



ITALIAN AGENCY  
FOR DEVELOPMENT  
COOPERATION

ALBANIA | BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA  
KOSOVO | SERBIA | NORTH MACEDONIA



# ANNUAL REPORT 2024

Tirana Regional Office



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# ANNUAL REPORT **2024**

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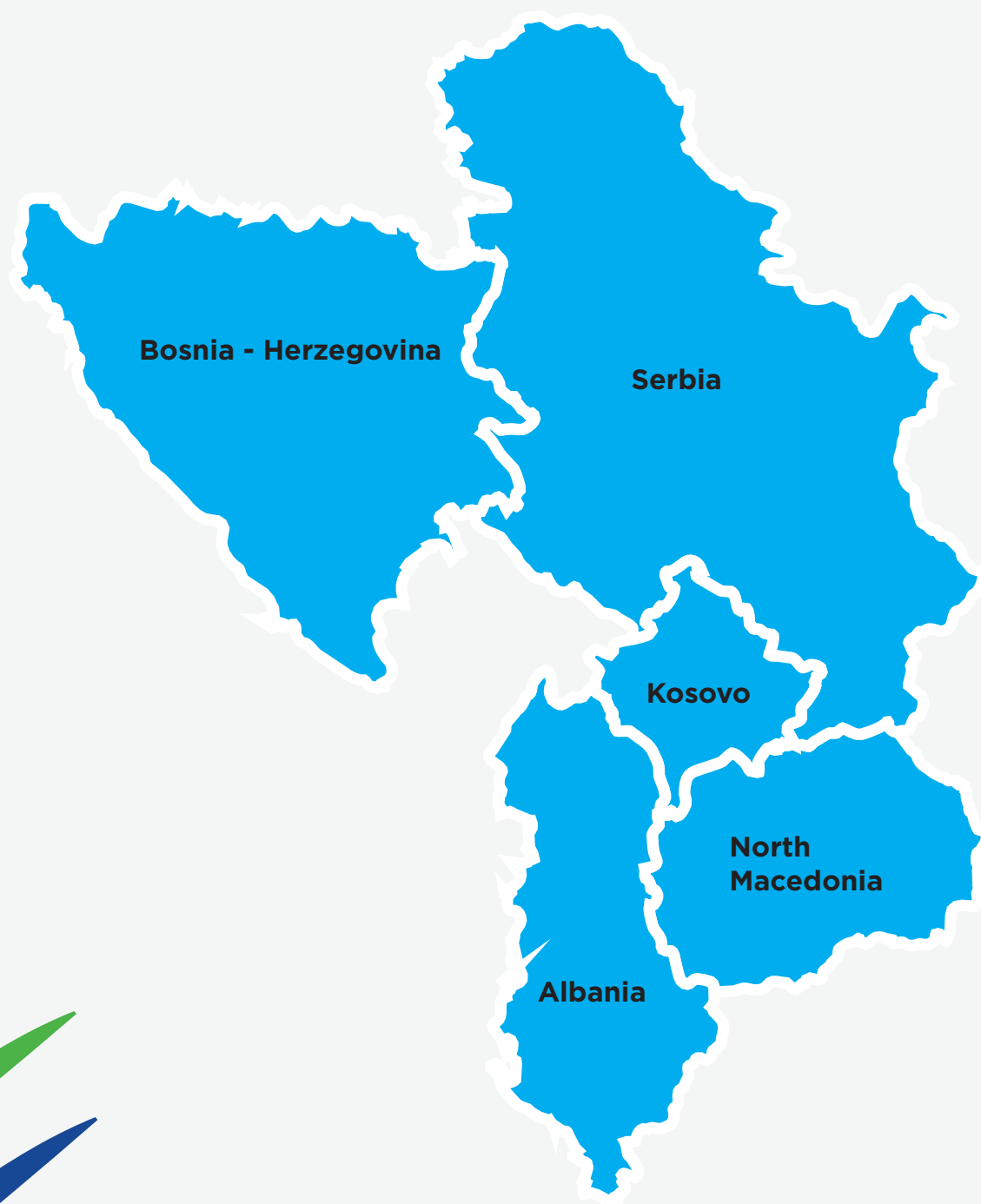
 ITALIAN AGENCY  
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Head of Office  
**Stefania Vizzaccaro**

Deputy Head of Office  
**Letizia Fischioni**

Contract staff:  
**34 workers** including  
**4 units in Sarajevo and**  
**1 in Pristina**







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# REGIONAL OFFICE ID

## BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA



## KOSOVO



## SERBIA



## REGIONAL



## REGIONAL OFFICE BUDGET



## ALBANIA



### Projects by funding channels

<b>Grants</b>	<b>110 MLN €</b>
<b>Soft Loans</b>	<b>262.6 MLN €</b>
<b>EU delegated cooperation</b>	<b>12.8 MLN €</b>

## NORTH MACEDONIA

*"Environmental Protection of the Radika River Valley"* (grant to the Macedonian Government)

In 2024, in close coordination with the Macedonian Ministry of Local Government, a new project proposal has been discussed in order to use residual funds for equipment and vehicles purchase and the improvement of waste management and fire response capacity of local authorities.

# WESTERN BALKANS IN 2024

Notwithstanding the **strong post-pandemic recovery experienced in the Western Balkans**, with a recorded GDP increase by 7,9% (2021), further progress has been obstructed by the economic consequences of the conflict in Ukraine and an unstable international context.

The region is grappling with **economic slow-down and inflationary pressures**, mainly due to rising food and energy prices, causing a significant impact on low-income families and energy-intensive sectors. Furthermore, this crisis underlined the need to diversify supply and accelerate the **transition to a low-carbon and environmentally sustainable economy**.



*June 14, Albania. On the occasion of World Blood Donor Day, Albanian Minister of Health Albana Koçiu and AICS Tirana Head of Office Stefania Vizzaccaro inaugurated a new mobile blood unit, a tangible result of the project “**RIPRESA – Restarting through Innovation and Health PREvention**”.*

There was a significative rise in public investments, however, excluding works related to the construction and modernization of railways as well as stations, they mostly concerned road infrastructures. Hence, it is vital to **continue to enhance the physical transport infrastructures**, especially along the main connectivity corridors throughout the Region.

Digitalization is increasingly being used as a primary tool of economic development, identified as a priority for Western Balkans’ governments. National e-governments portals are constantly integrated with new services, working as a one-stop shop for businesses and citizens. Implementation of broadband and high-speed internet access are progressing; in addition, many of the Region’s economies have witnessed **a significant growth in the information and communication sector (ITC)**, with the increase of ITC services export from 8, 2% recorded in 2018, to 13% in 2022. In this context, **support to small and medium-sized enterprises (PMI)** in order to adopt digital technologies, develop e-commerce, and e-business are also being strengthened.

On the other hand, progress related to freedom of enterprise and green economy are modest: they are partial in addressing the vast informal sector of the Region and in fighting corruption, which is the main reason for distortion in the business environment. The implementation of anti-corruption and tax reform measures, as well as further advancement in the digitalization of public services, have significant potential to stimulate economic transformation by reducing corruption and informality.

**Prioritizing reforms of public enterprises and improving their governance** seems essential. A strong industrial sector development is hindered by the presence of inefficient public enterprises, thus, transforming management structures, **eliminating political patronage, and reducing fiscal risks are crucial.**

Likewise, **the ongoing brain drain**, combined with lacks and weaknesses in professional skills and trainings, leads to a reported difficulty in finding qualified labor throughout the Region. Despite the increasing number of graduates in tertiary education and vocational education and training (VET), education systems are unable to provide the wide range of skills needed by businesses. The results of the 2022 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) highlight challenges in delivering quality education, with the majority of fifteen-year-olds (79%) in the Western Balkans assessed as insufficient in at least one of the three tested subjects, compared to an OECD average of 45%.



*December 2–19, Kosovo. Awareness activities in Kosovar primary schools on local flora and fauna within the framework of “NaturKosovo” project.*



*September 20, Albania. Steering Committee of “EU for Economic Development - Tourism-led, Local Economic Development, with a Focus on Cultural Heritage”, project, aimed at establishing a visitor center and museum in the archaeological parks of Bylis and Klos, improving accessibility, offering training for students and experts, and promoting both sites as local and international touristic destinations.*

Measures to mitigate climate change and to guarantee business sustainability are modest, causing **environmental and health concerns, especially related to air pollution.** Annual average PM<sub>2.5</sub> concentrations are almost double compared to UE levels (22,8 µg/m<sup>3</sup> in comparison with the UE average of 13,5 µg/m<sup>3</sup>) and four times higher than the World Health Organization’s recommended level of 5 µg/m<sup>3</sup>.

Meanwhile, economic sectors such as tourism, mining and agriculture - if not adequately regulated – may pose a **threat for conservation of biodiversity and the health of ecosystems.** Besides fighting pollution and environmental degradation, the Region’s governments need to sustain competitiveness of the private sector, supporting the access to green finance



and good quality education, introducing a “carbon tax” and creating policies meant to protect fragile populations in order to guarantee a better sustainability.

Almost one in four people coming from Western Balkans lives abroad. Although emigration causes labor lack, **if effectively managed, the diaspora phenomenon can help reduce poverty**, boost exports, and attract investments

— leading to job creation and knowledge sharing. However, to make this possible, action is needed on multiple fronts: developing vocational training and mobility programs in partnership with destination countries; facilitating the transfer of advanced skills and technologies; leveraging digital tools; and improving data collection to manage the phenomenon and design appropriate policies.



*May 27, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Presentation of the results of the “**Building Relationships for Intercultural Dialogue in Bosnia and Herzegovina – BRIDGE**”, which involved nearly 2,000 young people from 55 municipalities and cities, promoting intercultural dialogue and friendship through various activities.*

#### SOURCES:

- OECD (2024), Western Balkans Competitiveness Outlook 2024: Regional Profile, Competitiveness and Private Sector Development, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/170b0e53-en>.
- World Bank (2024), [Western Balkans Regular Economic Report: Retaining the Growth Momentum](#)



# **Western Balkans Countries**

# ALBANIA

In 2024, the Albanian economy performed better than expected, with **an estimated growth of 3,9%** thanks to the sustained contribution of tourism, services and construction, with a particular emphasis on private consumption and public investments.

**The unemployment rate** in Albania rose to 8,8% in the fourth quarter of 2024 (compared to 8,1% in the third quarter of 2024). The unemployment rate averaged 14,03% over the long term 1993-2024, reaching an historical high of 22,3% in the fourth quarter of 1993.

However, the country faced **multiple challenges** such as a decline in industrial and agriculture production and weaknesses in the export of commodities, leading to an enhancement of the national currency (lek) and a weakening of external demand. Other key factors contribute to exacerbating this framework, such as modest demand from Eurozone, a possible decline in remittances and adverse weather conditions (particularly drought). The latter may have an impact on energy production, consequently leading to an increase in electricity imports.



*April 8, Albania. Public event at the archaeological park of Bylis to present — together with local partners and communities — the Park's Management Plan, designed to preserve and promote both the important archaeological site and the local economy.*



*October 14, Albania. Presentation in Tirana of the feasibility study for the creation of "EXPO Albania", including a macroeconomic context mapping, business model, financial, operational and management plans for implementation and launch.*

**Italy is Albania's main commercial partner**, counting for over one-fifth of its imports. In 2024, these imports from Italy amounted to €1.93 billion, a decrease of 2.3% compared to the previous year, followed by China and Turkey, from which Albania imported roughly a equivalent volume (€1.97 billion). Main products imported from Italy were machinery, equipment, and spare parts (23.3%); textiles and footwear (18.9%); and food, beverages, and tobacco (16.9%).

Albania records the lowest carbon and energy intensity in Western Balkans, mostly due to its availability of renewable energy sources, such as hydropower; nonetheless, **energy poverty remains a concern for many** and a significant part of the population struggles to cover expenses: Albania needs to act in order to improve the **management of water resources**, which is essential for agriculture and energy production, especially in light of climate change-induced events such as floods and droughts.





*November 5, Albania. Certificates awarded to **Albanian Civil Protection** experts who participated in training courses organized by the Italian Department of Civil Protection.*

2024 marked an **extraordinary year for tourism in Albania**. 11,7 million visitors have been visiting the country, showcasing an increase of 15,2% compared to the previous year. This result prompted concerns regarding environmental impact and anthropic pressure, yet it generated 3,8 billion euros in economic activities during the first nine months of the year, thanks to a well-established touristic marketing in Italy, Germany and France. In this regard, the Ministry of Tourism and Environment published its **Strategy for the period 2024-2030**<sup>1</sup>, thus providing an action plan to improve the touristic sector, by focusing on sustainable development, the improvement of infrastructures and enhancement of visitors' experiences. This strategy stimulates collaboration between government's entities, private sector stakeholders, and local communities to achieve ambitious goals.

The Ministry of Tourism and Environment is formally leading climate policy, yet **challenges persist in mainstreaming climate change in sectoral strategies**. While disaster risk management responsibilities are defined, coordination gaps persist. Efforts are underway to integrate climate priorities into public financial management, but implementation is still incomplete. Sustainable climate financing mechanisms and dedicated adaptation funds are lacking, which hinders long-term planning. Among European countries, **Albania has one of the highest levels of disaster risk and exposure to earthquakes, floods, landslides, and wildfires**, affecting 95 percent of municipalities over the past two decades. The increasing variability in the frequency and intensity of catastrophic events is making such occurrences even more unpredictable.

<sup>1</sup> Full text available for download: [https://www.konsultimipublik.gov.al/documents/RENJK\\_785\\_Strategjia-Kombe%CC%88tare-e-Turizmit-2024-2030\\_Update\\_6\\_Tetor.pdf](https://www.konsultimipublik.gov.al/documents/RENJK_785_Strategjia-Kombe%CC%88tare-e-Turizmit-2024-2030_Update_6_Tetor.pdf)

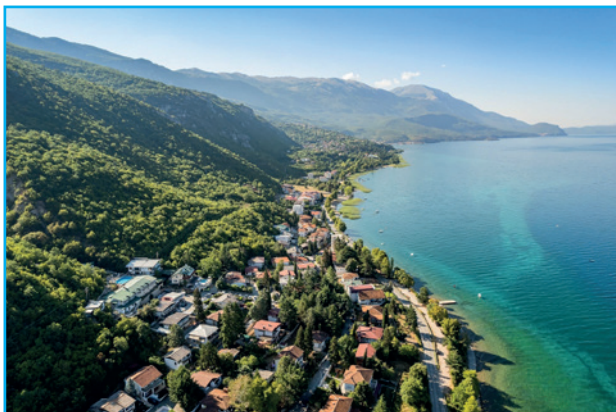


## ACCESSION PROCESS TO THE EUROPEAN UNION

The integration in the European Union is a **key strategic objective of the Albanian authorities**, reiterated as top priority from the very beginning of the accession process. Albania has committed to implementing the new Growth Plan for the Western Balkans underlined by the following pillars: integration within the EU Single Market, regional economic integration, fundamental reforms, and an increase in financial support.

**The third accession conference for Albania** took place on December 17, 2024. In this occasion, negotiations related to Cluster No. 6, including Chapter 30 on external relations and Chapter 31 on foreign, security, and defense policy, were opened. The EU has also established the parameters for the provisional closure of these chapters. Cluster No. 1, concerning primary issues and sectors such as the functioning of democratic institutions, the judiciary, and fundamental rights, was opened at the meeting on October 15, 2024.

Prime minister Edi Rama has identified **the conclusion of the technical negotiations with EU by 2027** as a realistic goal.



Available on the Lonely Planet Italian website a long article related to the project **"Lakes of Albania"**.

<https://www.lonelyplanetitalia.it/articoli/avventure-outdoor/un-viaggio-sostenibile-laghi-d-albania-ohrid>

Short video documenting activities implemented in the framework of the project **"Ruralbania"**, supporting Albanian farmers through 3 Pilot Centers for rural assistance (QABR):

<https://www.facebook.com/rtm.org/videos/908373148085355>



### SOURCES:

- World Bank Group: [Albania—Country Climate and Development Report](#)
- Info Mercati Esteri (Ambasciata d'Italia in Albania): [www.infomercatiesteri.it](http://www.infomercatiesteri.it)
- Commissione Europea: [Albania Report 2024 - European Commission](#)
- Istituto di Statistica Albanese: [Kreu](#) | [Instat](#)

# BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

2024 was characterized by a **moderate economic growth in Bosnia and Herzegovina (2,3%)**, which was insufficient to tackle unemployment, standing at 11, 7%. Economic activity rate is still low (approximately 48%, compared to EU average of 75%), with women participation only at 37%. Gender disparities in employment are evident for poor-educated workers.

Inflation rate declined in 2024, compared to the previous years (from 7% in 2023 to 2,2% in 2024), however families purchasing power continues to be compromised by the **increase in prices of basic goods** and the low level of the average wages. According to the United Nations, 20% of the population is at risk of poverty: 40% of citizens are unable to save, are in debt, or would not be able to cover basic expenses for more than a month in the event of losing their main source of income. Average pensions are four times lower than the EU average. Families, even those with an income, often struggle to cover minimum expenses: in 2024, a family of four needed over 3,100 KM (€1,585) per month, while the average salary was 1,369 KM (€700).

The **fragmented political system**, divided among 3 national communities and 2 separated entities, hinders any stable progress. Bosnia and Herzegovina is still experiencing a state of chronic instability, subject to ethnic divisions and political interests that obstacles development and the fight against poverty.

Furthermore, other challenges constraint a more robust development: productivity is affected by a **high number of state-owned enterprises** that employ a relevant portion of the qualified labor force. The aging population, exacerbated by emigration, further reduces productivity and puts pressure on public services, especially healthcare. Youth emigration is a serious issue in Bosnia and Herzegovina as its consequences: the loss of human capital hampers the country's economic and social development, creating a vicious cycles that further fuels emigration.

**The touristic sector** in Bosnia and Herzegovina continued to grow (an increase of 10,3% in 2024 compared to 2023), one of the country's emerging economic pillars. Natural beauties, a

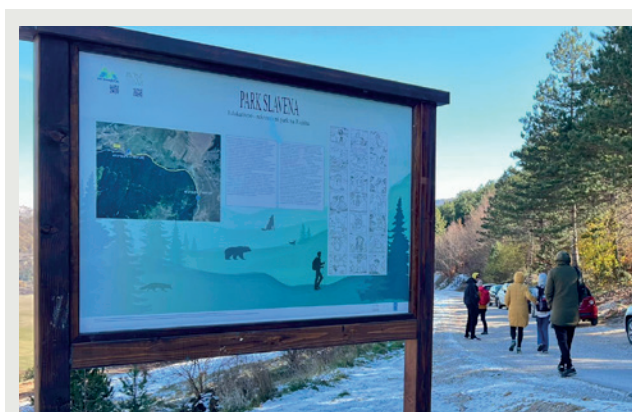


*September 25, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Inauguration of the "Casa della crescita per giovani menti" (House of Growth for Young Minds) in Bihać, which will host unaccompanied foreign minors (UFM) on the Balkan Route and at-risk local minors, with 32 beds, as part of the "BRAT" project.*



rich cultural heritage, and the hospitality of local communities have attracted regional and international visitors. However, some critical issues hamper the full development of the sector, such as the lack of a unified tourism strategy at state level, shortage of modern infrastructure in certain areas, and weak promotion in foreign markets. Moreover, tourism pressure in specific locations risks to ruin environmental balance, making a targeted approach to sustainable destination management increasingly urgent.

2024 confirmed Bosnia and Herzegovina **as a country suspended between opportunities and fragility**, where the future depends on the ability of institutions and civil society to overcome diversity and economic challenges in order to get constantly closer to the EU standards.



November 18, **Via Dinarica**. Inauguration of the Parco Slavena thematic-educational trail for nature and mythology lovers, located between the imposing Velež and Prenj mountains in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

## ACCESSION PROCESS TO THE EUROPEAN UNION

The accession path of **Bosnia and Herzegovina towards EU membership** recorded significant developments in 2024.

In March, the European Council formally approved **the opening of the accession negotiations**, marking an historical moment for the country. However, the path is complex and intertwined with the implementation of structural reforms. Many fundamental sectors such as a judicial system reform, the fight against corruption, and the protection of human rights, are far from being supported. The lack of an internal consensus on reforms and the constant political divisions are causing a slowdown in the accession process.

### SOURCES:

- Commission staff working document: [Bosnia and Herzegovina 2024 Report](#)
- Agency for Statistics of the Bosnia and Herzegovina - [Consumer Price Index in Bosnia and Herzegovina, December 2024](#)
- World Bank – [Bosnia Herzegovina report](#)
- Friedrich Ebert Stiftung – [Youth Study 2024, Bosnia and Herzegovina](#)



# KOSOVO

In 2024 a new census registered an 8,8% decline in the resident population of Kosovo, compared to the 2011 census, confirming a common negative trend across the Region.



*June 3–6, Kosovo. Four days of training for Kosovar rescuers organized by the Italian partner CN-SAS (National Alpine and Speleological Rescue Corps) within the framework of “NaturKosovo”: management of traumatized patients in arduous environments, practical rescue simulations, learning rescue techniques, and stretcher handling on cableways.*

Kosovo continued **its process of economic development** in 2024, achieving a moderate growth of 4,3%, driven by internal consumptions and diaspora remittances, which account for 15% of GDP. Despite stable inflation at 1,6%, the country still struggles with high rates of unemployment, recorded at 12%, with a rate exceeding 30% among young people. Moreover, female participation in the labor market is low, mostly due to the lack of childcare services, which limits professional opportunities for women. High prices for essential goods and energy continue to weigh on living conditions, pushing many people to seek opportunities abroad.

**The liberalization of Schengen Visa** has been a fundamental step in 2024. On the one hand, it facilitated travelling to Europe; on the other hand, it exacerbated the “brain drain” problem. Migration of highly qualified workers, especially in the healthcare and education sectors, increased. Every two days a doctor and two nurses leave the country. Similarly, the loss of teachers has put pressure on the educational system leading to growing disillusionment among students, while compromising the quality of education.

One sector exhibiting positive growth trends is **tourism**. In 2024, the number of international visitors increased by 12% (during the first eight months, compared to 2023) thanks to promotion policies and international events. Tourism could become a key resource for the local economy, creating job opportunities, while attracting investments.

**Relations with Serbia** remain a problematic issue for Kosovo. Political tensions between the two countries continue to affect regional stability, with repercussions on the country’s domestic policies. In 2023, European Union imposed sanctions on Kosovo as a consequence of government’s unilateral actions in northern municipalities, which had caused unrest and violence. The sanctions led to a suspension of fundings and the cancelation of high-level bilateral meetings, isolating the country and reducing opportunities for foreign investments. Although these sanctions have not had a significant economic impact, their duration could jeopardize future opportunities and the accession to the European Union.

## ACCESSION PROCESS TO THE EUROPEAN UNION

Kosovo faces several key challenges on its path towards EU membership. In addition to the **fundamental requirement of recognition as a sovereign state by all the Union members**, critical issues include the strengthening of the rule of law, fight against corruption and to develop a more independent and efficient judicial system, the problematic relations with Serbia so far (mostly concerning the implementation of the 2023 agreement).

Competitiveness is constrained by an **educational system** not aligned with market demands, as well as by a **fragile entrepreneurial environment**; furthermore, public administration requires structural reforms aimed at improving transparency, efficiency and meritocracy.

Addressing these challenges will be essential for Kosovo's progress toward EU accession.

### SOURCES:

- KAS [https://ask.rks-gov.net/#:~:text=Kosovo%20Agency%20of%20Statistics%20\(KAS\)](https://ask.rks-gov.net/#:~:text=Kosovo%20Agency%20of%20Statistics%20(KAS))
- UNDP Kosovo <https://www.undp.org/kosovo/publications/annual-achievement-report-2024>
- European Commission [https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/kosovo-report-2024\\_en](https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/kosovo-report-2024_en)
- Banka Qendrore e Kosoves <https://bqk-kos.org/>

## NORTH MACEDONIA

According to the Central Bank of North Macedonia, the country's **economic growth** is proving to be weaker than expected.

During the first trimester of 2024, GDP grew by only 1.2% year-on-year. As a consequence, according to information coming from the Minister of Finance, in 2024 the country's growth will not reach the previously expected 3,4% , but will instead stand at 2,1%. Growth, driven by increased household consumption, has been negatively affected by a decline in exports.

**Services** are the main economic activity in North Macedonia and the most important sectors include also banking, ICT, insurance industry, tourism sector, commerce, logistics and transportations. Key productive sectors include automotive components, steel, food, footwear, textiles, tobacco, construction, chemicals, and mining.

About 73,000 small and medium-sized enterprises operate within the country's economic fabric.

## ACCESSION PROCESS TO THE EUROPEAN UNION

North Macedonia adopted the European Commission's recommendations through the document ***National Development Strategy - Conditions and Challenges (2024 - 2044)***. In the reform process towards EU membership, good relations with neighboring countries and participation in regional initiatives play a key role. The existing bilateral agreements with neighboring countries must be implemented in good faith, including the Prespa Agreement with Greece and the Treaty of Friendship, Good Neighborliness, and Cooperation with Bulgaria.

Efforts are now focusing on implementing the **New Growth Plan for the Western Balkans**, which includes for North Macedonia a reform agenda in the following sectors: (i) governance, public administration reform, and public finance management; (ii) green and digital transition; (iii) human capital; (iv) private sector development and business environment; (v) fundamental rights and rule of law.

# SERBIA

In 2024 Serbia recorded a **4% GDP growth**, one of the best performances in the Eurozone, surpassing 5 billion euros in foreign direct investment.

**Unemployment rate** was 8,6% during the fourth trimester of 2024, compared to 8,1% of the previous trimester - an important result if compared to the average of 14,29% during the period 2008-2024, with a peak of 25,5% during the first trimester of 2012.

**Information Technology** is a sector that presents interesting opportunities, contributing around 10% of GDP and accounting for the country's largest net export value. It has grown by over 26% annually over the past 11 years. According to the Serbian Statistical Office, the sector employs around 110,000 people, with more than 3,500 companies (compared to 700

in 2006). The green **energy transition** is another promising sector offering for local businesses.; that includes opportunities in renewable energy, energy efficiency improvements, wastewater treatment, and air quality enhancement.



*September 24, Serbia. **European Week of Possibilities in Belgrade:** AICS Tirana presents ongoing and upcoming opportunities for mobility of artists, journalists, creatives and cultural officials coming from the Western Balkans.*

## ACCESSION PROCESS TO THE EUROPEAN UNION

Serbia continues the process of aligning its institutions, public administration, and relations with to the European standards, within the framework of its EU accession process.

Main goal of domestic policy remains the **strengthening of the rule of law** (through necessary reforms of the judicial system, anti-corruption measures, and improvements in media functioning), while regarding foreign policy priority is given to **advancing regional cooperation and dialogue with Kosovo**, whose independence has not yet been recognized by Belgrade.

In 2024, Serbia was invited to present the **two remaining negotiation positions under Cluster No. 3** (Competitiveness and Inclusive Growth): Taxation (Chapter 16) and Social Policy and Employment (Chapter 19). The reference benchmarks for Chapter 35 (which addresses issues not covered by other negotiation chapters) have been revised to reflect Serbia's obligations under the Agreement on the Normalization Path with Kosovo. Pristina is also expected to engage in the EU-facilitated Dialogue on the establishment of the Association of Serb-majority Municipalities.

### SOURCES:

- Ambasciata d'Italia a Belgrado: <https://ambbelgrado.esteri.it>
- Trading Economics: <https://it.tradingeconomics.com/serbia/unemployment-rate>
- European Commission: [https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/serbia\\_en](https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/serbia_en)

# ACCESSION PROCESS AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES

At the end of the year, following an EU summit between EU Senior representatives and Western Balkans leaders, an important declaration was adopted: EU leaders have reiterated their conviction that **the Western Balkans' accession to the EU represents a strategic investment in peace and stability**. While acknowledging the progress made in aligning with the EU Common Foreign Security Policy, this document also highlighted that further commitment to the democratic principles of the Union and more active participation are required.

The **Brussels Declaration**<sup>1</sup> underscores that the Growth Plan for the Western Balkans<sup>2</sup> presents an opportunity to double the region's economic growth over the next decade and to accelerate the socioeconomic convergence with the EU, provided that the necessary reform plan is implemented.

The Declaration also reaffirms commitments to key areas such as:

- *good governance* and the **fight against corruption**;
- **Social protection**, emphasizing access to quality healthcare and education for all;
- **Job creation** and strengthening of domestic economies;
- **Green economy** and environmental protection;
- Preservation of cultural heritage and identity as a driver for **tourism development**;

<sup>1</sup> Full document available here: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/wvld5ka1/brussels-declaration-2024-en.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Additional information: [Growth Plan for the Western Balkans - European Commission](#)

- **Leveraging diaspora communities** as resources for national economic development;
- **Innovation and digitalization** as essential tools for development and well-being.

As in the broader Mediterranean region, Western Balkan countries are **particularly vulnerable to disaster risks**, including heatwaves, floods, landslides, droughts, forest fires and earthquakes. Therefore, enhancing their capacity to manage such risks is crucial.

Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and North Macedonia are part of the **EU Civil Protection Mechanism** and all Western Balkan countries have demonstrated strong commitment to the implementation of the Sendai Framework



*October 22, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Launch of the project "**Strengthening the Capacity and Coordination of the Judiciary and Law Enforcement in Bosnia and Herzegovina to Effectively Address Corruption and Economic Crime**".*



for Disaster Risk Reduction. However, current efforts are insufficient given the increasing frequency and intensity of disasters due to climate change consequences. A report presented at the 54<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum, held in January in Davos-Klosters, identified extreme weather events, critical changes to land systems, biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse as the most significant long-term risks<sup>3</sup>. This

report emphasizes that global risk preparedness and mitigation are more essential than ever yet hindered by a lack of consensus and cooperation. The report reiterates also that cross-border coordination is the only viable approach to address the most pressing threats to human security and prosperity.

3 Full document available here: [Global Risks Report 2025 | World Economic Forum](#)



*October 4, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Devastating floods hit the country, causing casualties and extensive damage. The Italian Cooperation immediately provided funds through the project “**Strengthening Local Disaster Preparedness and Response Capacities**” to support local communities.*



# ITALIAN DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION STRATEGY

**AICS Tirana strategy in the Western Balkans** is aligned with the European Union accession program and with all the priorities identified by the countries of the Region.

**Three new regional projects** have been designed and approved in 2024, in addition to regional program "Culture and Creativity in the Western Balkans", funded by the European Union and currently implemented in Albania, Kosovo, and Bosnia and Herzegovina.



*January 15, Venice. Workshop titled "Il mare dei mestieri" held within the framework of "Culture and Creativity for the Western Balkans (CC4WBs)", aimed at establishing connections between traditional crafts and new cultural models. Focus was on the Xhubleta, a traditional Albanian dress included in the UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage.*

These 3 new projects embrace AICS Tirana approach and objectives, for dialogue and reconciliation in the Western Balkans, working on crucial sectors such as **disaster risk management**, **environment protection**, and **diaspora valorization and involvement**.

**"Strengthening transboundary collaboration, Disaster Risk Reduction capacities & Early Warning Systems in the Western Balkans".**

1



**EUR 4.000.000**

Implemented by UNDRR (United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction)

**Albania, North Macedonia, Serbia, Kosovo**

**"Shar Dinaric – Sustainable development and protection of natural and cultural heritage in the cross-border Dinaric Alps"**

2



**EUR 3.000.000**

Implemented by Civil Society Organizations to be selected through call for proposals

**Kosovo, North Macedonia**

**"Leveraging the potential of diaspora to advance EU accession and labour mobility in the Western Balkans"**

3



**EUR 3.000.000**

Implemented by IOM (International Organization for Migration)

**Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia**



# Sectors of Intervention

# Agriculture and Rural Development



**68,3** MLN  
EUR

## ALBANIA



**8 grants**  
**5 soft loans**

## BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA



**4 grants**

**Institutional technical assistance** for adaptation and alignment with the Acquis Communautaire through capacity-building activities related to Chapters 11, 12, and 13 of Cluster no. 5 "Resources, Agriculture, and Cohesion"

Promoting gender equality and **women's economic empowerment** in rural development and agriculture

**Enhancing local products**, supporting different steps of the supply chain – from small producers to improve yields, productivity, sustainability, and product quality, to adopting brands and trademarks consistent with food safety standards, promoting quality and marketing of agricultural products

**Support to the VET (Vocational Education and Training) sector** in the field of agricultural and rural development through infrastructural interventions and the updating of teaching curricula

**Institutional capacity building** to strengthen fishermen's associations and improve the organization of the fisheries sector

**Conservation of plant biodiversity**, promotion of native animal breeds and enhancement of sustainability of typical productions

**Development of organic farming** and control/support tools for the marketing of quality products



*June 7, Albania. "COLTIVIAMO IL FUTURO" event in Tirana to promote ongoing sustainable agriculture initiatives and deliver four vehicles, donated in the framework of "SAFIAL - Institutional strengthening of the Albanian Ministry of Agriculture for food safety management" project, provided to reach livestock farmers to conduct health inspections.*



*May 6–9, Rimini. AICS Tirana's first participation at **MACFRUT** with a 45-members delegation, including 12 exhibitors from different areas of Albania, partners and technical operators from the Albanian fruit and vegetable sector, ministerial representatives from Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and members of Albanian and Italian civil society.*



## EU GOAL

Institutional support to Albania in the agricultural and fisheries sectors towards EU accession

The specific objective of the project is **to strengthen the capacity of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development in the framework of the EU accession negotiations for Chapters 11 and 13**, implementing pilot interventions in the agricultural and fisheries sectors according with the new Common Agricultural Policy 2023-2027 and the Common Fisheries Policy.

The two pilot interventions will showcase concrete progress regarding *acquis* approximation and harmonization with the *acquis* in the Agriculture and Rural Development and Fisheries sectors.



BUDGET **2.500.000,00 Euro**

IMPLEMENTING PARTNER



PARTNERS

Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD)

DURATION

36 months

AREAS OF INTERVENTION

Albania

CHANNEL

Multi-bilateral

BENEFICIARIES

Technical and administrative officials at MARD involved in the working groups related to Chapters 11 e 13



### **IRFAN TARELLI**

General Director of Agriculture and Rural Development, MARD

*Albania's path toward the European Union membership entails an ambitious agenda aimed at successfully concluding accession negotiations in the coming years. Within this process, the Albanian Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) is responsible for negotiations in Agriculture and Rural Development (Chapter 11), Food safety, veterinary and phytosanitary policy (Chapter 12), and Fisheries and Aquaculture (Chapter 13).*

*As Director General for Agriculture and Rural Development at MARD, I am tasked with overseeing the alignment process under Chapter 11. This involves preparing the ground for Albania to actively participate in the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). This involves leading a profound transformation of the country's agricultural sector, which goes well beyond legislative alignment. It includes establishing and strengthening management and control systems, engaging and supporting farmers, rural communities, and stakeholders throughout the process, while ensuring that Albania contributes to key EU policies and strategies, such as the European Green Deal, the Farm-to-Fork and the Biodiversity strategies.*

*To achieve this, our public administration is called to make sustained efforts in a relatively short time. And here cooperation with Albania's longstanding international partners represents a crucial opportunity. Among them, Italy plays a key role in accelerating progress in Chapter 11, in particular through the EU GoAL project, funded by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS) and implemented by CIHEAM Bari in close collaboration with MARD.*

*Providing institutional capacity development for EU accession negotiations under Ch.11 and Ch.13, EU GoAL is also working directly with my General Directorate to align with specific CAP sectors, including Direct Payments, the Common Market Organization framework, and Organic Agriculture. This is carried out through technical assistance, training activities both in Albania and abroad, and targeted pilot actions.*

*Support through access to expertise and best practices on EU CAP implementation, such as those provided by Italy with EU GoAL, is proving fundamental in transforming the complexities of the alignment process into valuable learning opportunities for MARD staff and its agencies. Indeed, further development of our institutional capacities is a key priority and an enabling factor for Albania's agricultural sector and rural communities to thrive within the EU.*



# Environment and Sustainable Tourism



**17,5** MLN EUR

## ALBANIA



**3 grants**  
1 EU delegated

## BOSNIA



**3 grants**

## KOSOVO



**1 grant**

## REGIONAL

**1 grant**

Support for the development and implementation of **protected areas management plans**, adopting a holistic and long-term approach that integrates both conservation and sustainable development

Assistance in supervising **territorial protection and valorization strategies** with a particular focus on mountain and rural areas, including co-designed initiatives with civil society to promote sustainable tourism development strategies and safeguard environmental and cultural heritage

Support to the **development of risk prevention capabilities**, including environmental crimes

Strengthening **control and monitoring capacities for tourism activities**, to foster tourism growth without compromising ecosystems

**Awareness-raising initiatives** targeting institutions, local communities and tourists



*September 18, Kosovo. Ceremony for the delivery of mountain rescue equipment to local beneficiaries in the framework of "NaturKosovo" project.*



*October 25, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Completion of modernization and energy efficiency works at Hotel Mladost in the Sutjeska National Park, thanks to "NaturBosnia" project.*



# VITA-Vjosa

Enhancement of tourism and environment along the Vjosa River

The VITA Vjosa project aims to **promote responsible tourism in the Vjosa River basin**, with a focus on sustainability and valorization of natural and cultural heritage and the specific objective of increasing business opportunities for local service providers and operators devoted to sustainable tourism along the river basin.

## RESULT 1

Strengthened the services of small businesses along the Vjosa River Basin working on responsible tourism

## RESULT 2

Improved public and private actors' skills in protection and valorization for environmental heritage and responsible tourism in the establishment of the Vjosa River Protected Area

8 DECENT WORK AND  
ECONOMIC GROWTH



## BUDGET

**1.881.578,95 Euro**  
95% AICS

## IMPLEMENTING PARTNER



## PARTNERS

CELIM - Centro Laici Italiani per le Missioni  
Associazione Italiana Turismo Responsabile - AITR  
Comune di Milano  
Agenzia Nazionale del Turismo Albanese - AKT  
Agenzia Nazionale per le Aree Protette - AKZM  
Associazione Juvenjlia

## DURATION

36 months

## AREAS OF INTERVENTION

Përmet, Këlcyrë, Tepelenë,  
Mallakastër, Selenicë,  
Valona

## CHANNEL

Projects promoted by  
Civil Society Organizations

## BENEFICIARIES

Small entrepreneurs  
Official and experts from public institutions  
Communities benefiting from waste  
management in the area





### Technical assistance for integrated tourist packages

- Mapping of economic activities related to tourism (hotels, restaurants, guesthouses, tour operators) in the target municipalities;
- Creation of a local consortium to coordinate tourism activities, following the establishment of the Vjosa River National Park, in order to ensure compliance with the new regulations.

### Training of operators and tourist guides

- Organization of HACCP courses and courses for tourist guides, with identification of trainers, involving 122 SMEs to assess their availability to participate in the consortium and contribute to tourism development.

### Creation of a fund for responsible tourism businesses

- Creation of the online platform "Mangrovia" to manage funding for tourism businesses and thus stimulate the growth of local businesses in the tourism sector.



### Promotion of tourism along the Vjosa River

- Promotional events such as the presentation of the project at the Peace Center "Annalena Tonelli" in Forlì, with testimonials from Italian travelers who have visited Albania, and collaboration with tourist agencies.

### Drafting of the Responsible Tourism Development Plan

- Public consultations for the approval of the Integrated Management Plan of the Vjosa River, which includes the Tourism Regulatory Plan as a basis for the plan for the promotion of sustainable tourism in the protected area.



### Interventions for the enhancement of tourist sites

- Creation of information points and watchtowers along the trails of the Vjosa River National Park with the aim of improving tourist accessibility and land management.

### Promotion and monitoring of the Tourism Development Plan

- Technical assistance for the creation of tourism projects in line with the sustainable development plan and monitoring of its implementation.

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### **Valeria Parracino**

CELIM (Centro laici italiani per le missioni, Milano)

*As a graduate in Environmental and Development Economy, I have always sought a way to integrate social and environmental issues, and cooperation has provided me with this opportunity. After diverse third-sector experiences, both within NGO and in a UN agency, from 2018 I've been working with CELIM on environmental cooperation projects in Albania and Lebanon. In 2024 I started to work on the Vita Vjosa project, a tourism-environment initiative on the Vjosa river, considered the last wild river in Europe. Threatened for years by hydroelectric power plant construction projects, the river was finally designated a National Park in 2023, thanks in large part to the efforts of civil society.*

*This project was conceived prior to the proclamation of the protected area, and involves a partnership between Italian and Albanian actors and it turned out as an extremely complex endeavor: we collaborate with 2 national agencies, 7 municipalities and 3 regional protected areas administration, expanding activities that include different themes, from waste and wastewater management to sustainable tourism promotion. This is perhaps the most stimulating aspect of the project: managing to bridge two seemingly contrasting worlds – environmental protection and tourism development – by creating spaces for dialogue, building trust and guiding local SMEs towards more sustainable models.*

*As often happens in development cooperation projects, this initiative offers me daily opportunities to learn, grow professionally and engage with top-level experts in various sectors. It is a path that enriches me deeply, both from a human and technical point of view. If I were to describe my cooperation experience in one word, I would choose "exchange". Too often cooperation is viewed as a unilateral process, but it is in fact a continuous reciprocal dialogue.*

*Every day you learn as much as you contribute. Giving back authentic meaning to this word means recognizing the value that arises from the encounter between experiences, cultures, perspectives and needs.*

# Disaster Risk Reduction



**42** MLN  
EUR

## ALBANIA



**2 grants**  
**1 soft loan**

## BOSNIA



**1 grant**

## REGIONAL

**1 grant**

### Support to the Albanian Civil Protection

in managing emergencies at the IT level, including field operations, and the acquisition of advanced equipment and infrastructures for emergencies

### Strengthening of the Albanian Fire Brigade,

providing training and establishing additional units currently not yet available (dog units, mountain rescue, freshwater and sea rescue teams)

### Support for the Civil Protection Volunteer Program

to ensure the organization, preparedness and training of volunteers

### Strengthen the resilience of local communities

and their preparedness for natural and wear and tear hazards in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in line with international standards and good practices

Enhancing disaster resilience in the Western Balkans through improved risk knowledge, **strengthened governance, multi-hazard early warning systems and cross-border cooperation** between Albania, North Macedonia and Serbia, with the involvement of Kosovo in regional activities



*December 11, Albania. Inauguration of the **Albanian Civil Protection Operational Room** — a new milestone in the strong partnership between the Italian Development Cooperation and the Albanian Ministry of Defense for the country's security and wellbeing.*



# Bosnia and Herzegovina: strengthening local capacities for disaster preparedness and response

The project aims at supporting the country in its accession process to the European Union by **contributing to the achievement of national priorities and international commitments in risk reduction**, improving safety, security, and well-being of communities in areas prone to hazards, with particular attention to the most vulnerable groups.



June 24, 2024: Project presentation in Sarajevo

From left: Laura Lungarotti – Chief of Mission IOM in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Marco Di Ruzza – Italian Ambassador to Sarajevo, Stefania Vizzaccaro – AICS Tirana Head of Office

## BUDGET

2.000.000,00 Euro

## IMPLEMENTING PARTNER



## PARTNERS

Red Cross – Bosnia and Herzegovina  
Ministry of Security (MoS)  
Civil defense authorities, organizations, and  
groups of the Federation of Bosnia and  
Herzegovina (FBiH) and Republika Srpska (RS)  
Brčko District (BD)  
Civil Defense Directorate of RS  
Civil Defense Administration of FBiH

## DURATION

24 months

## AREAS OF INTERVENTION

Bosnia – Herzegovina

## CHANNEL

Multi-bilateral

## BENEFICIARIES

Civil defense officials  
Brčko district level and municipalities,  
firefighters, police officers, school  
principals, social services, and members of  
the Red Cross





## MAIN ACTIVITIES

1. Specific training on CCCM (**Camp Coordination and Camp Management**) for key disaster response agencies personnel;
2. **Psychological first aid training** in critical situations in selected municipalities/cities;
3. Organization of a CCCM simulation to **share practical knowledge** with local stakeholders;
4. **Exchange of good practices** and experiences on disaster risk reduction organized between regional partners, EU Member States (EU MS), and the EU Civil Protection Mechanism (EU CPM);
5. Improvement of infrastructure and availability of **essential risk reduction equipment** for beneficiary agencies;
6. Awareness sessions and **participatory risk reduction activities** for communities in the target municipalities.



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**Azra IBRAHIMOVIC-SREBRENICA**

Capacity Building and Liaison  
Coordinator, International Organization  
for Migration (IOM), Bosnia and  
Herzegovina

*This intervention needs to be rapid and targeted, in order to reduce disaster risks and enhance emergency response capacities across the country. The training courses are not only technically relevant but also highly impactful at the local level, focusing on coordination and management, psychological first aid, and disaster risk reduction (DRR) for communities.*

*What strikes me the most is the project's ability to serve these communities. It fosters a sense of responsibility and strengthens resilience from the very beginning, with the clear aim of providing tools for sustainable disaster preparedness. The expected results, including strengthened disaster management systems and increased volunteer engagement, will undoubtedly have a transformative and long-term impact.*

*Reflecting on my 25 years of experience in development and emergency projects, I remember with particular pleasure my involvement in a center for vulnerable people. I've been working closely with beneficiaries who had endured enormous hardship yet still held hope for a better future. Those moments reminded me that our work goes beyond simply providing shelter and aid - it is about restoring dignity and enabling people to look at the future again.*

*More than just a job, humanitarian commitment has become a vocation for me: contribute to make the world a more compassionate place for all.*

*What is development cooperation for me in one word? RESILIENCE*

# Economic Development



**51,6** MLN  
EUR

## ALBANIA



**2 grants**  
**2 soft loans**

## SERBIA



**1 grant**

## REGIONAL

**1 grant**

**Creating job opportunities:** supporting local entrepreneurs as well as youth and women's employment

**Strengthening the local productive sector:** development of small and medium-sized enterprises in order to make the economic system more competitive and resilient, while promoting knowledge transfer and new technologies

**Investments in human capital:** promoting technical and vocational education and skills development to foster economic growth and innovation

**Access to integrated financial tools:** facilitating access to credit lines with competitive interest rates on the national market and providing technical assistance aimed at improving SMEs value chains



*November 26, Albania. During the 2024 Global Entrepreneurship Week, the **Italo-Albanian Program in support of SMEs** held a workshop focused on infrastructure investment and financing opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises.*





# EU Support for Internal Market

This project aims at improving Serbian institutional entities in order to **create an attractive environment for market operators**, significantly contributing to the alignment of the EU *acquis* related to the internal market.

## Sectors of intervention

- MARKET SURVEILLANCE
- QUALITY INFRASTRUCTURE
- ELECTRONIC COMMERCE
- SINGLE CONTACT POINTS (SCP)
- CONSUMER PROTECTION
- INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS
- COMPETITION
- STATE AID CONTROL



November 24, 2024: EU for Internal Market 2<sup>nd</sup> Steering Committee



## BUDGET

**8.000.000 EUR**  
1.734.726,80 EUR managed by AICS Tirana

## IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS



## PARTNERS



## DURATION

36 months

## CHANNEL

European Union delegated initiative

## BENEFICIARIES

Ministry of Domestic and Foreign Trade  
Ministry of Economy  
Ministry of Information and Telecommunications  
Ministry of Health - Inspection Affairs  
Ministry of Environmental Protection  
Ministry of Construction, Transport, and Infrastructure  
Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Water Management  
Ministry of Labor, Veterans' Employment, and Social Affairs  
Ministry of Finance  
Ministry of Mines and Energy  
Local Economic Institutions





**Vera Despotovic**

Ministry of the Interior and Foreign  
Trade of Serbia

*Two of the project's key activities are business inspection and market surveillance. Given that the responsibilities of supervisory authorities include online monitoring, distance trading and physical products inspections, this project covers the full range of surveillance processes, from e-commerce and digital supply chains, to a new approach to market oversight. Instead of relying solely on documentary reviews and visual inspections, the project supports the transition to tangible verification of product characteristics, such as sampling and laboratory testing. One method of sampling products is through random purchasing, carried out by inspectors without revealing their identity, the so-called "mystery shopping". This new methodology involves online purchases from various types of outlets, including large retailers and small shops, offering selected electrical products (vacuum cleaners, hair dryers and irons) at different retail prices.*

*Market research was conducted by purchasing products for laboratory testing, with the aim of assessing risks and guiding further supervision. The results revealed that out of a total of 51 samples of electrical products, 69% did not meet the technical and safety requirements set by the standards. Furthermore, all non-compliant products were found lacking the required markings and consumers' instructions. For non-conformities of the examined products, which could pose a serious risk to consumer safety, especially for vulnerable groups, the project provided technical support to the competent inspectors and acquired information necessary to increase the effectiveness of market surveillance. This also benefited economic operators, enabling them either to address formal product non-conformities on their own initiative or upon request from market inspectors, as well as to withdraw those presenting safety risk and recall them when evidence of non-conformity is provided.*

*In parallel with the support of market surveillance authorities, the project contributes to the drafting of the National Market Surveillance Strategy for the period 2025-2028, sharing and transferring the expertise of EU Member States' market surveillance authorities in the development of national strategies, which define priority market surveillance activities.*



# Culture



**12,1** MLN  
EUR

## ALBANIA



**2 grants**  
1 EU dele-  
gated

## BOSNIA



**1 grant**

## REGIONALE

**1 EU delegated**

**Technical and scientific assistance** for the revitalization of the cultural heritage of the archaeological park of Antigonea and of the historic village of Benja, in Albania

Development of local resources and **sustainable tourism** in the archeological park of Bylis (Albania)

**Economic support for women and young people** through the promotion of cultural heritage

**Capacity building in the cultural and creative sectors** through technical and financial support in favor of cultural industries

**Strengthening of regional culture cooperation** and promotion of artists and cultural professionals' mobility



*April 22, Albania. Launch of the second call for proposals in the framework of the regional program “**Culture and Creativity for the Western Balkans (CC4WBs)**”, aimed at funding projects in the cultural and creative sector fostering dialogue within the Region and with Europe.*



# ARS AEVI

The project aims at **supporting the development of the Ars Aevi Museum in Sarajevo** through conservation and preservation of the existing collection, raising awareness about the museum's importance, developing human and technical skills through the exchange of experiences with international cultural stakeholders, and providing tools and equipment.

## EXPECTED RESULTS

1. Construction of the Ars Aevi Museum;
2. Local and worldwide promotion of the Museum, highlighting its historical and cultural importance;
3. Evaluation and exhibition of the works of art using both traditional and digital tools;
4. Strengthening the Museum's management and administrative staff skills in order to create a free space for artists and market opportunities for their works, as well as enabling citizens to be part of Sarajevo's cultural life;
5. Provision of technical equipment to preserve and restore artifacts, artworks, and archives.



# ARS AAEVI



## BUDGET

**2.000.000,00 Euro**  
in the framework of a Trust  
Fund managed by UNESCO

## IMPLEMENTING PARTNER



## PARTNERS

Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina  
Ministry of Culture and Sports of the Sarajevo Canton  
Municipality of Sarajevo  
"City Museums" network

## DURATION

24 months  
in pipeline

## AREAS OF INTERVENTION

"Ars Aevi" Museum  
in Sarajevo

## CHANNEL

Multi-bilateral

## BENEFICIARIES

Museum and University professionals  
Artists and Creative people  
Administrative and Management Staff  
Students of Arts

1992

A group of local intellectuals starts working on the Ars Aevi Project, led by **Enver Hadžiomerspahić**, former Director of the official ceremony at the 1984 Olympic Winter Games and of the Sarajevo Biennial of Contemporary Art "Yugoslav Documenta".

1994

The **Ars Aevi Collection** comes to life, involving museums, centers and foundations of contemporary art, single pieces of art donated by over 150 world-famous artists including Michelangelo Pistoletto, Daniel Buren, Joseph Kosuth, Bizhan Bassiri, Jannis Kounellis, Maja Bajević, Dean Toumin Jokanović, Panamarenko.

2001

The Italian Government funds the "Development of the ARS AEVI Museum of Contemporary Arts in Sarajevo" project (1 MLN USD) in order to implement a **medium-term preservation plan** for the museum collection.

2002

The **Ars Aevi Bridge** is built to connect, even symbolically, the two banks of the Miljacka River in Sarajevo, allowing citizens to reach the site of the future museum.

2015

The European Commission approves the allocation of funds for the **Feasibility Study of the Ars Aevi Museum**, completed in 2016.

2017

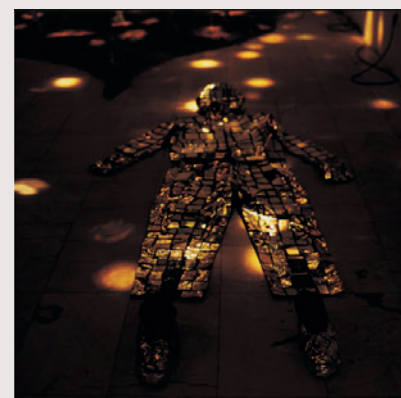
The city of Sarajevo shifts the Museum project into a public institution, supporting its **nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize**, due to the contribution in changing the image of Sarajevo and Bosnia and Herzegovina on the international artistic, cultural, political and economic scene.

2022

The Italian Agency for Development Cooperation supports the whole initiative by engaging a local architecture firm, Studio Non Stop, to **develop the final design for the Museum based on Renzo Piano's preliminary drawings**. In October 2023 Studio Non Stop presents the final design in Sarajevo.

2024

On August 19th, at the presence of the Italian Ambassador to BiH, the EU Ambassador, UNESCO representatives, and local authorities **a ceremony for the Museum's construction permits** is held. On September 30th, the **Italian contribution of €2 million** to the Trust Fund is approved. The **partnership agreement** is signed in December.



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### Senka Ibršimbegović

Director of Citizens' Museums of Sarajevo

**Ars Aevi**, meaning “Art of the Epoch” in Latin and an anagram of “Sarajevo,” was born during the 1992 siege of Sarajevo as a powerful act of cultural resistance.

Ars Aevi’s concept redefines the traditional museum model. It is envisioned not merely as a repository of art but as a collaborative, on-going project involving artists, curators, and institutions from around the globe. At the heart of its vision is **Sarajevo’s historical role as a meeting point between Eastern and Western cultures**. As such, Ars Aevi means to be a museum shaped by an “international collective will,” emphasizing inclusivity, cultural dialogue, and innovation.

The foundation of the museum lies in the **Ars Aevi Collection**, comprising over 200 works by renowned contemporary artists from across the globe. Its formation followed an unconventional model: prominent curators and institutions from Italy, Slovenia, Austria, Turkey, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Ukraine curated selections and hosted exhibitions in their own cities before donating artworks to Sarajevo. Notable exhibitions and collaborations took place in Milan (from 1994), Prato (1995), Venice (1996), Ljubljana (1997), Vienna (1998), Istanbul (2007), Podgorica (2012), and Sarajevo (1999–2014).

This decentralized model continues to evolve. From 2022, new regional and European partners—such as museums and art centers in Saint Étienne, Zagreb, Belgrade, Athens, and Barcelona—have joined or confirmed future collaboration, further expanding the Ars Aevi network.

Ars Aevi has played a vital role in promoting contemporary art from Bosnia and Herzegovina on the international stage. Highlights include organizing Bosnia and Herzegovina’s first Venice Biennale pavilion in 2003 and 2009 exhibition Future Post History by Braco Dimitrijević. More recently, the Ars Aevi Collection was featured in the 2022/2023 Museum in Exile exhibition in Montpellier and the Fotografia Europea festival in Reggio Emilia.

Echoing its own wartime origins, Ars Aevi launched the “Kyiv 2022/2023 Collection” to show solidarity with Ukraine following the 2022 Russian invasion. Created in partnership with the Kyiv-based NGO MOCA, this initiative underscores the ongoing need for cultural resilience amid conflict and envisions a future contemporary art museum for Ukraine.



# Health and Gender-Based Violence



**13,8** MLN  
EUR

## ALBANIA



4 grants  
1 soft loan

## BOSNIA



1 grant

## KOSOVO



1 grant

Support to the implementation of **sustainable and inclusive health governance** in line with the “Leave no one behind” principle

Improvement of **health infrastructures**

Technical assistance for **procedures and protocols development and updating**

**Training** for healthcare professionals

**Exchange of good practices** and expertise

**Collaboration with research institutions** and hospitals within the Italian System

Strengthening of **prevention and response measures to Gender-Based Violence and Violence** against Women in support of relevant institutions



*June 14, Albania. Inauguration of the educational farm “Da Sandra”, dedicated to social inclusion and psychiatric rehabilitation, within the framework of the “**BenEssere insieme**” project.*



*December 11, Albania. AICS Tirana supporting rural women in the North of Albania through 2 different new projects*

<https://www.facebook.com/AICSTirana/videos/1255752325689800>



# Support to health system in Kosovo

The project aims to strengthen the National Healthcare System through two main components: supporting the establishment and full operation of the **Cardiac Surgery Department at the University Clinical Center** of Kosovo and improving the quality and management of hospital services, with a focus on **preventing hospital-acquired infections** and the rational use of antibiotics to **prevent antibiotic resistance**.

## Achieved results

### Establishment and improvement of the clinical microbiology laboratory

- Staff numbers increased from 3 microbiologists and 3 laboratory technicians to 6 and 11;
- Analyzed samples from 11,000 (2021) to approximately 40,000 (2024);
- Innovative equipment, ongoing training, institutional support, and rapid, reliable, and comprehensive diagnoses.

### The cardiac surgery department is now fully operational

- Over 1,770 operations from 2015 to 2024, with progressive growth year after year;
- 372 surgeries performed in 2024 alone;
- Second operating room equipped and ready to work in 2019.

3 GOOD HEALTH  
AND WELL-BEING



### BUDGET

3.069.900,00 Euro

### IMPLEMENTING PARTNER

Ministry of Health  
National Institute for public health

### DURATION

39 months

### AREAS OF INTERVENTION

Pristina

### CHANNEL

Bilateral

### BENEFICIARIES

Kosovo population

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AGENZIA ITALIANA  
PER LA COOPERAZIONE  
ALLO SVILUPPO



### **Shpejtim Shurdhiqi**

Director of Cardiac-surgery Clinic, University Clinical Center of Kosovo

*"I have wanted to study medicine and especially surgery since I was in elementary school. Thanks to my great efforts I managed to complete my studies and when, in 2012, a specialization in Cardiac Surgery was offered for the first time in Kosovo's history, I chose it right away.*

*My optimism for this medical field grew even stronger when the media announced that cardiac surgery in the University Clinical Center was supported by a fund from the Italian population, through the Italian Embassy in Kosovo. This contribution represented a gesture of hope, a message that reminded us that we were not alone and that we had the support of an extraordinary community that believe in our cause: the creation and development of a missing medical specialization, extremely important for our population. The year 2013 marked a historic turning point: as a member of the first generation of Cardiac Surgery specialists, we began operating. It was an indescribable feeling, combining humanity, commitment, responsibility, and success. The dream was becoming reality.*

*Years went by and, at the end of 2018, I managed to complete my specialization, becoming part of the first generation trained entirely in Kosovo, thanks to the facilities and working conditions established within the Cardiac Surgery Clinical Service.*

*Our work never stopped and the support of the Italian State remained essential for the advancement of Cardiac Surgery. The number and complexity of the interventions continued to grow and, after nearly a decade, Cardiac Surgery had reached an advanced stage of development.*

*Continuous commitment, favorable working conditions and strong determination enabled me, at the beginning of 2023, to be appointed interim Director of the Cardiac Surgery Clinical Service, a position officially confirmed in August 2024.*

*The Italian contribution was not only a financial investment in the creation of a modern working environment, but also crucial support for the training of new generations of cardiac surgeons, who signify a real wealth for Kosovo."*

# Good Governance and Rule of Law



**20,4** MLN  
EUR

## ALBANIA



**2 grants**  
1 EU dele-  
gated

## BOSNIA



**3 grants**

## SERBIA



**1 grant**

### Albania



**Support to judicial self-governing institutions**, aimed at strengthening the independence, transparency, effectiveness and efficiency of the Albanian judicial system

**Development of Strategic Plans**, including the *Strategic Plan 2025-2030 for the procurators' system*, in order to define clear and sustainable objectives

Improvement of **inter-institutional cooperation**, promoting enhanced collaboration and communication among judicial institutions

**Strengthening institutional capacities**, through technical assistance and training, to improve performance, and ensure the adoption of strategies in line with European standards.

### Bosnia



**Strengthening institutional abilities**, both administrative and organizational, for education and inter-institutional collaboration

Providing a targeted **training to judges** and public prosecutors

**Promoting naturalistic and scientific activities** related to nature, science, tourism, environment protection and sustainable development as tools for reconciliation and social inclusion

### Serbia



**Improving the current legislative framework** to support the alignment with European standards

**Strengthening institutions** through training and technique assistance

**Raising awareness about the Internal Market** by promoting opportunities and EU regulations

**Digitalization of administrative processes**, with the aim of simplifying procedures and services





# EU 4 Justice - Improve the capacity of independent justice institutions in Albania

The overall objective is to **support the governance bodies of the Albanian judiciary to implement the justice reform** by strengthening their independence, transparency, efficiency, accountability and building public trust in the Albanian justice system in line with the EU *acquis* and best practices.



## EU IV JUSTICE



### BUDGET

**3.430.000,00 Euro**  
900.000 Euro = AICS co-funding  
30.000 Euro = Expertise France co-funding

### IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

ITALIAN AGENCY  
FOR DEVELOPMENT  
COOPERATION

### PARTNERS

Consiglio Superiore della Magistratura italiano - CSM  
Fundación para la Internacionalización de las Administraciones Públicas (FIAPP)  
Expertise France (EF)

### DURATION

24 months

### AREAS OF INTERVENTION

Albania

### CHANNEL

European Union delegated initiative

### BENEFICIARIES

High Judicial Council (HJC)  
High Prosecutorial Council (HPC)  
High Justice Inspector (HJI)

## High Judicial Council

- Strengthening the Council's organizational and managerial structure, including reporting, establishment, and management of the monitoring mechanism for strategic planning;
- Strengthening its functional and organizational independence following the completion of the new judicial map;
- Improving standards and procedures for the selection, appointment, assignment of positions, termination of office, transfer, and promotion, as well as standards and procedures for evaluating the ethics and professional performance of judges;
- Strengthening standards and procedures for other decisions regarding the rights and obligations of judges;
- Supporting courts and the CSG in drafting/adopting rules on the efficiency and quality of justice.



**May 10, 2024** – Annual Joint Meeting between HPC and HJC



**May 21-24, 2024** – Study-visit to Italy for the HPC at the Italian partner CSM – Superior Council of the Judiciary

## High Prosecutorial Council

- Strengthening the Council's organizational and managerial structure, in particular procedures, internal capacity building, and standards for the performance of administrative tasks, including reporting;
- Support to establish and manage the monitoring mechanism for the implementation of strategic planning competencies;
- Support in establishing a functioning training unit;
- Improving internal standards and procedures for hiring, appointment, assignment, termination, transfer, promotion, command, and other career decisions;
- Strengthening standards and procedures for the ethical and professional evaluation of prosecutors;
- Strengthening standards and procedures for other decisions determining the rights and obligations of prosecutors.

## High Justice Inspector

- Strengthening the Inspectorate's organizational and managerial structure aiming at increasing its efficiency;
- Improving service delivery related to legal reporting obligations;
- Creating and strengthening mechanisms for legal, administrative, and practical cooperation between judicial bodies;
- Improving standards and procedures for all inspection responsibilities related to courts and prosecutors' offices, in accordance with the law, regarding institutional and thematic inspections.



**December 16-20, 2024** – Second study-visit to Italy for the HPC at the Italian partner CSM – Superior Council of the Judiciary

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# Education and Vocational Training



Support to partner countries in the implementation of **national strategies for vocational education and training** through development/revision of curricula

**Creating job opportunities** mobilizing local resources, private sector included

# Energy and Infrastructures



**Improving Albania's energy distribution system and road network:**

- Provide the Albanian Ministry of Public Works and Transport with project tools to improve the national road system through three facilities for infrastructures
- North-South and East-West routes
- Strengthen economic development opportunities along Montenegro and Northern Europe routes
- Duplication of the direct road axis Mitrovica-Shkoder
- Creation of the direct link Vazarr-Kavaje
- Creation of the Elbasan bypass

**Capacity building technical component** to ensure a proper projects' management and a full alignment with European regulations.





*December 13, Tirana. AICS Tirana staff group picture at Sou Fujimoto's cloud installation in Tirana*

## CONTACTS



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