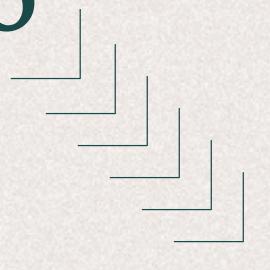




THE
BALKAN
FORUM

MONTHLY UPDATE

January, 2026



Eco Champions Consortium Meets in Valladolid

In January, The Balkan Forum, together with its consortium partners in the Eco Champions project: **Connect Brussels**, **CO2gether**, **Bond Beter Leefmilieu**, **La Bien Pagá Espacio Escénico** and **CRHACK LAB FOLIGNO 4D**, participated in the 3rd Transnational Project Meeting, hosted by La Bien Pagá in **Valladolid, Spain**.

The meeting provided an important opportunity to reflect on **progress achieved** so far and to coordinate the next phase of project implementation. Partners shared updates on ongoing activities, aligned responsibilities and discussed upcoming milestones aimed at strengthening the project's overall impact.

Discussions focused on advancing key project outputs, improving accessibility of materials and reinforcing dissemination efforts. Particular attention was given to the development of the **Eco Champions digital platform**, with partners reviewing its structure, planned features and timeline. The next steps include an online co creation workshop in early March, followed by a pilot phase with selected users and full deployment by the end of the month.

The consortium also progressed planning for upcoming activities, including the Food Bank event in Patras, the online **Eco Champions Ceremony** and the **Final Project Event** scheduled for **June 2026 in Patras, Greece**. In parallel, partners discussed the preparation of national and transnational recommendations that will reflect the project's outcomes and lessons learned.

Through its participation in the meeting, The Balkan Forum reaffirmed its commitment to promoting environmental sustainability, civic engagement and cross sector cooperation, while contributing actively to the collective work of the Eco Champions consortium.



Kosovo's Election Proved a Point

A recent analysis published by The Balkan Forum examined **Kosovo's latest elections** as a moment that challenged long-standing narratives about **democracy in the Western Balkans**. Rather than being defined by instability or dispute, the electoral process demonstrated institutional functionality, citizen participation, and political maturity in a complex regional context.

The article emphasizes that, despite unresolved political challenges, the elections were competitive, inclusive, and largely uncontested. Voter engagement remained strong, political competition unfolded within institutional frameworks, and the results were accepted without major disruption. In a region where elections are often perceived as zero-sum struggles, this represented a meaningful sign of democratic resilience.

At the same time, the analysis acknowledged that Kosovo's democracy remains imperfect. Issues such as polarization, economic pressure, and procedural delays persist. Particular attention was given to the post-election phase, where extended recount procedures raised concerns about institutional timelines and public communication.

The blog concludes that democracy does not depend on ideal conditions, but on continued participation, accountability, and institutional trust. Kosovo's experience, while not without challenges, demonstrated that political transformation can take place through ballots rather than instability, reinforcing the importance of civic engagement in shaping the country's democratic future.

Author: Arta Haxhixhemajli, Researcher at The Balkan Forum



GreenBridge - Policy Brief Completed under WP2 – Needs Analysis

During the month of January, the BF team finalized the GreenBridge policy brief, a comprehensive document presenting key findings and actionable policy recommendations to support evidence-based decision-making in the VET sector. The policy brief has been completed in both Albanian and Bosnian and was uploaded as an official project deliverable by 31 January. With this achievement, the final result under **WP2 – Needs Analysis in the Field of Green and Digital Skills in the Western Balkan Region** has been successfully completed, contributing to the project's broader dissemination and stakeholder engagement objectives.

Next steps: In the coming period, we will focus on organizing a stakeholder roundtable in the first week of March, bringing together approximately 20 relevant stakeholders to present the policy brief, encourage dialogue, and gather feedback on the proposed recommendations.



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