

26-27 MARCH 2025

Prosperity through Diversity

# CAPITALISATION WORKSHOP

Boosting Knowledge  
and Competitiveness  
in the Danube Region

## POLICY ANSWERS

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

Sanja Popović Pantić



**Interreg  
Danube Region**



Co-funded by  
the European Union

# Project Basic Information

Project title	POLICY ANSWERS: “R&I POLICY making, implementation AND Support in the WEsteRn BalkanS”
Project funding	Coordination and Support Action under Horizon Europe <a href="#">WIDERA-2021-ACCESS-06-01 Support for R&amp;I policy making in the Western Balkans</a> ; Grant Agreement 10105887
Project duration	48 months: March 2022 - February 2026
Project partnership	14 partners + wide stakeholder network
Project officer	Bernhard Fabianek, DG Research & Innovation
Project coordinator	Elke Dall, Centre for Social Innovation
Project contact	<a href="mailto:policy-answers@westernbalkans-infohub.eu">policy-answers@westernbalkans-infohub.eu</a>
Project website	<a href="http://www.westernbalkans-infohub.eu">www.westernbalkans-infohub.eu</a>
Project social media	@WBInfoHub

# POLICY ANSWERS objectives ...

- **Organising policy dialogue events** such as Ministerial and Steering Platform meetings and ad-hoc policy coordination meetings, offering room for exchange about policy implementation.
- **Supplying an information hub and web platform**, [www.westernbalkans-infohub.eu](http://www.westernbalkans-infohub.eu), addressing R&I, Education, Culture, Youth and Sport in the Western Balkans to enable better information sharing, create opportunities for joint actions and get the WB closer to EU policy making.
- **Carrying out analytical activities such as mapping of relevant institutions, programmes, initiatives, needs and common priorities in the Western Balkans**, and monitoring ongoing activities related to the implementation of the WB Agenda
- **Designing informed policy recommendations** to decision makers in the region, addressing the EU's key priorities such as: digitalization, green economy and health, and aligning them.
- **Implementing regional pilot activities** which reach out directly to academia, industry and civil society, in order to strengthen links between academia and industry in the WB region, and to support mobility of researchers within the area. Targeted actions will also be taken to increase the visibility of Western Balkans research infrastructures in the wider European research landscape.

# The POLICY ANSWERS consortium

Coordinator: Centre for Social Innovation from Austria

Other beneficiaries from:

Albania

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Kosovo\*

Montenegro

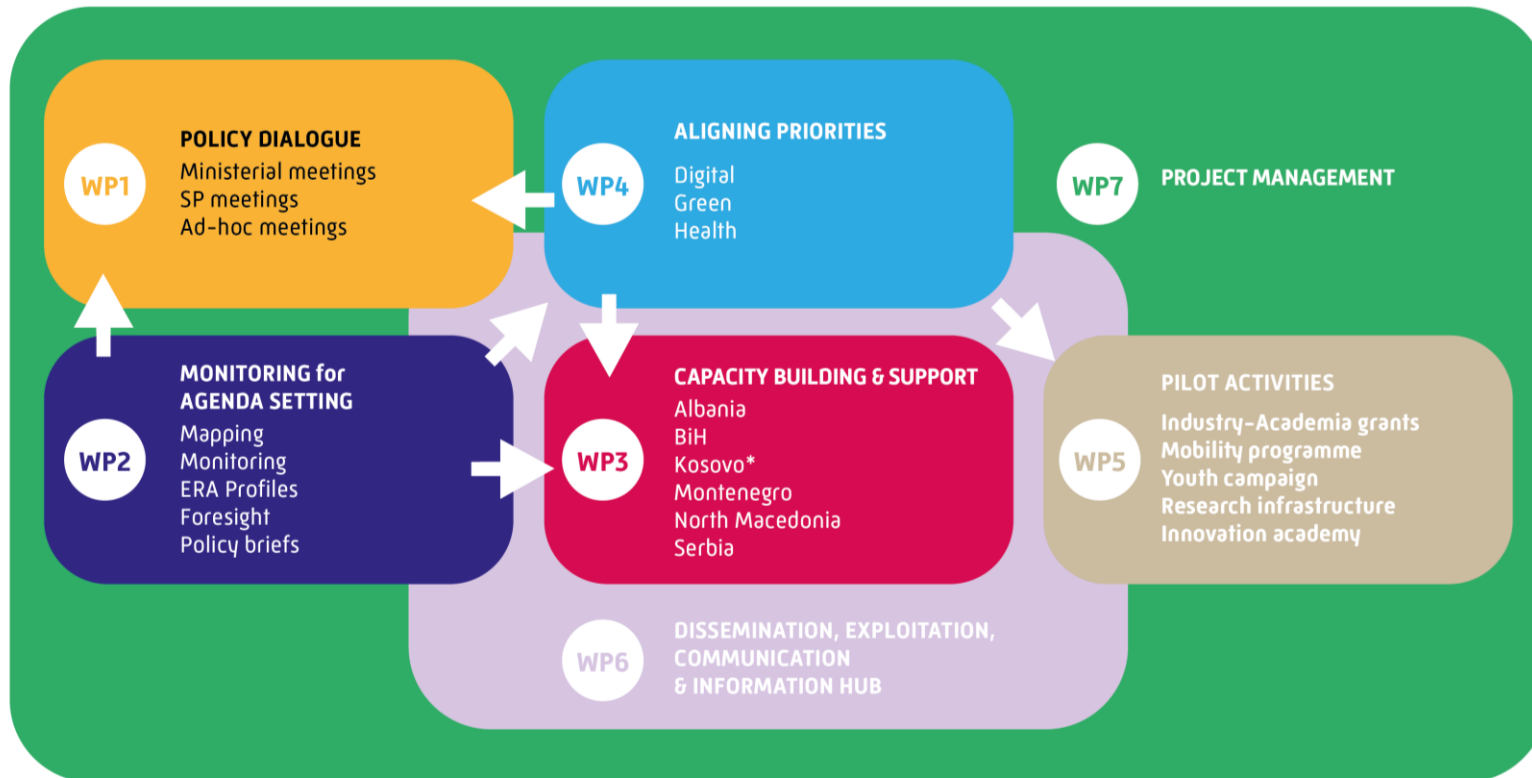
North Macedonia

Serbia

Austria, Croatia, Germany and Italy



# POLICY ANSWERS key highlights



Ministerials and Steering Platforms

Analytical support (monitoring WB Agenda implementation, ERA profiles)

Support to align with instruments (e.g. missions and partnerships) in relation to digital and green transition and healthy societies

Start of a capacity building programme

Preparation for pilot activities

Regular interactions with Project Advisory Board

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

# Links to EUSDR

- The Western Balkans Info Hub has been selected as one of the Danube Flagship Projects in 2024
- Danube Strategy Flagships are key projects or initiatives that support the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) by fostering macro-regional cooperation and multi-level governance.
- POLICY ANSWERS is actively promoting the activities of the EUSDR, since the Danube Region Strategy area also includes Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Serbia in the Western Balkans.





# Latest collaboration with EUSDR

- POLICY ANSWERS Webinar: Smart Specialisation in EU Enlargement Countries (co-organised with EUSDR PA7)
- This webinar explored the state of play of RIS3 in the region, cooperation potential and pathways for strengthening joint initiatives and R&I excellence.



WEBINAR

13 March 2025  
15:00 (CET)



**Smart Specialisation in EU Enlargement Countries**

## Speakers



**Emanuele Fabbri**

Economic and Policy Analyst, European Commission – Joint Research Centre



**Viktor Nedović**

Director of The Serbia Accelerating Innovation and Growth Entrepreneurship Project (SAIGE)



**Lazar Živković**

Head of the Innovation Economics Department, Research Associate, Institute of Economic Sciences, Belgrade



**Dijana Štrbac**

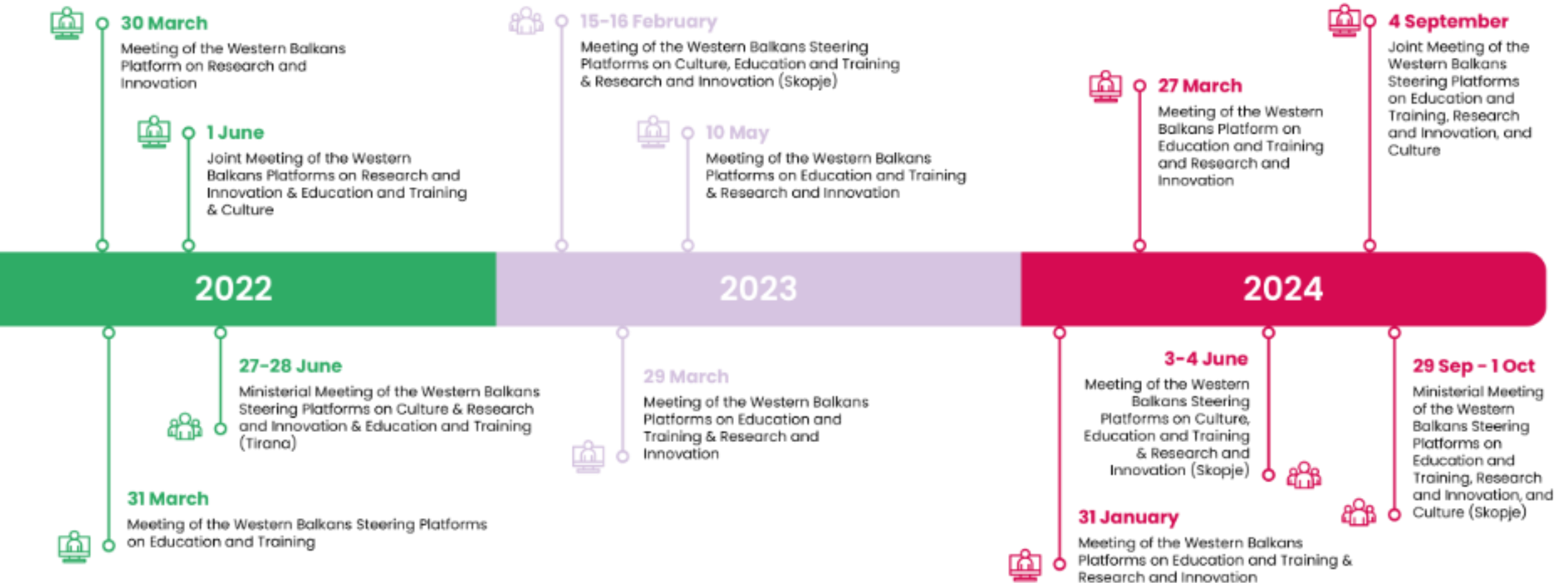
Research Associate, Institute of Economic Sciences, Belgrade; EUSDR Priority Area 7 (Knowledge Society) Support Team Member

Register for the webinar via the link provided in the description

**WESTERN BALKANS Info Hub**

# Project Main Achievements/Expected Results

## Supporting Steering Platforms and Ministerial Meetings





# Project Main Achievements

## Monitoring the implementation of the Western Balkans Agenda

Two monitoring rounds already implemented (2023, 2024)

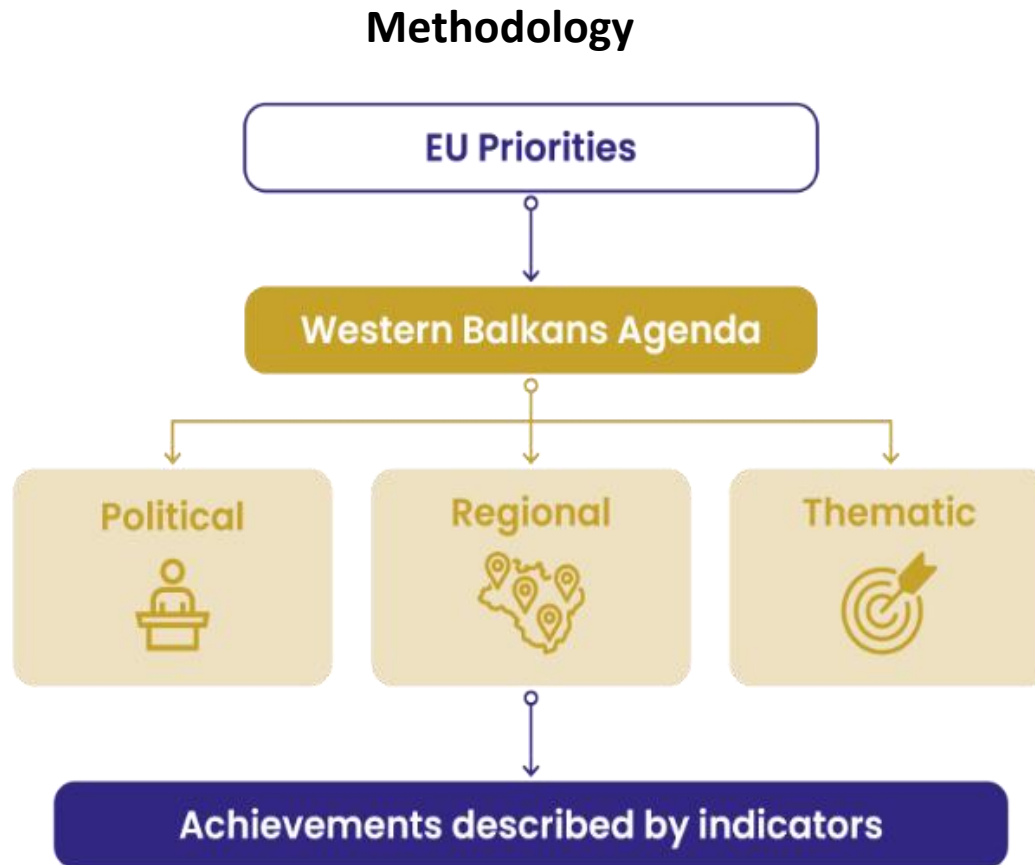
The monitoring is organised around six dimensions, measuring the progress in implementing the WB Agenda:

- Research and innovation
- Digital competitiveness
- Environment
- Education and skills
- Youth, culture, sports
- Common regional market



# Project Main Achievements

## Monitoring process



### Example:

#### Target -> Political:

Reforms in the region in the field of science and research are supported

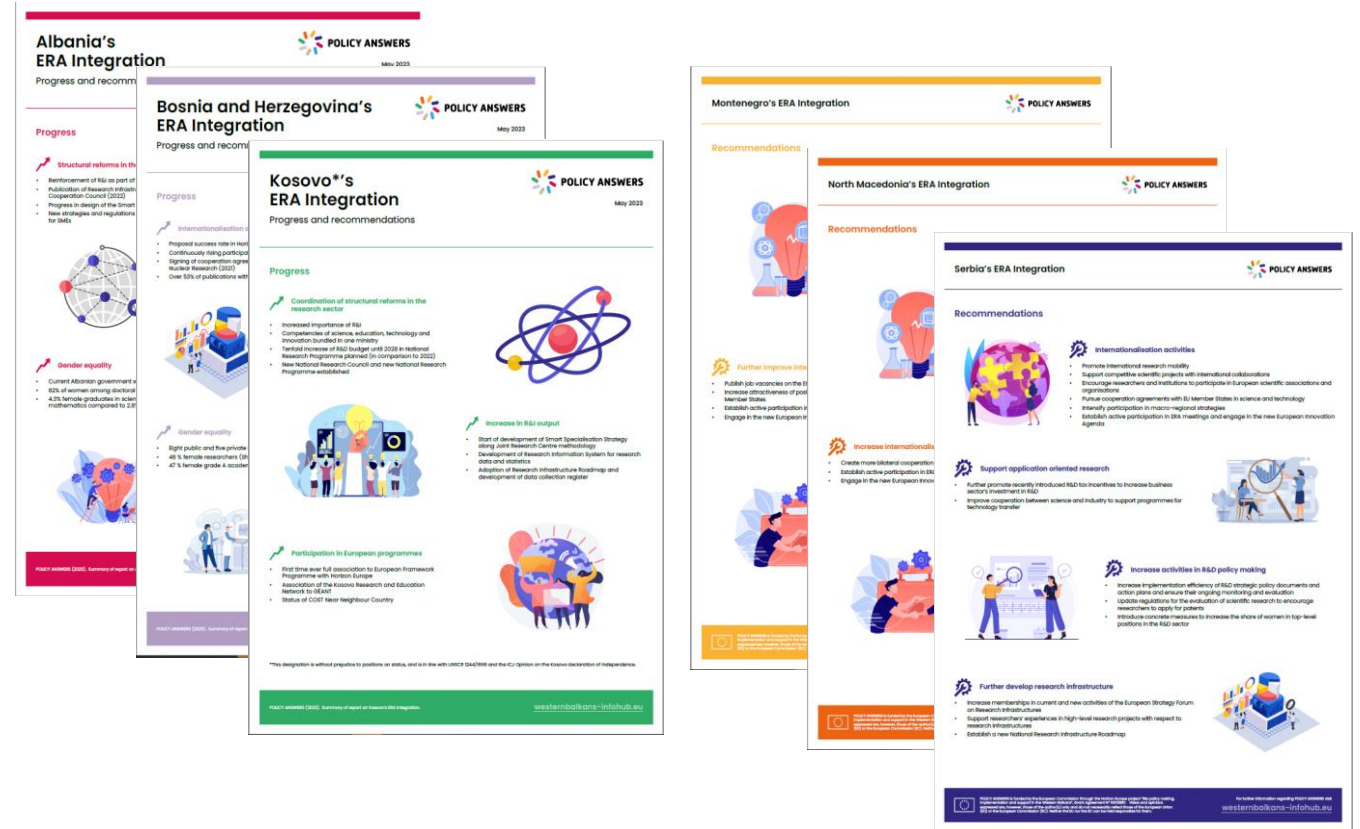
#### Achievement:

Western Balkans Steering Platform meetings on R&I

**Indicator:** Number of SP meetings organised; Number of participants (political and technical level)

# Project Main Achievements

- Short and long reports for the monitoring period 2022/23, published between May and November 2023
- New reports based on the “New ERA” reporting covering 2023, published in May 2024



# Project Main Achievements

## Policy Brief: The Western Balkans on the Road to Framework Programme 10

- Various governments, associations, and institutions have proposed changes to improve the effectiveness of the upcoming EU Framework Programme (FP10).
- The Policy Brief presents recommendations gathered in the first half of 2024 from the WB region.
- POLICY ANSWERS contributes to this discussion by providing recommendations from the Western Balkans (WB), based on desk research, surveys, and key informant interviews.



# Project Main Achievements

## Capacity Building Programmes

### 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. Multisectoral approach to digitalisation, green agenda and healthy societies.
5. Building and strengthening the academia-industry linkages.
6. Assistance in (co)creating policy documents.
7. Support to Open Science.
8. Support to the development of a Smart Specialisation Strategy.

### 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.

### SERBIA

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

### 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.

### 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. Organisational management.
3. Fundraising for public institutions.



# Project Main Achievements

## Identified needs and capacity building actions

### ALL 29 CAPACITY BUILDING SUPPORT ACTIONS COULD BE CLASSIFIED INTO FIVE BROAD TOPICS:

1. Capacity building and technical assistance in policy design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.
2. Support for participation in EU programmes.
3. Specific support to universities and technology transfer activities.
4. Specific support to the business sector.
5. General training sessions for quadruple helix actors in the area of circular economy, blue growth and health society.

- Implemented in all six economies
- The capacity building actions co-designed with stakeholders across the region cover topics from green and digital transition, writing of HE and other EU funded proposals, monitoring and evaluation for policy makers to gender equality.
- Hands on and practical training events, workshops, mentoring visits discussions and study visits.



# Project Main Achievements

## Ongoing capacity building activities

Upcoming activities include:

- **Info days** (e.g. hybrid MSCA Info Day in Albania)
- **Trainings** (e.g. on how to prepare and manage projects related to EU Economic Growth Plan in Kosovo)
- **Workshops** (e.g. Monitoring and Evaluation workshops in Serbian university centers)
- **Study visits** (e.g. peer learning study visit on support programmes and policies for research, innovation, start-ups and sustainability by stakeholders from North Macedonia)
- **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)

# Project Main Achievements

- The **Western Balkans Regional Innovation Academy** (WB RIA) platform was designed (existing educational materials processed and made available on the WB Info Hub which have the potential to enhance the innovation capacity in the region.
- A training programme and resources' catalogue on gender mainstreaming and inclusiveness of R&I policy, programmes and projects is under preparation which will be useful for policy makers, academia, research community and other relevant stakeholders.

**Discover the Academy**

## Foster your innovation

The Western Balkans Regional Innovation Academy (RIA) includes textual and multimedia resources in the following areas:




- Funding Innovation
- Innovation Basics
- Managing Innovation
- Gender-related Innovation

It targets anyone who has a stake in managing, promoting and understanding innovation in the region: **students, researchers, entrepreneurs, policymakers, educators, youth workers and other stakeholders.**



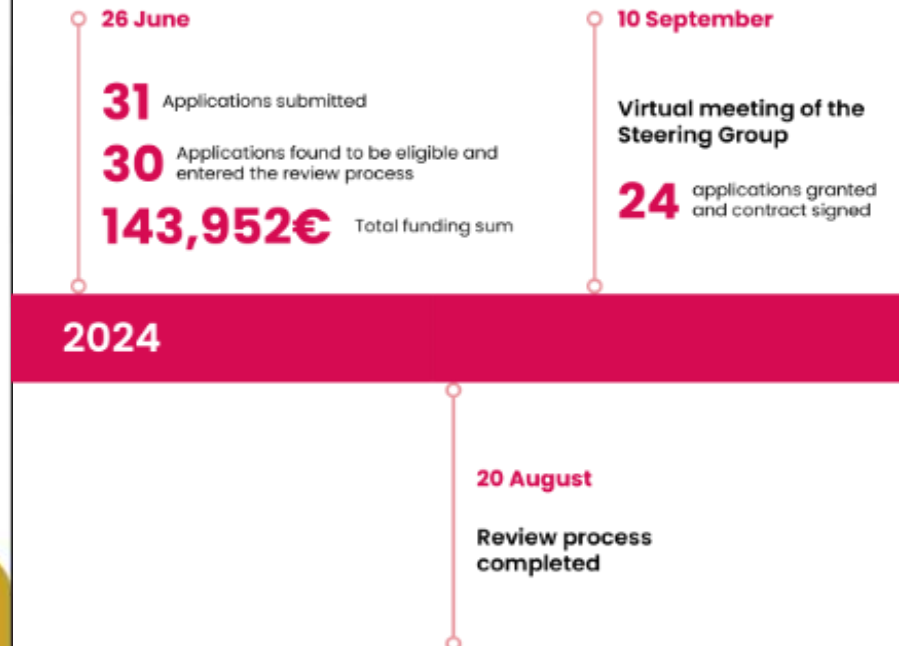
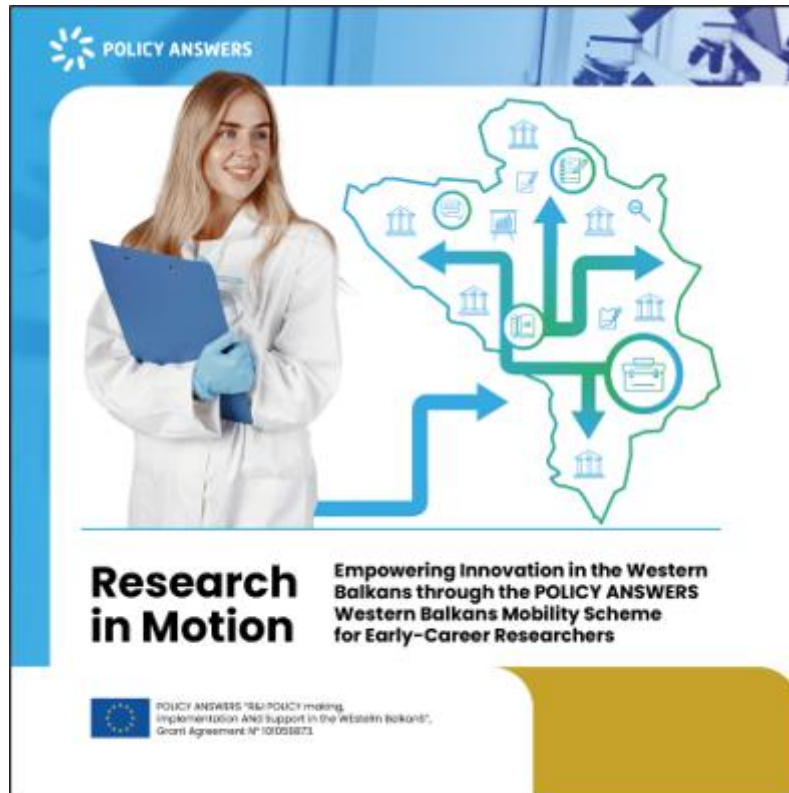
The illustration shows a man and a woman standing in front of a large digital screen. The screen displays a circular diagram with five yellow circles containing the text: 'FUNDING INNOVATION', 'INNOVATION BASICS', 'Tools Insights Lectures and Courses Case Studies', 'SUCCESS STORIES', and 'GENDER-RELATED INNOVATION'. The man is pointing at the screen, and the woman is holding a magnifying glass over the 'SUCCESS STORIES' circle. There are also small icons of a laptop, a plant, and a document on the screen.

## The resources are grouped into four main categories

 <p><b>Tools</b></p> <p>Manuals, guidelines and other materials for anyone who wants to innovate and needs a sound basis or more expertise.</p> <p><a href="#">Read more</a></p>	 <p><b>Insights</b></p> <p>In-depth materials for anyone who wants to study more in detail specific innovation-related topics.</p> <p><a href="#">Read more</a></p>	 <p><b>Lectures and Courses</b></p> <p>Comprehensive and far-reaching materials for anyone who wants to manage innovation in an effective way.</p> <p><a href="#">Read more</a></p>	 <p><b>Case Studies</b></p> <p>Relevant success stories of innovation management in the Western Balkans and elsewhere, that can serve as models to foster innovation.</p> <p><a href="#">Read more</a></p>
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# Project Main Achievements

- Western Balkans Mobility Scheme in operation
- 23 early-career researchers are working at their hosting institutions to advance their research in this period



# Project Main Achievement

Western Balkans Innovation Vouchers currently evaluated





# Project Main Achievements

- Open call for participation:  
Western Balkans Research & Innovation Youth Awards
- Several awards with a total amount of EUR 18,000
- **Deadline: 18 April 2025**



# Existing Cooperations/Synergies

- POLICY ANSWERS actively engages with the macro-regional strategies EUSDR and EUSAIR and related INTERREG programmes, the Regional Cooperation Council, the Rectors Conferences, etc.
- The Project Advisory Board includes members of RCC, DG RTD, DG JRC, DG EAC, DG REGIO, DG CNCT, DG NEAR, DG AGRI, etc.





# Join us promoting our events

Upcoming webinar

## How to Become Active in EU Partnerships, the Approach of Türkiye

24 April 2025, online



**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**

# Visit our website [www.westernbalkans-infohub.eu](http://www.westernbalkans-infohub.eu)

News, events and calls announcements are published by the project team on a daily base. We are happy to receive inputs from the community via [info@westernbalkans-infohub.eu](mailto:info@westernbalkans-infohub.eu)

Powered by  POLICY ANSWERS

## Welcome to the Western Balkans Info Hub

We are here to provide you with valuable information on research, technology, innovation, education, culture, youth, and sports in the Western Balkans region. Our hub, proudly funded by the European Union, aims to support the exchange of high-quality information and foster a bi-regional dialogue on various topics.

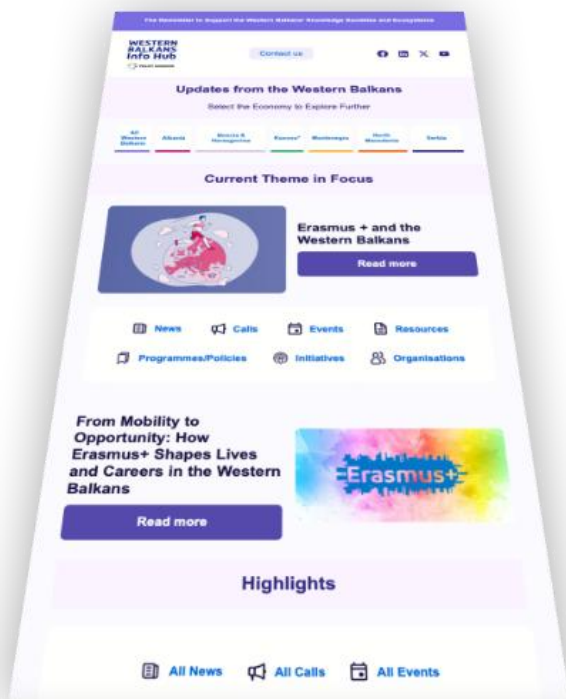
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# Thank you!

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