

MARCH 2023

A SNAPSHOT

The Balkan Forum Activities in 2022



We work to create a new vision for the Balkan region

This snapshot of the Balkan Forum's (BF) activities in 2022 provides an overview of our progress in actively mobilizing advocacy action, building new partnerships, implementing projects, organizing events in the Western Balkan (WB) and European Union (EU) countries, and providing support to civil society actors in the region and wider Europe. The implementation of these activities was made possible thanks to our donors, the **Rockefeller Brothers Fund** (RBF), and the **EU Office in Kosovo**.

CONTENT

- Circular Economy Week
- International advocacy
- Publications
- International events
- Berlin Process and Manila Plan of Action
- The BF in the media
- Contribution on issues of European and global importance
- Projects
- Youth Cooperation Fund
- Ukraine

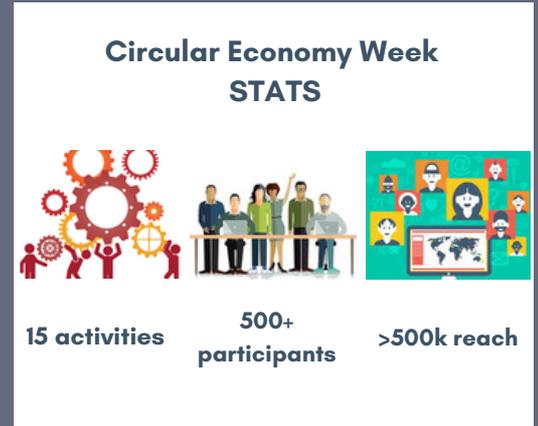


Photo by: Protests NATO close the sky Krakow

CIRCULAR ECONOMY (CE) WEEK

Western Balkans Circular Economy Week

Organised by **LogEx** members (23 – 27 May 2022), the **CE week** is the first regional initiative that brought together different actors throughout the WB region focusing on CE and Sustainable Development. Activities implemented in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, and North Macedonia, with communications support by the LogEx member in Serbia included: conferences & webinars, podcasts, roundtables & workshops, a festival, environmental action, recycling activities and articles. Find the highlights [here](#).



INTERNATIONAL ADVOCACY

Advocacy action

Together with our partners from the Western Balkans and the wider Europe, we are actively engaging in advocacy, calling for **democracy, human rights and the rule of law**, and condemning **hate speech**, nationalism, authoritarianism, **Russian aggression against Ukraine**, and other issues threatening freedom, peace and democracy in our continent.

**United for democracy,
human rights, and the
rule of law**

**Vienna declaration on dealing
with authoritarianism**



PUBLICATIONS

Research

Our research published in 2022, includes:



Unlocking the potential of Erasmus+ in the Western Balkans: A Students' Perspective, investigating patterns in the migration of students following periods of academic mobility.



European engagement with the Western Balkans under the Berlin Process, analyses European support for progress in WB region under the Berlin Process with a focus on the period culminating in the 2020 Sofia and 2021 Berlin Summits.



Underpinning Circular Economy progress in the WB countries, underlines the need for full alignment between policy implementation and business innovation for WB countries to be on the front line of CE momentum.



Environmental activism in the WB, identifying what has worked and what has proven challenging, and exploring the role played by the exchange of knowledge and experience at the regional level.

INTERNATIONAL EVENTS

Wake up, Europe?

Berlin, Germany 7 April 2022. The **workshop** "Wake up, Europe? Bosnia-Herzegovina 1992, Ukraine 2022: Young people & their contribution to international solidarity in times of war" held by crossborder factory, CIFE and the Balkan Forum, with the support of the Franco-German Youth Office.



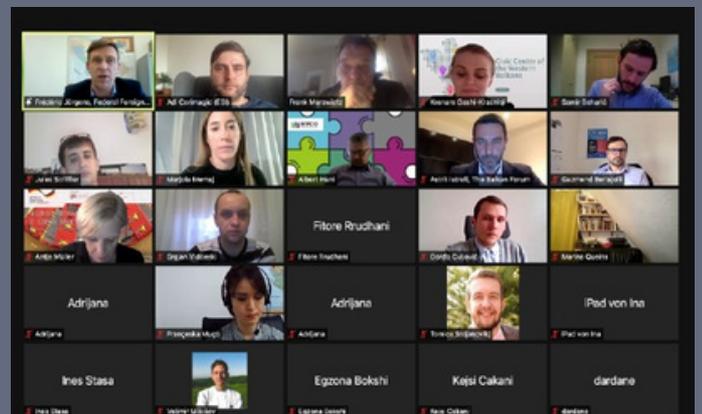
How to deal with the threat of Authoritarianism?

Vienna, Austria 7 April 2022. Organised by the International Institute for Peace, the Balkan Forum, Karl-Renner-Institut and Österreichisches Institut für internationale Politik, experts from the WB and EU analysed the elections held in Serbia and Hungary in 2022 and formulated the **Vienna Declaration** on the issue of dealing with the authoritarianism. Also, the event included a 2-day workshop (see the **report**).



Digital Civic Center of the WB

Berlin, Germany 31 March 2022. **Digital Civic Center** is a platform that will provide civic education and pedagogical support to citizens and existing educational institutions; a structural dialogue with political decision-makers and concrete training measures for its members. It is part of the project "One Way Ticket No More", by crossborder factory in cooperation with RYCO and since 2022 in partnership with the Balkan Forum, supported financially by the German Foreign Office.



INTERNATIONAL EVENTS

New Geopolitics After the Russian Aggression in Ukraine



Prishtina, Kosovo 24 October 2022. The international **conference** “New Geopolitics After the Russian Aggression in Ukraine: Implications for the WB”, is a continuation of the collective efforts by the Balkan Forum, Universum College and Kosovar Institute for Policy Research and Development (KIPRED), under the aegis of the Foreign Affairs and Security Forum (**FAS Forum**), established by the three partners, aimed at facilitating dialogue and interaction on peace, security, and Euro-Atlantic integration processes, and implications for the WB region, and wider Europe.



LogEx Community: Strategic Planning

Skopje, North Macedonia 10–11 November 2022. A year after its establishment, LogEx members gathered in Skopje for a two-day strategic planning meeting, honing its vision for building human capital and strengthening a circular economy in ways that it brings together key stakeholders in the WB while contributing to the commitments of the Berlin Process.



Meeting EU parliamentarians and experts

Brussels, Belgium 16 –17 November 2022. Together with the International Institute for Peace (IIP Vienna), Renner Institut, and young experts from the WB, we exchanged views with MEPs from S&D & EPP and experts from FEPS Europe and CEPS, on the Vienna Declaration on dealing with Authoritarianism, including on issues like reconciliation, EU integration, and history teaching.

BERLIN PROCESS AND MANILA PLAN OF ACTION

Berlin Summit 2022

Since 2018, the BF and members of the WB **Civil Society Platform for Democracy and Human Rights** have been actively contributing to Annual Summits. In 2022, we participated in the consultations preceding the Berlin Summit, as well as in the forums during the summit. Ahead of the summit, we published a research on the progress of the Berlin Process since Sofia and Berlin Summits in 2020 and 2021, along with a **Joint Statement** by 40 CSOs in the WB expressing support for the Berlin Process, and organized a webinar.

Contribution to Manila SGD event – adoption of Draft Platform of Action

Invited by the SSCC, a global network for south-south dialogue established in 2016 in Colombia, a **joint contribution** by the Balkan Forum and the Center for Contemporary Politics in Serbia, has been included in the **Draft Manila Platform of Action** adopted at this SGD event.



BF IN THE REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL MEDIA

In 2022, the BF team featured in prominent national, regional, and international media such as KTV, Gazeta Express, and Klan in Kosovo, CIVIL Today in North Macedonia, N1, Detektor in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Voice of America, TRT World, Haaretz, Al Jazeera (Balkans, English, Arabic, World), Middle East Monitor, Press TV. This included over 30 interviews on Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the brutal Russian aggression against Ukraine, as well as on issues related to freedom, security, democracy, civil rights, regional cooperation, and Euro-Atlantic integration of the WB region.



CONTRIBUTION ON ISSUES OF EUROPEAN AND GLOBAL IMPORTANCE

In 2022, the BF team was invited to participate in various fora to share its views on thorny issues of European and Global significance, among others:

- The Balkan Think Tanks Convention III “Furthering Cooperation under Geopolitical Challenges” 7-9 September 2022, Ankara, Turkey, organized by SETA and the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities. The BF presented its views on EU integration as a never-ending story: How to make sense of deadlocks.
- The International Conference on Global Security – Ukraine Conflict and its Aftermath: Toward a New Systemic Turbulence? held on 11 November 2022. The BF shared its views on: The prominence of International Organizations (NATO and EU) in Times of Global Crisis and Threats.
- The International Conference “Climate Crisis and the Role of VET” 20-22 October 2022, Athens Greece, organized by the European Association of Institutes for Vocational Training.
- World Forum for Democracy, 7-9 November 2022 in Strasbourg, France, organized by the Council of Europe.
- The Conference “The Role of Education in Overcoming the Legacy of the Past in the Western Balkans and Beyond”, 23-24 November 2022 in Prague, Czech Republic, organized by the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- Seminar on the fight against disinformation, organized by CIVIL in North Macedonia, held on 5-10 December 2022.



PROJECTS

Equipping, Empowering and Employing Youth, Women and Other Disadvantaged Groups in five Municipalities of Kosovo

The main outcomes of this **project** funded by the European Union in Kosovo and implemented by the Balkan Forum in partnership with Syri i Vizionit and the Municipality of Istog/Istok, include:

- 301 members of the target group trained;
- 50 enrolled and completed internship;
- 50 obtained certificates from accredited Centres for Professional Advancement;
- 8 social enterprise start-ups established; 20 local business supported with small-scale grants;
- 21 people employed.



These are two hives, we let the bees work on their own as they worked in the past.

Vicinity Chronicles

On 25 February 2022, the BF and the European Movement in Serbia (EMinS) signed a partnership agreement to implement the “Vicinity Chronicles” project, supported by the European Fund for the Balkans. The project aims to inform the public and institutions in the region and the EU on a weekly basis about important social and political events in each of the six WB countries. As part of this cooperation, we published 20 short articles written by young people and civil society activists in Kosovo (see the **blog section** for these and other articles).



How the radical right is proposing a harmful alternative

Living with the challenges of an unknown future

Open questions about the Open Balkan

The BF's YOUTH COOPERATION FUND

Implementation of Small Size Grants by our Grantees

The Balkan Forum provided **Small Size Grants** to three consortia of youth organisations in the WB region to implement cross-border initiatives with the aim of supporting the regions' transition to the circular economy.

These projects that were implemented in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro and North Macedonia between January and June 2022, focused on:

- reducing waste (including food waste);
- promoting reuse, repair, and recycling;
- protecting the environment, including by raising public awareness on the alternatives to single-use plastic in general and to single-use plastic bags in particular; and
- saving energy, water, and natural resources.



UKRAINE

Assistance to Ukraine civil society actors

In March–April 2022, the Balkan Forum visited border areas between Poland and Romania with Ukraine and Moldova to: i) establish contact with Ukraine civil society actors, ii) get a better understanding of the scale and consequences of Russia's brutal aggression against Ukraine, and iii) assist private UK/US donors to develop a pipeline of organizations for support related to Ukraine crisis. Since then, we have been mobilising support in Europe to condemn Russia's aggression and assisting Ukraine civil society actors to connect with donors and international media, as well as to draft campaign messages (see our **Ukraine** section).





Team

Astrit Istrefi
Elhana Dervishi
Fitore Rrudhani
Linda Baleta
Gazmend Berljajli
Jules Striffler
Mamudije Qengaj
Samir Beharić

Board of Experts

Dave Ward
Panagiotis Tzannetakis

Board of Directors

Ms. Ejiris Shoshi
Mr. Haris Pašović
Mr. Henry Smith
Ms. Marika Theros
Ms. Marijana Toma
Mr. Rade Rajkovcevski

Contact us

Email: info@thebalkanforum.org
Tel: +383 38 728 927; +383 49 427 222
Address: TIRANA C4/2 LAM B-N2 11-1,
Prishtina 10000, Kosovo
Web: www.thebalkanforum.org

Follow us on social media



Donors



**Rockefeller
Brothers Fund**
Philanthropy for an Interdependent World



**Funded by
the European Union**