

COST relations to the Western Balkan Countries

The 6 Western Balkan Countries, WBC, countries (Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Kosovo*¹, Serbia) are Full Members of COST or Near Neighbour Country (Kosovo*).

The COST Full Members are members of the COST governing board, the CSO, and currently there is one WBC representative at the COST Executive Board. They are eligible to propose a new COST Action, to lead it or to undertake any leadership position. These countries also fall in the category of COST Inclusiveness Target Country meaning they can benefit from all the specific measures established.

Additionally, participants to COST Actions from the 6 countries are eligible for funding within the COST schemes

The connections and collaboration established via COST are important building blocks both in the European Research Area as well as in the European Union integration of the region, while strongly contributing to bridge the participation gap and close the innovation divide in Europe and providing opportunities for younger generations.

WBC participation figures confirm their strong involvement in COST activities, especially when it is compared to the size of their respective research communities.

Chart 1 Running COST Actions with WBC participation, March 2020

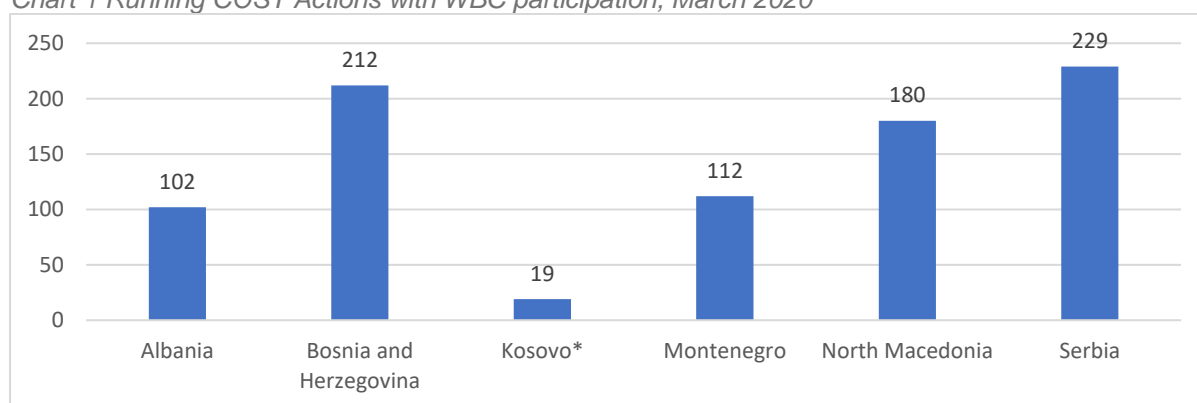
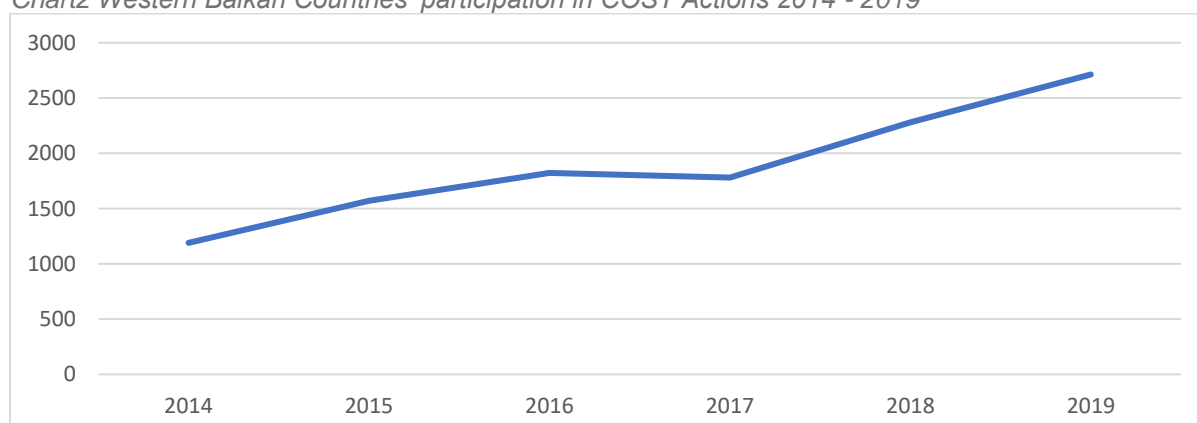


Chart2 Western Balkan Countries' participation in COST Actions 2014 - 2019



The strong participation has led to significant results and follow-up in terms of the number of proposals submitted for collaborative research in Horizon 2020, with a success rate which more than triples the average success rates for these programmes. This underpins the role of COST as a pre-portal for

¹ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

follow-up European funding for research and innovation. Since the beginning of Horizon2020, one fifth of the networking activities carried out by individuals from the WBC region were addressing the mobility schemes, such as short term-scientific missions (STSM) of a 3-month duration as well as training schools. It adds up to a total of 1205 training schools and 730 STSM participation completed.

Table1 WBC researchers' participation in Training Schools and STSMs 2014-2019

	Trainees	STSMs
Albania	40	11
Bosnia-Herzegovina	130	79
Kosovo*	4	n/a
Montenegro	39	22
North Macedonia	239	138
Serbia	753	480
Total	1205	730

Additionally, there is a strong impact on researchers' careers, reinforced mobility of individual researchers and new links forged. The recent study on career advancement² showed Serbia as one of the countries with whom the new links were created.

The participation in COST enhancing the integration of WBC to ERA and the internationalisation of their national research ecosystems. COST is committed to continue serving the Western Balkan Countries and provide its tools to facilitate their stronger integration into the European Research Area.

"The data we have shows that the COST network has achieved significant success in establishing such networks and opening up boundaries of knowledge and innovation without people actually migrating. The circulation, interaction within regions, but also interregional and continental is one of the most efficient mechanisms in transforming the entire paradigm of the brain loss. Interaction and networking is not a loss for some but gain for all, and in that regard we have high expectations from Horizon Europe in recognizing the values and achievements of the COST, especially in successful promotion of ITC countries, gender balance and inclusion of young researchers into COST actions." WBC at Steering Platform on Research and Innovation for the WBC, 24/09/2019

Info Days organised in WBC

29 03 2019 Serbia
 17 04 2019 Bosnia-Herzegovina
 17 Sept 2019 Montenegro
 19/11/2019 Kosovo*
 15/01/2020 Albania
 09/10/2020 North Macedonia (tbc)

Dedicated meetings between COST and WBC

Serbia COST Connect 10 Oct 2018
 Montenegro ministerial visit 22 May 2019
 SEIIST 18 Sept 2019
 WBC Steering Platform on Research and Innovation 23 Sept 2019
 WBC Ministerial meeting of the Steering Platform on Research and Innovation 24 Sept 2019

² Targeted impact assessment on career development <https://www.cost.eu/publications/targeted-impact-assessment-on-career-development/>