

Towards a Stronger European Research Area: Lessons and Pathways for the Western Balkans' Participation

Agenda





Towards a Stronger European Research Area: Lessons and Pathways for the Western Balkans' Participation

Final public event by POLICY ANSWERS to present the project's main outcomes and their contribution to the Western Balkans Agenda

Thursday, 19 March 2026

Venue: Consortium Meeting Room
Tirana International Hotel & Conference Center
Sheshi Skënderbej 8, Tirana, Albania

The event will also be broadcast live on our YouTube channel. Watch the livestream at:
[Western Balkans Info Hub](#)

09:00 - 09:30 Registration and Welcome Coffee

09:30-10:00 Welcoming Speeches

Daniel Pirushi, General Director, National Agency for Scientific Research and Innovation (NASRI), Host

Armela Baka, Deputy Minister of Education, Albania

Martin Kajo, Deputy Minister of Economy and Innovation, Albania (tbc)

Linda Pustina, Head of Smart Specialisation Strategy Team, Albania

Karlo Dukic, Programme Officer (JPD), Delegation of the European Union

Mina Stareva, Deputy Head of Unit International Cooperation - Europe and Americas, Directorate-General Research and Innovation, European Commission (EC)

Elke Dall, Project Coordinator, Centre for Social Innovation (ZSI)

10:00-11:00 POLICY ANSWERS: Results and Insights from the Western Balkans Part 1

Moderator: Sanja Popovic-Pantic, Institute Mihajlo Pupin (IMP)

This session presents the main outcomes and lessons learned from capacity building activities of the project through a series of highlights and "lightning talks" by project partners and experts.

- **Albania**, Robert Dumi, NASRI
- **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, Maja Arslanagic-Kalajdzic, UNSA
- **Kosovo***, Alma Bajramaj, RIINVEST
- **Montenegro**, Aleksandra Mugoša, MPNI
- **North Macedonia**, Gabriela Kostovska Bogoeska, MIR
- **Serbia**, Sanja Popovic-Pantic, IMP

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.



11:00-11:30

POLICY ANSWERS: Results and Insights from the Western Balkans Part 2

Moderator: Elke Dall, ZSI

This session presents highlights from cross-cutting activities by project partners.

- **Policy lessons from the Western Balkans Innovation Vouchers**
Andrijana Tasevska, INOVA
- **Policy lessons from the Western Balkans Mobility Scheme**
Ralf Hanatschek, DLR
- **Aligning priorities: Success and opportunities in Horizon Europe**
Janine Halder, FFG
- **Monitoring and analysis: Implementing the Western Balkans Agenda**
Ulrike Kunze, DLR
- **Progress of Policy Dialogue: Conclusions from Ministerial Meetings**
Desiree Pecarz, ZSI

11:30-11:45

Coffee break

11:45-12:10

Exploring Policy Impacts of Past Initiatives and Perspectives for the Future Collaboration

Keynote Speakers: Mina Stareva and Bernhard Fabianek, EC

Interviewer: Elke Dall, Project Coordinator, ZSI

This in-depth conversation with Mina Stareva and Bernhard Fabianek, highlights strategic insights and lessons for research and innovation in the Western Balkans from the past period and discusses opportunities for future cooperation.

12:10-12:45

Stakeholder Reactions and Open Panel

Moderator: Elke Dall, ZSI

Cooperation partners and stakeholders from the audience are invited to join the discussion and share their perspectives.

12:45-13:00

Looking ahead: Introducing POLICY ENLARGE

Béla Kardon, Chief Scientific Officer, Regional Centre for Information and Scientific Development (RCISD)

This overview of the follow-up project POLICY ENLARGE highlights its objectives, planned activities and anticipated contributions to research and innovation development in the Western Balkans and other enlargement countries.

13:00

Family Photo

13:00-14:00

Lunch break





14:00 **Transfer to Barleti University**

14:30-16:30 **Exploring 5 Helix: Digital Future Hub at Barleti University**

This study visit introduces participants to Barleti University's approach to innovation, co-creation and digitalisation. Through guided visits to key laboratories and a concluding discussion, the programme aims to encourage knowledge exchange and explore opportunities for collaboration between academia, research, and industry.

Welcome by the Rector

Suzana Guxholli, Rector of Barleti University

Visit of the University facilities:

- TRIANGLE Co-creation Lab (Transforming Research, Industry & Academia into Networks for Growth & Leadership)
- *Creative Industries Lab - Creative Makerspace*

Concluding discussion

Light farewell cocktail
