

## Regional Network of Women in STEM in the Western Balkans

**Website:** <https://www.rcc.int/docs/556/womens-economic-empowerment-areas-for-joint-actions-in-the-western-balkans>

**Country:** Other

**Geographical focus:** Western Balkans

**Scientific field/Thematic focus:** Cross-thematic/Interdisciplinary, General

### What is the good practice about?

The "Regional Network of Women in STEM in the Western Balkans" is a joint initiative of the RCC and UNDP established in April 2021. Its main purpose is to empower and encourage high-school girls and young women to enter into both, STEM higher-education and STEM careers. The Network is about to launch the first regional women in STEM role-models campaign, plans to introduce mentorship programs etc.



### Why is this initiative needed?

A limited number of women are active in STEM fields posing an enormous underused social and economic potential. Men significantly outnumber women in the region's labour force, particularly in STEM fields as expressed in percentages. The gender pay gap in each WB economy is especially big in professions that are considered 'male' such as technology and computer science. Only between 20% and 30% of women have graduate degrees in engineering because STEM fields tend to perpetuate inflexible, exclusionary, male-dominated cultures.

The Network is a part of a RCC-UNDP joint initiative on Women Economic Empowerment (WEE) that draws on the Common Regional Market Action Plan 2021-2024.



## What are the main objectives and activities?

The Network of Women in STEM's aims at expanding limited opportunities for girls and women in educational and workplace contexts in the region. Also, it aims to assist in closing the labour and education gap. Key envisaged activities are the promotion of successful women in STEM from the WB, introducing practical pilot actions - to be scaled following lessons learned - such as mentorship and/or internship programmes, running tailor-made media outlets that empower women, bridging the gap between male-dominated industries and women.

## Who is involved?

RCC, UNDP and individuals and organisations focusing on STEM from each of the WB economies.

## Can this good practice be replicated?

This is a regional initiative with a high potential to scale. The necessary resources amount between hundreds of thousands to several millions of euros, including dedicated human resources, to scale throughout the region.

## Further links:

- ⇒ <https://www.rcc.int/docs/556/womens-economic-empowerment-areas-for-joint-actions-in-the-western-balkans>
- ⇒ <http://www.rcc.int/>
- ⇒ <https://balkaninnovation.com/>

**Relevant RRI keys:** Gender Equality in Research and Innovation (R&I), Science Education

**Type of practice:** Promotional activities/events/campaigns, Websites serving as platforms for services to clients, Relations with media, Lobbying/advocacy/representation, Organisation of conferences, panels, round-tables, Organisation of matchmaking and networking (tools, events, other support), Peer learning/mentoring

**Target groups:** innovators in the business sector, youth (children, pupils), students, in particular female researchers

