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Diaspora4Innovation Conference

10–11 September 2026 | Pyramid – Innovation Hubitat, Tirana, Albania

DAY 1 | THURSDAY, 10 SEPTEMBER 2026

09:00–09:30 | Registration & Welcome Coffee

09:30–10:00 | Results Gallery Opening
An interactive exhibition showcasing key Diaspora4Innovation results, partnerships and experiences across education, research and mentoring.

10:00–10:15 | Opening Remarks

- **Lirim Krasniqi,** Co-Executive Director, GERMIN
- **Jule Petra Schultz**, Country Director, GIZ Albania
- **Jenni Lundmark,** EU Programme Manager, EU Delegation to Albania
- **Delina Ibrahimaj,** Minister of Economy and Innovation of Albania (TBC)

10:15–10:45 | Diaspora4Innovation: Results & Reflections

- ***Project Results and Impact***
  - **Egzon Sadiku,** Project Manager, GERMIN
- ***Scholar Reflections***
  - **Assoc. Prof. Dr. Dorina Pojani,** Diaspora Scholar, The University of Queensland, Australia
  - **Assoc. Prof. Dr. Edmira Cakrani,** Resident Scholar, European University of Tirana & Western Balkans University, Albania

10:45–11:45 | Thematic Panel 1: From Guest Contribution to Institutional Partnership – How Can Diaspora Expertise Really Stick?
A discussion on how diaspora engagement can move beyond one-off contributions toward sustained academic, institutional and innovation partnerships.

Moderator: Vartan Marashlyan, Executive Director, Repat Armenia, Yerevan, Armenia

- **Dr. Albina Balidemaj-Basha**, President, RIT Kosovo

- **Anila Hyka-Smorgrav,** Senior Specialist at Orange Communications in Paris, France
- **Kushtrim Xhakli,** Entrepreneur & Tech Executive, Finland
- **Dr. Ilir Gëdeshi,** Director, Center for Economic and Social Studies, Albania

11:45–12:00 | International Keynote: Connecting Education, Innovation and Diaspora – The Armenian Experience

- **Veronika Aghajanyan**, Lead, Research Advancement and Higher Education Programs, Foundation for Armenian Science and Technology (FAST), Armenia

12:00–13:00 | Thematic Panel 2: The Future of Entrepreneurship Education in Albania
A discussion on how higher education can better respond to changing labour-market needs, emerging skills and the evolving role of universities in entrepreneurship and innovation.

Moderator: **Dr. Alba Skendaj**, Lecturer, University of Tirana; Founder, Match4Research

1. **Arch. Ledian Bregasi**, PhD, Dean of the Faculty of Architecture and Design, POLIS University, Tirana, Albania
2. **Dr. Françeska Korançe**, EIT Community Officer, Albania
3. **Dr. Vehap Kola**, Lecturer of Innovation, University of New York Tirana

13:00–14:00 | Lunch & Networking

14:00–14:30 | Connecting the Dots: A Live Diaspora4Innovation Lab

- Facilitator: **Serena Leka**, Chief Innovation Officer, Leka Consult, Denmark

14:30–15:15 | Interactive Clinic: Adoption Myths – Why Do Good Technologies Fail?
This interactive session explores why promising technologies fail to achieve adoption, connecting theoretical frameworks with real-world implementation challenges.

- **Assoc. Prof. Dr. Edlira Martiri**, Associate Professor, University of Tirana, Albania
- **Shefqet Avdullau**, Angel Investor and Strategic Advisor
- **Dr. Shkëlzen Marku**, Co-Founder and CEO, Enterimpact Balkans; Director, Growpreneur Accelerator, Albania

15:15–15:30 | Coffee Break

15:30–16:30 | Fireside Conversation: From Learning to Practice – The Urban Oasis Experience

Moderator: Valbona Koçi, Advisor, GIZ Albania

- **Dr. Klodian Gradeci**, Diaspora Scholar, SINTEF/OsloMet, Norway
- **Dr. Artan Hysa**, Architect/Research Associate, Technical University of Munich, Germany
- **Arbër Xhomaqi**, Student, POLIS University, Tirana, Albania

16:30 17:00 | AI vs. Identity: The Digital Twin Concept (TBC)

- **Shuk Orani**, Multimedia Artist, Hamburg, Germany

19:00–21:00 | Networking Reception, MAK Hotel Tirana

DAY 2 | FRIDAY, 11 SEPTEMBER 2026

09:30–10:00 | Morning Welcome Coffee

10:00–11:30 | Leadership Roundtable: Diaspora Engagement for the Future of Albanian Higher Education
A forward-looking discussion on how diaspora expertise, networks, and partnerships can contribute to the long-term development, internationalisation, and innovation of Albania's higher education sector.

Moderator: Lirim Krasniqi, Co-Executive Director, GERMIN

Participating University Leaders: University of Tirana · Polytechnic University of Tirana · University of Shkodra "Luigj Gurakuqi" · University of Vlora "Ismail Qemali" · University of New York Tirana · POLIS University · Canadian Institute of Technology · European University of Tirana · Aleksandër Moisiu University · Western Balkans University · EPOKA University

11:30 - 11:45 Closing Remarks and Next Steps

11:45–13:00 Light Networking Lunch