



COUNTRY FACTSHEET

2017

SWISS COOPERATION IN THE WESTERN BALKANS



Swiss representations

-  Embassy with Cooperation Office
-  Embassy with Regional consular center

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Over the last 20 years, Switzerland has been supporting the Western Balkan countries in their efforts to transition to greater democracy and a social market economy. In spite of the progress that has been made, there are still important reforms that need to be implemented and the region continues to face considerable challenges. Switzerland's transition cooperation contributes to reducing the causes of conflict, resolving conflicts, building reliable institutions, achieving long-term economic growth, protecting the environment and integrating the Western Balkan countries within Europe.

Background

Progressive reforms have taken place in the Western Balkan states since the end of the Bosnian War in 1995. Two states of the former Yugoslavia, Croatia and Slovenia, have since become members of the European Union (EU). In Switzerland's partner countries in the region – Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia and Serbia – the change of system and European integration process have progressed at a different pace, with Serbia and Albania having gone further than Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Macedonia.

Tension between Russia and the West, the slowing down of the EU integration process and the migration crisis have created new challenges for the Western Balkans. In addition, relations between the countries in this region remain tense. Despite considerable efforts, major challenges remain – political institutions are still not sufficiently established, there is a need to catch up economically and unemployment is widespread.

That is why support from the international community is still needed, although the focus should be placed increasingly on governance, inclusion, reducing disparities, conflict resolution and environmental protection.

Objectives of Swiss cooperation in the Western Balkans

Switzerland's transition cooperation with the states of the Western Balkans has the following main objectives: to support the transition to democracy and market economy systems and to foster conflict prevention, social cohesion and inclusion.

Switzerland supports the EU integration process because it has a clear interest in the development and stability of the Western Balkans in terms of security, economic and migration policy. The region's geographical proximity and its diaspora in Switzerland reinforce these interests.

Key aspects of Swiss cooperation

Switzerland implements a cooperation strategy in each of its partner countries in the Western Balkans. A focus on selected fields of activity and emphasis on long-term continuity help to give Swiss cooperation a clear profile and a high degree of credibility.



Members of the government and administration pay more attention to the concerns of the people.

Governance, strengthening institutions and decentralisation

Switzerland supports the modernisation of public administrations and the division of responsibilities at the different state levels. To this end it engages in the consolidation of democratic structures, the strengthening of institutions and decentralisation reforms. Switzerland also promotes participation in decision-making at the municipal level and the work of civil society organisations.



One-stop-shops – provided by local government – offer comprehensive and transparent municipal services.

Employment and economic development including vocational education and training

Switzerland is committed to creating professional and economic opportunities in the region. It contributes to the creation of favourable conditions for economic development, trade and business enterprise; it advises on the administration of public finances and helps strengthen the private sector, especially competitive small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and facilitates access to (international) markets. Switzerland also seeks to create a market-oriented, modernised system of vocational education and training, integrate young people into the job market and establish better employment services.



In order to alleviate unemployment, Switzerland supports vocational education and training for young people.

Infrastructure, climate change and water

Swiss cooperation focuses on ensuring efficient and affordable water and energy supplies as well as waste water and waste management systems in both urban and rural areas.

Health

Switzerland prioritises affordable care services for all. To this end it concentrates on establishing comprehensive basic healthcare, equal access to medical services for disadvantaged population groups and promoting reforms in the health sector.



Restoring the ecosystem in Lake Prespa.



Switzerland is committed to universal access to primary healthcare.

Migration partnerships

Migration partnerships with Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Serbia encourage dialogue with Switzerland. They support the reintegration of returnees, reduce irregular migration, help establish asylum facilities and create favourable conditions for the contributions made by members of the diaspora to development in their home countries.

The federal agencies concerned and budget

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA), and the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) of the Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research (EAER) implement Switzerland's cooperation strategies in the Western Balkans.

The expenditure planned for Swiss cooperation in 2017-2020 in the Western Balkans region amounts to approximately CHF 538 million. Of this, the SDC contributes two thirds and SECO one third.

In addition, other federal agencies are active in the Western Balkans, including the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM) within the framework of migration partnerships with Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, the Human Security Division (HSD) of the FDFA and the Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport (DDPS), which are active in Kosovo.

Impressum

Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA)
Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)
3003 Bern, Switzerland
www.sdc.admin.ch

Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research (EAER)
State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO)
3003 Bern, Switzerland
www.seco-cooperation.admin.ch

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