The EU acknowledged the European perspective for all Western Balkan partners at the Thessaloniki European Council in June 2003. The EU-Kosovo Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) has been in force since April 2016. In December 2022, Kosovo applied for EU membership. Visa-free travel for Kosovo passport holders is expected to enter into effect on 1 January 2024.

The EU is the largest provider of financial assistance to Kosovo. The EU is supporting the socio-economic development and fundamental reforms in Kosovo with financial and technical assistance through the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA).

For 2021-2023, the IPA III funding for national programmes amounts to over €231 million for Kosovo. This includes the dedicated €75 million from the 2023 Energy Support Package immediate measures, 90% of which have already been disbursed to support vulnerable families and SMEs facing the rising energy prices. The actions are also aimed at supporting policy measures to accelerate the energy transition.

Since 1999, the EU has provided €338 million in loans for Kosovo through the European Investment Bank.

Total EU Foreign Direct Investment in Kosovo amounted to €2 billion in 2022.

Total volume of trade in goods with the EU was almost €2.7 billion in 2022.
**HUMAN CAPITAL**

The EU pays special attention to youth, education, and innovation. It helps the Western Balkans in implementing Youth Guarantee schemes to support youth employment.

5,500+ participants took part in exchanges between the EU and Kosovo in the areas of education, training, youth, and sport under ERASMUS+ (2014-2020).

The EU has provided €34 million in support to civil society (2014-2023).

364 young people received the opportunity to obtain a master’s degree via ‘Young Cells Scheme’ grants for future public administration officials and experts.

**ECONOMIC AND INVESTMENT PLAN**

Launched in 2020, the Economic and Investment Plan (EIP) for the Western Balkans aims to mobilise up to €30 billion in cooperation with international financial institutions until 2027. Under the EIP for Kosovo, the EU has already mobilised **€940 million** in investments, out of which €312 million in grants.

The EIP flagship projects in public sector for Kosovo, endorsed between 2020 and 2023, support **sustainable transport** and **renewable energy**.

For instance, the investments help:

- rehabilitate and upgrade Pristina-Merdare highway section
- introduce solar energy as one of the sources for Pristina district heating network

**Expected results 2023 - 2030**

- 27 km of motorway built
- 165 km of railway lines rehabilitated
- 130 MW renewable energy generation capacity installed
- Improved water and sanitation services for 1.3 million people