

THE BALKAN FORUM

MONTHLY UPDATE *August 2024*



ENGAGE, CONNECT AND EMPOWER YOUTH FOR A SUSTAINABLE GREEN FUTURE

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In one beautiful city such as Vlora—located in southwest Albania—30 participants from five regional organizations gathered from 26 to 30 of August to continue their journey by contributing to the second “Training of Trainers” program organized in the framework of the “Fast Forward” project. The five days that followed were not only a deep dive into the complexities of their joint mission, which brought together different corners of the Western Balkans, but also about making friendships and gaining new insights into why this project is important to each other.

Day One: It began with warm welcomes and introductions from the participants, representing Build Green Group, Albanian Skills, BRAVO, Eco-Logic, Brigaid EU Project and The Balkan Forum, who shared their visions. As the day progressed, they became familiar with the project’s aims and anticipated outcomes, constructing a joint journey that would cross international frontiers.

Day Two—Experts articulated how climate change interacts, intertwining impacts upon both natural systems and human dimensions. The data came alive, the abstract was realized and made concrete through interactive sessions. The day ended with engaging conversations and group activities that added a burst of energy to the room.

Day Three: The quest for climate data continued, exploring the mysteries of natural variability and the enormous shifts in planetary systems due to environmental decimation. The case studies from Albania animated and colored their discussions with a local flavor, making the global problems they were examining together feel more familiar.

Day Four: All about adaptation, both in theory and practice. Participants reflected on new technologies and adaptation strategies, showcasing a variety of Western Balkans case studies that demonstrated resilience in the face of challenges. Creativity sparked during workshops, leading to strategies that could be implemented across the region.

Day Five: The book-end of a great story. The morning was filled with group presentations, providing evidence of learning and collaboration. Closing reflections were shared as the day came to an end, followed by a ceremony that honored not just what was learned in training but also how it united them.

The project “Engage, Connect and Empower Youth for a Sustainable Green Future,” funded by the European Union (EU), aligns with two main concerns of young Europeans: quality education and a sustainable Europe. The project is being developed in collaboration with six organizations: Build Green Group and Albanian Skills from Albania, BRAVO from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Eco-Logic from North Macedonia, The Balkan Forum from Kosovo, and Brigaid EU Project from Spain.

The views and opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor the granting authority is responsible for them.



**Yours,
Drenusha Canolli
Project Manager
The Balkan Forum**





THE BALKAN FORUM PODCAST

Empowering Students: A Conversation with Ilir Kiçmari

An insightful episode with Ilir Kiçmari, a dynamic student activist and a passionate advocate for solving student issues. Ilir finished his studies in Computer Science at Universiteti i Prishtinës, Fakulteti i Shkencave Matematike Natyrore, and has a background in Financial Mathematics from RTU – Rīgas Tehniskā universitāte. In this episode, Ilir shares his journey from academia to activism, discussing how he founded an organization dedicated to addressing the challenges faced by students today. We dive into the initiatives he's leading, the impact he's making, and his vision for the future of education and student welfare.



In the "Next Gen" series of The Balkan Forum podcast, student Ilir Kiçmari discussed academic life and activism, among other topics. As a successful student in the field of mathematics, he has recognized the importance of raising his voice to advocate for meeting students' demands for higher quality education. His work has shown success, including various collaborations, improvements in academic quality, and increased interest from other students in extracurricular activities.

"It is important to be able to balance academic life with being an activist. However,, these two have a lot in common. While studies prepare you for a certain profession, being an activist equips you with skills that are essential for life beyond university. My advice would be that whatever you are doing, focus on it 100%."



We revisited the podcast episode from the "Balkans and Beyond" series featuring guest Xhabir Deralla. Additionally, we shared key highlights from that interview. The conversation covered topics such as combating fake news, the situation in North Macedonia after the elections, and the work of the organization he founded in 1999, CIVIL.

"Only two out of ten people read more than a title, a headline. And those two that remain that read more, only one goes lower than the first paragraph, eventually to the end. That's really dangerous. That's something that gives room, gives space to propaganda, to fake news, to disinformation and other forms of hybrid threats against democracy." - Xhabir Deralla journalist and founder of Civil MK on the "Balkans and Beyond" series of The Balkan Forum podcast.

THE BALKAN FORUM
PODCAST EPISODES

ToKeQark Project

Youth groups from four municipalities participating in the ToKeQark project continued their activities and awareness campaigns throughout August. Among other things, The Balkan Forum hosted representatives of youth groups from the municipalities of Ferizaj and Mitrovica in their office, where they were awarded certificates of appreciation in recognition of their tireless work and activism.

