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ABSTRACT

Environmental issues in the Western Balkans are at the crossroads of civic mobilization processes against the negative effects of various types of pollution and the process of integration into the European Union. In addition, during the post-socialist period a dependent capitalism has emerged in Western Balkans countries, particularly as a result of increased dependence on foreign investments and international aid. In this context, the article analyses the economic development and consequences of dependent capitalism on the environment. It analyses also how process of European integration impact on environmental issues as well as the role of local actors and how they are reflected in public policies. The significant increase in civil society actors acting in the field of environment has created a new situation in recent years. In this sense, the article questions the concept of environmental democracy in the Western Balkans.

Environmental democracy in the Western Balkans between dependent capitalism and integration into the European Union

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Since the 1990s, following pressure from environmental movements, the question of the consequences of competitiveness on the environment has led to economic studies that take environmental issues into account. Among these, the “Michael Porter hypothesis” places the environment at the service of productivity and competitiveness². Here, regulations and standards are central because they push companies to transform their production methods and would have beneficial effects on the environment. Michael Porter’s hypothesis is thus based on performance and profits from changes in production methods. Even if according to this assumption the winners are on both sides, environment, and companies, in the end, there are all the same “winners and losers”. In the case of Western Balkans countries, the introduction of European regulations and standards has been topical in recent years. During this period, the priority is placed on rapid privatizations, the closure of many unprofitable companies as well as banks. The relationship between savings and productive investment disappears completely. During the last two decades, the focus was on FDI (Foreign Direct Investment,) which does not arrive at the expected level. Thus, privatizations were mainly for the benefit of people enriched during the previous period and regimes of 90s. However, during the last decade, Chinese investments as well as Gulf countries, Turkey and the arrival of some multinational companies from different countries have changed the situation. A dependent capitalism has emerged in the Western Balkans particularly as a result of increased dependence on foreign investment. Despite a period of slowdown in foreign direct investment in the Western Balkans during the period of the Covid 19 pandemic, the gradual exit from the pandemic has seen a significant increase in Foreign direct investment, in particular towards Serbia which recorded in 2022 an increase of 27.9% compared to the year 2021. China invests in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina in old technology in the energy sector that pollutes the environment. While, for example, coal provides cheap energy, buildings are outdated and pollute the environment. Moreover, the lithium mining projects in Serbia by the Anglo-Australian multinational company Rio Tinto have been followed by actions of local NGOs against these projects and have seen the emergence of environmental conflicts which have led to changes of position of local governments. So, environmental issues in the Western Balkans have become topical over the past decade. and more particularly in recent years with a significant increase in the number of NGOs active in this sector. The process of integration into the European Union has also made it possible to highlight environmental issues through reforms in connection with the negotiations of the chapters of the Community acquis and the announcement of the Green Deal for the Balkans.

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2 BOIRAL Olivier, « Concilier environnement et compétitivité, ou la quête de l'éco-efficience », *Revue française de gestion* 2005 / 5 (n°158), pp. 163-186.

In this context, environmental issues are at the crossroads of civic mobilization processes against the negative effects of various types of pollution and the process of integration into the European Union. Is it therefore possible to speak of an « environmental democracy » in the Western Balkans ? What are the consequences of dependent capitalism on the environment in the Western Balkans ? How does the process of European integration affect the consideration of environmental issues in public policies in the Western Balkans ?

The concept of « ecological - environmental democracy »¹ has been developed during the last three decades with an extensive literature². The environmental democracy index is based on several composite indicators with clear distinction between three pillars: a) free access information on environmental problems and quality, b) participation in decision-making and c) enforcement of environmental laws. These indicators can be considered as fundamental rights of citizens. They are also based on possible impacts of citizens on decision-making processes and on public policies. Contribution of civil society organization to the Green Agenda in the Western Balkans as part of the EU accession process has been highlighted by the EU and embedded in several declaration³. The relation between environment and economic development is more complex. Despite some research that are part of regulationist thought, according to Sandrine Rousseau and Bertrand Zuideau « it is clear that they are too few and insufficiently coordinated to form a true regulationist theory of the environment. In fact, the integration of the environment into the regulationist corpus remains an exercise that is still largely unfinished. In this sense the contribution of Louison Cahen-Fourot and Nelo Magalhaës is interesting because these authors introduce the «socio-metabolic dimension »⁴.The concept of “metabolism” makes it possible to study the “physical units of energy and matter that enter and leave (waste, emissions, etc.) from an economic system »⁵. In the case of Western Balkans countries, the model of neo-liberal capitalism of the last twenty years is based on a « socio- metabolic regime » which is characterized by an intensive use of resources and materials at the national level with a strong negative influence on the environment,

1 BABERAND F. Walter, BARTLETT V. Robert. « Deliberative Environmental Politics - Democracy & Ecological Rationality ». Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 2005, 276 pp

2 PICKERING Jonathan, BACKSTRAND Karin, SHLOSBERG David, Between environmental end ecological democracy : theory and practice at the democracy-environment nexus, Journal and Environmental Policy and Planning, vol. 22, 2020, Issue 1. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/1523908X.2020.1703276>

3 <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/contribution-civil-society-green-agenda-and-sustainable-development-western-balkans-part-eu-accession-process-own/related-links-rex-528>

4 CAHEN-FOUROT Louison, MAGALHAES Nelo, « Matter and regulation: socio-metabolic and accumulation regimes of French capitalismsince 1948 », <https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-02554906/document>.

5 CAHEN-FOUROT Louison, MAGALHAES Nelo analyzes over a long time the periodization in socio- metabolic regimes (agrarian, industrial, etc.) from the case of France as well as the biophysical dimensions of economic activities as well as their ecological compatibilities. (Presentation at the Regulation Seminar on 12.01.2021)

with a significant impact of industrial pollution on public health. power, limited energy efficiency, high rates of energy poverty despite generally high levels of subsidies, limited market mechanisms and private sector participation. The energy sector in the Western Balkans is still characterized by insufficient and obsolete infrastructure, high dependence on fossil fuels, late adoption of renewables except for residential biomass and hydropower, limited energy efficiency, high rates of energy poverty despite generally high levels of subsidies, limited market mechanisms and private sector participation.

Socio-economic development and environment in former Yugoslavia

After the Second World War and mainly after 1948, Yugoslavia embarked on a model of socialism different from other Eastern European countries characterized by self-management and the establishment of a « socialist market economy ». This had multiple advantages since it made it possible to create competition, develop production and integrate the national economy into the world economy. Two antagonistic tendencies that must be reconciled are therefore present at the political and economic level. One aims to strengthen decentralization at the level of companies and municipalities, the other, predominant, aims to strongly maintain the centralization of power through the League of Communists, a single party. At the same time, Yugoslavia experienced a process of reconstruction with “brigades and work actions” in which the Communist Youth League took part from 1946 until the 1970s by organizing a massive mobilization of youth. Moreover, the accelerated industrialization of the country based on the steel industry, the exploitation of mines and the creation of very large national companies has harmful consequences on pollution problems¹.

The economist Branko Horvat proposes a chronological breakdown of Yugoslav economic development by periods as presented in the table above for the period from 1945 to 1988 (phase A). From the beginning of 1990, macro-economic stabilization and the transition to a market economy began, as in the other countries of Eastern Europe. Then from 1991, Serbia, like the other countries resulting from the federation, entered a post-Yugoslavian period (phase B). The phase after 1945 is that of post-war reconstruction. During this first period, GDP growth per capita was 40% between 1945 and 1951. The reconstruction process will span several decades. In this context, after 1951, we witness the introduction and development of self-management². The period of the 1960s was marked by radical liberalization measures which were introduced in 1961 and 1965, mainly « in the direction of increasing the autonomy of companies»³.

1 VUKADINOVIC Nebojsa, « Géoculture de l'environnement en Serbie » (The Geo-Culture of the Environment in Serbia), *Balkanologie*, Vol16, n°2, 2021, <https://journals.openedition.org/balkanologie/3618>

2 SAMARY Catherine, *Le marché contre l'autogestion, l'expérience yougoslave*, Editions La Brèche Publisud, 1988, 331 p.

3 BILANDŽIĆ Dušan, *Certains aspects du système yougoslave d'autogestion*, Belgrade, *Međunarodnapolitika*, 1968, 63 p.

Indeed, the reforms¹ of the organization of the self-management system provided that decisions on investments should be taken at the level of AWOs (Associated Work Organizations) to reduce their dependence on banks and thereby avoid their indebtedness. But in 1968, investments were mostly still financed by banks. In addition, wages kept rising, causing inflationary pressures. In 1967, takeovers and mergers of companies are authorized in the self-managed sector of the organization of the self-management system provided that decisions on investments should be taken at the level of AWOs to reduce their dependence on banks and thereby avoid their indebtedness. But in 1968, investments were mostly still financed by banks. In addition, wages kept rising, causing inflationary pressures. In 1967, takeovers and mergers of companies are authorized in the self-managed sector². This will result in a tendency towards the emergence of monopolies. In addition, foreign direct investment (less than 50%) is authorized from 1968, as well as the creation of small private companies, mainly in tourism and trade. The period of the sixties is still marked by a growth in GDP per capita which will last until 1979 « reaching an increase by 5 between 1951 and 1979 »³. Throughout this period, the self-management model works but dysfunctions appear. According to Wladimir Andreff, the self-management system generates « two specific dysfunctions, and not the least embarrassing, which ultimately condemn it in terms of economic efficiency : it systematically creates unemployment and inflation »⁴. Some economists, such as Branko Horvat⁵ or Aleksander Bajt were aware in the 1970s of the interaction between self-management, unemployment, and inflation. The vicious circle that had set in can be described as follows: the income of companies being distributed among those who work there, a new « recruitment is only collectively advantageous if its productivity at work is clearly higher than the collective average productivity »⁶. As companies have a monopoly on their market, they will act on prices. This situation pushes on the one hand the companies to recruit little and on the other hand to increase the prices to increase their receipts and thus their incomes. The period of « polycentric statism or the contractual economy » characteristic of the 1970s and 1980s was marked by the development of contractual relations between self-managed structures in companies.

1 CARIĆ Slavko, STANOJEVIĆ Obrad, Privredno i radno pravo. Pravni položaj privrednih organizacija, (Le droit économique et le droit du travail. Le droit des organisations économiques), Novi Sad, Visoka škola za organizaciju rada, 1968, 201 p

2 BAKARIĆ Vladimir, Aktuelni problemi sadašnje etape revolucije, (Les problèmes actuels de l'étape de la révolution), Zagreb, Stvarnost, 1967, 366 p.

3 Op.cit. https://yuhistorija.com/serbian/ekonomija_txt01.html

4 ANDREFF Wladimir, La crise des économies socialistes, la rupture d'un système, Grenoble, Presses Universitaires de Grenoble, 1993, p. 183.

5 HORVAT Branko, Lutanja jugoslovenske privrede, (Wanderings of the Yugoslav economy), Ekonomskopregled, Zagreb, 1993, p. 550-565.

6 ANDREFF Wladimir, La crise des économies socialistes, la rupture d'un système, Grenoble, Presses Universitaires de Grenoble, 1993, page 183.

Table 1 : Economic development and impact on environment in former Yugoslavia (SFRY - Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia)¹ (1945-1990) and after the transition from communism to capitalism (1990-2021) / desintegration of former Yugoslavia.

Phase		Economic periods	Dates	Impact on environment (1)
A	a	<i>Controlled economy</i>	1945-1951	XX
	b	<i>Self-management period</i>	1952-1964	XXX
	c	<i>Economic liberalization and political democratization</i>	1965-1971	XXX

	d	<i>Contractual economy</i>	1972-1987	XXX
	e	<i>Nationalism</i>	1988-... ¹⁸	XXX
B	f	Macroeconomic stabilization and « blocked transition » ¹⁹	1990-2001	X
	g	Macroeconomic stabilization, structural reforms and economic international integration	2001-2012	XXX
	h	Macroeconomic stabilization, structural reforms and EU integration	2012-2023	XXX

Phase A : SFRY (Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia)

Phase B : After the disintegration of Yugoslavia (SFRY)

a-e : periods of economic development in Yugoslavia (SFRY)

f-h : periods of economic development during the transition from communism to capitalism and the disintegration of former Yugoslavia (SFRY)

(1) Impact on environment : X Low impact ; XX Medium impact ; XXX High impact

1 République socialiste fédérative de Yougoslavie

2 HORVAT Branko, « Lutanja jugoslovenske privrede », in Ekonomski pregled, Zagreb, 1993, pp. 550-565.

3 MOROKVASIC Mirjana, VUKADINOVIC Nebojsa (dir.) « Sortir de la transition bloquée: Serbie- Monténégro », Revue d'études comparatives Est-Ouest, vol. 35, 2004, Voir https://www.persee.fr/issue/receo_0338-0599_2004_num_35_

The “economic institutional relations between the republics, the Federation and the municipalities”¹ from 1945 to 1990 could work because the League of Communists made it possible to maintain cohesion, political centralization in a largely decentralized system, but they had negative consequences on the environment². Indeed, despite the establishment of self-management, there was an intensive use of natural resources. As in Western European countries, coal was widely used during the decade of the 1950s. But unlike some Western European countries which reduced coal production by choosing nuclear power in the 1970s, Yugoslavia remain on a line of exploitation of traditional energy resources with harmful consequences on the environment. A lot of laws have been adopted in the period of 60s-80s. All these laws have been proscribed in 1991 and each new country from former Yugoslavia has adopted separate new legislation.

After the death of Josip Broz Tito in 1980, and especially at the end of the 1980s, Yugoslavia found itself faced with several economic problems: hyperinflation, increasing foreign debt and shortages. However, despite the positive effects of the macroeconomic stabilization program implemented on January 1st, 1990, as in most Eastern European countries for the transition from communism to capitalism, the rise of nationalism will destroy the reforms in progress. In this context, to Branko Horvat’s classification, it is necessary to add other periods to understand the evolution of economic development in the former and post- Yugoslav space after the disintegration of Yugoslavia until today (from 1990 to 2021). During this period, the beginning of 1990 marked the beginning of the «transition» reforms with the implementation of macro-economic stabilization (Marković plan), following the example of what is happening in Poland (plan Balcerowicz) under the impetus of the IMF and the Washington Consensus. The wars of 1991 to 1999 have deeply marked all the countries resulting from the Yugoslav federation, The fall in production of the 90s was so strong that it is still felt today. The production levels of 1989 are still not reached more than thirty years later. This sudden fall in production will however make it possible to attenuate, or even reduce the negative effects on the environment until 1996. However, the situation is more contrasted when we look more closely since the production of lignite has not not decreased, but considerably increased over the last twenty years with negative repercussions on air quality.

The experience of reintegration of Western Balkans countries in the global economy after the period of conflicts and the process of enlargement of the EU since de beginning of 2000s, shows that the enlargement process has a positive impact on the flow of Foreign Direct Investments. All East European countries have registered in that period a significant increase of FDI. Nowadays the situation is similar in the Western Balkan countries. In 2019 before the COVID 19 pandemic, the Western Balkans countries saw an increasing in foreign direct investment. This contrasted with the trends of declining FDI both globally and in the wider Central, Southeast and Eastern Europe (CESEE) region. Western Balkan countries have been gradually converging to the European Union.

1 DUROVSKI Lazar, *The Commune and the communal system of Jugoslavia, 1941-1978*, Skopje, Institutza sociološka i političko-pravna istraživanja, 1981,658 p.

2 PETRIĆ Hrvoje, ZEBEC SILJ Ivana, *Environmentalism in Central and Southeastern Europe: Historical perspectives*, Editions Lexington Books, 2017, 304 p.

However, due to different reasons, including transitional issues, macroeconomic factors as well as internal and external shocks, the real convergence of the Western Balkans region to the EU average is relatively slow. However, macro-economic stabilization programs in place for many years, have produced conditions for the development of the private sector and attraction of FDI. Nominal convergence usually provides a stable macroeconomic environment as a favorable floor for real convergence. In this context, EU enlargement has provided a positive framework for the macro-economic stability. Despite of improvements in relation to previous years, positive trends in FDI flows, economic stability, estimated growth rates and economic benefits of EU accession at the country level and good macro-economic indicators, the region continues to suffer from chronic problems, such as continued high levels of unemployment, resistance in implementation of reforms, lack of regional economic plans and lack of internal investments policies.

Dependent Capitalism in the Western Balkans and Environmental issues

The period of macro-economic stabilization and the « blocked transition » in the economic and political sphere has profoundly modified the social stratification with a minority of winners and a mass of losers. This period is also characterized by a loss of values and a profound change in beliefs. In this context of crisis and then conflict, the informal economy and trafficking have become the rule. Finally, inequalities have increased, the Yugoslav middle class has practically disappeared, and a privileged category has benefited from the largesse of the regime, or has taken advantage of the embargo against Serbia. On the contrary, retirees are in an extremely precarious social situation. Moreover, as Catherine Samary points out, one of the characteristics of the transition in Serbia is its « radicalization in the direction of liberalism since the end of the 1990s »¹. Since more than two decades, economic reforms have been introduced in rapid waves and slowdowns, which is characteristic of a shock therapy transition followed by a « stop and go » period. The priority is placed on rapid privatizations, the closure of many unprofitable companies as well as banks. The relationship between savings and productive investment in the financial systems disappears completely. The focus is on FDI which has not arrived at the expected level has contributed that the privatizations has mainly benefit to people enriched during the previous period of the 90s.

Since the Second World War and up to the present day, changes in production and consumption patterns have had an impact on the environment² in Western Balkans and evolves according to the phases of economic development. Insofar as a “social market economy” was in place, production followed logics of competition. The influences of agricultural production were also felt on air quality, ecosystems and waste.

1 SAMARY Catherine, « Réinsérer la Serbie dans l'analyse de la transition, rapports de propriété, Etat et salariat » in MOROKVASIC Mirjana, VUKADINOVIC Nebojsa (dir.) «Sortir de la transition bloquée : Serbie- Monténégro », Revue d'études comparatives Est-Ouest, vol. 35, 2004, pp. 117-156.

2 OSTRIC Zoran, « Ekološki pokreti u Jugoslaviji – građa za proučavanje razdoblja 1971-1991, Socijalna ekologija, n°1 (January-March) 1992, pp.27-30

Energy consumption and production also had a negative influence on air quality and gas emissions. In addition, individual and collective mobility, and the development of transport during the period from 1952 to 1990 had a negative influence on air quality and gas emissions. During this period, the self-management system in which there was a logic of competition relied on an intensive use of labor with productivity gains. This had negative influences on the environment. From the 1990s to the present day, rail transport has been reduced considerably because of wars and lack of investment. Thus, road transport has become the main mode of transport between cities, thus contributing to air pollution.

Since the beginning of 2000, a neo-liberal economic model has been put in place in all Western Balkans countries which became a constant in the formation of capitalism¹ in the region. For more than two decades, economic reforms have been carried out without any real reflection on the logic of the sequences of reforms to be implemented or on their consequences. For example, privatizations have been carried out rapidly between 2001 and today, sometimes without corporate restructuring. Moreover, financial system reforms have been slower than privatizations. In this context, there have been in many cases privatizations for the benefit of the old political and economic elites from the 90s.

The energy sector and consequences on environment: heritage and perspectives

The energy sector in the Western Balkans is still characterized by insufficient and obsolete infrastructure, high dependence on fossil fuels², late adoption of renewables except for residential biomass and hydropower, limited energy efficiency, high rates of energy poverty despite generally high levels of subsidies, limited market mechanisms and private sector participation. Environmental problems are linked to the dilapidated energy systems and the dependence on traditional energy sources (mainly coal). The high air pollution in some area and the water pollution are in relation to the energy heritage from the former Yugoslavia socialist period. Air pollution, particularly in urban and industrial zones, notably stemming from outdated coal-fired power plants is also a major cross-border issue in the region. Also, drinking water supply and discharge of wastewater are additional key concerns in the Western Balkan. At the same time, the region is rich in biodiversity which needs to be protected, while sustainable managing of water supply, wastewater and waste disposal is crucial. In addition, poor waste management is linked to low investments in this sector and low municipalizes incomes.

1 AMABLE Bruno, *Les cinq capitalismes. Diversité des systèmes économiques et sociaux dans la mondialisation*, Paris, Editions du Seuil, 2005, 378 p.

2 See <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/201391544823541838/pdf/Western-Balkans-Energy-Directions-Paper.pdf>

In the recent period, Chinese investments in mines in Serbia and in the steel, mill have resulted in environmental degradation. In addition, the mini hydropower plants in Serbia and Bosnia-and-Herzegovina have caused significant damages. The use of lignite also aggravates the pollution situation. Added to this are the investment projects of the multinational companies, such as Rio Tinto in Serbia which have provoked disputes and environmental conflicts. The Western Balkan region is therefore facing a unique double transition: moving from centralized state-controlled systems to open and competitive markets, and moving towards decarbonization. These are at the same time the most important Pillars of the Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans that are in line with the Green Agenda¹. During the past decade there has been an awareness concerning environmental questions in Western Balkans. The number of NGO dealing with environmental issues has increased significantly in recent years. Therefore, the debates on energy and the question of increasing investment in renewable energies and the manner how such investments are to be made are relatively present. In this context, local governments have adopted National Energy Strategies that have the main goal of providing a secure energy supply and promoting compatible energy reforms in accordance with the Energy Community Treaty (ECT)². In addition, a regional approach in planning the energy sector investments is expected to decrease the overall investments needed to meet regional energy demand through increased energy trade. The transition from highly polluting coal to more sustainable and green sources of energy production is a key point for the region to meet its commitments under the Paris Agreement. The EU is therefore presenting a « Green Agenda for the Balkans »³, as foreseen in the European Green Deal. This Agenda is formed by five broad areas covered by the “Green Deal”: decarbonization, depollution of air, water and soil, circular economy, farming and food production, and protecting biodiversity. The war in Ukraine since 2022 has also highlighted the energy question in the Western Balkans and the question of dependence on Russia. Concerning the vulnerability to climate change, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) identified the Western Balkans as one of the most vulnerable areas to climate change in Europe⁴.

1 See https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_1811

2 <http://www.energycommunity.org>

3 See https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2020-10/green_agenda_for_the_western_balkans_en.pdf

4 <https://www.iucn.org/news/eastern-europe-and-central-asia/202008/water-our-ally-adapting-climate-change-western-balkans>

Environmental democracy and Integration of Western Balkans into the European Union.

During the period 1960-1991 the Legal framework and public policies related to environment followed the evolution of the Yugoslav socialism. The environmental activism of the « Gorani movement »¹ was organized as a youth organization similar as the organization of the youth socialist organization. The ideological dimension was therefore present in the law and youth organizations. Since 1991 and until nowadays, many legislations have been adopted in all post-Yugoslav countries with a lack of participation of NGO and the academic sector in the preparation, the definition and implementation of the legislative framework in all Western Balkans countries. Only in recent years with an important development of the NGO sector dealing with environmental issues the situation started to change. In addition, environmental conflicts in recent years as local levels mainly focused on small hydroelectric plants the relation between environmental damages and corruption has been highlighted by local NGO. The Rio Tinto project for lythium exploration in Serbia revealed « pressures on government »² and was the occasion of important manifestations against the project in autumn and winter 2021. Faced with mass demonstrations the government decided to back down with this project. Following the three pillars approach of environmental democracy, this event demonstrated that the environmental activism has let to changes in governmental position through information, participation and enforcement. Environmental democracy is also reflected in the Public Policy Cycle, namely in Agenda setting, Policy formulation, Decision-making, Implementation and Evaluation. The role of civil society organization in the environmental sector has been taken into account in programming, implementation and evaluation of EU pre-accession IPA funds and currently IPA III framework (2021-2027)³ with impacts on the Public Policy Cycle in all Western Balkans countries.

The COVID-19 pandemics in 2020 – 2022 brought massive disruptive effects on the Western Balkan countries in terms of economic convergence with the EU, facing the ongoing challenges of low competitiveness, high unemployment, and a significant brain drain. The need to intensify joint efforts by implementing structural reforms, overcoming structural weaknesses, strengthening innovation potential, and accelerating the green and digital transition – also in view of their future in the EU – is more pressing. Therefore, in October 2020, the European Commission adopted a comprehensive Economic and Investment Plan (EIP) for the Western Balkans⁴ which aims to spur the long-term recovery

1 VUKADINOVIC Nebojsa, « Géoculture de l'environnement en Serbie » (The Geo-Culture of the Environment in Serbia), *Balkanologie*, Vol16, n°2, 2021, <https://journals.openedition.org/balkanologie/3618>

2 Dragojlo Sasa, Mladenovic Ivica, « Serbia's lithium is Rio Tinto's perfect project », *Le Monde diplomatique*, November 2022, <https://mondediplo.com/2022/11/10serbia>.

3 Concerning IPA III Framework Window 3 (Green Agenda and Sustainable connectivity) https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-01/C_2021_8914_F1_ANNEX_EN_V5_P1_1462290.PDF, pp.36-44.

4 <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/default/files/economic-and-investment-plan-brochure.pdf>

- backed by a green and digital transition - leading to sustained economic growth, implementation of reforms required to move forward on the EU path and bringing the Western Balkans closer to the EU Single Market. Alongside the Economic Investment Plan to support the region, the European Commission presented guidelines for the implementation of the Green Agenda in the Western Balkans, adopted at the Western Balkans Summit in Sofia in November 2020 that aims at mirroring the EU Green Deal and presents tailored solutions for bringing the region one step closer to climate neutrality by 2050.

Indeed, it foresees activities related to climate (including decarbonization, energy, and mobility), circular economy (including waste, recycling, sustainable production, and resource efficiency), biodiversity (aiming to protect and restore the region's natural assets), combating air, water and soil pollution and sustainable food systems and rural areas. Digitalization will be the key to achieving the above five pillars, in line with the concept of the dual green and digital transition. This should help make the region more attractive for investment and tourism and unlock the significant economic potential of a green economy. The success of the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans depends on the commitment of all actors: the EU, international financial institutions, bilateral donors, international organizations, and beneficiaries. Considerable efforts are needed from all partners to coordinate activities, plan and implement this agenda in a way that enhances the complementarity and synergies of all actions implemented so far by each beneficiary. The Green agenda for Western Balkans sets strategic objectives towards a clean transport that is a fit for a green and digital future, with sustainable mobility and a greening infrastructure as essential elements¹. In Serbia, the Ministry in charge of energy has started preparing the new Energy Development Strategy covering the period until 2050 but has also presented the preliminary goals for the National Energy and Climate plans (NECP). In addition, a Strategic environmental impact assessment procedure in EU and Western Balkans countries for the Interreg IPA Cross-border Cooperation (CBC) has been initiated in 2021 for the period 2021-2027. Environmental issues are also present in the EU Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian Region (EUSAIR)², more specifically under Pillar 3 and within the Danube Strategy (EUSDR)³. These two macro-regional Strategies provides a good opportunity for regional cooperation between Western Balkans countries and between EU Member States and Western Balkans countries. Inter pillar projects have been developed within EUSAIR to promote common projects in Environment and Transport but more synergies between the two macro-regional Strategies could be developed.

The process of European integration impact also on environmental issues in Western Balkans through European projects and negotiation of the Acquis Communautaire. It is also a leverage on definition of public policies and local governments. In this sense, the process of European integration participates to the environmental democracy. However, without a clear calendar for EU integration of Western Balkans countries, economic dependance from non-EU international actors can continue with reinforcement of the dependent capitalism with its negative effects on environment.

1 Strategy for Sustainable and Smart Mobility in the Western Balkans, July 2021

2 <https://www.aii-ps.org/eusair>

3 <https://danube-region.eu/about/>

Policy recommendations :

- To support active consultation and participation of civil society organization in preparation and monitoring implementation of Plans and Strategies in all sectors, including Energy, Environment and Transport in all Western Balkans countries and to organize exchange of experiences between countries in these tasks.
- To strengthen the role of research and academic institutions in the decision-making process for elaboration and implementation of public policies in the environment sector in all Western Balkans countries and to promote academic and research regional cooperation.
- To reinforce synergies between the two macro-regional Strategies (EUSAIR and EUSDR) in the area of environment and to strengthen regional Cross border cooperation (CBC) in environment through IPA CBC programs and projects and other international donors.

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BABERAND F. Walter, BARTLETT V. Robert. « Deliberative Environmental Politics - Democracy & Ecological Rationality ». Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 2005, 276 pp

BILANDŽIĆ Dušan, *Certains aspects du système yougoslave d'autogestion*, Belgrade, Medjunarodna politika, 1968, 63 p.

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