

# OUR WORK



THE BALKAN FORUM **ACTIVITIES IN 2024**

[WWW.THEBALKANFORUM.ORG](http://WWW.THEBALKANFORUM.ORG)

***We work  
to create a  
new vision  
for the  
Balkan  
region***

This overview of the Balkan Forum's (The BF) activities in 2024 outlines our sustained commitment to driving advocacy, establishing new partnerships, carrying out significant projects, and organizing events throughout the Western Balkans (WB) and beyond. We remain dedicated to supporting civil society organizations in the region and across Europe. These efforts were made possible through the support of our main donor, the **Rockefeller Brothers Fund (RBF)** as well as other donors.

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THE BALKAN  
FORUM  
BF



# CIRCULAR ECONOMY (CE) WEEK

## SUSTAINABLE BRIDGES: UNITE, UPLIFT, UPCYCLE

The third annual Western Balkans Circular Economy Week took place on 27-31 May, 2024. This year's theme was **"Sustainable Bridges: Unite, Uplift, Upcycle"**.

Organizations from the Western Balkan countries, members of the LogEx community, held a series of parallel activities that aim to boost promotion of good practices and knowledge, but also the challenges and prospects of the circular economy in the region.

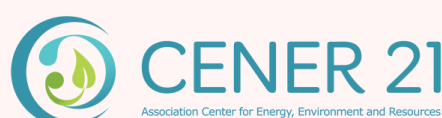
The regional initiative of the LogEx community – founded by The Balkan Forum – aims to revolutionize the Western Balkans' approach to sustainable development, by promoting circular economy practices. By bringing together different actors, including academia, civil society organizations, media, businesses and experts, we aim to foster cooperation and encourage meaningful changes in the region.

As part of the LogEx community, partner organizations in the Western Balkans organized key events during Circular Economy Week 2024. **Build Green Group (BGG)** in Albania hosted a webinar on May 28th in Valbona, focusing on waste management, and a session on May 30th with Cameron Price discussing the principles of the circular economy and innovative solutions. **COD Jajce** organized a workshop on May 28th to promote green entrepreneurship and the integration of circular economy practices into business. **UNI-Universum International College** held the Sustainable Fashion Festival, where students showcased designs made from recyclable materials and debated the role of the textile industry in Kosovo's regional economy. **CIVIL** hosted an online conference on May 31st, bringing together civil society organizations to discuss the perspectives of the circular economy in times of war and insecurity. **CENER21** organized a workshop for media professionals and students in Bosnia and Herzegovina, focusing on effectively communicating circular economy principles and environmental advocacy.

We were happy to welcome **Zero Waste Montenegro** to the LogEx Community in 2024! ZWM, dedicated to promoting sustainable waste management practices and advocating for a zero-waste lifestyle, brings valuable expertise and passion to our team. We look forward to collaborating with Zero Waste Montenegro on future initiatives and to the impactful contributions they will make towards advancing circular economy practices in the region. Their addition strengthens our shared mission of creating a more sustainable and circular future for the Western Balkans.



# logex





# PROJECTS 1/4

## ToKeQark

In 2024, The Balkan Forum successfully implemented the ToKeQark project across four municipalities in Kosovo—**Ferizaj**, **Fushë Kosova**, **Graçanica**, and **Mitrovica**. Focused on promoting environmental sustainability and climate change mitigation, the project highlighted the pivotal role of youth in driving community-led initiatives.

### Key Achievements and Takeaways:

#### Youth Leadership in Action:

- Over 60 young people from diverse backgrounds and ethnicities participated in discussions addressing 21st-century environmental challenges.
- Participants received training on critical soft and green skills, empowering them as advocates for sustainability.

#### Community Engagement Activities:

- 21 interactive events included four art installations made from recyclable materials, four public debates, and four awareness campaigns promoting circular economy principles.
- Four roundtable discussions in each municipality established the informal ToKeQark network to foster collaboration among stakeholders.

### Educational and Financial Support:

- Five students received green scholarships, enabling them to pursue initiatives in innovation, technology, green futures, and peace education.

### Extensive Outreach:

- The project reached over 90,572 individuals through social media campaigns, televised debates, and community activities.
- Youth-led efforts were amplified via local public TV channels, sparking widespread community dialogue on environmental issues.

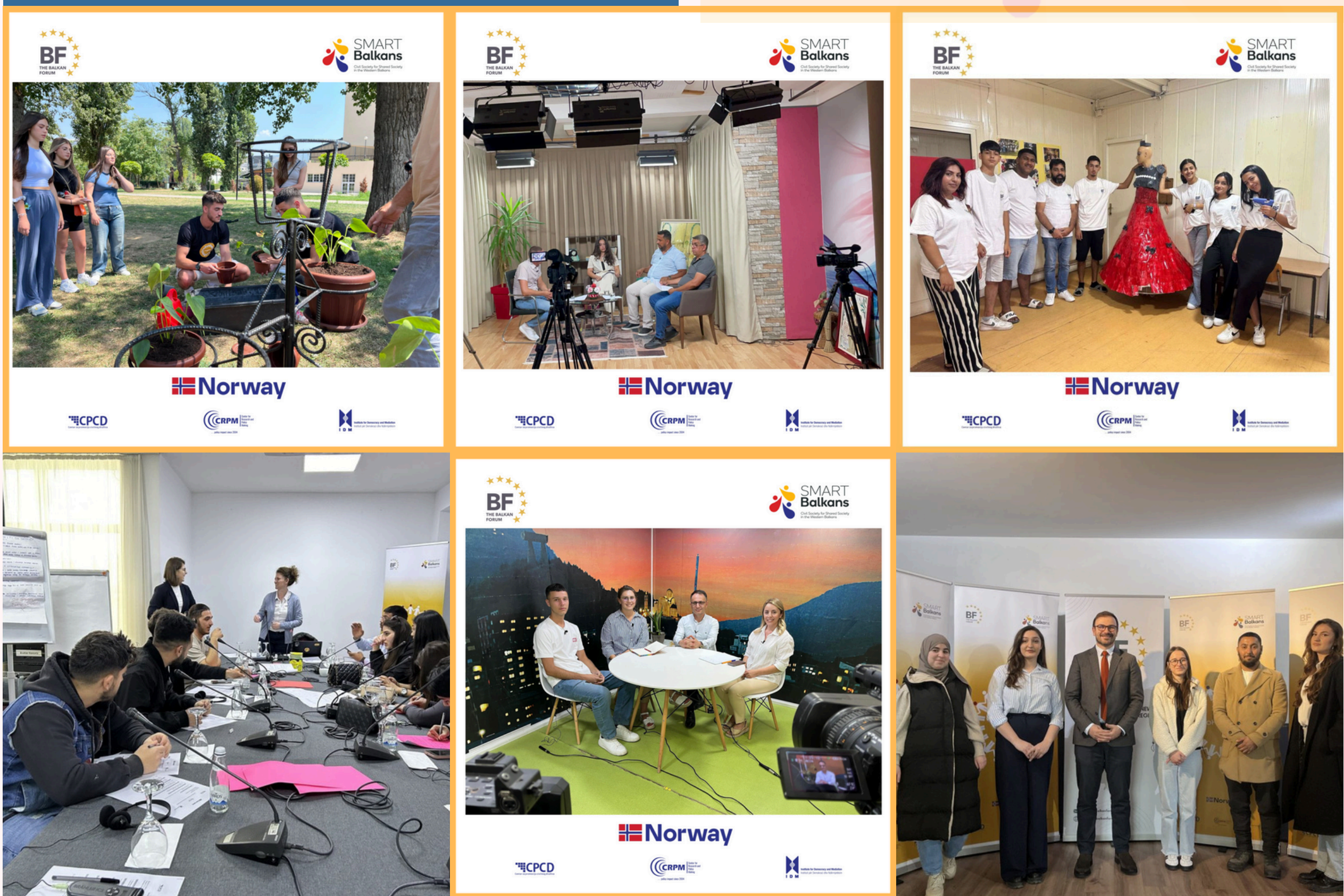
### Community Impact:

- Youth groups worked alongside local stakeholders to promote recycling, climate awareness, and sustainable practices.
- The project fostered a culture of environmental responsibility while emphasizing the importance of the circular economy for a sustainable future.

### Highlights:

ToKeQark not only empowered youth to take active roles in environmental protection but also created a platform for cross-community collaboration. By integrating innovative activities and leveraging media outreach, the project inspired a broader commitment to sustainability and positioned young people as catalysts for change.

For more information and project updates, visit BF's webpage [\[here\]](#).





# PROJECTS 3/4

## Fast Forward

Launched in March 2024, the Fast Forward project, led by Build Green Group and implemented by a consortium of five organizations across the Western Balkans and Spain, is fostering youth-led sustainability and environmental protection. Through youth exchanges, workshops, and training sessions, the initiative is equipping young people with the tools and skills to drive positive environmental change.

### Key Achievements and Activities:

#### Collaborative Consortium:

- Partners include **Build Green Group** (Albania), **Albanian Skills** (Albania), **BRAVO** (Bosnia and Herzegovina), **Eco-Logic** (North Macedonia), **The Balkan Forum** (Kosovo), and **Brigaid EU Project** (Spain).
- A joint effort to promote regional cooperation and knowledge sharing for sustainability.

#### Training of Trainers (ToT):

- Two sessions held: one in Valencia, Spain, and another in Vlora, Albania.
- 60 participants trained in leadership, communication, and youth engagement strategies to champion sustainability efforts.

#### Youth Exchanges:

- Two exchanges in 2024: Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Struga, North Macedonia.
- Each exchange brought together 30 youth participants to share experiences, learn skills, and discuss strategies for environmental action.
- A third exchange is planned for February 3-7, 2025 in Peja, Kosovo, with two additional exchanges to follow.

### Skill Development and Empowerment:

- Training sessions emphasized leadership, communication, and sustainability-focused initiatives.
- More than 60 participants are now better equipped to lead programs and projects promoting green futures in their communities.

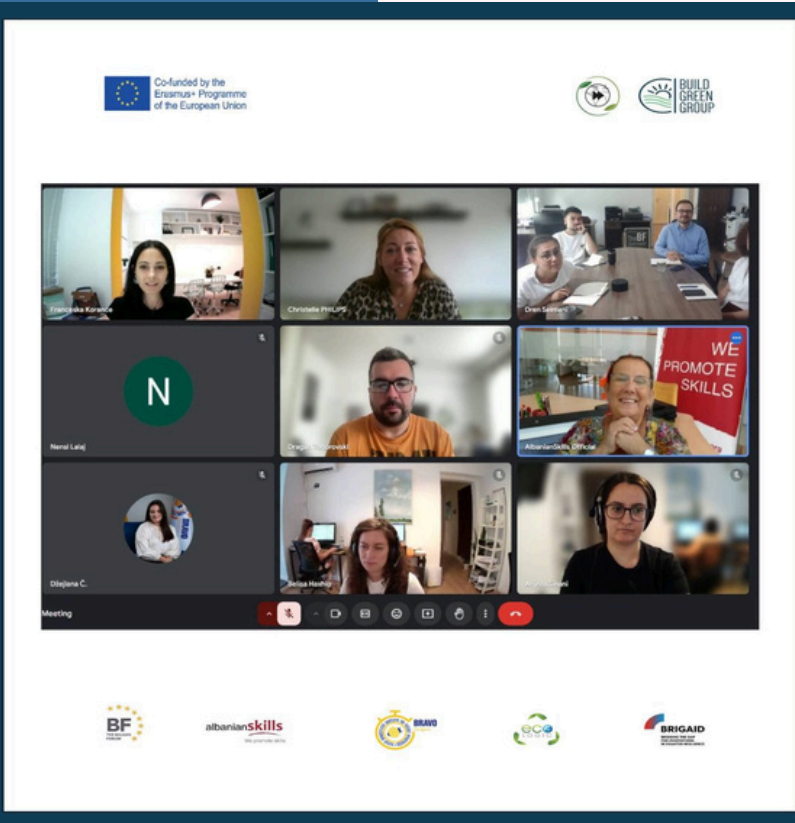
### Regional Impact:

- The project is building a strong network of youth leaders across the Western Balkans, united by a shared vision of environmental responsibility and sustainability.

### Highlights:

Fast Forward is not just about skill-building; it's about creating a movement. By fostering cross-border collaboration and empowering youth, the project is shaping the next generation of leaders who will champion a sustainable green future for the Western Balkans and beyond.

For updates on upcoming youth exchanges and project activities, visit BF's web page [\[here\]](#).



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# PROJECTS 4/4

## Eco Champions

Initiated in 2024, the Eco Champions project tackles sustainable waste management within the framework of the EU Green Deal. The initiative promotes community engagement, democratic participation in environmental policymaking, and civic responsibility to inspire pride in sustainable practices at local and regional levels.

The project promotes democratic participation in policy-making and fosters civic responsibility, encouraging individuals to take pride in sustainable practices in their local and regional environments.

The project involves six partner organizations: **Connect Your City** and **Bond Beter Leefmilieu** (Belgium), **Cohesion Network 2gether** (Greece), **The Balkan Forum** (Kosovo), **La Bien Paga** (Spain), and **Crhack Lab** (Italy). These partners are working together to create spaces for community-driven action and dialogue. The official kickoff meeting for the project took place in December 2024 in Prishtina, Kosovo, marking the start of an active and engaged partnership. Eco Champions is supported by the European Union and is expected to implement core activities across Belgium, Spain, Italy, Greece, and Kosovo.



### Kickoff Meeting:

- Organized by BF in December 2024 in Prishtina, Kosovo, with 26 participants from six countries (Belgium, Greece, Kosovo, Italy, Spain, and the Netherlands).
- Focused on aligning partner organizations with the project's vision and objectives.

### Engaging Sessions:

- Panels and Discussions: Explored the needs and challenges in waste management and shared best practices in citizen engagement.
- Workshop: Facilitated the co-creation of innovative ideas for the Eco-Marathons.
- Presentations: Outlined the design and structure of the Eco-Marathons to ensure cohesive implementation.
- Networking: Strengthened inter-organizational relationships and encouraged collaborative problem-solving.

### Outcomes:

- Established a shared understanding among partners of the project's goals and their roles in achieving them.
- Laid the foundation for the Eco-Marathons, which will serve as a platform for community-driven action and engagement.

### Looking Ahead:

Eco Champions is set to implement a series of core activities across partner countries, including Eco-Marathons designed to engage communities in sustainable waste management practices. By encouraging democratic participation and fostering civic pride, the project is poised to contribute to the EU Green Deal's objectives and inspire meaningful environmental change. For updates and information on upcoming Eco-Marathons, visit BF's web page [\[here\]](#).



**The Greenbridge** project, launched in 2024, aims to foster regional collaboration on environmental sustainability by connecting youth from the Western Balkans through workshops and exchanges focused on green innovation. The first virtual meeting for the project was held in December 2024, and the official kickoff is scheduled to take place in Sofia, Bulgaria, in January 2025.




# PUBLICATIONS

Beyond the Headlines: Identifying Disinformation and its Threats to the Western Balkans



EU’s Digital Regulation Model as an Example for the World to Follow



United Against Falsehoods: How Kosovo and Czechia Can Overcome Disinformation




Information is the power and oxygen of democracy: Public information is public, not secret!



Poland’s vigilance and its Echoes in Western Balkans




If We Had Learned About War...



Foreign actors in the CEE and Western Balkans



Tolerance – A Path to Change or an Excuse for the Status Quo?



The Rise of Right-Wing Support in the 2024 EU Parliamentary Elections: An Analytical Overview



Sixteen Days Are Not Enough



The hollow promise of global peace: How power politics and inaction fuel conflict



Western Balkans at a Crossroads: A Common Vision





# BERLIN PROCESS

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

From October 9-11, 2024, 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.



# INTERNATIONAL EVENTS

From October 21-23, Samir Beharić, Research Officer at The Balkan Forum, moderated a panel at the **European Fund for the Balkans (EFB)** conference on Bosnia and Herzegovina's stagnation. He discussed ongoing challenges with experts like Damir Kapidžić and Ivana Korajlić. On October 29-30, Samir attended a seminar in Skopje on youth work, presenting a study on youth brain drain and advocating for solutions to retain young talent in Eastern and South-East Europe.



## Western Balkans at a Crossroads: A Common Vision

The Balkan Forum, in collaboration with the **International Institute for Peace (IIP)**, **Österreichisches Institut Für Internationale Politik (oioip)**, and the **Karl-Renner Institut**, hosted an impactful event in Vienna, bringing together young experts, activists, and stakeholders to address the pressing challenges facing the Western Balkans.

Workshops:

- Navigating identity conflicts for lasting stability.
- Citizen participation & democracy as tools for prosperity.

Public Debate: Is the EU still a transformative power in the Western Balkans?

The event facilitated rich discussions on strategies for unity, cooperation, and reform, with a strong emphasis on the role of youth in shaping the region's future.





# THE BF PODCAST

The Balkan Forum proudly re-launched its podcast series, offering a fresh platform for in-depth discussions on important regional and global issues. The re-launch brings new episodes featuring a variety of topics, with experts, activists, and thought leaders sharing insights and perspectives on key challenges facing the Western Balkans and beyond. This renewed series aims to engage audiences in meaningful conversations that drive positive change and foster regional cooperation.

Fjollë Caka - Climate Resilience Specialist



“Greening the Western Balkans”

Donarta Fetahu - Student



“Next Gen”

Xhabir Deralla - Journalist, CIVIL



“Balkans and Beyond”

Elvira Ibrahim - CEO, Founder of Accell



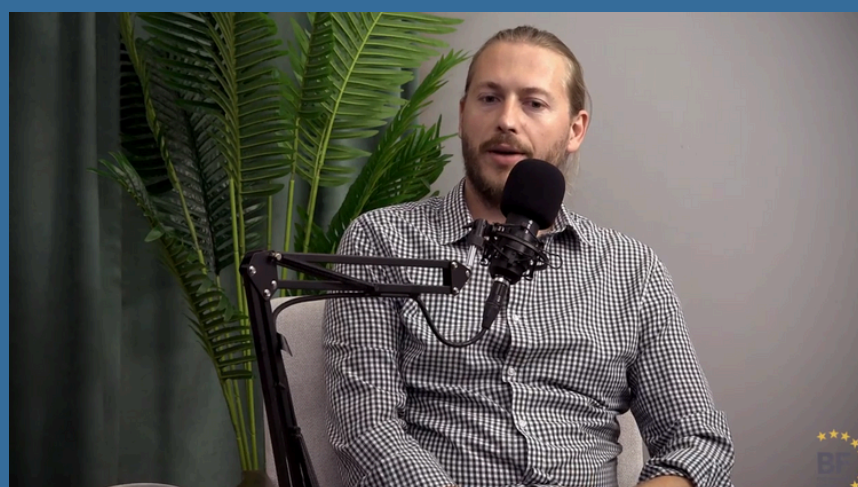
“Bold Balkan Women”

Ilir Kijmari - Student



“Next Gen”

Arbër Fetahu - Civil Society Activist



“Balkans and Beyond”

Behare Bajraktari - Journalist, founder of Green Journalism



“Greening the Western Balkans”

## TOWARDS 2030 INITIATIVE

In 2024, **The Balkan Forum** launched the **"Towards 2030"** initiative, a platform designed to connect the Western Balkans to global conversations by featuring regional perspectives on pressing global issues. This initiative brought together writers from **Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia** to share their unique insights on topics such as security, sustainability, democracy, human rights, innovation, climate change, and social progress. As part of this initiative, 26 blogs will be written, contributing to the broader regional dialogue. To date, 6 blogs have been published, providing valuable perspectives on the aforementioned themes. These blogs serve as an important tool for sharing knowledge and fostering understanding between the Western Balkans and the global community, while also highlighting the region's contributions to ongoing discussions on key global challenges.







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**Drenusha Canolli** - Project Manager

**Gonxhe Konjufca** - Communications Officer

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