



POLICY ANSWERS

Final Project Advisory Board meeting

Presentation of Achievements by Work Package Leaders

Tirana, 18 March 2026



POLICY ANSWERS, "R&I POLICY making, implementation ANd Support in the WEsteRn BalkanS", is a Horizon Europe project funded by the European Commission, Grant Agreement N° 101058873.

Project basics

Project title	POLICY ANSWERS: “R&I POLICY making, implementation AND Support in the WEsteRn BalkaS”
Project funding	Coordination and Support Action under Horizon Europe WIDERA-2021-ACCESS-06-01 Support for R&I policy making in the Western Balkans ; Grant Agreement 101058873
Project duration	50 months: March 2022 - April 2026
Project partnership	14 partners + wide stakeholder network
Project officer	Mina Stareva and Agota David, DG Research & Innovation
Project coordinator	Elke Dall, Centre for Social Innovation
Project contact	policy-answers@westernbalkans-infohub.eu
Project website	www.westernbalkans-infohub.eu
Project social media	@WBInfoHub



*Project start on 1 March 2023
Elke Dall, Bernhard Fabianek, Nikelina Naska*

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

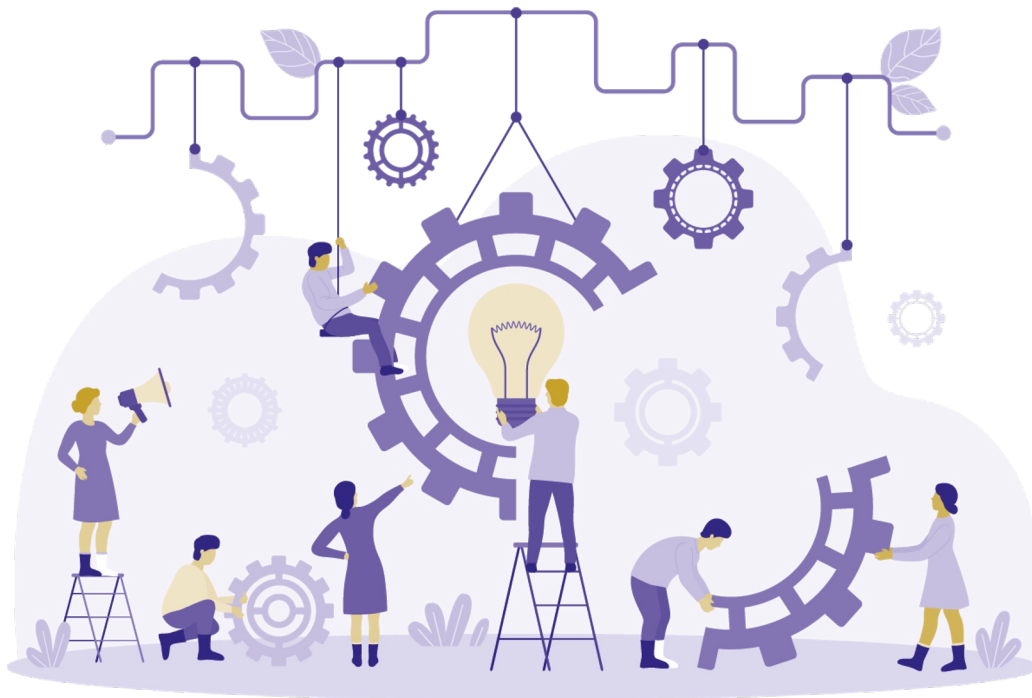
* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

Project Advisory Board meeting

Tour de Table

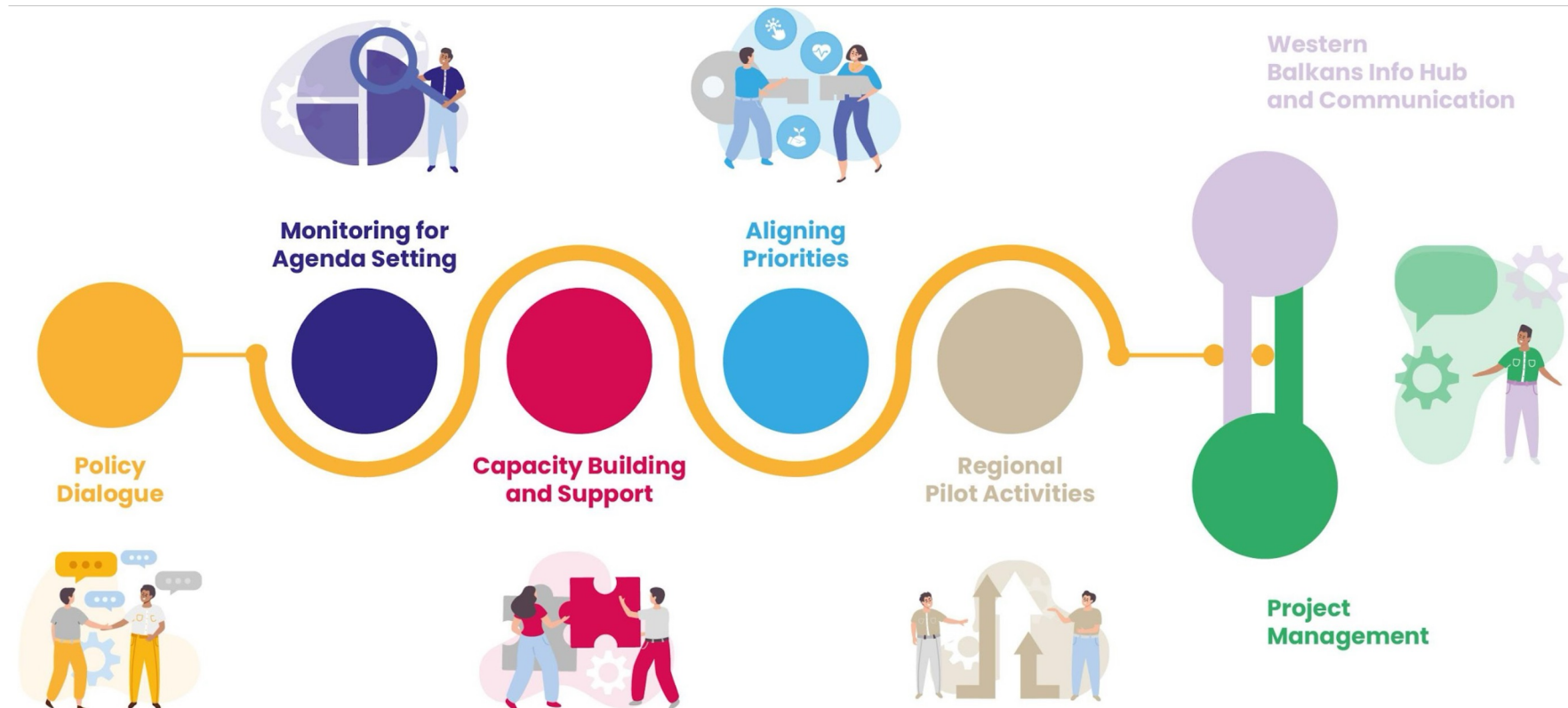


Plan for and after this PAB



- The project holds its final meeting and a public conference in Tirana, Albania.
- We are working on the hand-over to the POLICY ENLARGE follow-up project. Lessons learnt are shared as we speak.

Project overview



WP1 POLICY DIALOGUE

Highlights WP1: POLICY DIALOGUE

Desiree Pecarz, Work Package Lead, ZSI



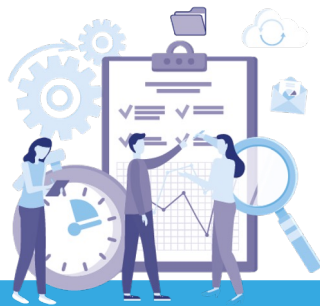
WP1 POLICY DIALOGUE



- Task 1.1 Ministerial Meeting
- Task 1.2 Steering Platform Meetings
- Task 1.3 Ad-hoc Meetings

WP1 in a nutshell

- Focused on the political level of the EU-WB support and dialogue in Research and Innovation and adjacent fields, such as Education, Training, Culture, Youth and Sports.
- Secretariat (task 1.1 and 1.2) supporting dialogue forums and organisation of policy dialogue events (i.e. Ministerial and Steering Platforms meetings); ad-hoc policy coordination meetings (task 1.3), offering room for exchange about policy implementation.



Research & Innovation
(2006)

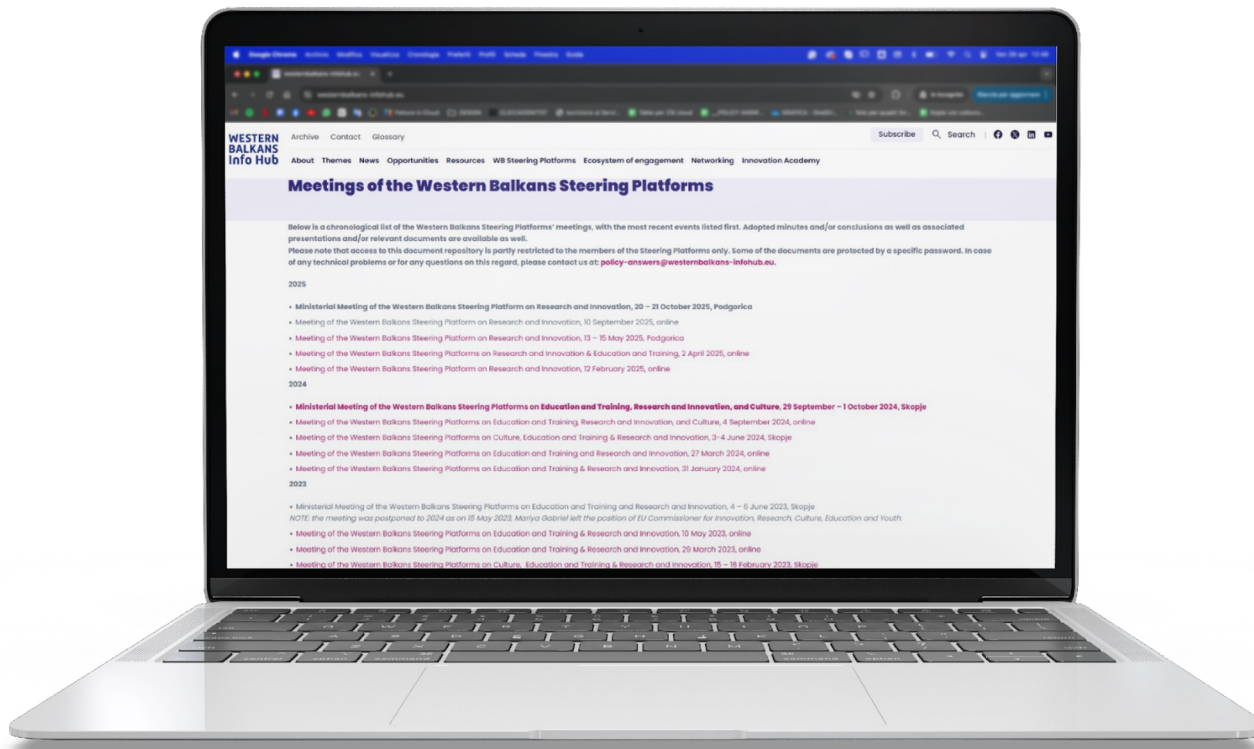


Education & Training
(2012)



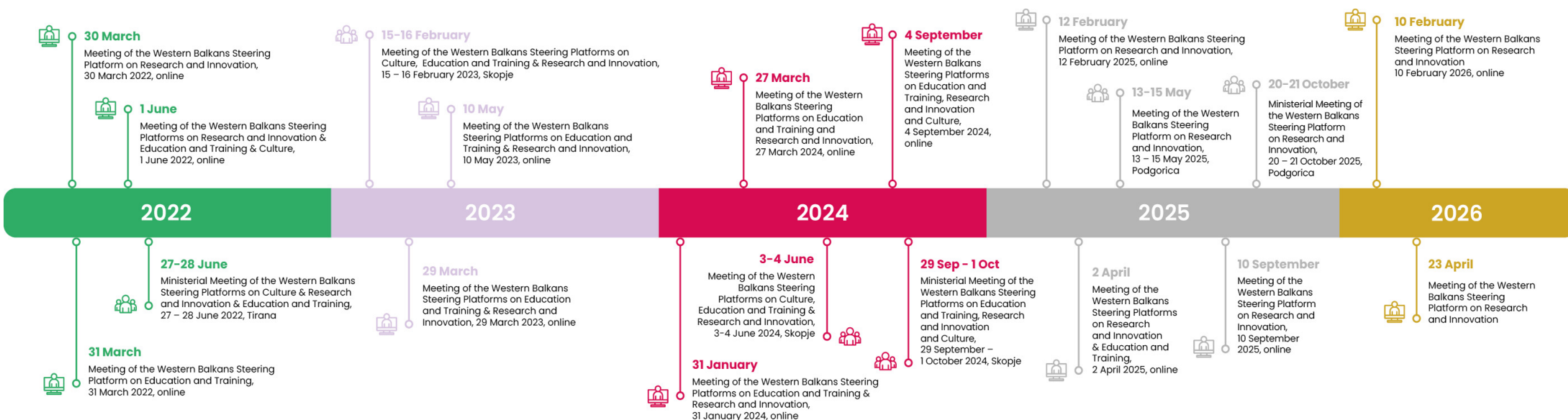
Culture
(2022)

Maintenance of membership lists and repository



WP1 POLICY DIALOGUE

Activity overview



Ministerial 2025 - Key results

Podgorica on 20 - 22 October 2025
Approx. 120 participants

Agenda focused on:
strengthening RI, role of AI in science, importance of S3 in driving both the green and digital transitions.

Conclusions:

- Ministers reaffirmed commitment to ERA integration and alignment with key EU initiatives
- Progress was noted in Horizon Europe participation, S3 and RI
- Further efforts are needed on R&I investment, private sector engagement and the twin transition
- The SP remains central to advancing coordination and innovation-driven growth.



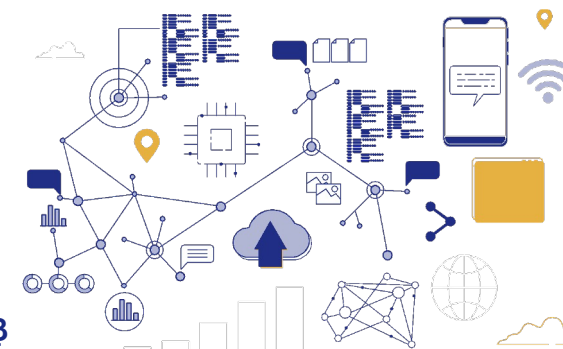
WB Steering Platform Meeting 2025 on Research and Innovation

Programme highlights

- **13 May: POLICY ANSWERS Technology-oriented research infrastructures workshop at the Science and Technology Park Montenegro**
- **14 May: SP Meeting (56 participants onsite + online)**
 - Discussions on R&I policy and implementation of the WB Agenda
 - WB Progress reports; Presentations by EU Member States (AT, DE, HU, SI) and international organisations (COST, EIT, EUREKA, RCC)
 - Preparatory discussions for the MM in October 2025.
- **15 May: Technical Workshops**
 - Workshop Marie Skłodowska Curie Actions (MSCA): Opportunities for Researchers' Training, Career Development and Mobility
 - Workshop Smart Specialisation: Productivity-based competitiveness and company-level innovation in the face of intense competition for labour and skills.



Ad-hoc policy coordination meetings



13 May 2025, Podgorica

• [Workshop on Technology-Oriented Research Infrastructures: Opportunities for the WB](#)

It explored how Technology-Oriented Research Infrastructures can foster development in the WB.

4 June 2025

• [Workshop between WB National Statistical Institutes with the European Commission](#)

It covered key EU tools for innovation and digitalisation, including e-commerce in enterprises.

19 November 2025

• [Webinar “Becoming a Horizon Europe Evaluator - WB Expertise Matters”](#)

It introduced the role and benefits of becoming an evaluator, highlighting the opportunities to strengthen professional development.

26 February 2026

• [Webinar “Democracy in the Neighbourhood and EU Enlargement: Horizon Europe Research Insights”](#)

It focused on Horizon Europe projects with insights for the WB, Eastern Partnership countries and Türkiye.

Looking Ahead

- 2026 marks 20th anniversary of the Steering Platform
- A timely moment for **SP members to reflect on how the SP /MM, can evolve** into a more strategic, forward-looking and implementation-driven instrument supporting the WBs' deeper ERA integration
- Based on discussion at last SP meeting on 10 February 2026:
 - MM are valued political milestones, with potential to evolve further
 - Future MM could **focus more strongly on implementation and follow-up** of agreed Conclusions
 - Closer alignment with ERA integration and upcoming EU initiatives (ERA Act, Innovation Act) would enhance strategic relevance
 - Greater but targeted **engagement of EU Member States**—focused on concrete policy challenges and practical experience-sharing—would further strengthen the platform
 - **Bilateral meetings** Commissioner/WB ministers remains essential, as particularly impactful
 - A **more interactive and dynamic format** with moderated discussions, thematic panels, workshops and best-practice showcases.
- The SP R&I continues to be supported by the **POLICY ENLARGE** project until 2029
- Upcoming 2026 events (tbc): 23 April SP online, June SP (Pristina), MM 22 October (Brussels).

WP2 MONITORING FOR AGENDA SETTING

Highlights WP2: Monitoring for Agenda Setting

Ulrike Kunze, Work Package Lead, DLR



WP2 MONITORING FOR AGENDA SETTING



- Task 2.1 Mapping of the stakeholder ecosystem
- Task 2.2 Monitoring the implementation of the WB Agenda
- Task 2.3 Drafting reports on ERA integration
- Task 2.4 Foresight and anticipatory science advice
- Task 2.5 Policy Briefs

WP2 MONITORING FOR AGENDA SETTING

Mapping of the stakeholder ecosystem

- **Key achievement: “Ecosystem of engagement”:** searchable and downloadable database at the WB Info Hub
 - Stakeholders/institutions/media outlets, programmes, policies, initiatives, best practices
 - Focus on the Western Balkans and on the topics and priorities of the WB Agenda.

- **“Mapping Card” disseminated.**

- **Sustainability:** some aspects of the mapping will be covered in the follow up project POLICY ENLARGE by a catalogue of RI's.

The screenshot shows the 'Ecosystem of engagement' page on the Western Balkans Info Hub website. The page features a search bar, filters for 'Geographical focus' (set to Europe) and 'Thematic domains' (set to Research and Innovation), and a 'Download all' button. Below the filters, there are tabs for 'All', 'Programmes & policies', 'Initiatives & good practices', and 'Stakeholders' (which is highlighted). A 'Download all' button is also present. The page is dated 31 March 2025 and is categorized under 'Organisations', specifically the 'European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency (EISMEA)'. A brief description of EISMEA's mission is provided, along with a 'Read more' link.

The screenshot shows a 'Stakeholder Mapping' card titled 'Analysis of the stakeholder ecosystem in the Western Balkans' by POLICY ANSWERS, dated January 2024. The card includes a brief introduction, a section titled 'What are the types and scope?' with three icons representing 'Organisational types', 'Thematic areas', and 'Geographical scope', and a section titled 'What are the topics?' with a list of thematic domains and cross-cutting areas. The card also includes a 'What is the purpose?' section and a 'Source' section.

The summary statistics are presented in three columns:

- +430 Stakeholders**
- 200+ Programmes/Policies**
- 100+ Initiatives/Best Practices**

Monitoring of the Western Balkans Agenda

- Progress of the Western Balkans economies in implementing the EU Western Balkans Agenda
- Measured by indicators and multiple data sources
- 4th monitoring round completed in February 2026
-> 2026 edition; new: A3 format, horizontal and folded.
- 4 editions:
2023 (baseline), 2024, 2025, 2026.
- Widely disseminated;
valuable tool for EC, the WB economies
and for other stakeholders
> overview of progress made in
important aspects of R&I systems.



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

POLICY ANSWERS Reports on ERA Integration

Monitors state of the R&I systems and progress in ERA integration of the WB economies.

Products:

- “POLICY ANSWERS Reports on Western Balkans’ ERA Integration” for all WB economies (reporting year 2022)
- “ERA Country Reports” for ALB, BiH, KOS* and MKD (reporting year 2023); [Ecorys: MNE, SER]
- ERA Cards for all six WB economies (May 2023)
- ERA Fact Sheet (September 2024)
- Widely promoted, also during events; valuable source of information on R&I systems
- Reporting is being continued by other contractors



* 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.

WP2 MONITORING FOR AGENDA SETTING

Foresight and Anticipatory Science Advice

Achievements:

- Co-creative POLICY ANSWERS Foresight workshop in Podgorica
- A Foresight Card with recommendations for the future of R&I in the WB
- The work on Foresight is being continued through a different contract.



Foresight Workshop in Podgorica, March 2023



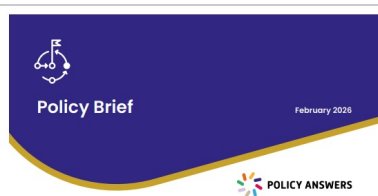
WP2 MONITORING FOR AGENDA SETTING

Policy Briefs and Policy Reports

Based on specific requests and needs; emphasise results of all Work Packages

Most recently published:

Policy Brief on FP10




Policy Brief February 2026

POLICY ANSWERS

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

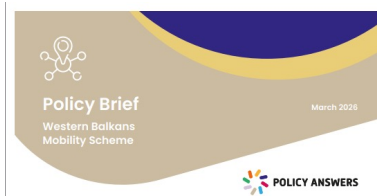
This Policy Brief updates our Policy Brief on the next Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (FP10) of September 2024, reflecting on the progress in the FP10 development process and their implications for stakeholders in the Western Balkans (WB)¹. It places particular emphasis on the perspective of the EU enlargement countries² and how EU accession interacts with the proposed FP10 structure.



1. POLICY ANSWERS (2024). Policy Brief The Western Balkans on the road to FP10. <https://westernbalkans-policy.eu/governance-and-innovation/policy-brief-the-western-balkans-on-the-road-to-fp10>. Reviewed 27 December 2025.
2. The Western Balkans comprise Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo³, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia. Candidates for independence.
3. The enlargement countries comprise the Western Balkans and Georgia, Moldova, Turkey and Ukraine.

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Policy Brief on Mobility



Policy Brief March 2026

Western Balkans Mobility Scheme


POLICY ANSWERS

Supporting young researcher mobility in the Western Balkans

Researcher mobility is recognised as a strategic priority within the Berlin Process and as a key instrument for addressing shared regional challenges in the Western Balkans (WB), including green transition and digital transformation, while nurturing a new generation of innovators.

The pilot initiative of the **Western Balkans Mobility Scheme (WBMS)** was launched to address these challenges, with the potential for scaling up through co-funding from additional actors. The Policy Brief shares insights and lessons learnt from the preparation, implementation and evaluation of the programme and dialogue activities of the POLICY ANSWERS project to further the discussion about researcher mobility grant schemes in the WB.

One of five pilot activities of the Horizon Europe-funded POLICY ANSWERS project, allowed us to test a scheme to enhance regional cooperation and sustained support for mobility-driven Research and Innovation (RI).



The overall aims were to contribute to sustainable economic growth, the development of a common regional market, increased societal resilience and the convergence of the WB with the European Union.

¹ The WB comprise Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo², Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia.

² The candidate is official applicant to join the EU, and is in line with UNCCF (1993) and the ECJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

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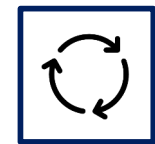
The deliverable D2.5 will include the full set of Policy Briefs and Policy Reports:

- Policy Brief on Health
- Policy Brief on Digital
- Policy Brief on Green
- Policy Brief on Data and Statistics
- Policy Brief on Innovation Vouchers
- Policy Brief on Research Infrastructures
- Policy Brief on FP10 - 2024 and *updated 2026 version*
- Policy Brief on Mobility

... and various reports for Kosovo (WP3)

Key messages from WP2

- Use project deliverables as source of information on R&I systems in the Western Balkans
- Make use of mapping - considerable amount of stakeholders; (database needs maintenance and update ...)
- Continue monitoring of the Western Balkans Agenda to show progress made by the WB economies and to support accession negotiations
- Provide further support to stakeholders dealing with statistics, indicators, data (also in view of European Innovation Scoreboard)
- Foresight exercise as a tool for policy makers to support programme planning
- Disseminate Policy Briefs as useful source of information and recommendations.



WP3 CAPACITY BUILDING & SUPPORT

Highlights WP3: Capacity Building and Support

Sanja Popovic-Pantic, Work Package Lead, IMP



WP3 CAPACITY BUILDING & SUPPORT



- Task 3.1 Capacity building and implementation in Albania
- Task 3.2 Capacity building and implementation in Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Task 3.3 Capacity building and implementation in Kosovo
- Task 3.4 Capacity building and implementation in Montenegro
- Task 3.5 Capacity building and implementation in North Macedonia
- Task 3.6 Capacity building and implementation in Serbia

WP3 CAPACITY BUILDING & SUPPORT

Updated Capacity Building Programme 2024/2025

ALBANIA

1. Training programme at universities to prepare and implement GEPs.
2. Support participation in Horizon Europe.
3. Support to promote EU funding for companies.
4. Supporting WB Agenda requirements on S3 implementation.
5. Promotion of innovation opportunities related to the blue economy.
6. Roadmap to improve EIS ranking of Albania (replaced initial Mapping of research infrastructure activity).

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

1. Support for preparation of Horizon Europe partnerships and proposals.
2. Capacity building in research management and administration.
3. Capacity building in monitoring and evaluation.
4. Building and strengthening the academia-industry linkages.
5. Assistance in (co)creating policy documents.
6. Support to Open Science (new sub-activity: integration and digitalisation of libraries entitled "Libraries as enablers of scientific research in the era of Open Science")

MONTENEGRO

1. Training for Preparation of Applications for Horizon Europe Projects.
2. Training for Implementing Horizon Europe Projects in Montenegro.
3. Training for implementation of the Circular Economy Principles in Montenegro.
4. Training to Support the Development of Sustainable Agriculture and the Food Value Chain in Montenegro.
5. Inno-Bootcamp (Fast-Track Pre-Acceleration Program) "Transforming Research into Market-Ready Solutions and Scaling Startups."

KOSOVO*

1. Training of researchers for preparation of applications and implementing projects in Horizon Europe.
2. Technical Assistance for the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation & the National Research Council through providing inputs for New National Research Programme and increasing funding sources for R&I.
3. Support in advancing curricula with thematic priority areas at university level.
4. Support of increasing cooperation between the private sector and institutions in the field of research and innovation.
5. Organisation of workshop and provision of methodology guideline for project identification and preparation in light of the EU Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans.
6. Creation of a Coordination Forum of Quadruple Helix to create synergy amongst key actors.
7. Technical Assistance on the Implementation of the WB Green Agenda.
8. Monitoring of the implementation of the Digital Agenda.
9. Technical Assistance for the Ministry of Health.

NORTH MACEDONIA

1. Policy Design, Coordination, Monitoring and Evaluation (Research, Development and Innovation (RDI), education and culture specific).
 - a. Setting the stage: policy design.
 - b. Institutions in practice: coordination & collaboration.
 - c. Performance management: monitoring & evaluation.
2. Strengthening capacities of the business sector for digital skills and innovations
3. Promoting peer learning & exchange of best practices for TT, innovation and twin transition
4. Supporting implementation of S3 Action Plan

SERBIA

1. Strengthening the capacity of the business sector for digital skills.
2. Green Transformation: New skills required to master the green transition.
3. Green transition (advanced level).
4. Training sessions on Programme evaluation: Evaluation practices in policies and programmes.

WP3 CAPACITY BUILDING & SUPPORT

Activities - State of play

Capacity Building (CB) Programme: Accomplishments, Enrichments and Challenges

- 34 activities successfully completed by end of 2025.
- 1 activity currently ongoing in Albania.

Programme Enrichments:

Montenegro (STP): Launched *Inno-Bootcamp* - an Fast-Track Pre-Acceleration Program on topic “Transforming Research into Market-Ready Solutions and Scaling Startups”.

Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNIBL): Introduced a new sub-activity under the adjusted *Action 6 - Open Science* → Focus: *Integration and digitalisation of libraries*.

Programme Challenges:

BiH: Unable to implement the 7th planned CB activity on *Smart Specialisation Strategy (S3)*

→ due to the absence of a relevant institutional and legal framework.

Albania: Began a 6th activity on *Mapping of Research Infrastructure*

→ but faced major procurement obstacles, preventing implementation and decided to replace it with the Roadmap to increase EIS activity.

Accompanying Activities to the CB Programme:

- 6 Peer-learning webinars showcasing partners’ best-performing CB activities - successfully completed.
- Video highlights presenting key CB achievements per economy - successfully completed.

WP3 CAPACITY BUILDING & SUPPORT

Achievements across the Western Balkans - Albania

Target group	Achievements
Academia	10 Gender Equality Plans developed in universities.
SMEs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• technical assistance provided to 22 SMEs, improving access to EU funding and strengthening project implementation skills.
Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Creation of the Roadmap to improve EIS position of Albania thus strengthening the research and innovation ecosystem in the country.
Other/diverse	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• nearly 500 participants expanded their knowledge on European funding opportunities through Horizon Europe and other programmes promotion through conferences and training.• 15 participants equipped with knowledge on the innovation in blue economy.

WP3 CAPACITY BUILDING & SUPPORT

Achievements across the Western Balkans - Bosnia and Herzegovina

Target group	Achievements
Academia	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 150+ researchers were trained in preparing Horizon Europe (HE) project proposals, contributing to an increased number of HE applications from Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2024 compared to 2022.• A Project Management Office for EU-funded projects was established at the Faculty of Philosophy UNIBL, strengthening institutional capacities for international project participation and management.• UNSA organised two international study visits for academic staff, enhancing their knowledge in research management and administration and expanding international partnerships.• 100 + researchers trained at UNSA and UNBL in Open Science and IPR• Improved digital literacy and use of Open Science principles for library services at UNIBL.
SMEs-Academia	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• SME and academia representatives were trained in IPR, increasing expertise and promoting stronger industry-academia collaboration (UNSA and UNIBL).
Policymakers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The capacity of policymakers in BiH in monitoring and evaluation of research projects, as well as research administration and management, was strengthened through targeted workshops and study visits abroad.• UNSA assisted policymakers in drafting eight strategic and legislative documents advancing science, R&D, and education policies.

WP3 CAPACITY BUILDING & SUPPORT

Achievements across the Western Balkans - Kosovo

Target group	Achievements
Academia	50 researchers strengthened their skills in preparing and implementing Horizon Europe (HE) projects, resulting in the development of 10 project proposals.
Policymakers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 10 reports and policy briefs addressing Digital Transformation, R&i ecosystem, Health, and the Green Agenda were produced, raising awareness and engaging approximately 400 participants across related events.• Public officials trained on project identification and preparation under the WBUF / EU Economic and Investment Plan framework.
Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 200 stakeholders participated in activities promoting the Western Balkans Green Agenda through policy briefs and video production (Green Talks) within the Green Action Space established by RIINVEST.• 50 participants from diverse stakeholder groups took part in the Green School, enhancing knowledge and engagement on green transition topics.• Developed the concept and operational model for a Quadruple Helix Forum, including coordination mechanisms supporting the Smart Specialization Strategy (S3).

WP3 CAPACITY BUILDING & SUPPORT

Achievements across the Western Balkans - Montenegro

Target group	Achievements
SMEs-academia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivered an advanced Training for Preparing and Submitting Horizon Europe Project Proposals (1 on-site and 7 online sessions) for SMEs and academia, resulting in the submission of 11 Horizon Europe project proposals and strengthened participation in EU R&I programmes.
Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 65 representatives from academia, industry, public and civil society received certificates after completing the Trainings for Preparation of Applications for Horizon Europe Projects and the Advanced Training for Preparing and Submitting Horizon Europe Project Proposals. 47 participants representing diverse stakeholders (academia, public, civil, and private sectors) received certification after successfully completing Trainings for Implementing Horizon Europe Projects in Montenegro. 65 participants representing diverse stakeholders (academia, public, civil, and private sectors) received certification after successfully completing Trainings on the implementation of circular economy principles in Montenegro. 28 participants, including rural producers and farmers, aspiring agripreneurs, and ICT innovators, were certified after completing Training to support sustainable agriculture and the food value chain in Montenegro. 22 participants including university researchers, decision-makers, and business representatives were certified after completing- Inno-Bootcamp, an Fast-Track Pre-Acceleration Program, on the topic: “Transforming Research into Market-Ready Solutions and Scaling Startups”.

WP3 CAPACITY BUILDING & SUPPORT

Achievements across the Western Balkans - North Macedonia

Target group	Achievements
Policy makers	100+ policymakers strengthened through capacity-building activities, including EU study visits, WB Agenda info sessions, and trainings on policy design, coordination, and Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning (MEL).
SMEs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 43 SMEs supported through digital transformation workshops, identifying digitalisation opportunities and exchanging good practices.• 25 SMEs upskilled in innovation management strengthening innovation capacities and organisational development.• 25 SMEs were supported in strengthening their growth through technology, innovation, and smart financing.
Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 103 stakeholders participated in a TED Talks conference, raising awareness and dialogue on AI-driven innovation and future technology trends.• 72 stakeholders from the fields of innovation and technology, young entrepreneurs, and representatives of the research and business sectors, collectively exchanged ideas on the future of technology and the role of artificial intelligence in society.• 150+ engaged in the Entrepreneurial Discovery Process (EDP), strengthening coordination within S3 Action Plan implementation.
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 103 diverse participants engaged in peer-learning on innovation and technology transfer, strengthening collaboration between academia, business, and innovation communities.

WP3 CAPACITY BUILDING & SUPPORT

Achievements across the Western Balkans - Serbia

Target group	Achievements
SMEs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 250+ SMEs trained in twin transition through series of 12 training sessions across Serbia.
Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 50+ representatives of diverse sectors enhanced their Monitoring and Evaluation capacities, supporting evidence-based policymaking.
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strong synergies were established with key projects and stakeholders, including the Enterprise Europe Network, Regional Chambers of Commerce in Vojvodina, Niš, Kruševac, and Valjevo, as well as the Science and Technology Park in Čačak.• A notable awareness-raising campaign on capacity-building activities was implemented, featuring the broadcast of participant video testimonials across local TV networks and the dissemination of an integrated promotional video, extending outreach beyond the training activities.

WP3 CAPACITY BUILDING & SUPPORT

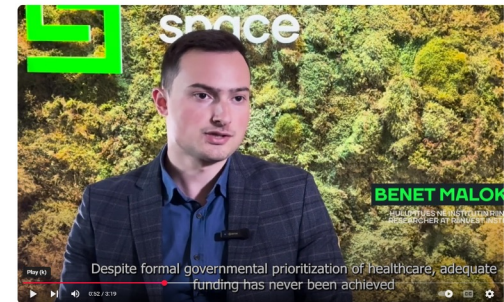
Gallery



Albania: EIT Info Day 27.2.25



BiH: University of Banja Luka and Sarajevo



Kosovo: Green 333



Montenegro: Training for Preparation of Applications for Horizon Europe Projects, 2023



North Macedonia: MIR Foundation's UK Peer-Learning Study Visit: Driving Innovation & Sustainability



Serbia: Green Transition workshop for SMEs

WP3 CAPACITY BUILDING & SUPPORT

Sustainability of Capacity Building activities across the Western Balkans

Western Balkans Economy (Partner)	Key Pillars of Sustainability plan
Albania (NASRI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued collaboration among NASRI and research ecosystem stakeholders. Sustainability ensured via own resources and external project-based funding. Replication and adaptation of developed training materials.
Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNIBL)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integration of CB outcomes into institutional R&I strategies and operational routines. Continuation financed through a blended model. Operational sustainability supported through Open Access repositories and ongoing policy dialogue processes.
Kosovo (RIINVEST)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Institutional embedding of CB results into national strategies, university programmes and organisational practices. Sustainability ensured through diversified financing. Continued policy engagement and implementation.
Montenegro (STP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training programmes by the Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation. Scaling of CB results through participation in additional EU-funded projects.
North Macedonia (MIR and Innova)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustained implementation through institutional partnerships and participation in international funding programmes. Reuse and adaptation of developed knowledge, tools and training materials.
Serbia (IMP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integration of CB activities into the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) activities. Financial sustainability supported through existing EEN project budget.

WP3 CAPACITY BUILDING & SUPPORT

Peer Learning Webinars



[Peer Learning Webinar 1](#)

Strengthening SMEs for the Twin Transition through Capacity Building Activities

[Peer Learning Webinar 2](#)

Open Science & IPR

[Peer Learning Webinar 3](#)

Preparing Applications for Horizon Europe Projects

[Peer Learning Webinar 4](#)

Circular/Green Economy

[Peer Learning Webinar 5](#)

Gender Equality Plan (GEP) Development

[Peer Learning Webinar 6](#)

Peer Learning Webinar: Training on Policy Design, Coordination and Monitoring and Evaluation

WP4 ALIGNING PRIORITIES

Highlights WP4: Aligning Priorities

Sanja Damjanovic, Work Package Lead, GSI




WP4 ALIGNING PRIORITIES



- Task 4.1 Digital Transformation
- Task 4.2 Green Deal
- Task 4.3 Healthy Societies

WP4 Highlights: Aligning Priorities

Key objectives:

- Align WB priorities with EU priorities across three thematic areas: Digital Transformation • Green Transition • Healthy Societies 
- Facilitate alignment through EU policy instruments: European Partnerships • EU Missions • Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3)
- Strengthen policy dialogue across the three areas with a focus on effective implementation and diverse stakeholder engagement.

WP4 ALIGNING PRIORITIES

WP4 Flagship Highlight: Policy Dialogue Conference 2023 (Sarajevo)



Signe Ratso's welcome speech

- Broad and diverse participation of governments, European Partnerships, the EC, and key stakeholders from the WB and EU
- 38 bilateral meetings between 9 European Partnerships and 17 WB Ministries
- Conference outcomes/World Café sessions - provided key input for Policy Briefs and Policy Reports
- [Extensive video coverage and interviews available on YouTube](#)

140 Participants from 19 European countries





CONFERENCE

Policy Dialogue on Aligning Priorities in the Western Balkans

WESTERN BALKANS
Info Hub

POLICY
ANSWERS

Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina
13 September 2023

Pathways: Digital • Green • Health • Vision 2030

Outstanding support from the POLICY ANSWERS Team and all Beneficiary Partners

WP4 ALIGNING PRIORITIES

Sustaining EU-WB Policy Dialogue through an Interactive Platform

[Dedicated EU-WB Policy Dialogue Stakeholder Platform](#)

EU-WB Policy Dialogue Stakeholder Platform

Digital • Green • Health •



WESTERN
BALKANS
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POLICY
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Reach:

270 registered stakeholders

26 economies

10 European Partnerships

ORGANISED BY	
	
PARTICIPANTS	
 Bosnia And Herzegovina	79
 Serbia	35
 Montenegro	30
 Albania	25
 North Macedonia	22
 Kosovo*	15
 Italy	11
 Germany	10
 Austria	10
 Croatia	5
 France	4

 Poland	4
 Hungary	3
 Spain	2
 United Kingdom	2
 Slovenia	2
 Belgium	2
 Sweden	1
 Switzerland	1
 Denmark	1
 United States	1
 Netherlands	1
 Ireland	1
 Slovakia	1
 Romania	1
 Greece	1

WP4 ALIGNING PRIORITIES

Expanding Engagement - WP4 Webinar Series

Webinars launched to deepen policy dialogue and knowledge exchange

EU alignment topics:

- European Partnerships
- EU Missions
- Smart Specialization (S3)
- Research Infrastructures

Since 2024:

17 Webinars | **26** expert speakers

Impact:

370 participants | **1000+** views

Webinars /Speakers

A Success Story - Montenegro joined the European Partnership on Blue Economy

WP4 ALIGNING PRIORITIES

Expanding Engagement - WP4 Webinar Series

Albania	24
Austria	31
Belgium	4
Bosnia and Herzegovina	36
Croatia	4
EC	7
France	5
Germany	20
Hungary	7
Ireland	2
Italy	9
Kosovo* (in line with UN SCR 1244 and the ICJ opinion)	14
Malta	4
Moldova	2
Montenegro	43
North Macedonia	31
Other EU territories (From Åland Islands to Saint Martin)	1
Pakistan	1
Poland	1
Romania	6
Serbia	62
Slovakia	3
Slovenia	1
Spain	3
Türkiye	2
UK	3
Ukraine	1
Unknow	43
TOTAL	370
WBs	210

Bojana Bajic
Digital Transformation of Public Administration Specialist, Regional School of Public Affairs (RESPA), Montenegro



Mirek Raba
EIT Food



Ariane Blum
Water 4All EU Partnership Coordinator, ANR - French National Research Agency



Luka Filipovic
Assistant Professor and Researcher at the University of Duga Gorica (UDG), Montenegro



Marija Jevtic
Professor, Faculty of Medicine, University of Novi Sad, Serbia



Elena Simion
International Projects Expert, UEFISCDI, Romania



Natalia Bolocan
Chief of International Relations and Sustainable Development, National Agency of Research and Development, Republic of Moldova



Antonella Autino
PRIMA Project Coordinator



Djordje Djatkov
Professor, Faculty of Technical Science, University of Novi Sad, Serbia



Barna Kovacs
Counsellor at the Permanent Representation of Hungary to the EU, Secretary General of the BIOEAST Initiative



Emanuele Fabari
Director and Policy Analyst, European Commission, JRC, Joint Research Centre

Viktor Nedovic
Director of the Serbia Accrediting Agency, Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, Republic of Serbia

Lozar Živković
Head of the Innovation Strategy, Ministry of Economic Affairs, Republic of Serbia

Dijana Štrbac
Senior Researcher, Institute of Economic Studies, University of Belgrade, Faculty of Economics, University of Belgrade



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



Michael Pioder
Head of research group for Technology, Innovation and Policy Consulting (TIP) at Joanneum Research



Christian Hartmann
Senior Policy Researcher at Joanneum Research



Tobias C. Kampmann
Research & Innovation Programme Manager for Industrial Technologies at Vinova



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



Branka Žižić
EIT Community Officer, Montenegro



Dr. Lisa Cowey
Director, The Technology Transfer Interface
Key Expert, NCD-WB Knowledge Transfer Toolkit Initiative | Oxford, UK







WEBINAR 17:
24 February | 9:00 CEST
Looking Back, Moving Forward: Integrated Policy Insights on Digital Transformation, the Green Deal and a Healthy Society



Webinars
/Speakers

WP4 ALIGNING PRIORITIES

Designing Policy Recommendations

Policy recommendations address three thematic priorities:
Digital Transformation • Green Transition • Healthy Societies

Outputs: 3 Policy Reports

3 Policy Briefs



These publications analyse challenges, opportunities and transformation strategies.

WP4 ALIGNING PRIORITIES

Digital Transformation - Thematic Roadmaps

[Policy Report \(40 pages\)](#) and [Policy Brief \(8 pages\)](#) on Digital Transformation in the Western Balkans



Key highlights:

- Best practice from WB economies
- Key challenges and policy gaps
- Concrete, actionable steps for regional digital transformation
- Aligned with the EU Digital Compass 2030

Outputs:

concise summary, key findings, strategic challenges, and action-oriented recommendations.

Developed by Regional Experts
Bojana Bajic (Montenegro) | Goran Pastrovic (Serbia)

WP4 ALIGNING PRIORITIES

Green Transition - Thematic Roadmaps

Policy Report (60 pages) and Policy Brief (8 pages) on the Green Transition in the Western Balkans



WP4 ALIGNING PRIORITIES

Green Transition - Thematic Roadmaps

Example of original analysis:
 Quantified green transition achievements in WB economies, aligned with the European Green Deal. The example illustrates performance under **Pillar 1** (left) and overall progress across all WB economies (right), which currently stands at **43%**. Adopted.

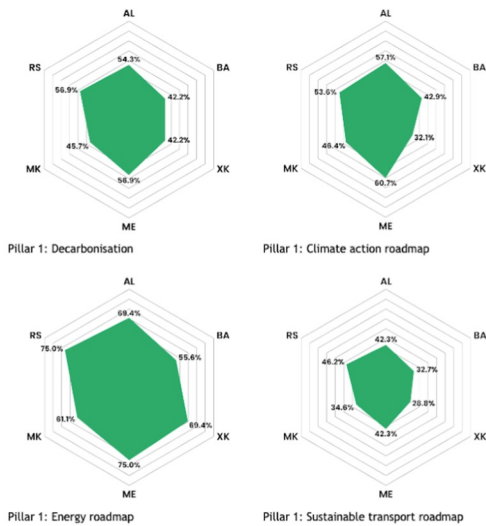


Figure 1: Quantification of the green transition in the Western Balkans economies aligned with the European Green Deal, specifically focussed on Pillar 1 (Decarbonisation) and associated roadmaps. Djatkov's elaboration (see Annex), adapted from RCC (2022).

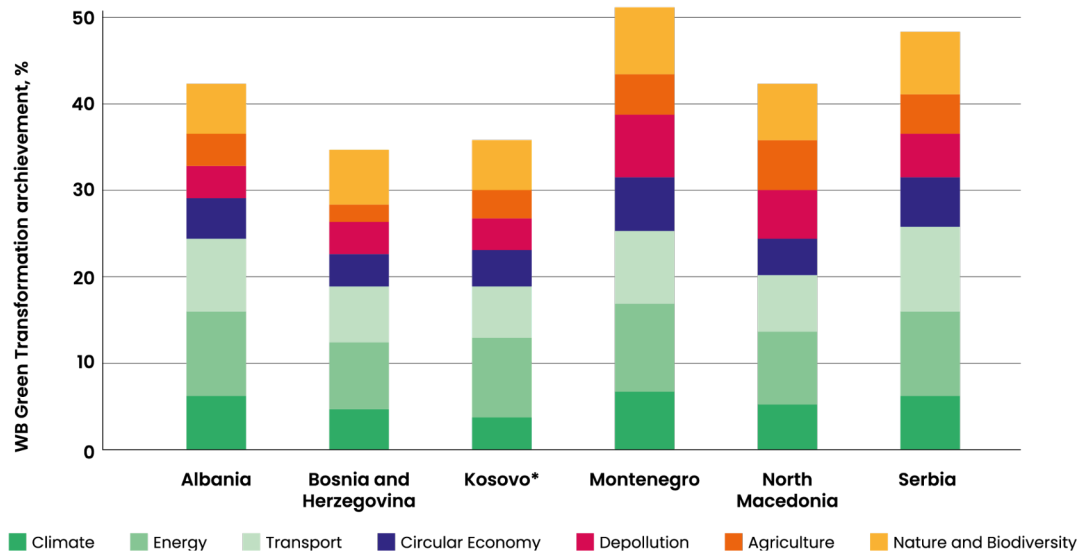


Figure 3: Overall quantification of the green transition in the WB economies aligned with the European Green Deal. Djatkov's elaboration (see Annex), adapted from RCC (2022).

Developed by Regional Expert Djordje Djatkov (Uni Novi Sad, Serbia)

WP4 ALIGNING PRIORITIES

Healthy Societies - Thematic Roadmaps

Policy Report (60 pages) and Policy Brief (8 pages) on the Health Policy Consideration in the WB



Report presented at the European Health Management Conference, EHMA 2025

Developed by Regional Expert
Marija Jevtic (University Novi Sad, Serbia)

Key highlights:

- **Original, self-developed framework** to assess the sustainability of health systems in the WB, aligned with EU priorities (Health in All Policies, digitalisation and Green Agenda principles in healthcare.)
- **Data-informed regional overview** of progress towards modern health policy.
- **Identification of key challenges, policy gaps, and good practices**, with a strong call for more health policy implementation.

Outputs:

Clear roadmap with high-impact action areas and recommendations;
Guidance on Health in All Policies and advancing green and digital transformation in health.

WP4 Key Milestones and Sustainable Results

- **Policy Dialogue Conference (Sarajevo)** bringing together policymakers, experts, European Partnerships, and key stakeholders.
- **Interactive EU-Western Balkans Policy Dialogue Platform** enabling continuous exchange, knowledge-sharing, visibility, and collaboration.
- **Webinars and recorded sessions** supporting outreach, capacity-building, and long-term access to expertise.
- **Policy Briefs and Policy Reports** across three thematic areas, delivering evidence-based analysis and actionable recommendations.

Sustainable outcomes:

- Established permanent knowledge base and digital assets (platform, recordings, publications).
- Strengthened EU-WB policy dialogue and expert networks across institutions, partnerships, and thematic areas.
- Reusable policy frameworks, methodologies, and thematic roadmaps supporting future initiatives and EU alignment.

WP5 REGIONAL PILOT ACTIVITIES

Highlights WP5: Regional Pilot Activities

Andrijana Tasevska, Work Package Lead, INOVA



WP5 REGIONAL PILOT ACTIVITIES



- Task 5.5 Regional innovation academy
- Task 5.4 Regional promoter scheme for research infrastructures
- Task 5.3 Regional promotion campaign for youth
- Task 5.2 Regional mobility scheme
- Task 5.1 Regional incentives scheme supporting academia-industry links

WP5 REGIONAL PILOT ACTIVITIES

Western
Balkan
Innovation
Vouchers

Western
Balkan
Mobility
Scheme

Western
Balkan R&I
Youth
Awards and
Youth
Campaign

Promoting
Research
Infrastructures

Regional
Innovation
Academy
and
Fellowship
Programme

Completed



Achievements of WBIV

The goal:

Cross-border matching between SMEs and research providers.

The results:

100% cross-regional matching achieved, resulting in tangible regional integration.

The impact:

Advancing projects by two TRL levels is a solid, measurable success that justifies the EU investment.

More info:

Publicly available [Policy Brief](#)



35 applications | 15 projects completed | EUR 111,040 spent

Achievements of WBMS

The goal:

Supporting young researcher mobility in the WB

The results:

A high-efficiency scheme model.
Despite a limited budget and timeframe,
23 young researchers gained hands-on regional R&I
experience and improved career prospects

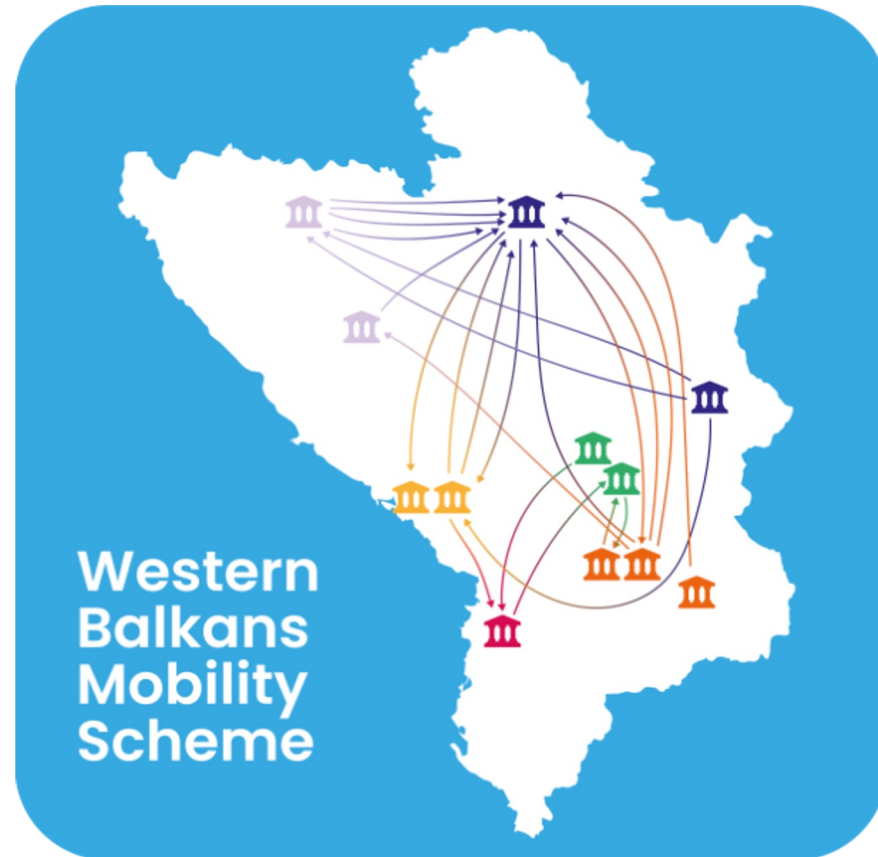
The impact:

The strong response from PhD
students and young post-docs makes the WBMS a small but
efficient tool to turn brain drain into
brain circulation in the WB.

More info:

[Western Balkans Mobility Scheme](#)

[Policy Brief Western Balkans Mobility Scheme](#)



31 applications | 23 projects completed | EUR 92,170.57 spent

WP5 REGIONAL PILOT ACTIVITIES

Achievements of WBR&IYA

The goal:
boosting the visibility of youth-focused R&I success stories across the Western Balkans.

The results:
65 applications received from all six economies in just 2 months, highlighting a robust, active youth-focused R&I ecosystem

The impact:
Promoted experimental learning as a key driver for future-proof skills and successfully showcased 6 high-quality success stories to a regional audience.

More info:
[Western Balkan R&I Youth Awards](https://www.westernbalkans-infohub.eu)

POLICY ANSWERS

Join us in Skopje!
29-30 May 2025

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

Apply Now!
www.westernbalkans-infohub.eu

POLICY ANSWERS 'R&I POLICY making, Implementation Aid Support in the Western Balkans', Grant Agreement N° 101050073

65 applications | 6 winners | 18,000 EUR spent

WP5 REGIONAL PILOT ACTIVITIES

Achievements of RIs

The goal:

Increase visibility of research infrastructure development in the Western Balkans and highlight its societal, economic and strategic value.

The results:

Launch of the RI Ambassadors initiative to showcase progress in RI development in the WB, highlighting successful examples such as BioSense and emerging initiatives such as SEEIIST.

The impact:

Advancing the “fifth freedom” (free movement of knowledge) in the WB, initiating pan-European research infrastructures and demonstrating that Europe as a whole matters.

More info:

[Publicly available Report and Policy Brief](#)

Main authors:

Sanja Damjanovic, GSI and Lisa Cowey, T3I Ltd UK



2 regional R&I workshops | 5 RI Ambassadors | 23+ partner organisations

Achievements RIA

The goal:

To provide diverse, peer-reviewed, and high-quality digital content that fosters innovation across the Western Balkans.

The results:

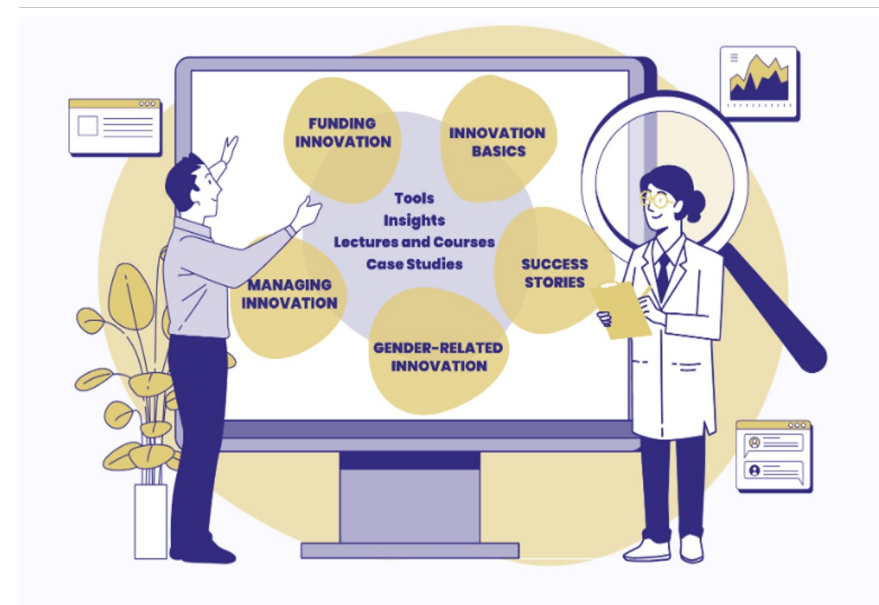
A curated hub of 28 published materials across 5 key areas (Funding, Basics, Managing and Gender-related Innovation).

The impact:

Attracted significant regional engagement in its first months of promotion.

More info:

[westernbalkans-infohub](https://westernbalkans-infohub.org)



120 sources evaluated | 28 relevant resources published | 8,500+ digital impressions

Achievements Fellowship Programme

The goal:

To prepare local partners for European projects by providing practical, in-person experience at international research and innovation institutions.

The results:

Successfully completed all 16 fellowships, with all individual technical reports now published on the Western Balkans Info Hub.

The impact:

Bridging the gap between theory and practice by allowing 16 professionals to bring first-hand knowledge of European project standards back to the local economy

More info:

[westernbalkans-infohub](https://westernbalkans-infohub.org)



15 experts | 2/3 Female Participation | EUR 24 000 spent

WP6 WESTERN BALKANS INFO HUB & COMMUNICATION

WP6: Western Balkans Info Hub & Communication

Francesca Conti, Work Package Lead, FBLU



WP6 WESTERN BALKANS INFO HUB & COMMUNICATION



- Task 6.1 Planning and setting up the Dissemination, Exploitation, and Communication (DEC) strategy
- Task 6.2 Implementing the Western Balkans Info Hub and ensuring continuous updates
- Task 6.3 Managing EU and local media relations to increase project outreach
- Task 6.4 Producing infographics and multimedia materials to enhance project visibility
- Task 6.5 Promoting engagement of underrepresented groups and gender mainstreaming

Turning knowledge into impact: communication, dissemination and legacy

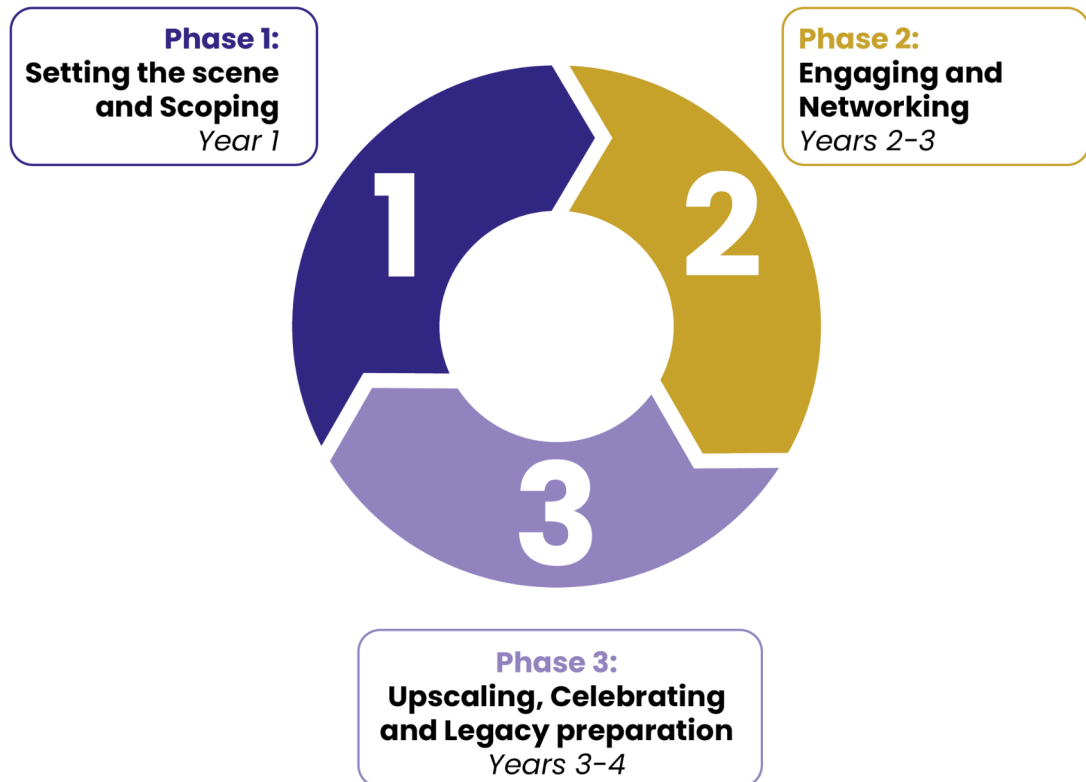
WP6 has acted as the connective infrastructure translating POLICY ANSWERS' evidence, dialogue and pilots into visibility, uptake and long-term value.



Dissemination, Exploitation and Communication (DEC) strategy and coordination

From awareness to engagement and legacy.

Phases of the Outreach Plan



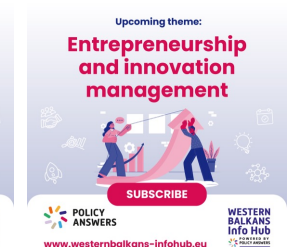
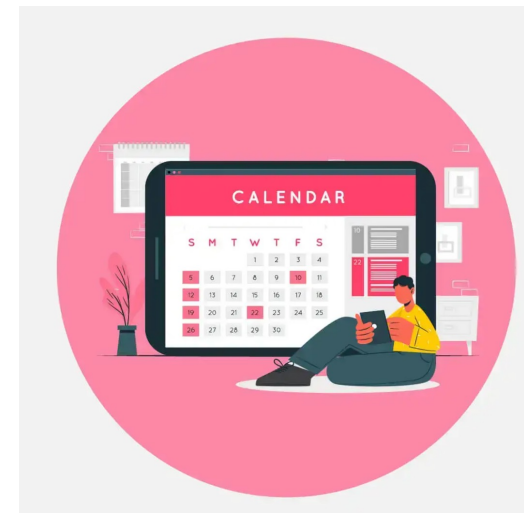
DEC Strategy and Coordination

A coordinated communication model

Communication Committee (monthly)

Cascade model →

- canva kits
- editorial calendar



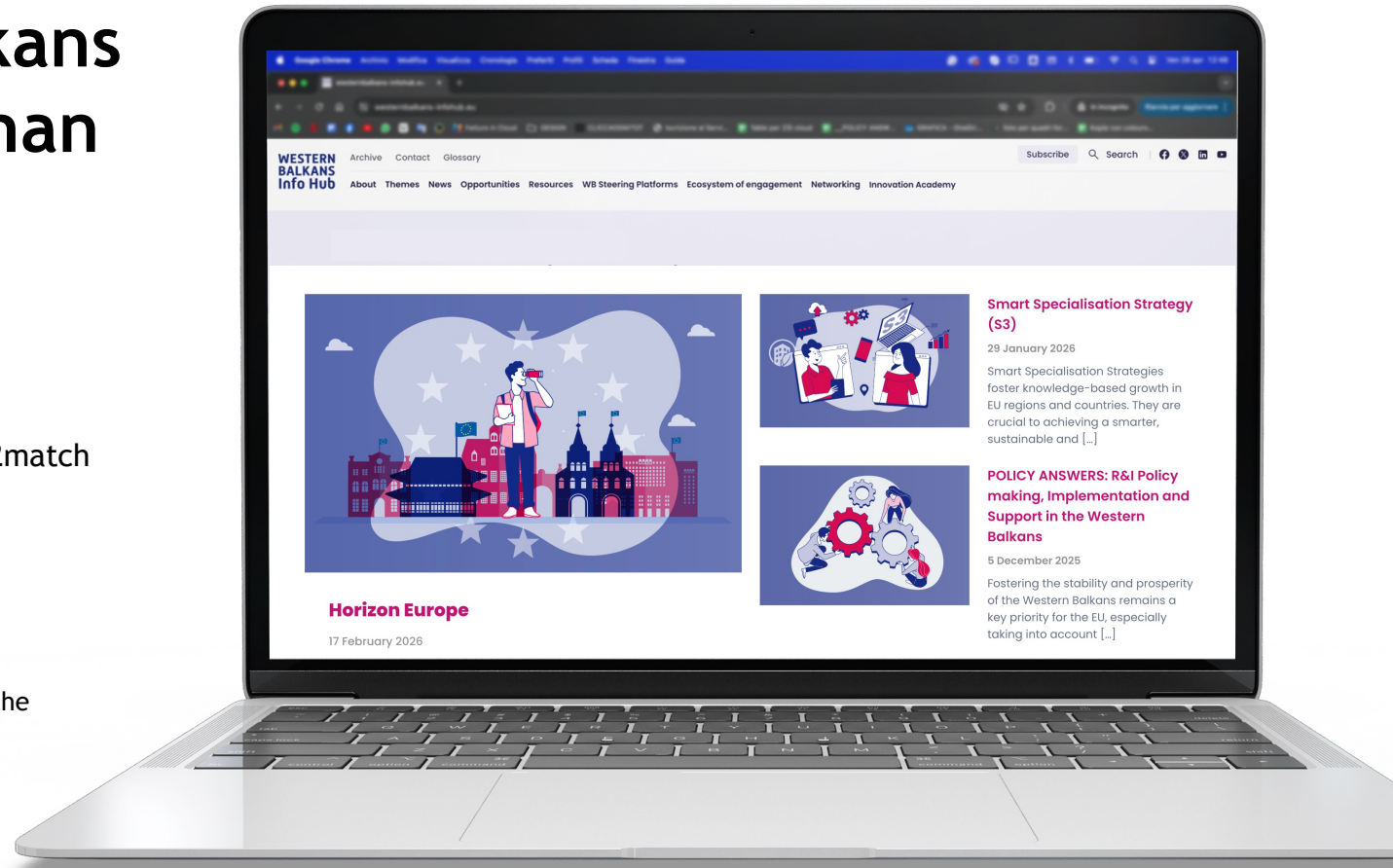
The Western Balkans Info Hub: more than a website

Achievement

- Fully redesigned
- Weekly content flow
- Integrated with newsletter, social, b2match
- **~3,000** monthly pageviews
- **46** newsletter shared

post-project legacy asset.

The platform services will be maintained under the follow-up POLICY ENLARGE project and further developed into an Enlargement Info Hub.



Content that travelled: from reports to stakeholders

From analytical outputs to usable knowledge

- Input (WP2-WP5 outputs)
- Transformation (infographics, cards, videos)
- Uptake (events, social, media)
- Full support to Policy Briefs
- Multimedia adapted to policy & non-policy audiences



WP6 WESTERN BALKANS INFO HUB & COMMUNICATION

Media & campaigns: making pilots visible

Visibility where it mattered:

- WB Mobility Scheme
- WB Innovation Vouchers
- WB R&I Youth Awards

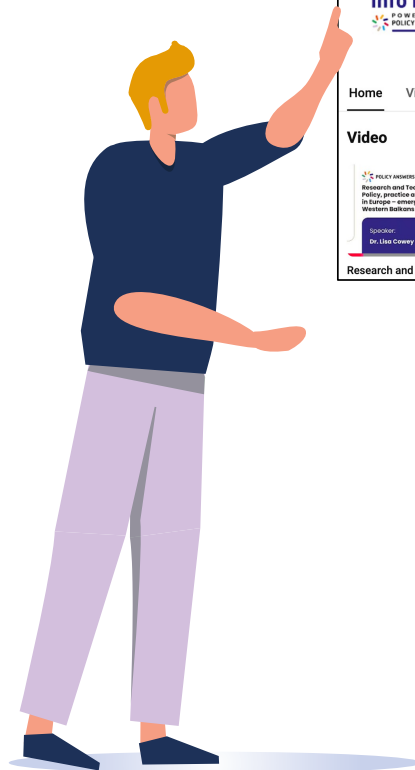


WP6 WESTERN BALKANS INFO HUB & COMMUNICATION

Social & community building

From followers to an active policy community

+8000 followers across LinkedIn and Youtube.



Western Balkans Info Hub
@westernbalkansinfohub1309 · 57 iscritti · 100 video
The Western Balkans Info Hub - powered by POLICY ANSWERS - is funded by the European Union
westernbalkans-infohub.eu
Iscriviti

Home Video Short Playlist

Video

- Research and Technology Infrastructures: Policy, practice and recent developments in Europe - emerging opportunities for the Western Balkans (Speaker: Dr. Lisa Cowley, 1:03:43)
- AI in the 21st Century: Breaking stereotypes or reinforcing inequalities? (Speakers: Anika Jovanovic, Anandharaj Govindarajan, 1:01:30)
- ET Communities as Drivers of Top-Down Integration (Speaker: Branke Zisk, 26:59)

Research and Technology | Peer-Learning Webinar: AI in | POLICY ANSWERS Webinar: | POLICY ANSWERS - Inno- | POLICY ANSWERS - Inno-

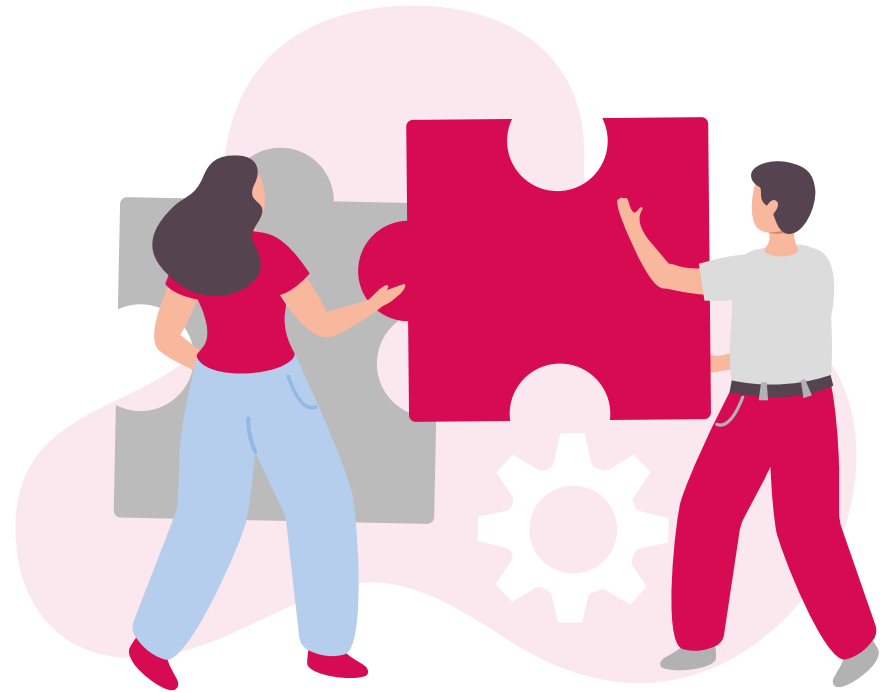
Western Balkans Info Hub
POWERED BY POLICY ANSWERS

Western Balkans Info Hub
Provides information about research and innovation in and for the Western Balkans (powered by POLICY ANSWERS #HorizonEU)
Research Services · 7K followers · 11-50 employees
Angela & 2 other connections follow this page
Message Following

Home About Posts Jobs People

Inclusion & gender mainstreaming

- Internal GM&I guidelines
- Peer-learning webinars
- Dedicated training courses
- Editorial integration (newsletter, content)



Beyond the project: sustainability & legacy what remains after April 2026

Consolidating results into reusable assets

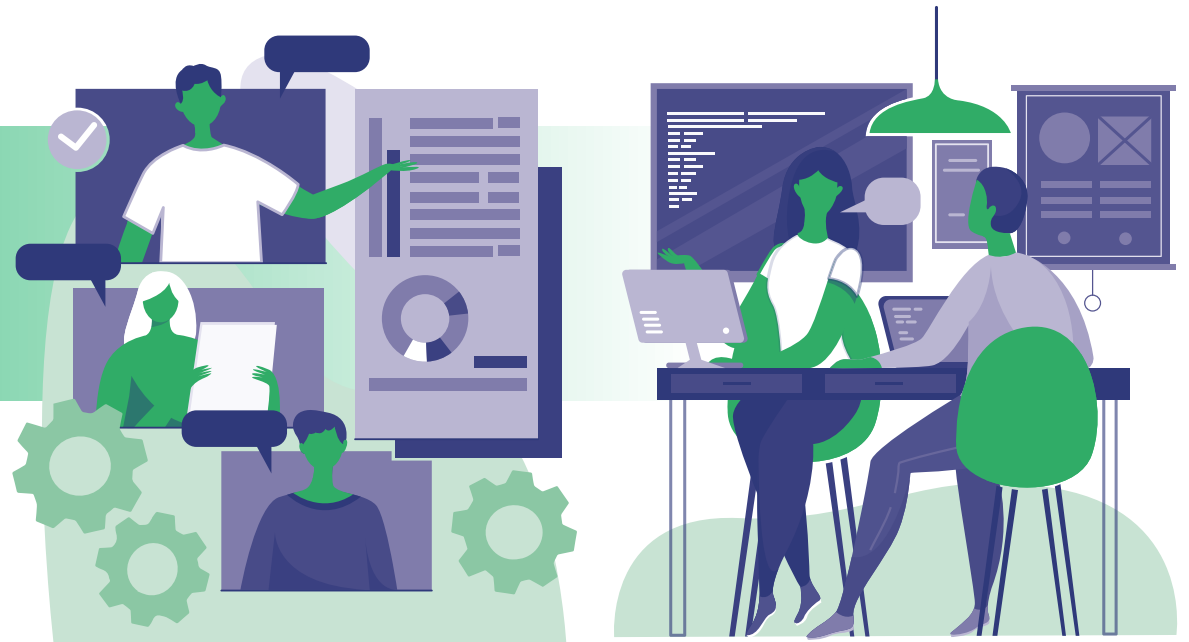
- **E-book:** narrative, cross-WP, policy-friendly
- **Report on DEC Plan, infographics and factsheets produced:** full accountability and legacy inventory

With WP6, POLICY ANSWERS results became visible, usable and durable.



Project Management and Coordination

Elke Dall, Work Package Lead, ZSI



WP7 PROJECT MANAGEMENT



- Task 7.1 Project management, controlling, reporting
- Task 7.2 Quality Assurance
- Task 7.3 Coordination of the Project Advisory Board and external experts

Current status of WP7

3 Tasks:

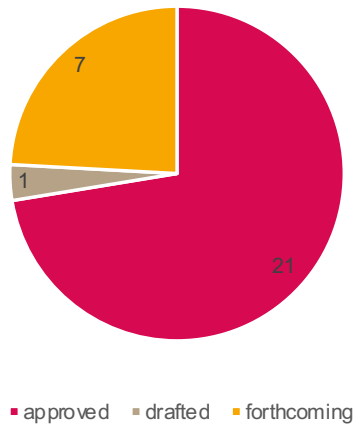
- Task 7.1 Project management, controlling, reporting
- Task 7.2 Quality assurance
- Task 7.3 Coordination of the Project Advisory Board and external experts.

Key activities in the past 14 months and for finalising of the project:

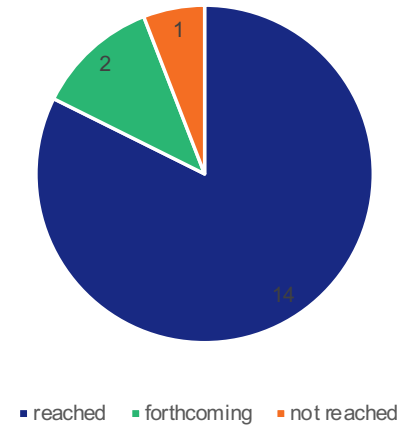
- Regular updates of the Project Handbook (D7.1) and the Data Management Plan (D7.2)
- Development of report on quality assurance activities (D7.3), organisation of a QA workshop
- Reporting on wide stakeholder engagement and expert involvement (D7.4)
- Endspurt for QA activities
- Final event planned
- Technical and financial reporting necessary for the successful conclusion of the project.

Deliverables and Milestones

29 Deliverable at different stages



17 Milestones



WP7 PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Stakeholder engagement and expert cooperation



Sustainability

Information Hub, Regional Innovation Academy and Platform ready for hand-over to POLICY ENLARGE / Enlargement Info Hub

Sustainable changes at the individual and organisational level and improved networks
Stakeholder contacts continue and are used by partners for new initiatives and impact creation

Capacity building activities with tangible outcomes / taken over by the Ministries and stakeholders
POLiCY ENLARGE also include capacity building modules (50.000 euro per economy)

Advisory Board concept shared with POLICY ENLARGE - to be established after the project kick-off (planned for April 2026)

Policy Dialogue and support also through Secretariate for Steering Platforms continued through follow-up project POLICY ENLARGE

Policy Briefs and analytical results available -> POLICY ENLARGE includes a WP on Policy Guidance
Foresight project continues separately for anticipatory science advice, ERA reporting continues with different contractors, etc.

Concepts for **three calls** piloted:

- WB Mobility Scheme
 - WB Innovation Vouchers
 - WB Youth R&I Award
- and lessons learnt made available
-> POLICY ENLARGE includes FSTP calls





Contact us at any time:

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policy-answers@westernbalkans-infohub.eu



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**THANK
YOU!**