

IPA Cross-border Cooperation Programme Serbia-Montenegro 2021-2027

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New Opportunities for the Development of the Cross-border Region

As part of the Cross-Border Cooperation Programme Serbia-Montenegro, six public calls have been announced so far, resulting in 64 projects with a total value of over 15.4 million euros being contracted. Currently, 12 projects contracted under the Third Call of the IPA 2014-2020 are in progress.

The priorities selected for funding under the 2021-2027 financial perspective include Employment, Labor Mobility, Social and Cultural Inclusion across the border, as well as Promoting Tourism and Cultural and Natural Heritage.

To strengthen the capacity of future beneficiaries, a workshop titled “Project Proposal Preparation within the Cross-Border Cooperation Programme Serbia–Montenegro 2021–2027” was held on June 11, 2024, in Sjenica. The workshop was organized by the Ministry of European Integration of the Republic of Serbia and the Ministry of European Affairs of Montenegro, with support from the Joint Technical Secretariate of the Programme, in preparation for the upcoming call for project proposals.

The event was attended by over 40 representatives from national and local institutions, as well as non-governmental organizations. During the training, participants received detailed information about the Cross-Border Cooperation Programme between the two countries. Key aspects of the project cycle and project development were also covered, along with practical advice on the application process.

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In Novi Pazar, 750 Households Are Involved in Primary Waste Selection

This spring, 1,500 new bins for sorting recyclable waste arrived in Novi Pazar, and 750 households joined the primary selection system. The goal is to improve the collection percentage by 20% on the premises, and the initiative is part of the project “BEST Waste Management Cooperation - Better Environment Sustainability Through Waste Management Cooperation,” implemented by NALED with the support of the European Union.

To establish an appropriate waste management system, each household was initially given two bins—yellow for cans and PET packaging, and blue for paper and cardboard. The project is implemented in cooperation with cross-border Montenegrin municipalities and in partnership with the Center for Ecotoxicological Testing. In addition to Novi Pazar, the municipality of Mojkovac will also receive a donation of bins for waste separation this summer, while efforts will be made to improve the system in the municipalities of Kolašin, Bijelo Polje, and Tutin, based on the contract signed with the Ministry of Finance, Department for Contracting and Financing of EU-Funded Programmes (CFCU).



In June, representatives of PUC and LGUs participated in the fourth training session aimed at strengthening the capacity of local government employees who deal with waste management. Besides infrastructure, it is equally important to invest in people and their education. Four more workshops to improve cooperation with the NGO sector are planned for the second half of the year.

As part of this initiative, project partners and other representatives will visit the Austrian capital in the fall to learn firsthand about waste selection, sorting, and recycling. Vienna began working on separate waste collection in the early eighties and is now considered one of the cleanest cities in Europe, with harmful gas emissions 90 percent below the legally prescribed limits.

“In addition to infrastructure, we are also working on raising the awareness of PUCs and citizens in the region because this is the way for primary selection to fully come to life. An analysis of glass packaging waste management is being conducted for Novi Pazar, and other local governments will receive documents

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related to the circular economy and the establishment of a packaging waste management system in Montenegro,” said Sanja Knežević Mitrović, Manager for Regulatory Reform at NALED.



In addition to 500 bins, Mojkovac will also receive a horizontal press, enabling the transformation of the recycling yard into a recycling center. Kolašin and Bijelo Polje, as users of the center, will also benefit. The implementation of this project will help these local governments reduce the costs of transporting waste to the regional landfill in Podgorica when the landfill on Tara is closed.



The project is implemented in the municipalities of Mojkovac, Kolašin, and Bijelo Polje in Montenegro, and Novi Pazar and Tutin in Serbia. The goal is to learn from each other through cooperation and exchange of experiences, share good practices, and together strengthen the system for proper waste collection and sorting more efficiently.

Final Conference of the BEYOND Project

On July 26, 2024, the final conference of the “BEYOND - Business Enabling Environment for Youth Employment” project took place in Priboj. The project, which spanned 14 months, aimed to foster innovation and technological advancement in the cross-border community.

During the conference, participants had the opportunity to hear inspiring speeches from representatives of partner organizations, engage in panel discussions, and network with colleagues and partners.

The BEYOND project achieved significant results, including the development of new technologies, enhanced collaboration between research teams and companies, and substantial support for young innovators.

Through this initiative, two robotic hands were procured and will be made available to professors and students at secondary vocational schools in Nikšić and Priboj. For the first time, these students will have the opportunity to apply their theoretical knowledge of robotics in a practical setting.



Additionally, the project led to the creation of a cross-border online mentoring platform (<https://startupuspeh.com>), designed to connect mentors across the border with individuals, startups, and MSMEs in the program area. This network will support more entrepreneurs in the region and enhance existing centers with new services.



The project was successfully implemented by the Regional Development Agency Zlatibor, the Innovation and Entrepreneurship Center Tehnopolis, and the Chamber of Commerce of Montenegro, under the Cross-Border Cooperation Programme Serbia-Montenegro 2014-2020.

Clean Community for Sustainability in Environment and Nature (CLEAN)

The project “Clean Community for Sustainability in Environment and Nature (CLEAN)” is being implemented in the municipalities of Gusinje (Montenegro) and Ivanjica (Republic of Serbia) with the goal of improving environmental protection in the cross-border area. At the beginning of 2024, activities were carried out that significantly contributed to enhancing municipal waste management infrastructure and promoting environmental protection among young people.

At the start of the year, the municipality of Ivanjica upgraded its existing communal infrastructure by purchasing a specialized waste collection vehicle worth 90,500 euros for the needs of PUC “Ivanjica.” The purchase of the vehicle was co-financed by the Municipality of Ivanjica, which contributed RSD 5,159,000.00.



Additionally, in the Municipality of Ivanjica, local infrastructure for the disposal of municipal waste was improved through the procurement and installation of ten wooden bins in the Golija Nature Park at tourist locations, aiming to protect natural resources. The project also included the installation of five informative and educational boards in the Golija Nature Park and central city locations.

On June 5, 2024, the municipalities of Gusinje and Ivanjica marked World Environment Day by implementing several activities as part of the project.

In elementary schools in Gusinje and Ivanjica, June 5th was celebrated with an Eco Quiz for students in the 7th to 9th grades and 6th to 8th grades, respectively. The Eco Quiz was designed to allow students to demonstrate their knowledge of ecology and sustainable development, while also providing an opportunity to qualify for participation in Eco Camps that will be organized in both municipalities in the near future. A total of 90 students from four elementary schools took part in the quiz.

Additionally, murals painted on the walls of two schools in these municipalities were officially unveiled. These murals serve as visual reminders to future generations about the importance of preserving

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the environment. They attract attention and raise awareness among students, teachers, and passersby about environmental issues, while also conveying important messages about environmental protection, recycling, energy conservation, biodiversity, and other related topics.



The project began on December 24, 2022, and will last for two years, until December 23, 2024. The total value of the project is 389,635 euros, with the European Union contributing 330,800 euros.



Enhancing the Employability of Persons with Mental Disabilities

The project “Borders that Connect – Initiative to Enhance the Employability of Persons with Mental Disabilities (PwMD) in Serbia and Montenegro” is aimed at improving the employment prospects of people with mental disabilities in Serbia and Montenegro. The goal of the project is to integrate people with mental disabilities into the working environment, thereby improving their quality of life and promoting social inclusion. This project is being implemented by three organizations: NGO Impuls from Nikšić, PI Day Center for Children with Disabilities and People with Disabilities Nikšić, and the Humanitarian Organization “Child’s Heart”



One of the key activities within the project is the harvesting of medicinal plants, which is carried out by project beneficiaries with the help of licensed mentors. This innovative approach to work engagement combines elements of outdoor work with the improvement of social skills, ultimately leading to the employment of people with mental disabilities in the open labor market.

The project team is actively working to establish contacts with local employers, with the goal of informing them about the possibilities and advantages of employing people with mental disabilities. In this regard, numerous contacts and preliminary discussions have been conducted, during which employers were familiarized with the results of previous activities, the training process, and the implementation of activities related to the harvesting, packaging, and presentation of medicinal herbs at fairs.

One of the significant activities was a visit to the Ethno Village of Brezna, located between the municipalities of Plužine and Nikšić. During this visit, discussions were held with the owners of the Ethno Village about the benefits of employing people with disabilities.

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The “Borders that Connect” project represents a significant step toward better integration of people with mental disabilities into society. Through education, practical work, and the active involvement of employers, the project contributes to the creation of an inclusive work environment in Serbia and Montenegro.



The European Union, through the IPA Cross-Border Cooperation Programme Serbia-Montenegro, provides crucial financial support for the implementation of such initiatives and the improvement of the position of persons with disabilities in the region.

Knight Games Held in Nikšić and Priboj as Part of the Project “Contest for Ilindan”

On August 1st and 2nd, 2024, knightly games were held on Mount Lukavica near Nikšić and in Pribojska Banja, organized by the Diocese of Budimlje and Nikšić and the Nikšić Tourist Organization as part of the project “Contest for Ilindan – Historic Re-enactment Events and Outdoor Tourism.”

The event was organized with the aim of contributing to the sustainable use of the region’s tourist potential through the joint promotion of religious, cultural, and recreational tourism. Project activities are focused on the municipalities of Nikšić and Bijelo Polje in Montenegro and the municipality of Priboj in Serbia, where religious, cultural, historical, and recreational tourism is recognized as a significant potential for development.



By organizing a new event and reconstructing historical scenes with performers and animators, the project introduces new cultural content into the tourist offerings of Nikšić and Priboj. This approach draws the attention of visitors, enriches the quality of the event, and provides a new and educational perspective that emphasizes history and culture.

The Svibor Association of Serbia, an organization dedicated to the promotion and practice of knightly combat and medieval culture, participated in the event. For the occasion, a medieval village with four tents was set up, equipped with tables, benches, furs, and tools, showcasing old crafts and medieval weapons. The Svibor knights performed outdoors in full military gear, demonstrating knightly combat with swords, spears, halberds, axes, a jousting tournament, ax throwing, wrestling, stone throwing, stick fighting, arm wrestling, the use of a medieval war bow and arrow, and massive knightly battles.

Visitors had the opportunity to participate in target shooting using soft props and safety equipment, and many took the chance to take photos in knightly costumes, armor, and equipment.

As part of this project, activities include building footpaths with additional equipment in the Pribojska Banja monastery complex, installing glamping tents with additional equipment near the Samograd



monastery in Bijelo Polje and on Mount Lukavica in the municipality of Nikšić, creating programs for historical events, organizing historical events in Bijelo Polje and Priboj, and incorporating these events and services into the municipalities' action plans.

Increasing the Employability of Young People in the Cross-Border Region

The project “Regional Training Academy for Boosting Employability of Vulnerable Youth” envisions the implementation of a one-stop-shop model that includes courses in soft, digital, and entrepreneurial skills, with the aim of increasing the employability of NEET youth.

To define the training program’s curriculum as effectively as possible, it is necessary to identify the gap between supply and demand in the labor market by conducting research in the municipalities involved in the project (Berane, Bijelo Polje, and Rožaje in Montenegro, and Sjenica, Tutin, and Novi Pazar in the Republic of Serbia).



The research will include at least 200 representatives from NEET youth, small and medium enterprises, IT companies, civil society organizations, and relevant institutions.

Focus groups are currently being conducted to discuss young people’s needs, the challenges they face in employment, and the skills they would like to acquire or improve to become more competitive in the labor

market. In addition to focus groups, the research includes interviews with representatives of relevant local institutions and surveys with potential employers, aimed at mapping the skills that are in demand in the labor market.

Selected experts will develop curricula for the 7-month one-stop-shop program as part of the Working Group and will create a document with guidelines for encouraging the employability of NEET youth in the cross-border area of Sandžak. In addition to the working group members, all project partners and alumni of the one-stop-shop pilot program from the cross-border region of Sandžak will contribute to the creation of this document.

Following this, a public call will be issued for 50 NEET youth interested in participating in the training program. Promotion will include a campaign on social media and info sessions held in all municipalities covered by the project. After the training program, ten young people will have the unique opportunity to participate in a three-month internship program.

The project is implemented by Forum MNE in partnership with the Center for Youth Work (CYW), the Rožaje Youth Civic Initiative, and the Novi Pazar Youth Office. The overall goal of the project is to increase the employability of NEET youth in the cross-border region of Sandžak by promoting innovative approaches to acquiring new knowledge and skills. The project aims to support young people in overcoming the skills gap needed to access the labor market through capacity-building programs designed to improve knowledge and skills for NEET youth in the cross-border region.

Joint Actions for Rural Tourism Development

The project “Joint Actions for Rural Tourism Development” is now entering its second year of implementation, with several results already visible and accessible to the public. During the previous period, a field survey of rural tourism entities was conducted in the Zlatar tourist zone. The data collected was used to identify the full potential of rural tourism in this area and served as the foundation for designing new tourist routes, aimed at further promoting these potentials.

In May 2024, the first botanical gardens were planted in Zlatar, under the guidance of renowned herbalist Momčilo Antonijević. By walking along the mountain paths, tourists will have the opportunity to explore the native plants of this region in an up-close and personal manner, learning about their medicinal properties.

During the early summer months, five rest areas were established, enhancing the mountain trails and providing walkers with designated spots to pause and relax at the most scenic locations in Zlatar. These rest areas, constructed from wood and seamlessly integrated into the mountain environment,



offer visitors a place to sit, refresh, and take shelter from the weather conditions before continuing on one of the five themed trails developed through the project. The Path of Happiness, the Path of Fragrance, the Path of Panoramic Views, the Path of Radoinja Meanders, and the Path of Enjoyment are the newest additions to Zlatar’s “family” of mountain routes. With a total length of 56 km, these new trails further enrich Zlatar’s tourism offerings.

A recent project milestone includes the acquisition of 10 electric bicycles and 10 electric scooters, which will be available for rent, allowing tourists to explore all local attractions. In the coming months,



efforts will focus on organizing educational activities to enhance the skills of tourism service providers, particularly in recognizing and harvesting medicinal plants for use in local cuisine and traditional medicine.

The project is implemented in partnership by the Regional Development Agency for Bjelasica, Komovi, and Prokletije, the Municipality of Šavnik, and the Zlatar Tourism Organization.



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**Cross-Border
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