



Switzerland and Bulgaria will further strengthen partnerships in innovation, environmental protection and vocational education

20 September 2022

Today, the Swiss Ambassador Raymund Furrer and Bulgarian Deputy Prime Minister for European funds Atanas Pekanov signed the bilateral framework agreement establishing the new Swiss-Bulgarian Cooperation Programme. As part of the second Swiss contribution to the enlarged European Union, Switzerland and Bulgaria will collaborate on joint initiatives in a number of areas important for Bulgarian development. Bulgaria is the first of the 13 EU Member States having joined the EU since 2004 that is signing the bilateral framework agreement for the second Swiss contribution.

On this occasion, Ambassador Furrer stated, “Through this second contribution Switzerland further strengthens its bilateral relations with Bulgaria and the EU. The Swiss-Bulgarian Cooperation Programme is more than the provision of funds: we aim at establishing partnerships, at exchanging knowledge and experiences and at actively contributing to the sustainable development of Bulgaria. By working closely with our Bulgarian partners, we hope to promote good solutions, which may be scaled up. For example, by focusing on dual vocational education and training we contribute to meeting the challenge faced by Europe today of reducing youth unemployment.”

Areas of cooperation

The aim of the new Swiss-Bulgarian Cooperation programme is to contribute to the strategic reforms undertaken by Bulgaria, to improve the lives of its people, as well as to strengthen existing and create new Bulgarian-Swiss partnerships between public institutions at central and local levels, as well as private sector and civil society organisations. It will target areas where there are proven needs of Bulgaria and opportunities for Switzerland to add value with its expertise and experience.

The new programme will focus on:

- protecting the environment and the climate through improved air quality, the disposal of obsolete pesticides and the sustainable use of national resources;
- strengthening innovation through scientific cooperation and exchange in research;
- promoting civic engagement and transparency;
- meeting the health and education needs of vulnerable groups and marginalised ethnic minorities;
- returning and (re-)integrating victims of trafficking and other migrants;
- mainstreaming dual vocational education and training (D-VET);



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- improving public safety and security through community policing and the prevention of juvenile delinquency;
- increasing health literacy of children and adolescence;
and
- fighting corruption and promoting integrity.

The programme will strive to realise synergies among these thematic areas, for example between the support measures in DVET and the inclusion of vulnerable minorities, as well as with programmes co-financed from other sources.

Scope of funding

The second Swiss contribution to Bulgaria amounts to 92.5 million Swiss francs; compared to the first Swiss-Bulgarian Cooperation Programme, the amount has been increased by more than fifteen percent or nearly 16.5 million Swiss francs. The individual support measures will be co-financed to a various degree by Switzerland and Bulgaria, depending on the interests of the two parties and the financial capacity of the executing agencies.

Next steps

The implementation of the second Swiss-Bulgarian Cooperation Programme will start after the framework agreement has been ratified by the Bulgarian Parliament. All support measures have to be implemented until the end of 2029.

Second Swiss contribution

The second Swiss contribution is an investment in Europe's security, stability and prosperity. It seeks to strengthen cohesion in Europe and to support countries that face exceptional migration challenges. Through the second contribution, Switzerland is furthermore strengthening and deepening bilateral relations with the EU partner countries and the EU as a whole.

The second contribution has a total value of CHF 1.302 billion – equal to the amount of the pre-ceding enlargement contribution – and a duration of ten years until 3 December 2029. Switzerland has earmarked CHF 1.102 billion for the 13 EU Member States that have joined the EU since 2004, namely Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia (EU-13).

The second contribution was approved by the Swiss Parliament on 3 December 2019 and released on 30 September 2021. On June 30, 2022, Switzerland and the EU signed in Brussels a Memorandum of Understanding specifying key parameters of the contribution such as the amount, its distribution among the partner countries, thematic priorities and principles for cooperation and implementation.



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First Swiss-Bulgarian Cooperation Programme

In its 10 years from 2009 until 2019, the first Programme with a budget of 76 million Swiss francs has supported more than 120 initiatives and key reforms in Bulgaria. It reached thousands of people in almost all municipalities. A long-standing environmental problem, the disposal of hazardous obsolete pesticides, was solved in over 100 municipalities. Modern dual vocational education was piloted as part of the educational system and promoted as the most effective tool for youth employment. Approaches for social inclusion of vulnerable groups and care for elderly people have been adopted in 15 municipalities and at a national level. New models of nature protection that are based on the commitment and improved livelihood of local communities started working. Combatting organized crime and trafficking of human beings became high in the agenda of the institutions and Bulgarian society. Contemporary standards in juvenile justice and delinquencies, human rights -based policing and environmental crimes were spread within law enforcement institutions.