



AGENDA

21-22 MAY 2026

Piramida, Tirana

OPENING CEREMONY 10:00h - 11:15h

DAY 1



MAINSTAGE

Opening of Balkonnnect Festival 2026

Overview

The Official Opening Ceremony launches the second edition of Balkonnnect Festival and sets the strategic and thematic direction for the three days. The session positions Albania and the Western Balkans as a connected economic space, introduces the festival logic and outlines the key themes: tourism investment, green transition, digital economy and deal-making.

Topics

- Welcome and introduction to Balkonnnect Festival 2026
- Lessons from Balkonnnect 2025 and evolution of the festival
- Albania and Tirana as host of the 2026 edition
- Overview of the program and objectives

“Investment Pathway: From Narrative - Deal - Follow-up”

NON-STOP SESSION 10:00h – 16:30h

DAY 1



B2B CUBE

B2B Matchmaking Sessions

(Pre-Arranged 1:1 Meetings)

Overview

The B2B Matchmaking is the festival's structured deal-making activity, running in parallel to the day's sessions. Companies and stakeholders create profiles on the B2Match platform, publish what they offer/seek and then request meetings based on mutual interests. The system auto-builds each participant's agenda, enabling efficient, time-boxed 1:1 meetings designed to spark concrete partnerships, cross-border collaboration and follow-up commercial discussions - leading to Business Partnership Agreements.

MORNING SESSION 11:30h – 12:30h

DAY 1



MAINSTAGE

Tourism Investment in Albania & the Western Balkans (2026–2030)

Overview

This mainstage session sets the strategic tone for Day 1 by addressing tourism as a core investment pillar for Albania and the Western Balkans. The discussion focuses on where capital is realistically flowing, what types of tourism projects are bankable and how destinations can position themselves competitively in the next investment cycle.

Topics

- Tourism investment trends in Albania and the Western Balkans
- What makes tourism projects bankable
- Risk, seasonality and return expectations, what works and what doesn't?
- Strategic Investment Opportunity (Public-private) collaboration models
- From destination branding to investable products

THEMATIC SESSIONS

BLOCK 1 13:30h – 14:15h

DAY 1



THEMATIC CUBES

Season Extension & Destination Management and Hospitality Technology & Experience Design

This session explores how:

1
TOPIC

destinations can reduce seasonality and build year-round tourism demand through integrated destination management, events, niche tourism products and data-driven planning,

how technology improves hospitality operations and guest experience, focusing on practical, already-adopted solutions rather than experimental concepts.

- Seasonality challenges and solutions
- Destination management governance
- Events, culture, heritage and niche tourism
- Data and digital tools in destination planning
- Revenue management and pricing
- Guest experience personalization
- Automation and AI in hospitality operations
- Balancing efficiency and authenticity
- Digitalised services and customer care conceptualisation

BLOCK 2 14:30h - 15:15h

THEMATIC CUBES

Tourism, Real Estate & Infrastructure: What's Bankable & Cultural Heritage and Creative Economy as Tourism Infrastructure

This session focuses on:

2
TOPIC

the intersection between tourism development, real estate and supporting infrastructure, highlighting investment structures that are realistic and financially viable;

how culture, music, festivals, outreach, heritage, film and creative industries function as core tourism infrastructure and economic multipliers. Is there a Legacy-Identity?

- Tourism-driven real estate development
- Infrastructure needs and investment gaps
- Strategic Investment Opportunity (PP investment models)
- Risk allocation and long-term returns
- Cultural heritage diverse tourism offer
- Creative industries as destination drivers
- Festivals and events as economic assets
- Linking culture with tourism investment
- Sustainability of creative ecosystems

AFTERNOON SESSION 15:00h – 16:15h

DAY 1



MAINSTAGE

World Business Angels Forum: Western Balkans Meetup

Investment Narratives & Angels
The Western Balkans as the Next Frontier for Angel & Smart Capital

Overview

This flagship investment session reframes the Western Balkans from an overlooked region to a strategic near-EU growth zone with compelling fundamentals for angel investors and smart capital.

Topics

- **Macro-to-Micro Reality**
Translating regional economic trends into specific, investable opportunities with clear entry points
- **The Angel Advantage**
Why angel capital is uniquely suited to Western Balkans ventures - flexibility, mentorship and strategic value-add
- **Albania as Entry Platform**
Why now, why the Western Balkans and specifically why Albania serves as the optimal gateway market
- **From Inspiration to Transaction**
Structured pathways from interest to investment - due diligence, deal structures and follow-up mechanisms

AFTERNOON SESSION 16:30h – 18:00h

DAY 1



THEMATIC CUBES

Investors' Masterclass

Led by
World Business Angels Forum & Prishtina REA

Overview

Due diligence frameworks, portfolio construction strategies and Western Balkans-specific investment approaches, EU/EIC Investor Readiness ScoreCard (IRS) filling

Topics

- **What makes a business investable**
- **What investors look for first**
- **Traction, scalability and market potential**
- **Common mistakes founders make when pitching**
- **What happens after the first investor meeting**

EVENING SESSION 18:30h – 20:30h

DAY 1



TOP OF PIRAMIDA

Networking Cocktail

(Invitation-Only)

Overview

This curated, high-value networking environment closes Day 1 by bringing together investors, speakers, institutional leaders and selected founders in a relaxed setting where meaningful business relationships begin.

Purpose & Format

- Curated seating to mix key players
- Informal networking over dinner & drinks
- Cultural live performance (non-distracting)
- Short welcome note (no long speeches)

Why it Matters

- Trust is Built After Hours
- Business Deals Begin Here
- Content Shifts to Connection

Invitation-only. Quality over quantity. No randomness.

NON-STOP SESSION 10:00h – 18:30h

DAY 2



B2B CUBE

B2B Matchmaking Sessions

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Overview

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MORNING SESSION 10:00h – 11:00h

DAY 2



MAINSTAGE

Renewables & Green Growth Reality in the Western Balkans

Overview

This session addresses the green transition from a pragmatic perspective, focusing on renewable energy deployment, grid readiness, permitting and financing structures that determine whether projects can be implemented at scale (EU-WB Growth Plan).

Topics

- Renewable energy potential vs grid capacity
- Permitting and regulatory barriers
- Bankability and financing structures
- Role of FDIs and private capital
- Growth Plan strategy and innovation predictability

THEMATIC SESSIONS

MORNING SESSION 11:15h – 12:00h

DAY 2



THEMATIC CUBES

Green Buildings & Energy Efficiency and Circular Economy for SMEs

1
TOPIC

This session focuses on:

energy efficiency and green building solutions across private and public infrastructure, highlighting replicable models and financing mechanisms;

how SMEs can adopt circular economy models in commercially viable ways, moving from policy concepts to practical implementation.

- Circular business models
- Waste-to-value solutions
- Market demand for circular products
- Barriers to scaling and competitiveness
- Energy-efficient building standards
- ESCO and performance-based models
- Financing retrofitting projects
- Strategic Investment/ Public and private case studies

THEMATIC SESSIONS

MIDDAY SESSION 13:00h – 14:00h

DAY 2



THEMATIC CUBES

Urban & Tourism Infrastructure Projects and Energy, Mobility & Circular Infrastructure

2
TOPIC

Infrastructure investments that support urban development and tourism competitiveness

Integrated infrastructure investments for energy, transport and circular economy

- Energy distribution and mobility systems integration
- Smart and sustainable transport solutions
- Circular infrastructure (waste management, resource recovery)
- Implementation challenges and financing structures
- Urban regeneration and place-making strategies
- Tourism-supporting infrastructure (airports, roads, utilities)
- Financing models and operational sustainability

AFTERNOON SESSION 14:00h – 15:00h

DAY 2



MAINSTAGE

Trust in Digital Finance & the Digital Economy

Overview

This session focuses on trust as the foundation of the digital economy, examining how digital identity, cybersecurity, compliance, trusted digital services enable secure financial transactions and cross-border digital business.

Topics

- **Digital Identity and Trust Services**
eID systems, digital signatures and cross-border authentication
- **Cybersecurity and Fraud Prevention**
Threat landscape, protective technologies and incident response
- **Regulatory Compliance Frameworks**
GDPR, PSD2 and emerging digital finance regulations
- **Building Trust in Digital Transactions**
Consumer protection, dispute resolution and transparency mechanisms

THEMATIC SESSIONS

AFTERNOON SESSION 15:00h – 16:00h

DAY 2



THEMATIC CUBES

Fintech & Open Banking in SEE

This session examines the current state of fintech and open banking in Southeast Europe, focusing on realistic use cases, regulatory frameworks and collaboration models.

1

TOPICS

- Open banking frameworks and APIs
- Ban-fintech collaboration
- Regulatory constraints and opportunities
- Financial inclusion and innovation

SaaS & Digital Export from the Western Balkans

This session explores the Western Balkans as an export hub for software and digital services, focusing on scaling strategies, compliance and international market access.

2

TOPICS

- International scaling strategies
- Go-to-market and pricing models
- Compliance and data protection
- Talent and operational challenges

AFTERNOON SESSION 16:00h – 18:30h

DAY 2



THEMATIC CUBES

Masterclasses

ESG Masterclass

A practical session on how businesses can meet ESG requirements, measure their impact, and turn sustainability into better access to finance, partnerships, and growth.

1
TOPICS

- Why ESG matters for growth and finance
- What banks and investors expect to see
- The most common ESG mistakes by SMEs
- Practical ESG steps companies can implement
- How ESG improves competitiveness and market access

(16:00 - 17:30)

e-Wallet Masterclass

Mobile payment systems, user experience design, regulatory requirements and digital wallet deployment strategies

2
TOPICS

- What the European Digital Identity Wallet is
- How e-wallets improve trust and digital transactions
- Use cases in banking, payments and public services
- Security, privacy and interoperability challenges
- How e-wallets can accelerate digital transformation

(17:30 - 18:30)

EVENING SESSION 17:00h – 18:30h

DAY 2



MAINSTAGE

Startup & SME Pitching

Investment-Ready Businesses from the Western Balkans

This mainstage session provides startups and growth-oriented SMEs with a structured platform to present their businesses to investors, corporate partners and financial institutions. The focus is on scalability, demonstrated traction and clear investment readiness.

Pitching Criteria & Focus Areas:

1 Scalable Business Models

Clear path to 10x growth, not lifestyle businesses

2 Revenue and Growth Strategies

Proven unit economics and customer acquisition

3 Investment Structure

Funding needs, use of capital and exit potential

4 Strategic Partnerships

Expansion plans and market entry strategies

5 Execution Capacity

Team strength and governance structures

CLOSING SESSION 19:00h – 20:00h

DAY 2



MAINSTAGE

Balkonnnect Festival Awards and Closing Session

Changemakers Innovation Awards

Closing Ceremony & Next Host Announcement

Overview

The Closing Session celebrates standout achievements from the festival, summarizes key outcomes, outlines follow-up actions and officially announces the 2027 host city.

This reinforces Balkonnnect's identity as a rotating, regional deal-making platform rather than a fixed event.

- **Festival Highlights**

Summary of key insights, announced deals and partnership commitments from the two-day program

- **Changemaker Awards**

Recognition of startups, investors and public sector leaders demonstrating exceptional innovation and impact

- **Follow-Up Framework**

Investment and project follow-up pathways to ensure momentum continues after the festival

- **2027 Host City Reveal**

Official announcement of Balkonnnect 2027 location, signaling the festival's regional rotation model

Final Message

Balkonnnect 2026 is not bigger by accident
It is **sharper by design.**

Built on Real Lessons

Every element reflects learnings from Balkonnnect 2025—what worked, what didn't and how to scale intelligently

Adapted to Piramida

The program architecture fits Piramida Tirana's unique venue characteristics and capacity constraints

Focused on Deals, Projects, and Credibility

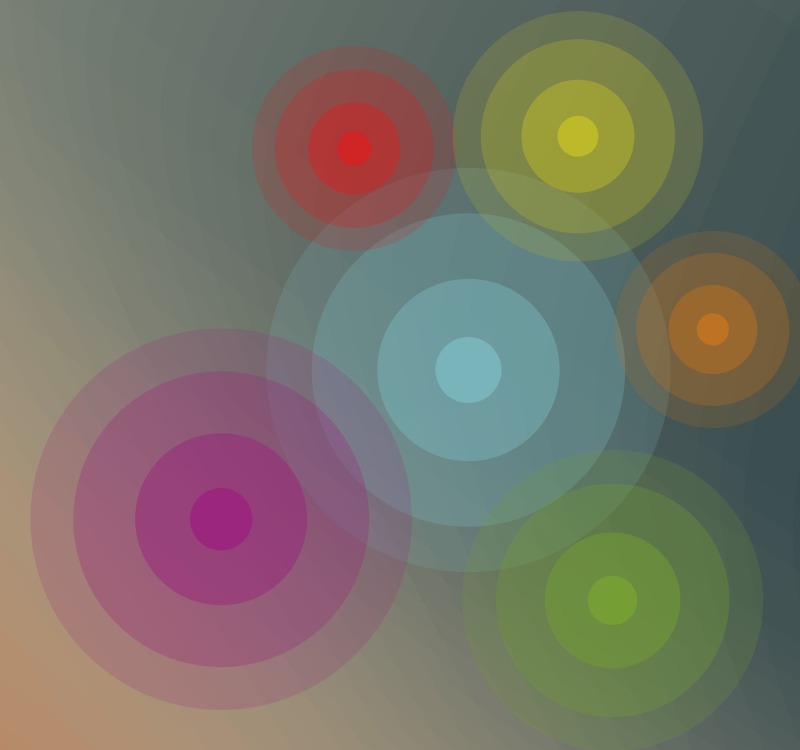
Not just conversations—structured pathways from dialogue to transactions, with follow-up mechanisms that work

Ready to Scale to Future Host Cities

The model is replicable, adaptable and designed to strengthen with each iteration across the Western Balkans

Balkonnnect Festival Tirana 2026

represents the maturation of a regional platform - professionally designed, investor-focused and built for sustainable growth.



Balkonnect

FESTIVAL
Business Without Borders

2026