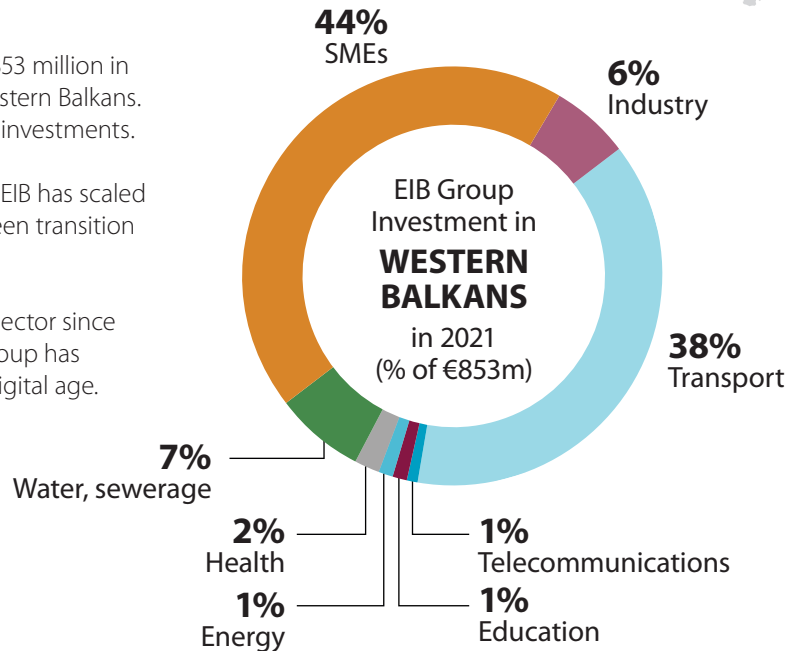


EIB Group activity in WESTERN BALKANS 2021

- The European Investment Bank (EIB) invested €853 million in 2021 as part of Team Europe support for the Western Balkans. These funds mobilised almost €3 billion of total investments.
- As the climate bank of the European Union, the EIB has scaled up its financial and technical support for the green transition in the Western Balkans.
- By investing close to €200 million in the digital sector since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the EIB Group has helped the Western Balkans adapt to the new digital age.



During 2021, the EIB continued working on the sustainable development of the Western Balkans through projects fostering a cleaner environment, greener industry, inclusive job opportunities and better digital, energy and transport networks. Under the Team Europe financial package for COVID-19 support, the Bank delivered €1.7 billion since 2020 to promote faster and more sustainable socioeconomic recovery in the Western Balkans, enabling long-term prosperity for people across the region and a more competitive economy.

Alongside partners in the region, the EIB helped to roll out the European Commission's Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans, aiming to spur regional integration and convergence with the European Union. This green and digital socioeconomic transformation requires commitment from all parties, new approaches, and partnerships combining knowledge and financial support. The EIB was pleased to join initiatives and cooperation opportunities that will help the region advance its green agenda, sustainable transport and digitalisation.





Making the Western Balkans greener

EIB invested €257 million in the region's sustainable development in 2021

As the EU climate bank, the EIB is expanding climate action and sustainability projects, aiming to mobilise €1 trillion of green investments during this decade. The EIB is working as part of Team Europe¹ to ensure that the Western Balkans region is not left behind as the world shifts towards a green, sustainable, carbon-neutral and circular economy. Together with its partners and with Western Balkan governments, the EIB is helping to mitigate the region's environmental issues and promote its adaptation to climate change. At the same time, by financing the transition to more efficient renewable energy in Serbia and North Macedonia, the EIB is helping to ensure diversification and security of energy supply.

The Bank complements its financing with bespoke technical assistance to help unlock more public and private investments in green energy and sustainability projects, with support from the European Commission. To help tackle environmental pollution, the EIB is financing a new water distribution system for Tirana, water supply systems for several municipalities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the construction of a wastewater treatment plant in Mitrovica. It is also financing and advising on sustainable mobility projects in the region, namely the modernisation of urban transport in the Sarajevo Canton and the city of Niš, railway network upgrades, and improved navigation along the Sava and Danube rivers.

1. Team Europe was first launched by the European Union to support partner countries in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. It combines resources from the European Union, its Member States, and financial institutions.



Ensuring a digital and smart future

Close to €200 million unlocked for digitalisation since 2020

How quickly and comprehensively digital skills and infrastructure are adopted will determine the speed of regional socioeconomic growth and economic competitiveness in the global market. To ensure the Western Balkans can compete globally, the EIB Group has invested over €200 million in the digital sector in the last two years alone.

“As part of Team Europe, the EIB is pleased to be able to accelerate digitalisation in the Western Balkans, helping the region adapt to the new digital era. Digitalisation is key for employment, long-term stability and increased resilience to crises. Every investment in this sector creates numerous benefits by developing connected, competitive, knowledge-based, sustainable, innovation-oriented and thriving economies in the region”, stated EIB Vice-President Lilyana Pavlova (responsible for the Western Balkans).

The EIB Group understands the importance of early adoption of digital skills and infrastructure. It has therefore invested in bringing digital equipment and high-speed internet to over 1 500 schools, making the necessary infrastructure upgrades for the introduction of 5G, and upgrading the existing 4G network in Serbia. These activities will contribute to the region’s digital transformation, economic and productivity growth, better youth employability, and the advancement of innovative capacity and climate change action.

Helping small businesses to recover, adapt and transform

Over €560 million invested in the private sector in 2021 as part of the €1.7 billion financial package for the Western Balkans under Team Europe

The EIB Group has provided tangible and rapid financial support for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), the major employer in every country of the region. In 2021 alone, the Bank unlocked €560 million for such businesses in the Western Balkans to ensure they can continue operating and providing employment. The funds were available under favourable and flexible conditions through the Team Europe financial package for faster socioeconomic recovery, and could be accessed by companies via commercial and national development banks.

EIB support helped small and medium enterprises in the region to overcome the burdens of the COVID-19 pandemic, which compelled companies to operate at limited capacity, postpone investment plans or even temporarily abandon operations (over one-third of firms according to the Enterprise Survey carried out by the EIB, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and the World Bank). At the same time, the pandemic has created opportunities for some sectors to adapt and change their business models, helping them to gain a head start in fast-changing markets. To catalyse this economic transformation and help small and medium enterprises become more digital, energy-efficient and inclusive, the EIB has introduced new financial instruments for the private sector over the last two years. These instruments include social impact financing to encourage Serbian companies to employ young people, women and vulnerable social groups, and a climate loan to help Montenegrin small and medium enterprises recover faster and introduce energy-efficient practices.

EIB group achievements in 2021

Overall EIB Group financing

Projects signed by the EIB Group
amounted to

€95 billion

Green financing

51%

of all financing signed by the EIB Group was related
to climate action and environmental sustainability

Projects signed

by the EIB for the Western Balkans amounted to

€853.5 million

This included

€834 million in EIB loans and
€19.5 million in grants

Projects signed

by the EIB Group for the Western Balkans
since 2009 reached close to

€9.5 billion

Number of jobs

sustained since 2009
thanks to EIB financing reached over

900 000

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