



**European Committee  
of the Regions**

**Commission for  
Citizenship, Governance,  
Institutional and External Affairs**

**CIVEX**

# **EU financial assistance available to local and regional authorities in the candidate and potential candidate countries for EU enlargement**



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# Abbreviations

BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
CBC	Cross-Border Cooperation
CEB	Council of Europe Development Bank
CERV	Citizenship, Equality, Rights and Values programme
CO <sub>2</sub>	Carbon Dioxide
CoR	the European Committee of the Regions
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CSO-LA	Civil Society Organisations and Local Authorities Programme
DDPI SEE	Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Initiative for South Eastern Europe
EaP	Eastern Partnership
EaSI	EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EC	European Commission
EIB	European Investment Bank
EIDHR	European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights
ELENA	European Local Energy Assistance
EP	European Parliament
EU	European Union
ESCO	Energy Service Company
ESF	European Social Fund
EUCO	European Council
GCAP	Green City Action Plans
H2020	Horizon2020
IcSP	Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace
IPA	Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance
IFICO	International Financial Institutions Coordination Office
JASPERS	Joint Assistance to Support Projects in European Regions
LRAs	Local and Regional Authorities
MFF	Multiannual Financial Framework
NALAS	Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
RCC	Regional Cooperation Council
REEP	Regional Energy Efficiency Programme
ReSPA	Regional School of Public Administration
ReLOaD	Regional Programme on Local Democracy in the Western Balkans
SIGMA	Support for Improvement in Governance and Management
SMEs	Small and Medium Sized Enterprises

TAIEX	Technical Assistance and Information Exchange
WBIF	Western Balkans Investment Framework
WeBSEDF	Western Balkans Sustainable Energy Direct Financing Facility
WeBSEFF	Western Balkans Sustainable Financing Facility
YEI	Youth Employment Initiative

# 1. Introduction

## Overview of EU financial assistance to LRAs between 2010-2020

Over the past decade, the EU has accelerated external action efforts to support local and regional authorities (LRAs) in the enlargement countries, increasingly identifying them as crucial policy actors<sup>1</sup>. During the period 2010-2020, candidate and potential candidate countries received increased funding through a myriad of financial programmes and instruments, with varying levels of involvement of LRAs.

Specifically, the EU financial assistance to LRAs within the Enlargement Region pursued the main objectives of increasing LRA empowerment, fostering their capacities and performance as democratic policy makers and local service providers while improving their national framework conditions in the long term. In this context, EU financial support primarily focused on four types of interventions<sup>2</sup>: (i) improving the LRAs' regulatory and local governance framework<sup>3</sup>; (ii) strengthening the ability of LRAs to fulfil their core mandates by improving their political, financial, and administrative capacities; (iii) improving local infrastructure and LRAs' capacity to deliver core services; and (iv) stimulating local economic development in strategic areas.

During the period 2010-2020, financial support to LRAs in the Enlargement Region was predominantly allocated via bilateral programmes in the framework of the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA), with both regional and thematic programmes playing a minor role in terms of financial volume. Serbia was the largest beneficiary country in support allocations for LRAs, and was followed by Albania, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Turkey<sup>4</sup>. The bulk of the financial assistance to LRAs was directed towards infrastructure to respond to challenges in terms of local service delivery and to local (economic) development interventions (mainly in Serbia, Kosovo, and Albania). The share of funds aimed at improving LRAs' political,

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<sup>1</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/la\\_eval\\_-\\_final\\_report.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/la_eval_-_final_report.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> For an overview of the type of EU financial support to LRAs, including sectors and implementation modalities, please see: [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/la\\_eval\\_-\\_annexes.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/la_eval_-_annexes.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Contrary to the following categories, which directly target LRAs, this type of intervention targets central governments with the aim to support national reforms in the field of decentralisation and intergovernmental relations.

<sup>4</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/la\\_eval\\_-\\_final\\_report.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/la_eval_-_final_report.pdf)



financial, and administrative capacities was quite low in comparison, with the exceptions being Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as North Macedonia<sup>5</sup>.

### *IPA-III*

IPA-III, which succeeds IPA-II for the period 2021-2027, is now in force and applies retroactively from 1 January 2021. Following the approval of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) Regulation by the European Parliament (EP) in December 2020, negotiations on IPA-III continued until June 2021, when the European Parliament and the European Council (EU CO) reached a political agreement. On 15 September 2021, the EP adopted a resolution approving the Council's position at first reading with a view to the adoption of IPA-III.

The financial envelope for the implementation of IPA-III will provide nearly EUR 14.2 billion to support candidate countries in key institutional, political, social, and economic reforms that help gradually align them with the EU's rules, standards, policies, and practices with a view to their future accession to the Union.

According to the new framework, IPA-III will bring further adjustments in comparison to its predecessor (IPA-II). The most significant change will be the replacement of pre-defined country envelopes with thematic windows as the key reference for programming and will include both bilateral and multi-country activities under its scope. In this sense, actions under IPA-III should be financed using a thematic approach to maximise the impact of EU assistance while ensuring synergies and coherence with other relevant EU financial programmes and assistance.

The new thematic architecture of IPA-III aims at introducing more funding flexibility in order to respond to evolving needs and unforeseen challenges and incentivising beneficiaries to apply for funding actions based on performance-based criteria, policy relevance, and the maturity of the projects proposed. This new results-based approach will enable the mobilisation of tailored financial assistance to beneficiaries based on their specific situations, needs, and implementation capacities. Moreover, the new IPA-III programming framework aims at further mobilising the leveraging potential of international financial institutions and private partners.

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<sup>5</sup> For a detailed mapping of EU-targeted financial support to LRAs, including a glossary on implementing partners, final beneficiaries, and associated budgets, please see: [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/la\\_eval\\_-\\_annexes.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/la_eval_-_annexes.pdf)

In addition, the new IPA-III framework contains a point on the possibility of suspending, reducing, or modulating accordingly the scope and intensity of the financial assistance in the event of significant degradation or persistent lack of progress by a beneficiary in the core areas of democracy, human rights, rule of law, and functioning of democratic institutions.

The European Commission (EC) and the EP committed to a high-level geopolitical dialogue between the two institutions on the implementation of the instrument. This dialogue should allow for more frequent exchanges (at least twice a year) with the EP, and its positions on the implementation of IPA-III will be taken into consideration.

As next steps, the EC will work on the IPA-III Programming Framework, the main strategic document for planning financial assistance and setting priority areas, which is expected to be finalised by December 2021<sup>6</sup>. At the same time, the beneficiary countries will propose specific interventions. Actions within IPA-III are thus expected to commence in early 2022.

*Table 1 Indicative overview of EU financial instruments to become available to LRAs in candidate and potential candidate countries for EU enlargement under the new MFF<sup>7</sup>*

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Programme / Instrument</b>
Regional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cross-Border Cooperation Programmes (IPA CBC) – to be defined under IPA-III <a href="https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/funding/ipa/cross-border/">https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/funding/ipa/cross-border/</a></li> <li>• Western Balkans Investment Framework (WBIF) – to be defined under IPA-III <a href="https://www.wbif.eu/">https://www.wbif.eu/</a></li> <li>• Regional Programme on Local Democracy in the Western Balkans (ReLOaD) <a href="https://www.ba.undp.org/content/bosnia_and_herzegovina/en/home/development-impact/ReLOaD.html">https://www.ba.undp.org/content/bosnia_and_herzegovina/en/home/development-impact/ReLOaD.html</a></li> </ul>
Bilateral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IPA-III (TBD, 2021-2027), available at <a href="https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/instrument-pre-accession-ipa-iii">https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/instrument-pre-accession-ipa-iii</a></li> </ul>
Thematic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• European Social Fund Plus (2021-2027) established by merging the European Social Fund (ESF), the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI), Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD), the EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI), and EU Health Programme <a href="https://ec.europa.eu/european-social-fund-plus">https://ec.europa.eu/european-social-fund-plus</a></li> <li>• EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) – to be defined under IPA-III, for the period 2021-2027 the EaSI programme is becoming a component of the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) <a href="https://ec.europa.eu/european-social-fund-plus">https://ec.europa.eu/european-social-fund-plus</a></li> </ul>

<sup>6</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/news/enlargement-region-european-commission-welcomes-final-adoption-eus-new-eu14-billion-pre\\_pl](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/news/enlargement-region-european-commission-welcomes-final-adoption-eus-new-eu14-billion-pre_pl)

<sup>7</sup> Descriptions of active programmes are provided in the main body of the report. Whenever possible, links are provided for programmes that are yet to be specified under the new MFF.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Europe for Citizens was replaced by the Citizens, Equality, Rights, and Values (CERV) programme – to be defined under IPA-III <a href="https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/programmes/cerv">https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/programmes/cerv</a></li> <li>• European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) – to be defined under IPA-III <a href="https://www.euro-access.eu/programm/european_instrument_for_democracy_and_human_rights">https://www.euro-access.eu/programm/european_instrument_for_democracy_and_human_rights</a></li> <li>• Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP) – to be defined under IPA-III, <a href="https://icspmap.eu/">https://icspmap.eu/</a></li> <li>• Civil Society Organisations and Local Authorities (CSO-LA) – to be defined under IPA-III</li> <li>• Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection – to be defined under IPA-III</li> <li>• Creative Europe (2021-2027) <a href="https://ec.europa.eu/culture/news/creative-europe-2021-2027-programme-launch">https://ec.europa.eu/culture/news/creative-europe-2021-2027-programme-launch</a></li> <li>• Erasmus+ (2021-2027) <a href="https://erasmusplus.org.pl/">https://erasmusplus.org.pl/</a></li> <li>• Horizon Europe (2021-2027) <a href="https://ec.europa.eu/info/research-and-innovation/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe_en">https://ec.europa.eu/info/research-and-innovation/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe_en</a></li> <li>• Support for Improvement in Governance and Management (Sigma) – to be defined under IPA-III <a href="http://www.sigmaxweb.org/">http://www.sigmaxweb.org/</a></li> <li>• The Technical Assistance and Information Exchange (TAIEX) – to be defined under IPA-III <a href="https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/funding-and-technical-assistance/taix_pl">https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/funding-and-technical-assistance/taix_pl</a></li> <li>• Twinning <a href="http://ec.europa.eu/twinning">http://ec.europa.eu/twinning</a></li> </ul>
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*Source: Own elaboration.*

### *COVID-19-related assistance*

The EU is set to support the post-COVID-19 recovery of the most vulnerable neighbouring countries. The European Investment Bank (EIB) has already increased the funding dedicated to Western Balkan countries up to EUR 873 million in 2020, with EUR 531 million allocated to construction and the modernisation of transport infrastructure and EUR 320 million aimed at supporting SMEs (as of October 2021)<sup>8</sup>. The EU relief measures focus on addressing short-term needs and mitigating the immediate socioeconomic consequences of the pandemic, as well as strengthening the water, sanitation, and healthcare systems.

About EUR 20 billion will thus be provided by the EU, its Member States, and relevant financial institutions (i.e., EIB and EBRD) through the dedicated “Team Europe” package<sup>9</sup>. A total of EUR 800 billion will be addressed to the Western Balkans and Turkey. The majority of these funds are, however, delivered to the national authorities, with LRAs benefiting from them in an indirect way.

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.eib.org/en/press/all/2021-040-the-eib-group-boosts-financing-for-the-western-balkans-in-2020>

<sup>9</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_20\\_604](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_604)

## **2. EU financial assistance available to local and regional authorities in the candidate and potential candidate countries for EU enlargement**

### **Regional (geographic) instruments**

#### *Cross-Border Cooperation Programme (CBC)*

European Cross-Border Cooperation (CBC), also known as Interreg A, is one of the key priorities of the IPA, supporting cooperation between bordering regions from at least two different countries and aiming to tackle mutually agreed upon common challenges in order to reinforce the regions' steady growth potential, while enhancing the cooperation process for the purposes of the overall development of the EU and the candidate and potential candidate countries.

The geographical focus of the IPA-CBC programmes is on: Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, and Romania on the one hand, and Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Turkey on the other. Each of the individual projects is managed separately. Detailed information on the projects can be found in the respective programmes' websites:

- Bulgaria / Serbia: <http://www.ipacbc-bgrs.eu>
- Bulgaria / Turkey: <http://www.ipacbc-bgtr.eu>
- Bulgaria / North Macedonia: <http://www.ipa-cbc-007.eu>
- Croatia / Serbia: <https://www.interreg-croatia-serbia2014-2020.eu>
- Croatia / Bosnia and Herzegovina / Montenegro: <https://www.interreg-hr-ba-me2014-2020.eu>
- Greece / Albania: <https://greece-albania.eu>
- Greece / North Macedonia: <http://www.ipa-cbc-programme.eu>
- Hungary / Serbia: <http://www.interreg-ipa-husrb.com>
- Italy /Albania / Montenegro: <https://www.italy-albania-montenegro.eu>
- Romania / Serbia: <http://www.romania-serbia.net>

*Contact point:*

- **IPA-CBC Bulgaria – Serbia:**

Managing national authority: Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works, Directorate of Territorial Cooperation Management

<http://www.ipacbc-bgrs.eu/contact>

Managing national authority: Ministry of European Integration, Department for cross-border and transnational cooperation programmes and cooperation with local and regional authorities and organisations for more efficient use of funds <https://www.mei.gov.rs/>

- **IPA-CBC Bulgaria – Turkey:**

Managing national authority: Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works, Directorate of Territorial Cooperation Management

<http://www.ipacbc-bgtr.eu/contact>

Managing national authority: Directorate for EU Affairs, General Directorate of Financial Cooperation and Project Implementation

[https://www.ab.gov.tr/contact\\_11\\_en.html](https://www.ab.gov.tr/contact_11_en.html)

- **IPA-CBC Bulgaria – Republic of North Macedonia:**

Managing national authority: Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works, Directorate of Territorial Cooperation Management

<http://www.ipacbc-bgrs.eu/contact>

Managing national authority: Ministry of Local Self-Government  
<https://vlada.mk/MLS>

- **IPA-CBC Croatia – Serbia:**

Managing national authority: Ministry of Regional Development and EU funds of the Republic of Croatia <https://www.interreg-croatia-serbia2014-2020.eu/contacts/>

- **IPA-CBC Croatia – Bosnia and Herzegovina – Montenegro:**

Managing national authority: Ministry of Regional Development and EU funds of the Republic of Croatia <https://www.interreg-hr-ba-me2014-2020.eu/contacts/>

- **IPA-CBC Greece – Albania:**

Managing national authority of European Territorial Cooperation Programmes <https://interreg.gr/en/contact/phone-book/>

- **IPA-CBC Greece – Republic of North Macedonia:**  
Managing national authority of European Territorial Cooperation Programmes <https://interreg.gr/en/contact/phone-book/>
- **IPA-CBC Hungary – Serbia:**  
Joint Secretariat: <https://www.szpi.hu/interreg---ipa-hungary-serbia-cross-border-cooperation-programme>
- **IPA-CBC Italy – Albania – Montenegro:**  
Managing national authority: Department for Economic Development, Innovation, Education, Training and Employment - Research, Innovation and Institutional Capacity Unit <https://www.italy-albania-montenegro.eu/contact-usJoint>
- **IPA-CBC Romania – Serbia:**  
Managing national authority: Ministry of Development, Public Works and Administration <https://www.mlpda.ro/pages/contact514>  
  
Managing national authority: Ministry of European Integration <https://www.mei.gov.rs/srp/kontakt/>

### **Example of a Project successfully funded in the candidate and potential candidate countries for EU enlargement**

*Fit For the Needs – Raise opportunities for underdeveloped areas*

Date: 1.04.2021-30.09.2022

Programme: CBCP Serbia-North Macedonia 2016-2020

EU contribution/Budget: EUR 188,958

Beneficiaries: Serbia, North Macedonia

Description: Throughout the project innovative and sustainable agricultural practices were used to increase the employability among the rural populations (in particular women and youth) in selected border municipalities of Serbia and North Macedonia. Citizens as well as representatives of LRAs, chambers of commerce and labour unions were all targeted to achieve the goals of the project.

For more information see:

<https://eu.rs-mk.org/fit-for-the-needs-raise-opportunities-for-underdeveloped-areas-2/>

## *Western Balkans Investment Framework (WBIF)*

The Western Balkans Investment Framework (WBIF) supports EU enlargement and socio-economic development in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, the Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia. Established in 2009, it is a joint initiative of the EC, the Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB), the EBRD, the EIB, the World Bank Group, KfW Development Bank, and a number of bilateral donors. Through the facility, support is provided for the preparation and execution of priority investments in line with regional and national strategies, leveraging grants (from the IPA and 20 bilateral donors) and loans from participating financial institutions with national financing (blending mechanism). Sectors covered include energy, environment, social, transport, digital infrastructure, and private sector development initiatives. The facility targets projects with region-wide and connectivity impacts. Eligible projects are identified and proposed by country beneficiaries through their National Investment Committee and Single Project Pipeline and are submitted via the National IPA Coordinators in response to specific calls for proposals<sup>10</sup>.

### *Contact point:*

- **Assistance in preparing grant applications:** International Financial Institutions Coordination Office (IFICO) <https://wbif.eu/about/wbif-contacts>

### **National IPA Coordinators:**

- **Albania:** Chief Negotiator for the Development of Accession Negotiations of Republic of Albania to the European Union <https://www.wbif.eu/about/wbif-contacts>
- **BiH:** Director of Directorate for European Integration <http://www.vijeceministara.gov.ba/kontakt/default.aspx?id=1922&langTag=en-US>
- **Kosovo:** Department of Development Assistance, Office of the Prime Minister <http://mei-ks.net/en/contact>
- **Montenegro:** Deputy Chief Negotiator, European Integration Office <https://kei.gov.me/kontakt>
- **North Macedonia:** Deputy Prime Minister for European Affairs <https://www.sep.gov.mk>
- **Serbia:** Minister for European Integration <https://www.mei.gov.rs/srp/kontakt/>

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.wbif.eu/about-the-wbif/how-to-apply-for-a-wbif-grant->

## *Regional Programme on Local Democracy in the Western Balkans 2 (ReLOaD2)*

The ReLOaD2<sup>11</sup> initiative (2021-2024), with a total budget of EUR 12.63 million, is a continuation of the ReLOaD initiative<sup>12</sup> financed by the EU and implemented by the UNDP (2017-2020) which aimed to support the EU integration process in the Western Balkans and strengthen local democracies. This is mainly done through the facilitation of cooperation between LRAs and civil society representatives, the empowerment of the latter, and the establishment of a networking platform for the exchange of best practices between the Western Balkan countries. A total of 50 LRAs from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia are eligible to participate in the initiative.

### *Contact point:*

- **Albania:** Regional UNDP Office  
<https://www.al.undp.org/content/albania/en/home/projects/albania-local-democracy-programme.html>
- **BiH:** Regional UNDP Office  
[https://www.ba.undp.org/content/bosnia\\_and\\_herzegovina/en/home/about-us/contact-us.html](https://www.ba.undp.org/content/bosnia_and_herzegovina/en/home/about-us/contact-us.html)
- **Montenegro:** Regional UNDP Office  
<https://www.me.undp.org/content/montenegro/en/home/projects/regional-programme-on-local-democracy-in-the-western-balkans-2--re.html>
- **North Macedonia:** Regional UNDP Office  
<https://www.mk.undp.org/content/north-macedonia/en/home/projects/Regional-Programme-on-Local-Democracy-in-the-Western-Balkans.html>
- **Serbia:** Regional UNDP Office  
<https://www.rs.undp.org/content/serbia/en/home/projects/regionalni-program-lokalne-demokratije-na-zapadnom-balkanu-2--re.html>
- **Kosovo:** Regional UNDP Office  
[https://www.ks.undp.org/content/kosovo/en/home/operations/projects/poverty\\_reduction/regional-programme-on-local-democracy-in-the-western-balkans--re.html](https://www.ks.undp.org/content/kosovo/en/home/operations/projects/poverty_reduction/regional-programme-on-local-democracy-in-the-western-balkans--re.html)

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<sup>11</sup> [https://www.ba.undp.org/content/bosnia\\_and\\_herzegovina/en/home/development-impact/ReLOaD.html](https://www.ba.undp.org/content/bosnia_and_herzegovina/en/home/development-impact/ReLOaD.html)

<sup>12</sup> <https://open.undp.org/projects/00089306>



**Example of a Project successfully funded in the candidate and potential candidate countries for EU enlargement**

*Vitac - incubator for organic beekeeping*

Date: 09.2021-04.2022

Programme: ReLOaD

Beneficiaries: North Macedonia, municipality of Kavadarci

Description: The end goal of the project is revival of rural communities in the North Macedonian municipality of Kavadarci through encouraging inhabitants to remain in their settlements. To this end, the project focuses on creating employment opportunities in the field of organic beekeeping. The main target groups of the project are young people and women (in particular single mothers and vulnerable groups) who are offered theoretical and practical trainings as well as free advice and guidance.

For more information see:

<https://eulocaldemocracy4wb.org/en/regional-reach/republic-of-north-macedonia/Vitac-incubator-for-organic-beekeeping>

## Bilateral programmes

Under the IPA-III, unlike under its predecessor, the pre-defined country envelopes are replaced by thematic windows as the key reference for the programming, which includes both bilateral and multi-country types of activities under its scope while allowing to reward performance and progress towards key priorities and increased flexibility to respond to the evolving needs of the partners on their EU path.

For planning purposes, LRAs in each country can access information on the projected activities in the multi-annual Country Strategy Papers, the proposed annual Country Action Programmes, as well as in their multi-country and sectoral counterparts (see contact points below). These programmes detail specific opportunities for support and financing, which are then announced in each beneficiary country or in a multi-country setting either as tenders (technical assistance projects) or calls for proposals (grant schemes). These can be found on the International Cooperation and Development website for calls for proposals and tender announcements, which should be reviewed regularly<sup>13</sup>.

Further information can be sought in each beneficiary country through the National IPA Coordinators (annual programming and coordination), Central Financing and Contracting Units (tenders and calls for proposals), and within the appropriate EU integration offices and line ministries responsible for the sectors (for LRAS, the most important of these will include the ministries responsible for finance, development, economy, employment, social issues, education, transport, and environment), as well as the local EU Delegations.

### *Contact points:*

- **Albania:** Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs <http://integrimi-ne-be.punetejashtme.gov.al/>
- **BiH:** Directorate for European Integration <http://www.dei.gov.ba>
- **Kosovo:** Ministry of European Integration <http://www.mei-ks.net>
- **North Macedonia:** Secretariat for European Affairs <http://www.sep.gov.mk>
- **Montenegro:** European Integration Office <https://kei.gov.me/>
- **Serbia:** European Integration Office <http://www.seio.gov.rs>
- **Turkey:** Directorate for EU Affairs [https://www.ab.gov.tr/iletisim\\_11.html](https://www.ab.gov.tr/iletisim_11.html), <https://www.ab.gov.tr/>

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<sup>13</sup> <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/europeaid/online-services/index.cfm?ADSSChck=1527497922370&do=publi.welcome>

## Thematic programmes

### *The European Social Fund Plus (2021-2027)*

The European Social Fund (ESF) is one of the five European Structural and Investment Funds. At the beginning of 2021, the ESF was transformed into the ESF+, which merged:

- European Social Fund (ESF) and the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI);
- Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD);
- EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation;
- EU Health Programme<sup>14</sup>.

The ESF+ is promoting fair social protection, equal working conditions, social inclusion, and a high level of health protection. Improving technology and reforming learning and education programmes are still important for the transition to cyclical stability and remains a key element of ESF+.

The budget for the ESF+ for 2021-2027 is EUR 101.2 billion (EUR 89.7 billion at 2018 prices), which is an increase of 21% in comparison to the previous programme (2014-2020), despite the 7% cut in the cohesion policy.

The ESF+ is structured under three strands, namely:

- ESF strand (European Social Fund [ESF] and Youth Employment Initiative [YEI], Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived [FEAD]) – EUR 100 billion for shared management;
- EaSI strand (Employment and Social Innovation [EaSI] programme) – EUR 761 billion for direct and indirect management;
- Health strand (Health programme) – EUR 413 billion for direct management<sup>15</sup>.

#### *Contact point:*

The ESF+ Technical Working Group and Employment and Social Innovation Technical Working Group <https://ec.europa.eu/european-social-fund-plus/en/esf-committee>

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<sup>14</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=9114&furtherNews=yes>

<sup>15</sup> European Commission Communication on the Multiannual Financial Framework for 2021-2027. COM (2018) 321

## *Creative Europe (2021-2027)*

The Creative Europe programme promotes the economic dimension of the cultural sector and its contribution to economic growth and job creation. The new programme budget was increased in comparison to the previous one by 17% and amounts to EUR 2.4 billion. In addition to the economic dimension of the cultural and creative sectors, the proposed framework aims at promoting the role of culture in social cohesion and its relation to artistic freedom, creative diversity, and the plurality of media<sup>16</sup>. LRAs actively participated in the previous programme (2014-2020).

### *Contact points:*

A list of Creative Europe Country Desks is available at <https://ec.europa.eu/culture/resources/creative-europe-desks>

## *Erasmus+ (2021-2027)*

Erasmus (2014-2020) represented valuable progress in the field of education in European institutes, both in a qualitative and quantitative manner. The main purpose of the previous programme was to support citizens in the acquisition of better and higher qualifications by supporting training and educational opportunities in foreign countries. Specifically, Key Action 2: Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices was eligible for local and regional authorities. The action made it possible for institutions and organisations from different countries work together, develop, and transfer best practices and innovative approaches in the field of education, training, and youth.

On 11 December 2020, the European Parliament and EU Member states reached an agreement on the new Erasmus+ Programme (2021-2027), with a dedicated budget of more than EUR 26 billion<sup>17</sup>.

### *Contact point:*

A list of National Agencies and national Erasmus+ Offices is available at [https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/contact\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/contact_en)

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<sup>16</sup> [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2018/628229/EPRS\\_BRI\(2018\)628229\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2018/628229/EPRS_BRI(2018)628229_EN.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP\\_20\\_2317](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_20_2317)

## *Horizon Europe (2021-2027)*

Horizon Europe succeeded Horizon 2020 as the next EU Research and Innovation Investment Programme. The new EU programme will have a budget of around EUR 95.5 billion for 2021-2027, which makes it the largest ever transnational programme supporting research and innovation activities<sup>18</sup>. The main goals of the programme are strengthening the EU's scientific and technological base and the European Research Area; increasing Europe's capacity for innovation, competitiveness, and jobs; delivering on citizens' priorities; and upholding the European socio-economic model and its values.

The first Horizon Europe Strategic Plan (2021-2024), which sets out key strategic orientations for the support of research and innovation, was adopted on 15 March 2021. The plan has a climate-neutral and green Europe and fit for the digital age as specific priorities.

The strategic plan identifies a total number of 29 co-programmed and co-funded partnerships with partners from national governments, industry, civil society organisations, and local and regional authorities. There are eight horizontal topics: (i) gender equality and inclusiveness; (ii) ethics and integrity; (iii) dissemination and exploitation (D&E); (iv) social sciences and the humanities (SSH); (v) open science practices; (vi) key enabling technologies (KET); (vii) social innovation; and (viii) EU taxonomy<sup>19</sup>. The main work programme dedicated to COVID-19 variants will be adopted in March and the complete main work programme is expected to be adopted in April.

### *Contact point:*

A list of national contact points is available at

[http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/support/national\\_contact\\_points.html](http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/support/national_contact_points.html)

## *SIGMA*

Support for Improvement in Governance and Management (SIGMA) is a joint initiative of the EU and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), principally financed by the EU. SIGMA was initiated in 1992 and since then has accumulated 25+ years of experience advising countries in transition on various public policy reforms and has developed long-term relationships with several in-country partners. The action aimed at strengthening public authorities in the Western Balkans and Turkey by enhancing

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<sup>18</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP\\_20\\_2345](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_20_2345)

<sup>19</sup> See Strategic Plan 2021-2024: <https://op.europa.eu/en/web/eu-law-and-publications/publication-detail/-/publication/3c6ffd74-8ac3-11eb-b85c-01aa75ed71a1>

accountability, transparency, and legality and improving policy results and services to people and businesses in order to support socio-economic development. SIGMA focuses on public administration reform in the following areas: public financial management, accountability, service delivery, strategic framework, public service and human resource management, and policy development and coordination.

According to the recent report publication<sup>20</sup>, the total budget of the action is EUR 15.5 million (EUR 15 million contribution). The final date for contracting was extended to 31 December 2021, whereas authorities have 72 months for project implementation after adoption of the Financing Decision.

*Contact point:*

SIGMA Office <http://www.sigmaweb.org/contactus/>

## *TAIEX*

TAIEX is the Technical Assistance and Information Exchange instrument of the European Commission<sup>21</sup>. It is a demand-driven tool offering peer-to-peer technical assistance and policy support from experts in EU Member States to the beneficiary countries. The TAIEX mandate covers, among others, the following countries: Turkey, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo. The technical assistance targets include public administrations. It provides the following types of activities: study visits, expert missions, and workshops (single or multi-beneficiary)<sup>22</sup>.

For more details and a list of recent exchanges within TAIEX-REGIO PEER 2 PEER, see:

[https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/index.cfm/en/policy/how/improving-investment/taix-regio-peer-2-peer/](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/index.cfm/en/policy/how/improving-investment/taix-regio-peer-2-peer/)

*Contact point:*

[https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/tenders/taix\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/tenders/taix_en)

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<sup>20</sup> See: [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/default/files/ipa\\_2020-041-818.09-mc-sigma.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/default/files/ipa_2020-041-818.09-mc-sigma.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> <http://taix.ec.europa.eu>

<sup>22</sup> TAIEX and Twinning 2019, Highlights, available at [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/annual-activity-report-2019\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/annual-activity-report-2019_en.pdf)

## *Twinning*

Twinning is a policy-driven platform supporting regular and in-depth cooperation between public administrations in the EU Member States and partner countries, including those covered by IPA. The platform was tasked with providing peer-to-peer support for the transition, implementation, and enforcement of the EU legislation. It promotes good practices developed in the EU with beneficiary public administrations and strengthens long-term relations between EU Member States and future EU members<sup>23</sup>.

Calls for proposals: [https://rea.ec.europa.eu/funding-and-grants/horizon-europe-widening-participation-and-spreading-excellence/twinning\\_pl](https://rea.ec.europa.eu/funding-and-grants/horizon-europe-widening-participation-and-spreading-excellence/twinning_pl)

*Contact point:*

[NEAR-TWINNING@ec.europa.eu](mailto:NEAR-TWINNING@ec.europa.eu)

[https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/funding-and-technical-assistance/twinning\\_pl](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/funding-and-technical-assistance/twinning_pl)

### **Example of a Project successfully funded in the candidate and potential candidate countries for EU enlargement**

*Support to Policy Planning in the Water Management Sector in Serbia*

Date: January 2019-July 2020

Programme: EU-funded Twinning Project

EU contribution/Budget: EUR 1.5 million

Beneficiaries: Serbia

Description: Twinning group of experts from Serbia, Germany, Austria, and the Netherlands developed recommendations for sound water management and protection of freshwater ecosystems in Serbia in line with the EU Water Framework Directive. The project also led to elaboration of steps needed to foster cooperation between foreign and domestic experts as well as increased public stakeholder involvement.

For more information see:

<http://wfd-serbia.eu/2019/03/17/project-background/>

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<sup>23</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/tenders/twinning\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/tenders/twinning_en)

### 3. Financing through the European Investment Bank (EIB)

#### *Institutional overview*

The European Investment Bank (EIB) focuses on social and economic infrastructure, contributes to the development of the private sector, and supports climate actions. The EIB offers the experience and expertise of economists and engineers to assist in the development and realisation of a wide range of projects. In terms of financial assistance, the EIB offers loans with competitive interest rates and grants for the further improvement of supported projects. In 2020, the EIB increased the borrowing authorisation by EUR 5 billion and assigned EUR 70 billion to support investment across Europe and around the world<sup>24</sup>.

#### *Policy context and objectives*

In the enlargement countries, the EIB is mainly operating under the EU External Lending Mandate, which aims at the development of the public and private sector. Since the beginning of its operations in the region, the EIB has provided over EUR 8 billion in financing for socio-economic development, making it one of its biggest public financiers<sup>25</sup>; in 2019 alone, the deals signed in the region amounted to EUR 648.9 million<sup>26</sup>. On top of this, in 2019, the EIB granted Turkey loans worth EUR 116.9 million (EUR 29.1 billion since 2000)<sup>27</sup>.

In 2020, the EIB increased its investments in the Western Balkans by 50% to a total of EUR 873 million. It has provided extensive support to the recovery from COVID-19 under the European Union's Team Europe initiative. The lion's share of investment, EUR 531 million, was allocated to constructing and modernising transport infrastructure, including a major investment on Corridor Vc in BiH. Moreover, the route also benefited from a EUR 12 million grant provided under the EU Western Balkans Investment Framework (WBIF). About EUR 65 million was invested in 1,500 schools within digital projects in Serbia.

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<sup>24</sup> [https://www.eib.org/en/investor\\_relations/press/2020/fi-2020-35-eib-increases-borrowing-authorization.htm](https://www.eib.org/en/investor_relations/press/2020/fi-2020-35-eib-increases-borrowing-authorization.htm)

<sup>25</sup> Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia.

<sup>26</sup> EIB, financed projects in Enlargement countries, available at [www.eib.org](http://www.eib.org)

<sup>27</sup> EIB, financed projects in Turkey, available at [www.eib.org](http://www.eib.org)



In order to bring financing opportunities closer to LRAs and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), alongside the EIB's headquarters in Luxembourg, the EIB created a Regional Office for the Western Balkans which allows it to offer better support to its clients throughout all project stages<sup>28</sup>.

### *Support instruments available*

Lending is by far the EIB's principal activity, consisting of 90% of its total financial commitment. At the same time, the EIB stays committed to financially supporting investment projects presented by other partners and private and public promoters, including LRAs. This is reflected in loans that might be individual, multi-sector, and multi-component. The EIB also provides guarantees (trade financing) and equity participation (investment funds) to meet all the client's and partner's expectations.

For investments in the public sector, lending is possible to national, regional, and local authorities as well as to public enterprises and institutions. Loans can be made either directly to the relevant authority, or indirectly as a credit line which the EIB channels to LRAs for infrastructure investment, for instance in partnership with a national ministry or a local intermediary financial institution. All loans must reflect the EU and EIB's priorities.

#### *Contact point:*

Public authorities wishing to obtain a loan from the EIB should contact:

- EIB local offices for loans over EUR 25 million  
<https://www.eib.org/en/infocentre/contact/offices/index.htm>
- EIB local partners for loans below EUR 25 million  
<https://www.eib.org/intermediarieslist/search/index>

Regional Office for the Western Balkans:

<https://www.eib.org/en/infocentre/contact/offices/serbia.htm>

Information desk: <https://www.eib.org/en/infocentre/contact-form.htm>

### **Advising: European Local Energy Assistance (ELENA)**

The European Local Energy Assistance (ELENA) is a joint initiative of the EC and the EIB under the H2020 programme. Its main aim is to provide technical assistance in the form of grants for activities focused on energy efficiency, distributed renewable energy, and urban transport. Funding is available for projects costing more than EUR 30 million (smaller on a case-by-case basis, if integrated into larger ones), and up to 90% of eligible costs can be covered under the scheme. The implementation period of the project must not exceed three years

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid

for EE projects and four years for urban transport and mobility. Support is available to LRAs (and other public and private entities such as transport authorities or social housing operators) in EU Member States as well as Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Iceland, Israel, North Macedonia, Moldova, Norway, Serbia, Switzerland, and Turkey. No projects funded under ELENA have been conducted by LRAs in the countries under investigation as of 24 March 2021.

*More information:* <https://www.eib.org/en/products/advising/elena/index.htm>

*Contact point:* [elena@eib.org](mailto:elena@eib.org)

## **Advising: Joint Assistance to Support Projects in European Regions**

Joint Assistance to Support Projects in European Regions (JASPERS) is a technical assistance partnership and a joint initiative of the EC and EIB under the EU Cohesion Policy, in operation since 2004. Under this scheme, technical assistance is available for large-scale projects at any stage of their cycle in the sectors of roads, air, maritime, public transport, water and solid waste, smart development, and energy. JASPERS assistance is free of charge for local and regional authorities.

Support is available to LRAs in selected EU Member States and seven accession countries: Albania (since 2019), Bosnia and Herzegovina (since 2019), Kosovo (since 2018), Montenegro (since 2013), North Macedonia (since 2013), Serbia (since 2013), and Turkey (since 2016)<sup>29</sup>.

### *Projects specifications in accession countries*

- **Albania** – ICT and transport projects, horizontal and strategic support, capacity building, and assistance with project preparation.
- **Bosnia and Herzegovina** – conducting workshops on development project preparations for relevant sectors (including energy projects).
- **Kosovo** – conducting workshops on the preparation of infrastructural projects, advising decision-makers and stakeholders on reforming healthcare institutions.
- **Montenegro** – strategic support, specifically contributing to transport and infrastructural strategy, cost-benefit analysis in the water and solid waste sectors.

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<sup>29</sup> <https://jaspers.eib.org/countries/index.htm>

- **North Macedonia** – assistance in water and wastewater sectors, reducing pollution caused by water disposal, and increasing the reuse and recycling of waste.
- **Serbia** – assistance in transport, solid waste, and energy projects, and promoting energy efficiency and energy production.
- **Turkey** – assistance in water and solid waste management projects, modernisation of water supply projects.

*More information:* <https://jaspers.eib.org/>

*Contact point:* <https://jaspers.eib.org/get-in-touch/index.htm>

## 4. Financing through the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)

### *Institutional overview*

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) was created in the early 1990s to support the development of market economies in Central and Eastern European and Central Asian countries after the widespread collapse of their respective communist regimes. Since then, the EBRD has been a major actor in fostering changes related not only to economic transition, but also to environmental and societal ones, investing around 150 billion in more than 6,000 projects<sup>30</sup>. The EBRD list of shareholders consists of 69 countries as well as the EU and the EIB<sup>31</sup>.

The EBRD supports all seven candidate and potential candidate countries for EU enlargement: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), North Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia, and Turkey. The Banks's activities in the region are supported by financing from a variety of donor resources, most significantly from the EU. In 2020 alone, it invested nearly EUR 3 billion, up from EUR 2.3 billion in 2019 (financing for Turkey accounted for 44% and 56% of that sum respectively), with 663 projects currently active throughout the region. This is on top of the technical assistance (including through policy dialogue and capacity building) provided by the EBRD and financed by various donors and stakeholders.

### *Policy context and objectives*

The EBRD's focus has been on making the economies of the candidate and potential candidate countries more competitive and resilient, fostering the expansion of the private sector, and promoting regional integration. In line with the newly adopted Green Economy Transition (GET) strategy 2021-2025, the Bank is helping build green, low carbon, and resilient economies. Through the new GET approach, the EBRD will increase green financing to more than 50% of its annual business volume by 2025. It also aims to reach net annual GHG emission reductions of at least 25 million tonnes over the five-year period. Furthermore, economic inclusion, the opening up of economic opportunities to under-served social groups, is integral to achieving a transition towards sustainable market economies. Through its private sector inclusion model, the

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<sup>30</sup> <https://www.ebrd.com/who-we-are/history-of-the-ebrd.html>

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.ebrd.com/shareholders-and-board-of-governors.html>

EBRD builds inclusion elements directly into its investments across all sectors and regions, creating pathways into jobs and training for young people, women, and rural populations while addressing challenges in providing basic services for all.

The Bank is specialising in the provision of financial investments and technical and business support and is well-known for its involvement in high-level policy reforms. Financial products span from loans (direct or through financial intermediaries) to equity investments and guarantees to promote trade.

### *Support instruments available*

The EBRD operates in a whole range of industries, infrastructure, and transport. Within the varied portfolio of the EBRD's products and services, LRAs in candidate and potential candidate countries for EU enlargement are a key partner for the EBRD's Municipal and Environment Infrastructure Sector<sup>32</sup>. In this sector, the EBRD typically leverages loan financing and – in cooperation with international donors – grants (technical cooperation grant funds and investment grants). It targets projects supporting the improvement of municipal services in water, wastewater, public transport, urban roads and lighting, solid waste management, district heating, and energy efficiency. The projects involve strategically driven solutions and objectives for decentralisation, commercialisation, and environment improvement. Under the Small Business Initiative, the EBRD helps small and medium-sized businesses gain access to business advice. As SME development has a significant impact on local and regional economies, LRAs are an important stakeholder for many of these actions, but not a direct beneficiary.

## **EBRD Green Cities**

The EBRD Green Cities flagship programme specifically supporting urban climate- and environment-friendly endeavours was launched in 2016. With a budget of EUR 3 billion, it is well suited to finance not only technical but also significant yet expensive infrastructural projects in: (i) urban transport; (ii) solid waste; (iii) water and wastewater; (iv) energy and buildings; (v) land planning, green space, and biodiversity, as well as cross-sectoral policy areas: (vi) governance and (vii) finance. The Green Cities programme consists of three different components: (i) Green City Action Plans (GCAPs) in which local-specific diagnoses are prepared; (ii) sustainable infrastructure investment where specific project costs are secured; and (iii) capacity building. The major aims of

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<sup>32</sup> <https://www.ebrd.com/what-we-do/sectors-and-topics/municipal-and-environmental-infrastructure/mei-overview.html>.

the programme are to preserve the environment and local biodiversity; to enable both climate mitigation and adaptation actions; and to ensure that green policies are inclusive for the local citizens.

All cities with a population of at least 100,000 (cities with a population of 50,000 can be eligible in special cases) from the candidate and potential candidate countries for EU enlargement are eligible to become part of the network if they are willing to conduct GCAPs. In the region, 13 cities have joined the programme to-date (Ankara, Banja Luka, Belgrade, Istanbul, Izmir, Kumanovo, Novi Sad, Podgorica, Pristina, Sarajevo, Skopje, Tirana, and Zenica), of which eight have developed Green City Action Plans with clearly defined policy actions and investment pipeline for implementation (Tirana, Zenica, Banja Luka, Skopje, Izmir, Sarajevo, Belgrade, and Pristina).

*More information:* <https://www.ebrdgreencities.com/>

*Contact point:* [greencities@ebrd.com](mailto:greencities@ebrd.com)

## **Regional Energy Efficiency Programme (REEP) for the Western Balkans**

The EBRD manages the EU-funded programme “Regional Energy Efficiency Programme (REEP) for the Western Balkans”, which, since 2013, has been successful in establishing a sustainable market for energy efficiency and renewable energy financing for the private and public sectors in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Kosovo.

Through the EBRD’s Sustainable Infrastructure operations, REEP enables the public sector to take leadership in energy efficiency investments. This scales up investments in sustainable energy with a focus on energy efficiency in public buildings and the residential sector.

Through the Western Balkans Sustainable Financing Facility (WeBSEFF) and Western Balkans Sustainable Energy Direct Financing Facility (WeBSEDF) <sup>33</sup>, the Bank provides support for the implementation of energy efficiency and renewable energy projects across the region.

The WeBSEFF and WeBSEDF have an allocation of EUR 50 million and EUR 2.5 million in loan funds, respectively. They are open to local SMEs and project developers including LRAs, ESCOs (Energy Service Company), and other public service providers through direct loans, free of charge technical consultancies, and incentive payments.

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<sup>33</sup> <https://www.ebrd.com/downloads/research/factsheets/wbff.pdf>.

*More information:* <http://www.webseff.com>

*Contact point:*

WeBSEFF: <https://www.webseff.com/index.php/contacts>

WeBSEDF: <http://seff.ebrd.com/contacts.html>

## **Examples of recent EBRD Municipal and Environment Infrastructure projects under signing, development, and/or review:**

- **Albania:** EUR 60 million EBRD loan signed in October 2020 to co-finance tourism-enabling infrastructure investments in the municipalities of Berat, Korca, Fier, and Shkoder and municipal and transport infrastructure investments facilitating tourism in the rest of the country. <https://www.ebrd.com/work-with-us/projects/psd/albania-infrastructure-and-tourismenabling-programme-1.html>
- **BiH:** EUR 30 million EBRD loan to Bosnia and Herzegovina for on-lending to Sarajevo Canton for the construction of a twin pipe tunnel in Kobilja and Glava, connection road to the tunnel (on the 1st Transversal road), and a dual carriageway at the end of the Sarajevo bypass road (on the 9th Transversal road). <https://www.ebrd.com/work-with-us/projects/psd/49840.html>
- **Kosovo:** EUR 5 million sub-sovereign loan to the Municipality of Pristina for the improvement of the environmental sustainability of municipally owned buildings, including schools, kindergartens, and primary healthcare centres. <https://www.ebrd.com/work-with-us/projects/psd/50591.html>
- **Montenegro:** EUR 24 million loan to the regional water supply company of Montenegro (“Regionalni vodovod Crnogorsko Primorje”) to improve the water supply in the coastal region through the construction of new pipelines and new wastewater infrastructure. <https://www.ebrd.com/work-with-us/projects/psd/50612.html>
- **Serbia:** up to EUR 5 million EBRD debt financing to the city of Nis to support the implementation of energy efficiency measures in up to 40 residential multi-store buildings connected to the district heating network. <https://www.ebrd.com/work-with-us/projects/psd/51868.html>
- **Turkey:** EUR 80 million EBRD loan to Izmir Metropolitan Municipality for a municipal transport (metro) project. <https://www.ebrd.com/work-with-us/projects/psd/51599.html>

*Contact point:*

EBRD Project enquiries: +44 20 7338 7168

or <https://www.ebrd.com/enquiries.html>

EBRD Municipal and Environment Infrastructure projects: +44 207 338 8539 or

<https://www.ebrd.com/municipal-and-environmental-infrastructure.html>

EBRD Country teams:

- **Albania:** <https://www.ebrd.com/albania.html>
- **BiH:** <https://www.ebrd.com/ebrd-in-bosnia-and-herzegovina.html>
- **Kosovo:** <https://www.ebrd.com/kosovo.html>
- **Montenegro:** <https://www.ebrd.com/montenegro-country.html>
- **North Macedonia:** <https://www.ebrd.com/north-macedonia.html>
- **Serbia:** <https://www.ebrd.com/serbia.html>
- **Turkey:** <https://www.ebrd.com/turkey.html>





## 5. Where to find information about new and upcoming funding opportunities?

When searching for new financing opportunities, it is useful to maintain a list of websites that publish information on upcoming opportunities on regular bases. Signing up for their newsletters and/or following them on social media is the most efficient way of staying informed.

A first step could be to sign up for the European Committee of the Regions newsletter to receive information on policy updates relevant to LRAs as well as new publications and events:

[https://cor.europa.eu/en/news/Pages/enewsletter.aspx?utm\\_source=SharedLink&utm\\_medium=ShortURL&utm\\_campaign=newsletter-](https://cor.europa.eu/en/news/Pages/enewsletter.aspx?utm_source=SharedLink&utm_medium=ShortURL&utm_campaign=newsletter-)

### Delegations of the European Union:

- **Albania:** [https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/albania\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/albania_en)  
*Contact point:* [https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/albania/area/contacts\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/albania/area/contacts_en)
- **BiH:** <https://europa.ba/>  
*Contact point:* [http://europa.ba/?page\\_id=474](http://europa.ba/?page_id=474)
- **Kosovo:** [https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/kosovo\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/kosovo_en)  
*Contact point:* [https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/kosovo/area/contacts\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/kosovo/area/contacts_en)
- **Montenegro:** [https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/montenegro\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/montenegro_en)  
*Contact point:* [https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/montenegro/area/contacts\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/montenegro/area/contacts_en)
- **North Macedonia:** [https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/republic-north-macedonia\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/republic-north-macedonia_en)  
*Contact point:* [https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/republic-north-macedonia/area/contacts\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/republic-north-macedonia/area/contacts_en)
- **Serbia:** [https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/serbia\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/serbia_en)  
*Contact point:* [https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/serbia/area/contacts\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/serbia/area/contacts_en)
- **Turkey:** <https://www.avrupa.info.tr>  
*Contact point:* <https://www.avrupa.info.tr/tr/bize-ulasin-250>

### National IPA coordinators

[https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/enlargement-policy/overview-instrument-pre-accession-assistance/national-ipa-coordinators\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/enlargement-policy/overview-instrument-pre-accession-assistance/national-ipa-coordinators_en)

## **EU Enlargement portal**

News section with updates on financial cooperation between the enlargement countries and the EU.

*More information:* [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/news\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/news_en)

## **Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe**

Gathering 14 associations of local authorities in the Southeast Europe, NALAS represent approximately 9,000 LRAs in the region. The website contains information on, e.g., upcoming events and funding opportunities.

*More information:* <http://www.nalas.eu/News>

## **Western Balkan countries Research Technology Innovation**

The platform gathers information on research, technology, and innovation, including on funding opportunities, in the Western Balkans.

*More information:* <https://wbc-rti.info/object/call/open>

## **Regional Cooperation Council (RCC)**

Co-funded by the EU regional cooperation framework for the South-East Europe that supports investment into competitiveness, development of human capital, digital transformation, justice, and environmental protection through dedicated projects.

*More information:* <https://www.rcc.int/home>

## **Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA)**

Funded by the EU regional hub in the Western Balkans focused on capacity-building of the public administration in Western Balkans as well as support of regional cooperation and acceleration of public administration reforms.

*More information:* <https://www.respaweb.eu>

## **Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Initiative for South Eastern Europe (DPPI SEE)**

A regional initiative establishing a cohesive regional strategy for disaster preparedness and prevention across Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, and Turkey.

*More information:* <http://www.dppei.info>

## **Covenant of Mayors (CoM)**

The 2020 EU Climate and Energy Package – adopted in 2008 – prompted the EC to endorse and support the efforts deployed by LRAs in the implementation of sustainable and energy efficiency (EE) policies by launching the Covenant of Mayors (CoM) initiative. The CoM is a unique bottom-up movement focused on reinforcing wider national efforts in carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) reduction which has resulted in a great number of local and regional climate change mitigation projects and green investments. While the CoM does not provide direct financing to the signatory LRAs, the latter can participate in the dedicated peer-learning and twinning programmes<sup>34</sup> organised by the Covenant.

*More information:* <https://www.eumayors.eu>

## **Macro-Regional Strategies**

The EU macro-regional strategies aim to “act as a bridge between EU and local policymaking”<sup>35</sup>. Currently, four countries from the region under study are encompassed by two of them: EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia) and EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Serbia). Under the strategies, LRAs cannot apply for funding, but may receive assistance in enhancing the visibility and outreach of their ongoing projects.

*Contact point:*

National Coordinators: EUSAIR

<https://www.adriatic-ionian.eu/contacts/national-coordinators/> / EUSDR

<https://danube-region.eu/contact/national-coordinators/>

EUSAIR Pillar Coordinators: <https://www.adriatic-ionian.eu/contacts/pillar-coordinators/>

EUSAIR Facility Point Partners: <https://www.adriatic-ionian.eu/contacts/eusair-facility-point-partnership/>

EUSDR Strategy Points (DSP): <https://danube-region.eu/contact/danube-strategy-point/>

EUSDR Priority Areas Coordinators: <https://danube-region.eu/contact/priority-area-coordinators/>

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<sup>34</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/news/launch-eu-covenant-mayors-peer-learning-programme-2021-jan-20\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/news/launch-eu-covenant-mayors-peer-learning-programme-2021-jan-20_en).

<sup>35</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/sources/cooperate/macro\\_region\\_strategy/pdf/mrs\\_factsheet\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/cooperate/macro_region_strategy/pdf/mrs_factsheet_en.pdf)

## **Tips & tricks**

- Reach out to the LRAs mentioned in the brochure or on the programme websites as participants of successfully implemented projects to learn about their experiences in both applying for and implementing projects;
- Make use of the assistance given by contact points and do not hesitate to contact your local EU Delegation for information and assistance;
- Take part in events organised by the CoR, EU Delegations, individual programme management teams, and other institutions, such as: info days, brokerage events, and training sessions, among others;
- Read eligibility criteria carefully;
- Be proactive in reaching out to potential partners.

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**European Committee  
of the Regions**

Created in 1994, the European Committee of the Regions is the EU's political assembly of 329 regional and local representatives such as regional presidents or city-mayors from all 27 Member States, representing over 446 million Europeans.

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