

sustainable development urban planning regional development civil society empowerment
policy influence transformative change good governance community engagement
transparency integrity innovation strategic partnerships cutting-edge know-how
multidisciplinary team capacity building employee retention mentoring culture territorial
governance spatial planning climate resilience circular economy environmental protection
energy efficiency sustainable tourism inclusive governance green transition smart
specialisation horizon europe horizon 2020 strategic assessments ecosystem services
socioeconomic inequalities environmental governance citizen engagement policy dialogue
urban biodiversity activism participatory democracy grassroots organizing civic
empowerment advocacy initiatives watchdog role public consultation citizen-led
development inclusive decision-making youth engagement public-private partnerships
academia collaboration local government regional cooperation international networks
ngos polis university transatlantic exchange waste management biodiversity protection
energy performance of buildings environmental justice green legislation habitat restoration
pollution monitoring decarbonization nature-based solutions tirana architecture week
national activism day aesop congress info day regional roundtables study visits workshops
winter schools cross-border cooperation community-led initiatives municipalities civil
society organizations universities ministries think tanks media private sector youth leaders
environmental sustainability territorial reforms local democracy spatial analysis inclusive
development urban resilience regional platforms civic initiatives policy briefs green
governance youth participation environmental monitoring cross-sector collaboration
participatory planning local action plans community-driven change development
strategies just transition public accountability energy audits stakeholder engagement
program implementation civic actors circular models knowledge exchange local ownership
biodiversity

social inclusion
community

ANNUAL REPORT 2024

energy transition
policy-making
sustainable

transformation social technical assistance ecosystem protection participatory budgeting
capacity development sub-granting schemes performance indicators inter-municipal
cooperation pilot initiatives rural development monitoring tools grassroots leadership social
justice resilience planning disaster preparedness digital tools local governance waste
reduction environmental legislation municipal strategies regulatory frameworks vocational
education public service improvement gender equality cultural heritage climate neutrality
social innovation equity in planning long-term impact environmental literacy
communication strategies academic partnerships civil resistance environmental inclusive
planning transnational cooperation climate policy professional exchange green jobs
decentralized planning regional disparities planning curriculum scientific cooperation
youth mobilization shared learning environmental risks decision-making processes
sustainable practices project evaluation citizen science collaborative design future-oriented
research participatory legal advocacy governance cross-border learning multi-stakeholder
dialogue urban challenges environmental campaigns grassroots change-makers national
policies public institutions inclusive reforms decentralized systems expert consultation
energy solutions social cohesion active citizenship community networks grant disbursement
transparency mechanisms regional dialogue stakeholder mapping urban innovation
strategic foresight civic dialogue smart cities sustainable livelihoods transition planning
regional hubs environmental compliance institutional reforms shared goals education for
sustainability impact tracking green infrastructure performance-based planning climate
literacy national consultations spatial governance economic inclusion data-driven
decisions integrated planning regenerative economy democratic participation monitoring
frameworks regional workshops energy awareness policy implementation transdisciplinary
approaches inclusive outreach social inclusion tools environmental data SDG progress
environmental coalitions strategic alliances institutional capacity habitat development
climate partnerships planning resilience sustainable financing community empowerment
inter-institutional learning collaboration co-plan institute for habitat development

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about Co-PLAN

Co-PLAN, Institute for Habitat Development, is a nonprofit organization. Since 1995, we have been dedicated to fostering sustainable development, catalyzing transformative change in urban and regional spaces, promoting good governance, addressing pressing environmental issues, cultivating civil society, and influencing local, national, and regional/international policies. With a focus on people and institutions, we aim to drive tangible social transformation and positive change by instilling change-driving knowledge in our society and ensuring through our persistent work that our habitats are smartly managed and resilient. Our work encompasses project-based engagement, research, grant-giving, capacity building, and active community engagement. This comprehensive approach, seamlessly incorporating technology and digital tools that strive towards innovative solutions, ensures a holistic and effective contribution to driving positive change. At the heart of this mission is our multidisciplinary team, urban planners, policy analysts, environmental engineers, economists, and researchers, who bring passion, expertise, and unwavering commitment to advancing Co-PLAN's vision of a more inclusive, just, and sustainable future.



Navigating Change with Commitment and Care

Message from the Executive Director

Dear colleagues, partners, and friends,

It is a particular honour to share with you Co-PLAN's 2024 Annual Report, a reflection of a year marked by purposeful action, growing influence, and deeper collaboration.

The report you hold in your hands is structured around three pillars that lie at the heart of our work: the values that define us - where integrity and transparency remain fundamental; the vision that fuels us - of sustainable, inclusive and just development; and the ambition to keep pace with the times - by fostering civic engagement and advancing evidence based policies.

In 2024, Co-PLAN entered a new chapter of institutional and programmatic evolution, guided by our enduring belief that sustainable change must be rooted in civic agency, equity, and inclusive development. Initiatives such as SPARKs and #NAD2024 deepened our engagement with grassroots actors, helping to energize citizen-led advocacy and highlighting those working to make Albania a more just and inclusive society. Through GreenAL, we strengthened the voice and capacity of environmental civil society, opening up critical dialogue on climate, pollution, and waste management, and promoting civic oversight as a cornerstone of environmental governance. Meanwhile, with EFFORT, we reinforced the importance of cross-border collaboration to advance renewable energy and build climate resilience at the local level—demonstrating how sustainable infrastructure begins with shared responsibility and vision.

At the same time, our research and knowledge partnerships flourished. Together with universities and European and regional collaborators, we explored complex transitions toward circular economies, climate justice, and regenerative systems through programs like GreenFORCE, CROSS-REIS, WBC-RRINET, and TURN. These collaborations not only advanced academic inquiry and policy innovation but also affirmed Co-PLAN's position as both a community-rooted actor and a credible contributor to regional and EU-level dialogues. In doing so, we helped bridge the gap between local realities and broader policy frameworks, ensuring that the voices and experiences from our region are reflected in shaping Europe's sustainable future.

But beyond outputs and outcomes, 2024 reaffirmed a core truth: transformation happens when knowledge is shared, voices are empowered, and systems are made accountable. That is why we continue to refine how we generate, communicate, and apply knowledge—making it more accessible to citizens, more valuable to policymakers, and more catalytic for positive change.

In the following pages, you will find not only data and results but also stories of challenges met, collaborations forged, and a team that never stops pushing boundaries. I am deeply grateful to every member of the Co-PLAN team, to our national and international partners, and to our wider community of collaborators and supporters who make our mission possible.

As we look to the future, we renew our commitment to being a steadfast advocate for sustainable development, a resource for innovation and learning, and a trusted ally in building more democratic, inclusive, and resilient societies.

Sincerely,
Anila Bejko

Key Facts

Since **1995**, Co-PLAN has forged strategic partnerships with over 80% of local government units across the country, while actively engaging with key stakeholders at the regional and national levels.

One of the leading organizations in the country for **grant management and cascade funding**, with a proven track record across multiple EU-funded projects.

200 + projects have been carried out in Albania, the Western Balkans, and beyond.
.....
Funding amounts varying between **€10,000 - €5 million.**

Portfolio



Territorial Governance and Spatial Planning



Research and Innovation



Environment and Climate Resilience



Civil society and Activism



Economic Development, Innovation and Sustainable Tourism



Grant management / cascade funding

Strategic partnership

Embedded within POLIS University, our strategic partner, we benefit from access to the university's infrastructure, including laboratories, as well as its academic and professional human resources.

Organizational values

At Co-PLAN, values aren't just words on paper, they shape what we do, who we work with, and how we get things done. They're the lens through which we choose our projects, build our partnerships, and drive impact. Here's what **WE** stand for:

1 Cutting-Edge Know-How. Unshakable Integrity.

From day one, Co-PLAN has brought together top-tier local and international **experts** to craft smart, context-driven solutions across everything we do. Our commitment? To deliver professional, trustworthy, and bias-free expertise. In a landscape that constantly shifts, we remain grounded in facts, driven by purpose, and focused on impact.

2 Continuous Personal Development

Our greatest strength is our **people**. Beyond shared values, we invest deeply in continuous learning and growth. From opportunities to pursue advanced qualifications and specialized skills, to regular retreats for collective reflection and learning, to hands-on mentoring, professional development is embedded in our culture. This commitment has fostered a consistently high level of expertise, creativity, and long-term dedication across our team. Personal growth is part of our everyday. It's how we stay sharp, inspired, and ready to take on whatever comes next.

3 Partnerships

Collaboration is in our DNA. At Co-PLAN, we believe real change only happens when it's built with, and owned by, the people it affects. That's why we partner closely with local communities, governments at all levels, civil society, and donor agencies. Our relationships aren't just project-based, they're built to last, rooted in trust, shared goals, and a **commitment** to long-term impact.





Directing board

Co-PLAN is governed by an Executive Director who works in close consultation with the organization's Directing Board, as well as a group of Strategic Collaborators and Advisors. The Directing Board is the highest decision-making body in the organization, providing strategic oversight and guidance.

Composed of three distinguished women: Loreta Gogaj (Chair), Brikena Zogaj, and Rudina Toto, and is responsible for shaping Co-PLAN's overall policies, ensuring strategic alignment with the organization's mission, and upholding its values of transparency, impact, and innovation.

Through regular consultations with leadership and staff, the Board plays a critical role in safeguarding Co-PLAN's long-term sustainability and relevance in a rapidly evolving governance and development landscape.



Loreta Gogaj (Chair)

Loreta Gogaj is a senior banking and economic development professional with nearly two decades of experience in Albania's financial sector. She currently serves as Head of the SME Business Department at Union Bank, where she drives strategic business development with a strong focus on the agriculture and energy efficiency sectors. Ms. Gogaj has a proven track record in designing tailored financial products, promoting green and inclusive lending, and advising on climate finance, local government creditworthiness, and energy transition planning. She has a deep expertise in financial strategy, feasibility analysis, and SME development. Ms. Gogaj holds a degree in Finance from the University of Tirana and a postgraduate qualification in Banking Management from the Frankfurt School of Finance and Management.



Brikena Zogaj (Board Member)

Brikena Zogaj is a seasoned professional with over 25 years of experience in child rights advocacy, development, and humanitarian response. She has worked across diverse and complex contexts—including Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon, Pakistan, and Eastern Europe—leading national, regional, and global programs focused on child protection, social inclusion, and community resilience. Brikena has held senior roles in international NGOs and philanthropic organizations, contributing to policy reform, system strengthening, and multi-sectoral collaboration. She is widely respected for her ability to navigate humanitarian challenges while fostering long-term impact through inclusive and rights-based approaches.



Rudina Toto [Board Member]

Dr. Rudina Toto is an accomplished expert in urban and environmental management, with over 17 years of experience in spatial planning, decentralization, and good governance. Her academic and professional journey bridges technical expertise and policy insight, focusing on sustainable urban development and regional planning. She holds advanced degrees in Urban Planning and Environmental Management from the Polytechnic University of Tirana, Wageningen University, and IHS – Erasmus University Rotterdam. She completed her PhD through a joint program between POLIS University in Albania and the University of Ferrara in Italy, with a focus on housing, governance, and spatial development. Rudina has led and advised on numerous strategic planning projects, including regulatory urban plans, territorial development strategies, and the design of territorial information systems. She has also worked extensively on issues related to regionalization, governance structures, and institutional capacity building.

Our Team

The Heart of Co-PLAN

Behind every project, research, policy analysis, or public forum we organize stands a team of dedicated, dynamic, and purpose-driven individuals. In 2024, Co-PLAN continued to grow as a multidisciplinary community of professionals, urban planners, environmentalists, economists, social scientists, and civic activists, united by a shared mission to shape more inclusive, resilient, and sustainable societies.

Each member brings not just skill, but a genuine commitment to sharing years of practical experience, mentoring, co-creating, and supporting those around them to learn and lead with confidence. We thrive on challenges, learn from each other, and constantly evolve by working at the intersection of knowledge and practice. With a strong presence across thematic areas, from territorial governance and spatial planning to environmental resilience, sustainable development, and civil society empowerment, our staff remains the driving force behind Co-PLAN's impact.



Anila BEJKO (GJIKA)
Executive Director



Ogerta GJIKNURI
Finance and Grant Manager



Fiona IMAMI
Regional Development, Planning & Monitoring Expert



Kejt DHRAMI
Spatial planning & Regional Development Expert



Ledio ALLKJA
Spatial & Urban Planning Expert



Merita TOSKA
Economic Development and Public Finance Expert



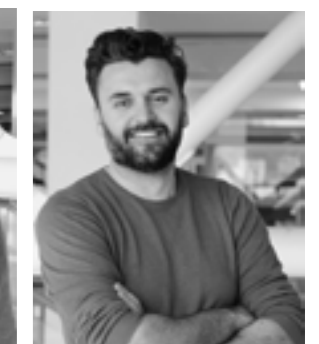
Elvis NDREKA
Environmental Engineer



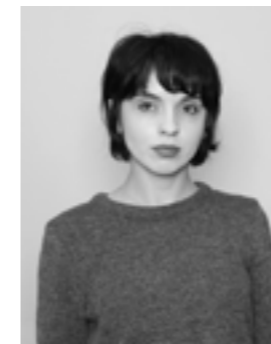
Enkela PORO
Environmental Engineer



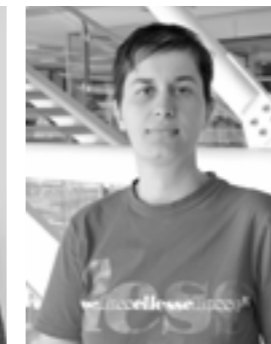
Erni KOCANI
Environmental Expert



Imeldi SOKOLI
Urban Planning Expert



Klesta GALANXHI
Multimedia Expert



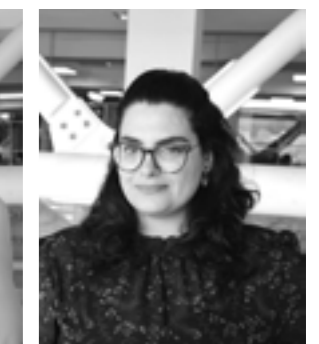
Merushe ZENELI
Civil Society and Gender Expert



Rea MUKA
GIS and Planning Expert



Rudina ÇOPA
Environmental Engineer



Androniqi NINI
Finance Specialist



Erinda DHEKALI
Finance Specialist



Greta SHEHU
Junior Environmental and GIS Expert



Alesia XHUMRI
Administrative Assistant and Social Media Manager



Altion QIRKO
Administration Driver



Projects

Co-PLAN has extensive experience and a diversified portfolio with over 150 projects in the field of territorial planning, urban and regional governance, environment, and research and public policy. Projects implemented over the years have been projects of own-design proposed by Co-PLAN, or projects where we have played the role of local implementing organization mainly for projects or development programs from international donor agencies such as USAID, World Bank, European Union, The Austrian Development Agency, the Open Society Foundation, the Swiss Development Agency, UNDP, etc..



SPARKs

Supporting Civic Activism and Advocacy Initiatives in Albania

Donor: Public Affairs Office, U.S. Embassy in Tirana

Duration: January - December 2024

Value: \$180,000

SPARKs aimed to ignite civic activism and strengthen advocacy initiatives across Albania. By fostering collaboration between civil society, local government, and the media, the project worked to build a more vibrant, rights-driven, and participatory local democracy.

Capacity Building Workshops & Tools



Two regional workshops (Lushnja & Tirana) introduced participants to the core principles of activism and advocacy.

Resources included:

Toolkits with exercises to develop ideas into impact

A Mini-guide on fact-checking tailored for local activists

Key Achievements

17 Local initiatives supported

3 Workshops held on practical advocacy skills

2 Institutional study visits organized

8 Participants embedded in leading CSOs



#NAD2024 7th edition

2

**National events:
Awards Ceremony &
Activism Fair**

35

**CSOs participated
in the fair**

6

**Awards granted to
activists and CSOs**

20

**Activists & orgs led
awareness activities
across Albania**

The National Activism Day, the seventh edition of #NAD, brought together many initiatives and activists under the motto "Voices

for Inclusion." #NAD2024 focused on initiatives advocating for diversity and inclusion in society and policymaking.

AWARDS



Women for Women

an initiative working for women's rights and empowerment in Shkodra county.



Jetmir Kallollari

an activist continuously empowering persons with disabilities.



Livia Zotrija

an activist for the attainment of LGBTI community rights.



Mission Emanuel

an initiative working for the social integration of the elderly in the Korça region.



Ana Dervishi

an activist for the rights of children and youth.



Romina Sefa

an activist for the rights of Roma and Egyptian minorities.

25 civil society organizations and dedicated activists voiced their initiatives in the cities where they live and work, such as Lushnjë, Durrës, Fushë-Arrëz, Librazhd, Prrenjas, Burrel, and more. Organizations like ESD Albania and LuletëBlinit conveyed their messages through artistic and demonstrative performances.

The need for empowering marginalized groups and including them in social and political life was the prevailing message at this seventh edition of the National Day of Activism, organized by Co-Plan with the support of the American Embassy.







GreenAL

GreenAL is a platform that amplifies the voice of civil society protecting the environment. At a time when ecological challenges demand bold responses, GreenAL supports civic organizations that don't wait, but act. Led by Co-PLAN, the network becomes a space of collaboration where local activists, institutions, and communities come together not just to raise concerns, but to co-create solutions. Together, they spark a new kind of environmental advocacy, one that is rooted, resilient, and impossible to ignore.

GreenAL

Supporting Environmental Civil Society Organizations 2024 – 2027

Donor: Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)

Duration: January 2024 – December 2027

Implementing Partners: Co-PLAN (Lead), VIS Albania, COSV

Total Budget: € 1,970,000/ € 1,744,148 Co-PLAN's share

Funded by Sida and implemented by Co-PLAN in collaboration with VIS Albania and COSV, GreenAL operates at the intersection of civil society empowerment, environmental governance, and Albania's EU integration process. Building on the foundations laid during its first phase (2020–2023), GreenAL II (2024–2027) seeks to institutionalize civic engagement in environmental policy-making, ensure local ownership of climate and environmental reforms, and foster sustainable, inclusive, and

accountable green transition pathways and meaningful participation. GreenAL remains committed to ensuring that the environmental transition is not only effective, but also just, inclusive, and citizen-driven. The program aims to strengthen transparency and accountability by monitoring environmental policies and services, while promoting responsible governance in three main areas: climate, pollution, nature.

Key Achievements

9

Regional roundtables were organized to discuss priority environmental concerns and policy gaps.

369

Stakeholders participated in these events.

13

Monitoring stations selected to assess pollution in Tirana, for the 2024 annual alternative report.

44

Meetings with stakeholders, including municipalities, regional institutions, and local agencies, resulting in partnerships with them and with similar projects across Albania and the region.

2

Strategic policy responses on energy and climate and environmental monitoring and pollution control, assessed albania's legal frameworks, monitoring systems, and alignment with eu standards to advance environmental governance and reform.

13

Monitoring stations were selected to assess pollution in tirana, for the 2024 annual

2

Draft laws discussed thoroughly with civil society and experts

20

Local cso representatives trained on project cycle management, equipping them with tools to improve project design, implementation, and evaluation.

55

Organizations submitted applications for the first phase of the thematic and regional grants scheme, launched in september 2024.



The program chart was finalized in June 2024, reflecting inputs from meetings and discussions, and will guide the next four years.



Targeted pollution monitoring exercise at the Vlora waste site. The findings were used to initiate advocacy efforts and call for stronger oversight mechanisms in waste management.



The green transition policy report was finalized and is under validation to reflect civil society perspectives on Albania's green transition.



Greenal contributed to the European Commission's country report by providing targeted input on Chapter 27 - Environment and Climate. The network coordinated civil society feedback and took part in structured consultations with the EU Delegation, while also engaging in dialogue with other csos to align advocacy efforts and amplify the voice of civil society in the **EU Accession Process**.





EFFORT

Enhancing Facilities for a Future with an Optimal Resource and Energy Efficiency Trajectory

Donor: European Union

Duration: 2023–2025

Partners: Municipality of Mirditë (Albania), Municipality of Junik (Kosova), Co-PLAN – Institute for Habitat Development

Total Budget: € 1,411,764.00 / € 330,830 Co-PLAN's share

The EFFORT project aims to advance energy efficiency and sustainable energy solutions through joint municipal action and targeted capacity building, with a focus on the municipalities of Mirditë (Albania) and Junik (Kosova). Its core activities focus on conducting technical assessments and preparing sustainable energy

measures for public buildings. In 2024, EFFORT entered its first full year of implementation. This key milestone marked the official launch of cross-border collaboration, uniting both municipalities in a shared ambition to reduce energy consumption and modernize public infrastructure.

Key Achievements

10

Public buildings were selected through a detailed baseline assessment for solar panel installations and energy audits.

4

Training missions and peer-to-peer exchanges were planned to share lessons learned across both municipalities.



EE Plans were created and validated with stakeholders, offering long-term municipal strategies for energy savings and system upgrades.



Municipal EE database is being built to track energy-saving measures and document results.



Launch of a multi-phase monitoring system, featuring quarterly evaluations and the integration of the project's LogFrame into the EU's OPSYS platform.



The Kick-Off Meeting, held on 18 April in Mirditë, brought together national and local stakeholders, including the Ministry of Economy of Kosova, OSHEE, KESH, and local schools.



A PRAG Training Session on 23 May provided procurement and legal staff from both partner municipalities with a harmonized framework for decision-making and compliance.



1 workshop on energy audits and renewables was held in Polis University for vocational school students; a second is planned in Junik in 2025.



Stakeholder consultations ensured **transparency and alignment** with community needs.



2 Focus Group Discussions engaged local actors in shaping EE plans and learning from early results.

GreenFORCE

Foster Research Excellence for Green Transition in the Western Balkans

Donor: Horizon Europe Widera (Grant agreement: 101059411)

Duration: 04/07/2022 – 04/07/2025

Implementing Partners: [Co-PLAN](#), [UB-GEF](#), [CEA](#), [Nordregio](#), [POLITO](#), [Polis University](#) (Affiliated partner)

Value of the project: € 1 499 305 / € 507,257 Co-PLAN's share

GreenFORCE aims at fostering excellence in the Western Balkans' green transition" scientific research and innovation of Co-PLAN (Albania), CEA (North Macedonia), and UB GEF (Serbia), as a means to enhancing their research profile, strengthening research and management capacities of their staff, and contributing to

convergence between Western Balkans (WB) and EU research capacities, as well as to wider policy initiatives for the WB region. This objective is reached through the twinning partnership of five organisations that have worked closely to produce territorial knowledge through exploratory research and institutional learning.



Key Achievements

Second Research Advisory Board (RAB) meeting, held on May 17 in Belgrade, gathered all GreenFORCE researchers to discuss the research progress and findings in a hybrid format.



Balkan tour for the GreenFORCE researchers led by Nordregio to present the findings of "Pathways for Macro-Regional Collaboration in the Western Balkans", engaging diverse stakeholders in Tirana, Belgrade, Sarajevo, and Skopje.



20 students at the Second GreenFORCE Winter School -

Students from POLIS University, Politecnico di Torino (POLITO), and UBGeF, as well as over 15 lecturers and researchers, followed the winter school that took place on May at the University of Belgrade - Faculty of Geography (UBGeF).



2nd Summer School in Belgrade

- The University of Belgrade hosted the in-person portion of the Second International Summer School of the GreenFORCE project, focusing on "Communicating Just Green Transitions - Navigating the Path to a Sustainable Future."



.....

Hosted a workshop on “Multilevel Governance: Empowering Stakeholders in the Climate and Energy Transition” during the European Week of Regions and Cities (October 2024, Brussels), highlighting the critical role of local and regional governments in driving climate justice and inclusive transition efforts.



.....

4 lecturers from POLIS University and Co-PLAN conducted a teaching exchange at Politecnico di Torino, contributing to the Planning and Governance curriculum.



.....

7 researchers from the WB engaged in a week-long secondment visit to Nordregio, to exchange knowledge on sustainable planning and innovation at the NordRegio Forum 2024.



.....

Participated in the **36th AESOP Congress in Paris**, contributing to sessions on Just Green Transitions and Citizen Science, and co-hosting a high-level roundtable with European academic partners.



Professional Fellows Program

Empowering Citizen-Led Democracy – Albania Chapter

Donor: U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, Global Leaders Division

Duration: May 2023 – March 2025

Implementing Partner (USA): Great Lakes Community Action Partnership (GLCAP)

Local Implementation: Co-PLAN – Institute for Habitat Development

Total Budget (Albanian Component): 33,394 USD

The Professional Fellows Program (PFP) is a two-way, U.S. government-funded international exchange initiative designed to empower mid-level professionals from Eastern Europe with the skills and experience needed to advance citizen engagement, participatory democracy, and community-led development. The program is part of the U.S. State Department's Global Leaders initiative and brings together civic actors from Albania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia. Through a combination of virtual

learning, practical experience in the U.S., and locally led follow-up initiatives, the program fosters a strong transatlantic network of change-makers dedicated to advancing inclusive governance, equity, and civic empowerment.

Albania's Participation in 2024

From May to June 2024, Albanian fellow Roberta Profka joined a cohort of participants for a six-week fellowship in the United States. The program included:

Orientation Week

in Chicago, Illinois, with team-building sessions and an overview of U.S. civic institutions

Four-week practicum

placement at People's Action, grassroots organizing organization based in Chicago

Community volunteering

at Temple Shalom's Monday Meals program, providing food to those in need

Final peer-learning and reflection session

placement at People's Action, grassroots organizing organization based in Chicago

Local Impact: Building Community Organizing Capacity

In fall 2024, as part of her action plan, Roberta successfully designed and delivered four capacity-building workshops on community organizing and civic engagement, targeting young people in:



 **100+**

young people took part in these interactive sessions, gaining foundational knowledge on: Grassroots leadership; Community mobilization techniques; Advocacy and campaigning tools.



CCL

Circular City Labs – Tirana

Funded by: GIZ, on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)

Duration: March 2024 – July 2025 (Implementation) | Sept 2024 – Sept 2025 (Grant Management)

Total Budget (Albanian Component): 90,000 EUR (local implementation) + 350,000 EUR (grant management)

Co-PLAN contributes to the CCL Tirana initiative through two key roles: as a local implementation partner in the piloting of circular economy models under the Urban Partnership Accelerator Initiative, and as the designated grant manager responsible for fund disbursement, monitoring, and capacity building for six sub-granted circular pilot initiatives. The project empowers small and

women-led enterprises in Tirana to test and scale sustainable practices, strengthening the city's shift to circularity and low-carbon urban development. By mobilizing diverse stakeholders and empowering entrepreneurs, particularly through the development of reusable packaging systems, CCL-Tirana fosters urban innovation and accelerates the green transition.

Key Achievements

1

Kick-off meeting was held to define the communication and visibility (C&V) targets for CCL.

5

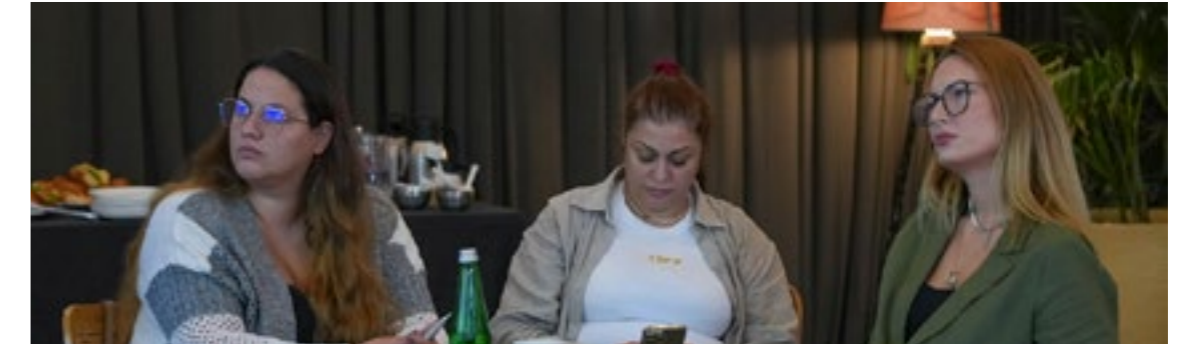
Key Modules were designed and implemented as part of a tailored program covering circular economy concepts, reusable packaging, business model development, market analysis, product prototyping, financial planning, and pitch preparation.

12

Training modules were prepared.

33

Hour Hackathon kicked off on 26 June 2024 at Destil Creative Hub, uniting innovators, experts, and city officials to co-create circular economy solutions focused on reusable packaging systems in Tirana.



12

Businesses received, intensive coaching, mentorship, and training, emphasizing circular economy principles, reusable packaging systems, and gender inclusion during the Accelerator phase.

1

Demo Day was held, where participants pitched their circular solutions.

4

Workshops guided participants through problem exploration, digital prototyping, financial planning, business development, and pitch preparation.



13



Mentorship meetings, interactive sessions, and one-on-one consultations to support tailored business development.

6

Winning proposals were selected: Barefoot Festival Eco Festival and TOK Digital Agency, Biocosm Laboratory, Birraria e Gjyshit, Gjellbër, Panja, and SilkyWet.

CROSS-REIS

CROSS-Disciplinary Network for Research Excellence in Regenerative Economy Innovation Eco-Systems

Donor: Horizon Europe – CSA – Grant agreement ID: 101136834

Duration: January 2024 – December 2028

Local Implementation: Co-PLAN – Institute for Habitat Development

Value: € 4,366,775.00 / € 413,125,00 Co-PLAN's share

CROSS-REIS is a four-year Horizon Europe project (2024–2028), funded by the European Union through the Horizon Europe Excellence Initiative. Coordinated by the University of Niš, Serbia, the project brings together our organization with other institutions from Serbia, Montenegro, Croatia, Slovenia, Spain, Norway, and Italy. It aims to enhance scientific excellence, strengthen cooperation between academia and the private sector, and promote innovation ecosystems for the regenerative economy. The project's core focus

areas include circular economy, waste management, and urban biodiversity. It aims to support the green and digital transitions in line with the European Research Area (ERA) policy agenda. CROSS-REIS also works to reform research evaluation systems, improve talent mobility, and foster open science, gender equality, and broader stakeholder inclusion, especially in widening countries. It reflects Co-PLAN's ongoing commitment to collaborative, excellence-driven, and future-oriented research.

Key Achievements

4

National Info Days organized in Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, and Slovenia engaged over 160 stakeholders from academia, civil society, business, and public institutions, raising awareness on key project topics: regenerative economies, urban biodiversity, and the circular economy.



7

Conference/Symposium participations showcased project themes and enabled cross-border peer learning at international events.



1 Business Forum in Niš, Serbia organized - titled "Sustainability 2.0: Exploring the Future of Regenerative Business," engaging over 60 multi-sector stakeholders in dialogue on regenerative business.



1 Study Visit (3-day) in Croatia organized - visiting the research facilities of EFRI (project partner) and attending the 'Economics of Digital Transformation' conference themed 'Artificial Intelligence and Productivity: Challenges and Opportunities.'"



1 Study Visit (3-day) in Montenegro organized - connecting regional innovation actors from the Western Balkans through participation in the MICEB Congress and a visit to the research facilities of the University of Podgorica (project partner).



1 Study Visit (3-day) in Serbia organized - included a visit to the research facilities of the University of Niš (lead partner).

1 Capacity-Building Visit (5-day) in Barcelona organized - hosted by EMEA and focused on "Building Capacities and the Knowledge Base for Regenerative Economy Stewardship"



1 Capacity-Building Visit (5-day) in Norway organized- hosted by OsloMet, focused on excellence initiatives and research governance



1 Online Training Session delivered by OsloMet (Dec 17-19, 2024) to build advanced digital research skills for circular economy and waste management.



13 Policy & Scientific Presentations delivered by partners across various conferences, panels, and academic venues strengthening the project's international visibility.



1 Mentorship Program Initiated - supporting early-career researchers in widening countries through training, exchanges, and joint research (25% underway).



1 Open-Access Repository Launched - CROSS-REIS Knowledge Agora online hub for sharing publications and learning materials across the network



2 Issues of the Journal of Regenerative Economics - published in 2024 (vs. 1 planned), featuring 12 peer-reviewed papers from authors across 10+ countries

Towards Regional Circular Supply Chains

Knowledge exchange from V4 to WB

Funded by: International Visegrad Fund

Duration: 04/07/2022 – 04/07/2025

The project seeks to support the advancement of circular economy practices in the Western Balkans (WB) by drawing on the experience of the Visegrad Group (V4), a regional cooperation platform between Poland, Czechia, Slovakia, and Hungary. Designed

as a launching point for cross-regional knowledge exchange, the project explores practical ways to assist stakeholders, policy makers, SMEs, and civil society, in strengthening circular transition pathways in WB countries.

Key Achievements

Dedicated Workshop in North Macedonia

As part of the conference **"The Undeclared: Political, Economic and Sustainable Future of the Western Balkans,"** a workshop titled "Is a Regional Circular Supply Chain Possible?" provided a platform to present and debate key findings from the project's research. Discussions focused on the state of waste management regulation in the WB, with particular attention to Bosnia and Herzegovina and North Macedonia. Participants pointed to fragmented regulatory frameworks, weak enforcement mechanisms, and low levels of public awareness as major challenges to advancing circular practices in the region. This initiative marks an important step toward fostering collaboration, sharing expertise, and building the foundations for a more circular and sustainable economic model in Southeast Europe.

Publication of the Regional Report

The Regional Report "Towards Regional Circular Supply Chains: Knowledge Exchange From Visegrad Countries (V4) to Western Balkans (WB)" presents a comprehensive analysis of circular economy dynamics across the Visegrad Group (V4) and the Western Balkans (WB). It explores how V4 nations can serve as models for knowledge sharing.



WBC-RRI.net

Embedding RRI in Western Balkan Countries: Enhancement of Self-Sustaining R&I Ecosystems

Donor: European Union, H2020-SwafS (Grant agreement ID: 101006279)

Duration: 01/03/2021 – 29/02/2024

Value of the project: € 1,999,995.00 total/ € 197,000 Co-PLAN's share

The WBC-RRI.net project, one of the flagship research projects implemented by Co-PLAN, came to an end during the first months of 2024. Lead by the University of Novi Sad, in partnership with University of Banja Luka; ICT Cluster of Vojvodina; South-East European Research Centre (SEERC, Thessaloniki); Centre for Social Innovation (ZSI, Vienna); Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts; NCDIEL; European Science Foundation (ESF, Strasbourg); Albanian Ministry of Tourism and Environment, "ZONA" Association; Science and Technology Park in Montenegro; RTD Health Cluster

in Bosnia and Herzegovina, this Horizon 2020 initiative brought together regional quadruple helix stakeholders in a constant effort to employ responsible research and innovation practices in the Western Balkans, while implementing territory-specific anchor initiatives to empower communities, academic and non-academic institutions, and business-enhancing facilities, in 6 key pillars: science education; public engagement in research; open access and open data; ethics in research; gender inclusivity; and proper research management.

Key Achievements



WBC-RRI.net concluded its five Anchor Initiatives, delivering targeted territorial interventions that embedded RRI principles in specific scientific and policy contexts.



4 Policy Briefs published, co-authored by Co-PLAN, providing actionable recommendations for policy and practice.



2-Day Regional Conference held, showcasing project achievements and exploring pathways for future collaboration.



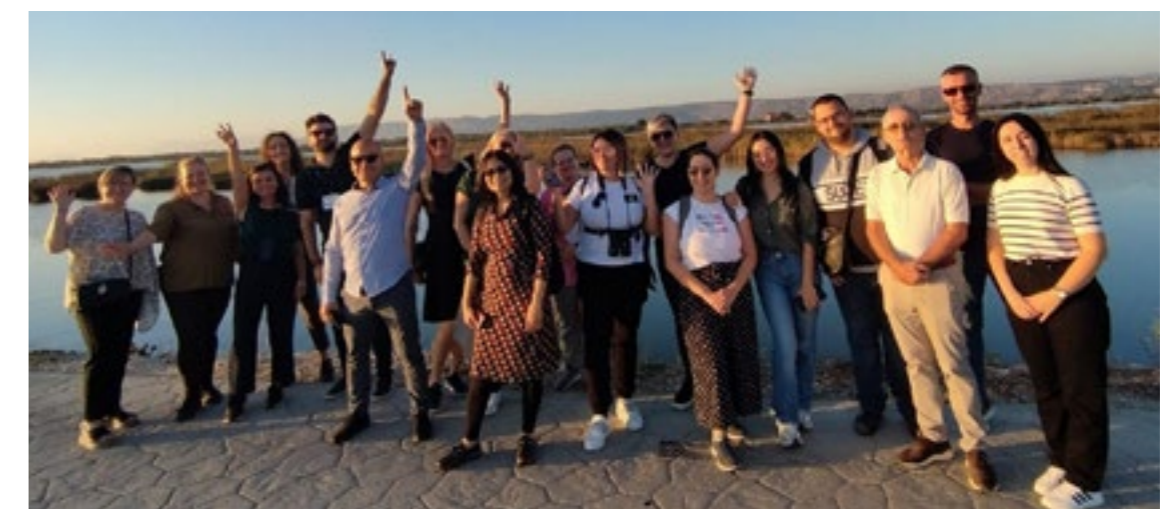
5 Anchor Initiative Reports finalized and published.

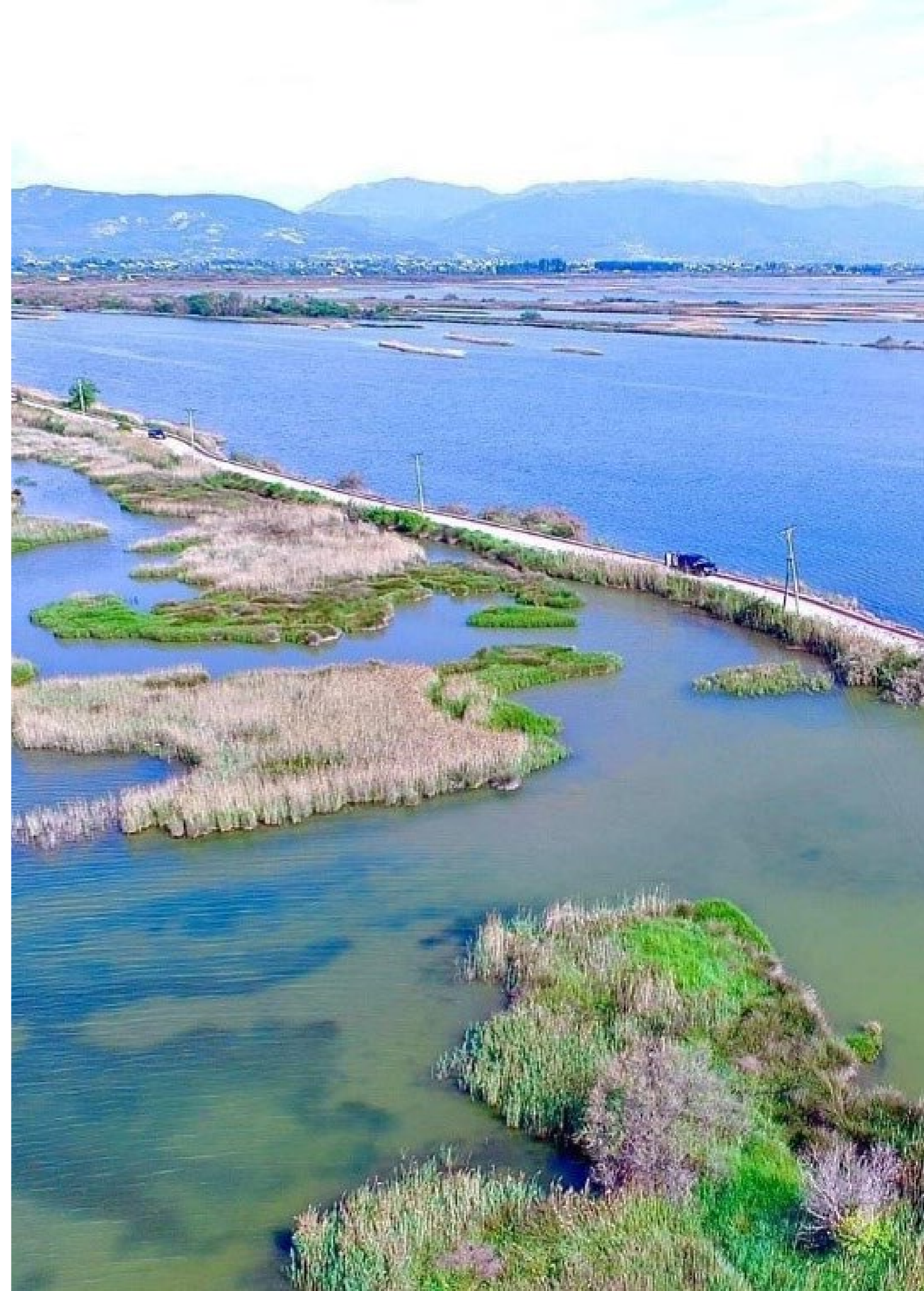


1 Final Open Event organized, engaging over 100 researchers in dissemination and closing activities.



1 Webinar on Science Communication delivered.





DRR

Preparation of Local Disaster Risk Reduction Strategies and Action Plans for the 6 Municipalities of Fieri Region

Donor: UNDP Albania

Duration: November 2023-May 2024

Value of the project: 12,506,516.00 ALL

This assignment, part of UNDP's RESEAL Project (Resilience Strengthening in Albania), builds on preparatory work initiated in late 2023 and was implemented throughout the first half of 2024. The objective was to equip the six municipalities of Fier Region (Fier, Lushnje, Roskovec, Divjakë, Patos, Mallakastër) with tailored Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Strategies and Action Plans, aligned with Albania's national DRR policy and Law 45/2019 on Civil Protection. Through this joint effort, Co-PLAN and Metro_POLIS supported municipalities in institutionalizing risk-informed planning and emergency preparedness, following a previous vulnerability assessment and preliminary

Strategy drafting included SWOT analyses, problem tree exercises, and the design of three strategic objectives per municipality focused on institutional capacity, community preparedness, and targeted risk-reduction interventions. Each municipality now has a complete DRR strategy accompanied by an action plan with costed, prioritized measures (structural and non-structural), an implementation timeline, and a monitoring framework. A consolidated coordination meeting with all mayors, UNDP, and NCPA in Roskovec finalized the strategies, which were then shared with local councils for approval. The process also contributed to capacity building, awareness raising, and the creation of a national model guideline for replication across Albania.

Key Achievements

6

DRR Strategies and Action Plans drafted and submitted

1

National DRR strategy guideline drafted for future replication

22+

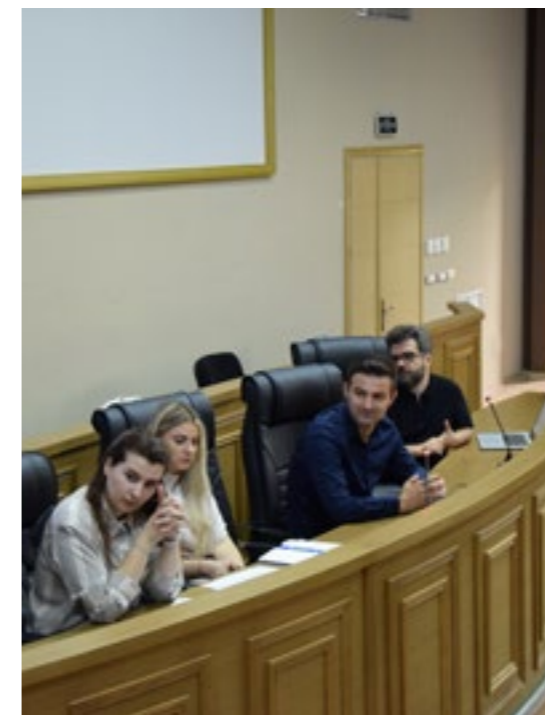
Local meetings and workshops held with working groups and sectors

3

Strategic objectives & project packages defined per municipality

80+

Stakeholders engaged, including mayors, civil society, and CP officers





ERASMUS+ SmartWB Project

Curricula innovation in climate-smart urban development based on green and energy efficiency with the non-academic sector

Donor: European Education and Culture Executive Agency, through ERASMUS-EDU-2022-CBHE

Duration: 01.01.2023 – 31.12.2026

Value of the project: € 715,074.00/ € 10,547.00 Co-PLAN's share

In 2023, Co-PLAN joined the Smart WB Erasmus+ Capacity Building in Higher Education project, coordinated by the University of Montenegro and implemented in partnership with 17 academic and non-academic institutions from the Western Balkans and the EU. The project, set to conclude in 2026, aims to enhance the quality and relevance of higher education in the field of climate-smart urban development (CSUD), with a strong focus on labor market alignment, interdisciplinary learning, and collaborative innovation. Throughout 2024, Co-PLAN continued to play a key role as a non-academic partner, supporting the modernization of university curricula and the integration of societal needs into academic production. Specifically, Co-PLAN contributed to the co-design of learning modules and facilitated dialogue between universities, civil society, and industry actors. This included identifying capacity gaps, promoting low-

carbon technologies, and initiating community engagement on emission reduction and sustainable urban transition.

In addition, the Smart WB project launched its technological platform to support CSUD education and collaboration across Western Balkan HEIs. Managed by the European University of Tirana (UET), the platform, accessible via Home | SmartWB E-Learning, offers tools such as e-learning modules, job listings, and discussion forums. It aims to enhance cooperation, knowledge exchange, and the modernization of university courses in line with EU standards. Designed to engage project partners, students, public institutions, and business stakeholders, the platform promotes inclusive access, content sharing, and capacity building, contributing directly to Smart WB's goals of improving teaching competencies, aligning education with labor market needs, and fostering regional collaboration.

Key Achievements



TURN

Addressing industrial relations towards circular economy in metal, chemical, textile, energy and construction sectors

Donor: European Union (SOCPL Programme)

Duration: November 2023 - November 2026

Implementing Partners: FIM CISL, FEMCA CISL, FILCA CISL, OZ IPLIK IS, Türk Metal, Co-PLAN, FSPISH, CSPS, KOZ SR, FIM, CCOO Industria, IndustriALL, EFBWW

Total Budget: € 253,189.19 / € 9,812 Co-PLAN's share

The TURN project supports the EU's shift toward a circular economy by aiming to reduce pressure on natural resources, foster sustainable growth, and create green jobs. As part of the broader vision to achieve climate neutrality by 2050 and address biodiversity loss, TURN focuses on mobilizing social partners and industrial relations actors across Europe to ensure that workers are both informed and empowered for this transition. It enhances knowledge on industrial relations within the circular economy, promotes social dialogue to make production systems more environmentally respectful, and equips workers with the skills needed to actively contribute to the green transition. Through capacity building and policy exchange, the project strengthens dialogue not only between workers and employers, but also between citizens and institutions, while mapping

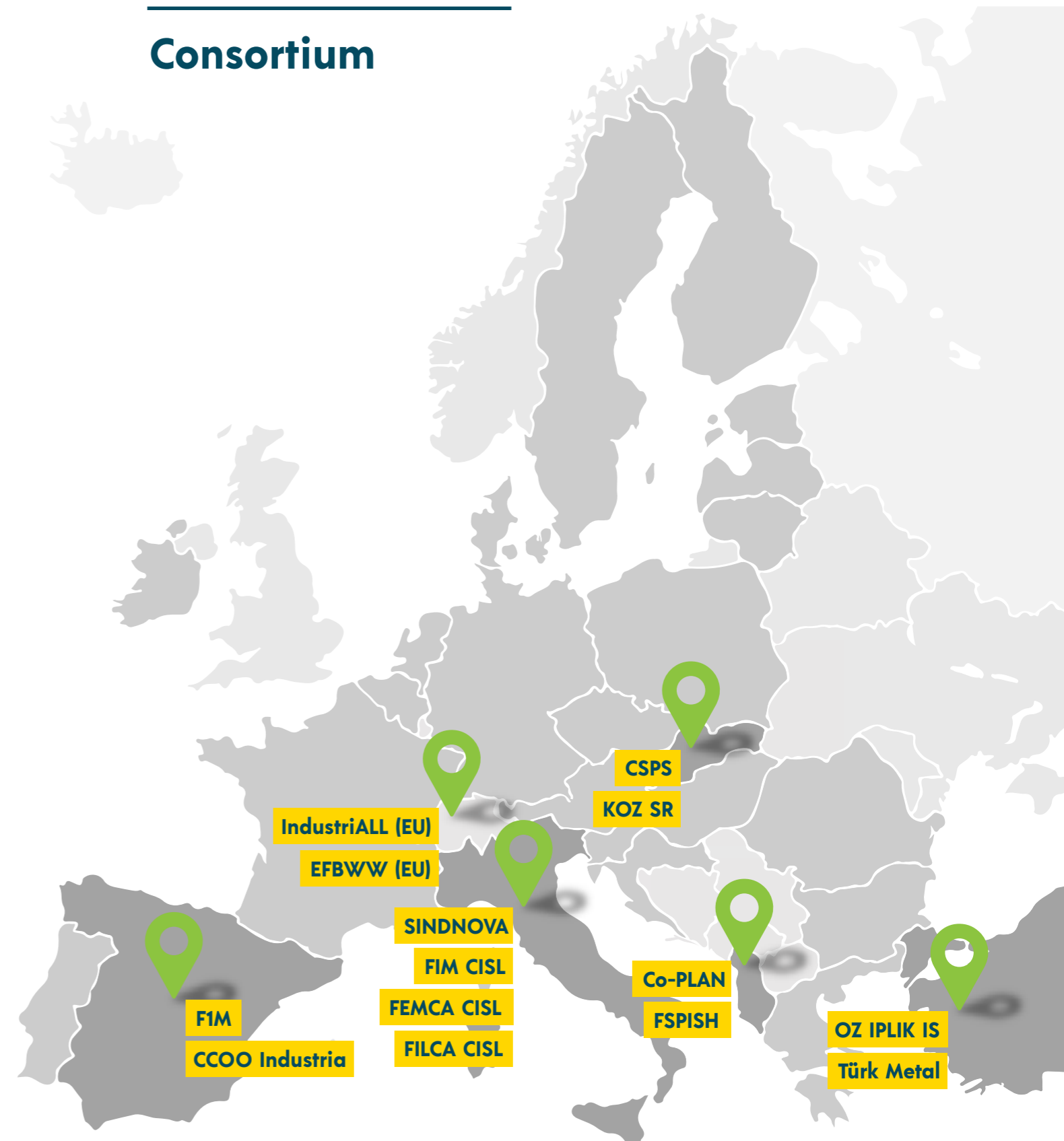
national experiences and practices across EU and candidate countries to foster a greener and fairer economic model.



18 partners gathered in a roundtable meeting

The activity aimed to foster dialogue, facilitate the exchange of experiences, and build capacity among key stakeholders to support the transition to a circular economy by enhancing industrial relations, raising awareness, and equipping both workers and employers with the tools needed for sustainable and inclusive practices.

Consortium



EU4M

EU4Municipalities

Donor: European Union

Total value for the period: 2021-2024: € 2,500,000

In 2024, the EU4 Municipalities (EU4M) project, financed by the European Union, continued to unlock the potential of Albanian municipalities as drivers of sustainable development and better living conditions. By addressing gaps in infrastructure, governance, and service delivery, EU4M worked to bridge the urban-rural divide and ensure that local communities were better equipped to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow.

The project strengthened the ability of local governments to plan, fund, and deliver quality public services. It addressed persistent constraints in financial, administrative, and management capacity, enabling municipalities to provide reliable infrastructure, expand basic services, and create opportunities for economic development. In doing so, it fostered territorial cohesion and aligned local progress with Albania's broader path toward EU integration.

EU4M operated through a combination of direct grants, technical assistance, and community empowerment. Municipalities were supported to

design and implement strategic projects that responded to local priorities while ensuring citizen participation in defining and shaping development objectives. This participatory approach improved transparency and accountability and established a model of best practice for how governance could be inclusive, efficient, and impactful.

Through infrastructure upgrades, modernization of services, and reinforced local capacities, EU4M enhanced the daily lives of citizens, from improved public spaces and utilities to stronger conditions for entrepreneurship and social cohesion. The project also equipped municipalities with the skills and systems necessary to absorb EU funding more effectively, ensuring that investments translated into long-term benefits. The EU4Municipalities during the phase 2021-2024 was implemented by a consortium comprising the Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South East Europe (NALAS), Co-PLAN Institute for Habitat Development, Eco Partners for Sustainable Development, and the Albanian Association of Local Autonomy (AALA), with the support of the European Union.

Key Achievements 2021-2024

24 public buildings now providing **68 new** or improved services to over **49,000 citizens**

.....
including more than **32,000 youngsters.**

24 infrastructure interventions were carried out in facilities dedicated to education, culture, youth, children, the elderly, and marginalized groups across various municipalities.

19 partner municipalities rehabilitated

650 local government experts were trained to deliver better services and manage EU financial assistance.

36 regional trainings were organized on project preparation and implementation.





Highlights

From organizing one or multi-day events on different issues, to participating in high-level international forums, Co-PLAN maintains a dynamic and engaging agenda throughout the year. Following are only some of the key highlights from the organization's activities over the past year.

Regional Leadership 2024 Award

For almost twenty years, the Co-PLAN Institute for Habitat Development has been awarding the "Leadership Award" to promote values and good examples in society in Government, Media, Civil Society, and Business. In 2024, Co-PLAN, in partnership with POLIS University, presented the **Regional Leadership Award to Mr. Dritan Abazović**, former first Albanian Prime Minister of Montenegro, in recognition of his commitment to democracy, regional cooperation, and European integration.

A political scientist and author, Mr. Abazović has played a key role in promoting institutional resilience, cross-border development, and coexistence in the Western Balkans. He is also a strong supporter of Co-PLAN and POLIS initiatives, as well as a promoter of the Buna River Bridge Project, as an effort with tremendous potential to strengthen tourism and development in Albania, Montenegro and the region.

The award ceremony was held at POLIS University, with participation from prominent figures, Co-PLAN and POLIS staff, and students.



TG-WeB 7th Annual Workshop in Sofia

The Western Balkan Network on Territorial Governance is established as a regional platform to advance research and policy dialogue on territorial governance, uniting academic and policy actors from across the Western Balkans.

Hosted by Sofia University, the 7th Annual Workshop of TG-WeB – the Western Balkans Network on Territorial Governance convened partners from Albania, Serbia, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Greece, and Bulgaria to address green transition and SDG integration in national and local development policies.

The event explored the region's slow progress toward Agenda 2030 and emphasized the need for sustainability-driven governance models. Presentations and discussions focused on stakeholder perspectives, spatial planning scenarios, and case research from Montenegro.

Members engaged in strategic dialogue on the future of the network, including funding, membership expansion, and continuity of the TG-WeB Annual Review.



Key takeaway

Strengthening TG-WeB as a collaborative platform is essential to support territorial sustainability and a greener future in the Western Balkans.



Advancing Local Resilience in Fier Drafting Disaster Risk Reduction Strategies

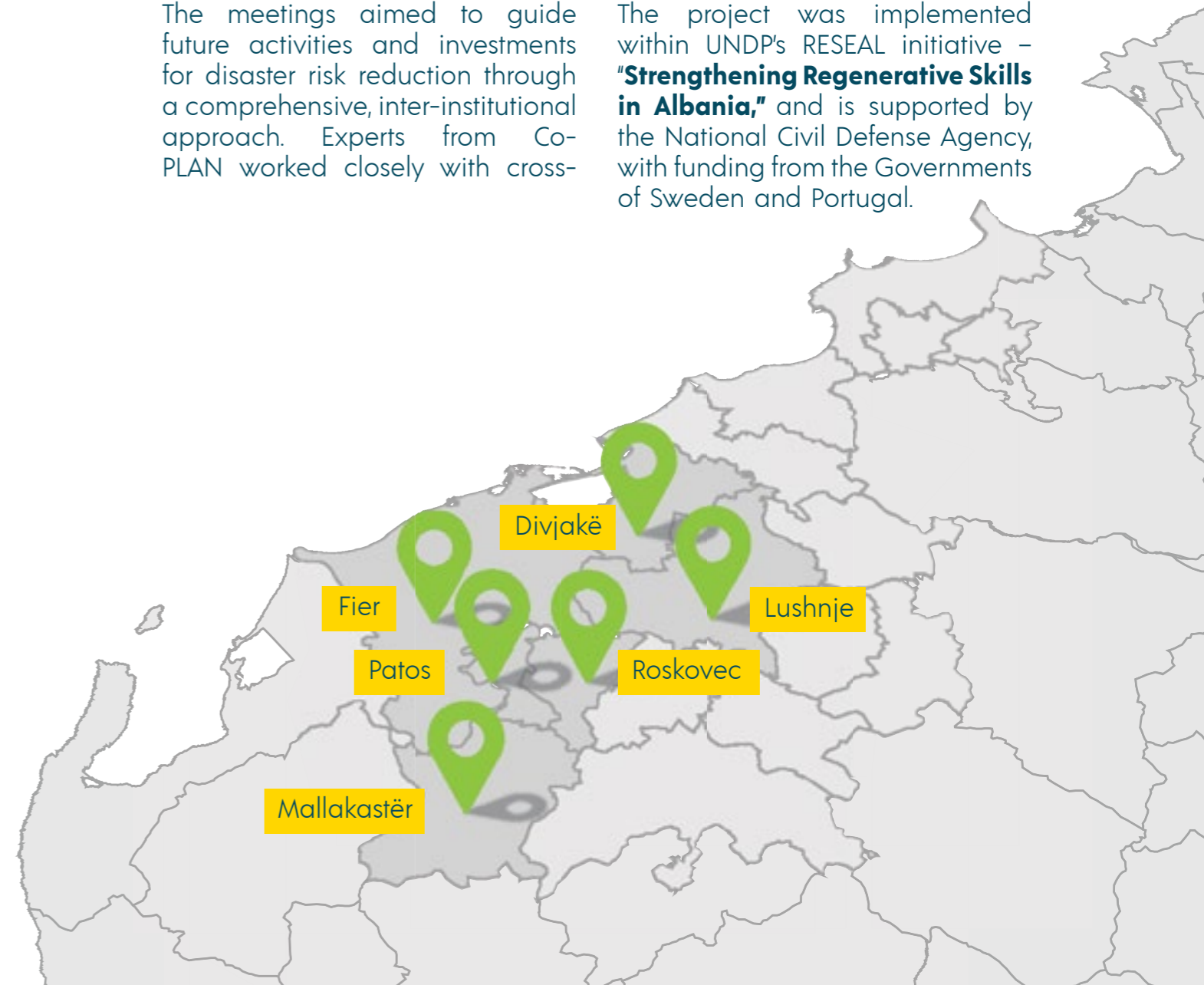
In 2024, Co-PLAN, in collaboration with MetroPOLIS, launched a series of working meetings across six municipalities in Fier District, Fier, Lushnje, Divjakë, Patos, Roskovec, and Mallakastër, as part of the project **"Preparation of Local Disaster Risk Reduction Strategies and Action Plans for the 6 Municipalities of Fieri Region."**

The meetings aimed to guide future activities and investments for disaster risk reduction through a comprehensive, inter-institutional approach. Experts from Co-PLAN worked closely with cross-

sectoral municipal teams to assess vulnerabilities, outline strategic objectives, and introduce initial project ideas.

These sessions marked the first phase in the strategy development process, with broader engagement planned to include local stakeholders and communities.

The project was implemented within UNDP's RESEAL initiative – **"Strengthening Regenerative Skills in Albania,"** and is supported by the National Civil Defense Agency, with funding from the Governments of Sweden and Portugal.



Defending Albania's Protected Areas

Civil Society in Action

In early 2024, Co-PLAN joined a broad coalition of civil society organizations, environmental experts, and academics in expressing strong opposition to proposed amendments to Law 81/2017 on Protected Areas, introduced by members of Parliament and reinforced by the Council of Ministers through a draft DCM dated February 7, 2024. The coalition criticized the proposals for undermining environmental protections by legalizing construction and strategic investments within protected areas, centralizing decision-making authority in the National Council of the Territory, and bypassing the role of local governments, the Ministry of Environment, and public consultation processes.

The amendments also threaten to allow infrastructure projects and uncontrolled interventions in ecologically sensitive zones, contradicting both national legislation and EU environmental directives. Of particular concern were proposed changes that enable interventions in water bodies and cultural heritage areas without clear safeguards. Civil society representatives urged Parliament and the government to withdraw the proposed changes, ensure transparency, uphold public participation, and align the legal framework with international standards for environmental protection and biodiversity conservation.



GreenAL

9 Roundtables to Engage Stakeholders

Between April and June 2024, GreenAL partners organized nine roundtables across Albania, eight at the regional level in key cities including Vlorë, Durrës, Elbasan, Shkodër, Fier, Pogradec, Dibër, and Kukës, and a final national roundtable in Tirana. These events served as a platform to present the GreenAL project's objectives, funding opportunities, timeline, thematic focus, and tools for environmental monitoring. With a strong focus on climate change, nature, and pollution, the discussions emphasized key issues such as urban waste management, biodiversity protection, habitat restoration, and air, water, soil, and acoustic pollution monitoring.

The roundtables brought together a diverse group of

over 230 participants, including representatives from 95+ organizations, 15+ municipalities and institutions, and 5+ educational institutions, with 60% female participation. These sessions offered valuable insight into the challenges and contributions of environmental CSOs and highlighted the importance of inclusive, multi-level dialogue in advancing the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans.

These roundtables served as a key instrument to validate and refine GreenAL's strategic direction for the years ahead. The insights gathered directly informed the development of the Programme Chart, the design of the grants scheme, the structure of the incubation program, and the institutionalization of the GreenAL network.



Roundtable on the Draft Law for Integrated Waste Management

As part of the GreenAL project, a roundtable was held on September 13, 2024, bringing together civil society organizations, businesses, and media representatives to discuss the draft law "On Integrated Waste Management." The discussion emphasized the need for broad public consultation and inclusive stakeholder engagement, recognition of local government capacities for effective implementation, clear

measures for waste prevention, recovery, and monitoring, as well as a standardized national methodology for waste data collection and reporting. A joint statement reflecting the main concerns and recommendations was submitted to the relevant institutions, underlining the importance of a transparent, inclusive, and accountable approach to the law's finalization and implementation.



Roundtable on the Draft Law “On the Energy Performance of Buildings”

On November 26, 2024, Co-PLAN, within the GreenAL project, organized a roundtable discussion on the draft law “On the Energy Performance of Buildings”. The event gathered representatives from environmental CSOs and key stakeholders to reflect on the law’s implications for the construction sector and its alignment with the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans.

Participants emphasized that the new law marks a significant step toward Albania’s green transition goals. Key discussion

points included the need to assess the applicability of the existing Law No. 116/2016, enhance institutional coordination for building decarbonization by 2050, and ensure equitable access to financing mechanisms, especially for vulnerable communities.

A Joint Declaration with detailed comments and recommendations was submitted to the responsible institution as part of the public consultation process, reinforcing the importance of inclusive dialogue in shaping a sustainable legal framework.



GreenFORCE

2nd RAB Meeting and 2nd Summer School in Belgrade

In mid May 2024, the GreenFORCE consortium convened its 2nd Research Advisory Board (RAB) Meeting and hosted the Second International Summer School in Belgrade. During the meeting, the partners of the GreenFORCE consortium showcased significant progress in their ongoing research cases. These cases focus on assessing JGT (Just Green Transitions) in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia. The presentations highlighted advancements in understanding the efficacy, environmental impact, and practical applications of JGT in these regions. The recommendations and suggestions provided by the RAB members are instrumental in refining the research methodologies and approaches. The experts offered critical feedback to enhance the quality and robustness of the research activities.

In parallel, The University of Belgrade hosted the in-person portion of the Second International Summer School of the GreenFORCE project, focusing on “Communicating Just Green Transitions – Navigating the Path to a Sustainable Future.” Held from May 13 – 17, 2024 in Belgrade, Serbia, this event brought together students and experts to explore the vital role of communication in advancing sustainable practices. The summer school program was meticulously designed to convey the significance of sustainability through effective communication strategies. By integrating interdisciplinary approaches, technology, hands-on exploration, collaboration, and advocacy, the event aimed to empower students to become ambassadors of a sustainable future.



EFFORT

Bridging Borders, Empowering Communities in Albania and Kosova

As part of the EFFORT Project, Co-PLAN has worked alongside the Municipalities of Mirditë (Albania) and Junik (Kosova) to strengthen cross-border cooperation in the field of renewable energy and energy efficiency. In the first half of 2024, a series of meetings were held with key institutions, including ZRRE, KESCO, OSHEE, FKKE, the Energy Efficiency Agency, the Regional Environmental Directorate, and the local vocational school in Mirditë, laying the groundwork for more inclusive and sustainable energy strategies.

The project has fostered multi-level engagement, connecting local and national authorities, the private sector, and academia, to advance knowledge sharing, enhance energy infrastructure, and support long-term partnerships. This collaborative effort contributes to clean energy development, economic growth, and environmental protection in both countries.

The EFFORT Project is funded by the European Union through the IPA Cross-Border Cooperation Programme Albania-Kosova and implemented by Co-PLAN and partner municipalities.



Part Of Tirana Architecture Week

Roundtable on Net-Zero Transition in Post-Communist Urban Neighborhoods

In October 2024, as part of Tirana Architecture Week, Co-PLAN and the GreenFORCE project organized a roundtable titled "Challenges in Achieving Net-Zero Transition in Post-Communist Urban Neighborhoods." The event brought together experts and stakeholders to address energy efficiency and sustainability challenges in aging urban housing stock across the Western Balkans.

The session featured the presentation of a national study on net-zero transition in Albania, followed by a dynamic panel discussion which included representatives from Tirana Municipality, ProCredit Bank, Milieukontakt Albania, and academia. The panelists discussed energy poverty, financing models, outdated infrastructure, and the role of civil society in green transition efforts. The event reaffirmed GreenFORCE's commitment to research, innovation, and policy dialogue in support of the Western Balkans Green Agenda, with a focus on the transition to net-zero-emission buildings in post-communist urban contexts.



Co-PLAN at the 36th AESOP Congress

From July 8–12, Co-PLAN participated in the 36th AESOP Congress in Paris, hosted by Sciences Po, gathering over 1,200 experts in urban studies under the theme "GAME CHANGER? Planning for Just and Sustainable Urban Regions."

Co-PLAN Executive Director Anila Bejko, project manager Fiona Imami, and Head of Territorial Governance and Spatial Planning Unit, Kejt Dhrami contributed to two thematic sessions. The first explored the conceptual foundations of a Just Green Transition for the Western Balkans, drawing from GreenFORCE project research. The second focused on Citizen Science in Spatial Planning, highlighting

democratic engagement practices developed through WBC-RRI.net and GreenLungs.

Co-PLAN also co-hosted a roundtable with Politecnico di Torino and Nordregio, featuring a high-level discussion on "Just Green Transitions: Transforming or Transitioning to What?", with panelists from POLIMI, Aalto University, and POLIS University. The Congress concluded on a celebratory note, as POLIS University, Co-PLAN's affiliated academic partner, was honored with the AESOP Quality Recognition Award. We look forward to continuing our international engagement at next year's congress in Istanbul.



Academia and SMEs Driving the Circular Economy / Info Day

On September 27, 2024, Co-PLAN hosted an INFO Day as part of the CROSS-REIS project, funded by the EU under the Horizon Europe Excellence Initiative. The project brings together institutions from eight countries and focuses on circular economy, waste management, and urban biodiversity, aiming to foster research excellence for a regenerative economy.

The event featured a roundtable discussion titled "Bridging the Gap: Challenges and Opportunities in Advancing Circular Economy for SMEs and Academia in Albania." Participants from academia, government, and the private sector

addressed barriers such as limited resources, regulatory constraints, and knowledge gaps. The discussion emphasized the need for stronger collaboration between SMEs and academic institutions to accelerate innovation and support Albania's transition to a circular economy.

Panelists included representatives from NASRI, Polis University, EU4Innovation, the Agriculture University of Tirana, and the EU4 Circular Economy and Livable Cities program. The session concluded with a forward-looking presentation of CROSS-REIS activities, reinforcing the project's commitment to expanding its impact across Europe.





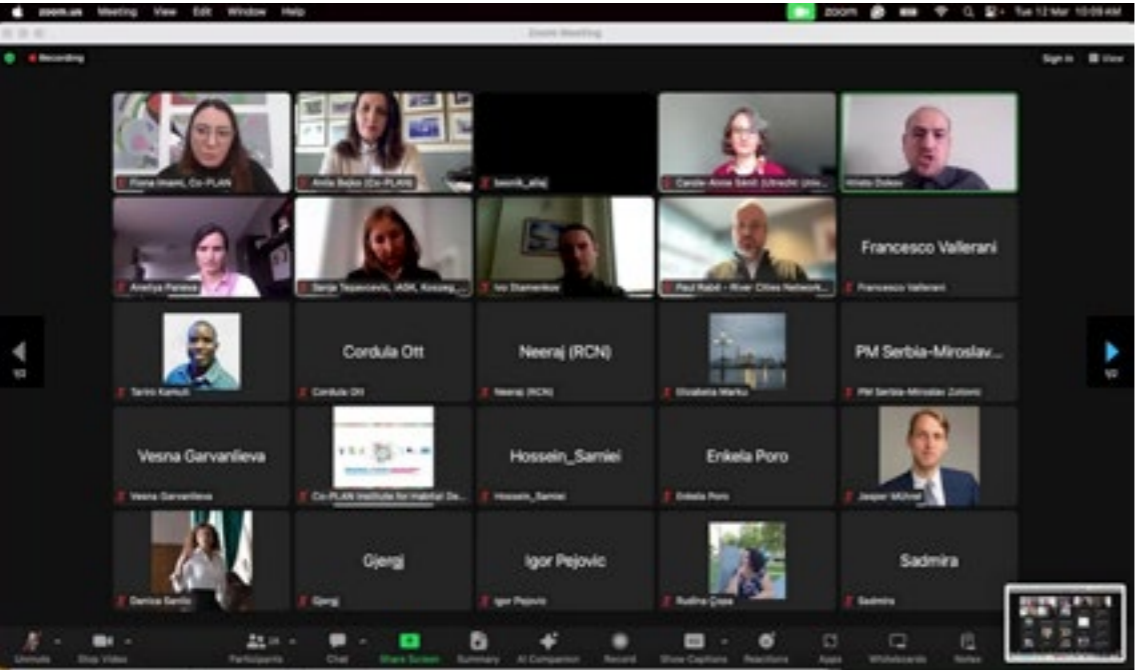
UNECE 2024 Regional Forum Side Event

Halfway to the SDGs in the Balkans

March 2024 - Sofia University, Department of Regional & Political Geography, Co-PLAN, Institute for Habitat Development, and POLIS University, Observatory of the Mediterranean Basin, **as part of the TG-WEB network**, organized a side event focused on the progress and challenges of implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the Western Balkans.

Bringing together academic experts and network partners (TG-Web, SDGs Taskforce, RCN), the event highlighted modest regional progress toward Agenda 2030, while identifying key obstacles such as limited resources, political instability, fragmented governance, and lack of data systems.

The discussion emphasized the importance of local action, regional cooperation, and stakeholder partnerships to accelerate SDG implementation across the region.



GreenFORCE at the European Week of Regions and Cities 2024 - Brussels

From October 7-10, the 22nd edition of the European Week of Regions and Cities gathered thousands of participants from across the EU. As part of the event, Co-PLAN, in the framework of the GreenFORCE Horizon Europe project, co-hosted a panel discussion on October 8 in collaboration with the Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy.

The panel, titled "Multilevel Governance: Empowering Stakeholders in the Climate and Energy Transition", featured key insights from Miljenko Sedlar (REGEA, Croatia), Benedetta Brighenti (AESS, Italy), and Co-PLAN

Executive Director, Dr. Anila Bejko, moderated by Eero Ailio from DG ENER. Discussions showcased multilevel energy dialogues in Croatia, regional sustainability efforts in Italy, and the GreenFORCE approach to enabling inclusive, stakeholder-driven governance in the Western Balkans.

In her address, Ms. Bejko emphasized the urgency of collaboration to navigate the green and digital transitions in the Western Balkans, highlighting GreenFORCE's mission to build ownership, foster research excellence, and drive a just green transition in the region.



Webinar on Citizen Science

The WBC-RRINET webinar on "Spreading Citizen Science in the Western Balkans," held on 17 January 2024, convened regional experts, practitioners, and institutions to exchange practices and strategies for advancing citizen science as a meaningful tool for societal engagement, research, and policy development. The event spotlighted both opportunities and challenges in applying citizen science approaches across diverse thematic areas in the Western Balkans.

Opening remarks set the tone by outlining the potential of citizen science to democratize scientific processes, build trust, and generate actionable data for local and national decision-making.

A regional overview presented by Jana Panova mapped out existing initiatives across the Western Balkans, highlighting Serbia's leadership in the field and growing interest in environmental monitoring, biodiversity, and air quality across Albania, North Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro. Despite this progress, gaps remain

in visibility, institutional uptake, and integration into education systems.

A standout contribution came from our researcher, Kejt Dhrami, who shared grounded reflections on the application of citizen science in Albania, emphasizing its value for both community empowerment and data triangulation in contexts of information scarcity. She detailed how continuous engagement with communities over an extended period allowed for the collection, validation, and interpretation of ecosystem service data.

The event closed with a call to action encouraging actors across the region to seize available funding opportunities (such as the IMPETUS call), strengthen institutional support mechanisms, and further embed citizen science in national research and innovation systems.

You can see the full webinar here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vWuSjORf6HQ>"WBC-RRINET Spreading Citizen Science in the Western Balkans - Webinar, 17.01.2024

CROSS-REIS

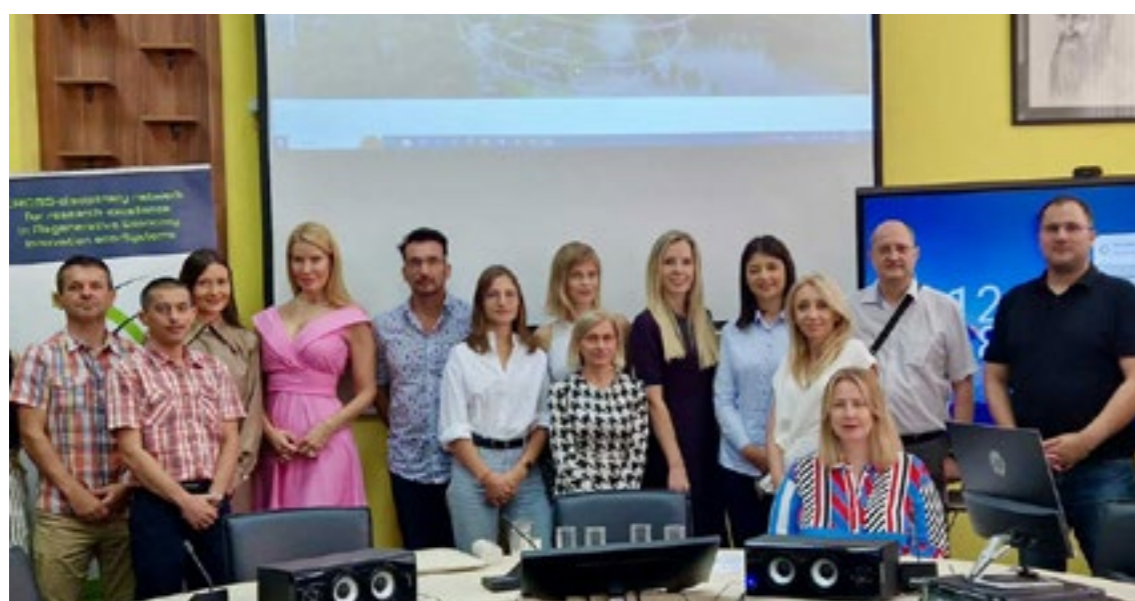
3 Study Visits and 2 Capacity-Building Missions Advancing Regional and European Collaboration

As part of its commitment to fostering excellence in regenerative economy research, CROSS-REIS organized three targeted 3-day study visits in partner countries, Croatia, Montenegro, and Serbia. These visits enabled direct engagement with research facilities such as the University of Podgorica and University of Niš, and offered participants insights into regional innovation strategies, institutional capacities, and ongoing scientific efforts in the fields of urban biodiversity, circular economy, and sustainability transitions.

Beyond the Western Balkans, two strategic 5-day capacity-building visits were held in Spain and Norway. Hosted respectively by EMEA in Barcelona and OsloMet in Oslo, these visits focused on advancing participants' knowledge in regenerative economy stewardship, science-policy interfaces, and digital skills for research excellence. They also fostered peer learning

on governance models and institutional transformation toward greener, more inclusive innovation systems. Both the study and capacity-building visits served as platforms for exchange between academic, public, and civil society institutions. Participants explored synergies for future collaboration, shared experiences in project implementation and stakeholder engagement, and built cross-border networks that contribute to strengthening the Western Balkans' role in European research initiatives.

These mobility activities were not isolated events but part of a broader strategy to equip partner institutions with the tools, partnerships, and know-how to lead in regenerative innovation. They laid the groundwork for lasting cooperation, knowledge transfer, and the institutionalization of regenerative economy principles across national and regional agendas.



CCL

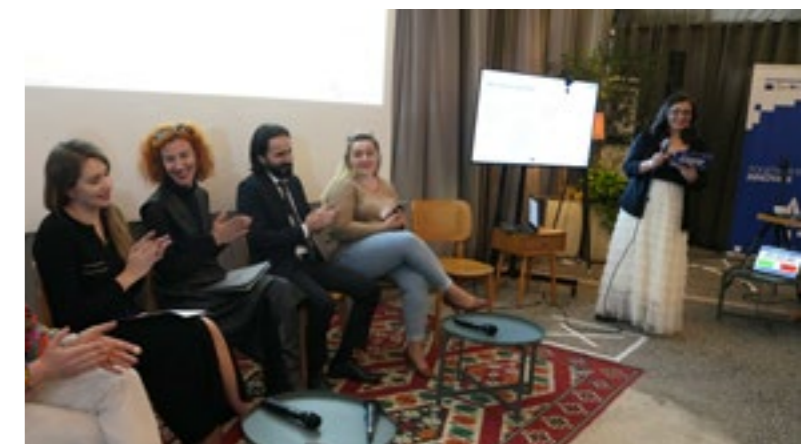
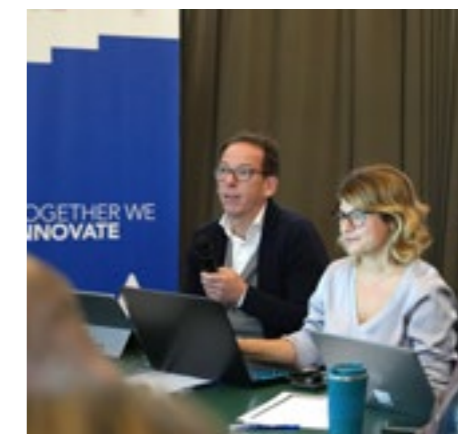
Demo Day: Showcasing Innovation for a Circular Future

The CCL Accelerator culminated in a dynamic Demo Day, which brought together entrepreneurs, experts, and partners to showcase the results of months of training, coaching, and mentorship. Eight businesses, including four women-led ventures, pitched their innovative solutions addressing reusable packaging systems and circular economy challenges. The event provided a platform not only for presenting business ideas but also for engaging in dialogue with stakeholders, jury members, and potential collaborators, underscoring the importance of sustainability-driven entrepreneurship in Albania.

The pitches were evaluated on feasibility, scalability, innovation, and alignment with circular economy goals. After careful assessment, six standout proposals were selected for pilot implementation: Barefoot Festival Eco Festival & TOK Digital Agency, Biocosm Laboratory, Birraria e Gjyshit, Gjëlber, Panja, and SilkyWet. These businesses are

pioneering solutions ranging from refill stations and reusable cup systems for events to returnable bottle models and borrow-and-return packaging schemes. Their projects reflect both the creativity of Albanian entrepreneurs and the program's commitment to building a greener, more sustainable local economy.

Beyond the competition, Demo Day highlighted the power of collaboration and knowledge exchange. International and local jury members provided constructive feedback, while the event created visibility for participating businesses through media coverage and stakeholder engagement. The celebration of innovation and the awarding of pilot projects marked a milestone for CCL-Tirana, setting the stage for the next phase: turning ideas into tangible, scalable solutions that will help drive Albania's transition toward a circular and sustainable future.



Smart WB Workshop in Höxter

Enhancing Digital and Experiential Learning for Climate-Smart Development

From March 19 to 21, 2024, Co-PLAN participated in the Smart WB Erasmus+ project's Theme-Based Training Workshop in Höxter, Germany, hosted by the OWL University of Applied Sciences and Arts. Organized under Work Package 3, Task 3.3, the workshop aimed to strengthen the capacity of Western Balkan Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) through practical, interdisciplinary training on innovative tools, digital platforms, and urban transformation processes in the field of climate-smart urban development (CSUD). Co-PLAN was represented by urban planner Imeldi Sokoli, who joined partner institutions in a multi-day program combining technical learning, creative methods, and real-world site visits. The workshop began with an introduction to the OWL Sustainable Campus and lab tours that showcased applied environmental technologies and digital learning tools, including virtual tours and CO₂ balancing as sustainability metrics.

A highlight of the training was the "Lego Serious Play" methodology, which fostered creative, team-based learning on CSUD themes. Participants used LEGO to visualize challenges and co-design solutions in a highly interactive format that encouraged reflection, communication, and collaborative problem-solving—techniques increasingly relevant to student-centered university teaching.

Another major focus was digital pedagogy, with sessions on online learning platforms covering instructional design, learning theories, and group work to develop prototype online courses—skills participants like Sokoli will integrate into curricula design back home.

The program concluded with a field excursion to Essen, where participants explored the transformation of former industrial areas into climate-friendly urban spaces. Guided by local urban development experts, the visit included site tours and discussions with municipal actors



Co-PLAN at the Community of Practice on Affordable Housing Meeting in Ljubljana

Co-PLAN Strengthens Regional Cooperation on Affordable Housing through the Community of Practice in the Western Balkans

On May 22–23, 2024, Co-PLAN took part in the second in-person meeting of the Community of Practice (CoP) on Affordable Housing in the Western Balkans, hosted in Ljubljana, Slovenia, and supported by Habitat for Humanity International. The event brought together 19 civil society organizations from across the region, fostering a shared commitment to advancing inclusive and affordable housing solutions.

The meeting focused on shaping two joint initiatives: (1) the renovation of multi-apartment buildings and repurposing of vacant spaces with an energy efficiency lens; and (2) improving housing access for Roma communities and other vulnerable groups through rights-based approaches. Hosted by Kralji Ulice, a leading Slovenian NGO

on homelessness and housing, the event offered a collaborative space for exchanging strategies and co-designing regional proposals.

Co-PLAN contributed insights drawn from its work on housing policy, urban informality, and spatial justice in Albania, with particular emphasis on energy poverty and marginalized communities. The agenda included facilitated sessions, a field visit showcasing Ljubljana's housing initiatives, and peer exchange on national policy shifts, publications, and upcoming funding opportunities.

The two-day event marked a pivotal moment for joint regional action, solidifying trust among network members and aligning efforts for the 2024–2025 period. Co-PLAN reaffirmed its active role in the network, committed to strengthening housing systems that are inclusive, climate-resilient, and grounded in social justice across the Western Balkans.



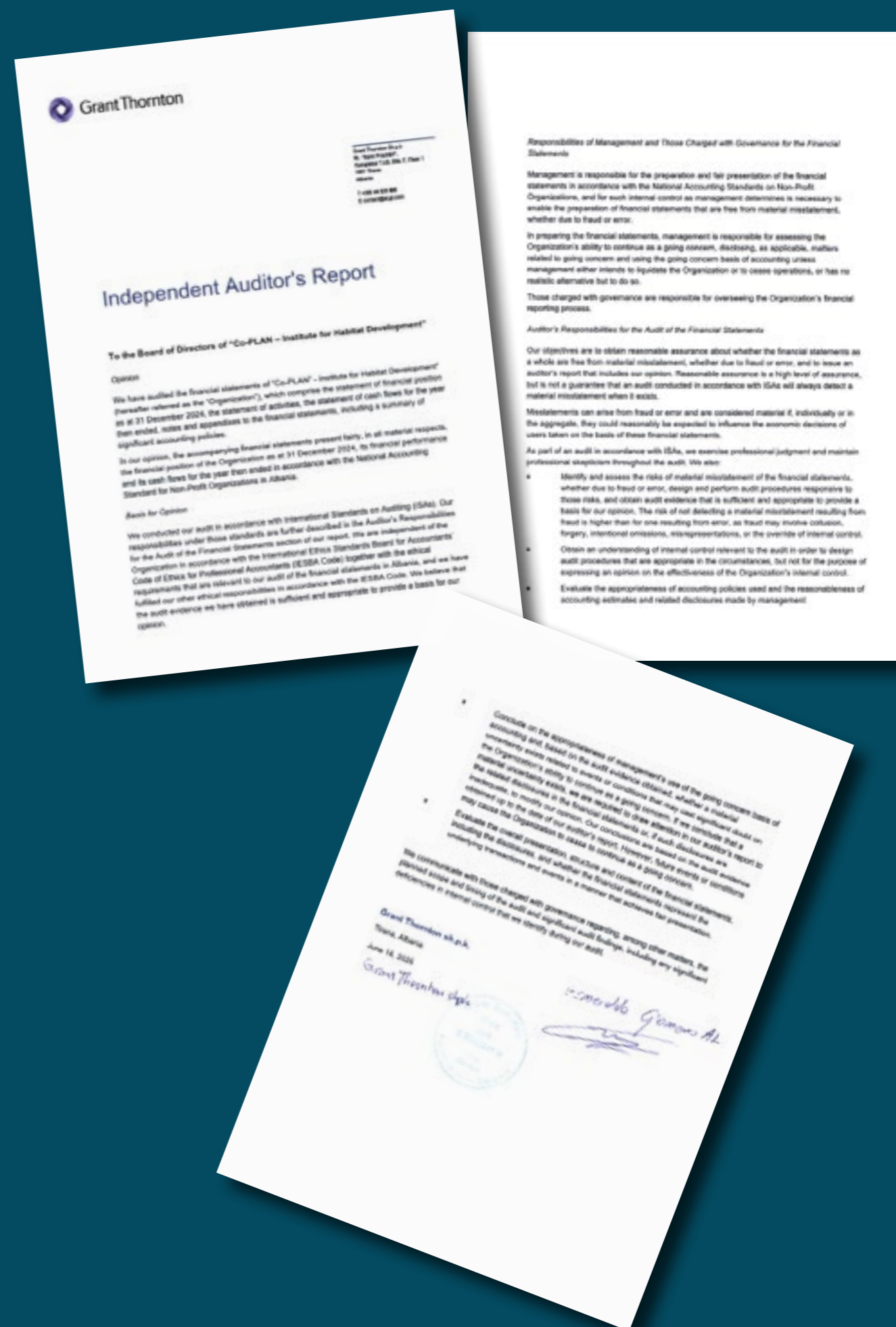


Transparency & Accountability

Transparency and accountability are key values at the heart of Co-PLAN's organizational culture and long-term success. These principles underpin our operations, decision-making processes, and relationships with partners, donors, and the communities we serve.

Co-PLAN's financial management is grounded in robust systems that ensure transparency, integrity, and compliance with international standards. Each year, the organization undergoes a full external audit conducted by an internationally accredited auditing firm. These annual audits provide an objective assessment of our financial health and governance practices.

To reinforce our commitment to openness, audited financial reports are made available to all interested parties upon request. This commitment to accountability reflects Co-PLAN's role not just as a project implementer, but as a trusted and responsible institutional actor in Albania and beyond.





Publications

In 2024, Co-PLAN strengthened its public voice and visibility through a wide range of publications, media engagements, and knowledge-sharing platforms. Our research and policy insights were featured in national and regional media, amplifying debates on sustainable urban development, good governance, and the green transition in the Western Balkans.

Throughout the year, Co-PLAN published policy papers, briefs, and analytical reports addressing key challenges such as local governance, regional cooperation, energy efficiency, and circular economy models. These publications served not only as tools for advocacy but also as resources for decision-makers, academics, and civil society actors.

February, 2024

WBC-RRI.NET/ Report on implemented RRI 'anchor' initiative in the Kune-Vain-Tale Lagoon wetland ecosystem

This document presents Deliverable 4.1- Report on implemented RRI 'anchor' initiative in the Kune- Vain-Tale Lagoon wetland ecosystem. It is developed in the context of Work Package 4 (WP4) – Implementation of RRI 'anchor' initiatives towards more efficient and inclusive R&I

eco-systems under Task 4.1 – Citizen science activities on the participative assessment methods for the ecosystem services in the Kune-Vain ecosystem, Albania. To read the full report please click [here](#). This document was written in the framework of the WBC-RRI.NET Project.

Empowering Local and Regional Authorities through Citizen Science and Public Engagement: A Framework for Inclusive Governance

This policy brief presents a framework for using citizen science as a powerful tool to empower local and regional authorities, thereby enhancing governance processes. Governments can better address complex challenges, foster transparency, and tap into the collective intelligence of their communities by combining citizen science with a real collaborative (bottom-up) process. This

document outlines the significance of integrating citizen science into decision-making processes, fostering public participation and contributing to informed decision-making. Moreover, it identifies some policy gaps and offers a few policy recommendations, based on the experience of the WBC-RRI.NET project. To access full document click [here](#).

Final WBC-RRI.NET Policy Brief - Regional innovation systems and smart specialization strategies in the Western Balkans

This policy document aims to provide an overview of the current situation and progress of innovation and smart specialization in Western Balkan countries (WBC). Furthermore, it aims to make specific recommendations to emphasize the dimensions of responsible research within the WBC's individual innovation

agendas. This paper focuses on the paths of smart specialization in five WBC: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia. These countries have made significant progress in recent years in their efforts to foster growth and economic development through innovation.

Nonetheless, the gaps in both policy design and implementation act as hurdles towards the full transition of the region towards Smart Specialization Strategies (S3)/ Smart Specialization Strategies for Sustainable and Inclusive growth (S4+). The paper utilizes the results from the WBC-RRI.net project activities to identify specific issues related to S3/S4+ strategies by

individual country and propose specific Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) principles informed by directionality and including quintuple helix (QH) stakeholders. To read the full publication click [here](#). This publication was written in the framework of the WBC-RRI.NET Project.

July, 2024

GreenFORCE – Comparative Report on Green Transition Governance Challenges

This comparative report is the third deliverable of WP4—Measuring and assessing impacts and costs of a just green transition in the Western Balkans (WB) – of the GreenFORCE project. It has been jointly authored by the WB project partners and the EU project partners. The European Union Economic and Investment Plan

for the Western Balkans outlines a comprehensive strategy to support green transition and sustainable development towards a carbon-neutral economy in the region .

To read the full publication please click [here](#). This publication was written in the framework of the GreenFORCE Project.

GreenFORCE – Research Study Report 1

This document presents the interim findings of the comprehensive assessment of the costs, benefits, and impacts of (just) green transition in the Western Balkans (WB), designed in the framework of the GreenFORCE project. The report is a compilation of 5 case studies meticulously selected case studies in Albania, North Macedonia, Serbia. These case studies are meant to establish contextual knowledge and methodologies

for continuous monitoring and assessment of JGT impacts in the WB. In this regard, this research capitalizes on previous work done for identifying specific territories, sectors, policy gaps and networks of quadruple helix stakeholders engaged in Green Transition in WB. To read full document please click [here](#).

This publication was written in the framework of the GreenFORCE Project.

August, 2024

GreenAL – Environmental and Air Quality Impact at the Vlora Waste Disposal Site Fire

In July 2024, a significant fire broke out at the Vlora waste disposal site near the city center, located in the southern region of Albania. This area, particularly popular during the summer season, is a major tourist destination. The fire, which persisted for several days, has sparked serious concerns about the potential environmental and public health impacts due to the

release of harmful pollutants into the atmosphere. In response, the GreenAL working group traveled to Vlora to monitor air quality and assess the possible consequences for both the community and the surrounding environment. For more details, please see the full release [here](#). This document was written in the framework of the GreenAL Project.

CROSS-REIS – Journal of Regenerative Economics

The launch of the Journal of Regenerative Economics (JRE) signifies the opening of a crucial dialogue that extends beyond academic circles to address broader societal challenges. This journal emerges from the recognition that regenerative

economics holds vital significance for regions grappling with pressing ecological, economic, and social issues—challenges that often stem from the insufficient application of regenerative principles. This document was written in the framework of the CROSS-REIS Project.

December, 2024

Policy Brief - Building up Governance Pathways for Just Energy Transition: The case of North Macedonia

This policy brief examines energy transition policies and the extent to which governance and stakeholder engagement processes can deliver policies and outcomes which are socially and spatially just. The case of the Republic of North Macedonia (RNM) is used as an example to uncover the governance challenges associated

with decarbonisation and the just energy transition. Although the subject is complex and cannot be directly transposed to other places, the experience of the RNM provides lessons relevant to other countries in the Western Balkan (WB) region and beyond with shared just energy transition challenges.

Regional Report “Towards Regional Circular Supply Chains: Knowledge Exchange From Visegrad Countries (V4) to Western Balkans (WB)”

The report presents a comprehensive analysis of circular economy dynamics across the Visegrad Group (V4) and the

Western Balkans (WB). It explores how V4 nations can serve as models for knowledge sharing.

“Circular Waste Management & Circular Economy in Albania” Report

The report **“Circular Waste Management & Circular Economy in Albania”** was published, providing a comprehensive situation analysis that identifies

key challenges, policy gaps, and opportunities to align Albania's practices with EU circular economy and waste management standards.



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