

## SHARED HORIZONS

### International Conference “Bridges that Connect”

*10–12 June 2026 in Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina*

## CONFERENCE STATEMENT

We, the participants of the international conference “Bridges that Connect,” gathered in Mostar from 10 to 12 June 2026 under the Shared Horizons project, Component 2, representing representative of the community of ALDA , civil society organisations, local governments, cultural institutions, young people, experts and researchers from across the Western Balkans and beyond, state the following:

**Cultural heritage connects us.** Our region carries a rich and complex history. Cultural heritage, its sites, stories, traditions, and living memory is not a source of division but a foundation we can build on together. When communities come together around shared spaces and shared narratives, reconciliation becomes possible.

**Local action matters.** Change happens at the community level. Local governments, cultural institutions, and civil society organisations are often the first to bring people together and the last to give up. Supporting local initiatives in heritage, memory, and civic engagement is not a soft investment, it is essential to building stable, democratic societies.

**Young people are not the future, they are the present.** This conference showed that young people are already building bridges through dialogue, through art, through engaging honestly with history. Their energy and ideas deserve space in policy and decision-making.

**The EU integration path is a shared responsibility.** EU membership is not simply a technical or political process. It is built on values: democracy, human rights, the rule of law, and the recognition of shared history. Cultural heritage initiatives that promote reconciliation, inclusive narratives, and intercultural dialogue directly support these values. The Western Balkans’ path toward European integration is strengthened every time communities choose to work together rather than apart.

**Regional cooperation works.** The conversations, workshops, and exchanges that took place in Mostar demonstrated that practitioners, researchers, and public officials from across the Western Balkans share common challenges and common aspirations. Platforms for regional learning and collaboration like this conference should not be one-off events. They need to become part of how the region moves forward.

**Memorial tourism as a bridge.** Sites of memory, done right, do more than attract visitors. They create spaces for reflection, empathy, and honest engagement with the past. When local communities are at the centre of how these sites are developed and interpreted, memorial tourism can become a genuine driver of both reconciliation and sustainable local development.

*We call on local governments, civil society organisations, cultural institutions, regional bodies, and European partners to continue investing in initiatives that use heritage and culture as a bridge between communities, between generations, and between where the Western Balkans is today and where it can be.*

Adopted in Mostar by the participants of the conference, 12 June 2026

*Shared Horizons, Component 2*