

Milena Stefanović, Milena Dragičević Šešić  
*University of Arts (Belgrade, Serbia)*

# Leadership in Independent Art Organisations: Entrepreneurship and Regional Embeddedness

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## ABSTRACT

The lack of honest and transparent social and regional intercultural and intergovernmental dialogue in the Western Balkans region is evident. The number of international (mostly externally driven) political cooperation instruments and initiatives has flourished in the last ten years (Berlin Process, Open Balkans, Common Regional Market), while the number of bilateral disputes has remained stable. While mostly linked to "dissonant heritage" and cultural/political memory issues, these disputes are raising deeper expressions of hatred (discourse of hate in official communication and performative acts). At the same time, the establishment of the Common Regional Market is underway, and one of the most important agreements regarding the common labour market of Albania, Serbia, and North Macedonia came into force in 2024. In such a complex and dialectical context, organizations operating in the field of cultural, creative, and socio-cultural entrepreneurship are using different, even risky, methods, strategies, and creative approaches to achieve organizational objectives by investing in collaborative programs and projects, while daring to deal with conflictual issues. Leadership in such a populist ecosystem requires courage, vision, and diplomacy skills to overcome challenges that threaten to sabotage democracy and the promotion of values such as diversity, freedom of speech, and human rights.

## KEY WORDS

Entrepreneurship, leadership, socio-cultural entrepreneurship, cultural management, Western Balkans

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Professor **Milena Dragičević Šešić**; the UNESCO expert. Published 20 books, translated in 20 languages. Commandeur dans l'Ordre des Palmes Académiques 2003. The European Network on Cultural Management and Policy (ENCATC) fellowship laureate 2019. University of Arts Laureate 2004, 2019. Doctor Honoris Causa University of Montpellier 2023.

Email: milena.dragicevicsesic@fdu.bg.ac.rs

Dr. **Milena Stefanović**, main research fields: strategic management and leadership, organizational culture and behavior, organizational/institutional memory. Experienced manager with demonstrated history of working in the civil sector, academia and business. Skilled in Strategic management, Public affairs, Policy analysis and International relations.

Email: milena.stefanovic@fdu.bg.ac.rs

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