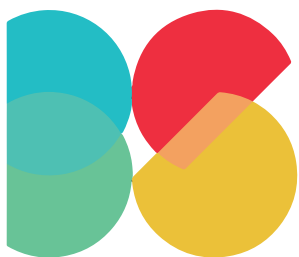


ISSUE 3



# TALES

## Welcome to the 3d Issue of B4Students Tales!

As we wrap up the first half of 2025, we're excited to share the third issue of B4Students Tales, a snapshot of everything we've been building together over the past few months.

This year started with fresh energy. From new projects and workshops to the continued success of our alumni and student entrepreneurs, the B4Students community has been busy bringing ideas to life. It's been a time of learning, growing, and connecting and it wouldn't be possible without all of you.

In this issue, you'll find stories that reflect the spirit of the program: students testing new ideas, creating real impact, and pushing boundaries. Whether it's through events, competitions, or day-to-day work, what stands out most is the dedication and creativity that keeps this community moving forward.

We hope these stories inspire you the way they've inspired us and maybe even spark your next step. Thank you for being part of this journey.

Here's to the rest of 2025, and all the things we'll create together.  
Warm wishes,

**The B4Students Team**



# Welcome to B4Students

## Where Ambition Meets Opportunity

B4Students is more than a program, it's a movement built with and for students, fully powered by the vision and support of the Mane Foundation. At its core, B4Students is here to support you in turning your academic journey into a springboard for real-world impact, offering you the tools, spaces, and experiences that matter most because they were shaped by your needs and ambitions.

Whether you're dreaming of launching your own business, driving social change, or gaining your first hands-on experience in a professional environment, B4Students has created pathways to help you grow. From the lecture hall to the boardroom and beyond, our mission is to foster student success and build bridges between studies and the world of work, personal development, and entrepreneurship.

The program is structured around four main components, each responding to what students across Albania have told us they need most:

**Entrepreneurship Support:** Through our Business Ideas Competition and the Business Challenge, students get to shape real startup concepts or tackle real problems faced by leading companies. Winners receive financial support, access to global online learning platforms, and internship placements that bring their ideas to life.

**Social Clubs:** We support student-led initiatives that enrich campus life and make a difference in communities. Selected projects receive funding, mentoring, and everything they need to succeed, from logistics to visibility.

**Internships & Employment:** We connect students with 3-month internships across the BALFIN Group, tailored to their career goals. With mentorship from top managers and the chance for full-time employment based on performance, this experience bridges the gap between university and the job market.

**Empowerment:** Because student success starts with strong institutions, B4Students also invests in improving public university spaces, making them practical, inclusive, and student-centered.

Looking ahead, B4Students is expanding its presence in the region, with a clear mission: **to empower young people, foster collaboration, and accelerate innovation.**

The future belongs to you  
and we're here to help you build it.



# “Skill Up Academy” – The Winning Project of B4Students that connects youth with top success examples

Mane Foundation continues to contribute to education and learning, for a generation that is motivated and prepared for the challenges of the future. Through the B4Students program and its winning project, “Skill Up Academy,” a series of meetings are being held with prominent public figures, where interested students become part of a fruitful discussion, sharing personal experiences as top examples of success. “Skill Up Academy” is open to all students, regardless of their academic direction, and aims to develop life skills and create new opportunities for young people.

The latest activity of the project was led by politician and lecturer Grida Duma, who addressed the discussion topic “Mindset” as the key to opening many doors in life. With over 380 students present at the University of Medicine Amphitheater, Duma shared her experiences and encouraged an open discussion on the impact of mindset in achieving goals. The participants expressed interest in learning and developing the right mindset to overcome obstacles they may face in their professional and personal lives.

A few days ago, “Skill Up Academy” organized another activity on “The Logic of Money,” with lecturer and young researcher Igli Tola, who approached financial practices from a different perspective.

The activity that kicked off the entire journey of “Skill Up Academy” was led by renowned journalist Marin Mema, who spoke on the topic “The Leader of the Future.” During this session, it was discussed how leadership can shape the world of tomorrow and how young people can prepare to lead with impact. The participants showed a strong desire to better understand the characteristics and strategies of successful leaders.

“Skill Up Academy” is an initiative aligned with the mission of B4Students to empower student-led social projects. It was created by students Armelda Ago, Armando Lekaj, and Esmeralda Sherifi, and aims to provide essential life skills and practical knowledge for students, preparing them for success in today’s fast-paced and dynamic world.

The activities of “Skill Up Academy” include organizing discussions on important topics for the education and overall development of students, covering subjects such as “Emotional Intelligence” and “Work-Life Balance,” in addition to the previously discussed topics.

“Skill Up Academy” is the fifth initiative supported and funded by B4Students.





# With Samir Mane's support, MANE Foundation empowers FEUT scholarship students



For the fourth consecutive year, MANE Foundation has awarded scholarships to six outstanding master's level students from the Faculty of Economics at the University of Tirana.

The scholarship award ceremony took place on Thursday morning at the Faculty of Economics, where students, faculty leaders, and representatives from MANE Foundation gathered.

This time, Samir Mane, the founder of MANE Foundation, attended the event and spoke about the Foundation's commitment to supporting



students and encouraging their professional growth.

In his speech, Samir Mane highlighted the importance of the Faculty of Economics to both MANE Foundation and BALFIN Group. "The Faculty of Economics is a cornerstone for us. Over 450 former students from this faculty are now part of our team, contributing to the success and expansion of BALFIN in Albania and beyond. Without these talented individuals, we wouldn't be where we are today," said Samir Mane.

During his speech, he also touched upon the reason for awarding scholarships in the field of tourism. "Tourism is one of the most important sectors for Albania's development, and that's why we're committed to investing in this industry. But for tourism and for all other sectors to thrive, we need skilled professionals who can lead the way."

Associate Professor Dr. Bernard Dosti, Dean of the Faculty of Economics, expressed optimism about the continued collaboration between the faculty and MANE Foundation. He also acknowledged the significant support provided by BALFIN Group, particularly in organizing conferences, such as the biggest economic and scientific conference with international attendees held in December, organized by FEUT. "BALFIN has been our largest supporter for such events, and it demonstrates how much they value and support higher education," he said.

The outstanding students who were awarded scholarships are:

**Amarildo Kurti** – Master of Science in Tourism Management  
**Vitjan Kordha** – Master of Science in Tourism Management  
**Kejsi Toro** – Master of Science in Tourism Management  
**Eleni Sava** – Master of Science in Information Security  
**Eva Billa** – Master of Science in Economics  
**Besmira Jaupi** – Master of Science in Finance

Students who received scholarships will have their master's tuition fees fully covered, allowing them to focus on their academic and professional growth without financial concerns. MANE Foundation's partnership with educational institutions like the University of Tirana plays a crucial role in developing the workforce of tomorrow, ensuring that students are equipped with the skills needed to succeed.

MANE Foundation supports students at the University of Tirana by offering scholarships and valuable hands-on experience through internships and projects. Over 100 students from the Faculty of Economics have participated in the B4Students program, with around 20 currently interning at BALFIN companies, gaining both academic and practical skills for their future careers.

# Skill Up Academy 4th session “Work-Study-Life Balance”: A Necessary Reflection for Success in a Dynamic World



In an increasingly dynamic and fast-paced world, one of the main challenges for students and young professionals is managing the balance between studies, work, and personal life. This is a crucial discussion that requires special attention, and precisely for this reason, the fourth session of Skill UpAcademy, a winning project of the B4Students Social Clubs 2024 call, addressed an extraordinary topic: Work-Study-Life Balance.

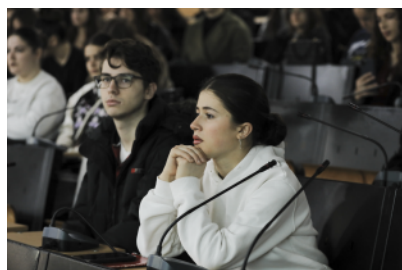
This event, held with the participation of Professor Assoc. Dr. Mimoza Manxhari, a faculty member of the Management Department at the Faculty of Economics, provided an excellent opportunity for students to discuss and engage with the challenges of time management and the commitments of daily life. Professor Manxhari

shared with students a deep approach to the importance of balancing academic careers and professional ones, emphasizing that this is a topic that accompanies students throughout their careers and has a significant impact on both personal and professional development.

In an era where technology and professional achievement demands are on the rise, it is easy to lose balance and experience stress and anxiety. Professor Manxhari offered valuable advice on ways to manage commitments and priorities, highlighting the importance of creating a well-structured and clear plan. She also emphasized that establishing healthy boundaries, taking breaks, and prioritizing self-care are essential practices for achieving sustainable success and well-being.

The discussion provided clear insights into how students can better navigate their responsibilities and manage their time effectively in a way that fosters both academic success and personal fulfillment. By actively engaging with these strategies, students can shape their future careers with greater confidence and resilience.

We would like to extend our gratitude to all the participants for their interest and active involvement in this meaningful conversation. This session, part of the Skill Up Academy project, supported by B4Students and Mane Foundation, not only addressed an important issue but also contributed to equipping students with the tools they need to thrive in their academic and professional journeys. As they continue to build their careers, the wisdom shared in this discussion will undoubtedly guide them toward maintaining a healthy and successful work-study-life balance.





# ‘Skill Up Academy’ concludes successfully, B4Students by Mane Foundation, always supporting education

B4Students program from Mane Foundation and its winning project, “Skill Up Academy,” finished a series of sessions aimed at developing life and professional skills for young people. The sessions featured experienced public figures who shared their knowledge.

The closing session was held at the Amphitheater of the University of Medicine in Tirana, with over 300 students attending. Special guest Blendi Fevziu, a well-known journalist, spoke on the topic “Secrets of Communication.”

## What was discussed

He shared his career journey and discussed how important communication is, especially in conveying messages with care and tact. He also pointed out that every professional, including doctors, should work on improving their communication skills.

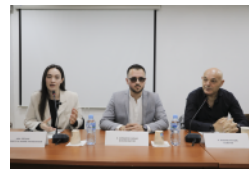
The program’s initiators, Armelda Ago, Armando Lekaj, and Esmeralda Sherifi, praised the sessions, calling them “a mix of hard work, creativity, and the desire to make a positive impact for the common good.” The goal of “Skill Up Academy” has always been to provide students with the life skills and knowledge needed to succeed in the fast-changing job market.

## The guests of the previous sessions and the topics

The first session was led by journalist Marin Mema, who talked about “Leadership of the Future” and how leadership shapes the world.

The second session was about money management, presented by Igli Tola. The third session, with Prof. Assoc. Dr. Mimoza Manxhari, focused on finding balance between study, work, and life. The second-to-last session featured politician Grida Duma, who discussed the importance of “Mindset” in achieving personal and professional goals.

B4Students is a program by Mane Foundation, aimed at helping students gain professional skills and connect with the business world.



# #Here2Empower at FSHN: Students explore Blockchain's opportunities with Marbind Maksuti



#Here2Empower initiative, part of the B4Students program and supported by the Mane Foundation in education, continues to bridge the gap between theory and practice by connecting students with real-world job market experiences through lectures delivered by BALFIN Group experts.

Recently, an open lecture was held at the Faculty of Natural Sciences and was led by Marbind Maksuti, Head of Software Development at the IT Department of BALFIN Group.

Twenty-five students from the “Physics and Computer Science” program at the Department of Physics were introduced to the concept of blockchain and its close connection to cryptography.

Maksuti shared his insights on the practical applications of blockchain technology in the IT industry, emphasizing its rapid growth. He also explained how blockchain, in conjunction, provides significant opportunities for secure data storage, transactional functionalities, and management.

In addition to the well-known blockchain applications in digital currencies like Bitcoin and Ethereum, the students learned about the potential uses of this technology in other fields, including finance and healthcare where these technologies can have a huge impact. The students expressed great interest and asked numerous questions about the challenges of blockchain technology.

One of them expressed enthusiasm for the entire open lecture, adding: “The pace of life today and the way we interact, not only in personal relationships but also in professional ones, makes me believe that blockchain will replace traditional systems, reduce costs, and increase data security.”

This active engagement reinforces the success of the #Here2Empower mission to share knowledge, experience, and expertise with the next generation of innovators and entrepreneurs. #Here2Empower is one of the most important initiatives of the B4Students program, which for over a year has successfully built connections between BALFIN Group experts and students across the country.



# B4Students: Connecting international students with real world retail experiences

B4Students, part of Mane Foundation, has become a key bridge between education and industry for students, offering valuable opportunities to connect classroom learning with real-world experience. Recently, a group of 50 students from Erhvervsakademi Aarhus University in Denmark visited the offices of leading retail companies within the BALFIN Group, including Neptun, Jumbo, Fashion Group Albania, and Spar.

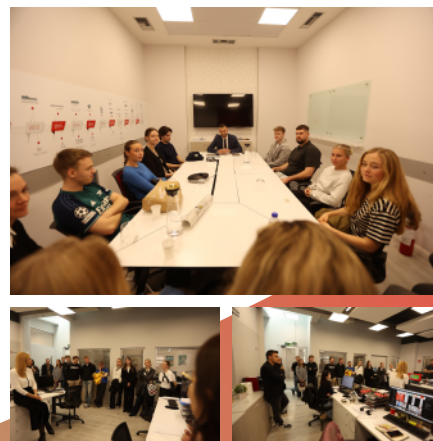
This visit was part of an exchange program with the University of Tirana's Faculty of Economics. The students, who are pursuing a master's in international marketing, were eager to explore leadership roles within the retail industry, ranging from Marketing and Sales to Social Media Management and Digital Marketing.

During their visit, the students had the chance to engage with managers and company representatives, gaining insights into how these companies operate and how marketing strategies are applied in Albania. They were particularly interested in understanding how consumer behavior in Albania compares to that of Denmark, and how marketing approaches differ in the two cultures.

Professor Mark Hughes, who accompanied the students, emphasized the value of experiencing real-world business environments: "In the classroom, we cover a lot of theory and models, but seeing how companies like BALFIN Retail Companies set prices, run promotions, and adapt to local consumer behavior brings those lessons to life. The cultural differences, between Denmark and Albania, are essential for understanding consumer behavior on a global scale."

Student representative Niles Illum also shared his thoughts: "It's fascinating to see how businesses of BALFIN Group manage operations. We've learned about managing different cultures, but this visit made everything more tangible."

Through initiatives like B4Students, Mane Foundation and BALFIN Group are offering valuable practical experiences, including internships and real-world projects, that help students develop the skills needed for success in the global marketplace.



# B4Students at Career Counseling Week at the Faculty of History and Philology

Career Counseling Week at the Faculty of History and Philology offered students a valuable opportunity to explore their professional paths, gain insights, and connect with programs that support their growth. Among the key participants was B4Students, a program supported by the Mane Foundation, which joined the event through the #here2empower initiative.

During the session, Ana Petani, Program Coordinator of B4Students, shared with students the various calls, initiatives, and opportunities that the Mane Foundation and BALFIN Group offer to students. From competitions and internships to mentoring and professional development activities, the presentation highlighted how students can actively engage and benefit from the support designed to empower their personal and career journeys.

The event also featured Fotelda Dai, Talent Acquisition and Development Manager at BALFIN Group, who provided students with a clear overview of the recruitment process within one of the region's largest business groups. Drawing from her extensive experience, she offered practical advice on how to prepare for job interviews, build a strong CV, and approach the job market with confidence.

B4Students' participation in Career Counseling Week reflects the program's ongoing commitment to being close to students and offering meaningful, hands-on support for their growth and success.





# Egla Ulliri: Designing a Generation's Voice in the 2025 B4Students Tales

Every issue of B4Students Tales is more than a magazine, it's a celebration of youth creativity, innovation, and talent. Behind each edition lies a visual story crafted by a student designer whose unique perspective sets the tone for the voices within. For the 2025 editions, both the third and fourth, B4Students is proud to spotlight Egla Ulliri, the young creative whose bold visual language and thoughtful design approach captured the spirit of a generation.

Egla, a 21-year-old graphic design student, brings to the table a philosophy rooted in both creativity and practicality. "I've always wanted to spend my life doing something creative, but at the same time, I consider myself someone who values functionality. What better way to combine the two than graphic design, a field that remains artistic while serving a purpose," she shares. Her passion for editorial design found its perfect match in this opportunity made possible through the B4Students Tales open call, held in collaboration with Geek Room.

With this challenge, Egla found herself stepping into the world of professional design for the first time. "I am most grateful for the opportunity to design this issue. I believe it to be a great first step into my future career," she reflects. Her approach was intentional, balancing the B4Students brand's visual identity, including its color palette and audience, while also allowing room for her personal artistic interpretation. The result? A cover and visual narrative that doesn't just decorate the pages, it gives them a personality.

Following in the footsteps of last year's winner, Klea Leli, whose work stood out for its originality and energy, Egla continues the legacy of student-led visual storytelling that B4Students Tales is known for. Klea once described her experience as "a moment where I saw my style come to life and be recognized by a wider audience." Now, it's Egla's moment to do the same, making her mark across two issues in a row.

In addition to public recognition and publication credit, both Klea and Egla have received financial support and exposure through platforms connected to Mane Foundation and BALFIN Group, a powerful stepping stone for any young creative building their portfolio.

The B4Students Tales open call continues to be one of the most exciting initiatives connecting students to real opportunities in the creative industry. Egla's story is a testament to what happens when young people are trusted with a platform, they rise, they shine, and they lead.

As her designs take center stage in 2025, we look forward to seeing how Egla's vision inspires the next wave of young designers to take the leap and turn their ideas into published realities.



# Riciklo Kreativ 2025: International Student Competition for Sustainable Design Enters Final Phase

The Riciklo Kreativ 2025 competition has entered its final phase, marking a significant moment for student-driven sustainability and design. Organized by the Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism in collaboration with B4Students, the Mane Foundation, and TEG (Tirana East Gate), the competition invites students to design outdoor lighting structures using entirely recycled materials—merging environmental awareness with architectural creativity.

Launched earlier this year, the competition has encouraged young designers to rethink the role of waste by turning it into something both functional and beautiful. The challenge: to propose lighting structures for public urban spaces, built exclusively from a single type of recyclable material. The initiative not only promotes sustainable thinking in design, but also provides students with an opportunity to gain visibility, practical experience, and recognition.

Following the close of the registration period on July 31, 2025, participants now have until August 31 to submit their project proposals (in A1 format). A jury will review the submissions and announce the selected finalists by September 8. These finalists will then be invited to submit physical prototypes by September 31, which will be showcased in a public exhibition.

The final exhibition of selected works will take place at TEG from October 1 to October 15, 2025, concluding with the official award ceremony on October 15. The exhibition will then move to the Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism from October 16 to October 30, offering extended exposure within academic and professional communities.

To reward creativity and impact, the competition will grant the following prizes:

- First prize: €800
- Two second prizes: €500 each
- Three third prizes: €400 each

An international jury composed of leading professionals from Albania, Kosovo, and North Macedonia will evaluate the submissions based on originality, environmental value, and practical feasibility. The jury members are:

1. Ardita Byci Jakupi (Kosovo)
2. Armand Vokshi (Albania)
3. Besian Mehmeti (North Macedonia)
4. Bledion Baraliu (Kosovo)
5. Florian Nepravishta (Albania)
6. Enis Jakupi (North Macedonia)
7. Entela Daci (Albania)
8. Ered Sali (Albania)
9. Ervin Taci (Albania)
10. Matilda Pando (Albania)



Riciklo Kreativ 2025 stands out as a platform where students can test ideas, explore sustainable practices, and engage with professionals across disciplines. Backed by the Mane Foundation and B4Students, this competition demonstrates the value of investing in youth potential and in projects that address both environmental and urban challenges.

More information and updates are available at [www.fau.edu.al](http://www.fau.edu.al).



# ART&CRAFTS at TEG: When Young Creativity Meets Public Space



From July 11 to July 23, TEG transformed into a living gallery, hosting the immersive exhibition “ART&CRAFTS – Experiments and Prints on Subtle Surfaces.” This unique collaboration between TEG, the ME WE Contemporary Art Center, and the B4Students program, supported by the Mane Foundation, offered the public an up-close encounter with the creative energy of Albania’s next generation of artists.



At the heart of the exhibition were the students of the University of Arts, whose experimental works in textile, graphic design, and mixed media challenged traditional formats and gave new life to raw materials. ART&CRAFTS was not simply a presentation of finished pieces, it was a dynamic, evolving experience where the artistic process unfolded live. Visitors were invited to witness, engage with, and even participate in the act of creation, guided by the students themselves.



The opening ceremony on July 11 brought together professors, young artists, and art lovers, setting the tone for a vibrant cultural exchange. What followed was a series of interactive installations and live demonstrations that highlighted the intersection between craft, experimentation, and contemporary expression. From delicate printed textiles to bold graphic compositions, every work on display reflected the students’ personal exploration of material and meaning.

The initiative is part of a growing effort to integrate student creativity into public life. By offering space, visibility, and support, TEG and its partners are redefining what it means to showcase emerging talent. More than an exhibition, ART&CRAFTS became a creative journey, one that invited the community to slow down, observe, and reflect on the artistic process as a form of dialogue.

This collaboration also reaffirms B4Students’ commitment to supporting artistic expression as a core part of student development. In providing real platforms, beyond the classroom or studio, programs like this help young artists build confidence, portfolios, and community connections. And for the public, they offer the chance to experience art not just as decoration, but as an evolving force of innovation and identity.

ART&CRAFTS left behind more than just impressions on fabric or paper, it left behind a message: that when young people are given the tools and trust to create, they transform even the most ordinary spaces into places of inspiration.

We are always open for any kind of collaboration that is aligned with our purpose. Please, get in touch, so we can have a chat about how we can support each other.

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