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Support to the Promotion of Civil Society regional actions in the Western Balkans (Phase II)
QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER ISSUED BY THE WESTERN BALKANS FUND

ISSUE XI, May 2025



30 new Champions of Regional Cooperation



Thirty (30) new regional grants to Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) across the Western Balkans were awarded in early May, as part of the second phase of the “Support to the Promotion of Civil Society Regional Actions in the Western Balkans” project.

This latest round of grants, part of the 4th Call for Proposals of the WBF-EU Joint Action, reinforces the longstanding commitment to empowering local actors in regional cooperation.

In total, 139 beneficiary organizations from 32 locations in the region have been included in the 30 awarded projects as lead-applicants or partners. **The 30 awarded projects were selected from a record 417 applications.**

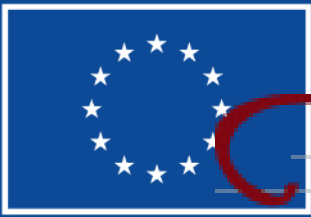
The distribution of lead applicants was balanced, with a equal number of lead-applicants from each Contracting Party of the Western Balkans Region.

At the official Awarding Ceremony, Dr. Gjergj Murra, Executive Director of the Western Balkans Fund, highlighted the broader significance of these grants

“This is not just a celebration of selected projects. It is a celebration of ideas, of trust, of partnership, and above all, of the strong belief that regional cooperation is not merely a concept, but a living reality we are building, one project, one collaboration, one handshake at a time. None of this would have been possible without the support of the European Union,” Dr. Murra stated.

Project Manager Mr. Fjordi Bisha emphasized the competitiveness and inclusivity of this call, noting that a record-breaking 416 applications were received. “This level of engagement reflects the inclusiveness and credibility of our Joint Action”, Mr. Bisha underlined.

The awarded projects reflect the diversity of regional needs, with projects focused on regional cooperation, education, culture, sustainable development, the green agenda, gender equality, and the promotion of human rights.



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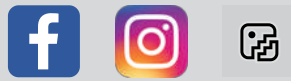


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MUZIČKO OPERSKO TEATARSKA ORGANIZACIJA MOTO
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Grant Recipients



Title of the Project:
Creative Vibes

Lead Grantee

Muzičko opersko teatarska organizacija MOTO in Belgrade

Regional Partners

- Udruženje "akustikUm" muzička omladina JMBH in Tuzla
- Association of Music Educators Polyhymnia in Skopje
- NGO "Zrcalo" in Podgorica

General Objective

To foster intercultural dialogue and regional cooperation in the Western Balkans by empowering young musicians from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds to explore, reinterpret, and promote the region's shared musical heritage through collaborative creation and performance



Title of the Project:
Empowering Occupational Safety and Health for Sustainable Development in the Western Balkans (GREEN4OHS)

Lead Grantee

University of Novi Sad, Faculty of Technical Sciences

Regional Partners

- Sarajevo School of Science and Technology in Sarajevo
- Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, Faculty of Mechanical engineering in Skopje

General Objective

To strengthen regional cooperation in Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) across the Western Balkans by harmonizing policies, building stakeholder capacities, and promoting inclusive and sustainable workplace practices.



Title of the Project:
Rivers' Future = Region's Future

Lead Grantee

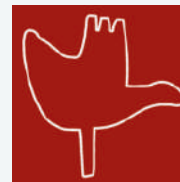
Discover Serbia in Priboj

Regional Partners

- Ekocentar in Višegrad
- NOVUS in Strumica
- Ozon in Nikšić

General Objective

To contribute to sustainable development and regional economic growth in the Western Balkans by addressing shared environmental challenges through improved waste management, eco-tourism promotion, and cross-border cooperation.



Title of the Project: VEČITO - Bogdan Bogdanović:
Macedonia, Serbia and BiH connected by monumental heritage

Lead Grantee

VAM Center in Belgrade

Regional Partners

- Umjetnička galerija Bosne i Hercegovine, Sarajevo
- NU Zavod za zaštita na spomenicite na kulturata i Muzej - Prilep
- NU Zavod za zaštita na spomenicite na kulturata i Muzej – Štip
- Centar za kultura "Marko Cepenkov", Prilep
- Architectural Faculty, University of Belgrade
- Centar za Kulturu Mostar



Title of the Project: ANDEM: The Summer School of Social Engagement and Democracy

Lead Grantee

Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory

Regional Partners

- Institute for Advanced Study, University of Montenegro in Podgorica
- University of Sarajevo, Sarajevo

General Objective

To enhance youth participation in environmental governance across the Western Balkans by integrating youth perspectives into Green Agenda policymaking and fostering regional cooperation for inclusive and sustainable development.



Title of the Project: Strengthening dialogue with civil society for enhanced communication and cooperation in the Western Balkan region.

Lead Grantee

Fenix Crna Gora" NGO in Herceg Novi

Regional Partners

- Srce za djecu in Sarajevo
- Čika Boca Mladice in Belgrade
- Udruženje "Iskra" in Banja Luka
- NGO SANO in Skopje
- Udruga Krijesnica in Zagreb

General Objective

To foster regional cooperation and social reintegration of young cancer survivors in the Western Balkans by creating a sustainable platform for mutual support, shared learning, and intercultural understanding

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Grant Recipients





GREEN HOME
act green

Title of the Project: Accursed Mountains - Cross Border Science Classroom III

Lead Grantee
NGO Green Home in Podgorica

Regional Partners

- Environmental Responsible Action (ERA) in Peja
- Institute for nature conservation in Albania in Tirana

General Objective
To strengthen cross-border cooperation and good neighborly relations between Montenegro, Albania, and Kosovo* by promoting regional dialogue, scientific exchange, and youth engagement in the field of nature protection and environmental sustainability.



A

Title of the Project: Museums open to all

Lead Grantee
Association of the Deaf and Hard of hearing of Montenegro in Podgorica

Regional Partners

- Cultural Centre Homer in Kotor
- The Deaf and Hard of Hearing Association of Serbia (SGNS) in Belgrade
- ANAD in Tirana

General Objective
To strengthen regional scientific cooperation and integration in the Western Balkans by promoting STEM education, fostering youth-led innovation, and building cross-border networks of young researchers and mentors.



Prona

Title of the Project: WBSA - Western Balkans Science Academy

Lead Grantee
Foundation Prona in Podgorica

Regional Partners

- Dah Teater in Belgrade
- Faculty of Science and Mathematics, University of Montenegro in Podgorica
- World Wision Bosna i Hercegovina in Sarajevo

General Objective
To enhance the regional cooperation and social inclusion in the Western Balkans by improving accessibility in cultural institutions for people with sensory impairments through introduction of inclusive



Opština Nikšić

Title of the Project: Generating Real Opportunities through Work, Talent & Hustle (GROWTH)

Lead Grantee
Opština Nikšić

Regional Partners

- Trebinje Development Agency (TREDEA) in Trebinje
- Center for Sustainable Community Development Debar
- Municipality of Knjazevac

General Objective
To enhance employability among youth and unemployed individuals in the Western Balkans through hands-on experience, mentorship and the promotion of sustainable business models, empowering them with key skills and fostering entrepreneurship as a driver of economic development.



Ed

Title of the Project: Balkan STEM Innovation Camp

Lead Grantee
EdGuard in Prishtina

Regional Partners

- Children Rights Center Albania in Tirana
- Center for Education and Development in Tearce

General Objective
To enhance STEM education and regional cooperation in the Western Balkans by providing high school students with hands-on STEM learning experiences, fostering crossborder collaboration, and empowering future STEM leaders



Kolegij AAB

Title of the Project: Students for Sustainable Development: Knowledge Sharing for Environmentally Responsible Practices

Lead Grantee
AAB College in Prishtine

Regional Partners

- British College of Science in Prishtina
- Mother Tereza University in Skopje
- South East European University, Faculty of Contemporary Social Sciences in Tetovo
- JU Center for Vocational Education in Podgorica
- University of Montenegro in Podgorica
- Junior Achievement Montenegro in Podgorica



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Grant Recipients



Title of the Project: WB Startup Forum: Regional Economic Cooperation Through Innovation

Lead Grantee

Keiretsu Forum SEE in Prishtina

Regional Partners

- Keiretsu Forum SEE in Albania in Tirana
- Foreign Investor Council in Sarajevo

General Objective

To support early-stage startup growth in the Western Balkans by improving access to financing, strengthening investment networks, and fostering regional cooperation among young entrepreneurs.



Title of the Project: Tradition Meets Innovation: Regional Network for Artisans and Digital Innovation

Lead Grantee

Oda Ndermareseve Zejtareve Prizren

Regional Partners

- The National Chamber of Crafts in Tirana
- The Chamber of Crafts in Skopje

General Objective

To strengthen regional cultural cooperation and people-to-people links in the Western Balkans by promoting traditional crafts, fostering intercultural dialogue, and connecting artisans across Kosovo, Albania, and North Macedonia through crossborder collaboration and digital innovation.



Title of the Project: From Earth to the Stars: Uniting the Western Balkans through Science & Astronomy

Lead Grantee

Astronomy Club of Kosovo in Prishtina

Regional Partners

- Astronomical Society ORION in Sarajevo
- Skopje Astronomical Society in Skopje
- EduAct Albania in Tirana
- KOM 18 Club for Youth Empowerment in Novi Pazar
- Network for Youth Activism of Montenegro – MOACG in Podgorica
- Montenegro Space Research in Podgorica
- Astronomsko društvo "Ruđer Bošković" in Belgrade
- ACK / Prishtina Observatory & CoPartners in Prishtina



Title of the Project: Thrive Balkan: New Age, New Approach

Lead Grantee

Centar za promociju civilnog društva in Sarajevo

Regional Partners

- Gender Knowledge Hub in Novi Sad
- Center for Democratic Transition in Podgorica

General Objective

To strengthen project management and writing capacities of CSOs and institutions in the Western Balkans, fostering regional cooperation and people-to-people links through shared learning and collaboration.



Title of the Project: Stecak Map Mak Dizdar Foundation

Lead Grantee

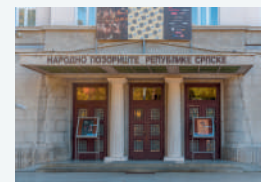
Dizdar Foundation in Sarajevo

Regional Partners

- Muzej Ras in Novi Pazar
- Zavičajni muzej "Ganića kula" in Rozaje

General Objective

To strengthen regional cooperation and people-to-people links in the Western Balkans through the preservation and promotion of stećci as a shared cultural heritage, engaging youth, communities, and institutions in cross-border collaboration and digital innovation.



Title of the Project: Theater for All

Lead Grantee

National Theater of Republica Srbska in Banja Luka

Regional Partners

- Narodno pozorište u Beogradu
- Crnogorsko narodno pozorište in Podgorica

General Objective

To promote inclusive and accessible theater across Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and Montenegro by fostering regional cooperation, cross-sector collaboration, and equal cultural participation for people with disabilities.

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Grant Recipients



Title of the Project: "Bridges of the Balkans" – Regional Mountaineering Cooperation

Lead Grantee

Association for Cooperation and Development SARA in Mostar

Regional Partners

- Mountaineering and Skiing Association PRENJ Mostar
- Mountanering Club "Ljuboten" in Tetovo
- Planinarsko društvo "Jelenak" Pančevo

General Objective

To foster regional cooperation and people-to-people links in the Western Balkans by promoting environmental sustainability and outdoor tourism as drivers of economic and social development.



Title of the Project: Roadmap to successful STEAM Festivals

Lead Grantee

Association Makerspace Garage in Mostar

Regional Partners

- NGO Digital Den in Podgorica
- Macedonia2025 in Skopje

General Objective

To foster inter-ethnic coollaboration, regional cooperation, and people-topeople links among youth in the Western Balkans through astronomy and science-based exchange.



Title of the Project: Community Foundations - Enhancing Local Philanthropy in the WB

Lead Grantee

Association Konekt Skopje

Regional Partners

- Tuzla Community Foundation in Tuzla
- Trag Foundation in Belgrade

General Objective

To enhance the competitiveness and sustainability of eno-gastro tourism in the Western Balkans by empowering local stakeholders through crossborder collaboration, skills development, and promotion of the region's wine and culinary culture.



Title of the Project: Fostering the Eno-Gastro Tourism in the Western Balkans region

Lead Grantee

Wines of Macedonia in Skopje

Regional Partners

- National Association of Sommeliers Montenegro In Podgorica
- Association of sommeliers, winemakers and wine growers in Novi Sad

General Objective

To foster the emergence and growth of community foundations in the Western Balkans by strengthening regional cooperation, systemizing knowledge, and building people-topeople links.



Title of the Project: geNarration Peace: Art is the way

Lead Grantee

Peace Action in Prilep

Regional Partners

- Civic Initiatives in Belgrade
- NGO Integra in Prishtina

General Objective

To strengthen regional cooperation and people-to-people ties by empowering youth cultural workers and activists from North Macedonia, Kosovo, and Serbia to promote intercultural dialogue and reconciliation through ar



Title of the Project: Game Divas: Empowering Women in the Gaming Industry

Lead Grantee

Macedonian Games Industry Association in Skopje

Regional Partners

- Serbian Games Association in Belgrade
- C4Communities in Tirana

General Objective

To empower women in the Western Balkans gaming industry by fostering regional cooperation, promoting gender diversity, and creating opportunities for women to thrive through capacity-building, mentorship, and networking



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Title of the Project:
Youth engagement for Europeanization of the Balkans

Lead Grantee

Balkan Institute for Regional Cooperation in Tetovo

Regional Partners

- Center for Innovation and Development in Prishtina
- NVO Glas in Podgorica

General Objective

To foster inter-ethnic collaboration, regional cooperation, and people-to-people links among youth in the Western Balkans through astronomy and science-based exchange.



Title of the Project: Colony of Visual Artists of Western Balkans – 2025 Messaging Dialogue, Peace, and Reconciliation

Lead Grantee

Friends of Korça Association in Korçë

Regional Partners

- Interkultura in Skopje
- CSO KI-Ka in Belgrade
- Center of Art and Culture Municipality of Korca

General Objective

To enhance regional cooperation and cultural dialogue among artists in the Western Balkans, using visual arts to promote peace, reconciliation, and a shared regional identity.



Title of the Project: BALKAN CANCER FORUM: Cross-Border Care - Strengthening Support Networks for Women with Breast Cancer

Lead Grantee

Europa Donna Albania in Tiranë

Regional Partners

- Renesansa in Prishtinë
- EZRA - Association for Development
- Initiatives for Health Care, Improvement of Health Care Services in Skopje

General Objective

To enhance regional cooperation and cultural dialogue among artists in the Western Balkans, using visual arts to promote peace, reconciliation, and a shared regional identity. The project will foster collaboration among artists to bridge cultural divides, strengthen networks, and use visual storytelling for social cohesion.



Title of the Project: CINEBALK: Capturing the Balkans' Cinematic Heritage through Digital Storytelling

Lead Grantee

Wines of Macedonia in Skopje

Regional Partners

- Sfera International in Skopje
- Sinhiro in Pancevo
- Akcelerator društvenih promjena – Zid in Podgorica
- Infinit Academy Institute in Prishtina
- Fondacija poduzetnika u Bosni i Hercegovini in Sarajevo

General Objective

To foster the emergence and growth of community foundations in the Western Balkans by strengthening regional cooperation, systemizing knowledge, and building people-to-people links.



Title of the Project: Agri4Future: Inspiring Youth in the Western Balkans to Embrace Agriculture

Lead Grantee

Destiny Center for Excellence

Regional Partners

- Destiny Center for Excellence (DCE) in Tirana
- Environmental Social Responsibilities Association (ESRA) in Prishtinë
- “Innovative Key” (Inovativni Ključ) -IK in Podgorica

General Objective

To empower youth from Albania, Kosovo, and Montenegro as active contributors to agricultural and rural development through regional cooperation and people-to-people connections.



Title of the Project: Queer Film Marathon

Lead Grantee

Open Mind Spectrum Albania (OMSA) in Tiranë

Regional Partners

- Montenegrin LGBTIQ Association Queer Montenegro in Podgorica
- Centre for Equality and Liberty Kosova (CEL), in Prishtinë

General Objective

To improve public perceptions and social attitudes towards LGBTQI+ individuals in Montenegro, Albania, Kosovo, and the Western Balkans by promoting queer culture and art through regional cooperation and cultural exchange.

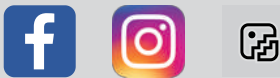


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Partnership Workshop with the grantees of the 4th CFP



From May 6–7, 2025, alongside the Awarding Ceremony of the 4th Call for Proposals of the Joint Action, we held different sessions of the Partnership Workshop.

Key areas of focus included:

- Financial management and reporting practices in line with transparency and accountability standards.
- Project design and implementation methodologies, encouraging strategic planning and measurable outcomes.
- Effective use of the Online Grant Management Platform for seamless administration.
- Outreach, visibility, and communication strategies to amplify the impact and reach of each project.

These sessions were carefully crafted to help grantees implement their projects in full alignment with regional priorities and European standards, while also strengthening cross-border cooperation and community engagement.

Record participation at the Regional Informative Sessions

From January 27 to February 5, the Western Balkans Fund organized a comprehensive round of 12 in-person Informative sessions across the Region, two in each Contracting Party. Two additional online sessions were provided for all interested parties.

Over 500 participants from civil society, public institutions, and grassroots organizations attended, showing strong interest in the WBF-EU Joint Action Call for Proposals. This was one of the key reasons behind the record number of 417 registered complete applications at this Call for Proposals.

These sessions provided practical guidance on eligibility, application procedures, and partnership building, helping ensure that the grant scheme reaches a wide and inclusive pool of potential beneficiaries across the Western Balkans.



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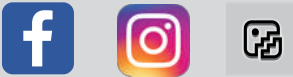
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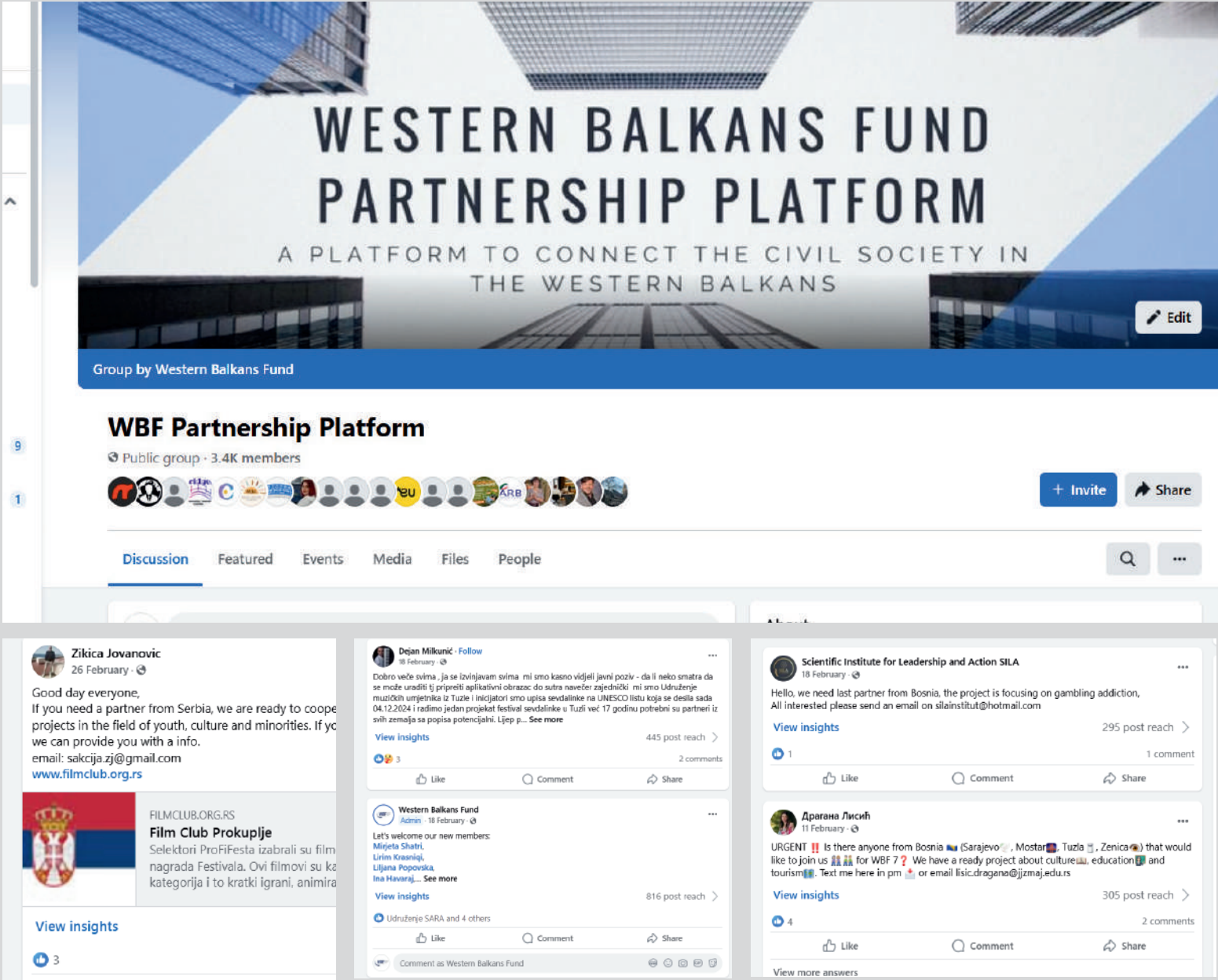


A new platform of Regional match-making

At the Western Balkans Fund, we take pride in being more than a grant-awarding institution. We are also a proactive facilitator of regional partnerships. a role we have embraced with growing determination.

Our WBF Partnership Platform on Facebook, with over 3,500 active members, has already contributed to the formation of hundreds of partnerships, many of which successfully applied for and received WBF grants. This simple, community-driven space has proven that targeted matchmaking across borders is not only possible — it is deeply needed.

Building on this success, we are now taking steps to develop a dedicated, professional online platform that will further strengthen regional cooperation. The upcoming platform aims to become a comprehensive partnership hub, serving not only WBF Calls for Proposals, but also the wider ecosystem of civil society organisations, public institutions, educational entities, and individuals across the Region.



As part of this work, WBF has conducted in-depth research on similar matchmaking platforms — examining both successful models and common pitfalls — in order to define the most suitable design. Technical consultations, specification drafting, and preliminary negotiations with service providers have also been carried out. Although the platform will not be operational during the two Calls foreseen in Joint Action Phase II, it is expected to be completed and fully functional before the end of the Action. Once live, it will enable users across the Western Balkans to connect, collaborate, and co-create regional initiatives with greater ease and long-term potential. his new development reaffirms our long-standing belief: cooperation begins with connection — and WBF remains at the heart of it.