



**POLICY  
ANSWERS**



## Summary of the POLICY ANSWERS Webinars on the Eu-Wb Policy Dialogue Stakeholder Platform

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The webinar series aimed at stimulating policy dialogue on how to align priorities in the Western Balkans with those of the European Union across three key thematic areas:

### Digital Transformation, Green Deal and Healthy Societies

The primary objective was to facilitate interactive exchanges among different actors, providing a space where challenges can be addressed and opportunities can be demonstrated. Firstly, the webinars provided an overview of the state of the art, major challenges and actions needed in the three thematic areas. Secondly, several EU initiatives were introduced with opportunities to engage Mission-oriented innovation, the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT), the Interreg Danube Region Programme, BIOEAST (Central-Eastern European Initiative for Knowledge-based Agriculture, Aquaculture and Forestry in the Bioeconomy) as well as ongoing and planned EU Partnerships (Raw Material, Water4All, The Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area/PRIMA). Furthermore, the webinars promoted the role of High-Performance Computing (HPC) and e-infrastructures in national development, Smart Specialisation Strategies, Research and Technology Infrastructures as well as national examples from Türkiye, Malta and Moldova how to engage in EU initiatives successfully.



More than 300 participants joined the live webinars and the policy dialogue after the expert presentations.

Especially high interest was expressed for the topics Smart Specialisation as well as Research and Technology Infrastructures, while the peer-to-peer learnings from national agencies and Ministries from Türkiye, Malta and Moldova stimulated an open and active dialogue. In summary, the webinars attracted stakeholders from different backgrounds (e.g., research-

ers, companies, NGO's, Ministries, national funding agencies) but attracted also new participants for each topic. The webinars proved that there is a high interest in the ecosystem in learning and discussing about cooperation opportunities and in stakeholders to increase cooperation and initiatives with the Western Balkans. The webinar series and the concept of open dialogue proved to be a successful tool to inform and connect different communities and stakeholders.

## Webinar 1

<b>Title</b>	<b>Overview of the Western Balkans on their Pathway to implement the Digital Agenda - Challenges, Best Practices and Recommendations</b>
<b>Speaker</b>	Bojana Bajic
<b>Organisation</b>	Digital Transformation of Public Administration Specialist, Regional School of Public Affairs (ReSPA) Montenegro
<b>Date</b>	22 February 2024
<b>YouTube Link</b>	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YDOBXnh8wsQ">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YDOBXnh8wsQ</a>
<b>Core Topic</b>	Bojana Bajic from ReSPA outlined how the Western Balkans are advancing their Digital Agenda by prioritising “digitalisation by default”. The webinar reviewed regional strengths, such as growing graduate numbers in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as well as key challenges including low basic digital skills, uneven internet access and gender imbalances in tech. The study outcomes recommended improved digital literacy programmes, better interoperability and e-ID infrastructure, supportive legislation aligned with the EU digital acquis, accessible online one-stop portals and increased digitalisation of businesses, all to bolster public administration efficiency, citizen services and regional competitiveness.

## Webinar 2

<b>Title</b>	<b>Overview of the Western Balkans on their Pathway towards Modern Health Policy - Challenges, Best Practices and Recommendations</b>
<b>Speaker</b>	Marija Jevtic
<b>Organisation</b>	Faculty of Medicine, University of Novi Sad, Serbia
<b>Date</b>	28 March 2024
<b>YouTube Link</b>	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yTvOfrvv6kk">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yTvOfrvv6kk</a>
<b>Core Topic</b>	The Webinar outlined progress and challenges in modernising health policy in the Western Balkans. Key issues included underfunded systems, workforce shortages and limited digital infrastructure. The presentation highlighted best practices like Serbia’s e-health initiatives and stressed the need for EU alignment, regional cooperation and investment in digital and green health reforms to build resilient, equitable healthcare systems across the region.

## Webinar 3

<b>Title</b>	<b>Overview of the Western Balkans on their Pathway to implement the Green Agenda - Challenges, Best Practices and Recommendations</b>
<b>Speaker</b>	Djordje Djatkov
<b>Organisation</b>	Faculty of Technical Science, University of Novi Sad, Serbia
<b>Date</b>	25 April 2024
<b>YouTube Link</b>	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ena_wkOgYwU">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ena_wkOgYwU</a>
<b>Core Topic</b>	This webinar examined the Western Balkans' efforts to implement the 2020 Sofia Declaration and Green Agenda in line with the EU's Green Deal. Djordje Djatkov highlighted core challenges: weak governance, limited public financing, administrative capacity gaps, continued reliance on coal and underdeveloped circular economy infrastructure. Best practices and recommendations included scaling renewable energy, leveraging biomass, solar and hydropower, introducing carbon pricing and ETS mechanisms, promoting circular economy, waste management and strengthening regional cooperation as well as capacity building. The presentation also stressed investment in protected areas and biodiversity aligned with Natura 2000, and calls for Smart Specialisation, sustainable innovation and funding via the EU Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) and green finance instruments to transition toward climate-neutral, resource-efficient economies.

## Webinar 4

<b>Title</b>	<b>Mission-oriented Innovation: Status and Future Opportunities for the Western Balkans</b>
<b>Speaker</b>	Michael Ploder Christian Hartmann
<b>Organisation</b>	Joanneum Research, Graz, Austria
<b>Date</b>	27 May 2024
<b>YouTube Link</b>	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sn425xf-yxo">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sn425xf-yxo</a>
<b>Core Topic</b>	Core topic of this webinar were Missions in Horizon Europe and how mission-oriented innovation can boost growth and resilience in the Western Balkans. Drawing weight from the foot it examined the current landscape and outlined future opportunities to better connect the region with EU Missions such as climate adaptation, healthy oceans, smart cities and food security. The presentation focused on the potential of Western Balkans for participating in EU Missions.

## Webinar 5

<b>Title</b>	<b>Innovating the Food System: Status and future Opportunities of European Partnerships for the Western Balkans</b>
<b>Speaker</b>	Mirek Raba
<b>Organisation</b>	EIT Food Co-Location Centre North East
<b>Date</b>	27 June 2024
<b>YouTube Link</b>	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q5OLMe1JFsQ">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q5OLMe1JFsQ</a>
<b>Core Topic</b>	Core topics of the presentation were the challenges of the food system like climate change, resource depletion and waste, malnutrition, obesity and other diet related diseases. It is a mission-based approach with many participating players across the food value chain. The EIT has established some communities in the Western Balkans as well as interactive training programmes that aim at educating on how Research Infrastructures could be leveraged for science industry collaboration.

## Webinar 6

<b>Title</b>	<b>Challenges and Opportunities for the mission-oriented Implementation of Climate Adaptation and Sustainable Cities</b>
<b>Speaker</b>	Elena Simion
<b>Organisation</b>	Executive Agency for Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation Funding (UEFISCDI)
<b>Date</b>	18 July 2024
<b>YouTube Link</b>	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3_omxKlvfGI">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3_omxKlvfGI</a>
<b>Core Topic</b>	This webinar analysed how mission-oriented frameworks can accelerate climate adaptation and sustainable urban development. It highlighted uneven understanding across the EU, including the Western Balkans, and explored how the HARMONMISSIONS project in the Danube Region builds knowledge, strengthens governance models and fosters cooperation to help cities meet EU Mission goals on climate resilience and smart, green urban transformation.

## Webinar 7

<b>Title</b>	<b>Adding Value to the Biomass in Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans</b>
<b>Speaker</b>	Barna Kovacs
<b>Organisation</b>	BIOEAST (Central-Eastern European Initiative for Knowledge-based Agriculture, Aquaculture and Forestry in the Bioeconomy)
<b>Date</b>	31 October 2024
<b>YouTube Link</b>	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oFrp31LKK6Y">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oFrp31LKK6Y</a>
<b>Core Topic</b>	The webinar highlighted the untapped potential of biomass in the region and the need to shift from raw exports to local processing that supports rural development and sustainability. It emphasised the importance of knowledge transfer, investment on bio-refinery infrastructure and coordinated EU-level policy support. An initiative like BIOEAST, builds a circular bio-based economy that creates jobs, adds value locally and aligns with environmental goals.

## Webinar 8

<b>Title</b>	<b>Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA) on Raw Material</b>
<b>Speaker</b>	Tobias C. Kampmann
<b>Organisation</b>	Swedish Agency for Innovation Systems (VINNOVA)
<b>Date</b>	5 December, 2024
<b>YouTube Link</b>	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yPARVbuHtVg">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yPARVbuHtVg</a>
<b>Core Topic</b>	The webinar introduced the EU's Strategic Research & Innovation Agenda on Raw Materials - a comprehensive roadmap developed with wide stakeholder involvement to support sustainable, circular, resilient primary and secondary raw material supply chains. The session highlighted key thematic areas such as efficient resource design, governance, social benefits and innovation capacity, stressing the importance of aligning research and innovation efforts with the EU's Critical Raw Materials Act goals and preparing for the EU Partnership on Raw Materials under Horizon Europe.

## Webinar 9

<b>Title</b>	<b>Water4All Partnership: Opportunities for the Western Balkans</b>
<b>Speaker</b>	Ariane Blum Natalia Bolocan
<b>Organisation</b>	Water4All National Agency of Research and Development (NARD)
<b>Date</b>	30 January 2025
<b>YouTube Link</b>	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kbfwWGYzAUs&amp;t=13s">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kbfwWGYzAUs&amp;t=13s</a>
<b>Core Topic</b>	In this webinar, goals and structure of the EU's Water4All Partnership were presented. Ariane Blum outlined its Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA), focusing on water security, climate adaptation and circular water use. Natalia Bolocan highlighted how the Western Balkans can engage through joint calls, policy dialogue and capacity building. The webinar emphasised aligning regional priorities with EU water research efforts and fostering stronger cross-border collaboration.

## Webinar 10

<b>Title</b>	<b>Smart Specialisation in EU Enlargement Countries</b>
<b>Speaker</b>	Emauele Fabbri Viktor Nedovic Lazar Zivkovic Dijana Strbac
<b>Organisation</b>	European Commission - Joint Research Centre Serbia Accelerating Innovation and Growth Entrepreneurship Project (SAIGE) Institute of Economic Sciences, Belgrade EUSDR Priority Area 7 (Knowledge Society)
<b>Date</b>	13 March 2025
<b>YouTube Link</b>	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZDFN-o4gNts">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZDFN-o4gNts</a>
<b>Core Topic</b>	The webinar explored how Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3) are being developed in EU enlargement countries. Emanuele Fabbri presented the EU's support for innovation-driven growth through S3; Viktor Nedovic, Lazar Zivkovic and Dijana Strbac discussed regional progress, challenges and opportunities for cross-border collaboration. The session highlights S3 as a key tool for boosting research, innovation and competitiveness in the path towards EU integration.

## Webinar 11

<b>Title</b>	<b>How to become active in EU Partnerships: The Approach of Türkiye</b>
<b>Speaker</b>	Serhat Melik
<b>Organisation</b>	TÜBİTAK, Türkiye
<b>Date</b>	24 April 2025
<b>Core Topic</b>	The webinar showcased how TÜBİTAK actively supports Turkish stakeholders to engage in EU partnerships under Horizon Europe. Serhat Melik explained TÜBİTAK's role in guiding national organisations via capacity building, matchmaking and advice on responding to partnership calls, funded under both Coordination and Support Actions and Co-fund projects. The presentation emphasised how such engagement boosts Turkey's research ecosystem, fosters collaboration with the European Research Area and positions national actors more strongly withing EU collaborative programmes.
<b>Title</b>	How to become active in EU Partnerships: The Approach of Türkiye

## Webinar 12

<b>Title</b>	<b>The Role of HPC and e-Infrastructures in Montenegro's Development</b>
<b>Speaker</b>	Luka Filipović
<b>Organisation</b>	University of Donja Gorica, Montenegro
<b>Date</b>	22 May 2025
<b>YouTube Link</b>	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RqWpk5HaUEc">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RqWpk5HaUEc</a>
<b>Core Topic</b>	The webinar examined Montenegro's progress in deploying High-Performance Computing (HPC) and e-infrastructures to accelerate digital transformation and align with EU research standards. The speaker traced Montenegro's past projects to present projects leading the National Competence Centre under EuroCC2 and discusses Montenegro's HPC-led initiatives spanning academia, SMEs and public institutions. The presentation showcased concrete HPC use cases, such as AI-driven solutions for agriculture, finance and healthcare, highlighting how coordinated efforts between public bodies, universities and businesses are unlocking advanced computational capabilities for regional innovation and integration into the European Research Area.

## Webinar 13

<b>Title</b>	<b>PRIMA and the Western Balkans: Advancing Sustainable Innovation through Euro-Mediterranean Collaboration</b>
<b>Speaker</b>	Antonella Autino
<b>Organisation</b>	PRIMA Partnership (The Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area)
<b>Date</b>	17 July 2025
<b>YouTube Link</b>	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Y4QLQHBfYc">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Y4QLQHBfYc</a>
<b>Core Topic</b>	Ms. Antonella Autino, programme coordinator at PRIMA, showcased how PRIMA fosters resilient, sustainable innovation across the water-energy-food-ecosystem (WEFE) nexus by engaging the Western Balkans through targeted Euro-Mediterranean partnerships. The session highlighted funding opportunities, regional case studies from the Western Balkans and PRIMA's strategic alignment with the EU Growth Plan for the region, leveraging integrated approaches to bolster sustainability, resilience and regional cooperation.

## Webinar 14

<b>Title</b>	<b>Malta's Experience in EU Partnerships: Contributions and Added Value</b>
<b>Speaker</b>	Annalisa Cartabia
<b>Organisation</b>	Xjenza Malta
<b>Date</b>	13 November 2025
<b>YouTube Link</b>	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z67y5m9eZ1I&amp;feature=youtu.be">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z67y5m9eZ1I&amp;feature=youtu.be</a>
<b>Core Topic</b>	Xjenza Malta, the national funding agency for Research and Innovation, is mandated to strengthen Malta's research capacity and foster international cooperation. Through its Internationalisation Unit, Malta has expanded its participation in EU Partnerships. This presentation highlighted Malta's contributions and the benefits of its active involvement in these initiatives. In addition, Annalisa Cartabia presented the A2P Scheme, an innovative funding scheme, which enables Malta-based researchers to participate in transnational Horizon Europe calls for from over 50 initiatives across various thematic areas.

## Webinar 15

<b>Title</b>	<b>EIT Communities as Drivers of EU-wide R&amp;I Integration</b>
<b>Speaker</b>	Branka Žižić
<b>Organisation</b>	EIT Community Montenegro
<b>Date</b>	11 December 2025
<b>YouTube Link</b>	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nAcR9qnz1Xs">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nAcR9qnz1Xs</a>
<b>Core Topic</b>	Branka Zizic provided an overview of the role of EIT (European Institute of Innovation and Technology) Communities as drivers of EU-wide research and innovation (R&I) integration. She outlined the position of the EIT within Horizon Europe, explaining how the (Knowledge and Innovation Communities) KICs operate, and presented key data on the participation of the Western Balkans compared to other regions. Drawing on the experience of one of the first EIT Community Hubs in the region, the presentation highlighted the opportunities created by a local presence as well as the challenges for effective implementation. Successful examples of gradual integration from both the international context and Montenegro were demonstrated.

## Webinar 16

<b>Title</b>	<b>Research and Technology Infrastructures: Policy, Practice and recent Developments in Europe - emerging Opportunities for the Western Balkans</b>
<b>Speaker</b>	Lisa Cowey Damir Medved Sinisa Marcic
<b>Organisation</b>	The Technology Transfer Interface Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) Western Balkans Knowledge Transfer Toolkit Initiative
<b>Date</b>	29 January 2026
<b>YouTube Link</b>	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uBny930YxhU">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uBny930YxhU</a>
<b>Core Topic</b>	The webinar introduced the definition of Research Infrastructure (RI) and Technology Infrastructure (TI) by showcasing European developments and examples. It furthermore introduced main strategic documents and recent policy changes and European initiatives, like the European Strategy on Research and Technology Infrastructure as well as the EU Startup and Scaleup Strategy. The webinar also addressed regional opportunities by summarising, e.g., the Western Balkans ecosystem in a database, including initiatives focusing on Deep Tech, scale ups, start-ups and regional hubs, to identify overlapping and cross-sectoral opportunities.

## Webinar 17

<b>Title</b>	<b>Looking Back, Moving Forward: Integrated Policy Insights on Digital Transformation, Health and the Green Deal</b>
<b>Speaker</b>	Marija Jevtic Djordje Djatkov Bojana Bajic
<b>Organisation</b>	Faculty of Medicine, University of Novi Sad, Serbia Faculty of Technical Science, University of Novi Sad, Serbia Regional School of Public Affairs (ReSPA) Montenegro
<b>Date</b>	24 February 2026
<b>YouTube Link</b>	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L7pxNjnu3Sg">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L7pxNjnu3Sg</a>
<b>Core Topic</b>	In this webinar the three regional experts who started the webinar series in 2024 provided an overview of the progress on Digital Transformation, Health and the Green Deal in the Western Balkans. The three presentations focused on the remaining challenges, needed key actions and targets including foresight and point out recent reports and policies that will be framing the three key topics in the future.



#### ABOUT POLICY ANSWERS

POLICY ANSWERS was a European Commission-funded initiative that supported cooperation, policy alignment and capacity development across the Western Balkans. Over four years, the project contributed to strengthening research and innovation systems by supporting policy dialogue, evidence-based decision-making, capacity building and pilot actions across the region. By fostering collaboration among institutions, policymakers, researchers and innovation actors, POLICY ANSWERS supported a more connected and implementation-oriented approach to research and innovation. The experience of the project highlights a broader process of integration into the European Research Area, where the Western Balkans are increasingly engaging as active participants in shared priorities and initiatives.

