

## GreenFORCE

Foster Research Excellence for Green Transition in the Western Balkans

### Deliverable D5.3 Sustainability Plan

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## List of project partners

Number	Role	Short name	Legal name	Country	PIC
1	COO	Co-PLAN	CO-PLAN INSTITUTI PER ZHVILLIMIN E HABITATIT	AL	941177712
1.1	AE	U_POLIS	UNIVERSITETI POLIS SHPK	AL	954870232
2	BEN	POLITO	POLITECNICO DI TORINO	IT	999977754
3	BEN	NORDREGIO	NORDREGIO	SE	999536792
4	BEN	UB-GEF	UNIVERSITY OF BELGRADE - FACULTY OF GEOGRAPHY	RS	933015744
5	BEN	CEA	CENTER FOR ECONOMIC ANALYSES ASSOCIATION	MK	912445536



## Executive Summary

The GreenFORCE Sustainability Plan provides a comprehensive roadmap for safeguarding and amplifying the project's outcomes beyond its formal completion.

Grounded in a structured rationale and articulated across four thematic pillars – (i) What to sustain, (ii) How to sustain it, (iii) Who does what, and (iv) How to monitor progress—the plan outlines a practical yet forward-looking framework for long-term continuity, impact, and institutional consolidation. These pillars address not only the preservation of key results and assets but also the governance structures, funding mechanisms, and evaluation tools needed to support a resilient and inclusive green transition in the Western Balkans. The sustainability strategy rests on the premise that knowledge, partnerships, and policy-relevant tools developed through GreenFORCE must evolve into living infrastructures of cooperation. These infrastructures are expected to operate well beyond the initial funding cycle, with a foundation anchored in shared institutional ownership, robust scientific collaboration, and responsiveness to emerging regional priorities. To this end, the plan integrates tangible actions, such as maintaining a joint research agenda, continuing policy brief production, and reusing training resources, with broader structural considerations, including governance consolidation and future funding access. This document presents a detailed account of the sustainability framework, focusing on the assets to be retained, the operational strategies to secure their relevance, and the collaborative instruments that will guarantee continuity. It also highlights mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation, identifies potential risks, and proposes mitigation strategies to ensure the project's achievements remain future-proof and aligned with evolving European and regional agendas.

The D5.3 Sustainability Plan summarises the activities presented and discussed during the third RAB meeting, held in Durres, Albania, in May 2025. It reflects the critiques and recommendations made by RAB members, as well as presents a rational proposal on what can be done in the future to ensure project continuity.

## Project Overview

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 broader policy initiatives for the WB region. To achieve this objective, a twinning partnership of five organisations will work closely to produce territorial knowledge through exploratory research and institutional learning; transferring and exchanging knowledge among partner organisations through applying the knowledge management cycle, engaging in networking for sharing, cross-fertilizing and amplifying knowledge at the societal level. Ultimately, the ambition is to transcend from individual learning to enabling institutional learning, ensuring that scientific research and its management practices become institutionalised within the recipient organisations. GreenFORCE will contribute to the impacts of the destination "Improved access to excellence" by enabling pathways of cooperation, exchange, co-design, and co-creation with academia, civil society and policymakers at the regional level. The five partner organisations are Co-PLAN, Institute for Habitat Development in Albania as the coordinating partner; University of Belgrade - Faculty of Geography (UB-GEF) in Serbia and the Center for Economic Analysis Association (CEA) in North Macedonia as the two regional partners; and Nordregio, a pan-Nordic research organisation based in Sweden, together with Politecnico di Torino, Italy (POLITO), as the leading EU research institutions. POLIS University in Albania is the affiliate partner of Co-PLAN.



## Methodology for Drafting the Sustainability Plan

The GreenFORCE Sustainability Plan has been developed through a structured, participatory, and iterative process designed to ensure the long-term continuity, replicability, and impact of the project's outcomes. The drafting process was led by the Politecnico di Torino (POLITO), which assumed scientific responsibility for coordinating the plan's conceptual design, content development, and strategic alignment with the project's objectives and regional priorities.

An initial draft of the Sustainability Plan was prepared by POLITO in early 2025, based on:

- An internal assessment of the project's main results and deliverables;
- A review of comparable sustainability frameworks from other EU-funded projects;
- A strategic mapping of future funding opportunities (EU and non-EU);
- Consultations with project partners on institutional readiness and implementation capacity.

This preliminary version was formally presented and discussed during the third meeting of the GreenFORCE Research Advisory Board (RAB), held in Durrës, Albania, in May 2025. The RAB meeting provided an opportunity to assess the robustness and relevance of the proposed sustainability model from the perspective of both academic experts and project partners.

As part of the consultation process, the RAB members were invited to provide structured feedback (orally during the presentation) by responding to a set of four guiding questions:

- Based on your experience, how 'sustainable' is the proposed sustainability plan in the long run (3 to 5 years)?
- Do you agree with the challenges identified regarding the project's sustainability after its lifetime has expired?
- Do you suggest including any additional action(s) or have any suggestions on how to modify those that have been tentatively included?
- Do you have any overall concerns about the contents of the proposed sustainability plan? How can the plan be improved accordingly?

Additional inputs from consortium members and strategic partners complemented the comments and suggestions collected through this process. POLITO subsequently revised the plan to incorporate the RAB's recommendations, resulting in a more coherent, realistic, and operational framework. Notably, the revised version enhanced the clarity of post-project governance arrangements, improved the outlook for funding strategy, and reinforced the integration of monitoring and risk mitigation components. The final version of the Sustainability Plan thus reflects a collectively validated strategy, grounded in both expert feedback and practical implementation concerns. It embodies a shared commitment to maintaining GreenFORCE's achievements over time and positioning the project as a reference initiative in the field of green transition governance in South-East Europe.

## Structure and Rationale of the Sustainability Plan

To ensure project continuity, GreenFORCE has prepared a sustainability plan based on four pillars (see Figure 1). This image presents a structured framework for ensuring the sustainability of project outcomes beyond the project's lifetime. It is divided into four main thematic pillars, each addressing a key question or function related to project follow-up:

- *What to sustain* – this pillar emphasises identifying and preserving the core outcomes and impacts of the project. It reflects on what should be capitalised upon to ensure continuity and long-term benefits
- *How* – this pillar focuses on the mechanisms and strategies for maintaining project activities and results over time, particularly in terms of securing funding and resources.



- *Who does what* – this pillar addresses the distribution of responsibilities after the project ends. It defines who will take charge of maintaining the outcomes and how governance will be structured.
- *Monitoring* – this pillar ensures that the implementation and impacts of the sustainability strategy are tracked over time. This includes setting up mechanisms to assess whether the goals and achievements are being maintained

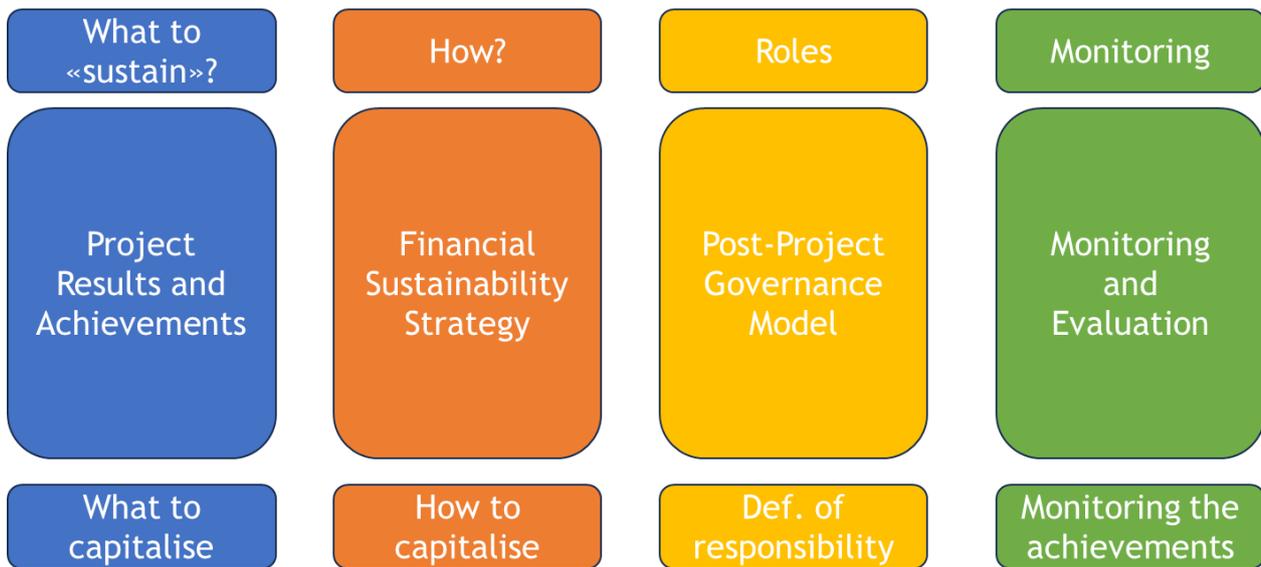


Figure 1 – Methodology and Rationale

### What to “sustain”?

This aims to define the core elements of the project that are worth preserving and capitalising upon. At the heart of this section lies the recognition of Project Results and Achievements as the key assets generated throughout the project lifecycle. This encompasses both tangible outputs, such as tools, methodologies, platforms, and reports, as well as intangible outcomes, including knowledge, networks, and institutional changes. The guiding question here is what elements of the project have lasting value and should be strategically retained and disseminated. At the bottom of this section, the label *What to capitalise* reinforces the idea that a deliberate effort must be made to select and prioritise those results that offer the most potential for future use and impact.

### How to sustain?

The second pillar addresses the question *How?*, and centres on the development of a robust Financial Sustainability Strategy. This component is crucial in outlining the mechanisms through which project results can continue to be sustained after initial funding has ended. This may involve identifying new funding sources, establishing cost-recovery models, integrating activities into institutional budgets, or forming partnerships with stakeholders willing to invest in the initiative’s continuation. The emphasis here is on transforming the project from a time-limited intervention into a sustained process. The accompanying label *How to capitalise* signals the need to design operational and financial pathways that enable the continued relevance and application of project outputs in real-world contexts.

### Roles and responsibilities

The third pillar focuses on Roles, with particular attention to the formulation of a clear and functional Post-Project Governance Model. This section underscores the importance of assigning responsibilities and establishing institutional arrangements that can carry the project forward in a coherent and coordinated manner. It involves defining who does what, who leads, who supports, and how decisions will be made in the absence of the original project structure. This governance model is essential for avoiding fragmentation and ensuring continuity. At the base of this pillar, the label



Definition of responsibility highlights the necessity of setting clear roles and mandates for all involved stakeholders, including public authorities, civil society actors, and other institutional partners.

### Monitoring

The fourth and final pillar is dedicated to Monitoring, and is centred on the establishment of mechanisms for Monitoring and Evaluation. This section deals with the creation of tools and procedures to assess the effectiveness of sustainability efforts, track the progress of implemented actions, and measure the continued impact of the project’s results over time. It emphasises the importance of evidence-based follow-up and adaptive management, allowing for improvements and adjustments as needed. The label ‘Monitoring the Achievements’ reflects the core objective of this pillar: to ensure that sustainability is not only planned but also actively observed, measured, and continually improved upon.

Based on this rationale, the following sections outline a sustainable strategy that can be implemented to ensure collaboration and project continuity.

### Key Results to Sustain

One of the significant outcomes of GreenFORCE is the co-development of a Shared Strategic Research Agenda (SRA) and the publication of scientific papers, including the first handbook on Just Green Transitions in the Western Balkans (currently under publication process with Palgrave Macmillan publishing house). The SRA is a strategic document that consolidates thematic priorities of the WB partners and identifies future research trajectories on green transition topics in the Western Balkans. This agenda reflects shared challenges and opportunities, serving as a roadmap for further joint research proposals and capacity-building actions. Scientifically relevant, the handbook and the papers constitute a very valuable legacy of the project that should be disseminated after the project’s lifetime. Equally important are the policy briefs produced throughout the project, which translate academic and technical findings into actionable recommendations for regional policymakers. These documents should be kept up to date and disseminated beyond the project to remain relevant and influential. Policy briefs can serve as a valuable reference for lobbying at various levels in the long run, ensuring a credible and effective implementation of policy actions. The project has also developed training materials and academic curricula, particularly through its workshops, staff exchanges, and standalone teaching activities (2 summer schools and 1 winter school). These resources can be reused or adapted by the partnering universities, think tanks, and civil society organisations interested in environmental governance, climate policy, and sustainable development. Finally, the transnational network formed between Co-PLAN, UB-GEF, CEA, Nordregio, and Politecnico di Torino represents an intangible yet essential asset. Its continuity will be key to sustaining all other outputs and fostering future collaborations.

### Financial Sustainability Strategy

A mix of funding strategies can be further mobilised to maintain selected project results and to scale them further. Partners will explore opportunities in future EU calls (e.g., Horizon Europe, Interreg, IPA III Cross-Border Cooperation and other funding schemes) to finance follow-up activities. Some funding opportunities were already explored during project implementation, and more than 2 applications were jointly conducted as represented also in D.2.2 Joint Proposals submitted. Below, a summary of information is provided.

### Project applications done

During the project’s lifetime, five project proposals were considered, as shown in Table 1.

No.	Project Title	Funding Programme	Partners Involved	Result
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Funded by the European Union

*Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or European Research Executive Agency (REA). Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.*

1	DEMO-GREEN – Democratising just green transitions in the Western Balkans	Creative Partnerships – Swedish Institute	Nordregio (Coordinator), Co-PLAN, University of Belgrade – Faculty of Geography, CEA and CREDI	Not financed
2	RESISTANT – Regional Sustainable Just Transition Network	EUKI	Nordregio (Coordinator), Co-PLAN, Politecnico di Torino, University of Belgrade – Faculty of Geography, and CEA	Not financed
3	Urban Nexus: Empowering Local governance in the Western Balkans (UrbaNEX – WB)	Know-how Exchange Programme – Central European Initiative	Politecnico di Torino (Coordinator), Co-PLAN, University of Belgrade – Faculty of Geography, Municipalities of Shkoder and Kragujevac, relevant Ministries	<b>Financed (project under implementation)</b>
4	JUST-IMPACT - Justice Upscaling of Subnational Transitions through Inclusive Multi-level Platforms for Action, Collaboration, and Transformations	EUKI	Nordregio (Coordinator), Co-PLAN, Politecnico di Torino, University of Belgrade – Faculty of Geography, CREDI and CEA	Result not yet published
5	Strengthening Regional Partnerships for Just Green Transition in the Western Balkans	Western Balkan Fund	CEA (North Macedonia); Co-PLAN (Albania); UBGeF (Serbia)	Not financed

Table 1 - Project applications done

### Futures call monitoring: International Funding Opportunities

This overview provides a structured guide to international funding programmes and open calls that may be of strategic relevance for Western Balkans academic institutions, NGOs, and other civil society actors. The selection includes both EU-funded programmes and non-EU international opportunities, covering themes such as green transition, social inclusion, research & innovation, education, climate action, and regional cooperation. Each table includes the Call name, Funding programme or donor, Main theme, and Deadline (or estimated timeline). The list is based on currently open or regularly recurring calls, with a forward-looking perspective for the next five years.

#### EU-Funded Calls and Programmes (2025 -2030)



Funded by the  
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This table includes selected EU funding programmes and open calls where Western Balkan countries can participate either directly (as eligible associated countries) or indirectly (via partnerships with EU Member States). These programmes span education, climate action, research, innovation, civil society support, and regional cooperation (Table 2).

Call Name	Programme Initiative	Main Theme	Deadline
HORIZON-CL5-2026-02 "Clean Energy" Thematic Calls	Horizon Europe	Clean energy systems (e.g. biofuels, PV, CO <sub>2</sub> capture, wind, etc.)	Opens 16 Sep 2025 – Deadline 17 Feb 2026 ( <a href="http://ufm.dk">ufm.dk</a> , <a href="http://euresearch.ch">euresearch.ch</a> )
HORIZON-CL5-2026-02 "Smart Buildings & Energy Communities"	Horizon Europe	Smart building renovation, energy communities	Opens 16 Sep 2025 – Deadline 17 Feb 2026
HORIZON-CL5-2026-02 "AI-for-Energy" & Resilience topics	Horizon Europe	AI-enabled energy systems, power infrastructure	Opens 16 Sep 2025 – Deadline 17 Feb 2026
Teaming for Excellence – Stage 2	Horizon Europe – Widening participation	Partnerships with excellence clusters for capacity building	2nd stage deadline 20 Jan 2026
9th EUKI Call for Project Ideas	EUKI / GIZ	Transborder climate action initiatives	Project start Dec 2025 / Feb 2026
Interreg IPA ADRION Programme 2 <sup>nd</sup> Call for Proposals	Interreg	Priority Axis 2: Supporting a Greener and Climate Resilient Adriatic-Ionian Region	Deadline for project proposals 30/06/2025

Table 2 - EU-Funded Calls and Programmes (2025–2030)

#### Non-EU International & Regional Calls

While monitoring other funding typologies, these regional or international funding programmes will be available from late 2025 onwards (see Table 3).

Call Name	Donor Programme	Main Theme	Deadline
V4 GEN Mini-Grants (2nd Call 2025)	Visegrad Fund	Regional cooperation, capacity building, and innovation	Opens 1 Oct 2025 – Deadline 15 Nov 2025 ( <a href="http://visegradfund.org">visegradfund.org</a> )
Western Balkans Fund – 6th Call	Western Balkans Fund	Civil society, regional cooperation	Expected mid-late 2025 (est.)
Eureka – WB R&D Calls	Eureka Network	Innovation, joint R&D across Western Balkans	New cycle expected 2026
Creative Europe MEDIA – Balkan Watchers	Creative Europe MEDIA	Investigative journalism support	Expected 2025



<i>AFD – Ageing/Gender/Social Justice Call</i>	<i>Agence Française de Dév. (AFD)</i>	<i>Ageing, gender equality in WB &amp; SE Asia</i>	<i>Next cycle expected 2026</i>
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**Table 3 - Non-EU International & Regional Calls**

Moreover, at the national level, research institutions in the Western Balkans may access their own governmental research funds or innovation schemes. Additionally, some project outputs—such as training modules or technical advisory services—may be offered to external stakeholders (municipalities, civil society, SMEs) on a fee-based model, generating revenue to support their maintenance. Public-private partnerships may also be explored, particularly in sectors such as green innovation and circular economy, where local and international actors are seeking expertise and frameworks aligned with EU standards. Linkages with other EU innovation ecosystems, such as the EIT Climate-KIC or EU Green Deal Missions, can provide further entry points for funding and visibility.

### Post-Project Governance Model

To ensure the long-term sustainability, impact, and operational legacy of the GreenFORCE project, a streamlined yet robust governance mechanism will be established (Figure 2). At the heart of this mechanism will be a Sustainability Coordination Committee (SCC), which will consolidate and extend the existing [TG-WEB](#) network partners, among which Co-Plan, CEA and POLITO are long-standing partners. The SCC will be composed of designated representatives from each core partner institution involved in the project (i.e. Co-Plan, CEA and POLITO) and will remain open to the inclusion of new stakeholders, including local authorities, civil society organisations, academic institutions, and international donors interested in advancing the green transition in the Western Balkans. The Committee will convene annually, either virtually or in person, to undertake key coordination and foresight tasks. These include:

- Monitoring the uptake and evolution of project results, such as toolkits, training modules, and policy recommendations;
- Identifying and pursuing new funding opportunities, particularly within EU Framework Programmes (e.g., Horizon Europe, Interreg, IPA III), national funding streams, and philanthropic initiatives;
- Co-developing and launching joint initiatives, including new research proposals, pilot actions, and strategic partnerships at the regional and European levels.

The SCC will also take responsibility for maintaining and periodically updating the Shared Strategic Research Agenda, ensuring it reflects emerging priorities in green transition, territorial governance, and just transformation. Where relevant, the Committee will coordinate the publication of new policy briefs, position papers, and knowledge outputs, further reinforcing GreenFORC’s role as a reference platform for evidence-based policy advice in the Western Balkans. In parallel, the SCC will serve as a liaison platform with key institutional stakeholders, including regional governance structures (e.g., the Regional Cooperation Council - RCC), EU institutions, and international knowledge networks. These open channels of communication will be essential for aligning the outcomes of GreenFORCE with evolving policy frameworks and supporting policy coherence across scales. Critically, strategic partners such as Nordregio and the Politecnico di Torino will continue to play an active role as scientific anchors and mentors, providing long-term support to institutional capacity-building and methodological consolidation within the region. Their involvement will ensure that methodological excellence, academic integrity, and comparative learning remain embedded within post-project activities. Ultimately, this governance model is designed not only to preserve GreenFORCE’s outputs but also to amplify their transformative potential, fostering an enduring community of practice committed to the sustainability and resilience of the Western Balkans.



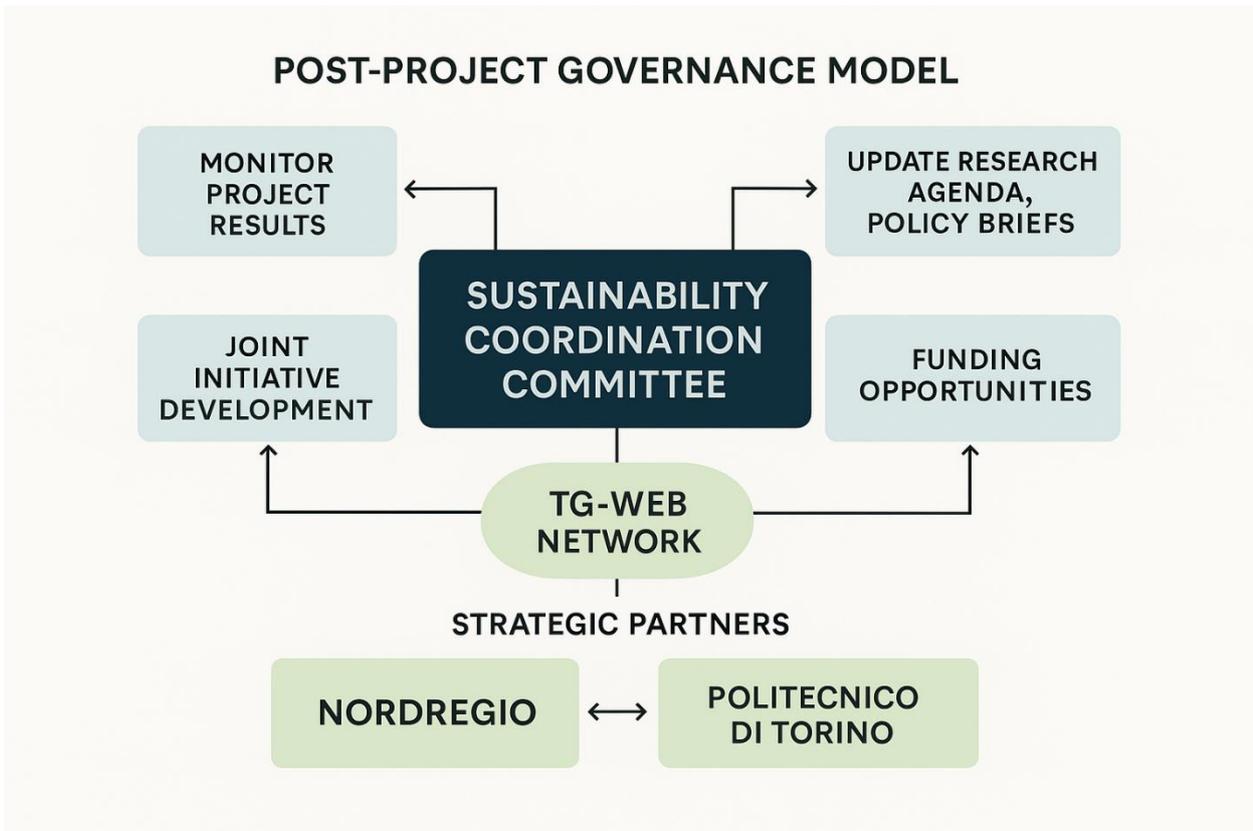


Figure 2 - Post-Project Governance Model

Yet importantly, as GreenFORCE was conceived as a Twinning project with the primary objective of strengthening research and innovation capacities, a key achievement has been the consolidation of dedicated Research Units within each of the Western Balkan partner organisations. Throughout the project, these units have significantly enhanced their expertise on the theme of Just Green Transitions, benefiting from targeted training, peer exchanges, and collaborative work with EU partners. By the end of the project, the Research Units are not only better equipped in terms of knowledge and methodologies, but also strategically positioned to contribute to national and regional debates on green transition pathways. Their consolidated capacities represent a valuable asset for future collaborative research initiatives, and they are committed to sustaining and furthering this work through joint publications, new project proposals, and continued engagement within the GreenFORCE network and beyond.

### Stakeholder Engagement and Outreach

The long-term success of GreenFORCE relies on the sustained commitment and active involvement of both institutional and societal actors across the Western Balkans and Europe. During the project implementation, more than 200 regional and local actors were involved. This involvement included research activities, co-design processes, two co-assessments, regional exchanges between the project and its participants, as well as participation in conferences, and the final event of GreenFORCE<sup>1</sup>.

Beyond the project’s formal duration, strategic mechanisms will be implemented to maintain its visibility, expand its influence, and promote ongoing learning and collaboration (Figure 3). A central element in this strategy is the

<sup>1</sup> A detailed list of project stakeholders involved can be checked here:

<https://greenforcetwinning.net/services/stakeholders-and-actors/>

GreenFORCE website, which will evolve into a dynamic knowledge hub. This platform will provide permanent open access to project deliverables, including research methodologies, scenarios, research results, datasets produced, mapping reports, training materials, scientific papers and policy briefs. The website will be regularly maintained by Co-PLAN and continuously enriched with new content by all project partners, including blog posts, case studies, and multimedia materials contributed by the extended GreenFORCE network.

To maintain relevance in key regional and European policy arenas, partners will actively disseminate project outcomes and methodological insights within frameworks such as the Western Balkans Green Agenda, the Berlin Process, and relevant EU strategies on sustainable development, cohesion policy, and climate adaptation. This will be achieved through strategic participation in multi-stakeholder dialogues, policy forums, and working groups, as well as through targeted contributions to policy development processes at both national and transnational levels.

The GreenFORCE consortium also foresees ongoing engagement in scientific and policy-oriented dissemination, including:

- The publication of peer-reviewed articles to the Eurpa XXI Journal (currently under second round peer review) and policy briefs to inform evidence-based decision-making;
- Participation in conferences such as of AESOP 2025 and ongoing, workshops and roundtables to ensure continued interaction with policymakers, scholars, and civil society;
- The production of editorial content (e.g., blogs, interviews, short videos) to share practical lessons and success stories emerging from the project.

Where appropriate, and particularly in the context of emerging collaborations, the formalisation of long-term cooperation will be facilitated through Memoranda of Understanding(s) (MoUs) or bilateral agreements between academic institutions, public administrations, and civil society organisations. These instruments will help institutionalise the partnerships initiated under GreenFORCE, ensuring clarity of roles, shared objectives, and mutual commitment to ongoing knowledge transfer, capacity-building, and joint action. Through these complementary actions, GreenFORCE will continue to act as a catalyst for systemic change, supporting a resilient and inclusive green transition in the Western Balkans and contributing to the broader European discourse on sustainable territorial development.



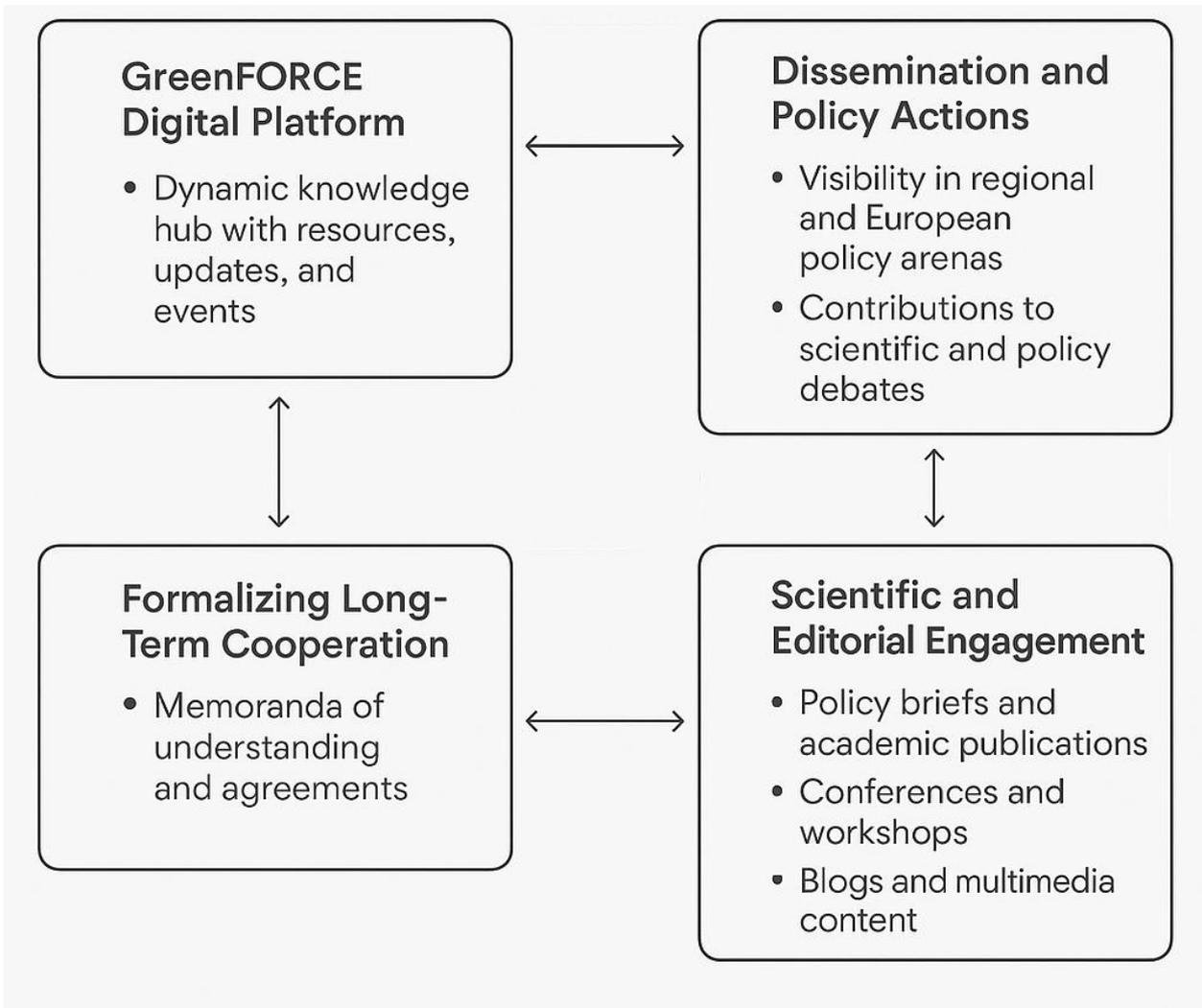


Figure 3 - Ensuring Long-Term Impact and Visibility

### Scalability and Replication

GreenFORCE’s results are designed not only to be sustainable within the original partnership framework but also to serve as scalable and replicable models that can be adapted to diverse territorial, institutional, and macro-regional contexts. One of the project’s key contributions—the Shared Research Agenda—offers a structured yet flexible roadmap that can be tailored to address the specific green transition challenges of other countries in the Western Balkans and beyond. This includes its potential integration into macro-regional strategies, such as the EU Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian Region (EUSAIR), where coordinated research, policy alignment, and territorial cooperation are crucial for addressing cross-border sustainability challenges. In parallel, the scenario-based methodology developed and tested within GreenFORCE offers a replicable framework for envisioning alternative pathways toward Just Green Transitions. Its structured yet adaptable approach allows for contextualisation in different regional settings, making it highly valuable for anticipatory governance and strategic planning. Moreover, the set of territorial research cases developed by each partner institution provides a rich comparative knowledge base that can be scaled up or transferred to other contexts. These cases, supported by a transparent and harmonised methodological framework, illustrate how place-based evidence can inform decision-making across various themes, including energy transitions, sustainable mobility, land-use planning, and social equity. By making these cases and their methodological blueprints openly accessible, GreenFORCE facilitates peer learning and horizontal exchange among research institutions, regional



authorities, and policy-makers. In this respect, the project's open-access database plays a central role in ensuring transparency, usability, and reusability of the knowledge produced. The database not only stores the project's outputs - such as case study data, policy briefs, and foresight scenarios - but also enables future users to update, expand, or replicate the analytical framework according to their local needs. It is a foundational element of the GreenFORCE knowledge ecosystem, designed to support cumulative learning and foster long-term collaboration within and beyond the Western Balkan region. Furthermore, the GreenFORCE policy brief methodology, which effectively bridges scientific evidence and policy formulation, stands out as a transferable model for other interdisciplinary initiatives, policy labs, and regional think tanks operating in the fields of environmental governance, climate adaptation, and sustainable development. This methodology combines rigorous academic input with clear policy messaging, enabling stakeholders to make informed decisions grounded in both empirical analysis and local relevance. As such, it represents a replicable tool for enhancing evidence-based policymaking and reinforcing science-policy interfaces across multiple scales. By promoting open access to its methods, tools, and outputs, GreenFORCE has laid the groundwork for a wider knowledge and innovation ecosystem dedicated to supporting the green transition in South-East Europe. The project's emphasis on co-creation, capacity-building, and multi-level governance encourages the formation of new partnerships that extend beyond the initial consortium, fostering transnational learning loops and nurturing a culture of collaborative innovation. In this way, GreenFORCE can act as a catalyst for systemic transformation, not only by delivering context-specific results but by offering a framework that can be adapted, expanded, and embedded within broader European sustainability agendas. Through strategic dissemination, replication efforts, and continuous engagement with new actors, the GreenFORCE approach can inform future programmes, inspire new policy-research interfaces, and contribute to a resilient and inclusive green transition across the South-East European region and beyond.

## Monitoring and Evaluation

To ensure that the long-term outcomes of the GreenFORCE project remain visible, relevant, and effective, a robust but straightforward monitoring framework will be implemented. This framework is designed to track the sustainability, uptake, and transformative potential of project results across institutional, scientific, and policy domains. It will rely on a mix of qualitative and quantitative indicators that reflect both the internal dynamics of the consortium and the external resonance of its outputs. Key indicators include:

- Scientific collaboration and co-creation: The number of joint publications, co-authored research proposals, and shared outputs developed by GreenFORCE partners will serve as a measure of continued intellectual synergy and cooperative momentum beyond the project's formal end.
- Policy uptake and institutional anchoring: The degree to which regional or national authorities reference, endorse, or adopt GreenFORCE's policy recommendations, tools, or methodologies will be monitored as an indicator of policy relevance and real-world impact. This may include citations in strategic documents, alignment with regional action plans, or explicit references in Green Agenda or Just Transition frameworks.
- Network resilience and partnership continuity: The persistence of collaborative ties—evidenced through joint participation in research networks, policy forums, conferences, or new project proposals—will be tracked to assess the vitality of the GreenFORCE community and its ability to evolve into a lasting ecosystem.

The implementation and oversight of this monitoring framework will be entrusted to the Sustainability Coordination Committee, operating within the TG-WEB network. The Committee will convene annually to review progress against these indicators, gather feedback from partners and stakeholders, and update the sustainability plan accordingly. This process will ensure that monitoring remains iterative, participatory, and adaptive, enabling the project to respond to emerging opportunities or challenges.

Importantly, the monitoring process is not limited to compliance or reporting; it is conceived as a learning-oriented mechanism, helping partners to reflect on what works, share good practices, and scale up effective strategies. Through this framework, GreenFORCE not only ensures accountability but also reinforces a culture of continuous improvement



and strategic foresight, which are essential for the resilience and longevity of green transition efforts in the Western Balkans and beyond.

### Anticipated Challenges and Critical Risks

While the GreenFORCE sustainability and replication strategy offers a coherent and forward-looking roadmap, its successful implementation hinges on overcoming several structural, operational, and contextual challenges. These issues must be acknowledged proactively to ensure that risks are mitigated, capacities are strengthened, and continuity mechanisms are effectively embedded.

- **Securing Continuous Funding Streams.** Despite the identification of several promising funding avenues, including Horizon Europe, Interreg, and IPA III, the availability of long-term financial support remains uncertain and highly competitive. Key post-project activities, such as updating policy briefs, delivering training programmes, and launching new joint research initiatives, will largely depend on the consortium's ability to successfully obtain follow-up grants or develop alternative funding models, including fee-based services, consulting arrangements, or institutional co-financing. Without secured resources, the risk of strategic drift and reduced capacity for action becomes significant.
- **Maintaining Institutional Commitment After Project Closure.** Sustaining multi-institutional engagement is particularly challenging once the formal EU funding cycle comes to a close. In the Western Balkans context, partner organisations may face internal constraints—including limited human resources, high staff turnover, shifting strategic priorities, and political or governance limitations—which can undermine continued involvement in the TG-WEB network or hinder the implementation of the Joint Research and Innovation Agenda. Proactively embedding commitments into institutional mandates or formalising cooperation through MoUs may help, but continuity is not guaranteed.
- **Operationalising a Light Governance Structure.** The proposed governance model—a Sustainability Coordination Committee embedded within the TG-WEB network—offers flexibility but also poses implementation risks. In its current form, the model lacks formalised roles, clear mandates, and binding mechanisms to ensure the regularity of meetings, the follow-up of decisions, and the equitable participation of all partners. There is a risk that without stronger institutional anchoring or coordination resources, the governance structure may become inactive or limited in scope over time.
- **Scaling and Contextualising Project Outputs.** While GreenFORCE outputs, such as its policy brief methodology, research agenda, and training modules, have strong replication potential, effective scaling and adaptation to new geographies or policy sectors will require additional efforts. These include context-specific revisions, capacity-building, translation, and localisation of tools, as well as targeted stakeholder engagement, none of which are currently financed or structurally planned. The assumption of linear scalability must therefore be replaced with a more nuanced understanding of transfer dynamics, contingent upon available resources, institutional readiness, and political will.

