

Looking Back, Moving Forward: Integrated Policy Insights on Digital Transformation, Health and the Green Deal

Marija Jevtic, MD PhD

Health



Looking Back, Moving Forward: *A Reflection on the Western Balkans Health Policy Trajectory*

Marija Jevtic, MD PhD

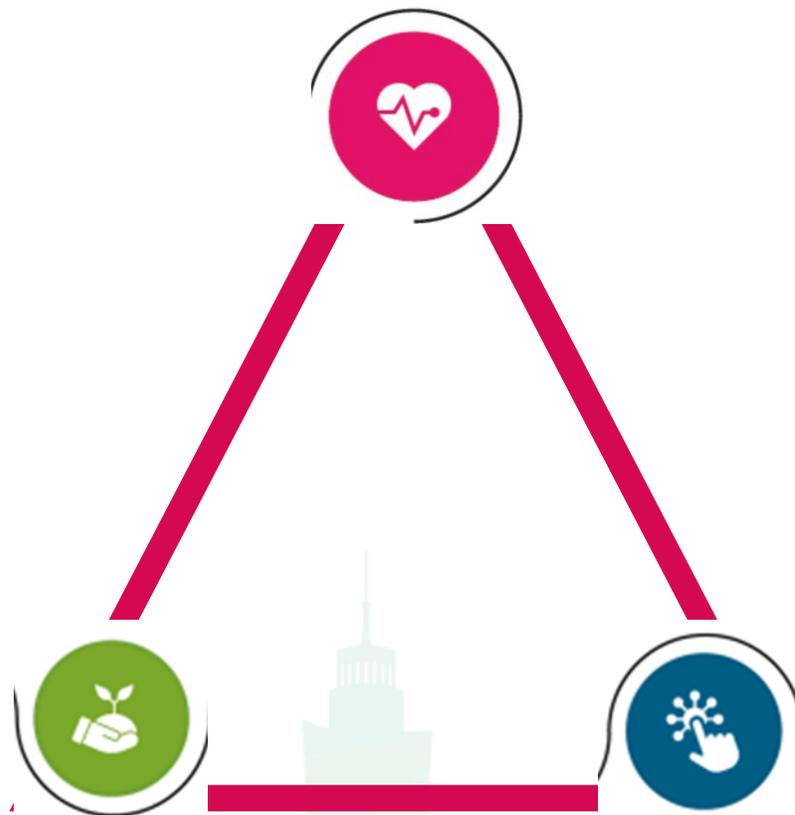
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Holistic approach to health



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Modern Health Policy

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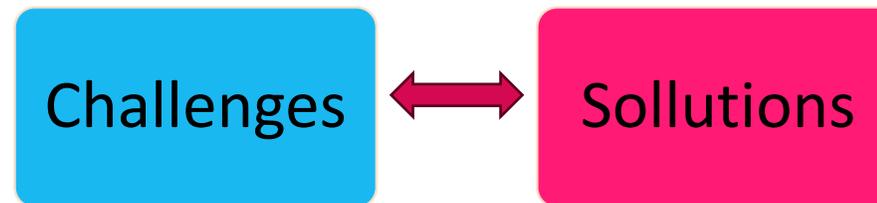


Complexity of the HEALTH APPROACH

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RESPONSIBILITIES, DUTIES, STRATEGIES, ACTIONS:

- Health in All Policies
- Population Health
- Health of Health Systems
- Health within the Healthcare Sector (Prevention)
- Health beyond the Healthcare Sector
- ...



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POLICY REPORT: HEALTH POLICY CONSIDERATIONS IN THE WESTERN BALKANS (Edition 2025)

Main author: Marija Jevtic, University of Novi Sad
Responsible Organisation: GSI Helmholtz Centre for Heavy
Ion Research GmbH



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And Support in the WEStErn Balkans", Grant Agreement N°101058873.



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Policy Brief Health Policy Considerations in the Western Balkans

July 2025



Figure 1: Key pillars of modern health policy in the
Western Balkans. © Jevtic, M. (2023)

This Policy Brief provides an overview of key health
and public health issues in the Western Balkans (WB),
focusing on the challenges and opportunities in the
transition towards more effective, equitable and
sustainable health policies.

The Western Balkans comprise Albania, Bosnia and
Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, North Macedonia
and Serbia.

The rapid pace of demographic, economic and
environmental changes in the Western Balkans has
created significant public health challenges. These
include a rise in Non Communicable Diseases (NCDs),
air and water pollution, mental health issues and a
growing burden from climate-related health risks.

In response to these challenges, the Western Balkans
economies are recognising the need for a more
comprehensive public health approach – one that
integrates disease prevention, health promotion and
systematic improvements of the overall health system.

This Policy Brief draws on extensive research, including
individual interviews across all Western Balkans

economies as well as insights retrieved during the 2023 Policy Dialogue Conference in Sarajevo¹ by
conducting world-café discussions. It reflects the contribution of regional health experts, aiming to
address key challenges of health issues and their connection with sustainability and digitalisation.

The Brief showcases some of the best practices from all six Western Balkans economies, with a particular
emphasis on digital and technological innovation in healthcare. It also identifies opportunities for policy
improvements and provides targeted recommendations to enhance healthcare access, strengthen
public health systems and improve health outcomes for the region's populations.

¹ POLICY ANSWERS Stakeholder Dialogue. Conference website. <https://eu-wb-policy-dialogue-stakeholder.b2match.io/page-4531>
Accessed 4 May 2025

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence

IMPORTANT:

- ❑ More health policy implementation less politics
- ❑ More implementation on strategy level and individual level
- ❑ Using principles Health in all policies, and insist on green agenda and digitalization in health



CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR HEALTH IN THE WESTERN BALKANS



INTRODUCTION

Health systems in the Western Balkans are undergoing significant reforms aimed at improving public health outcomes. However, the region continues to face complex challenges in governance, financing, workforce development, access to care, and environmental-sustainability. This policy brief provides an overview of the key challenges and opportunities in the region, with a focus on improving health policies and aligning them with EU standards.

KEY CHALLENGES



OPPORTUNITIES



For the future:

WB as a client who know how to save health

- Healthier organizational culture
- Healthier leadership
- Healthier environment for workforce in healthcare
- Educational process and curricula richer by digital and AI issues
- Sustainable healthcare by respecting and implementing energy efficiency and environmental issues



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- ❑ The pursuit of HEALTH should unite us in the Western Balkan, with all its challenges.
- ❑ Implementation of a **Health in All Policies** framework, combined with tailored, accessible health communication and collaborative action-oriented research with **digital** and **sustainability**-focused objectives, could **improve health outcomes** and facilitate progress toward European Union accession.



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By focusing on integration, stakeholder engagement, cross-sectoral collaboration, and developing a cohesive policy roadmap, the groundwork is posed for a sustainable and inclusive health-policy framework in the region.



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It is important to emphasize the need for **greater health-policy implementation with less politics**, at both the strategic and individual levels, as well as to apply the principles of Health in All Policies and to insist on the Green Agenda and digitalization in health.

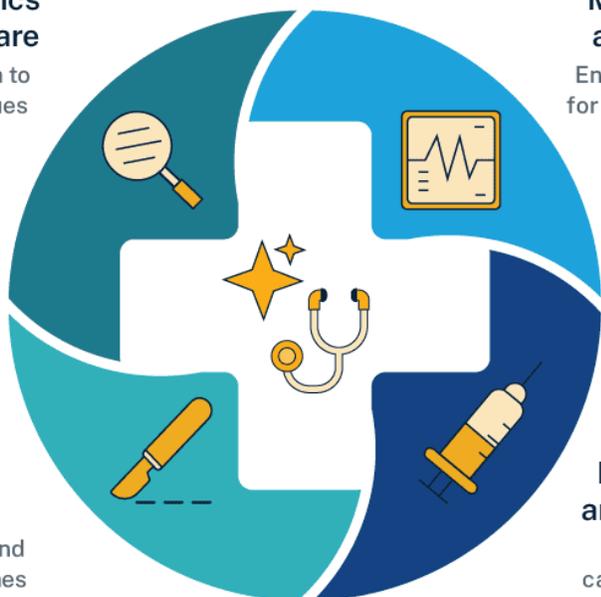




How Is AI Used in Healthcare?

Predictive Analytics and Preventive Care

Analyzes patient data to anticipate health issues



Medical Imaging and Diagnostics

Enhances image analysis for early disease detection

Robotic Surgery

Improves precision and reduces recovery times

Drug Discovery and Development

Accelerates drug candidate identification

- Artificial Intelligence is expanding across all sectors — including health.
- Will we govern AI responsibly, or will it begin to govern us?

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Foresight approach — shaping our possible and preferred future

- Positive scenario
- Negative scenario

Vision—A bold and equitable future for health and well-being must include:



Economic well-being



Equitable access to basic needs and supports



Inclusive, just communities



Holistic, innovative, culturally-rooted healthcare



Regenerative practices for people and planet


FORESIGHT
Designing a Future for Health

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For the future: Key Actions



- Foster a healthier organisational culture
- Promote healthier leadership
- Create a healthier environment for workforce in healthcare
- Enrich the educational process and curricula by integrating digital and AI issues
- Ensure sustainable healthcare by respecting and implementing energy efficiency and environmental issues
- Leverage FP10 to operationalise the WHO Western Balkans Roadmap via targeted R&I investments, advancing resilience, digital innovation and sustainability, thereby enhancing the importance of health and wellbeing issues in the region

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Trust & Ethics in Healthcare Systems

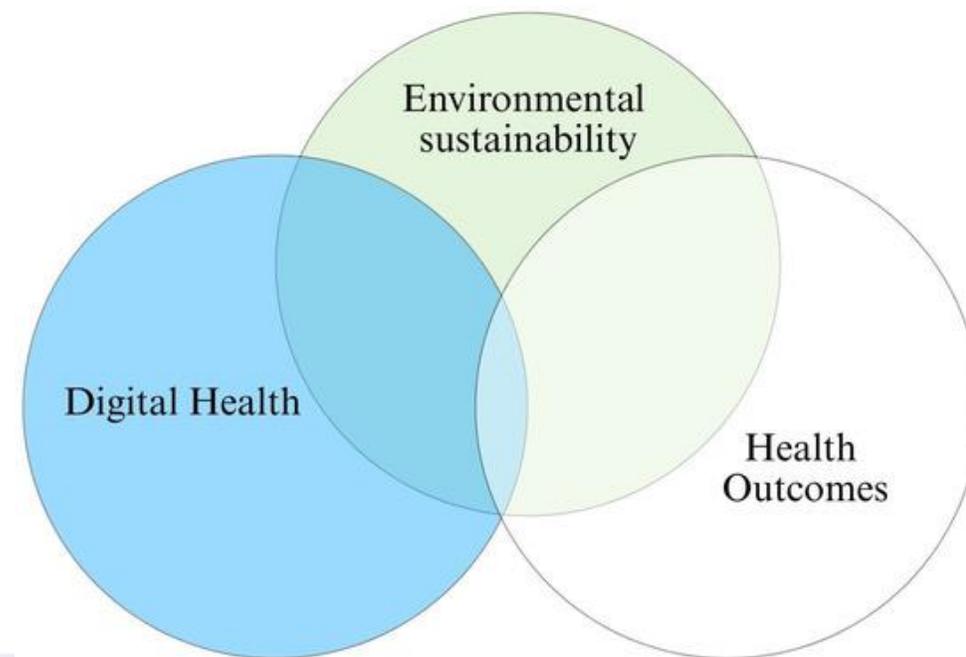
- Public–private balance still fragile
- Workforce & governance shape credibility
- Corruption undermines ethical commitment
- Empathy cannot be billed — yet without it, trust disappears





From Vision to Action

- ❑ **Health in All Policies** → from rhetoric to practice
- ❑ **Prevention as a political priority**
- ❑ **Institutionalised green transition**
- ❑ **Digital transformation** serving public health
- ❑ **Ethical governance** as non-negotiable
- ❑ Systemic approach, **discipline and commitment**
- ❑ **Integration: digitalisation + sustainability + public health**



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thank you



Pathways: Digital • Green • Health •

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Looking Back, Moving Forward: Integrated Policy Insights on Digital Transformation, Health and the Green Deal

17th POLICY ANSWERS Webinar, February the 24th 2026

Djordje Djatkov, Regional Expert for Green Transition



Green Agenda for Western Balkans – what is it?

Global challenges and threats (**greater**):

- Rapid climate change;
- Deterioration of environment;
- Depletion of resources;
- Impairment of health;
- Healthy food and security;
- Energy security;
- *Democracy;*
- *Geopolitical situation;*
- *Major elections across the globe.*



Green Agenda for Western Balkans – what is it?

- **European Green Deal** – development strategy for the 21st century.
- **Green Agenda for Western Balkans (GAWB)** – connection of WB and EU.
- **Economic and Investment Plan for WB (EIPWB)** – 9b€ until 2027.
- **Sofia Declaration** in November 2020 – GAWB endorsement by WB leaders.
- **Action Plan** for the Implementation of the Sofia Declaration on the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans 2021-2030 – *Regional Cooperation Council (RCC)*.
- 1st GAWB Action Plan **Implementation Report** – *Regional Cooperation Council (RCC)*.

Green Agenda for Western Balkans – what is it?

- **Hamburg Declaration** in October 2024 – GAWB endorsement by WB leaders.
- **2nd Report** on the **Implementation** of the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans Action Plan (GARI) **for 2023** in February 2025 – *Regional Cooperation Council (RCC)*.
- **Revised Green Agenda Action Plan 2025-2030** in October 2025 – *Regional Cooperation Council (RCC)*.
- **3rd Report** on the **Implementation** of the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans Action Plan (GARI) **for 2024** in October 2025 – *Regional Cooperation Council (RCC)*.

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Policy Answers Results



Policy Brief Green Transformation in the Western Balkans

September 2024



This Policy Brief provides an overview of the green transformation in the Western Balkans (WB), addressing various dimensions including infrastructure, skills, governance models, strategic frameworks, and legal and regulatory frameworks.

Climate change is a global threat. In response, the European Green Deal serves as the EU's development strategy for the 21st century, focusing on environmental sustainability and climate change mitigation. The Green Agenda for the Western Balkans (GAWB) is a shared commitment between the region and the EU, aligned with the ambitions of the European Green Deal. It is structured along five pillars: 1) Decarbonisation, 2) Circular Economy, 3) Depollution, 4) Sustainable Agriculture, and 5) Protection of Biodiversity and Ecosystems.

This Policy Brief is based on extensive research, including individual interviews conducted for each WB economy, as well as insights gathered from the discussions held during the Policy Dialogue on Aligning Priorities in the Western Balkans¹ organised in Sarajevo in 2023. By systematically exploring contributions from different sectors and fostering coordination, this document provides valuable recommendations for decision-makers in the region, based on identified challenges, barriers, and good practices for implementing the GAWB.

To assess the progress of the green transformation in the WB, the approach is based on seven roadmaps, corresponding to the five pillars (splitting the first one into three sections: Climate Action, Energy, and Sustainable Transport)².

The Energy roadmap is the most advanced component in the WB region, followed by the Climate Action roadmap and the Sustainable Transport roadmap. However, when assessing the remaining pillars, the level of achievements is notably lower.

¹POLICY ANSWERS Stakeholder Dialogue. Conference website. <https://eu-wb-policy-dialogue-stakeholder.b2match.io/page-4531>. Accessed 23 August 2024.

²Regional Cooperation Council (RCC). (2021). Action Plan for the Implementation of the Sofia Declaration on the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans 2021-2030. Sarajevo. <https://www.rcc.int/docs/586/action-plan-for-the-implementation-of-the-sofia-declaration-on-the-green-agenda-for-the-western-balkans-2021-2030>. Accessed 23 August 2024.

POLICY REPORT ON THE GREEN TRANSITION IN THE WESTERN BALKANS (Edition 2024)

Main author:
Djordje Djatkov, University of Novi Sad



POLICY ANSWERS is funded by the European Commission through the Horizon Europe project "R&I POLICY making, implementation and Support in the WEsteRn Balkans", Grant Agreement N°101058873.

Biggest Challenges

- Lack of capacities of all kinds and at all levels.
- Low public awareness on GAWB.
- Low implementation of regulations.
- Insufficient coordination among institutions and stakeholders across the pillars.
- Lack of financial instruments.
- Insufficient political willingness.

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3rd POLICY ANSWERS Webinar, April the 25th 2024

Conclusions

- **GA is complex** itself, but **connected** and have synergies with **Digital Transformation and Health**.
- Framework conditions are being prepared, but implementation is insufficient.
- Education, **Awareness** and **Capacity building** are of utmost importance.
- **Efficient governance structure** needed to use and upgrade existing capacities.
- Driver for Green Transition is **Health** as a final outcome.

Assessment of the Framework Conditions

Development 49.7%

Climate 48.8%
Energy 67.6%
Transport 37.8%

Circular Economy 45.8%

31.7%

Sustainable Culture 36.3%

Protected Areas and 37.9%

Green transition 38.8%

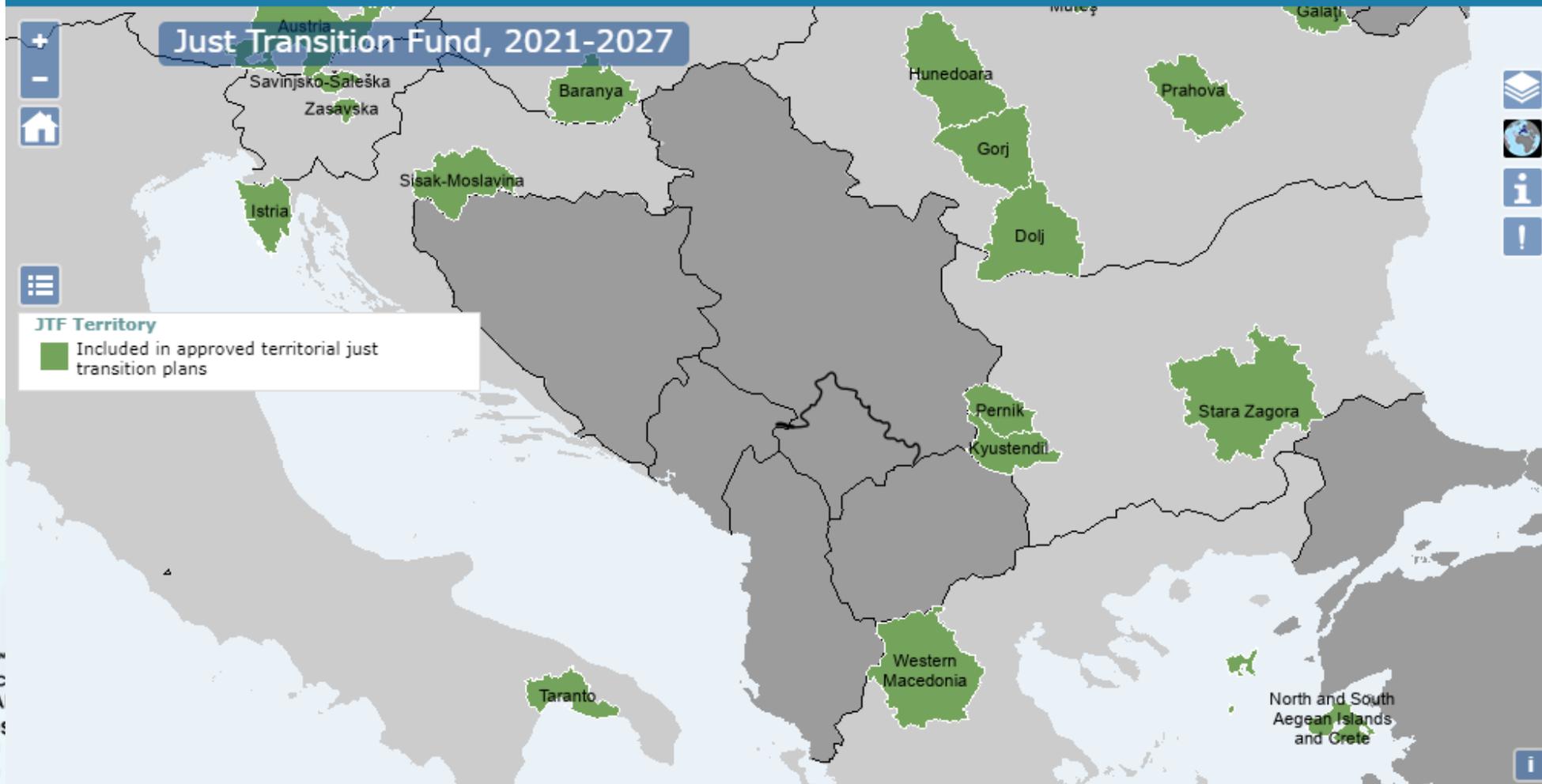
Source: RCC
(own elaboration)

Challenges – Capacities

JTF territories

as of April 2024

Explore our map to see eligible JTF territories

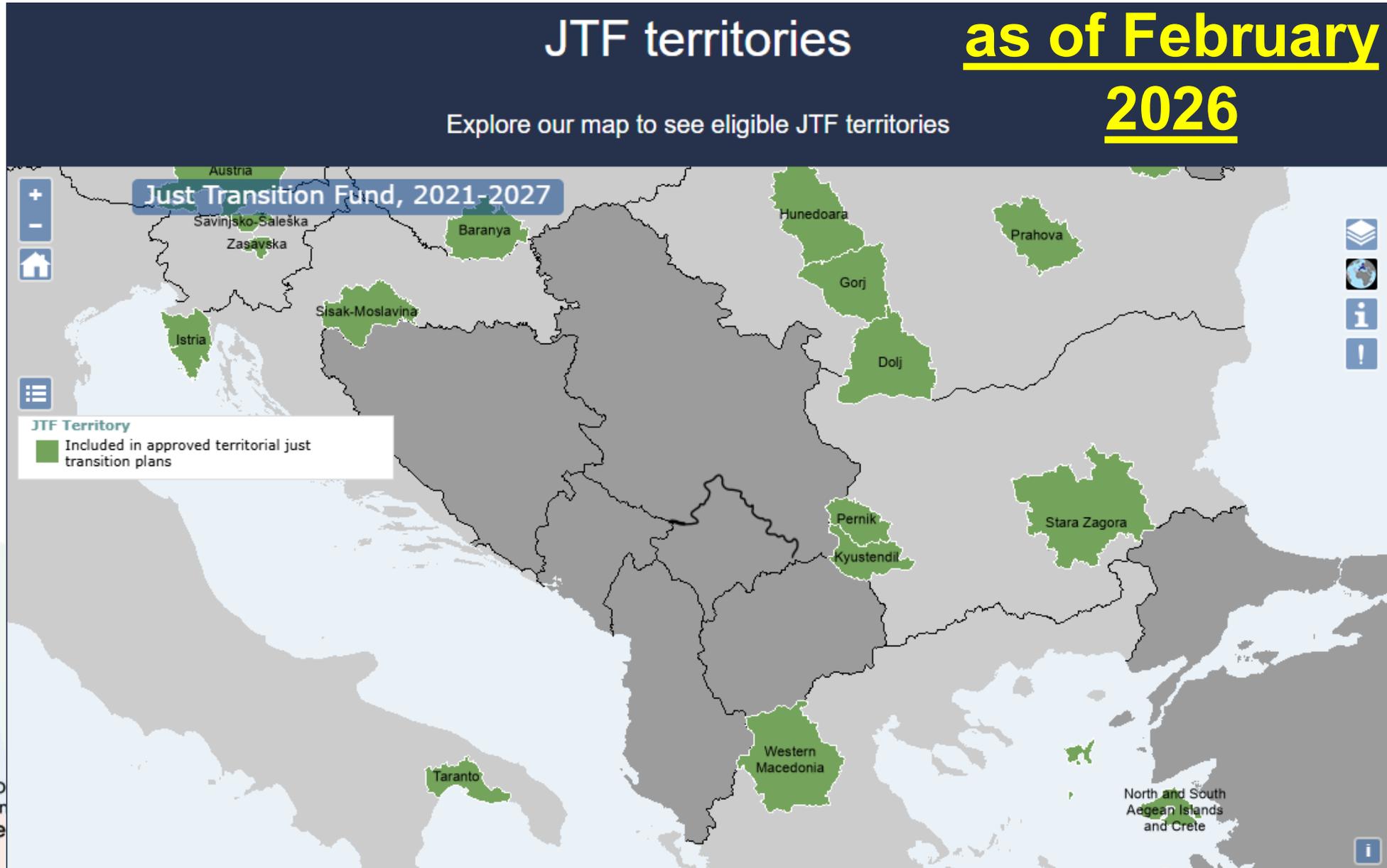


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Challenges – Capacities



Recently Published Documents / Reports

- **RCC 2025:** Revised Green Agenda Action Plan (2025–2030)
<https://www.rcc.int/pubs/217/revised-green-agenda-action-plan-20252030>



Recently Published Documents / Reports

- **RCC 10/2025:** Revised Green Agenda Action Plan (2025–2030)
<https://www.rcc.int/pubs/217/revised-green-agenda-action-plan-20252030>

Revised Green Agenda Action Plan (2025–2030) builds on the original plan endorsed at the 2021 EU–Western Balkans Summit, transforming it into a **streamlined and results-oriented roadmap**. With 41 bold actions, it introduces clear **timelines**, **SMART indicators**, and **stronger alignment** with the EU Green Deal. The revision integrates **new regional deliverables**, while **reinforcing social dimension** through just transition and energy poverty measures, turning political commitments into measurable, inclusive, and accountable action.

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Recently Published Documents / Reports

- **RCC 10/2025:** Report on the Implementation of the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans Action Plan (GARI)

<https://www.rcc.int/download/docs/GARI%202025.pdf/738c0b4219ca62cb002f26f87aff8ff5.pdf>



Recently Published Documents / Reports

- **RCC 10/2025:** Report on the Implementation of the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans Action Plan (GARI)

<https://www.rcc.int/download/docs/GARI%202025.pdf/738c0b4219ca62cb002f26f87aff8ff5.pdf>

Advances in Green Agenda implementation, albeit unevenly across the pillars owing to divergent targets and context-specific challenges in meeting them.

Climate-adaptation **strategies aligned** with EU efforts and **application of NbS expanded** (nature-based solutions) .

Considerable **progress in developing legal and policy frameworks** and mobilising public support for renewable energy (**NECPs**).

Advanced **alignment with EU ETS** (EU Emissions Trading System) and/or introduction of **alternative carbon pricing instruments**. **Progress in energy efficiency**, but **insufficiently to reduce energy security risks**.

Recently Published Documents / Reports

- **RCC 10/2025:** Report on the Implementation of the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans Action Plan (GARI)

<https://www.rcc.int/download/docs/GARI%202025.pdf/738c0b4219ca62cb002f26f87aff8ff5.pdf>

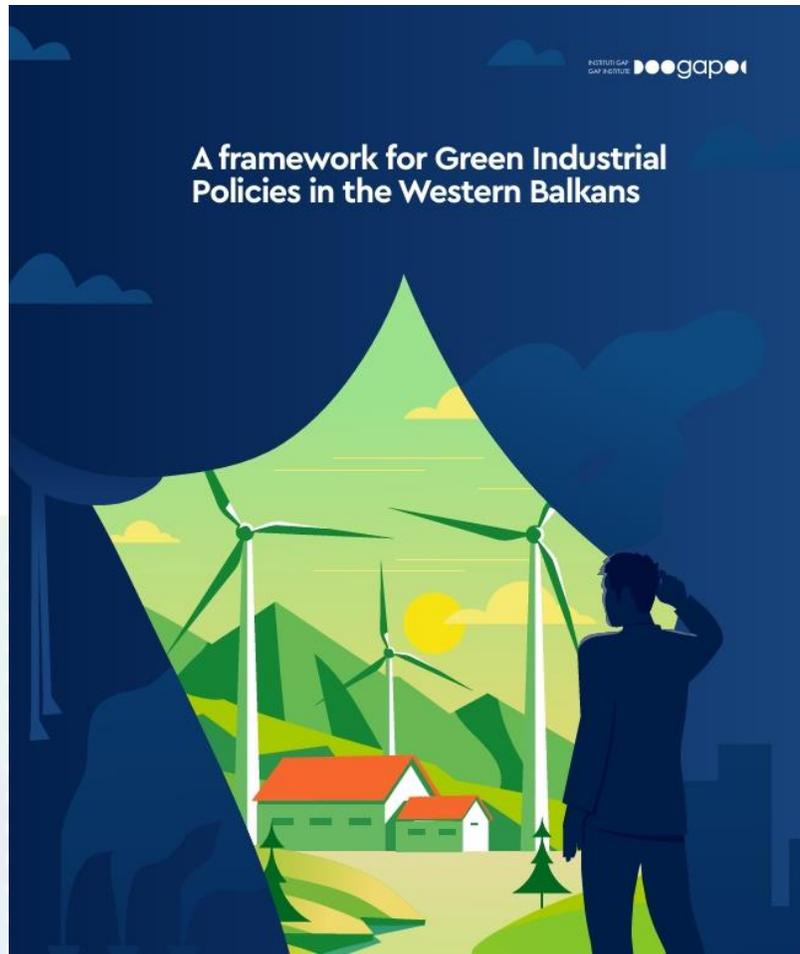
Improved **coordination** between **energy efficiency** and **policy** for eradicating **energy poverty** is needed. **Further efforts are required to reduce coal use** and enable a gradual phase-out, which is essential for power sector decarbonisation.

Development of WB6 Climate Adaptation Roadmap was supported, to strengthen climate resilience across the region.

Gradual progress in advancing sustainable transport, supported by a range of activities, capacity-building initiatives and workshops. Alignment between policy frameworks and the Smart and Sustainable Mobility Strategy for WB. **Further efforts needed to develop** alternative fuel **infrastructure** and implement sustainable urban mobility plans.

Recently Published Documents / Reports

- **GAP 2024:** A Framework for Green Industrial Policies in the Western Balkans
www.institutigap.org/documents/30604_A%20framework%20for%20Green%20Industrial%20in%20Policies%20in%20Western%20Balkans.pdf



Recently Published Documents / Reports

- **GAP 2024:** A Framework for Green Industrial Policies in the Western Balkans
www.institutigap.org/documents/30604_A%20framework%20for%20Green%20In%20dustrial%20in%20Policies%20in%20Western%20Balkans.pdf

Conclusion: Alignment of decarbonisation with competitiveness and economic development is needed. Targeted public support, innovation and skills development, stronger regional value chains, and better alignment with EU climate and state-aid rules are recognized as key important aspects. The key message is that **green transition** should be treated **not only** as an **environmental obligation**, but as an **opportunity for industrial upgrading and job creation**, and long-term resilience.

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Recently Published Documents / Reports

- **EC/JRC 10/2024:** Green transition and Smart Specialisation in the Western Balkans

<https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC136482>

ISSN 1831-9424



Green transition and Smart Specialisation
in the Western Balkans

Radovanovic, N., Stevanovic Carapina, H.



Recently Published Documents / Reports

- **EC/JRC 12/2024:** Green transition in the Western Balkans requires stronger focus on sustainable innovation

https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu/jrc-news-and-updates/green-transition-western-balkans-requires-stronger-focus-sustainable-innovation-2024-12-19_en



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[Home](#) > [JRC news and updates](#) > Green transition in the Western Balkans requires stronger focus on sustainable innovation

Green transition in the Western Balkans requires stronger focus on sustainable innovation

A slow start of the green transition, currently perceived as imposed by the EU, can get a boost by using the smart specialisation approach also as a tool to address climate and environmental challenges.

GENERAL PUBLICATIONS

19 December 2024 — Joint Research Centre — 6 min read

Recently Published Documents / Reports

- **EC/JRC 12/2024:** Green transition in the Western Balkans requires stronger focus on sustainable innovation

https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu/jrc-news-and-updates/green-transition-western-balkans-requires-stronger-focus-sustainable-innovation-2024-12-19_en

Conclusion: Education and capacity building are key for the WB green future, supported by smart specialisation. WB should leverage Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3) to strengthen innovation systems. This includes: enhancing inter-ministerial coordination, stakeholder engagement, workforce upskilling, and research-industry linkages, harmonising regulations and increasing funding mechanisms, to accelerate green transition and broader sustainable economic transformation. Comprehensive recommendations for aligning future policy processes and effectively utilizing Smart Specialisation in green transition initiatives within the Western Balkan region are provided.

Recently Published Documents / Reports

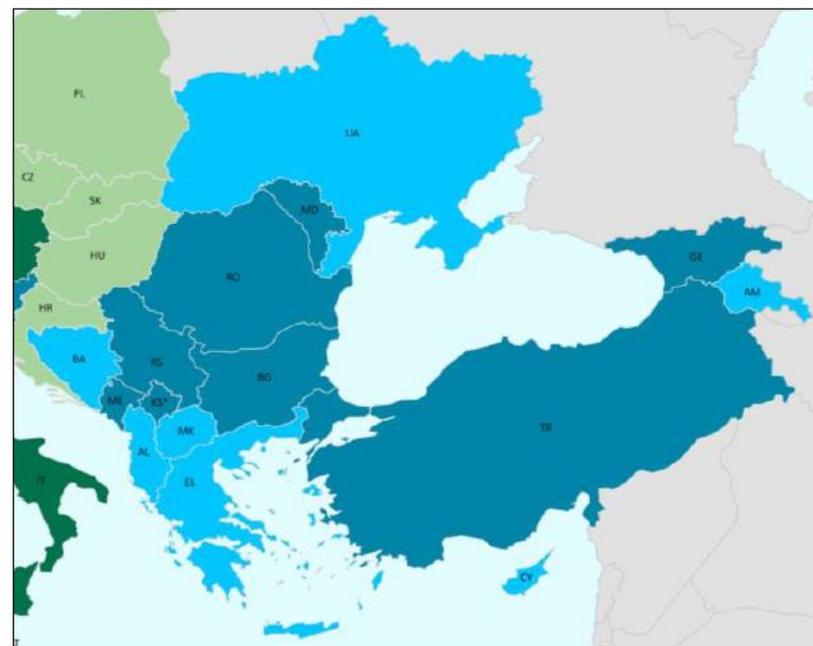
- **EC/JRC 09/2025:** Bioeconomy Strategy Development in Horizon Europe Associated Countries (Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kosovo*, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Moldova, Serbia, Türkiye and Ukraine)
https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu/jrc-news-and-updates/green-transition-western-balkans-requires-stronger-focus-sustainable-innovation-2024-12-19_en



Bioeconomy Strategy Development in Horizon Europe Associated Countries

Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kosovo, Montenegro,
North Macedonia, Moldova, Serbia, Türkiye and Ukraine*

Nešković, V., Trofimtseva, O., Eliasson, Å., Borzacchiello,
M.T., Camia, A.



Legend:
■ Dedicated bioeconomy strategy at national level
■ Dedicated bioeconomy strategy at national level under development
■ Other policy initiatives dedicated to the bioeconomy
■ Other related strategies at national level
■ non-EU countries

Source: EC's Knowledge Centre for Bioeconomy
Administrative Boundaries:
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Recently Published Documents / Reports

- **EC/JRC 09/2025:** Bioeconomy Strategy Development in Horizon Europe Associated Countries (Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kosovo*, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Moldova, Serbia, Türkiye and Ukraine) https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu/jrc-news-and-updates/green-transition-western-balkans-requires-stronger-focus-sustainable-innovation-2024-12-19_en

Conclusion: There is a **growing interest and potential for national bioeconomy strategies** in these countries. Six out of eleven countries already have policies in place related to circular economy, while all eleven countries have other policy documents addressing various aspects of the bioeconomy. All countries engage in macro-regional initiatives and businesses and non-governmental organisations actively contribute to advancing bioeconomy projects. Key recommendations include expanding macro-regional initiatives to support bioeconomy strategy development and increasing awareness of the bioeconomy concept to foster stakeholder engagement.

The Western Balkans on its Pathway to Implement Digital Agenda

17th POLICY ANSWERS Webinar, February 24th 2026
Bojana Bajic, Regional Expert for Digitalization





For Digital Future of the Western Balkans



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 - <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/governance/brief/govtech>
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 - <https://www.sigmaweb.org/publications/>
- [International Telecommunication Union \(ITU\) - ICT Statistics](#)
 - <https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Pages/default.aspx>
- [European Commission - Enlargement Country Reports](#)
 - https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/strategy-and-reports_en

Europe's Digital Decade: digital targets for 2030



Source: European Commission

- 80% population with basic digital skills
- 20 million ICT specialists
- 100% Gigabit connectivity & 5G coverage
- 75% enterprises using Cloud / AI / Big Data
- 100% key public services online
- 80% citizens using digital ID

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EU Snapshot 2026

Digital Decade 2030 Goals

- ✓ 80% population with basic digital skills
- ✓ 20 million ICT specialists
- ✓ 100% Gigabit connectivity & 5G coverage
- ✓ 75% enterprises using Cloud / AI / Big Data
- ✓ 100% key public services online
- ✓ 80% citizens using digital ID

EU Snapshot 2026

- ✓ Basic digital skills: 55–56%
- ✓ ICT specialists: ~10 million (4.6% employment)
- ✓ Gigabit coverage: ~73%
- ✓ 5G coverage: ~89%
- ✓ Cloud adoption: ~45% of enterprises
AI adoption: 8–10%
- ✓ Digital public services: ~84% availability
Digital ID usage: ~60%

Europe's Digital Decade: digital targets for 2030/2026

Digital Decade 2030 Goals

- ✓ 80% population with basic digital skills
- ✓ 20 million ICT specialists
- ✓ 100% Gigabit connectivity & 5G coverage
- ✓ 75% enterprises using Cloud / AI / Big Data
- ✓ 100% key public services online
- ✓ 100% citizens using digital ID
- ✓ 80% citizens using digital ID

WB Snapshot 2026

WB Snapshot 2026

- ✓ Basic digital skills: 45–55% (regional average)
- ✓ ICT workforce: below 4%
- ✓ Gigabit coverage: 50–65% (mainly urban)
- ✓ 5G: partial rollout across economies
- ✓ Digital public services: 60–75%
- ✓ Digital ID usage: 40–60%

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Europe's Digital Decade - digital targets for 2030/2026

Skills

Slow growth in basic digital skills
Insufficient advanced digital & AI competencies
Gender and regional disparities persist
Public administration requires structured upskilling

Infrastructure & Cybersecurity

Connectivity improving but uneven
5G rollout still incomplete
Cybersecurity resilience remains vulnerable
Interoperability frameworks under development

Business Digitalisation & Innovation

Low AI and Big Data adoption among SMEs
Limited integration of emerging technologies
E-commerce expanding but fragmented
Need for stronger GovTech & startup ecosystems

Digital Government

Expansion of national e-service portals
Improved digital ID frameworks
Fragmented data sharing and limited once-only implementation
Open data maturity below the EU average

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DIGITALISATION PROGRESS ACROSS THE INDIVIDUAL WB ECONOMIES

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Albania

- **Digital Government Leadership:** Over 95% of public services are available online through the e-Albania portal, with strong political commitment to full administrative digitalisation and implementation of the once-only principle. Albania is aligned with the EU Digital Decade framework and participates in the Digital Europe Programme.
- **Infrastructure & Connectivity:** Broadband penetration is high, and digital infrastructure has significantly improved, supporting widespread access to online public services. However, continued investment is needed in 5G expansion, cybersecurity resilience, and secure data infrastructure.
- **Digital Skills & Workforce:** Albania has introduced coding in early education and expanded smart labs in schools, showing commitment to digital literacy. Despite progress, advanced ICT skills, AI expertise, and specialised digital competencies remain below EU averages.
- **Governance & Legal Framework:** Ongoing efforts aim to align legislation with EU acquis in areas such as electronic identification, trust services, cybersecurity (NIS2 alignment), and electronic communications. Ensuring robust data governance, interoperability, and institutional coordination remains essential for sustainable transformation.

Albania stands out as a regional frontrunner in digital government with near-full online public service delivery, but sustained progress now depends on strengthening advanced digital skills, AI capacity, cybersecurity resilience, and full alignment with EU regulatory standards.

BIH

- **Early Stage of Digital Transformation:** Bosnia and Herzegovina remains at an early stage, with fragmented institutional structures slowing coordinated digital reform.
- **Legislative & Regulatory Gaps:** Alignment with EU acquis in areas such as electronic identification, cybersecurity (NIS2), and electronic communications remains incomplete.
- **Infrastructure Challenges:** Broadband strategy implementation and 5G rollout lack clear timelines, limiting connectivity advancement.
- **Relatively Strong Digital Skills Indicators:** BiH performs comparatively better in basic digital skills and digital education within the region.
- **Interoperability & Governance Issues:** Limited coordination across government levels and lack of interoperable systems hinder the digitalisation of public services.

Bosnia and Herzegovina's digital transformation is constrained by fragmented governance and incomplete EU alignment, despite relatively solid digital skills performance within the region.

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Kosovo*

- **Connectivity Leader:** Nearly 100% broadband coverage (urban and rural), with high fixed internet penetration and strong mobile usage.
- **New Governance Structure:** Establishment of the Ministry of Public Administration and Digitalisation (2026) strengthens central coordination of digital transformation.
- **Digital Government:** Government Gateway for interoperability operational; e-services expanding but overall maturity still developing.
- **Cybersecurity & EU Alignment:** Cybersecurity law adopted, but further alignment with NIS2, 5G Toolbox, and broader EU digital acquis is required.
- **Skills & Innovation:** Growing ICT sector (software and services), yet advanced digital and AI skills remain limited relative to demand.

Kosovo* has reinforced its digital transformation agenda with the establishment of a new Ministry of Public Administration and Digitalisation, yet further progress is needed to advance digital government maturity, specialised digital skills, interoperability, and full alignment with EU cybersecurity and digital acquis.

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Montenegro

- **Connectivity:** Very high broadband and FTTP coverage; expanding 5G rollout.
- **Digital Government:** Broad e-services and operational interoperability, but the once-only principle is not Fully implemented.
- **Cybersecurity & EU Alignment:** Updated legal framework and established Agency for Cyber Security; further NIS2 harmonisation and capacity building needed.
- **Skills & Innovation:** Solid digital skills regionally; AI and advanced ICT expertise still limited.

Montenegro has built one of the region's strongest digital infrastructures and e-government foundations, but sustained progress now depends on deepening cybersecurity resilience, advancing EU acquis alignment (including NIS2), and scaling advanced digital and AI competencies.

North Macedonia

- **Connectivity:** 5G spectrum allocated early; broadband improving but below EU benchmarks.
- **Digital Government:** Strong e-portal and service availability; interoperability uneven.
- **Cybersecurity & EU Alignment:** Legal alignment progressing; enforcement capacity needs strengthening.
- **Skills & Innovation:** Growing tech adoption; advanced AI skills remain limited.

North Macedonia has strengthened its digital reform momentum with the establishment of the Ministry of Digital Transformation, supporting progress in 5G and e-services, yet accelerating interoperability, cybersecurity enforcement, and advanced digital and AI skills remains essential to meet EU standards.

Serbia

- **Connectivity:** Advanced digital infrastructure and expanding 5G.
- **Digital Government:** High interoperability and mature e-government ecosystem.
- **Cybersecurity & EU Alignment:** Developed framework; further alignment with EU digital acquis required.
- **Skills & Innovation:** Strong ICT

Serbia has developed one of the most advanced digital government and ICT ecosystems in the region, driven by strong institutional leadership and infrastructure, but further EU regulatory alignment and broader SME-level adoption of advanced AI and digital technologies remain key next steps.

COMMON CHALLENGES EU Digital Decade (2026)

- **Common Challenges -Digital Skills Gap:** Slow growth in basic and advanced digital skills; shortage of ICT and AI specialists across Member States.
- **AI & Advanced Tech Adoption:** Low enterprise-level AI uptake and uneven integration of emerging technologies, especially among SMEs.
- **Interoperability & Data Sharing:** Fragmented cross-border data exchange and incomplete implementation of the once-only principle.
- **Cybersecurity & Resilience:** Uneven NIS2 implementation and growing cyber threat landscape require stronger coordination and investment.
- **Regulatory & Implementation Gap:** Strong EU legislative framework (AI Act, DSA, DMA, Data Act), but uneven transposition and enforcement at national level.
- **Investment & Scale:** Need for higher public and private investment to reach gigabit, edge/cloud, and innovation targets by 2030.



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COMMON CHALLENGES WBs

GOVERNMENT:

- **Fragmented Governance Structures:** Limited coordination across ministries and levels of government slows digital transformation.
- **Interoperability Gaps:** Incomplete data exchange between institutions and partial implementation of the once-only principle.eID & Trust Services:
- **Legal frameworks** are progressing, but practical adoption and cross-border alignment with eIDAS remain limited.
- **Cybersecurity Capacity:** Institutional and technical capacities uneven; full alignment with NIS2 and EU cyber frameworks still ongoing.
- **AI Readiness:** Early-stage use of AI in public administration; lack of structured governance and specialised expertise.
- **Service Quality & Inclusion:** Online services are expanding, but usability, accessibility, and citizen trust require improvement.
- **Monitoring & Evaluation:** Weak performance measurement systems limit assessment of impact and return on digital investments.



RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **Strengthen Central Coordination:** Empower lead ministries / digital authorities to ensure whole-of-government implementation and reduce fragmentation.
- **Accelerate Interoperability:** Fully implement the once-only principle, develop interoperable base registers, and adopt common data standards aligned with the EU Interoperable Europe framework.
- **Advance eID & Trust Services:** Align with eIDAS 2.0 and strengthen practical uptake of digital identity, eSignature, and trust services.
- **Enhance Cybersecurity Resilience:** Complete NIS2 alignment, strengthen national CERT/CIRT capacity, and invest in cyber workforce development.
- **Build AI Governance Capacity:** Develop AI strategies for public administration, establish oversight mechanisms, and invest in advanced AI skills.
- **Improve Service Quality & Inclusion:** Apply user-centric design, accessibility standards, and digital inclusion measures to increase citizen uptake.
- **Strengthen Monitoring & Impact Evaluation:** Introduce KPIs and measurable outcomes to track digital transformation performance and EU investment impact.

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THANK YOU!



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