



# THE EU AND MONTENEGRO

#WesternBalkans  
#EUEnlargement

October 2024



Montenegro is an **EU candidate country** since 2010.

DECEMBER 2008	MAY 2010	DECEMBER 2010	JUNE 2012	DECEMBER 2013	JUNE 2020	JUNE 2024
Application for EU membership	Stabilisation and Association Agreement enters into force	European Council grants candidate status	European Council decides to open accession negotiations	Opening of "Rule of Law" Chapters (Chapters 23 and 24)	All 33 screened chapters opened, three of which provisionally closed	Intergovernmental Conference on meeting the Interim Benchmarks set for the "Rule of Law" chapters

## Growth Plan for the Western Balkans

In 2023, the EU announced a landmark **Growth Plan** to accelerate Western Balkans partners' socio-economic development and EU integration.

"The Plan aims to boost **socio-economic convergence** through enhanced economic integration with the **EU's single market**, regional integration within the **Common Regional Market**, accelerating fundamental reforms.

As part of this Growth Plan, Montenegro was invited to prepare a **Reform Agenda** focusing on reforms to **unlock national and regional growth potential** and related to the fundamentals of the enlargement process, including **the rule of law, democracy, the respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms**.

A €6 billion **Reform and Growth Facility** for the Western Balkans will provide key support to the implementation of the Growth Plan. The Commission approved the Reform Agenda of Montenegro in October 2024. **€383.5 million in non-repayable grants and favourable loans** will be available to Montenegro **when** it meets the conditions it has committed to in its own Reform Agenda.



**The EU is Montenegro's**

✓ largest trade partner

✓ largest investor

✓ largest provider of financial assistance



## Ongoing EU support for Montenegro

The **EU** is the **largest provider of financial assistance to Montenegro**. It offers a variety of programmes and instruments to support Montenegro's development and EU accession process.

### Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA)

Between **2021-2024** the EU has allocated **over €135 million** of financial and technical assistance to Montenegro under IPA III. Assistance is provided in the form of **non-repayable grants**. This includes:

- **€7 million** to help Montenegro advance towards EU accession in key areas of **judiciary reform, fundamental rights and fight against organised crime**.
- **€14 million** budget support to improve citizens' quality of life and economic growth by creating a well-functioning, **digital and accessible public administration**.
- **€30 million Energy Support Package** which supported vulnerable families and SMEs in Montenegro in dealing with rising energy prices.

### Economic & Investment Plan (EIP)

The EU's **EIP for the Western Balkans** identifies 10 flagship investments in sustainable transport, clean energy, environment and climate, digital future, human capital and the private sector, to support a green and digital transition and bring the region closer to **the EU's single market**.

For projects in **Montenegro**, since 2020 the EU has mobilised **€1.3 billion in investments thanks to over €394 million in EU grants**. Funds are raised through tools such as the Western Balkans Investment Framework (WBIF). This includes:

- Rehabilitation of **168 km of railway line** along the Bar-Vrbnica Railway Line Section and increasing travel speed up to 120 km/h, as part of the extension of the TEN-T Core Network.
- Construction of a new **wastewater treatment** plant and sludge incineration plant serving a population of 189 300 people and installing 33.6 km of sewer pipes.
- Modernisation of kindergartens, primary, secondary, and vocational schools as well as provision of IT equipment providing **7 720 new places to students**, benefitting around 10 000 children annually.



### What we are achieving together



**183 km** of railway lines rehabilitated



**230 km** of electricity transmission lines upgraded



Improved water and sanitation services for **400 000 people**



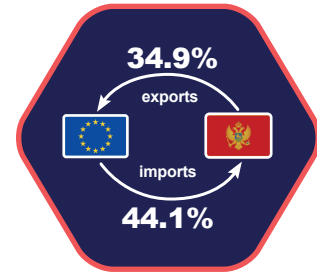
**71 900 people** with broadband access in rural areas



## Close trade & investment links

The **EU is Montenegro's main trading partner**. In 2023, the EU accounted for 47.5% of Montenegro's total trade in goods (34.9% of total exports and 44.1% of total imports). Total EU Foreign Direct Investment reached €223.6 million in 2022\*.

Progressive trade liberalisation and mutual duty-free access for most goods has been taking place since 2010 and is currently based on the **EU – Montenegro Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA)**.



## Foreign & security policy cooperation

Montenegro has continued to fully align on EU's **Common Foreign and Security Policy** positions and declarations.

In addition:

- Montenegro continues to participate in **EU crisis management missions and operations under the Common Security and Defence Policy**, currently in the EU NAVFOR ATALANTA.
- Montenegro contributes to regional cooperation in military medicine through the Balkan Medical Task Force (BMTF).
- The EU provides support to Montenegro in facing hybrid threats, including cyber and foreign information manipulation and interference.



## People to people contacts

- Since 2010, Montenegrins benefit from **visa-free travel** to the EU.
- The EU has funded over **4 500 exchanges** between EU and Montenegro citizens in the areas of education, training, youth, and sport under ERASMUS+ (2014-2020).

\* Source: DG Trade