

**THE EIB GROUP'S  
SUPPORT FOR BUSINESSES IN THE  
WESTERN BALKANS**





# HOW THE EIB GROUP SUPPORTS COMPANIES IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

The European Investment Bank Group (EIB Group) plays a central role in driving economic development, job creation and innovation across the region. The Group consists of the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Investment Fund (EIF).

As the lending arm of the European Union, the EIB provides **financing on favourable terms to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and mid-caps**, helping companies grow, innovate, decarbonise and be more competitive. In the Western Balkans, the Bank has provided €5.3 billion to the private sector so far.

The EIF complements this work by providing financial guarantees for startups and small and medium companies. These guarantees are key to improving access to finance for SMEs, as they reduce collateral requirements and attract financing to projects that would otherwise struggle to find funding.

In partnership with the European Commission, the EIF has signed a total of €1.3 billion in financing, mobilising a total of €6.3 billion to support more than 91 000 companies and 485 000 jobs in the Western Balkans since 2013.

## €6.6 billion

Total EIB Group support for small and medium businesses  
and mid-caps in the Western Balkans.



## HOW IT WORKS

The EIB Group supports small and medium-sized enterprises and mid-caps mainly through intermediated lending, technical assistance and grants. This means the EIB provides funds to local development institutions and commercial banks on favourable terms. These institutions then pass on those funds to final beneficiaries, reflecting the financial advantage through reduced interest rates, longer tenors, or both. This enables companies – SMEs (up to 250 employees) and mid-caps (up to 3 000 employees) – to invest in growth, digitalisation, decarbonisation and innovation throughout the different stages of their development.

Typical EIB-backed loans offer maturities of up to 12 years and flexible repayment schedules. The EIB usually finances up to 50% of the total project cost and approves financing of up to €12.5 million per company. As EIB involvement is widely regarded as a “stamp of approval,” it often helps businesses attract additional investors.

EIB funds enable companies to implement investment plans, secure working capital, expand production facilities, strengthen distribution networks, conduct research and development, and much more. Cooperating with local banks, the EIB also helps strengthen the wider financial system, encouraging new products and improving access to finance for companies across the Western Balkans.

## THE EIB GROUP'S IMPACT

By applying EU standards across all EIB financed projects, we help pre-accession countries advance toward membership and integrate into the EU single market. We also strengthen companies' competitiveness by supporting their compliance with climate and other regulations.

Evidence from an [EIB study](#) shows the strong positive impact of the EU bank's intermediated lending in the Western Balkans, especially for micro and credit-constrained firms. Based on information provided by EIB-backed companies, €1 million of EIB loans creates about 15 new jobs. The benefits reported by companies include:

**15% higher employment**

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**20% higher total assets**

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**35% higher fixed assets**

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## GREENER BUSINESSES

With the **Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism** in force since 1 January 2026, companies across the region are accelerating efforts to cut emissions, modernise technologies and reduce their environmental impact. The EIB Group has scaled up its support to accelerate progress on decarbonisation.

In Serbia, the EIB has provided a **€160-million financial package** under Team Europe to support sustainable growth of small and medium businesses through a partnership with Banca Intesa and Intesa Leasing. **The funds will finance** working capital, investment projects and green initiatives, such as renewable energy, clean transport and energy efficiency. By boosting climate resilience, competitiveness and innovation, the programme is expected to support around 240 companies and protect 25 000 jobs.

A cooperation with the **Development Bank of Montenegro** has supported over 300 small businesses through credit lines worth €100 million, including €20 million devoted to green investments. And a new €50 million credit line focuses exclusively on private sector projects that qualify for green financing.





The **green financing** implemented with the **Development Bank of North Macedonia** has supported around 60 green investments, including 52 renewable energy projects with a combined capacity of 15 MW. That is enough to meet the energy needs of between 5 000 and 9 000 small companies. The initiative is implemented in cooperation with a range of commercial banks in Skopje: Komercijalna banka, NLB Bank, ProCredit Bank, Sparkasse Bank and Stopanska Bank.

Technical assistance under the programme helps companies meet climate requirements. A key tool is the **Decarbonisation Guide** developed with the Economic Chamber of North Macedonia that helps local businesses measure and reduce their carbon footprint, find financing and develop sustainable strategies.

One of the beneficiaries is **car parts producer LTH Learnica** in Ohrid. The company modernised its production to cut emissions and stay competitive. “We managed to transform three working stations and three separate machines into a single robot-automated working centre,” says general manager Nataša Jovčeska. An EIB loan provided through NLB Bank Skopje made the investment possible.



See if your project qualifies for EIB Group financing with the **EIB Group Green Checker**

# DRIVING TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION

Developing and adopting new technologies is essential for driving the green transition, digitalisation and artificial intelligence. New technologies will help companies across the region innovate, adapt to shifting market demands and stay competitive. The EIB is actively supporting this transformation through a range of initiatives.

## Fund for climate, digital and agricultural innovations

The EIB introduced the €187 million **Innovation and Green Transformation Facility**, combining €170 million in loans and €17 million in EU grants to support private-sector growth in the Western Balkans. Through local banks, the facility offers affordable financing and incentives to micro, small and medium-sized enterprises and mid-caps to encourage investment in digitalisation, innovation and the green transition.

Priority areas include innovation, cybersecurity, product development, sustainable agriculture, ecosystem-based tourism and climate resilience. Beyond financing, the programme provides mentoring, training, capacity building and support for incubators, science parks and research centres to strengthen innovation and help companies meet EU standards.

## Turning green ideas into successful businesses

The **EU for Green Agenda in Serbia** is helping transform green ideas into investable, market-ready projects. Combining donor grants with bank loans at lower interest rates and longer maturities, this **innovative financing model** builds on a strong track record. Since 2022, it has enabled **94 green projects** worth €52 million, including €6.3 million in co-financing.

In Belgrade, an **innovative air purification system** combats rising pollution in the city. "Addressing the root causes of urban air pollution requires substantial, long-term investments," says Aleksandar Rodić, head of the Centre for Robotics at the Mihajlo Pupin Institute, which developed the system with support from the EU for Green Agenda. The new purifier reduces the concentration of toxins in the air by 50% within a 10- to 15-metre radius.

The EU for Green Agenda is implemented by the United Nations Development Programme in partnership with the Ministry of Environmental Protection and supported by the European Union, EIB Advisory and the governments of Sweden and Switzerland.

## Skills and strategic corporate development

Large companies can also access EIB financing directly for projects aligned with EU priorities such as innovation, the climate transition and modern infrastructure. Fiat Chrysler Automobiles Serbia, part of global automaker Stellantis Group, is one example. Looking to speed up the decarbonisation of Europe's automotive industry, **EIB Global is loaning the company €73 million** for a new electric vehicle platform at its Kragujevac plant. This investment drives the sector's green transition, strengthens competitiveness and attracts additional private capital to the region.



## PROMOTING A FAIR SOCIETY

Supporting equal opportunities for jobs, training and management roles to people across the region is one of the EIB Group's key priorities in the Western Balkans. Through **inclusive finance**, the Bank helps companies hire and retain people who often struggle to find employment.

In partnership with **UniCredit Bank Serbia**, **Erste Bank Serbia** and **Intesa Sanpaolo Banka**, the EIB enables small businesses to strengthen their social impact in areas such as gender equality, youth employment and social inclusion. Thanks to grants under the **Economic Resilience Initiative Fund**<sup>1</sup>, the programme rewards companies that create leadership opportunities and stable jobs for women, young people, minorities, people with disabilities and refugees.

**Serbian textile company Jasmile** is a beneficiary of that initiative. "Businesswise, we have benefited from favourable loan terms and the grant," says Dragan Vuletić, the company's director. "From a social perspective, we're dedicated to expanding women's employment and leadership in the municipalities where our factories are located."



1. The Economic Resilience Initiative aims to support resilient and inclusive growth in Europe's Southern Neighbourhood and the Western Balkans and create new opportunities, especially for vulnerable groups, including young people and women.



## Guarantees for more resilient businesses and jobs

The [EU-funded Guarantee for SME Resilience initiative](#) improves access to finance for small and medium companies and strengthens their ability to withstand economic pressures. The guarantee is expected to unlock more than €886 million in loans on affordable terms for 15 000 SMEs, helping safeguard around 140 000 jobs across the region. Facilitated by the [Western Balkans Investment Framework](#), the initiative is implemented by the EIF in cooperation with local commercial banks.

## Advising on inclusive employment and green strategies

The EIB also provides technical assistance, advisory services and training support to help companies prepare and deliver bankable projects, particularly those focused on decarbonisation and inclusive employment practices. For financial institutions, the [EIB's Greening Financial Systems technical assistance programme](#) strengthens the capacity of central banks, supervisors and commercial banks to assess and manage climate risks and develop green taxonomy frameworks. This [enables local banks to guide SMEs](#) on how to unlock green investment. Companies can also seek advice using the online digital tool – [the Decarbonisation Guide](#).

The European Investment Bank (EIB) is the European Union's bank. It provides finance and expertise for sustainable investment projects.

The European Investment Fund (EIF) is part of the EIB Group. Its central mission is to support micro, small and medium-sized businesses by helping them access finance.

To find a list of EIB Group partners in your country, visit [www.eib.org/intermediarieslist](http://www.eib.org/intermediarieslist).



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