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# SWISS COOPERATION PROGRAMME SOUTH CAUCASUS REGION 2022-2025





## SWISS COOPERATION IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS, 2022-2025

Swiss engagement in the South Caucasus dates back to 1988 and has expanded ever since through strong bilateral interventions in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia and results in the area of economic and democratic development. Switzerland is considered a trusted development partner, with effective cooperation instruments. And thanks to its neutrality and expertise, it is also seen as a trustworthy partner in conflict transformation and mediation.

The Swiss Cooperation Programme 2022–25 for the South Caucasus reaffirms Switzerland’s continued commitment to promoting peaceful, inclusive and resilient societies in the region. Building on past achievements, Switzerland intends to make an effective contribution to the region’s development pathways by focusing on three thematic areas: Governance and Peace, Economic Development and Employment, and Environment and Climate Change. The financial commitment for this period amounts to CHF 80 million.

### The overall goal

*People of the region benefit from sustainable and inclusive economic and social development, democratic public institutions, human security, peace, and increased climate change resilience, achieved through regional dialogue and cooperation.*

The Programme is implemented jointly by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) and the Peace and Human Rights Division (PHRD). It was developed in close consultation with national and local authorities, partners from civil society and the private sector. It is designed to address the priorities and needs of our partner countries, in line with the principles defined in Switzerland’s International Cooperation Strategy 2021–24 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

## STRATEGIC ORIENTATION AND PRIORITIES FOR 2022-2025

During 2022-2025, Switzerland will support the South Caucasus region in **four key areas** and adopt a systemic approach to poverty reduction, gender equality and social inclusion. Gender and good governance will be treated as **transversal themes**. In addition, the Swiss programme will systematically consider how its interventions influence or are influenced by migration, the environment, digitalisation and the media.



### Protecting and promoting civic engagement and space as well as cooperation in the region

Non-governmental organizations and people of the South Caucasus, including conflict-affected populations and minorities, engage in national policy discourses, formal decision-making as well as in regional knowledge generation and joint actions to promote sustainable economic development and peaceful, inclusive and resilient societies, as well as confidence building and dialogue.



### Strengthening democracy and public institutions

In Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, public institutions at national and local levels are increasingly effective, inclusive and accountable to all citizens and rights holders, and these institutions abide by human rights and the rule of law.



### Improving economic development and creating decent jobs

In Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, SMEs and rural producers generate income and jobs as they operate in a conducive business environment and benefit from improved access to a skilled workforce, diversified markets and services, including access to finance.



### Strengthening climate resilience and sustainable resource management

National and local governments, civil society organizations (CSOs), academia and private sector actors in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia improve environment-related results through climate action and sustainable resource management, whilst participating in and learning from regional exchanges and platforms, and contributing to global environmental policies.

## RESULTS BY 2025 AND BEYOND

### Protecting and promoting civic engagement and space as well as cooperation in the region

- Women's empowerment in the South Caucasus is enhanced through enabling policies and capacity building of national and local actors, and through promotion of gender equality by the private sector.
- Democracy, democratic values and human rights are strengthened by a pluralistic, innovative and participatory cultural sector, dialogue and exchanges.
- Minorities enjoy better integration and participation thanks to consultative mechanisms between the government and CSOs.
- CSOs are actively engaged in confidence building and dialogue, and contribute to shaping governmental conflict transformation strategies.
- Exchanges of ideas, of goods, and between people, among the three South Caucasus countries are promoted. Cross-border market linkages increased.
- Partnerships between organisations with regional outreach are enhanced.
- Independent media and freedom of expression are promoted.

### Strengthening democracy and public institutions

- Public finance management is more effective, predictable and sustainable; debt management is strengthened and the stability of the financial sector is improved.
- Local democratic governance, participation and accountability is promoted; active citizenship practices, including for women, minorities and left behind groups, are fostered.
- State reform and territorial reform/decentralisation for local political, administrative and economic development are achieved.
- Participatory democracy, human rights-based approaches and rule of law reforms to curb corruption are encouraged.
- Democratic processes and non-violent conflict resolution mechanisms are strengthened.

### **Improving economic development and creating decent jobs**

- Agriculture-related value chains, such as rural tourism, are more productive and environment-friendly.
- The private sector takes an active part in the vocational education and training system, which contributes to better matching of skills with labour market needs.
- Capacities for macro-economic planning and for management of public investment are enhanced.
- Financial literacy and management capacities of SMEs are upscaled and access to finance (such as bank loans) and to markets is enhanced. The investment climate and business environment are improved.
- Improved capacities of local self-governments (LSGs) greatly contribute to local economic development. Local citizens, including women, and SMEs benefit from accessible digitalized public services.
- New job and income opportunities contribute to reducing outmigration.

### **Strengthening climate resilience and sustainable resource management**

- The resilience of vulnerable people, communities and regions to climate-related threats and natural hazards is enhanced through the creation of national systems for multi-hazard risk mapping, monitoring, modelling and forecasting.
- Action oriented research and policy advisory work are intensified. University curriculum related to climate change and disaster risk reduction is developed.
- The climate change and biodiversity agendas are linked with economic growth.
- Evidence-based policymaking and advocacy of scientists and CSOs in the region on the issues of climate change adaptation and sustainable mountain development is encouraged. Cross-border technical cooperation is facilitated.
- Local authorities and citizens adopt sustainable resource management practices, in particular, for forests, thereby creating opportunities to diversify incomes.

## SOME KEY RESULTS OF THE COOPERATION STRATEGY 2017-2021 AT A GLANCE



1'500 women in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia found decent paid jobs. In Azerbaijan, 3 resource centres for women opened. Regulatory impact assessments started to be conducted in Armenia and Georgia.

More than 1.5 million citizens in Armenia and Georgia receive transparent, efficient online delivery of public services.



Two financial infrastructure facilities- the Private Credit Bureau and Movable Assets Registry – were established in Azerbaijan a bid to improve the business environment and access to finance.

Armenia and Georgia elaborated key policy documents: a decentralization strategy, mountainous regions development strategy and local self-governance law.





More than 100 SMEs received support in Armenia and Georgia to develop new products or brands in the dairy, meat, wool and honey value chains.

In Armenia and Georgia, net incomes of 125'000 people active in the agriculture sector increased by 10–30%.



A distance-learning module on disaster-risk management was developed with partner universities in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia.

37 small-scale cultural projects in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia received grants to promote cultural diversity and regional exchanges.



## **SWISS COOPERATION OFFICE FOR THE SOUTH CAUCASUS**

### **Embassy of Switzerland in Armenia**

Melik-Adamyanyan Street 2/1

0010 Yerevan, Armenia

Phone: +374 10 52 98 60

E-mail: [yerevan@eda.admin.ch](mailto:yerevan@eda.admin.ch)

Website: [www.eda.admin.ch/armenia](http://www.eda.admin.ch/armenia)

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/SwissEmbassyYerevan>

### **Embassy of Switzerland in Azerbaijan**

Icheri Sheher (Old City) Böyük Qala Street 9

1004 Baku, Azerbaijan

Phone: +994 12 437 38 50

E-mail: [baku@eda.admin.ch](mailto:baku@eda.admin.ch)

Website: [www.eda.admin.ch/azerbaijan](http://www.eda.admin.ch/azerbaijan)

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/SwissEmbassyBaku>

### **Embassy of Switzerland in Georgia**

Radiani Street 12

0179 Tbilisi, Georgia

Phone: +995 322 75 30 01/02

E-mail: [tbilisi@eda.admin.ch](mailto:tbilisi@eda.admin.ch)

Website: [www.eda.admin.ch/georgia](http://www.eda.admin.ch/georgia)

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/SwissEmbassyTbilisi>