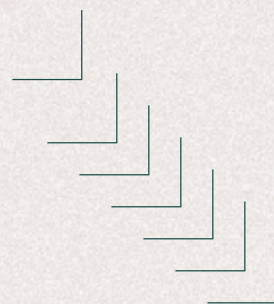


MONTHLY UPDATE

August, 2026



Eco Champions Concludes with a Lasting Legacy for Sustainable Waste Management

After an inspiring journey across five European communities, the EU co-funded **Eco Champions** project has come to an end. The Balkan Forum was proud to represent Kosovo as part of a consortium involving partners from Belgium, Greece, Italy, Spain, and Kosovo. **Launched in December 2024, the project promoted sustainable waste management in households and public spaces** while encouraging civic participation, community responsibility, and citizen involvement in local decision-making.

Throughout its implementation, Eco Champions directly engaged **5,598 participants**, exceeding its initial target by more than twofold, and achieved a cumulative digital reach of **677,139 through 291 dissemination activities**. **Five regional Eco-Challenges** were organized in **Brussels, Foligno, Prishtina, Valladolid, and Patras**, connecting environmental awareness with practical community action. The project also engaged **253 stakeholders** across **15 countries**, created **49 educational resources**, awarded **306 digital Eco-Badges**, and developed **10 transnational policy recommendations informed by 1,067 citizen votes and signatures**.

Project activities included gathering public input through an **online questionnaire**, assessing local **waste-management needs**, and **facilitating dialogue among public institutions, civil society, the private sector, and young people**. These efforts highlighted the need for stronger enforcement, improved recycling and waste-sorting infrastructure, greater institutional coordination, and meaningful citizen participation.

A major milestone was the Eco Festival – **Prishtina Sustainable Design Week 2025, organized by The Balkan Forum in collaboration with DYVO Lab**. The festival engaged more than **400 participants** through an **Upcycling Design Marathon**, an **Interactive Eco Quiz**, a **Waste Sorting Challenge**, an anthropology workshop, exhibitions, and thematic conferences. By bringing together young people, educators, artists, designers, institutions, diplomats, and citizens, the festival transformed Prishtina into a vibrant space for sustainable design, creativity, and intergenerational collaboration.

Although the project has formally concluded, its legacy continues through the **knowledge, partnerships, educational materials, policy recommendations, and good practices developed across the participating communities**. Eco Champions demonstrated that lasting environmental change begins locally—when informed citizens, responsive institutions, and engaged communities **work together toward a shared and sustainable future**.

Explore the Eco Champions journey and its results.



Eco Champions in Action: Highlights from Our Journey



ECO-CHAMPIONS:

Scale, Inclusion, and Regional Green Festivals



Co-funded by
the European Union

PROJECT HERO SUCCESS (DIRECT REACH & VISIBILITY)

5,598

Total Direct
Participants



677,139

Cumulative
Digital Reach



Generated via 291
dissemination
activities across
local, national, and
European levels

10

Transnational Policy
Recommendations



Delivered to
authorities
based on 1,067
citizen votes
and signatures

THE 5 REGIONAL ECO-CHALLENGES

Belgium (Brussels)



1,084%
Actual vs. Target
(2,179 Actual)

Key highlight: Strict zero-plastic
policy and massive modal shift to
eco-transport.

Italy (Foligno)



100%
Actual vs. Target
(230 Actual)

Highlight: Intergenerational walks
along Roman aqueducts; 78%
youth participation.

Kosovo (Pristina)



174%
Actual vs. Target
(401 Actual)

Highlight: Upcycling workshops
and active networking with
national policymakers.

Spain (Valladolid)



100%
Actual vs. Target
(200 Actual)

Highlight: Land art on the River
Pisuerga; hosted in vulnerable
neighborhoods.

Greece (Patras)



119%
Actual vs. Target
(274 Actual)

Key highlight: Women-led Food
Rescue Programme; high
inclusion (53% seniors, 34% PWD).

DEMOGRAPHIC OVERPERFORMANCE AND DURABLE POLICY & CIVIC LEGACY



Massive Women & Youth Engagement



Exceeding Inclusion Targets



253 Unique
Stakeholders
Engaged

Includes 16 local
and 11 national
authorities across
15 countries



3.3x
Planned Educational
Resources

49 new resources
created alongside 306
digital eco-badges
awarded



Co-funded by
the European Union

Coordinator: CONNECT
Partners: GETHER, THE BALKAN FORUM, LABOUR PAGA, egrina, Info def



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THE BALKAN FORUM

New Blogs Examine Montenegro's and Albania's Paths Towards the EU

During August, The Balkan Forum published two analytical blogs written by Benjamin Jenkins Wise, Political Science Graduate and UNCTAD Intern, examining the contrasting trajectories of Montenegro and Albania on their paths towards European Union membership.

“Montenegro’s Path Towards the EU: A Small Country Setting the Pace” examines Montenegro’s position as the leading EU candidate in the Western Balkans. It highlights the country’s progress in accession negotiations, political and public support for EU membership, and the institutional reforms that have moved it closer to membership, while acknowledging the remaining challenges related to judicial independence, anti-corruption efforts, and domestic political divisions.

“Albania’s Path Towards the EU: Reform Ambitions Colliding With Domestic Crisis” explores the widening gap between Albania’s ambition to join the EU by 2030 and its domestic political challenges. The analysis focuses on political unrest, institutional credibility, the independence of anti-corruption bodies, and the importance of concrete rule-of-law reforms for maintaining progress in the accession process.

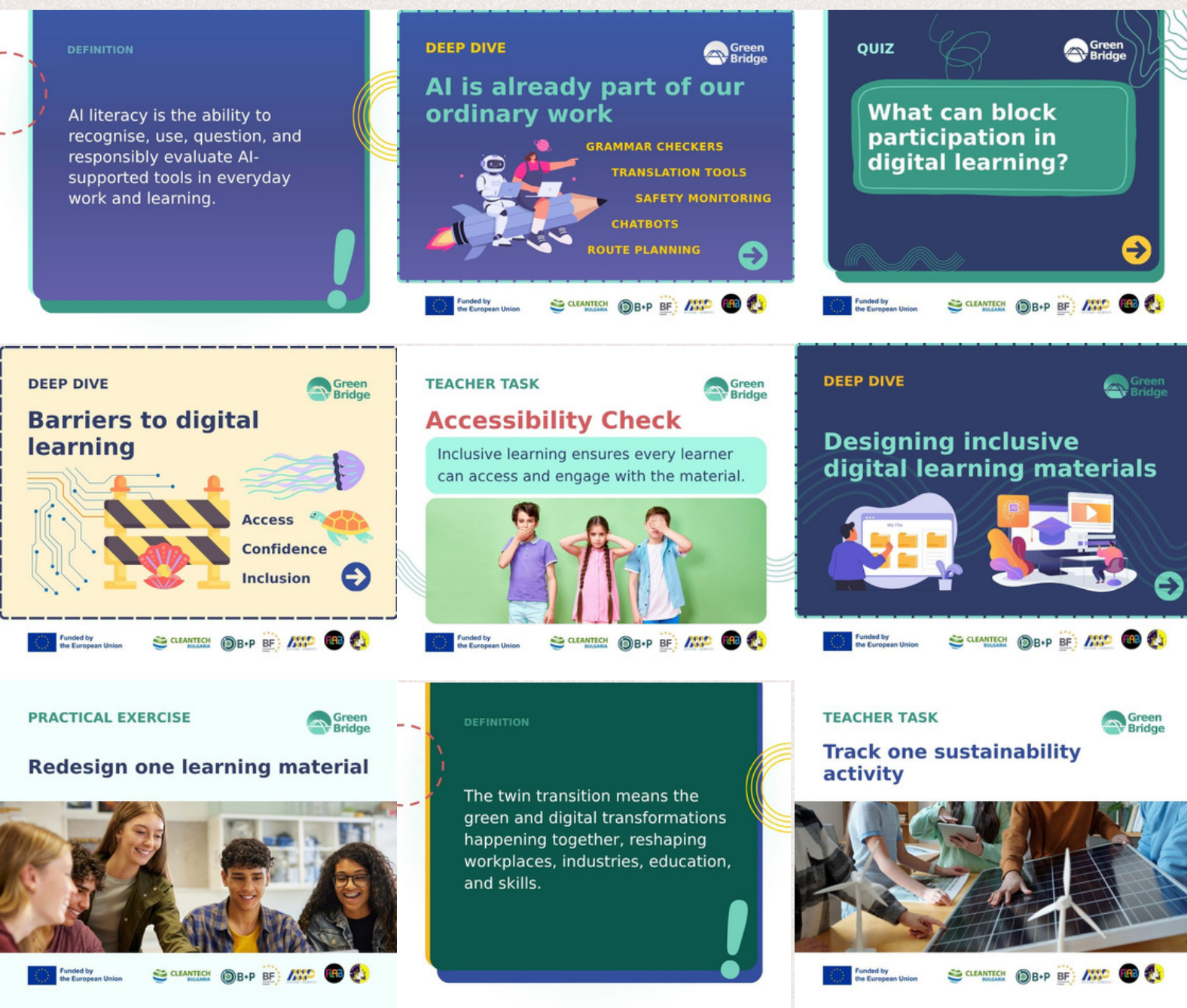
Together, the two blogs provide a timely comparison of how domestic governance, political stability, and institutional reform continue to shape the European integration prospects of Western Balkan countries.



GREENBRIDGE in Focus: August Updates

Throughout August, The Balkan Forum continued supporting the communication and visibility of the **GREENBRIDGE** project by sharing the latest posts published through the project's main channels. These updates helped keep audiences informed about the project's ongoing work and key messages, in line with the latest dissemination and visibility guidelines.

Below are highlights from the GREENBRIDGE posts shared during August.



Upcoming: Women in Diplomacy and Peace

The Balkan Forum is developing the **Women in Diplomacy and Peace** initiative in collaboration with Dr. Jeta Abazi, Fulbright Research Visitor at IPDGC within the School of Media and Public Affairs at George Washington University.

The initiative seeks to challenge persistent misconceptions about women's roles in diplomacy, peacebuilding, and state-building while highlighting their historical and contemporary contributions to Kosovo's diplomatic evolution.

By connecting academic insight with public dialogue, it aims to promote a more inclusive understanding of women's essential role in building institutions and advancing peace. Further details will be announced as they are confirmed.



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info@thebalkanforum.org