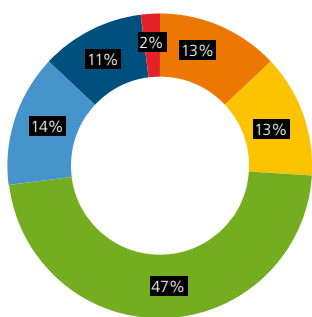


# The enlargement contribution in Bulgaria



**Population:** 7.1 million  
**Swiss imports from Bulgaria:** CHF 310 million  
**Swiss exports to Bulgaria:** CHF 391 million  
**Real GDP growth rate:** 3.6%  
**Purchasing power relative to EU average:** 49%  
(Source: Eurostat, Swiss foreign trade statistics, 2017)

**In Bulgaria, Switzerland is contributing CHF 72.2 million to support nine projects and six thematic funds (with 23 sub-projects) up to 2019. Three projects and two thematic funds have now ended. The following are the results achieved by the end of 2018.**



## Breakdown of the enlargement contribution for Bulgaria by project objective

- Promoting economic growth and improving working conditions**  
5 (sub-)projects CHF 9 533 750
- Improving social security**  
8 (sub-)projects CHF 9 338 190
- Protecting the environment**  
5 (sub-)projects CHF 34 178 871
- Improving public safety and security**  
9 (sub-)projects CHF 9 850 000
- Strengthening civil society**  
3 (sub-)projects CHF 7 800 000
- Project preparation and technical assistance**  
2 (sub-)projects CHF 1 499 189

**Total CHF 72 200 000**

Not including the implementation costs on the Swiss side.

## ■ Promoting economic growth and improving working conditions

### **Reform in vocational education and training (VET)**

Based on Switzerland's dual education system, 32 vocational schools in 19 cities are currently training 1,134 apprentices. With the support of 170 partner companies, these are being trained in 12 professions with updated curricula. At the same time, much progress has been made in VET reform with the participation of all stakeholders. A milestone was reached with the enactment of the ordinance on dual vocational education and training, which was amended on the basis of the project's recommendations.



Research fellowships have promoted the scientific careers of numerous promising young scientists. © SDC

### **Research**

Scholarships have enabled 22 PhD students and postdoctoral researchers to complete a research residency at a Swiss university. Furthermore, there are currently 13 projects under way as part of a Bulgarian-Swiss research programme. Both of these programmes have boosted the international networking of Bulgarian researchers and research institutions, as demonstrated by the various articles published in renowned scientific journals.

### **Public procurement**

Switzerland is helping Bulgaria improve the underlying conditions for sustainable public procurement. To this end, a market analysis was conducted on sustainable products in Bulgaria. A new handbook will assist the Bulgarian authorities in applying sustainable criteria in public procurement. Furthermore, a study trip to Switzerland provided an opportunity for an exchange of experiences with the relevant Swiss authorities.

## ■ Improving social security

### **Social inclusion of Roma and other minority groups**

Switzerland is supporting implementation of the national strategy for the integration of Roma at a local level. For example, new kindergarten facilities have improved access to childcare services. Early enrolment, Bulgarian language teaching and classroom support, extracurricular activities and the use of educational mediators are effective means of promoting the integration of minorities in the school system. More than 1,950 children have benefited from this. In addition, health mediators have raised awareness among over 4,700 members of the Roma community on the importance of a healthy lifestyle, disease prevention and maternity care.

### **Nursing and care at home**

The home care system being tested in Bulgaria is based on Switzerland's 'Spitex' system, recognised for its efficiency and quality. This has improved the quality of life for 734 people with chronic illnesses, disabilities and age-related ailments in four municipalities of the Vratsa district, one of the poorest regions of Europe. The Roma minority has also been included, whether as patients (15%) or home carers (25%). With a view to extending the home care system to the entire country, the Bulgarian Parliament has passed the necessary legislative amendments to include these social-medical services in the public health system. This project has also resulted in closer collaboration between the Swiss and Bulgarian Red Cross societies.



Home nursing is less expensive than hospital care and relieves the burden on family carers. © SDC

## ■ Protecting the environment

### **Public transport**

A Swiss firm has delivered 28 decommissioned trams from Basel's transport system to Sofia. In this way, Switzerland is helping to improve the public transport system in Sofia and at the same time reduce traffic congestion and air pollution. In addition, the city planners have worked together with a specialist firm to develop a concept for sustainable mobility in Sofia.



The trams from Basel now operating in Sofia offer passengers increased comfort and a low-floor entrance, making it easier for people with disabilities to board. © SECO

### **Waste management**

Switzerland is assisting with the environmentally sound disposal of around 4,500 tonnes of old toxic pesticides stored in warehouses all over Bulgaria. This poses a serious environmental hazard, and the disposal work is under way. Bulgaria has also launched a pilot project to build collection points for household hazardous waste in five municipalities.

## ■ Improving public safety and security



With additional technical resources for collecting evidence, the Bulgarian criminal police can now investigate cases more independently.  
© SDC

### ***Security in the Schengen Area***

The abolition of border checks on persons within the Schengen Area calls for increased police cooperation and an improved exchange of information between the national police coordination unit and the EU-wide Schengen Information System. In this regard, Switzerland has helped to increase the level of professionalism of Bulgaria's police coordination unit and, at the same time, consolidated Bulgarian-Swiss police cooperation.

### ***Preventing and combating human trafficking***

Close cooperation with Swiss authorities and civil society organisations makes it easier to identify and support victims of human trafficking in Bulgaria and Switzerland. A 34-bed transit centre and two reception centres were opened in the capital. Also, 150 victims identified abroad received return assistance and support for their reintegration in Bulgaria. Prevention campaigns have been launched to curb human trafficking, and a new victim hotline was set up.

## ■ Strengthening civil society

### ***Civil society fund***

A total of 45 NGOs received financial support from a fund to promote and strengthen civil society participation in Bulgaria's economic and social development. Social and environmental projects have enabled the NGOs concerned to strengthen their capacities, mobilise public support for their concerns and influence various reforms.



Bulgarian farms have benefited from advice on sustainable resource use © SDC

### ***Regional development and nature conservation***

Switzerland promotes sustainable agriculture in protected areas, the development of regional products and ecological tourism in the poorest peripheral regions of Bulgaria. The association of 23 rural organisations under a coalition umbrella is a model for cooperation between NGOs. For example, Bulgarian and Swiss NGOs have supported around 50 agricultural firms in processing and marketing dairy products directly on the farm and in setting up a weekly farmers' market in the capital. Studies show that direct sales can generate three times as much income. The Ministry of Agriculture is therefore providing financial aid for other cities wishing to introduce similar farmers' markets.

### ***Partnership fund***

In Bulgaria, 27 projects were carried out in partnership with Swiss organisations. For example, the cities of Thun and Gabrovo ran a joint project. Cooperation with civil society organisations promotes the country's continued development and the exchange of knowledge and experience in a wide variety of areas.