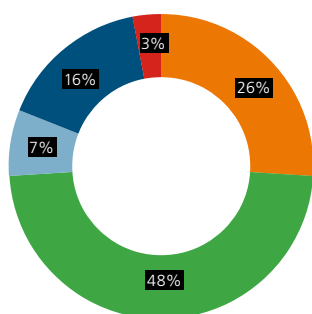


The enlargement contribution in Croatia



Population: 4.2 million
Swiss imports from Croatia: CHF 201 million
Swiss exports to Croatia: CHF 221 million
Real GDP growth rate: 2.8%
Purchasing power relative to EU average: 62%
(Source: Eurostat, Swiss foreign trade statistics, 2017)

In Croatia, Switzerland is contributing CHF 42.75 million to support twelve projects over the period 2015–24. The following are the results achieved by the end of 2018.



Breakdown of the enlargement contribution for Croatia by project objective

- Promoting economic growth and improving working conditions**
4 projects CHF 11 000 000
- Protecting the environment**
3 projects CHF 20 598 200
- Improving public safety and security**
1 project CHF 3 000 000
- Strengthening civil society**
2 projects CHF 6 800 000
- Project preparation and technical assistance**
2 projects CHF 1 351 800

Total CHF 42 750 000

Not including the implementation costs on the Swiss side.

■ Promoting economic growth and improving working conditions



A modern vocational education and training system prepares young people better for the labour market. © SDC

Modernising the vocational education and training system

In Croatia, the average youth unemployment rate is high at 30% and is on the rise in skilled trades as vocational schools and training in this sector are outdated. Switzerland is therefore supporting the modernisation of the vocational education and training system. The curricula in regard to chimney cleaning, glass construction technology and cosmetics have been overhauled.

Promoting SMEs

Croatia lags behind other EU member states in terms of product innovation. By contributing to the Croatian 'Eurostars' programme, Switzerland supports international R&D undertaken by Croatian SMEs in cooperation with European partners. Successful applicants can use the funding to develop innovative products, processes and services and take them to market. To date, four Croatian companies – in the areas of biotechnology, energy and ICT – have received Eurostars funding. One of the four projects has now been completed.

Strengthening Croatia's position as a research centre

Croatia's R&D spend has been in decline since 2009 and lies well below the EU-28 average. The share of scientific publications by Croatian researchers is three times below the EU average. Switzerland is helping to boost Croatia's research system by promoting a new career model for university lecturers. To counteract the brain drain of qualified researchers, young researchers are receiving financial support to implement their projects in Croatian research institutions. This model of career promotion, as applied at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Lausanne (EPFL) and across Europe, is now also in place in Croatia. A committee of experts selected four promising research projects for future funding. Switzerland is also promoting greater international research cooperation. This is done through joint research projects by teams from Switzerland and Croatia. The Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) and the Croatian partner agency selected 11 research projects that promise significant findings in the natural and social sciences.

■ Protecting the environment

Developing drinking water and wastewater systems

Many regions in Croatia have a dilapidated drinking water supply with high loss rates. In addition, there is a substantial backlog in the construction of efficient systems for treating domestic wastewater. Currently many residents collect their wastewater in septic tanks. The tanks, which are dug straight in the ground with or without concrete walls, are regularly emptied. In the Gorski Kotar region of north-western Croatia, Switzerland is assisting the three municipalities of Delnice, Fužine and Brod Moravice in the construction and rehabilitation of wastewater and water infrastructure. Construction work began once the feasibility studies and environmental impact reports were prepared and the tendering procedure was completed.



A Swiss expert inspecting the drinking water reservoir built in 1960 in the Croatian municipality of Fužine. © SECO

■ Improving public safety and security

Demining activities and reintegrating landmine victims

Mines and other explosive remnants of war are a dangerous legacy from the 1991–96 war in Croatia. To date, 294 local deminers have defused 3,585 explosive remnants of the war, covering 1.8km² of the Kotar-Stari Gaj woods. This corresponds to about 10% of the mines still suspected in Croatia. The Swiss-Croatian project also supports victims and their families by developing measures for economic and social integration and a national database to analyse their needs.



Switzerland's demining project in Croatia is helping to create a safe and protected environment for people living in mine-infested areas. © CROMAC

■ Strengthening civil society

Supporting civil society initiatives

Civil society organisations are particularly important for raising awareness and education about sustainable development and environmental protection. Switzerland is therefore making funding available for around 40 projects to be run by NGOs in the field of environmental education. A wide variety of activities aim to help improve the skills and knowledge of children and young people in sustainable development. Schools will also raise awareness among teachers and parents.

Partnerships between Swiss and Croatian institutions

Switzerland has lent its support to about 20 partnership projects which promote the exchange of knowledge and experience between Swiss and Croatian NGOs.