



# Western Balkans Alumni Association (WBAA)

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ETF online Regional Conference "Use it or lose it:  
how labor markets, human capital and migration  
interact in the Western Balkans"



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# About WBAA



The Western Balkans Alumni Association (WBAA) is a **regional network** of students and alumni from the **Western Balkan** region (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo\*, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia) who have spent part of their **studies** in one of Erasmus+ programme countries. These exchanges were mostly funded by the European Commission.

WBAA is **neutral, unbiased and nonpartisan** in the existing political discourse.

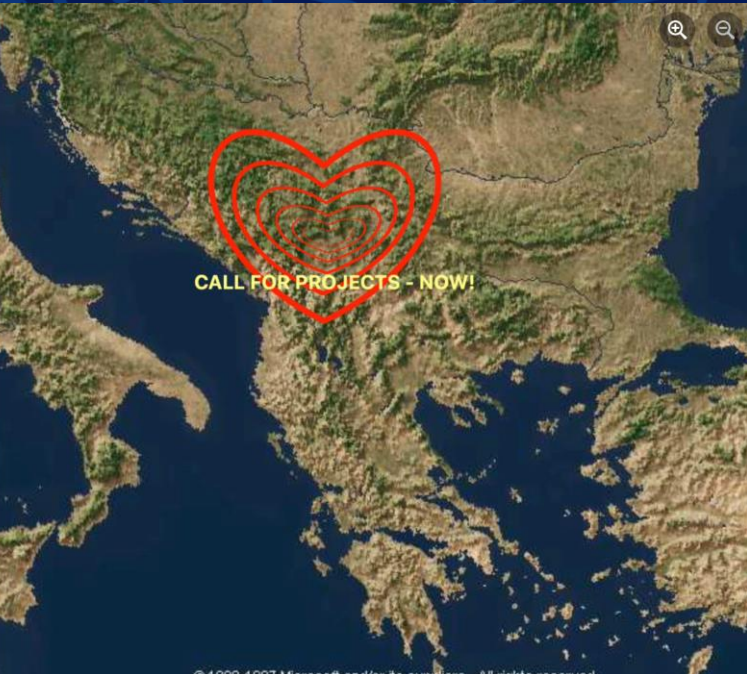
WBAA is supported and Service Provider is funded by the European Commission.

\* 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.



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# WBAA mission



- **Advocating** modernization and improvement of higher education quality in the region
- **Empowering** young people of the Western Balkans on their academic and career development towards successful employment
- **Strengthening** regional exchange, collaboration and integration
- **Supporting** region's efforts towards European integration



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# KEY MESSAGES



**1. WBAA, the bridge, the engine and intellectual capacity for WB-EU co-evolution** - and what it means for Western Balkans as **distinctive force** (what these young people carry within themselves and as association)

**2. How can each one from WBAA and WB in general, on international mobility **multiply the effects** for oneself, for the country and region (modalities of engagement and impact - not just go and come back, but open, bridge, expand, share, take level up, combine research and WB practice, address copy-paste special, innovation in context, ...) selflessly. Brain circulation - not just brain drain!**

- Double degrees for individuals
- Tandem master thesis - joint supervision and joint work WB-EU students
- WBAA projects - with consortia of diverse actors - all projects, Tracer study, ...
- Once you've lived in more organised societies, you have the need to keep up and keep in the loop, one way or another!
- Impact and outreach  $1+1+1+1+1+1>6$

**3. Through our own example - upsides and challenges**

- Standing on shoulders of giants - the giants need to make the effort and open the window
- Need to keep up - NOT BRAIN DRAIN BUT BRAIN CIRCULATION
- More ready solution - migrate - tried it, it's complicated
- Spacetime material of universe - and heart and home in WB - calling
- Quicksand
- Do your best not just for oneself!





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# CALL FROM/TO THE WESTERN BALKANS YOUTH TO BE CONSIDERED BY THE POLICY MAKERS!

WE NEED TO:

- **BUILD YOUR COMPETENCES, DAY BY DAY, ACTIVITY BY ACTIVITY**
- **BE SELFLESS**
- **BE PROACTIVE**
- **BE CONFIDENT**
- **BE OPENMINDED**
- **HAVE INTEGRITY**
- **COPY-PASTE SPECIAL**
- **BE WITH A VISION, DREAMS, HOPES**
- **BE TOGETHER**

THESE ARE ALL ISSUES OUR POLICY MAKERS, THEIR GLOBAL COLLABORATES AND ALL CITIZENS NEED TO ADDRESS, BY OWN EXAMPLE AND FOR THE WB COUNTRIES



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## Human capital, labour markets and migrations in the Western Balkans as a research challenge



- What are the factors of youth emigration from the WB
  - traditionally emigration region
  - the impact of the transitional process
  - political and war conflicts
  - low opportunity costs of youth emigrants
- Lack of reliable data
  - Sometimes only rough estimations
  - What is the scope of the 'brain drain'?
- Visa liberalization
  - increased possibilities for traveling for education purposes
  - possibility for circular migration among youth unskilled workers
- Regional initiatives – increased regional cooperation and spurring faster economic development (Berlin process, Mini Schengen, Open Balkan)
  - Special focus on youth
- Lack of specific skilled labour force
  - Youth can increase their expected income by investing in professions of high demand
- The impact of Covid-19 pandemic
  - Reduction of mobility of the labour force
  - Disproportional impact on the economic activities and switch to online work
  - A part of the emigrated workers have returned due to the economic crisis



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## Reach out to us!

**Email** - [info@western-balkans-alumni.eu](mailto:info@western-balkans-alumni.eu)

### **Social media:**

- Facebook - [www.facebook.com/WesternBalkansAlumniAssociation/](https://www.facebook.com/WesternBalkansAlumniAssociation/)
- Instagram - @wbaassociation
- LinkedIn - [www.linkedin.com/company/westernbalkansalumniassociation/](https://www.linkedin.com/company/westernbalkansalumniassociation/)

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