



POLICY ANSWERS

POLICY ANSWERS sets out to support integration of the Western Balkans into the European Research Area

The European project, that kicks off on 14 April in Vienna, will work for 4 years and support cooperation on innovation, research, education, culture, youth and sport

A newly-launched European project, called **POLICY ANSWERS**, will deploy a vast array of tools - from high-level meetings to information services, from launching pilot activities to policy recommendations on key innovation issues - to support a better integration of the Western Balkans into the European Research Area (ERA).

The project aims to continue and scale up the common efforts of the European Union and the Western Balkans - Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia - for cooperation on Innovation, Research, Education, Culture, Youth and Sport. The goal is to ultimately foster stability and prosperity while strengthening the European perspective of the region.

Led by the Centre for Social Innovation (ZSI) in Vienna and involving 14 partner institutions, the project builds on the solid ground created by successful past experiences.

In the past years, the Western Balkans Steering Platforms (WB SPs) for Research & Innovation and Education & Training have played a central role in stimulating, monitoring and supporting the cooperation in research, education and innovation between the European Union Member States, the European Commission and the Western Balkans in EU funded programmes and beyond. Regular platform meetings, including at Ministerial level, have brought together a multitude of stakeholders to identify common priorities, discuss latest policy and reforming measures, decide on spin-off activities and follow-up measures as well as on topics for regional cooperation with EU assistance.

Past efforts supported by the EU have also built widely-used information hubs and services: from websites and social media to monthly newsletters, which provide high quality targeted information on research, technology and innovation in, with and for the Western Balkans but also touching upon education, culture, youth and sports.



POLICY ANSWERS officially kicks off on 14 and 15 April 2022 in Vienna, bringing together all of its 14 partner organisations. The project will run for 48 months and focus, among many things, on the following activities:

- 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, 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.

At all stages of the project, special emphasis will be put on the inclusion of so-far underrepresented groups and the coordination with key stakeholders and international organisations.

With its ambitious and wide-ranging work programme, POLICY ANSWERS will impact on science, economy and society, thus contributing to a faster recovery from the COVID-19 crisis and to the digital and green transitions in the Western Balkans.

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



POLICY ANSWERS

POLICY ANSWERS (R&I POLICY making, implementation ANd Support in the WEsteRn BalkanS) is a Coordination and Support Action funded by the European Union through the Horizon Europe programme. It is led by the Centre for Social Innovation in Vienna (Austria), and involves 13 other partners: German Aerospace Center (Germany), Institute Mihajlo Pupin (Serbia), GSI Helmholtz Centre for Heavy Ion Research (Germany), the Agency for Research, Technology and Innovation (Albania), Riinvest - Institute for Development Research (Kosovo), Fund for Innovations and Technology Development (North Macedonia), Foundation for Management and Industrial Research (North Macedonia), University of Banja Luka (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Formicablu (Italy), Science and Technology Park Montenegro (Montenegro), Austrian Research Promotion Agency (Austria), University of Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Institute of Economics Zagreb (Croatia).*

More information: www.westernbalkans-infohub.eu

Contact: policy-answers@westernbalkans-infohub.eu

Social media: <https://twitter.com/WBInfoHub>, <https://www.facebook.com/WBInfoHub>