

Balkonnect

FESTIVAL
Business Without Borders

2025

23-24 May

REA
Prishtina REA



European Bank
for Reconstruction and Development



Balkonnnect

25

Bridging the Western Balkan leading industries
to global Innovation, Matchmaking, Promotion,
Networking and Investment

Balkonnnect Festival

The festival, with a traditional spirit, is to be organized on
annual basis, rotating the hosting to the capitals of WB
countries every year, beginning with Prishtina/2025

23-24 of May 2025
Prishtina, Kosovo

<https://balkonnnect.com>

Powered by
PRISHTINA REA

Prishtina REA and networking partners
joined forces and expertise to power together the branded
DeepTechcamp 2025 as BALKONNECT FESTIVAL 2025

It aims to bring together key globally stakeholders, passionate and influencers from the leading industries, TechParks, incubators, accelerators, innovation centres, science parks, finance and banking ecosystem actors, e-solutions, innovators connect and including business angels, venture capitals and investors. This Festival, intends to become the Western Balkans traditional-May event, aiming at gearing up for the digital and green transformation economy powered by artificial intelligence, bigdata analytics and e-platforms, finance and banking, ensuring the key strategic adventurers keep ahead of the curve while remaining focused on our joint mission: Innovate, Transform, e-Solution, Invest

**IMMERSIVE
LEARNING**

Dive into sessions focusing on the strategic and operational dimensions of running an Innovation Accelerator and supporting digital transformation innovative entrepreneurs

**EXPERT
INSIGHTS**

Engage with business show-case experts and peers in dynamic workshops and collaborative sessions

**SECTOR- SPECIFIC
INSIGHTS**

Learn how digitalisation and AI, e-platforms and banking are reshaping industries like e-payment, e-governance, green energy, gaming, and data-mining

**THREE KEY
PERSPECTIVES:**

Explore business and innovation support from the viewpoints of Prishtina REA/EEN/EBN, EBRD, their clients, and investors

For the first, launching DeepTechcamp (May 2025), Prishtina REA/EEN/EBN and EBRD, will craft a programme dedicated to the impact of Digital and Green Transition, focusing on Innovation, Investment, Matchmaking, Networking and Promotion. The event will take place at the highly attractive and accessible area, leveraging the unique assets of the local ecosystem, particularly in the topics related to the event.

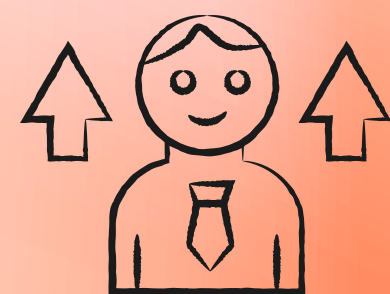
Celebrating 24 Years of Innovation: The 2025 Prishtina REA-EBRD, Balkonnect Festival also marks the 24th anniversary of the Prishtina REA operation and establishment. Join us for a special celebration to honour our impact on WB's innovation landscape, culminating in a night of networking and celebration.

Balkonnnect

Key Objectives

INNOVATION

Exercise the private sector incentives to synergise R&D, Innovators and Investors to advance competitiveness and INNOVATION



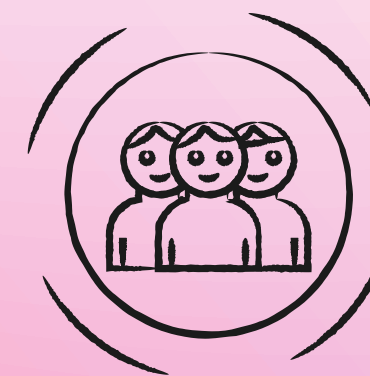
INVESTMENT

Enable companies, especially from hosting countries, to Pitch in front of private investors, Business Angels (BAs) and Venture Capitalists (VCs)



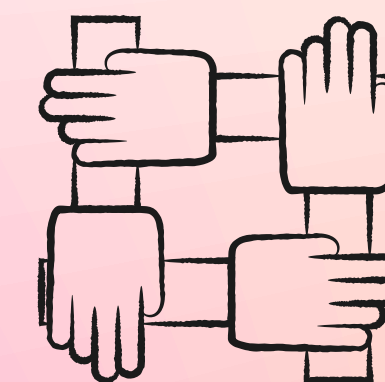
MATCHMAKING

Facilitate business connections among industry leaders, investors and stakeholders in the WB region and globally



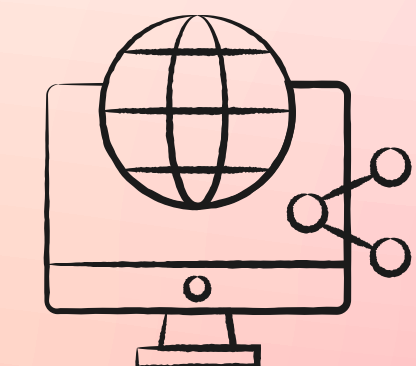
NETWORKING

Bridging transnational potential and provide a structured yet informal environment for building partnerships across borders



PROMOTION

Showcase the leading industries and success stories of WB countries to a global audience and internationalise its potentials



Core Theme: innovate-transform, e-solution-invest

Balkonnnect

key Objectives:

KOSOVA

Wood and Metal processing
ICT and Digital
Tourism
Renewable and Green
Banking and Finance
Outsourcing

ALBANIA

Tourism
Telecommunication
Manufacturing
Renewable and Green
Agri & Food & Processing
Construction

NORTH MACEDONIA

Agri & Food & Processing
Manufacturing
ICT and Digital
Renewable and Green
Materials

BOSNIA & HERCEGOVINA

Agri & Food & Processing
Wood Industry
ICT and Digital
Materials

MONTENEGRO

Montenegro
Tourism
ICT and Digital
Renewable and Green
Real Estate

SERBIA

Wood and metal processing
ICT, Telecommunication and
Digital
Tourism
Renewable and Green
Banking and Finance
Agri & Food & Processing
Construction & Materials

The Balkonnect 2-day festival will be divided into 3 separate themes per day, consisting of 6 themes overall, ending with a private session of investment seeking each of the two nights. The investment seeking sessions, will have the seekers the Western Balkan companies (with a majority of the hosting country), which will be rotated on annual basis to the other WB countries.

Target Audience

BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY LEADERS

From leading sectors
across the WB

GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

Policy-makers driving
regional economic
integration

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Including EBRD and other
economic development
stakeholders

INVESTORS

Business angels, ven-
ture capital firms & in-
stitutional investors

ACADEMIA AND INNOVATORS

R&D institutions
and tech innovators

Key Outcomes

- 1 CROSS-BORDER COLLABORATIONS:**
FOSTER STRONGER REGIONAL
ECONOMIC TIES THROUGH BUSINESS
MATCHMAKING
- 2 ATTRACTING INVESTMENTS:**
EMPOWER LOCAL BUSINESSES
OF HOSTING COUNTRIES BY
PRIORITIZING THEIR INVESTMENT NEEDS,
- 3 PROMOTING INNOVATION:**
INSPIRE MODERNIZATION WITHIN KEY
SECTORS ACROSS WB ECONOMIES,
- 4 ENHANCING REGIONAL IDENTITY:**
POSITION THE WB AS A UNIFIED AND
DYNAMIC INVESTMENT DESTINATION.

Partnerships & Collaboration Strategy

B2B MATCHMAKING EVENT: It is planned to organise a two-day B2B matchmaking event in Prishtina, as part of the Balkonnect Festival, having as partner and co-organizer of different regional, SEE and EU countries as well as EEN network partners, in close cooperation with the representatives of sectorial businesses from partnering countries.

The b2match platform will be open and operating during the whole 2-days festival and companies will be able on their own to arrange, coordinate and meet as per the b2match organizing model. The b2match platform will enable the offline and online meeting arrangement, upload profiles of the participating companies, develop their market

For the organisation of B2B matchmaking events, Prishtina REA will cooperate with relevant networking partners and companies with WB and EU -EEN related business associations, EBN, Cluster networks. In administrating the action, we will use B2match platform (b2b.prishtinamatch4ict.com), in order to organise high-quality networking events, arrange face-to-face private meetings, explore possibilities of collaboration, potential partnerships and facilitate the B2B matchmaking continuously, including automatic processing of arrangements, requests and reports.

During the B2B Matchmaking and Sessions promotion event, multilateral meetings will be arranged for each of participating enterprise. The selected business, will upload their profile, presenting their core products/services, their offers, their requests and their specific interest for cooperation, including market segmentation. Based on reviewed profiles, the businesses do themselves the 'request for meetings and agenda is automatically processed, accordingly. It is envisaged that each participating enterprise will have around 8-10 multilateral meetings during the day, as already arranged through the platform and each meeting will last at most 20 minutes. These meetings will have direct business discussions, after the reviews of business profiles through the B2match platforms, seeking to initiating business relationships among the enterprises as per the presented strengths and capabilities of each other and assess future collaboration opportunities, in the sense of signing Business Partnership Agreements.

<https://international-b2b-matchmaking-event-milan.b2match.io/components/21075>

Partnerships & Collaboration Strategy

INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERS:

1.EBRD: Provide strategic guidance, Funding for organizational needs, and Promote the festival globally.

2.NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS:

Act as Enablers by supporting participating businesses and highlighting each country's policies for foreign direct investment (FDI).

3.DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES:

Ensure inclusion of SMEs and promote diversity within participating industries.

INDUSTRY AND CLUSTER ASSOCIATIONS:

1.CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE:

Assist in selecting businesses for the matchmaking and investment sessions.

2.SECTOR-SPECIFIC BODIES

Partner with Renewable Energy, ICT, and Agri-business councils to bring leading companies to the festival.

PRIVATE SECTOR:

1.CORPORATE SPONSORS:

Fund industry-specific events (e.g., a renewable energy sponsor for Day 1 or Digital Banking).

2.TECH PARTNERS:

Provide digital platforms for matchmaking and event management (e.g., an app for scheduling one-on-one meetings).

INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS:

1.GLOBAL BUSINESS NETWORKS/EEN/EBN:

Invite high-profile investors, VC, BAN and companies to foster cross-border collaborations.

2.EU, WB/IFC, GIZ, OR USAID:

Assist with policy advocacy and inclusion of sustainability themes.

Thematic Sessions

Balkonnect Festival 2025

THE PURPOSE OF THE BALKONNECT FESTIVAL sessions is to gather success stories-show-case entrepreneurs, experts and diamond inspirational influencers from across the country, region and globally, allowing them to promote, share their business showcase models as well as explore the business cooperation, co-investment and exporting opportunities, exchange information and foster bonds. The participants should benefit from this experience in that, it will give them new ideas and widening their business perspective and vision. They could also explore the possibility of international business cooperation.

THE BALKONNECT FESTIVAL OPENING CEREMONY: The opening ceremony will start with the high-level ceremonial opening session and introductory presentation of the guest speakers. There will be decorated Opening Ceremony Scene, in line with such an event, flags, and accessories, including sound and translation system, video projectors etc. There will be a short traditional dancing act (*Prishtina Ansamble*) playing three dances, (*Vallja e Prishtines, Vallja e Rugoves, Vallja e Tropojes*)

Each of six thematic panel sessions, will bring on the stage the business showcase models from the specific sectors, focusing always on Innovation, Digital and Green Transform, e-Solution, Investment and Financing. The session will be moderated by a speaker, just to install the business spirit around, and motivate the sectorial speaker to show-up with their distinguishing business stories.

WOOD-METAL CONSTRUCTION INNOVATIVE TRANSFORMATION AND R&D-BASED CHALLENGES

(day I-morning session)

This sector is among the most prominent and rapidly developed in the Western Balkans region. It is also the most common leading industries among the countries of WB. Beside it, it is a sector that brought innovation, large investment, attractive financing instruments, and showed the stable International-WB business growing partnership. In addition, this sector is among the most dynamic exporting segment to EU, serving as living and generating linkage too. Of course, beside heavy investment, it gathers the largest employment statistics too. Its contribution to the overall economic growth and welfare is huge. This sector not only is reshaping the region's landscape, it is also, contributing to the capital growth and raising foreign direct investment permanently.

The key speakers of this session are the key sectorial players from the business ecosystem, who will show-case their distinguishing business innovation mindset, transformation skills, the power of investment and healthy perspective ahead. The key selected segment from this industry will present the reflection of Western Balkans ownership on a very strong instrument of stabilisation, internationalisation and know-how transfer. Their link to R&D&I and business spirit installed brought it as a flourishing dimension of transformation and well-being.

TOURISM AGRI-FOOD PROCESSING INNOVATION SUSTAINABILITY AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

(day I-afternoon session)

The tourism-agri-food-processing industry represent a highly vibrant multiply dimension of private sector advance improvements. The diversity of this industry is a lot differentiating from country to country and has got, also various specifics. Albania is the leading country in a more complex and meaningful tourism, while Serbia and North Macedonia are very strong on agri-food-processing. Montenegro is building its summer tourism identity, either with massive low-price offers and or class summer tourism offer too. Kosovo and Bosnia and Hercegovina are a lot, involving on agro-production, while consolidating the winter and rural tourism, including cultural heritage too. Exploiting biodiversity protection, restauration of eco-system remains a huge potential and applying bigdata, machine learning and AI tool a long with high international recognition tourism standards and certifications.

The key speakers will demonstration the new formatting intervention of this industry, how innovative solutions can make changes and promoting transnational good-practices and linkages are the way ahead. The focus of this session will be to valorise the cross-sectorial multiple benefits and proof the green and digital transition to the coming financing models and healthy perspective.

RENEWABLE & GREEN A TRANSFORMED AND AUTOMATED GROWTH ECOSYSTEM

(day I-afternoon session)

The Western Balkans Green Agenda promotes the transition from a traditional economic model to a sustainable innovative economy, aligning to the European Green Deal. Some of the priorities are: aligning the region with the EU's 2050 ambition; making the Europe a carbon neutral zone; unlock the potential of circular economy; fight pollution of air, water a soil, promote sustainable methods of food production and supply, and exploit the huge biosecurity and AI tools. The EU's Growth Plan for the Western Balkans (through the Reform and Growth Facility # 6 Billion €) offers partial access to the EU single market for countries like Kosovo, contingent upon the implementation of significant reforms. This access incentivizes private sector entities to align with EU environmental standards, enhancing their competitiveness in both regional and European markets. The EU's Growth Plan offers a combination of new financing opportunities and early access to selected aspects of the single market. An expansion of Single Euro Payments Area (SEPA) to some of the Western Balkan countries in 2025 would help support market integration and remove barriers to financial flows. The Reform Agendas focus on the reforms in the priority areas of rule of law and other fundamentals, governance, the digital and Green Transition, human capital development and the business environment.

The key speakers covering this session will come from successful business investment stories, demonstrating the differentiating interventions undertaken in these sectors, building on EU's model investments in a conducive business environment and resilient market system. The EU4Green programme, the EBRD Green Economy Financing Facility and WB Fiscal Policy and Green Growth Reforms are the latest instruments that determined the developing growth of renewable and green industry.

ICT AND DIGITAL: THE EVOLUTION OF SAAS AND EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES (day II-morning session)

The recent exceptional achieved developments in the ICT and Digital sector in the Western Balkans, boosted growth and profitability, it boasted skilled workforce, competitiveness, strong infrastructure and enticing incentives, making the region an ideal zone for innovative investors and business partnership. It is the main driver of economic growth and has become the most encouraging field of foreign investments, especially for finance capitals and world class brands. The Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) landscape is undergoing significant transformations, influenced by advancements in various emerging technologies. Some of the key drivers are: Integration of AI and ML, Rise of vertical SaaS Solutions, Enhanced security and compliances, expansion of micro-SaaS ventures, Growth of edge computing Integration etc. Most of the WB-based ICT and Digital companies are outsourcing their services to the globally top businesses and exporting of ICT and Digital services covers most of the available capacities of operating businesses. In addition, the flow of innovative start-ups in this sector is tremendously attractive due to the available resources, infrastructure and well-educated workforce. Connectivity has been among the leading intervention, resulting to, for example, making Kosovo the top internet coverage countries in Europe (99 %). 5G and Artificial Intelligence promoted are shaping the region into a new attractive hub, linking the region globally. E-payment and e-services are also heavily contributing to the digital economy.

The Key speakers of the ICT and Digital session seeks to showcase the trendy innovation solutions, the interconnection to other interdisciplinary industries and the increased vast impact to the society, digital transformation, youth development and welfare of the population. It is also among the key sectors to decrease the migration and improve the education approach, health progress, manufacturing and engineering achievements and green transition too.

OUTSOURCING INDUSTRY- THE HIGH-TECH AND MANUFACTURING COMPETITIVE HUB

(day II-morning session)

The transformed and automated industrial growth, globalisation, the increasing costs of operations, transport, management, difficulties in resilient, sustainability, the increasing costs of R&D&I, the increasing time-efficiency requirements, the ability to align to legal framework and be fast, byrocracy issues etc, makes the outsourcing a highly relevant developing tool to build not only cross-border ties by transnational healthy and attractive building block of partnership. The Western Balkans outsourcing industry has been gaining traction in international business markets due to its strategic location, skilled workforce, and cost-effectiveness, thus, becoming attractive destinations for IT services, business process outsourcing (BPO), and nearshoring.

The Western Balkans is an increasingly attractive destination for EU manufacturing outsourcing due to its cost advantages, geographic advantages, improved logistics and transport networks, proximity, trade agreements, and skilled workforce. With continued investment in infrastructure and stability, the region is poised to become a key part of the European supply chain. Some of the highly potential sectors are wood and metal processing, construction, automotive and spare parts, textiles and apparel, electronics and machinery,

The Western Balkans SMEs are smaller, dynamic, fast-learning, quickly responding, easy to negotiate and cheaper in service-product provision and efficient-delivery. Outsourcing is the best solution for small, quick and low budget market needs.

The key speakers of this session seek to transmit new, well-performing practices, successful showcase models, the tailored transformation to rational, modern and efficient industry and the vision to international competitiveness and quality of service-product provision. This industry, probably, demonstrates the best how innovative solution are proved to make differences.

BANKING & FINANCE THE IMPACT OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION ON SECURITY, EFFICIENCY AND TRUST IN BANKING AND FINANCE

(day II-afternoon session)

The improved electronic services have dramatically enhanced the security and operational efficiency within the banking and finance sector, they have also highlighted the importance of building trust in digital transaction as an essential for fostering long-lasting relationships with their clientele. The digital transformation plays a pivotal role on finance and banking, it showed how innovative solutions enhanced the efficiency, accessibility and security of financial services across the board. The integration of eIDAS-accredited services is not just a trend; it is a necessity for our sector. These services promise to streamline operations, enhance customer experiences, and foster trust in digital transactions.

The invited key speakers will discuss about the impact of eIDAS-Accredited Services, including Digital Identity Wallet on Digital Economy and the future of Payments. They will be focusing on customer satisfacion, streamlining operations,, and the critical role of trust and security in digital transactions.

PITCHING EVENT

(day II-afternoon session)

The Balkonnect Pitching Event is an exciting opportunity for ambitious entrepreneurs to showcase their innovative ideas, attract funding, and propel their businesses to success. Serving as a crucial milestone in their business journey, this event opens doors to potential investors-including business angels (BAs), venture capitalists (VCs), financing institutions, and startup accelerators.

A well-crafted pitch effectively conveys the value proposition of the business while demonstrating the founder's passion, vision, and ability to execute. Beyond fostering innovation, competition, and creativity, the pitching session also serves as a catalyst for strategic partnerships and growth opportunities on an international scale.

The opened call for pitching expression of interests will be working on selecting the most attractive, business-sound ideas and make them ready pitching in front of the investors. The research based business ideas, their captivating stories, their traction and validation evidences, the scalable business models, the impact and distinguishing way ahead indicators are critical to the process of preparing high, ready to invest presentations.

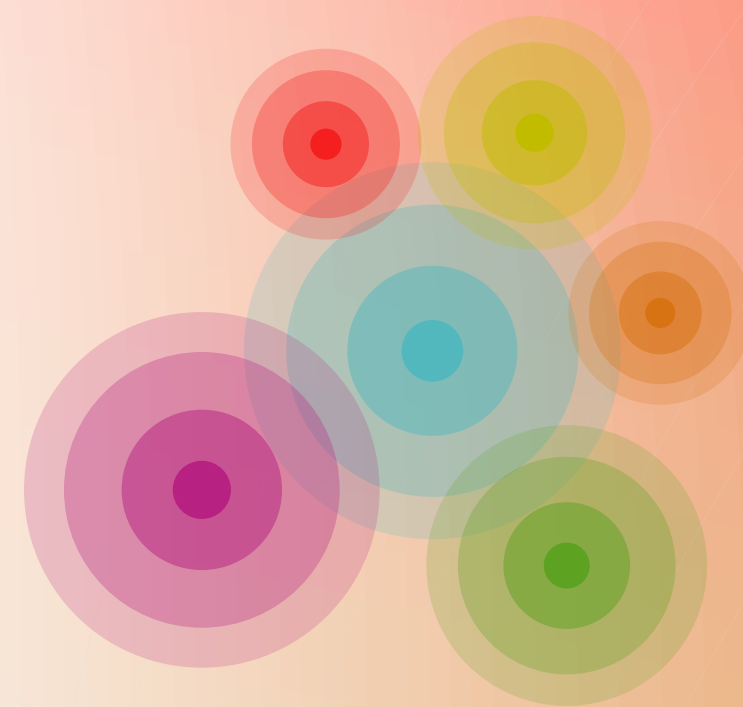
There will be a 15 min presentation by each pitching selected business, while 50 % of the selected pitching businesses will be local ones from the hosting country (in this round, it is Kosovo) and the rest of 50 % will come from other Western Balkan countries.

The Balkonnect Pitch high-energy event blends innovation, competition, and collaboration to fuel the next wave of industry disruptors

VISIBILITY AND PROMOTION PLAN

The plan of promotion and visibility set for each event will be prepared to promote and raise the awareness of each single activity, session, B2B matchmaking and pitching event, before, during and after the event by using the best available channels and means for the promotion in order to ensure wider promotion, the relevance of content to the invited audience which is very important and we will emphasise finding angles for audiences to develop interest and generate a desire to participate in proposed events.

Apart from the above mentioned Balkonnect Festival's visibility materials such as LED banners, Rollup banner, Promo-stand, Country partners, donors, sponsors and Kosovo Flags, outdoor digital displays and event flyers, etc. will be used in the venue of the event. In addition, the organizer will design a Promotional Country Factsheet/Newsletter and a flyer of the Business Participants' Profiles too. Prishtina REA will follow the Balkonnect visibility guidelines, include in the visibility the main supporters, sponsors and partners, other relevant stakeholders to the event, send invitations with the agenda, issue Pres-release and do plan and focused promotion in the social media to attract participants from the regions, photo shooting, short video story and summary.



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 **enterprise
europe
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Business Support on Your Doorstep