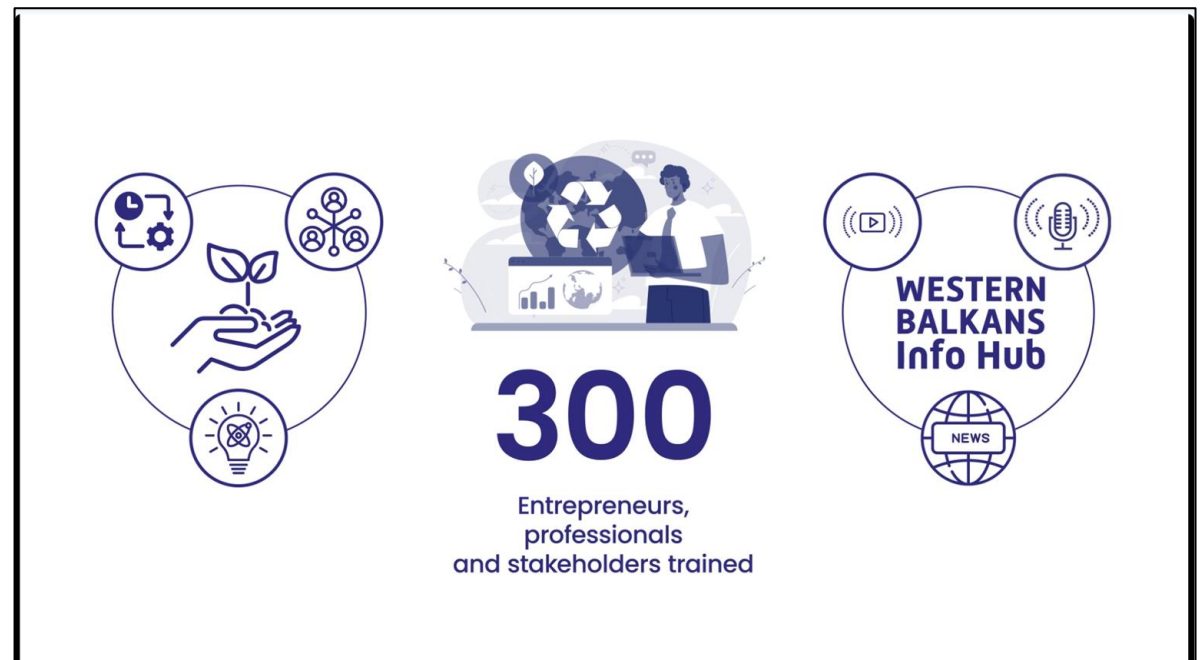


WP3 CAPACITY BUILDING & SUPPORT

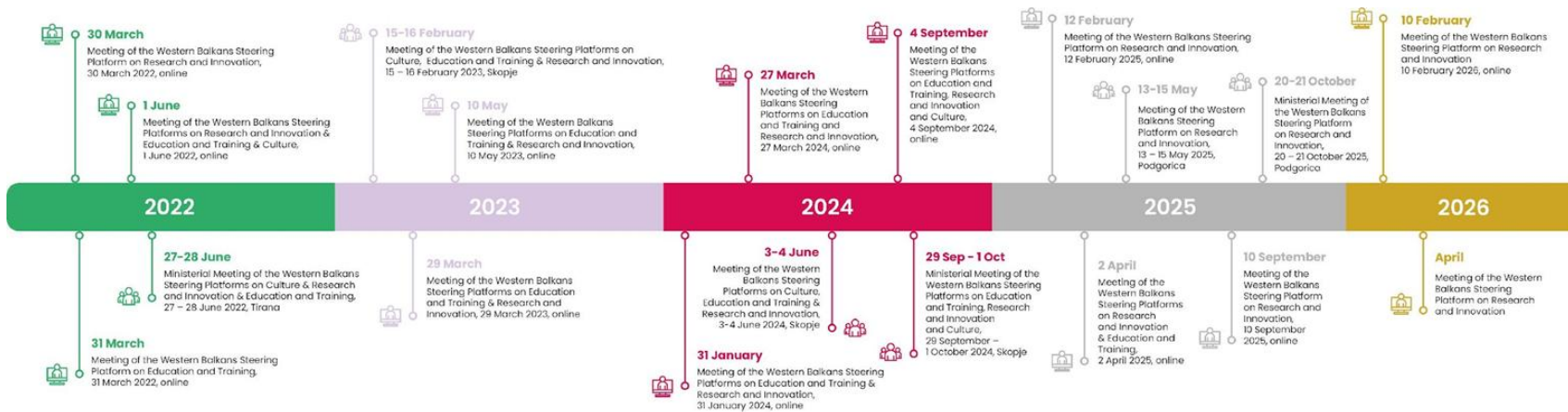
Presentation of the results of our Capacity Building Programmes implemented in each WB economy, including trainings, policy papers, technical assistance, info days, etc.



Link to the
final event
in Tirana



Regular support to Steering Platform meetings



Further
information



Follow-up dialogue

Event website



Registration



POLICY ANSWERS

Funded by
the European Union

ONLINE WEBINAR VIA WEBEX

Democracy in the
neighbourhood
and EU enlargement:
**Horizon Europe
research insights**

26 February 2026
9:30–12:30

09:30 – 11:00 Session 1:
Geo-scope on Western Balkans

11:00 – 12:30 Session 2:
Geo-scope on Eastern Partnership
countries and Türkiye

Register for the webinar via the link
provided in the description below

**WESTERN
BALKANS
Info Hub**



Monitoring of the Western Balkans Agenda

Progress of the WB in the implementation of the WB Agenda

4th and last monitoring round completed

> 2026 edition available soon

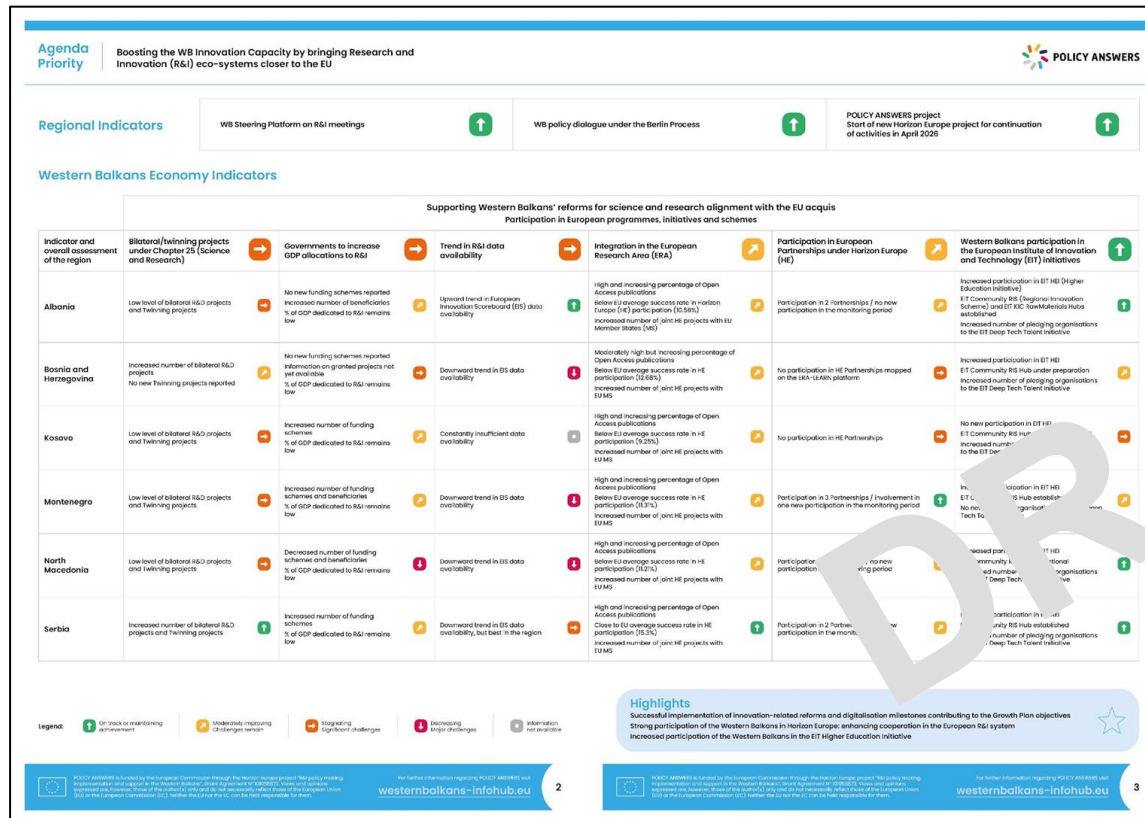
- Research and Innovation
- Digital Competitiveness
- Environment
- Youth, Culture & Sports
- Education & Skills
- Common Regional Market

Link to the 2025 version

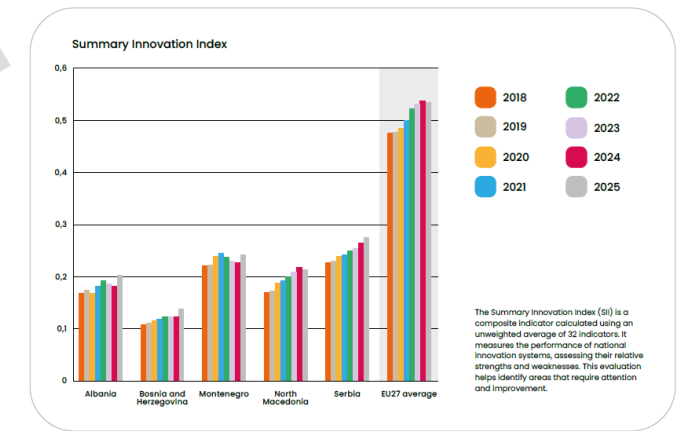


Monitoring Card on Research and Innovation

Agenda Priority: Boosting the WB Innovation Capacity by bringing Research and Innovation (R&I) eco-systems closer to the EU



Achievements in a wider context of the Western Balkans Agenda



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

Development of Policy Briefs

Preparing for FP10: Strengthening Western Balkans participation in the 2028-2034 programme landscape

- Provides recommendations on the path towards FP10 (forthcoming)
- Update of the Policy Brief on FP10 from September 2024



Link to the
Policy Brief
FP10



Development of Policy Briefs

Western Balkans Monitoring and Reporting: Challenges and Key Takeaways

POLICY ANSWERS Policy Brief: Western Balkans Monitoring and Reporting Challenges and Key Takeaways

Published: 28 August 2025

Policy Brief

Western Balkans monitoring and reporting: challenges and key takeaways



Characteristics	Description
Data Availability	Difficult to obtain timely data
Surveying and Sampling	Business register updates and functioning CRIS are prerequisites
Data Harmonisation	Methodological changes affect data comparability
Data Owners	Lack of designated data owners, contact and focal points
Data Use	Results often not used for decision and evidence based policy-making
Data Reliability	Proxy indicators and unresolved questions related to data reliability
Problem Awareness	Policy makers are often unaware of challenges
Resources	General lack of resources available in the R&I ecosystem and in particular at statistical offices

Other Documents

Western Balkans – Unleashing the Potential of Innovative Start-Ups and SMES in the Western Balkans : Investment Readiness Program 2.0

"Western Balkans: unleashing the potential of innovative start-ups and small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the Western Balkans: investment readiness [...]"

Open Innovation Testbeds – Lessons learnt in EU projects

Open Innovation Test Beds (OITBs) are one form of Technology Infrastructures that offer services for the development, testing and upscaling [...]"

North Macedonia's ERA Integration: Two-pager visual summary of the ERA report

POLICY ANSWERS publishes the visual summary of the report on North Macedonia's ERA integration. 0_WEB_Visual_Summary_ERAreport_NORTH_MACEDONIA_2023.pdf



The full document is available for download here:



Development of Policy Briefs

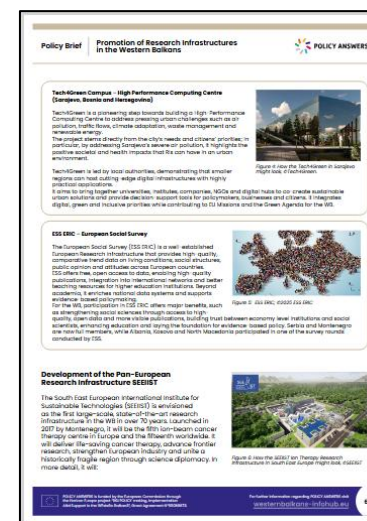


Policy Brief and Policy Report (deliverable) on Research Infrastructures

The full documents are available for download here



Includes good practices from the region and a set of recommendations for policy makers



Specific recommendations for policymakers

Pan-European and WB regional initiatives should plan to develop and adopt OA principles and practices based on the 2024 EU Charter². Moreover, in each economy policymakers should:

- Establish economy level OA principles, defining OA RIs as a priority, outlining the benefits of OA RIs to different user groups and encouraging RPOs to adopt suitable OA policies.
- Consider making the adoption of an OA RI policy a legal requirement for accredited higher education institutions and RPOs.
- Introduce incentives for researchers and institutions to use and contribute to Open RI.
- Consider including OA RI Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) into RPOs' reporting (e.g. total number of OA users, type of OA users, number of new and repeat users, type of services, cost and value of providing access).
- Take steps to raise awareness of the benefits of OA tailored to different stakeholder groups, including the private sector, and monitor the effects in order to assess raised awareness. Promotional efforts should be repeated and linked to take up of services.
- Support participation in ERICs, including implementation of the ERIC Regulation at national level, and encourage engagement of WB economies in ESFRI-related initiatives and established ERICs (e.g. participation of WB6 in successive iterations of the European Social Survey).

² European Charter for Access to Research Infrastructures. <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/ec4692a9-ac6f-11ef-acb1-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>. Accessed 28 November 2025

Recent highlights from our monthly webinars

 **POLICY ANSWERS** 

WEBINAR

Thursday, 29 January 2026
15:00 (CET)

Research and Technology Infrastructures: Policy, practice and recent developments in Europe – emerging opportunities for the Western Balkans

Speaker:
Dr. Lisa Cowey
Director, The Technology Transfer Interface
Key Expert, RCC WB Knowledge Transfer Toolkit Initiative | Oxford, UK



Register for the webinar via the link provided in the description

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 **POLICY ANSWERS** 

WEBINAR 14

Malta's Experience in EU Partnerships: Contributions and Added Value

Annalisa Cartabia
R&I Funding Specialist, Internationalisation Unit (Xjenza Malta)



13 November 2025
15:00 CET

#WBvision2030

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 **POLICY ANSWERS** 

WEBINAR 15

EIT Communities as Drivers of EU-Wide R&I Integration

Branka Žižić
EIT Community Officer Montenegro



11 December 2025
15:00 CET

#WBvision2030

WESTERN BALKANS Info Hub



R&I Youth Awards

- Pitching event and award ceremony in Skopje
- 5 months social media Youth Campaign



WP5 REGIONAL PILOT ACTIVITIES



- Policy Brief on Mobility (forthcoming)



Research in Motion

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

Policy Brief including key features, lessons learnt, success stories



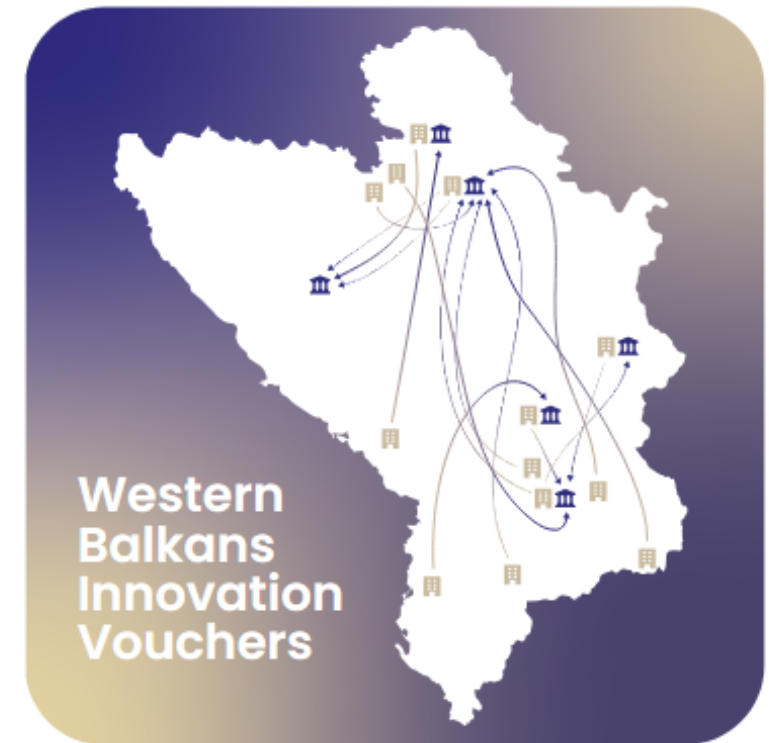
Policy recommendation: The argument for a regional R&I fund

The concept of a regional R&I fund for the Western Balkans has been a key recommendation by influential actors in the region, including the Berlin Process Joint Science Conference and the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), who have previously highlighted the necessity of such a mechanism.

For example, the 7th Berlin Process Joint Science Conference⁶ directly recommended the establishment of a Western Balkans Research Fund. Similarly, the RCC has consistently supported a regional approach to R&I funding through strategic frameworks, such as the Common Regional Market (CRM) Action Plan⁷ and the development of the Western Balkans Regional R&D Strategy for Innovation⁸, now part of a larger, forward-looking strategic context, the RCC Strategy and Work Programme 2026–2028⁹.

The pilot activity within the POLICY ANSWERS project has provided compelling evidence that a unified, regional approach to funding R&I is not only feasible but highly effective. While Western Balkans economies' own innovation funds are crucial, they are often insufficient to foster the cross-border synergies required for genuine regional integration. The WBIV scheme, by mandating inter-economy collaboration, has demonstrated a powerful model for breaking down barriers and promoting a shared culture of innovation.

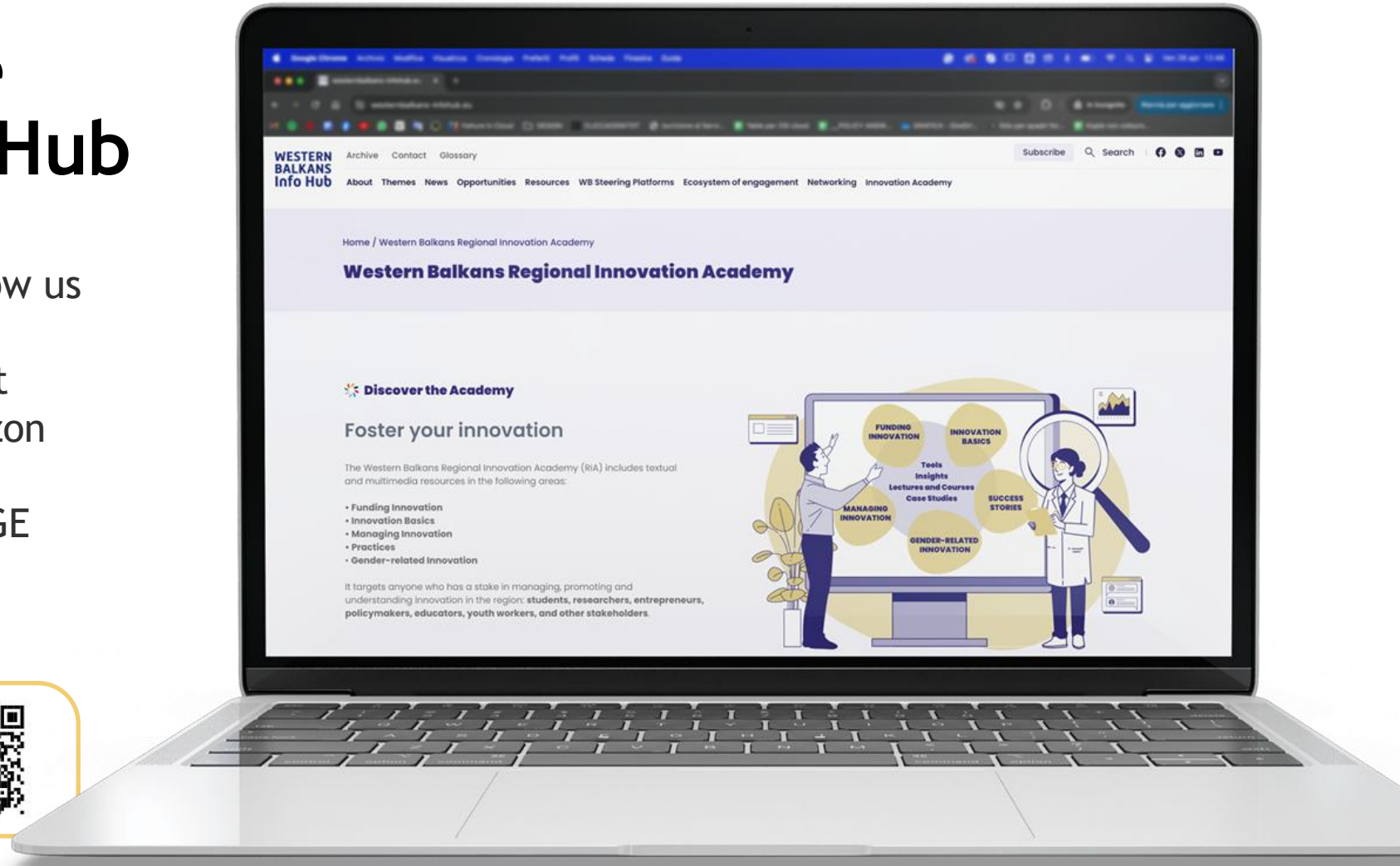
The regional approach enables an efficient pooling of resources and expertise, allowing the Western Balkans to tackle complex, shared challenges more effectively. Henceforth, one can argue that the regional innovation voucher scheme should be a key mechanism to be used by a future regional R&I fund to drive transformative change within the Western Balkans R&I landscape, particularly in the green transition and digital transformation fields.



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- Regular updates. Most recent focus on S3, upcoming: Horizon Europe
- Hand-over to POLICY ENLARGE

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**THANK
YOU!**