



Balkonnect

FESTIVAL
Business Without Borders

2025

REA
Pristina REA



European Bank
for Reconstruction and Development



Session: Panel I

Time: 11:30h - 13:00h

Industry: Wood-Metal-Construction

Date: Day 1 – 23rd May'25

Venue: Hotel Emerald, Prishtina

Panel:

Wood-Metal/Construction Innovative Transformation and R&D-based Challenges

This panel is to be exploring the sensitive interactions among wood-metal processing and products, construction techniques and the R&D challenges facing within the building industry, especially the innovation know-how knowledge and practices of wood and metal-based products. The business show-case models will present the latest industrial achievements related to:

- Material Synergies -leverage the benefits to final products,
- Renewable Resources in wood and strength and durability of metal products-sustainability, efficiency and cost-effective building solution,
- Innovative Construction Applicable Techniques-hybrid construction methodologies (wood and metal combined by-products),
- Designing Advanced Technologies (like 3D printing, prefabrication) - improving efficiency in construction,
- Research and Development Challenges-advanced material properties, testing protocols, performance standards,
- Scientific and Lab Testing-ensuring diverse climates and building environments, structural integrity
- Business Case-Models- Real World Illustration of Wood-Metal/construction Solutions applied to sustainable urban buildings, public infrastructure and residential projects.

Key Takeaways:

Business experts will discuss successful case studies from various regions, highlighting:

- how their recent distinguishing innovation solutions were piloted,
- the next R&D driven generations of sustainable building materials can achieve incredible integration,
- the KPIs of performance, cost-efficiency, safety and durability in hybrid-based products,
- the relevance of new technologies, tools, automation, and programming solution interact to the competitiveness and sustainable financing,
- the role of R&D in nurturing startups and fostering collaboration between government, academia, and the private sector to drive sustainable industry development.

Session: Panel II

Time: 14:00h - 15:30h

Industry: Tourism-Agri-Food-Processing

Date: Day 1 – 23rd May'25

Venue: Hotel Emerald, Prishtina

Panel:

Tourism-Agri-Food-Processing Innovation, Sustainability and Economic Growth

This panel seeks to present three interrelated sectors: tourism, agriculture and food processing - exploring key challenging opportunities for innovation, sustainability and economic growth. This identified industry has got significant natural, infrastructure and capacity potentials due to the region's rich agriculture traditions, diverse food processing capacities and rapidly growing tourism sector.

The explored business show-case models to be presented, will be mainly focused on the following subjects:

- Seasonal Tourism and Agri-rural development - rapid Albania seaside, natural parks and cultural heritage expansion, Kosovo, Serbia, North Macedonia, BiH and Montenegro farm stays, vineyards and winter tourism, as well as Serbia, North Macedonia and BiH traditional agriculture practices,
- Traditional and Sustainable Food Processing – enhanced organic food production, modern food safety standards and exports to EU, reducing food waste through circular economy practices,
- Regional Cooperation and Cross-border (agri-eco) Tourism – Balkan food and mountaining attractions and wine routes, traditional Balkan cuisine and cultural inheritance,
- Digitalisation and Innovation in Food and Tourism – Blockchain and traceability in food processing, digital platforms for direct farm-to-consumer sales, AI-driven personalized tourism experiences
- Investment and Financing - Empowering integration EU market technology trends and standards, SME access to finance for agri-food businesses, PPP for technological infrastructure and supply chain development

Key Takeaways:

Business experts will discuss successful case studies from various regions, highlighting:

- Class-based Tourism branding – a key growing driver,
- Authentic Balkan food products penetration to EU and Global markets,
- Strengthening competitiveness through Eco-friendly products/services,
- Leveraging tech solution generating accelerating growth and innovation
- Cross-border sectoral identity boosting global market linkages/attractions.

Session: Panel III

Time: 15:30h - 17:00h

Industry: Renewable and Green

Date: Day 1 – 23rd May'25

Venue: Hotel Emerald, Prishtina

Panel:

Renewable and Green - A Transformed and Automated Growth Ecosystem

Exploring how the Western Balkans can transition from a traditional economic model to a sustainable and innovative economy, in alignment with the European Green Deal will be the thematic aspect of this session. The conversation will focus on key sustainability priorities, including achieving carbon neutrality, fostering a circular economy, combating pollution, promoting sustainable agriculture, and leveraging AI and biosecurity tools for environmental protection.

The theme emphasizes collaboration, policy alignment, and technological innovation as driving forces behind a greener, more resilient future for the region

- Aligning with the EU's 2050 Ambition and Carbon Neutrality- transitioning towards a net-zero emissions economy, policies & regulation, renewable energy investments and infrastructure development,
- Unlocking the Circular Economy Potential- reducing waste through reuse, recycling and sustainable design, creating green jobs & boosting economic opportunities and incentivizing businesses to adopt circular economy models,
- Agri-food, Retails and Renewable Energy Communities- fostering local cross-sectorial cooperation, reducing energy consumption and developing independency business operation solutions

Key Takeaways:

The Invited business experts are to showcase their business models, emphasizing:

- Accelerating policy alignment with EU sustainability goals,
- Investment in renewable energy and circular economy initiatives
- PPP- sustainable and utmost solutions
- Sustainable production methods enhancing environmental and economic resilience
- AI and Digital technologies playing a transformative role in achieving climate goals
- Green energy. Eco-tourism, Sustainable Urban Planning, electrical business, AI and Smart Systems enhancing SmartCity solutions.

Session: Panel IV

Time: 10:00h - 11:30h

Industry: ICT & Digital

Date: Day 2 – 24th May'25

Venue: Hotel Emerald, Prishtina

Panel:

ICT and Digital: The Evolution of SaaS and Emerging Technologies

The rise of Software as a Service (SaaS) has transformed how businesses operate and deliver services in today's digital world. This session will explore the broad impact of SaaS across various industries, discussing its role in driving innovation, scalability, and efficiency. From digital identity and trusted services to data management, AI, and beyond, SaaS solutions are revolutionizing the way businesses provide secure, seamless, and scalable services to their customers.

The panel will cover a wide array of SaaS applications, with a focus on its integration into critical areas such as data management and usage, digital identity management, scalability, and more. We'll explore how SaaS enables organizations to adopt cutting-edge technologies while ensuring compliance with evolving regulations and addressing the growing need for data analytics.

Business showcase models will present the following topics:

- SaaS for Digital Identity Management – Exploring how SaaS solutions enable businesses to manage digital identities securely, including eIDAS 2.0 compliant digital signatures, authentication, and identity verification across borders.
- Data Analytics with SaaS – The role of data analytics in SaaS, as well as how businesses are securing sensitive data in the cloud.
- AI and Machine Learning in SaaS – Leveraging AI and ML to enhance SaaS products, from fraud detection and predictive analytics to personalized user experiences and automated business processes.
- SaaS for Collaboration and Productivity – How SaaS is transforming workplaces with cloud-based tools that enable real-time collaboration, project management, and remote work.
- Blockchain in SaaS – Exploring the integration of blockchain technology within SaaS models to provide secure and transparent data management and decentralized applications

Key Takeaways:

Business experts will discuss successful case studies from various regions, highlighting:

- The SaaS Revolution – How SaaS is enabling businesses to scale, reduce costs, and innovate in ways that were previously not possible with traditional software.
- Digital Identity Management with SaaS – How digital identity solutions, such as eIDAS 2.0, are integrated into SaaS platforms to provide secure authentication and trusted services across borders.
- AI and ML in SaaS – The game-changing impact of artificial intelligence and machine learning in making SaaS solutions more intelligent, adaptive, and responsive to business needs.
- Blockchain for SaaS – The integration of blockchain to enhance the security and trust of SaaS applications, especially in areas like data management, supply chain, and financial transactions.

Session: Panel V

Time: 11:30h - 13:00h

Industry: Outsourcing

Date: Day 2 – 24th May'25

Venue: Hotel Emerald, Prishtina

Outsourcing Industry – The High-tech and Manufacturing Competitive Hub

In a rapidly evolving global landscape, outsourcing has become an essential strategic tool for businesses seeking operational efficiency, cost reduction, and global expansion. With automation, digital transformation, and increasing regulatory complexities shaping industries, outsourcing is no longer just a cost-cutting measure but a vital enabler of innovation, resilience, and sustainability. It is about strategic partnership and competitiveness, efficiency and quality assurance. Today, we will explore the multifaceted impact of outsourcing in the context of:

- Industrial transformation & automation
- Globalization and cross-border partnerships
- Rising operational costs & R&D investments
- Time efficiency & regulatory alignment
- Challenges in resilience & sustainability

The business expert panel will discuss how businesses can leverage outsourcing to not only optimize operations but also foster international collaboration and long-term strategic growth:

- The Evolution of Outsourcing-shifting from cost -saving to value creation, automation and AI on outsourcing industries,
- Globalization and Cross-Border Partnerships – strengthening transnational linkages and overcoming cultural, legal and operational barriers and burdens,
- Operational Cost and Sustainability – transportation, management and compliance costs, sustainable outsourcing based on ethical and environmentally responsible practices
- Innovation and R&D in Outsourcing – accelerating research, development and innovation and intellectual property protection
- The Future of Outsourcing - Automation and AI reducing or expanding outsourcing opportunities and outsourcing in emerging industries and technologies

Key Takeaways:

Business experts will discuss successful case studies from various regions, highlighting:

- Outsourcing as enabler of innovation, digital transformation and business scalability,
- Automation & AI reshaping the Outsourcing and reshaping the skills set
- R&D&I as driving Outsourcing's Future, reducing time -to-market for innovation, hybrid models and integrating in-house expertise
- Embracing digital transformation, automation and sustainable outsourcing
- partnership, drive the next era of business success.

Session: Panel VI

Time: 14:00h - 15:30h

Industry: Banking and Finance

Date: Day 2 – 24th May'25

Venue: Hotel Emerald, Prishtina

Banking and Finance- the Impact of Digital Transformation on Security, Efficiency, and Trust in Banking and Finance

The improved electronic services, including eIDAS-accredited solutions, are reshaping the banking and finance sector by enhancing security, operational efficiency, and trust in digital transactions. It explores the role of digital transformation in optimizing financial services while addressing challenges related to cybersecurity, regulatory compliance, and customer experience. Has Digital Transformation in banking and Finance truly enhancing Security and trust, or does it introduce new risks and challenges? Banks continue to adopt innovative solutions while strengthening security measures and customer education to maintain trust, ensuring robust cybersecurity strategies and regulatory oversight to mitigate risks.

The sense of key topics to be discussed among the participating panel will be around the following lines:

- Enhancing Security in Banking and Finance- the impact of improved electronic services on fraud prevention and risk management,
- Operational Efficiency through Digital Transformation -automation and AI-powered analytics optimizing financial operations, cost reduction and improving decision-making through digitalisation,
- Building Trust in Digital Transactions – the role of transparency, compliances and customer education in trust-building, and addressing cybersecurity concerns and regulatory compliances
- eIDAS -Accredited Services – strengthening authentication and trust in digital banking. Seamless and secure customer onboarding through digital identities
- Innovative Financial Solutions – Fintech and Blockchain adoption for increased efficiency, the future of AI- driven financial advisory services
- Trends in Digital Banking and Finance – open banking and its role in creating a more connected financial ecosystem and the impact of decentralised finance on traditional banking structure

Key Takeaways:

Some of the key takeaways presented by the invited Business experts are:

- Digital transformation reshaping banking and finance by improving security, efficiency and accessibility
- eIDAS accredited services crucial to securing digital transactions and regulatory compliances
- Trust, as fundamental indicator om digital transactions, requiring transparency, security, and user education
- AI, Automation, and Blockchain technology are driving efficiency and innovation in financial services.

Session: Panel VII

Time: 10:00h - 11:00h

Industry: Social Enterprise-Women Entrepreneurship

Date: Day 2 – 24th May'25

Venue: Hotel Emerald, Prishtina

Social Enterprise-Women Entrepreneurship and Cross-Cultural Ecosystem

- Business scale up through social enterprise concept
- The Insight of Women business creativity
- The Interconnectivity and cross-sectorial impact
- Predictability to sustainable Innovation and business internationalization
- Early seed business concept capitalization and monetization
- Intercultural and social benefit to awareness increase and media promotion on life-skills improvement and human resource enhancement
- Social partnership ^ public-private partnership, a new scalable innovation platform

PITCHING EVENT

Balkonnect
Festival

Time: 16:00h - 19:00h

Industry: Pitching event

Date: Day 2 – 24th May'25

Venue: Hotel Emerald, Prishtina

BALKONNECT PITCHING EVENT

Overview: The Balkonnect Pitching Event is a dynamic platform designed to connect ambitious entrepreneurs with potential investors, mentors, and business partners. By providing a structured yet engaging environment for startup founders to pitch their ideas, the event aims to drive innovation, investment, and business growth.

Vision: The event seeks to bridge the gap between early-stage startups and funding opportunities, fostering a culture of creativity, competition, and collaboration. Through this initiative, Balkonnect aspires to build a thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem where ideas can transform into scalable businesses.

Components:

- **Startup Pitching Sessions:** Entrepreneurs deliver compelling pitches to a panel of investors and industry experts.
- **Investor Engagement:** Business Angels (BAs), Venture Capitalists (VCs), and financing institutions assess and provide funding opportunities.
- **Mentorship & Feedback:** Experts offer insights to refine business models and market strategies.
- **Networking & Partnerships:** Opportunities for startups to connect with key stakeholders for growth and collaboration.

Unique Value Proposition:

- Empowers startups by giving them direct access to international investors.
- Fosters innovation through competition and collaboration.
- Drives investment in high-potential businesses.
- Strengthens the entrepreneurial ecosystem by facilitating strategic partnerships.

Expected Impact:

Increased funding and scaling opportunities for startups.

- Enhanced visibility and credibility for entrepreneurs.
- Strengthened regional and global business networks.
- Creation of a sustainable support system for startups beyond the event.

Key Takeaways:

The Balkonnect Pitching Event is more than just a competition—it's a launchpad for entrepreneurial success.

By fostering investment, mentorship, and collaboration, the event will play a key role in shaping the future of startups and driving economic growth.



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Business Support on Your Doorstep