Research and Technology Infrastructures: Policy, practice and recent developments in Europe – emerging 'opportunities' for the Western Balkans"

Dr Lisa Cowey MBA

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Over-view of the session

Part I: Policy, practice and recent developments in Europe

- RI and TI
  - Useful definitions and illustrative examples
  - Purpose and focus
  - Strategy and policy
- Open Access:
  - Rational and Benefits
  - Scope and functioning

Part II: Regional 'Opportunities'

- RI and TI – design of a regional 'Twin Transition network '.
- Input from Siniša Marčić (RCC)
- Damir Medved SyntAgent
- NEWS: Supporting action.

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‘WHAT ARE ‘RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURES (RI) AND TECHNOLOGY INFRASTRUCTURES (TI)?’

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Research Infrastructure (RI)

- **Facilities** that provide resources and services for research communities to conduct research and foster innovation.
- Can be used beyond research e.g. for education or public services.
- May be ‘single-sited’, ‘distributed’, or ‘virtual’.
- Any other research and innovation infrastructure of a ‘unique’ nature which is **open** to external users

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ESS: European Spallation Source Lund SE
‘Single Sited’

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Extreme Light Infrastructure: ELI 'Distributed'

World's first international laser research infrastructure

- 'pursuing unique science and research applications for international users'.

Distributed

- 3 specialized and complementary facilities
  - Czech Republic
  - Hungary
  - Romania.

First ESFRI project to be fully implemented in the newer EU Member States.

- pioneered a novel funding model
- combined EU structural funds (ERDF) + ERIC (European Research Infrastructure Consortium) contributions for operation.

- Potential for others to join? (**Centre for Advanced Laser Techniques (CALT) in HR -** an associated project and a technology supplier/collaborator.)

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ELIXIR: European Research Infrastructure for life science data

Virtual and Distributed RI

A ‘Hub and Spoke model’

The **Hub**, located at the Wellcome Genome Campus UK
- responsible for the overall strategy and coordination of the infrastructure.

National Nodes - centers of excellence in bioinformatics within member countries across Europe, run the actual services and resources:

- databases,
- software tools,
- training materials,
- cloud storage and
- supercomputers.

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Social Science
Virtual and Distributed RI

- SHARE: Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe
- Purpose: to study the effects of health, social, economic and environmental policies over the life-course of European citizens and beyond
- a multidisciplinary and cross-national panel **database** of micro data on health, socio-economic status and social and family networks of about 140,000 individuals aged 50 or older (around 380,000 interviews).
- Covers **28 European countries and Israel**.

[linked to 'sister studies' in the UK (ELSA) and US (HRS)]

- https://share-eric.eu/

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RIs: main take-aways

- RI focus on early TRL and ‘research’ but ‘foster innovation’
- RI can be:
  - Physical/ Virtual
  - Single sited or distributed
  - May offer some opportunities for others to ‘join’
- To be a RI the facility must be ‘OPEN’

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From equipment and facilities to RI

Internal use

'Open' ?

- **A**ccessible
- **F**indable
- **D**iverse
- **U**sers

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‘Technology Infrastructure’
Definition and main characteristics

- ‘Important tools for industry to lower the costs and risks arising during technology development’
  - ➢ testing
  - ➢ prototyping
  - ➢ validation
  - ➢ Up-scaling phases.
- ➢ Higher TRLs, more focused on innovation, more focus on enterprises (including start-ups)
- Formally recognised in 2025 – Strategy
- Earlier mentions in 2019
- (By definition ‘Open’ as aimed at enterprise and industry)

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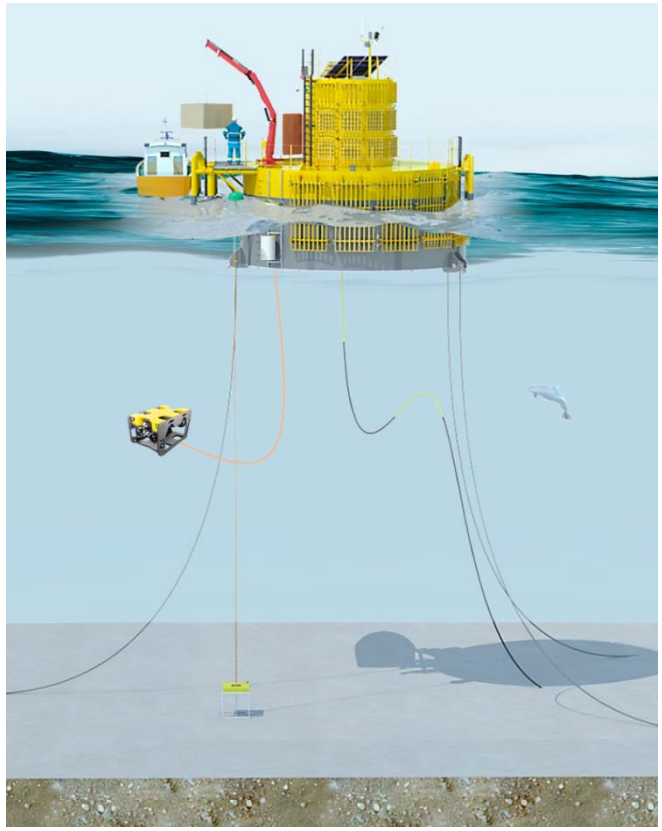
European TI examples

Tecnalia's Harsh Lab (Spain)



IT4Innovations supercomputing centre (Czech Republic)

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European TI examples

Facility 4.0 ProM Facility, (Mechatronic prototyping Italy)

Renewable energy (Białystok, Poland)

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RECENT CHANGES TO THE RI/TI POLICY ENVIRONMENT

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Main strategic documents

- Updated ‘European Charter for Access to Research Infrastructures’ (2024).
- European Strategy on Research and Technology Infrastructures (15.09.2025)
- ‘Towards a European Policy for Technology Infrastructures Building Bridges to Competitiveness’ (02.2025)
- EU Startup and Scale-up Strategy (05.2025)

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Summary of Key Enhancements in the Revised European Charter for Access to Research Infrastructures (2024 vs. 2015/2016)

Theme	Original Charter (2015/2016)	Revised Charter (2024)
Core Purpose	Non-regulatory principles for access	Updated principles reflecting modern RI landscape and research policies
Open Science	Encouraged	Explicit integration of FAIR principles
Research Security	Not explicitly addressed	Added as a key element along with strategic autonomy
User Focus	Broad users	Stronger focus on diverse users including SMEs/industry
Resilience	Implicit	Explicitly addresses resilience to crises
Operational Guidance	Traditional access modalities	Updated to reflect hybrid practices and modern infrastructure roles

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Other notable points/ implications

European Strategy on Research and Technology Infrastructures

- treats **research infrastructures (RIs)** and **technology infrastructures (TIs)** as a **continuum** from scientific discovery to technology validation and up-scaling (*implies linkages/ networks...*)
- Explicit actions to simplify and **expand access for researchers, startups, scaleups and industry**, promoting use of facilities from early research through commercialization (*implies targeted funding...*)

EU Startup and Scaleup Strategy

- **Infrastructure as Core Startup Support - Access to infrastructures, networks and services** is highlighted as essential to growth (*implies linkages between RI/TI and startup programmes and services..*)

Towards a European Policy for Technology Infrastructures

- formalises a **definition of TIs and their role** in the innovation ecosystem
- Future TI policy will likely include **clearer roles, funding lines, and access mechanisms** tailored to innovation and industrial users

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PART 2: ‘REGIONAL OPPORTUNITIES’

AKA: ‘DESIGN YOUR OWN TECHNOLOGY INFRASTRUCTURE NETWORK’

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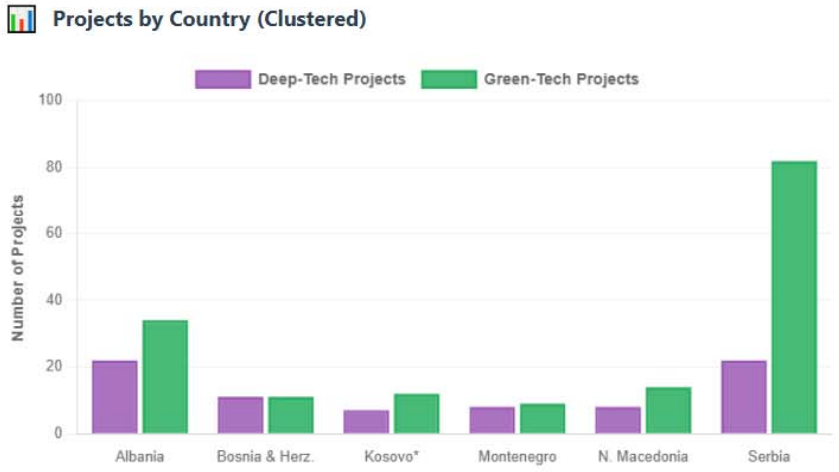
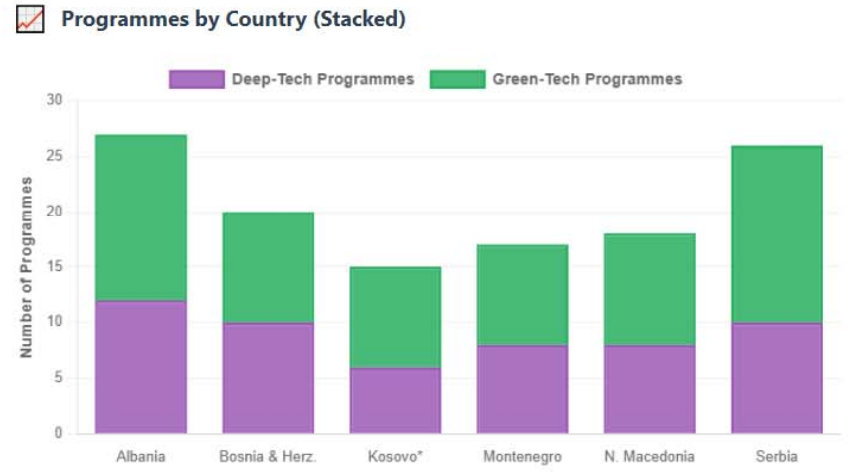
The raw ‘enterprise’ potential: Start-ups and Scale-ups

Western Balkans Innovation Ecosystem

Deep-Tech & Green-Tech Projects and Programmes Summary (2025)

78	162	54	69
Total Deep-Tech Projects	Total Green-Tech Projects	Deep-Tech Programmes	Green-Tech Programmes





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Sub-sectors

Deep-tech

- advanced materials
- advanced AVML platforms
- quantum computing
- next-gen robotics, blockchain
- Biotechnology
- IoT enabled
- manufacturing, microelectronics & semiconductors
- biotechnology

Green-tech manufacturing

- renewable energy generation & storage systems
- sustainable transport tech
- circular economy
- sustainable/energy-efficient building materials & construction systems
- recycling solutions
- eco-friendly packaging

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Regional Support: Hubs and programmes

Regional support for Deep-Tech

EIT | WBIF | EDIF | EDIHs | ABCD Project

Main ecosystem players in the Western Balkans

Albania
- EU4Innovation
- Oficina Accelerator
- TechSpace Tirana
- ICTSlab

Bosnia & Herzegovina
- Verlab Institute
- SPARK Mostar
- INTERA Tehnopolis
- ICBL Banja Luka

Kosovo*
- ICK
- VentureUP
- ITP Prizren
- UBT Tech Park
- Makerspaces

Montenegro
- NTP Montenegro
- Tehnopolis Nikšić
- UoM Innovation Hub

North Macedonia
- FITD
- UKIM Innovation Centre
- SEAVUS Accelerator
- YES Incubator
- FABLAB Skopje

Serbia
- STP Belgrade
- STP Novi Sad
- BioSense Institute
- STP Nis
- ICT Hub

Main players supporting deep-tech through funding, incubation, specialised infrastructure and KIS in the Western Balkans (mapping 2025)

Regional support for Green Manufacturing

EBRD SME Go Green | WBIF | EIT | UNDP | GIZ

Main ecosystem players in the Western Balkans

Albania
- EU4Innovation
- Oficina Accelerator
- TechSpace Tirana
- Metropolitan Incubator

Bosnia & Herzegovina
- INTERA Mostar
- SPARK Mostar
- Verlab Institute
- ICBL Banja Luka

Kosovo*
- ICK
- ITP Prizren
- UBT Tech Park
- VentureUP

Montenegro
- NTP Montenegro
- Tehnopolis Nikšić
- University of Montenegro Innovation Hub

North Macedonia
- FITD
- TIDZ Industrial Zones
- YES Incubator
- FABLAB Skopje

Serbia
- STP Belgrade
- STP Novi Sad
- STP Nis
- NTP Čačak
- BioSense Institute

Main players supporting green manufacturing through funding, incubation, specialised infrastructure and KIS in the Western Balkans (mapping 2025)

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Ranked Research Performing Organisations (RPOs) for Green Manufacturing in the Western Balkans

Ranking based on: (a) peer-reviewed manufacturing research, (b) circular-economy / green-transition engagement, (c) applied pilot capacity (e.g. BioSense). Compiled with AI deep research mode, 2025.

Serbia

Top Tier – strongest ecosystem

University of Novi Sad — BioSense Institute & Faculty of Technical Sciences (FTN)

University of Belgrade — Faculties of Mechanical Engineering & Electrical Engineering (ETF)

Indicators:

- BioSense: peer-reviewed research on sensors, precision agriculture and sustainable bio-processes; direct relevance to green, resource-efficient manufacturing and process monitoring.
- Strong EU collaboration track record (e.g. ANTARES / BioSense) showing both research quality and technology-transfer capacity.
- University of Belgrade: long history of peer-reviewed work in materials, manufacturing processes, energy efficiency and control/automation.
- Nationally leading research footprint for green process optimisation and industrial partnerships.

Bosnia & Herzegovina

High-potential Green Manufacturing RPOs

University of Sarajevo — Faculties of Mechanical & Electrical Engineering

University of Banja Luka

Indicators:

- Active in circular economy, materials and process research.
- Peer-reviewed outputs and national white papers highlight CE and sustainable production efforts.
- Mechanical/manufacturing labs enable low-carbon production pilots.
- Engineering research in process engineering, materials and telecommunications supports industrial monitoring and optimisation for greener manufacturing.

North Macedonia

Ss. Cyril & Methodius University (UKIM)

Faculty of Technology & Metallurgy

Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Information Technologies (FEEIT)

Indicators:

- Strong research in materials, manufacturing and automation.
- Peer-reviewed work in sustainable materials and manufacturing processes.
- Visible engagement in circular-economy and green-transition topics at regional level.

Albania

Polytechnic University of Tirana (UPT)

Polytechnic University of Tirana (UPT)

Indicators:

- Leading national engineering research capacity for manufacturing decarbonisation and automation.
- Peer-reviewed outputs in manufacturing engineering, automation and IT systems for industrial control.
- Core competencies for green manufacturing transitions.

Kosovo*

Growing Green Manufacturing RPOs

University for Business & Technology (UBT)

University of Prishtina

Indicators:

- Growing outputs in applied engineering, automation and digital solutions that support green manufacturing.
- Most visible sources of indexed engineering and applied-CS publications in Kosovo*.
- Work in data-driven manufacturing, cybersecurity for industry and applied automation positions them as partners for green-manufacturing digitalisation.

Montenegro

University of Montenegro (UoM)

University of Montenegro (UoM)

Indicators:

- Engineering faculties active in energy efficiency, control systems and applied manufacturing research.
- Research in power and energy systems, control and embedded systems, and applied engineering relevant for energy-efficient manufacturing and process control.
- Regional reports highlight UoM among national research leaders.

These RPOs are priority partners for green-manufacturing pilots and technology transfer in the WB region.

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The ecosystem support: Funding

National Schemes & International/Regional Instruments by Economy (2025)

Deep-Tech · Green-Tech · General Innovation · **Major** = Higher budget/more calls

AL — Albania

NATIONAL FUNDING SCHEMES

- Startup Fund Albania — deep-tech
- EU4Innovation — deep-tech
- Albanian Investment Fund — green-tech
- AIDA SME Support — general

INTERNATIONAL & REGIONAL

Horizon Europe · IPA III · EBRD · EIB · WBIF · UNDP · GIZ · USAID

BA — Bosnia & Herzegovina

NATIONAL FUNDING SCHEMES

- INTERA Tech Park — deep-tech
- IC Banja Luka — deep-tech
- UNDP Green Fund — green-tech
- FBiH Development Bank — general

INTERNATIONAL & REGIONAL

IPA III · EBRD · EIB · WBIF · UNDP · GIZ · Swedish Sida · Swiss SDC

XK — Kosovo*

NATIONAL FUNDING SCHEMES

- ICK Innovation Fund — deep-tech
- MCC Energy Storage — green-tech
- KIESA Grants — general

INTERNATIONAL & REGIONAL

IPA III · USAID · EBRD · WBIF · UNDP · GIZ · Swedish Sida · UK Aid

ME — Montenegro

NATIONAL FUNDING SCHEMES

- Innovation Fund ME — deep-tech
- Tehnopolis — deep-tech
- Energy Efficiency Fund — green-tech
- Investment & Dev Fund — general

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MK — North Macedonia

NATIONAL FUNDING SCHEMES

- INNOVA (ex-FITD) — deep-tech
- Science Fund MK — deep-tech
- Climate Fund — green-tech
- APPRM SME Support — general

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RS — Serbia

NATIONAL FUNDING SCHEMES

- Innovation Fund Serbia — deep-tech
- Science Fund RS — deep-tech
- AI Institute Grants — deep-tech
- Green Innovation Fund — green-tech
- Development Fund RS — general

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THE POTENTIAL FOR ‘TWIN TRANSITION’!

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Overlaps and Synergies between Deep-Tech and Green Manufacturing Ecosystems in the Western Balkans

Multi-sector support from innovation hubs – hubs hosting both deep-tech and green-tech start-ups

Albania

- Oficina
  "Deep-tech + Green"
- TechSpace Tirana
  "Green"
- EU4Innovation
  "Deep-tech + Green"
- Metropolitan Incubator
  "Green"

Bosnia & Herzegovina

- INTERA
  "Green"
- SPARK Mostar
  "Deep-tech + Green"
- Verlab Institute
  "Deep-tech"
- ICBL Banja Luka
  "Green"

Kosovo*

- ICK
  "Deep-tech + Green"
- ITP Prizren
  "Green"
- UBT Tech Park
  "Deep-tech + Green"
- VentureUP
  "Deep-tech"

Montenegro

- NTP Montenegro
  "Green"
- Tehnopolis Nikšić
  "Green"
- University of Montenegro Innovation Hub
  "Deep-tech + Green"

North Macedonia

- FITD
  "Deep-tech + Green"
- TIDZ Industrial Zones
  "Green"
- SEAVUS
  "Deep-tech"
- YES Incubator
  "Green"
- FABLAB Skopje
  "Deep-tech + Green"

Serbia

- STP Belgrade
  "Deep-tech + Green"
- STP Novi Sad
  "Deep-tech + Green"
- BioSense Institute
  "Deep-tech"
- STP Nis
  "Green"
- NTP Čačak
  "Green"

Green = Green Manufacturing Hubs Blue = Deep-Tech Hubs Yellow = Mixed / Cross-sector Innovation Hubs

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PRO strengths mapped by sub-sector

Economy	Organisation	1. Advanced materials	1. Advanced AV/ML platforms	1. Quantum computing	1. Next-gen robotics	1. Blockchain	1. Biotechnology	1. IoT-enabled manufacturing	1. Microelectronics & semiconductors	1. Renewable energy generation &	1. Sustainable transport tech	1. Circular economy	1. energy-efficient	1. Recycling solutions / Sustainable	1. Eco-friendly packaging
Serbia	Univ. of Belgrade (ETF, Mech.)	▪	■	□	▪	▪	■	■	■	▪	■	▪	▪	■	□
Serbia	Univ. of Novi Sad (+ BioSense)	■	▪	□	■	□	■	■	▪	■	□	▪	□	■	□
Bosnia & Herzegovina	Univ. of Sarajevo (Eng)	■	■	□	■	■	■	■	□	▪	□	■	■	■	□
Bosnia & Herzegovina	Univ. of Banja Luka (Eng)	■	■	□	■	■	■	■	□	■	□	■	□	■	□
North Macedonia	UKIM (FEEIT / Tech & Metallurgy)	▪	▪	□	■	■	■	▪	□	▪	□	▪	▪	■	□
Montenegro	Univ. of Montenegro	■	■	□	■	■	■	■	□	▪	□	■	■	■	□
Albania	Polytechnic Univ. of Tirana (UPT)	▪	■	□	■	■	■	▪	□	■	□	■	■	■	□
Albania	Univ. of Tirana	■	■	□	■	■	■	■	□	□	□	■	■	■	□
Kosovo*	University of Prishtina	■	▪	□	■	■	■	▪	□	■	□	■	■	■	□
Kosovo*	UBT (University for Business & Technology)	■	▪	□	■	■	■	▪	□	■	□	■	■	■	□

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‘Twin transition’ synergies – sub-sector overlap

Deep-Tech and Green Manufacturing Synergies

	Renewable Energy Hardware & Smart Grids	Circular Economy & Waste Valorisation	Sustainable Construction & Materials	Energy-Efficient Industrial Automation	Eco-Product Design & Packaging	Sustainable Transport Tech
AI & Data	Smart forecasting Grid optimization Predictive maintenance	Waste stream analytics		Process optimization Energy efficiency ML models		Route optimization Fleet management
IoT & Sensors	Real-time monitoring Smart meters Grid sensors	Sorting sensors Quality control	Building sensors Climate control	Real-time energy monitoring Industrial IoT		Vehicle sensors Emissions tracking
Robotics & Embedded Systems		Automated sorting Disassembly robots Material recovery	Modular construction robots	Industrial automation Cobots Precision control		Assembly automation EV production
Advanced Materials	Battery materials Solar efficiency	Recycled materials Upcycling tech	Bio-composites Insulation materials Low-carbon cement		Biopolymers Recycled composites Biodegradable packaging	Lightweight materials Efficiency gains
Biotech & Bio-processes	Biofuels Bio-hydrogen	Bio-based recycling Biogas production Enzyme catalysis	Mycelium materials Bio-insulation		Bio-plastics Organic packaging Compostable products	
Digital Platforms & Blockchain	Energy trading P2P platforms	Material tracking CBAM compliance Supply chain transparency	Building passports Material traceability		Product lifecycle tracking	Mobility platforms Carbon tracking

Synergy Strength Legend

- Strong Synergy – High priority areas for joint deep-tech and green manufacturing initiatives
- Medium Synergy – Emerging opportunities with moderate integration potential
- Light Synergy – Limited current overlap, potential for future development

Priority synergy spaces for RCC and WB6 policymakers to support industrial competitiveness and green transition

Matrix identifies technology convergence opportunities for sustainable industrial development in the Western Balkans

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The Cross sector **regional** potential

Cross-sectoral value-chain opportunities

1. AI & Data-Driven Optimization × Industrial Energy Efficiency
2. Advanced Materials × Circular Economy & Eco-Packaging
3. Robotics & Automation × Waste Management and Recycling
4. Sensors & Microelectronics × Renewable Energy Systems
5. Digital Platforms × Circular Business Models

Example high -impact “white spaces” for innovation

1. Pilot lines for production-line efficiency and smart energy management.
2. Production of eco-packaging for regional food and cosmetics industries.
3. Waste collection, sorting and recycling processes.
4. Smart renewable energy systems: affordable microgrid controllers or battery management units.
5. Tools for circular economy needs.

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Cross-Sectoral Opportunity RI/TI Spaces

Pilots and scale-ups need to be supported by RPO/ RI and Hubs/TI

- **Smart, energy-efficient manufacturing (Industry 4.0)** — AI/IoT + automation pilots to reduce energy intensity in metal, textile and food plants (INTERA, STP Belgrade, STP Niš, BioSense, VERLAB).
- **Advanced & sustainable materials** — R&D + prototyping for biopolymers, recycled composites and eco-packaging (UKIM, BioSense, INNOVA, TechSpace, Tehnopolis).
- **Renewables hardware & systems + smart grids** — modular solar/wind + storage assembly and AI-enabled optimisation (ICK/UBT, NTP Montenegro, STP Belgrade, University of Montenegro).
- **Circular economy & waste-to-product technologies** — robotics for sorting, waste valorisation pilots and market platforms (INTERA, VERLAB, TechSpace, INNOVA).
- **Sustainable product / packaging design & local assembly** — prototyping and small-scale manufacturing of compostable packaging and eco-products (TechSpace, Tehnopolis, FABLAB/INNOVA partners).

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GM: Best Ecosystem Matches by Sector/ Sub-sector

Deep-Green Opportunity Spaces – Key Ecosystem Hubs in the Western Balkans

Listing compiled with AI deep research mode (2025)

A. Sustainable Materials & Advanced Materials

Hubs focused on new materials, composites and advanced fabrication.

INTERA Technology Park
Bosnia & Herzegovina
Additive manufacturing, CNC, composites.

Tehnopolis
Montenegro
Materials testing, agri-materials, food packaging.

STP Niš
Serbia
Microelectronics and material-integrated systems.

FABLAB Skopje
North Macedonia
Materials prototyping.

B. Circular Economy & Waste Valorisation

Innovation for reuse, recycling and waste-to-resource models.

YES Incubator
North Macedonia
Active circular economy programmes.

SPARK
Bosnia & Herzegovina
Digital circular solutions, waste-tech.

TechSpace Tirana
Albania
Circular product design.

UNDP Accelerator Labs
all WB economies
Waste-to-resource challenge support.

C. Renewable-Energy Hardware / Manufacturing

Hardware and system solutions for the energy transition.

STP Belgrade
Serbia
Cleantech entrepreneurship.

UBT Tech Park
Kosovo*
Renewable energy R&D support.

NTP Montenegro
Montenegro
Clean energy system design.

FITD
North Macedonia
Funds renewable hardware prototypes.

D. Industrial Automation & Energy-Efficient Production

Industry 4.0, robotics and energy-optimised processes.

INTERA Technology Park
Bosnia & Herzegovina
Robotics, automation, Industry 4.0.

STP Novi Sad
Serbia
IoT for smart manufacturing.

Tehnopolis
Montenegro
Process optimisation.

ICK
Kosovo*
Digital manufacturing tools.

E. Sustainable Packaging & Eco-Product Design

Eco-products, packaging and design-driven circularity.

Tehnopolis
Montenegro
Packaging R&D (food/agri-tech focus).

TechSpace Tirana
Albania
Prototyping eco-friendly consumer goods.

INTERA
Bosnia & Herzegovina
3D printing & design labs.

YES Incubator
North Macedonia
Circular-product entrepreneurship.

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‘Opportunity’

JOIN FORCES, INVEST IN ‘TWIN-TRANSITION’ TI AND REALISE POTENTIAL!

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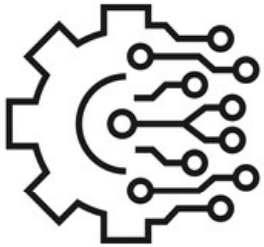
Making RI and TI 'Open'

Papers/ Publications: FAIR

- Findable
- Accessible
- Interoperable
- Reusable

Infrastructure?

- (Legally) Accessible
  - Workable OA Policy for diverse users
- Affordable
  - Existence of funding support
- Findable
  - Well promoted
- Supported
  - TI Hub Services



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• MAKING REGIONAL RI AND TI ‘OPEN’: VISIBILITY AND ACCESS

• SINIŠA MARČIĆ RCC

• DAMIR MEDVED SYNTAGENT

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Support on the ‘Horizon’

WINGS: Widening Innovation through Networking, Growth and Skills

WP3

- Identification and adoption of a set of **core KT services.**
- Linked to **RI and TI.**
- **Support for adoption** by established service champions.
- Led by **KTU** (Lithuanian Valleys).
- RCC is a full PP in WINGS.

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Discussion, comments, questions

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