



# THE EU AND SERBIA

#WesternBalkans  
#EUEnlargement

October 2024



Serbia is an **EU candidate country** since 2012.

<b>DECEMBER 2009</b> Application for EU membership	<b>MARCH 2011</b> EU-facilitated dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina starts	<b>MARCH 2012</b> European Council grants candidate status	<b>JUNE 2013</b> European Council decides to open accession negotiations	<b>SEPTEMBER 2013</b> Stabilisation and Association Agreement enters into force	<b>JUNE 2021</b> Political Intergovernmental Conference under the revised enlargement methodology	<b>DECEMBER 2021</b> 22 out of 35 Chapters opened, two of which provisionally closed
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## 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, Serbia 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 Serbia in October 2024. **€1.586 billion in non-repayable grants and favourable loans** will be available to Serbia **when** it meets the conditions it has committed to in its own Reform Agenda.

A specific pre-condition applies to Serbia and Kosovo who must engage constructively in the normalisation of their relations.



## The EU is Serbia's

- ✓ largest trade partner
- ✓ largest investor
- ✓ largest provider of financial assistance



## Ongoing EU support for Serbia

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

### Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA)

Between **2021-2024** the EU has allocated over **€586 million** of financial and technical assistance to Serbia under IPA III. Assistance is provided in the form of non-repayable grants.

This includes:

- **€30 million** to strengthen the independence, efficiency and competence of the **judiciary**, improving the access to justice and the quality of the services to citizens and raising the level of trust in the judicial system.
- **€43.5 million for public administration and public financial management** to foster a merit-based, transparent, accountable public services and strengthen Serbia's budget execution and public internal financial control.
- **€165 million Energy Support Package** which supported vulnerable families and SMEs in Serbia 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 **Serbia**, since 2020 the EU has mobilised **€6.2 billion in investments thanks to €1.4 billion in EU grants**. Funds are raised through tools such as the Western Balkans Investment Framework (WBIF).

This includes:

- Upgrading over **600 km of railways**, expected to increase transport speed from 50km/h to 200km/h.
- Construction of the Kostolac wind farm and installing 66 MW of renewable energy capacity, expected to produce **187 GWh per year**, equivalent to the **energy** demand of 45,000 households.
- Construction of a new building for University Children's Hospital in Belgrade (Tiršova 2) with an additional 15 676 m<sup>2</sup> for **healthcare** services provided with modern technology for **over 3 700 patients** more per year.



### What we are achieving together



**77 km** of motorways built



**586 km** of railway lines rehabilitated



**353 MW** renewable energy generation capacity installed



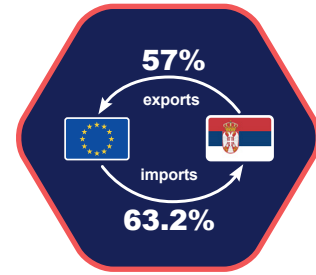
Improved water and sanitation services for **2.1 million people**



## Close trade & investment links

The EU is Serbia's main trading partner. In 2023, the EU accounted for 59.7% of Serbia's total trade in goods (57% of total exports and 63.2% of total imports). Total EU Foreign Direct Investment reached €1.39 billion in 2022\*.

Progressive trade liberalisation and mutual duty-free access for most goods has been taking place since 2009 based on the **EU – Serbia Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA)**.



## Foreign & security policy cooperation

- Serbia continued to participate actively in **EU crisis management missions and operations** under the Common Foreign and Security Policy.
- The Balkans Medical Task Force, in which Serbia participates, benefits from **€6 million support measures** under the European Peace Facility.
- The EU provides support in facing hybrid threats, including cyber and foreign information manipulation and interference.



## People to people contacts

- Since 2009, Serbians benefit from **visa-free travel** to the EU.
- The EU has funded over **28 400 exchanges** between EU and Serbia citizens in the areas of education, training, youth, and sport under ERASMUS+ (2014-2020).

\* Source: DG Trade

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