



# Western Balkan Agenda Update

# Axis of the Western Balkans Agenda

## POLITICAL AGENDA

**Towards a sustainable future by stimulating an economy that supports the recovery and helps to create jobs**

- Reflecting the strategic importance of the region and supporting its integration process through an increased EU engagement;
- Nurturing knowledge-based societies and evidence-informed policy making;
- Supporting the association to all the Union programmes covering Research, Innovation, Education, Culture, Youth and Sport;
- Supporting the implementation of systemic changes and reforms.

## THEMATIC AGENDA

**Towards closer alignment with the EU strategic priorities**

- Transforming the national research and innovation eco-systems;
- Counteracting climate change and supporting the digital transformation;
- Promoting the implementation of the EU Green Deal in the Western Balkans.

## REGIONAL AGENDA

**Towards a closer regional economic integration through planned investments in human capital development and digital transformation**

- Enhancing the quality of education and training;
- Boosting human capital development;
- Reducing the gender and digital divide;
- Improving mobility and connectivity;
- Fostering cultural and regional cooperation.

# Initial Set of Actions

## Political Axis Achievements

- ❖ French Council Presidency Western Balkans conference
- ❖ Assist the reforms addressed by Chapters 25 and 26 by supporting the implementation of the Acquis
- ❖ Enhance relevant reform measures adopted in the context of the Economic Reform Programme process
- ❖ Regional Policy Dialogues on Research & Innovation, on Education & Training, and on Culture
- ❖ Promote **investment** in regional R&I and education infrastructures, capacities, and skills
- ❖ Support the development, implementation, coordination and monitoring of **Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3)**
- ❖ All Western Balkan partners are now re-associated to the **Horizon Europe** programme, with Kosovo as newcomer
- ❖ Western Balkan partners non-associated to **Erasmus+** (MKD and SRB are already associated) benefit from dedicated support worth € 374 million

# Initial Set of Actions

## Regional Axis Achievements

- ❖ Western Balkans participation in the **Enterprise Europe Network (EEN)**
- ❖ Support the regional network of technology transfer offices, research and technology infrastructures, science parks and incubators for high-tech start-ups
- ❖ Inclusion of dedicated actions (**Twinning and Support to Policy Making**) for the Western Balkans in the Horizon Europe Work programme 2021-22
- ❖ Full membership of Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina in EUREKA
- ❖ **EUREKA Western Balkans Working Group**
- ❖ Second Regional Youth Policy Lab
- ❖ European Week of Sport Beyond Borders in the Western Balkans
- ❖ **EIT Community RIS Hubs** by 2023/24 (pilot Hub in MKD)
- ❖ Cross-KIC Strategic Regional Innovation Cluster
- ❖ Western Balkans in **international tests** (TIMSS, PILS, ICILS, TALIS)

# Initial Set of Actions

## Thematic Axis Achievements

- ❖ Promote the digital skills development and virtual learning in the region
- ❖ Kosovo\* connected to **GEANT**
- ❖ **Science for Policy Report** on the status of air quality, greenhouse gases, water and soil in the Western Balkans
- ❖ North Macedonia and Serbia participating in the 10<sup>th</sup> round of the **European Social Survey**
- ❖ EIT KICs rolled-out a dedicated pre-Jumpstarter support initiative
- ❖ **Digital Europe Programme** from 2023 onwards
- ❖ Association to LIFE programme
- ❖ European Universities Initiative, Teacher Academies, Centres of Vocational excellence, Alliances for Innovation
- ❖ **Synergies with Macro-regional structural funds** (Adriatic and Danube)
- ❖ Horizon Europe **Missions on Oceans and Cities**

\* "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."

# Support for R&I policy making in the Western Balkans

Co-creation in action between DGs EAC, JRC, CNECT, GROW, REGIO and AGRI (in cooperation with DG NEAR)

- ❖ Facilitate Agenda implementation
- ❖ Support the Steering Platforms
- ❖ Link with EU partners to improve research and innovation management capacities and support national policy reforms
- ❖ Advance the further integration in the ERA
- ❖ Strengthen human capital development, R&I capacity building, national research and innovation systems, and evidence-based policymaking
- ❖ Foster innovative SMEs in the region by increasing the competitiveness
- ❖ Accelerate academia-business cooperation and technology transfer

# The European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) and its 9 thematic Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs)

## Main Achievements

Since 2014 >2,7 M€ EIT support to WB

[EIT Regional Innovation Scheme](#) (RIS) launched in 2014 for countries with modest and moderate innovation rates (eligible WB economies in 2021-2024: Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia)

2 thematic RIS Hubs in WB (both in Serbia: **EIT Urban Mobility, EIT Food**) – 5 new thematic Hubs planned in WB by 2025

Since 2017: [Jumpstarter](#) pre-accelerator programme for start-ups, 25% of applicants come from WB

Example of successful support: [ElevenEs](#), Serbian battery producer supported by EIT Innoenergy, to build a Gigafactory in Subotica by 2025, to equip more than 300,000 electric vehicles annually with batteries

## Outlook 2023-25

**Enhanced EIT RIS and HEI Support action:** including gradually launch EIT RIS Community hubs to cover all WB RIS-eligible economies by 2025 (North Macedonia pilot Hub official launch shortly and will become operational in 2023, Serbia: MoU with Ministry pending after Letter of Intent in 2022)

**Jumpstarter** programme will aim to scale-up participation by WB participants (at least 30 additional WB teams per year + a dedicated Western Balkans prize)

Launch **Infra-booster**, a new initiative to support the WB HEI and Research Centres to make best use of their available infrastructures in the delivery of innovations. Goal to bring 30 new, innovative products and services to the market by 2025

# MSCA and the Western Balkans

## How to increase participation?

### HORIZON EUROPE 2021-2022

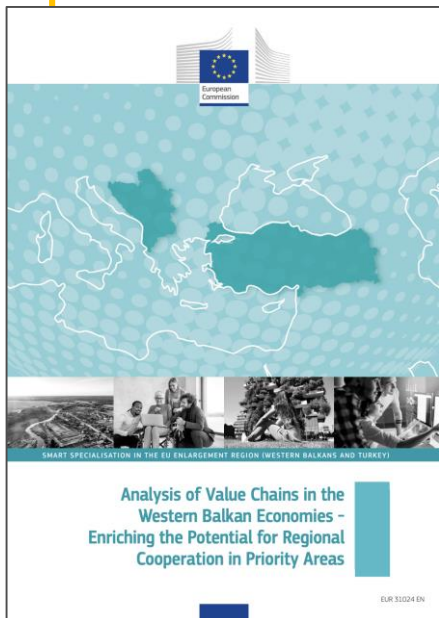
- **Promotion of MSCA** in the Western Balkans (participation in National and local infodays) in close collaboration with the **MSCA National Contact Points (NCPs)**
- Organisation of an **online MSCA contact seminar for the Western Balkans** (March 2021)
- NCP EU funded Project **MSCA-NET** with focus on Widening countries, including all WB (Trainings, MSCA material and [MSCA Matchmaking platform](#) for partner search)
- **ERA fellowship calls** (open to researchers of any nationality who wish to engage in R&I projects in a Widening Country) to attract the diaspora back.
- **MSCA study on Mobility flows of researchers**: Analysis of the structure and determinants of researchers' mobility flows under the MSCA and recommendations toward a more balanced brain circulation across the European Research Area. Assessment of the impact of the Widening Fellowships.

### Horizon Europe 2023-2024

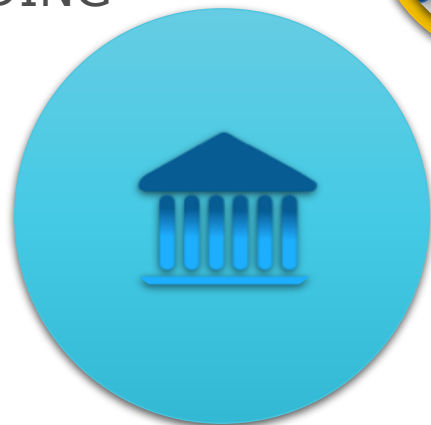
- Continue to **promote MSCA** (participation in national and local infodays) in close collaboration with the **WB MSCA National Contact Points (NCPs)**.
- NCP EU funded Project **MSCA-NET** with focus on Widening countries, including all WB (Trainings and twinnings, MSCA material and [MSCA Matchmaking platform](#) for partner search).
- **ERA fellowship calls** (open to researchers of any nationality who wish to engage in R&I projects in a Widening Country) to attract the diaspora back.
- Seek for more **synergies with existing initiatives in the region**: ERASMUS+, COST, MCAA WB chapter, Euraxess etc



# Smart Specialisation in the Western Balkans



INSTITUTIONAL  
CAPACITY BUILDING



FINAL S3 STRATEGY

Montenegro  
Serbia



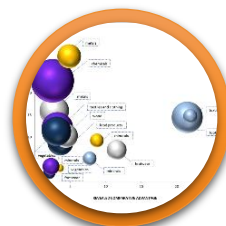
INSTITUTIONAL  
CAPACITY FOR  
IMPLEMENTATION

North Macedonia



ENTREPRENEURIAL  
DISCOVERY PROCESS

Albania,  
Kosovo\*

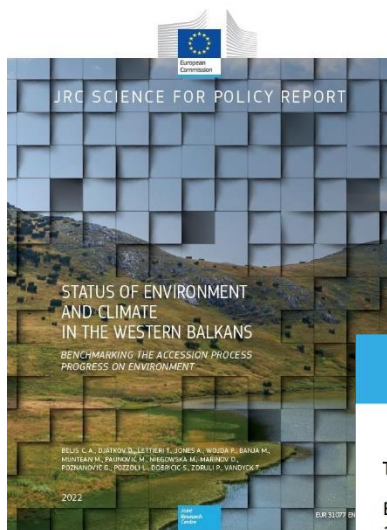


MAPPING EXERCISE

Bosnia  
and Herzegovina

# Supporting the Green Deal in the Western Balkans

- ❖ Surveys (and related databases) about the status of the Environment (air, climate, water and soil) in the Western Balkans
- ❖ Foresight analysis to evaluate the impact of air pollution on health and the co-benefits with climate policy in the WB until 2050 (scientific publication)
- ❖ The science for policy report on Environment in the Western Balkans launched by Commissioner Mariya Gabriel
- ❖ Technical report published: Soil health in the Western Balkans
- ❖ Session of the JRC Science Summit on the JRC collaboration with countries associated with Horizon Europe
- ❖ training " Emissions' distribution methodology and introduction to EDGAR WEB-based gridding tool aimed at enhancing countries' capability to compile emission inventories



# Western Balkans in the New European Bauhaus

- ❖ **NEB Community**

- ❖ 12 official partners in the WB

- ❖ **NEBLab**

- ❖ 3 WB participants to the call for expressions of interest “Transformation of places of learning”

- ❖ **NEB Prizes 2023**

- ❖ 107 applications from WB

- ❖ **NEB Funding opportunities** (EU programmes)

- ❖ 2 WB cities in the “cohort” cities that joined the CrAFt platform, which is funded by the Horizon Europe Climate-neutral and smart cities Mission

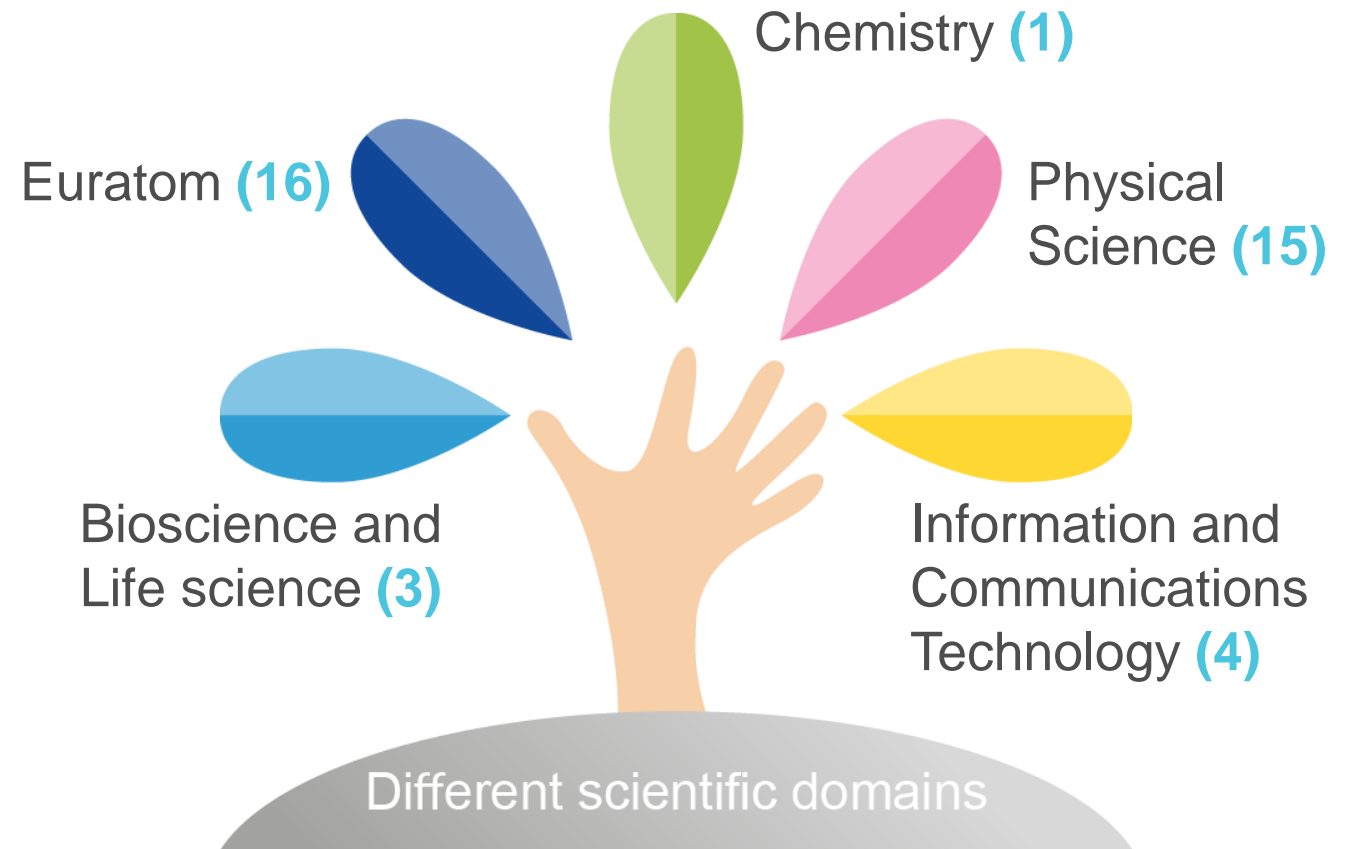
# Open access to JRC Research Infrastructures

The JRC hosts **39 physical Research Infrastructures (RI)** with a potential of **opening to external users** (out of a total of **56**)

<https://europa.eu/!CM63UK>

## Currently open calls:

European Laboratory for Structural Assessment  
Fuel Cells And Electrolyser Testing Facilities  
Assessment of nuclear power plants core internals  
Micro-Characterisation Lab  
Structural Materials Performance Assessment Labs  
Nanobiotechnology Lab  
Fuels and Materials Research  
Actinide user labs



# Western Balkans in Horizon Europe

Evolution over time



# Western Balkans in Horizon Europe

Net EU Contribution (EUR) by thematic priority

Global Challenges and European Industrial Competitiveness  
151

31,3 M€

Widening Participation and Strengthening the European  
Research Area  
73

21 M€

Excellent Science  
42

7 M€

3

# 4 Flagships

- 1. A STRONGER INVOLVEMENT of the WESTERN BALKANS in EU POLICY WORK**
  - ❖ Bring the Western Balkans closer to the EU policy developments
  - ❖ Increased policy dialogues
  - ❖ Concrete impact on national policies
  - ❖ Instrumental in aligning policy developments within the Western Balkan partners with EU countries
- 2. ASSOCIATION of the WESTERN BALKANS to EU PROGRAMMES and INITIATIVES**
  - ❖ Participating in key EU programmes
  - ❖ Benefits in terms of funding, enhanced competence/excellence
  - ❖ results achieved through the implementation of concrete projects and activities

# 4 Flagships

## 3. SUPPORTING THE QUALITY OF YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AND YOUTH POLICY REFORMS BY INCREASING OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

- ❖ Concrete opportunities rendered to young people
- ❖ Making them part of and exchanging with the Youth in the EU

## 4. SUPPORTING THE WESTERN BALKANS FIT FOR THE GREEN AND DIGITAL AGE

- ❖ Full inclusion of the Western Balkans in missions, partnerships, the EIT, the Digital Education Action Plan, large-scale environmental monitoring and research infrastructures
- ❖ Access to supercomputing resources to be better prepared against flash floods, forest fires, climate change and in optimising industrial processes
- ❖ Awareness about the JRC activities: the work on Environmental reporting and monitoring



Thank you!