



COUNTRY FACTSHEET

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Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Agency for Development
and Cooperation SDC

State Secretariat for
Economic Affairs SECO

THE ENLARGEMENT CONTRIBUTION IN CROATIA



Population: 4,05 million
Swiss imports from Croatia:
CHF 259 million
Swiss exports to Croatia:
CHF 289 million
Real GDP growth rate: - 9 %
Purchasing power relative to EU average:
- 36% (Source: Eurostat 2020, Swiss foreign trade statistics, 2019)

In Croatia, Switzerland is contributing CHF 42.75 million to support ten projects over the period 2015–24. The following are the results achieved by the end of 2020.



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

Promoting economic growth and improving working conditions

Modernising the vocational education and training system

In Croatia, the average youth unemployment rate is high at 20% and is on the rise in skilled trades as vocational schools and training in this sector are outdated. Switzerland therefore supported efforts to modernise Croatia's vocational education and training system over a three-year period. This project was completed in November 2020, resulting in the overhaul and modernisation of the curricula for six vocational courses. The Swiss-inspired approach of involving employers in course development and increasing the focus on work experience while training was well received.

Promoting SMEs

Switzerland's contribution to the Croatian «Euros-tars» programme promotes Croatian SME projects in research and innovation and helps to develop networks with European partners. Successful applicants can use the funding to develop innovative products, processes and services and take them to market. Two years before the end of the programme, five Croa-

tian projects focusing on biotechnology, energy and ICT received Eurostars funding. One of them (IT Application Safebox by SEDAM IT) has been completed.

Strengthening Croatia's position as a research centre

Gross domestic expenditure on research and development in Croatia lies well below the EU-28 average. Croatia's share of scientific publications is lower than that of any other EU country. Switzerland supports Croatia's research system by promoting international research collaborations. This is achieved through joint research projects by Swiss and Croatian teams. In 2018, the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) and its Croatian counterpart selected 11 research projects with promising potential in the natural and social sciences.

A pilot programme was also launched to promote a new career model for university lecturers. In order to counteract the brain drain of qualified researchers, young researchers receive financial support to implement their projects in Croatian research institutions. This model of career promotion, which corresponds to that of the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Lausanne (EPFL) and is already applied across Europe, is thus now also being implemented in Croatia. Three promising research projects are currently under way in Croatia based on this new model.



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

Protecting the environment

Developing drinking water and wastewater systems

Many regions in Croatia have a dilapidated drinking water supply with a high rate of water loss. In addition, there is a substantial backlog for the construction of functioning systems for the treatment of 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. The construction work is undertaken in stages and began in November 2018.

Increasing public safety

Demining activities and reintegrating landmine victims

Mines and other explosive remnants of war are a dangerous legacy from the 1991–96 war in Croatia. Over 1.8 square kilometres of woodland near Kotoar-Starj Gaj was cleared of explosive devices and is now available for use again by the population. The Swiss–Croatian project also supports mine victims and their families. A national database of their needs is currently being compiled. Various activities are also planned for the economic and social integration of people affected.



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

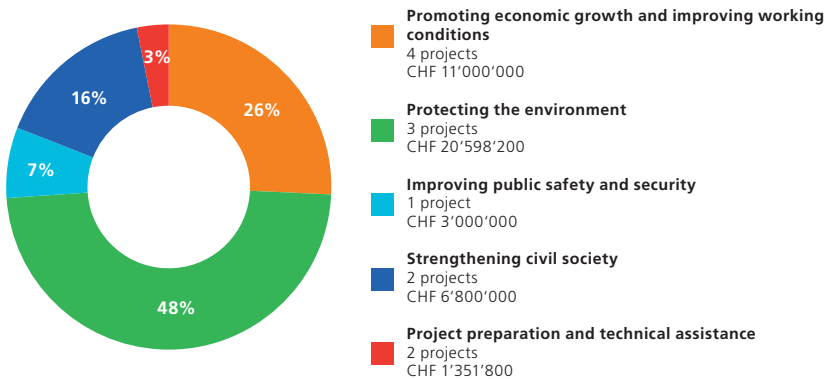
Supporting civil society initiatives

Civil society organisations (CSOs) play an important role in Croatian society and are key in raising awareness about sustainable development and environmental protection. Croatian CSOs often lack human and financial resources. Switzerland is therefore making funding available for around 40 environmental education projects to be run by CSOs. A wide variety of activities are helping to improve the skills and knowledge of children and young people in sustainable development. Schools are also raising awareness among teachers and parents. A call for project proposals was launched in 2018. From 84 project proposals, the most effective projects were selected to receive Swiss support. The coordinating government agency hold periodic meetings to encourage networking and the sharing of experiences between the various projects.

Partnerships between Swiss and Croatian institutions

Switzerland is providing support for nine partnerships between Swiss and Croatian NGOs. Experience shows that such projects bring new experiences and insights to both sides. A call for project proposals was launched in 2018. After a detailed assessment of 24 project proposals, nine projects were selected for implementation. Some projects in this Swiss–Croatian collaboration have already been completed, while some are still under way.

Breakdown of the enlargement contribution for Croatia by project objective



Total CHF 42'750'000

In addition, there are the implementation costs on the Swiss side and the partner country's own contributions of at least 15%.

IMPRESSUM

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