

The Balkan Forum

Civil Society and Think Tank Forum 2024: A Key Gathering for Regional Cooperation

From October 9-11, The Balkan Forum joined 115 civil society representatives at the Civil Society and Think Tank Forum 2024, organized by the Aspen Institute and the South East Europe Institute. The event featured a series of impactful activities, including a conference opened by Dr. Anna Lührmann, Germany's Minister of State for Europe and Climate, with further contributions from Special Representative Manuel Sarrazin, Ambassador René Troccaz, and six ministers from the Western Balkans.

One of the forum's highlights was a workshop titled "Enabling Spaces for Civil Society," which fostered high-level exchanges between decision-makers and civil society representatives. Additionally, participants presented a comprehensive mapping study, "10 Years of the Berlin Process," to leaders of the Western Balkans, emphasizing the decade-long journey and progress made under the initiative.

The 2024 Berlin Process Summit focused on key regional milestones, including the advancement of CEFTA agreements, the release of a new Common Regional Market Plan, and the establishment of a fifth regional mobility agreement. Further supporting regional cooperation, Kosovo announced the abolition of its visa regime for Bosnian and Herzegovinian citizens, effective January 1, 2025.

This event provided a valuable platform for networking, where representatives could connect with like-minded individuals and explore new avenues for future collaboration.

Yours,
Gazmend Bërlajolli
Executive Director
The Balkan Forum



Eco Champions



The Eco Champions project represents a collaborative effort to tackle one of the most pressing challenges of our time—sustainable waste management within the framework of the EU Green Deal. This dynamic initiative is designed to actively engage citizens and communities in discussions and activities centered on sustainable waste management policies at both EU and regional levels. This project aims to foster democratic participation in policy-making processes, encourage civic responsibility, and instill a sense of pride across local and regional landscapes.

Our journey began with a virtual meeting that introduced all six partners: Connect and Bond Beter Leefmilieu from Belgium, Cohesion Network 2gether from Greece, The Balkan Forum from Kosovo, La Bien Paga from Spain, and Crhack Lab from Italy. We're excited to announce that the official kickoff meeting is set to take place in early December in Prishtina, marking the start of an active and engaged partnership.

Supported by the European Union, Eco Champions will implement core activities in Belgium, Spain, Italy, Greece, and Kosovo, creating spaces for community-driven action and dialogue.

We are thrilled to share this journey with you and look forward to making sustainable change possible, together!



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Towards 2030



Mila Pajić

Youth Initiative for Human Rights (YIHR – Serbia)
Activist and one of the founders of STAV
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In a compelling new blog post titled “If we had learned about war...”, activist Mila Pajić delves into the transformative power of education—not only in shaping minds but in building a future grounded in peace and reconciliation.

Mila challenges us to reflect on the stories left untold in history lessons, posing critical questions: What are the consequences when young people aren't taught the full truth about war? How might perspectives shift if students learned about past conflicts with an emphasis on compassion and accountability?

Published in honor of World Teachers' Day marked on October 5, this piece urges us to consider the knowledge we pass to future generations—and the essential gaps we still need to bridge in our region.

This blog is part of the Towards 2030 initiative, which promotes regional collaboration across the Western Balkans with the support of our dedicated partners: Build Green Group (Albania), Centar za obrazovanje i druženje Jajce - COD (Bosnia & Herzegovina), Civil MK – Center for Freedom (North Macedonia), and YIHR Srbija (Serbia).



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Fast Forward



The Fast Forward project is moving forward, and we're excited to announce the start of its youth exchange phase! After the first exchange in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, we've now opened the call for applications for the second Youth Exchange, set to take place in Struga, North Macedonia, from December 1-6.

This exchange is a unique chance for young people across the region to come together, share experiences, and develop skills to advance a sustainable, green future.

It is being developed in partnership 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.

Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

Thirrje për pjesëmarrje në shkëmbim rinor:

“Fast Forward”

Angazhohu, Lidhu dhe Fuqizo të Rinjtë për një të Ardhme të Gjelbër të Qëndrueshme

01-06 dhjetor 2024
Struga, Maqedoni e Veriut

Logos: BF, BUILD GREEN GROUP, albanianskills, BRAVO, eco, BRIGAD CONNECT

The BF podcast

As the world undergoes rapid transformation, so too must the media, stepping up to meet the urgent need for accurate, impactful reporting on environmental issues. This belief drives Green Journalism in Kosovo, an initiative founded by Behare Bajraktari, a journalist with over 25 years of experience.

“This initiative emerged from the necessity brought on by the rapid transformation of the world. Media must adapt as well, to better inform citizens—because that’s why we do what we do. Let us be the first to spread the word about climate change, environmental issues, and the European Green Deal, especially for Kosovo and the Balkans,” said Behare.



Regional Engagement

From October 21–23, our Research Officer, Samir Beharić participated in the European Fund for the Balkans (EFB) conference, titled “Failure of policy – failure of process – what next?” As part of the conference, our Samir moderated the panel “Bosnia and Herzegovina – Back to Square One? How to End Stagnation?” with esteemed panelists, including Damir Kapidžić (University of Sarajevo), Ivana Korajlić (Transparency International BiH), Adi Ćerimagić (European Stability Initiative), and Lejla Kusturica (Foundation ACT). The discussion delved into Bosnia’s ongoing challenges—from political deadlock to environmental threats—highlighting the importance of EFB’s continued support.



On October 29–30, Samir attended a seminar in Skopje on advocating for youth work in Eastern and South-East Europe, organized by the Council of Europe – European Union Youth Partnership. As a follow-up to previous regional seminars, this event gathered experts to discuss the conditions and challenges surrounding youth work in the region. He presented a study on youth brain drain, contributing to a critical dialogue about the future of youth engagement and the urgent need for solutions to retain young talent.

