

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

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ABOUT THE PROGRAMME

Serbia and Montenegro Enter a New Chapter of Cross-Border Cooperation – First Call under IPA III Framework Coming Soon

Serbia and Montenegro continue to strengthen partnerships through the new IPA III perspective, bringing fresh opportunities for the development of cross-border cooperation. The first public call for project proposals under this programme is expected to be launched during 2025.

A total of EUR 5.4 million in EU funds will be available in the first call for projects aimed at improving the quality of life in the cross-border areas of Serbia and Montenegro. The selected funding priorities include:

- Employment, labour mobility, and social and cultural inclusion across borders;
- Encouraging tourism and cultural and natural heritage.

High interest is expected from public, civil, and private sector stakeholders, as this call represents a major opportunity to develop joint projects, improve local services, and promote the region as an attractive and connected area. The IPA III programme builds on the legacy of successful cooperation from previous funding cycles, with an even stronger focus on inclusive and sustainable development.

All interested stakeholders are invited to follow the programme's official website and social media channels and to begin preparing in a timely manner for participation in this important EU funding opportunity.

www.cbcsrb-mne.org
www.facebook.com/PrekogranicniProgramSRBMNE
www.cbc-srb-mne.euzatebe.rs/en/

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VISIT TO SUCCESSFUL CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION PROJECTS BETWEEN SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO

On 3 and 4 June, representatives of the EU Delegation to the Republic of Serbia and the Joint Technical Secretariat of the Cross-Border Cooperation Programme Serbia-Montenegro visited successful projects implemented under the programme.

In Ivanjica, they visited the project “Clean Community for Sustainability in Environment and Nature – CLEAN” and toured underground waste containers and a new waste collection vehicle procured through the project. The municipalities of Gusinje and Ivanjica jointly implemented the project. With a total value of EUR 389,635—of which the EU provided EUR 330,800—“CLEAN” delivered tangible benefits to the citizens of both municipalities.

On this occasion, Nicola Bertolini, Head of Cooperation at the EU Delegation to Serbia, emphasised that the EU continues to invest in sustainable development through projects such as “CLEAN.”

Following their visit to Ivanjica, the delegation also toured the recycling centre of the Public Utility Company “Gradska čistoća” in Novi Pazar. The project “BEST – Cooperation in Waste Management – Towards a Sustainable Environment” was implemented in partnership with the Municipality of Mojkovac, the Centre for Ecotoxicological Research from Podgorica, and NALED from Serbia. Through this project, Novi Pazar received 1,500 bins for sorting recyclable waste and a delivery vehicle, while a system for primary waste selection was established in participating municipalities.

Faruk Suljević, Director of the Public Utility Company “Gradska čistoća,” noted that EU support has lasted for more than a decade, since 2014. “Through these projects, including the cross-border one with Montenegro, the process of primary recycling was initiated,” said Suljević.

On the second day of the visit, representatives of the EU Delegation to the Republic of Serbia and the Joint Technical Secretariat visited a new tourist attraction – Via Ferrata Đurđevica in Tutin. This ferrata was developed through the project “Via Ferrata CLUB – Climbing to Discover the Beauty of Piva and Ibar.”

The project was jointly implemented by the Municipality of Plužine, the Municipality of Tutin, InTER, and Piva Nature Park.

“This is a fantastic project co-financed by the European Union and made possible thanks to the local initiative of citizens and organisations, who were highly professional in constructing this site and making it accessible to nearly everyone,” said Bertolini while climbing the ferrata.



More Efficient Waste Management in Five Local Self-Governments in Serbia and Montenegro

Five local self-governments – Novi Pazar, Tutin, Mojkovac, Bijelo Polje, and Kolašin – have enhanced their knowledge and capacities in the area of waste management, thanks to the project "BEST – Waste Management Cooperation – Better Environment Sustainability Through Waste Management Cooperation", implemented by NALED with support from the European Union and in partnership with the Center for Ecotoxicological Research. The goal of the project was to improve the waste collection and recycling systems in the border area between Serbia and Montenegro.

At the same time, it aimed to strengthen the capacities of local self-governments and public utility companies in primary waste separation and to raise public awareness about the importance of proper waste management and environmental protection. During the project, four thematic training sessions were organized for representatives of local governments and public utility companies, along with four additional sessions for civil society organizations.

These educational events contributed to knowledge sharing, better understanding of the regulatory framework, enhancement of technical capacities, and increased awareness among public administration employees about the principles of the circular economy.



One of the most significant parts of the project was a study visit to Austria, where participants had the opportunity to learn about modern and efficient waste management models, including primary waste selection and the transformation of waste into electrical and thermal energy. The project's main activity included the procurement of 2,000 waste separation bins based on the two-container model, which were distributed in Novi Pazar and Mojkovac. Additionally, a waste baling press was provided to the public utility company in Mojkovac.

Owing to savings achieved through the project, Novi Pazar was also able to procure a specialized vehicle for waste collection, further strengthening the technical capacity of its local administration. "It is important to develop a primary selection system, which involves collecting and separating waste at the point of origin. NALED's research shows that most citizens do not separate waste due to a lack of proper infrastructure, while only one-fifth cite a lack of habit. Findings also indicate that additional motivation could come from having waste bins and recycling stations closer to users, along with the introduction of certain incentives. Serbia has solid regulations aligned with EU standards in the field of municipal waste management, but more investment is needed to support implementation," said Sanja Knežević Mitrović, Head of the Environmental Protection Unit at NALED.

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To support the development of a long-term and sustainable waste management system, the project resulted in the creation of five strategic public policy documents:

- Situation Analysis and Recommendations for Glass Packaging Waste Management – Novi Pazar
- Situation Analysis and Roadmap for Circular Economy – Municipality of Tutin
- Situation Analysis for Establishing a Packaging Waste Management System – Montenegro
- Situation Analysis and Roadmap for Circular Economy – Mojkovac, Kolašin, and Bijelo Polje
- Local Waste Management Plan – Municipality of Mojkovac

These documents were presented during workshops held in both Serbia and Montenegro, and their adoption in Novi Pazar and Tutin demonstrates the readiness and commitment of local authorities to take concrete steps toward responsible resource management. However, it is also clear that many local governments lack the resources and capacity to fully implement the responsibilities delegated to them. This is why pilot projects such as “BEST” can be especially valuable, particularly for smaller communities, helping them to recover recyclable resources from municipal waste – such as PET plastic, aluminum, cardboard, paper, multi-layer packaging, and glass. The total value of the project is €374,826.35, of which €318,602.40 was financed by the European Union.

Health Trail in Pribojska Banja

Pribojska Banja is the most visited tourist destination in the municipality of Priboj, offering visitors health treatments in indoor thermal water pools, a spa pool with thermal water, and an open-air spa pool. In addition, visitors can explore the 12th-century Monastery of St. Nicholas, located near the spa complex. The monastery is especially renowned for its treasury of medieval artifacts and jewelry, which were hidden by monks in the foundations of the building during the Ottoman conquests. These treasures, discovered in the 1970s, represent priceless cultural heritage. For a long time, a walking trail had been missing for visitors to Pribojska Banja. To address this, the Tourist Organization of Priboj planned the construction of a health trail as one of the main activities within the project "Megdan for Ilindan – Historical Events and Outdoor Tourism." The health trail, constructed in 2024, is approximately 1,500 meters long and between 1.90 and 2.5 meters wide. The top layer is made of fine crushed stone, and the trail winds through a mixed forest area with both coniferous and deciduous trees, featuring gentle inclines and declines. Along the trail, benches and trash bins were installed through the project. In addition to the trail, the project included:

- Outdoor gym with six exercise machines
- Children's playground with five play structures
- Wooden mushroom-shaped shelter for resting



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The trail is protected from flash floods by concrete retaining dams and drainage pipes. It is also equipped with LED lighting, making it suitable for use during the night. The trail is regularly used by tourists, local residents, and citizens of the Priboj municipality. One of the project's activities included the reenactment of historical events with performers, animators, and craftsmen demonstrating knightly battles using swords, spears, halberds, axes, jousting, axe throwing, wrestling, stone throwing, stick fighting, arm wrestling, medieval war bows and arrows, and mass knight battles. So far, three such events have been held – in Pribojska Banja, on Mount Lukavica, and at the Samograd Monastery near Bijelo Polje.



The goal of these events is to authentically present the lifestyle, clothing, and customs of people from the medieval era of this cross-border region, as well as their music, crafts, and knightly combat traditions. The implementation of the Serbia–Montenegro Cross-Border Cooperation Project 2014– 2020, titled "Contest for Ilindan – Historic Re-enactment Events and Outdoor Tourism," began on November 22, 2023, and will continue until November this year. The project aims to enhance the tourism offer of Pribojska Banja and the cross-border region. It is implemented by the Tourist Organization of Priboj as the lead partner, in cooperation with the Eparchy of Budimlja and Nikšić and the Tourist Organization of Nikšić as project partners. The total value of the project is EUR 324,931.10, of which 76.47% is financed by the European Union.

New Opportunities for 50 NEET Youth in the Cross-Border Region

The Regional Academy for Improving the Employability of NEET Youth, coordinated by Forum MNE in partnership with the Center for Youth Work from Novi Sad, the Youth Office of Novi Pazar, and the Civil Youth Initiative from Rožaje, offers a new opportunity for young people who are Not in Employment, Education, or Training (NEET) – through an innovative cross- border training model.

The project began in February 2024 and will run for two years, with the goal of enhancing the employability of young people aged 18 to 30 from rural areas of the cross-border region.

The initiative focuses on overcoming employment barriers through a unique approach that combines the development of soft skills, digital competencies, and an entrepreneurial mindset. The European Union is co-financing the project with EUR 203,891.54, while the total project value is EUR 239,900.63.

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As part of the project, a comprehensive study on youth employability was conducted, involving 200 participants, including young people, employers, and institutions. The results clearly highlighted a lack of practical digital skills, entrepreneurial thinking, and self-confidence among youth. In response, the Regional Training Academy was established, supported by experts in digital marketing, youth work, and local business from Serbia and Montenegro.

Together, they developed a specialized seven-month training program tailored to the needs of the regional labor market. Through fieldwork, information sessions, and a social media campaign that reached over 120,000 young people, the project team received nearly 100 applications. From these, approximately 50 participants (most of them women) were selected to take part in the program.

The first soft skills workshop was held in Rožaje, focusing on interpersonal and professional abilities such as communication, leadership, empathy, time management, and business presentation.

At the same time, digital training sessions in Berane and Novi Pazar are entering their final phase. Topics include social media marketing, SEO, email campaigns, content creation, and the use of tools such as ChatGPT. Young participants are gaining practical knowledge that is in demand by local employers, especially micro and small enterprises.



These trainings not only help bridge the digital skills gap but also build self-confidence and empower youth for self-employment or entry-level positions in emerging sectors. In the coming period, Showcase Days will be organized to connect young people with employers, along with professional internships for 10 selected participants, and a Regional Camp focused on startup skills and launching their own businesses. This project represents an important step toward building a stronger, more capable, and competitive workforce in the cross-border region.

Promotional Tour through the RESET Project

As part of the project “gReen Eyes croSs bordEr rouTe (RESET)”, implemented by the Municipality of Nikšić and the Regional Tourist Organization of Sandžak, in cooperation with the Tourist Organization of Nikšić, the first three-day promotional tour was organized to showcase the beauty and tourism potential of the eight municipalities involved in the project.

Over three days, participants visited 37 sites across the municipalities of Nikšić, Šavnik, Žabljak, Pljevlja, Prijepolje, Nova Varoš, Sjenica, and Novi Pazar, gaining firsthand experience of the diverse natural and cultural attractions that this cross-border region offers. The route passed through picturesque landscapes, rich cultural heritage, and authentic local stories. Lakes, monasteries, mosques, museums, and unspoiled nature all form part of the unique offerings along this new tourist route.

The promotional tour was held from June 11 to 13, 2025, and brought together 25 participants, including representatives of local governments, tourism organizations, the media, NGOs, a tour guide, and an event organization agency. In each municipality, participants were warmly welcomed by local tourism organizations and guides who provided hospitality, expert presentations, and a detailed overview of each area's tourism potential.

The tour served as a valuable opportunity to exchange ideas and help shape future tourism offerings. Through their personal experience and feedback, participants contributed to finalizing the itinerary developed as part of the project.

The aim of the event is to create an attractive cross-border tourist route that will support tourism development, strengthen regional cooperation, and highlight the natural and cultural richness of the area.

To further promote the tourism potential of the municipalities involved in the RESET project, a mobile application called Travel Reset has been developed. The app provides visitors with an overview and detailed information about all attractions and features offered by the eight municipalities – from natural landmarks to cultural and historical sites, local events, and services.



Cleaner Communities Through Joint Action

The project “CLEAN community for sustainability in Environment And Nature – CLEAN”, jointly implemented by the municipalities of Gusinje (Montenegro) and Ivanjica (Republic of Serbia), aimed to strengthen local capacities for waste management and of environmental protection and proper waste disposal.

Through a series of practical activities, and with financial support from the European Union, conditions were created for improved public utility services while also fostering a stronger connection between citizens and their living environment.

One of the most visible outcomes of the project was the significant improvement in local waste management infrastructure. Specialized vehicles, underground and bulky waste containers, as well as wooden trash bins for tourist areas such as Prokletije National Park and Golija Nature Park, were procured. These investments equipped the utility companies in Gusinje and Ivanjica with the technical resources needed to carry out their work more efficiently.

The introduction of new operational procedures and the organization of study visits further contributed to building knowledge and facilitating the exchange of experiences among utility workers and local government representatives, thus supporting the long-term sustainability of the project's results. In addition to infrastructure improvements, the project also played a key role in increasing awareness among young people—particularly elementary school students in the two communities—about proper waste management and environmental protection. Through educational workshops, eco quizzes, camps, and creative school activities, more than 650 students actively participated in the project.

Their involvement went beyond formal engagement—these young participants genuinely contributed to promoting recycling, preserving nature, and educating their peers.



For many students, it was their first time participating in nature-based educational activities—during the camps in Golija and Prokletije—where they learned scouting skills, navigation, and developed a strong sense of teamwork. By painting two murals at schools in Gusinje and Ivanjica, they delivered a lasting message for future generations: the importance of a clean environment and personal responsibility.

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The collaboration between two municipalities from different countries demonstrated that shared challenges can be successfully addressed through mutual understanding and resource-sharing. Throughout the project, strong ties were formed between local governments, public utility companies, schools, and the civil sector. This type of cross-border cooperation delivers long-term benefits—not only through tangible infrastructure improvements but also by creating a sense of collective strength: that small communities working together can achieve meaningful change. The project laid a strong foundation for future initiatives that can build on the knowledge gained and the trust developed. The total value of the project was EUR 389,635, of which EUR 330,800 was funded by the European Union. The project was implemented from December 24, 2022, to December 23, 2024.



Katuns and Thematic Trails at the Heart of the Tourism Offer

The project “Joint actions for rural tourism development” makes a significant contribution to the sustainable development of the cross-border area between Serbia and Montenegro, relying on the rich natural and cultural heritage of katun (mountain hut) regions – Durmitor, Sinjajevina, Piva, and Prošćenske mountains in Montenegro, and mountain Zlatar in Serbia. Through joint efforts, partners developed new tourism products that directly promote the potential of these areas, engage local communities, and contribute to the economic development of rural regions. The total value of the project is EUR 264,724.74. In Montenegro, the thematic route “Giant Heights” was developed, stretching over 500 km and connecting more than 50 katuns. This trail offers an authentic insight into traditional mountain life, local gastronomy, and stunning landscapes. The initiative supports ongoing efforts to preserve katuns and recognize their value as potential intangible cultural heritage. On mountain Zlatar in Serbia, five thematic trails were created, totaling 56 km, each with a distinct concept:

- Trail of Happiness – offering unforgettable panoramic views
- Trail of Enjoyment – for complete peace and relaxation in nature
- Trail of Good Views – opening up spectacular sights of surrounding mountains
- Trail of Scents – dedicated to the richness of medicinal herbs
- Trail of Radoinja Meanders – highlighting the unique river landscapes.

In addition to trail development, the project improved tourist infrastructure through the construction of rest areas, campsites, and the establishment of botanical gardens. Promotional activities included the creation of brochures, a promotional video, enhanced online visibility, and presentations of the project on www.katunroads.me and www.zlatar.org.

Capacity-building was also a key focus of the project. Training sessions were held to strengthen the skills necessary for providing tourism services—such as quality service delivery, guest communication, rural tourism promotion and marketing, and the use of medicinal herbs in cosmetic products. A joint training event brought together participants from both countries, focusing on the use of medicinal herbs in culinary practices, directly connecting tradition, agriculture, and the diversification of local products.

A particularly valuable component of the project is the introduction of sustainable mobility measures. The procurement of electric bicycles and scooters in Serbia aims to reduce environmental impact and promote green tourism, in line with modern European standards of sustainable development.

The project has strong economic potential for local communities, enabling the development of new tourist attractions, job creation, and encouraging young people and women to remain and thrive in their hometowns. It also creates opportunities for small producers to offer authentic products within organized tourism experiences.

Beyond economic impact, the project contributes to the preservation of natural and cultural values—including the protection of katun architecture, intangible heritage, traditional herbal knowledge, and the conservation of landscapes and biodiversity in areas recognized by national and international institutions.

From July 9–11, 2025, a promotional tour was organized for tourism operators and media representatives to showcase the newly developed services and attractions in the cross-border area—Zlatar in Serbia and Durmitor, Sinjajevina, and the Piva mountains in Montenegro. The tour highlighted mountain tourism offers, with a special focus on service providers and the natural beauty of these destinations.



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“This project is of great importance for Nova Varoš and the tourism offer of mountain Zlatar. Thanks to the Serbia–Montenegro Cross-Border Cooperation Programme and EU funding, we have created new content that is crucial for attracting tourists to our mountain. We installed signage along the thematic hiking trails—an essential step toward valorizing our natural and cultural resources. We also implemented educational programs to boost the knowledge of local hosts and began infrastructure improvements at scenic viewpoints. While there's more work ahead, this project has provided the initial impulse and a solid foundation for further development of rural tourism on Zlatar.” – Branko Pucarević, Director of TO “Zlatar” “Through the implementation of this project, we've taken a significant step forward in strengthening the capacities for sustainable tourism development in the cross-border region of Serbia and Montenegro. We believe such best practices can serve as inspiration for new initiatives and encourage further enhancement of cross-border cooperation.”– Snežana Zečević, Project Manager, Regional Development Agency for Bjelasica, Komovi, and Prokletije

Youth Startup – Support for Young Entrepreneurs in the Border Region of Serbia and Montenegro

The “Youth Startup” project was launched with the aim of encouraging young people in the border region between Serbia and Montenegro to start their own businesses and remain in their local communities. It includes the municipalities of Pljevlja, Bijelo Polje, Rožaje, and Petnjica in Montenegro, as well as Sjenica, Prijepolje, Nova Varoš, and Priboj in Serbia. The Municipality of Pljevlja is the lead partner, and the project is implemented in cooperation with the Municipality of Sjenica and the NGO ADP-Zid from Podgorica. The total project value is EUR 250,495.56.

During the first year of implementation, the focus was on developing an entrepreneurial mindset and building a supportive environment for young people who want to start their own businesses. Through conferences, workshops, forums, info days, and intensive training sessions, the project connected youth from both regions, encouraging the exchange of knowledge, experience, and ideas.

In March, national conferences were held in Pljevlja and Sjenica, where the goals and significance of the project for local economic development were presented. These were followed by info days in Pljevlja in June, and a four-day Startup Camp in Žabljak in July, where twenty young people developed their own business ideas with the support of mentors.

In September, a Startup Forum took place in Sjenica—the first regional event of its kind — which brought together youth from Pljevlja and Sjenica to network and collaborate on entrepreneurial solutions. Just days later, an event in Pljevlja allowed young participants to present nine innovative ideas to local officials, media, and potential investors, ranging from eco-cosmetics to educational digital platforms. Investors expressed genuine interest in supporting the development of several business ideas, marking an important step in connecting youth with the market.

Throughout 2024, the “Youth Startup” project not only taught young people how to create business models but also created a space for trust, collaboration, and the belief that it's possible to start something of their own—right here, in their hometown. In a time when many young people are choosing to leave, this initiative demonstrates that we can rely on each other and build together.

A Sustainable Future Through Improved Wastewater Management – Cooperation Between Pljevlja and Kraljevo

Within the project “Let's join the sustainable future through better wastewater management,” a series of important activities were carried out that strengthened the technical and professional capacities of local utility companies and resulted in the building of trust, friendships, and readiness for future collaboration.

Through workshops held in Pljevlja and Kraljevo, employees from the respective utility companies gained new knowledge, exchanged experiences, and shared best practices related to their daily operations at the local level. A special contribution came from a study visit to Maribor (Slovenia) and its modern wastewater treatment facility. Although “Vodovod” Pljevlja operates similar infrastructure, this visit allowed the teams to compare operating models and receive specific advice for improving their own systems. What made the project particularly successful was the fact that, beyond technical outcomes, participants built genuine friendships and formed a true partnership—one of the most valuable achievements. A committed and constructive cooperation was established, rooted in shared goals and mutual trust, laying the foundation for future joint initiatives.



On the technical side, one of the key improvements was the procurement of mini Canal Jet vehicles for the Pljevlja and Kraljevo water utilities. These specialized vehicles significantly ease the maintenance of sewer systems, speed up interventions, and contribute to greater customer satisfaction.

The total project value was EUR 348,221.61, with EUR 295,361.57 funded by the European Union.

The project demonstrated that cooperation through cross-border programs brings tangible benefits—from education and technical advancement to strengthening interpersonal relationships and improving public service delivery.

“Even if you’ve never been part of such projects before, dare to participate. This kind of cooperation sparks a wave of positive change and creates an impact that far exceeds initial expectations.”

SUCCESS STORY: Via Ferrata – A New Adventure Tourism Product of Piva and Ibar

The “Via Ferrata CLUB – CLimb to Unveil Beauty of Piva and Ibar” project was successfully completed in December 2024, resulting in the creation of two new adventure tourism products in the municipalities of Plužine (Montenegro) and Tutin (Serbia) – Via Ferrata Piva and Via Ferrata Đurđevica.

As part of the project, 20 future guides and rescuers from Montenegro and Serbia were trained through three five-day training modules. The practical training included visits to several via ferratas in the region, such as Kotor and Durmitor, enabling participants to gain essential skills for safely guiding tours and providing assistance on the routes.

Via Ferrata Piva, approximately 4,500 meters long, was officially opened on October 3, 2024, in the presence of the EU Ambassador to Montenegro, Mr. Johann Sattler, the President of the Municipality of Plužine, Mr. Slobodan Delić, the President of the Municipality of Tutin, Mrs. Selma Kučević, and the Director of InTER, Mr. Dragiša Mijačić. After the opening ceremony, visitors were guided along the entire route.

The final event and the opening of Via Ferrata Đurđevica in Tutin took place on December 24, 2024. It featured a joint promotional film and a ceremonial diploma award for the trained guides. Ownership of the ferrata was transferred to the Municipality of Tutin, while management rights were granted to PSD Beleg.

This project stands as a strong example of successful cross-border cooperation and sustainable tourism development in the Western Balkans. The Via Ferratas in Plužine and Tutin have enhanced local tourism offerings, strengthened community capacities, and promoted the natural and adventure tourism potential of the region.

The project was jointly implemented by the Municipality of Plužine, the Municipality of Tutin, and the NGO InTER, with a total value of EUR 288,643.10.

