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# Policy Dialogue on Aligning Priorities in the Western Balkans

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Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina  
13 September 2023



Pathways: Digital • Green • Health • Vision 2030



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# Overview of the Western Balkans Region on its Pathway to implement the Green Agenda

Miroslav Vesković and Đorđe Đatkov, University of Novi Sad



# The European Green Deal - A Green Agenda for the WB

By signing the Sofia Declaration on the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans (GAWB) in October 2020, leaders from the region recognised the importance of the European Green Deal (EGD), which is the EU's new growth strategy towards a modern, climate neutral, resource-efficient and competitive economy.

**Just, Inclusive and Sustainable Green  
Transition for the WB!**

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# “Putting words into actions”

- A strong cross-sectorial cooperation at both economy and regional levels. *GAWB requires careful complementary actions addressing economic, social, and environmental goals simultaneously.*
- *With one eye on green and digital transformations, particular emphasis is placed on digitalization as a crucial enabler for these five pillars.*

RCC: ACTION PLAN FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SOFIA DECLARATION  
ON THE GREEN AGENDA FOR THE WESTERN BALKANS 2021-2030, Sarajevo,  
04th October 2021

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# GAWB - Some Dedicated Documents and Events on Implementation



## Green Agenda for the Western Balkans

The Road Toward Effective and Sustainable Implementation



aste environment green circular regional renewable transiti  
 climate incentives market sustainable energy development s  
 y public business action management barriers agenda imp  
 lementation economy efficiency investment emissions resour  
 al financing economic awareness policies measures framew  
 ork isolations supply knowledoe investments potential priorities

April 2022

CEP Insight

Author: Sara Mitrović, CEP Junior Researcher

EUROPEAN POLICY CENTRE

### The Green Agenda for the Western Balkans

A dead letter or a genuine opportunity?

By signing the Sofia Declaration on the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans in October 2020, leaders from the region recognised the importance of the European Green Deal (EGD), which is the EU's new growth strategy towards a modern, climate neutral, resource-efficient and competitive economy. In order for this acknowledgement to materialise in practice, the leaders of the Western Balkans (WB) also agreed to incorporate elements of the ECD into all interrelated sectors and policies, based on the European Commission's Guidelines, with the common goal of developing carbon-neutral and sustainable economies in the region. Given that it has been a year and a half since the Sofia Summit, it is warranted to look down the complex notion of the Green Agenda and analyse whether and to what extent it has the potential to truly induce changes in the Western Balkans. Therefore, the paper presents key issues identified in the five pillars of the Green Agenda, examines certain cross-cutting aspects of the green transition that could be essential for achieving a climate-neutral Western Balkans, and provides concrete measures and proposals for effective Green Agenda implementation.

**Unpacking the Green Agenda**

The Western Balkan region has long lagged behind the EU with regard to fighting climate change. As such, it has long lacked an overall approach that would make all relevant policies climate-sensitive. That is where the Guidelines for the implementation of the Green Agenda for the WB step in. Originally proposed by the European Commission, the Guidelines establish five pillars of action: decarbonisation; circular economy; depollution; sustainable food systems and rural areas; and biodiversity. The emphasis is on the implementation of the Green Agenda in conjunction with technological progress and innovation, based on the concept of the dual green and digital transition. For the objectives to be carried out, the Commission proposed the Economic and Investment Plan (EIP) – with €4 billion in grants and expected €10 billion in guarantees. Although it is too early to tell whether all funds will be absorbed by interconnecting the EIP and the Green Agenda and by laying out roadmaps for implementation, the EU sends a signal that it is ready to put its words into action.



## REGIONAL NGO FORUM ON THE GREEN AGENDA FOR THE WESTERN BALKANS

30 MARCH 2023, BELGRADE



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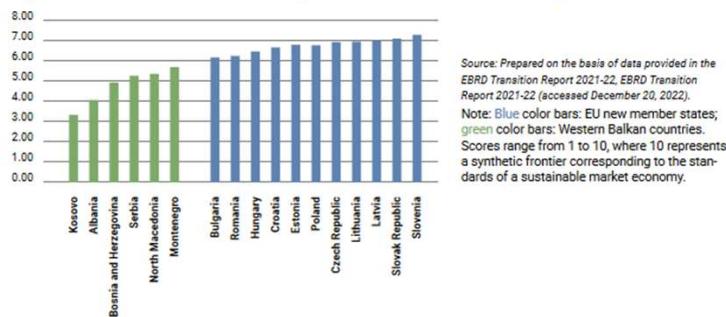
# Some General Conclusions

Current Situation in the Western Balkans:

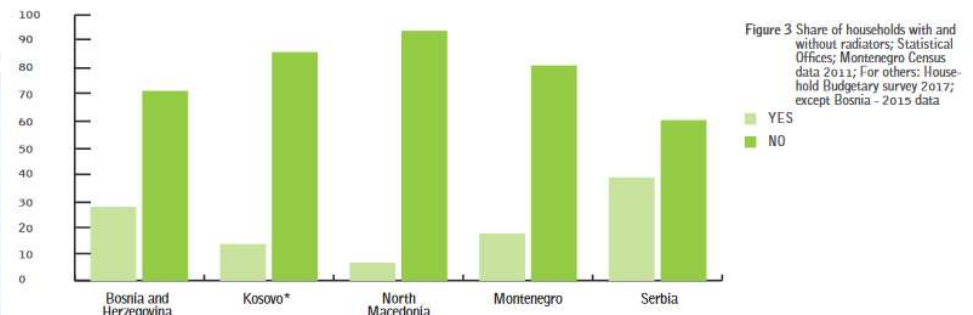
“The Green Agenda includes important objectives that are clearly inter-related, representing an ambitious and complex agenda for the Western Balkan governments. **The legislative framework regarding the most important issues has been prepared and adopted, but most countries have not yet implemented the necessary reforms.** According to prevalent assessments (e.g., by the European Commission, the Energy Community Secretariat, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the OECD, and the World Bank), the Western Balkans are today at the very beginning of their green transition. .... Moreover, many of these laws have not yet been implemented and enforced.”  
 Milica Uvalić · University of Perugia, Publication: December 2022, ISSN 2940-4169

Aspen Institute Germany

Figure 1: EBRD Scores on Green Quality of a Sustainable Market Economy, 2021



Central heating installations in households



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# Some of the main challenges regarding the implementation of the Green Agenda are:

- **Governance:**... *Weak governance capacities of Western Balkan public administration...*
- **Financial Constraints:**... *There is no assurance that Western Balkan governments will be able to co-finance costly projects, since their public budgets are limited...*
- **Conflicting Objectives:**... *Most projects on renewable energy (Flagship 4) initially proposed for financing are related to hydropower plants, which often do not take into account the environmental damage they cause...*
- **Industrial Policies:**... *Incentives and technical support need to be offered to enterprises (especially private) to move toward greater use of renewable resources, adopt more appropriate environmental norms, and engage in training and the development of skills in the work-force.*
- **Regional Cooperation:** ...*There are also serious obstacles that prevent the effective regional integration of electricity markets, including the reluctance of governments to share control over a politically sensitive sector, and opposition from entrenched groups interested in maintaining the status quo...*
- **Raising Awareness/Education:**.. *It is fundamental to raise awareness about the importance of climate, energy, and the environment – both among the population and at the policy level...*

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# Some positive attempts/success stories



EU Projects  
in Serbia

NEWS SECTORS PROJECTS EU OPPORTUNITIES MAP OF EU PROJECTS CAMPAIGNS PHOTO/VIDEO ARCHIVES

f @ Login RS/EN Q



EU FOR GREEN AGENDA IN SERBIA

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# Circular Economy in the Western Balkans



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# EU Missions and GAWB



Enhancing Nature-based Solutions in Serbia  
The role of ecosystems in disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation  
Tanja Popovicki



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The 100 EU cities will be “test beds” for innovative integrated solutions to many of urban citizens’ issues.

**CITIES FROM ASSOCIATED COUNTRIES**

<b>ALBANIA</b> Elbasan	<b>ISRAEL</b> Eilat	<b>TURKEY</b> Istanbul Izmir
<b>BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA</b> Sarajevo	<b>MONTENEGRO</b> Podgorica	<b>UNITED KINGDOM*</b> Bristol Glasgow
<b>ICELAND</b> Reykjavik	<b>NORWAY</b> Oslo Stavanger Trondheim	

\* The United Kingdom is expected to become associated to Horizon Europe and will therefore have the same rights and obligations as other associated countries.

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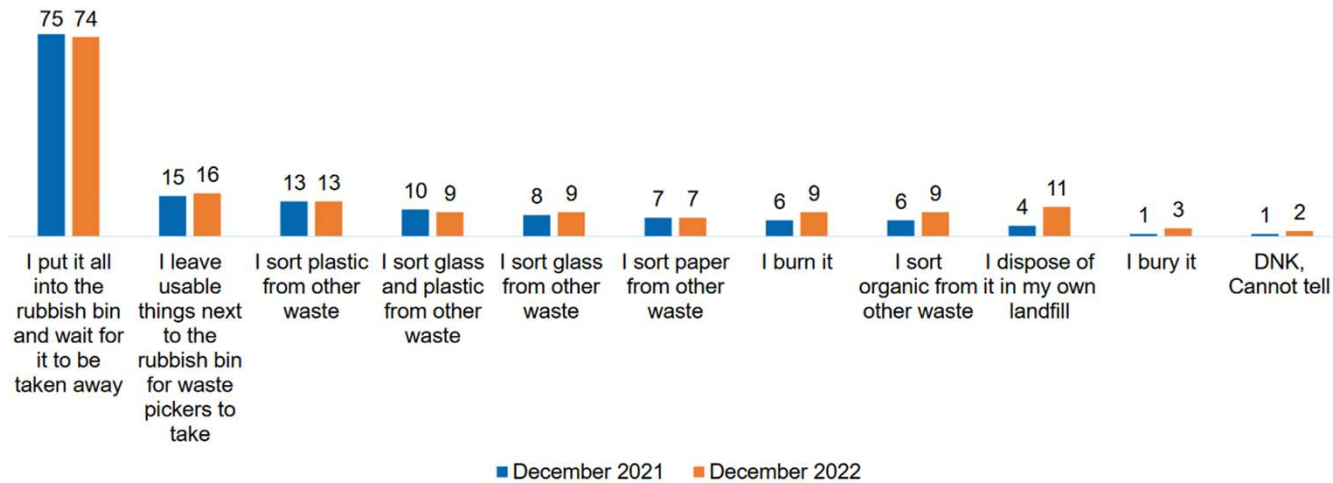


# What are we ready to do to help implement GAWB

## What do you do with your waste? (in %, multiple answers)



The largest percentage of citizens state that they put waste in containers and wait for the services in charge to take be taken away - 74% (the finding is simliar to the one from 2021).



UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

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