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"
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.
- **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
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!
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.
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
Reach out to us!

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