

2023 GREEN CHAMPIONS OF THE WESTERN BALKANS

Recognition Award

What is it about?

We are delighted to announce the commencement of the nomination process for the **2023 Green CHAMPIONS of the Western Balkans!**

Launched in the framework of the [Green Agenda for the Western Balkans Action Plan 2021-2030](#) and Tirana Conclusions of the Local Self-Governments Forum 2023, this esteemed recognition celebrates cities/municipalities that demonstrate outstanding commitment and innovative approaches to environmental sustainability, urban greenery, green growth and eco-conscious initiatives.

As we embark on this journey to identify the most deserving city/municipality that stands out in the implementation of the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans, we invite you to nominate candidates that exemplify dedication to environmental protection, preservation of natural resources, and the promotion of sustainable living practices.

Whether through green infrastructure projects, community engagement initiatives, or policies fostering ecological resilience, we seek cities/municipalities that serve as beacons of inspiration for a greener, more sustainable future.

Nominate a city/municipality that stands out for its:

1. Decarbonisation efforts: Sustainable urban planning and infrastructure, carbon footprint reduction, renewable energy integration, and energy efficiency initiatives;
2. Promotion of eco-friendly transportation and mobility solutions;
3. Efforts in fostering community engagement and environmental awareness on circular economy;
4. Innovation and creativity in addressing environmental challenges- depollution;
5. Promoting sustainable agriculture practices;
6. Commitment to environmental conservation and protection.

Your nominations will play a crucial role in recognizing and honoring the remarkable achievements of cities/municipalities across the Western Balkans region. Let us come together to celebrate, innovate, eco-vate and elevate the transformative power of sustainable practices in building healthier, more resilient communities.

Who can nominate:

Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South East Europe (NALAS) and the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) invite National Local Government Associations (LGAs), Local

Government Units (LGUs) individuals, representatives of public and private institutions, civil society organisations, and regional and international partner organisations from the Western Balkans to nominate 2023 Green Champions of the Western Balkans in the categories presented in the next section.

Just Click on the LINK and fill out the form.

The nominations are open until 31 March 2024.

Who is eligible?

Cities and municipalities of the Western Balkans region (from Albania, Bosnia and Hercegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia) with an outstanding practice implemented in 2023.

Categories

NALAS and RCC welcome nominations for 2023 Green Champions of the Western Balkans in the following categories.

1. Decarbonisation:

(practice/examples, including but not limited to: green transition at the local level, integration of climate adaptation into urban planning and infrastructure development, increasing the share of renewable energy sources, preparation of long-term building renovation strategies to support the transition to highly energy-efficient and decarbonized buildings in line with EC Renovation Wave initiative.)

2. Sustainable Transport

(Initiatives including, but not limited to: greening and digitalisation of mobility and the public transport sector at the local level, promotion of eco-friendly transportation and alternative mobility solutions, development of pedestrian-friendly and cyclist-friendly infrastructure, implementation of policies to reduce traffic congestion and emissions from vehicles etc;)

3. Fostering community engagement and awareness on circular economy/environment

(Initiatives in the area of promotion of recycling and waste reduction programs; implementation of circular economy principles in local industries and businesses; strategies to minimize resource consumption and promote sustainable consumption patterns, efforts in fostering community engagement and cooperation in this endeavor)

4. Innovation and creativity in addressing environmental challenges - depollution

(Tangible efforts in combating air, water, and soil pollution within the territory, achieved through the implementation of effective policies, investments in air quality plans, wastewater management, and initiatives addressing land degradation, among others)

5. Sustainable Agriculture Practices

(Initiatives in promoting sustainable practices within the agricultural and rural development sector, including the adoption of green farming techniques and sustainable tourism practices, such as the agricultural tourism and farms)

6. Commitment to environmental conservation and protection and Biodiversity

(initiatives on the preservation of natural habitats and green spaces within the city/municipality; protection of endangered species and ecosystems, initiatives to restore and enhance biodiversity through reforestation and conservation efforts, nature-based solutions on climate change adaptation measures, disaster risk reduction, green corridors)

NALAS and RCC will select 6 (six) Green Cities/Municipalities, one from each - Albania, Bosnia and Hercegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia - that are fulfilling the characteristics of the abovementioned categories*

Note: NALAS and RCC Secretariats shall use above data in line with the Law on Data Protection of Bosnia and Hercegovina, North Macedonia and internal rules and regulations. All information is considered confidential and shall be used only for the purposes of this activity.

Selection Process:

First phase: Call for Nominations

The call for nominations will be open until 31 March 2024.

The call for nominations is open until 31 March 2024 . Eligible nominators include National Local Government Associations (LGAs), Local Government Units (LGUs), individuals, representatives of public and private institutions, civil society organizations, and regional and international partner organizations from the Western Balkans region.

To participate, interested parties can visit the following [LINK](#) to access the online nomination form.

Nominees are encouraged to complete the form thoroughly, providing detailed information about their city/municipality's initiatives and achievements in the specified categories, focusing exclusively on practices implemented during the year 2023.

The form should include evidence of decarbonization efforts, promotion of eco-friendly transportation, fostering community engagement, innovation in addressing environmental challenges, sustainable agriculture practices, and commitment to environmental conservation and biodiversity—all implemented within the year 2023.

All nominations must be submitted before the deadline on 31 March 2024, to be considered for evaluation by the evaluation panel. This phase serves as an opportunity for stakeholders across the Western Balkans region to recognize and honor cities/municipalities that have demonstrated exemplary commitment to environmental sustainability and green initiatives throughout 2023.

Second phase: Administrative eligibility screening

NALAS Secretariat staff will conduct an administrative eligibility screening to confirm the following:

- The practice is implemented by a city or municipality
- The practice is implemented in 2023
- The practice fits into one of the six described thematic categories.

All eligible applications will be sent for evaluation by the evaluation panel.

Third phase: The evaluation panel

NALAS and RCC will establish an evaluation panel to select the winners based on the data collected through the digital application form. The panel will be composed of three members, representatives of NALAS, DG Near and RCC.

During this phase, the evaluation panel will evaluate and decide based on the fulfilment of the criteria as presented in the suggested categories, through evaluation of the impact of the best practice, the innovative aspects of the practice, sustainability, as well as the scaling-up potential.

Please note that:

- the evaluation panel has the right to move an application to a different category if they feel it is more appropriate;
- the evaluation panel reserves the right to select one Green City of the WB from each, Albania, Bosnia and Hercegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia, that fits in one of the six defined categories;
- the decision of the evaluation panel is final.

Fourth phase: Final Event

The winners will be informed in due time and asked to provide a video pitch, photographs, and/or brief profiles outlining their green initiatives, projects, or experiences.

The recipients of the Recognition Awards will be honoured at the Final Event during the Second LSG Forum on April 19, 2024, in Bar, Montenegro. This event provides an invaluable platform for winners to engage in a panel discussion regarding the implementation of the GAWB AP, displaying their innovative and environmentally sustainable solutions.

Benefits for the participating Cities/Municipalities

- Receive publicity regionally and beyond through RCC and NALAS channels;
- Be invited to various RCC and NALAS events to showcase their success stories;
- Access to capacity building and trainings that will be offered through the NALAS Covenant of Mayors in Energy and Climate SEE office;
- Enhanced Tourism and Investment Appeal: Being recognized as a green champion can enhance the attractiveness of cities/municipalities for tourists seeking eco-friendly destinations and investors interested in sustainable development projects;

- **International Collaboration Opportunities:** Being recognized as a Green Champion can open doors for international collaboration and partnerships with other cities, institutions, and organizations committed to advancing sustainability goals globally;
- **Citizen Engagement and Pride:** Winning the award can foster a sense of pride and engagement among citizens, encouraging them to actively participate in ongoing environmental initiatives and contribute to the city's sustainability efforts;