

International workshop: “Promoting AI-supported Eco-Activism in the Western Balkans”



The International Workshop on Promoting AI-supported Eco-Activism in the Western Balkans was successfully held on the 26th and 27th of September 2024 in Prilep, North Macedonia. The event brought together participants from all Western Balkan countries, fostering collaboration and engagement in using AI for eco-activism. The Workshop was a resounding success. It not only provided valuable insights into

the application of AI in eco-activism but also fostered regional collaboration, practical engagement, and cultural exchange. The newly developed web application, Vertex AI Waste Management, stands as a significant step toward enhancing eco-activism efforts in the region.

The workshop aimed to promote artificial intelligence (AI) tools and solutions for environmental protection, focusing on eco-activism and waste management across the Western Balkans. A key component was the presentation and testing of the **Vertex AI Waste Management web application**, a newly developed tool for detecting and mapping waste. It began with a welcoming address by the project coordinator **Dimitar Nikoloski, Ph.D.**, He introduced the workshop’s objectives and structure, highlighting the potential of AI in eco-activism across the region.



The first session on the topic: *Introduction to AI*, was presented by **Marjan Angeleski, Ph.D.**, This session provided a foundational understanding of AI, introducing participants to the basic concepts and how they can be applied to environmental activism. Next, **Pawel Gora, Ph.D.**, Founder and CEO of the Quantum AI Foundation from Poland, focused on computer vision and its relevance to environmental monitoring, waste detection, and mapping. **Sylwia Majchrowska, Ph.D.**, Postdoc Research Fellow at AstraZeneca, Sweden, delivered hands-on session and allowed participants to engage directly with AI tools, providing practical experience with AI-driven solutions. **Gjorgji Mancheski, Ph.D.**, Founder of INOS. Dr. Mancheski led to

demonstration session by introducing the **Vertex AI Waste Management** application, a web tool designed for mapping waste and assisting eco-activism efforts. Participants had the opportunity to test the application during the social activities that followed.



After the demonstration, participants embarked on a hiking trip to **Marko's Tower**, where they tested the AI tool in a real-world setting, identifying and mapping waste. This hands-on experience enhanced the practical learning aspect of the workshop. Participants also had the chance to visit the **Tobacco Museum**, experiencing the cultural heritage of Prilep.



Key outcomes of the workshop:

1. The workshop successfully demonstrated the role of AI in addressing environmental issues, particularly in waste detection and management.
2. Participants from different Western Balkan countries had ample opportunity for networking, fostering future collaborations in the field of AI and eco-activism.
3. The **Vertex AI Waste Management** application was tested in real-world conditions, proving its usability and effectiveness for eco-activism initiatives.
4. The combination of cultural visits and practical activities emphasized the importance of environmental protection, while also showcasing the rich heritage of Prilep.