



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Agency for Development
and Cooperation SDC

State Secretariat for
Economic Affairs SECO

**SWISS
COOPERATION
PROGRAMME
IN SERBIA**
2026-2029

**FOREIGN POLICY
STRATEGY
2024-2027**



**INTERNATIONAL
COOPERATION
STRATEGY
2025-2028**



**SWISS
COOPERATION
PROGRAMME
IN SERBIA
2026-2029**



Background

Switzerland's foreign policy in the Western Balkans promotes stability and prosperity and supports the region's path toward European integration.

Since 1991, Switzerland has been a reliable partner to Serbia. What began with humanitarian assistance has developed into long-term support for democratic, economic and energy related reforms. The country plays an important political and economic role in the Western Balkans. While progress toward joining the European Union (EU) has been slow in recent years, EU membership remains a key goal for the government. At the same time, political and social polarisation are increasing. Although fundamental democratic structures are in place, further efforts are needed to strengthen the rule of law, increase transparency, reduce corruption and foster an enabling environment for media organisations and civil society.

Economic performance shows solid results in areas such as growth, public finances and trade. Yet, an economic growth model, largely driven by foreign investment and public spending, appears to be reaching its limits and less able to realize the country's full potential. Past investment has tended to focus on industries with limited added value, while local small and medium-sized enterprises face administrative barriers. Although unemployment is at a historic low, the labour market continues to face structural challenges, including shortages of skilled workers, an ageing and shrinking population and the emigration of young and well-educated people. Building on national scientific talent and a growing innovation sector offers a promising alternative, moving toward a knowledge-based economy.

Progress has been made on environmental issues by aligning with the EU Green Deal and by ratifying key environmental agreements. Since the outbreak of the conflict in Ukraine, diversifying and decarbonising energy sources have become even more important. As a result, energy efficiency and cleaner energy now play a central role in national strategies. Looking ahead, long-term sustainability will also require continued attention to biodiversity, environmental protection and ecosystem resilience, alongside stronger institutions to effectively implement and enforce policies and laws.



Results 2022–2025

Between 2022 and 2025, the Swiss cooperation programme achieved concrete results across the three priority areas of governance, economic development and climate action.

Democratic Governance and Civil Society

Switzerland collaborated with 91 local governments to improve their performance in areas such as good governance, social inclusion and environmental governance. As a result, citizens are more satisfied and enjoy better living conditions. More than 100 civil society organisations have stronger institutional and advocacy skills. This enabled them to better fulfil their democratic role, involve citizens, represent their interests and give a stronger voice to vulnerable groups, resulting in the civic engagement of more than 100,000 people. Furthermore, support to media organisations and journalist associations increased access to reliable information and public debate in a shrinking public space.

Economic Development and Employment

More than 150 start-ups and 300 companies have benefited from innovation, value chain development and improved access to domestic and international markets. These efforts contributed to new jobs, stronger competitiveness and a more resilient private sector. Moreover, closer links between education and labour market needs were established. More than 20,000 young people benefited from better access to skills development and work-based learning opportunities, thereby increasing their employability and enabling companies to address skills shortages. Switzerland's support for improving the framework conditions for private-sector growth, innovation and employment also continued. This work contributed to reforms in public finance management, including at the local level in at least 10 partner municipalities.

Climate Change and Sustainable Urban Development

Swiss cooperation supported Serbia's efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate change and to transition to cleaner energy. Two renewable energy auctions attracted private investment and exceeded the planned target of 1,300 megawatts. Better energy management in municipalities contributed to reduced energy consumption and emissions in public buildings and utilities. Investments in renewable-based district heating increased the share of renewable energy by 1.8% by 2024, showing that cleaner heating solutions are viable. Through the Green Agenda programme, Switzerland contributed to national laws and strategies and supported 94 pilot projects and access to finance in areas such as clean energy, pollution reduction and biodiversity protection. Additionally, 10 cities enhanced their capacity for integrated, climate-resilient urban planning.

Switzerland's priorities for 2026–2029

While important results have been achieved, more work is needed to ensure full implementation of reforms. Against this background, Switzerland's cooperation programme for 2026-2029 aims to strengthen Serbia's resilience and inclusive development and to support the country's European integration. The programme focuses on strengthening accountable institutions, supporting a vibrant economy and promoting green transformation. It builds on past experience and results, placing greater emphasis on innovation, biodiversity and environmental protection.

Democratic Local Governance and Engaged Civic Sector

The cooperation programme strengthens the accountability of public administrations and local governments toward citizens. It continues to support civil society organisations, the cultural sector and media organisations, enabling non-state actors and citizens to play an active role in democratic life. By creating new spaces for dialogue between civil society and public institutions, the programme contributes to greater trust and encourages greater public participation in decision-making. Cooperation with independent oversight bodies further enhances transparency and accountability at both national and local levels. Switzerland also supports democratic reforms in municipalities, enabling them to respond better to citizens' needs and promote inclusive governance, with a particular focus on the participation of young people and women.

Economic Development and Employment

Switzerland contributes to a more competitive private sector and promotes trade and investment to create more and better jobs and improve living standards. The cooperation programme supports Serbia's move toward a competitive, knowledge-based economy. This includes strengthening the innovation ecosystem, boosting trade and improving conditions for businesses through a more predictable, investor-friendly climate. Switzerland also works with national and local administrations to improve their capacity to implement fiscal reforms and manage public finances more effectively. In addition, continued engagement for vocational skills development aligned with labour market needs aims to reduce skills gaps, increase productivity and create more decent employment opportunities.

Climate Change and Resilient Cities

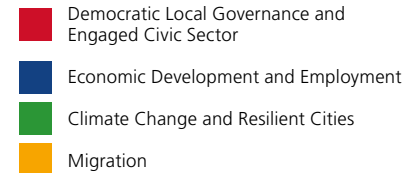
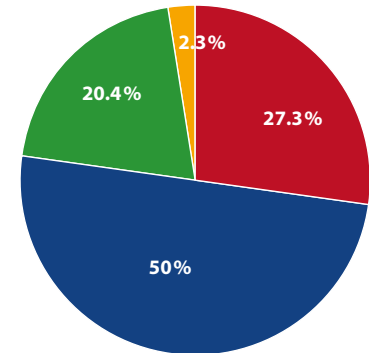
Switzerland continues to support Serbia's green transformation. The programme focuses on reducing emissions from district heating, increasing the use of renewable energy, improving energy management in municipalities, and developing innovative financing models to expand investments in energy-efficient buildings. Together with sustainable urban development measures, these efforts contribute to making Serbian cities more productive and competitive while creating jobs. Alongside reducing emissions, the programme places greater emphasis on protecting biodiversity and strengthening the resilience of natural ecosystems.

Cross-cutting Themes

Good governance is promoted across all three priority areas of Swiss cooperation, with a strong emphasis on transparency, accountability and effective use of public resources. Gender equality is integrated into all Swiss-supported initiatives, with particular attention to strengthening women's political participation and leadership in public life. Social inclusion and climate change considerations are taken into account across all relevant activities.

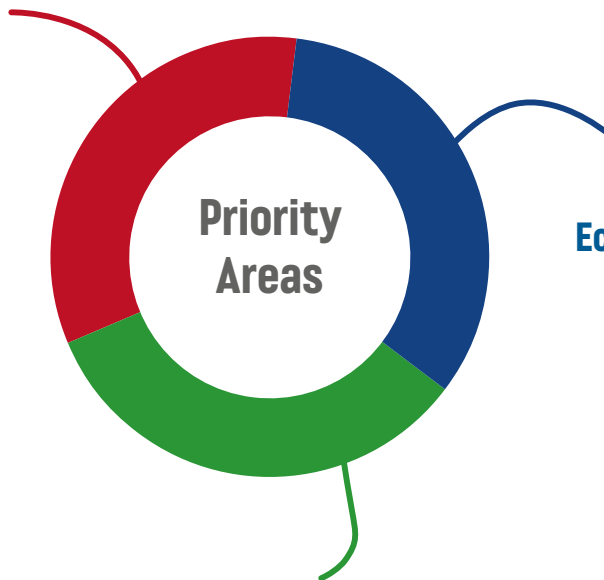
Cooperation Programme 2026–2029

Indicative total budget: CHF 88 million
Including CHF 2 million from Swiss Migration Strategic Framework for the Western Balkans 2024–2027





Democratic Local Governance and Engaged Civic Sector



Economic Development and Employment



Climate Change and Resilient Cities



Approach and Partners

The Swiss cooperation programme is jointly designed, funded and steered by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO), in cooperation with Serbian public, private and civil society partners. In addition, since 2009 the Swiss-Serbian Migration Partnership is active and includes a migration dialogue and cooperation measures, developed jointly with the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM), focusing on enhancing migration management.

The Swiss Cooperation Programme in Serbia aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and complements national efforts to implement its Reform Agenda

under the EU Growth Plan. It highlights the importance of political ownership, accountability and constructive dialogue among public institutions, civil society and the private sector in support of reforms.

Achieving lasting change requires a combination of technical expertise, political engagement and financial support. The programme is implemented in close cooperation with a wide range of partners, including national and local public institutions, civil society organisations, media organisations and the private sector. Switzerland also works closely with other development partners to avoid duplication, ensure complementarity and enhance results.

Swiss cooperation focuses on strengthening individual and institutional capacity, including linking Serbian partners with Swiss and international expertise. A systemic and adaptive approach ensures that results are firmly anchored in country systems and remain effective in a changing and complex environment. Identifying and supporting national and local drivers of change is also central to advancing reforms and sustaining progress.





Imprint

Published by:

Federal Department of Foreign Affairs
Swiss Agency for Development and
Cooperation SDC

CH-3003 Bern

www.deza.admin.ch

Federal Department of Economic Affairs
Education and Research

State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO

CH-3003 Bern

www.seco.admin.ch

Layout:

Mark Manion, Communication Arts

Photos:

Swiss PRO/UNOPS SEEMCO/S. Knežević; CCIS;
UNDP; ©zoranmesarovic.com

Contact:

Embassy of Switzerland in Serbia
and Montenegro

11001 Belgrade, Serbia

Tel: +381 11 30 65 820

belgrade@eda.admin.ch

www.eda.admin.ch/belgrade

Bern, 2026

© FDFA/SDC/SECO

