



UNITED NATIONS
MONTENEGRO



2025

UN Country Results Report

Montenegro





Sailboats with tall masts moored in a marina, with mountains in the background and a life buoy visible in the foreground.

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UN Country Results Report

Montenegro

March 2026

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UN Country Team



The **UNCT configuration** is based on the country's needs and is agreed with the Government of Montenegro, following assessed capacity to deliver on UNSDCF results. The UNCT in Montenegro consists of 10 agencies with an in-country presence (FAO, ILO, IOM, OHCHR, UNDP, UNESCO, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNOPS, WHO), and 9 without a physical presence (these are regionally based agencies, funds and programme carrying out operational activities for development in Montenegro - IFAD, ITU, UNDRR, UNECE, UNEP, UNIDO, UNODC, UN Women). UNCTAD joined UNCT in 2025.

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Woman and man in traditional costumes of Boka dance together outdoors, surrounded by others dancers in similar attire during a cultural performance.



Portrait of Caroline Tissot, UN Resident Coordinator in Montenegro

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Caroline Tissot
UN Resident Coordinator in Montenegro

FOREWORD

In 2025, Montenegro continued its fast track toward European Union membership while navigating complex economic, social, and environmental challenges that shape its development trajectory. Progress has been tangible, yet uneven, as reforms move forward amid persistent structural constraints. In this context, the United Nations system has remained a trusted partner – supporting national institutions to translate commitments into concrete improvements in people’s lives.

This report highlights how, in 2025, the UN system worked alongside the Government and many other key partners to deliver integrated, forward-looking solutions across Montenegro’s key development priorities.

Significant strides were made in strengthening governance, advancing inclusion, and accelerating the green transition. Legislative and policy reforms reinforced gender equality, including the introduction of a 40 per cent quota for women in company management and stronger gender-responsive policymaking. Social protection systems were further modernized, with progress in deinstitutionalization and the expansion of community-based services. The adoption of the legal framework for a unified disability assessment system marked a major step toward equity for persons with disabilities.

At the same time, Montenegro deepened its climate ambition. The adoption of an updated Nationally Determined Contribution, a National Adaptation Plan, and new disaster recovery legislation has laid the foundation for a more resilient and low-carbon future. Investments in energy efficiency, biodiversity protection, and environmental governance are already delivering benefits for communities and strengthening alignment with EU standards.

Human capital development remained central to our joint efforts. Education reforms, including the new Education Reform Strategy and expansion of digital learning, are helping equip young people with skills for a changing economy. Health system saw certain improvements with strengthened service delivery, while targeted programmes supported vulnerable groups, migrants, and youth in accessing opportunities and services.

These achievements were made possible through strong partnerships. The Government of Montenegro, local authorities, civil society, the private sector, international financial institutions, and a broad community of development partners – including the European Union and bilateral donors – have worked closely with the United Nations to deliver results at scale. The Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund and UN joint programmes demonstrate the value of coordinated, multi-partner approaches in addressing complex development challenges.

At the same time, important challenges remain. While positive developments were recorded, various groups continued to face inequality, discrimination or were subjected to hate speech, all of which pose a risk to social cohesion. Economic growth continues to rely on a narrow base, while demographic pressures, inequalities, and gaps in service quality persist. Climate risks are intensifying, and institutional capacity constraints continue to affect the pace of reform implementation. These realities underscore the importance of sustained, coherent efforts to ensure the realization of human rights and no one being left behind.

Looking ahead, 2025 also marked the beginning of a strategic reflection on the future of the UN’s engagement in Montenegro beyond 2027, as the country approaches EU accession. This transition offers an opportunity to redefine how the UN can best support long-term, inclusive and sustainable development, building on its comparative advantages in convening, policy support, and integrated solutions.

The United Nations remains committed to supporting Montenegro in delivering results that matter for its people – strengthening institutions, expanding opportunities, and safeguarding the environment for future generations. Together with our partners, we will continue to work toward a more resilient, inclusive, and sustainable Montenegro.



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SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
GOALS

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Artist: Ivan Šuković

Entrance of the art installation with signage reading “UNITED NATIONS MONTENEGRO” and “SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS”.

Key development partners and funds



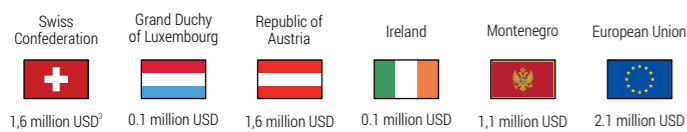
UN agencies core and thematic funds



Other strategic partners



MAF contributors



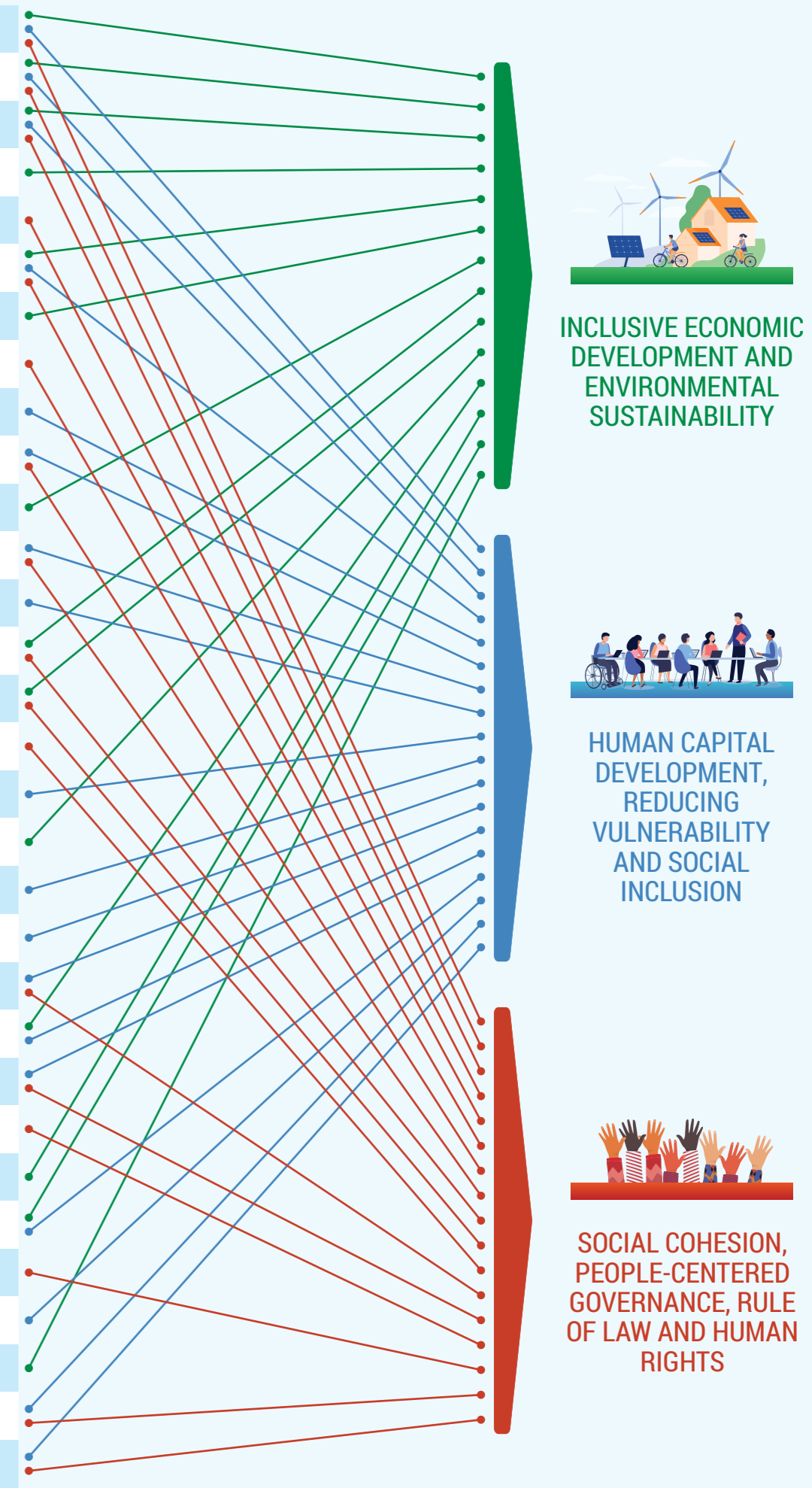
Contributing partner

2025 Total Available Resources¹

2025 Total Expenditure

European Union ²	10,375,921	6,902,229
Montenegro (national and local level)	8,027,430	5,736,727
UN agencies core funds	4,078,523	3,713,852
The Global Environment Facility	2,338,420	2,338,150
UN Peacebuilding Fund	1,719,881	1,219,470
Montenegro Acceleration Fund	1,307,980	1,081,043
Adaptation Fund	1,166,934	272,601
Western Balkans SALW Control Roadmap MPTF	668,307	668,307
The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TBC and Malaria	579,647	478,464
The United Kingdom	475,388	470,102
Slovenia	334,263	334,263
IOM Development Fund	283,000	235,547
Republic of Korea	281,904	262,408
Slovakia	273,350	273,350
Germany	270,701	270,701
The United States of America	264,000	189,000
UNPRPD	217,945	179,943
Montreal Protocol	204,084	204,084
Lions Club International Foundation	194,020	135,000
TUI Care foundation	178,976	149,175
Denmark	171,200	148,722
Sweden	140,731	127,007
Norway	130,005	109,232
UN MPTF	120,000	120,000
UNDP Biodiversity Finance Initiative	114,280	90,756
UNICEF Global Thematic - WASH	112,076	59,509
UNDP Seoul Policy Centre	106,667	106,667
UNICEF Private Sector Fundraising	96,087	96,087
The Green Climate Fund	30,000	22,249
UNICEF Global Thematic - Child Protection	20,114	19,991
UNICEF Global Thematic - Education	10,632	10,632
TOTAL:	34,292,466	26,025,269

Sources of funds in 2025, in USD (Figure 1)



INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY



HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT, REDUCING VULNERABILITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION



SOCIAL COHESION, PEOPLE-CENTERED GOVERNANCE, RULE OF LAW AND HUMAN RIGHTS

1 - Available amounts are based on donor commitments reflected in signed project documents, although some funds were either not disbursed in 2025 or carried forward to 2026.

2 - European Union has additionally invested through the pooled Montenegro Acceleration Fund (EU Window).

3 - The amounts reflect committed funds.

CHAPTER 1

Key developments in the country and regional context



Montenegro is entering the final stages of its EU accession process while continuing to advance, though unevenly, towards the SDGs. The accession framework remains the main anchor of legal, institutional and economic reforms, with 12 negotiation chapters provisionally closed by the end of 2025.⁴ However, persistent implementation gaps continue to slow the translation of reforms into tangible development outcomes. These gaps are mainly due to limited institutional capacity, fragmented coordination across 25 ministries, delays in foundational legislation such as the Law on Government, and uneven follow through on reforms especially at the municipal level.

Many economic and social indicators continued to show improvement. Poverty fell to an estimated 7.5 per cent in 2025, supported by wage growth, tourism driven consumption and social transfers. However, the country's growth model remains narrow and vulnerable, heavily reliant on tourism, construction and real estate, with labour shortages increasingly filled by foreign workers. Outmigration of young people, particularly from northern municipalities, combined with population ageing, strains the labour market, reducing the domestic labour supply and creating fiscal pressures linked to pensions and social services.

Health and education systems provide broad formal coverage, but quality and equity challenges persist. Out-of-pocket health expenditures remain high, with inequalities widening as poorer households spend a growing share of their budgets on essential healthcare. Immunisation coverage for the youngest cohorts, including MMR1, remains among the

lowest in Europe, as vaccinations are postponed, increasing vulnerability to vaccine preventable disease outbreaks. While there have been substantial investments in education, learning outcomes remain below that of EU/OECD peers, with PISA and TIMSS assessments showing a large share of students performing below basic proficiency. These systemic pressures reinforce broader inequalities between urban and rural areas, especially in digital access, school quality, and availability of specialised services.

Progress continues in some areas, but other indicators show stagnation or backsliding, leaving some at risk of being left behind.

Income inequality has modestly declined, however, sub-national disparities persist. Rapid increases in property prices and rents, driven partly by foreign investment and inward migration, are making housing increasingly unaffordable for young people, delaying household formation and contributing to outward migration. Although social protection continues to absorb an increasing share of public spending, core poverty focused benefits remain insufficiently targeted and inadequate since they have not kept pace with inflation, limiting their capacity to reduce vulnerability.

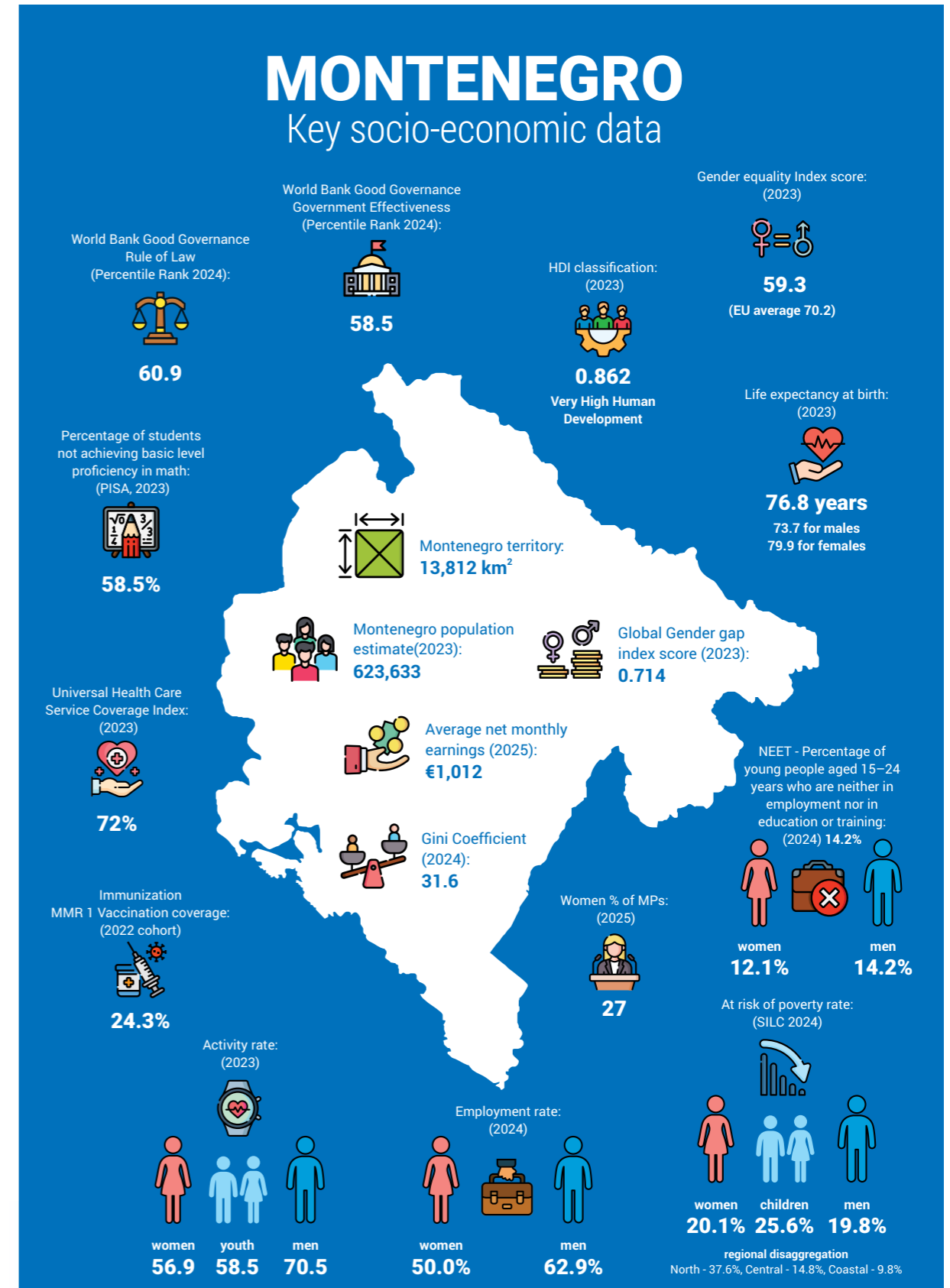
Gender equality has advanced in several areas, including stronger legislative frameworks and increased political representation through quota reforms.

However, significant structural gaps persist. Women, despite higher educational attainment, remain disproportionately inactive, concentrated in lower-paid sectors, and face a gender pay gap exceeding 20 per cent, pointing to systemic labour market inequalities. Women are also underrepresented in entrepreneurship, business leadership and local executive

positions, reflecting limited access to finance, networks and decision-making power. Unequal distribution of unpaid care work and limited care services further constrain their economic participation, while low representation in STEM and high-growth sectors limits their role in economic transformation. Despite a strengthened policy framework,

implementation gaps and limited institutional capacity continue to hinder progress, underscoring the need for more targeted and systemic action to advance gender equality as a driver of inclusive development.

This overview is based on the 2025 Common Country Analysis (CCA) update.



⁴ Which increased to 13 at the beginning of 2026

CHAPTER 2

UN development system support to national development priorities through the Cooperation Framework

2

2.1. OVERVIEW OF COOPERATION FRAMEWORK RESULTS

Montenegro's development priorities are closely aligned with the 2030 Agenda and the country's strategic objective of EU membership, leveraging the strong synergies between the two. In 2025, the UN system in Montenegro continued to advance its support

for national development priorities through the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), launched in January 2023 and signed by 19 UN Agencies. Support was provided under its three strategic priorities: a) Inclusive economic development and environmental sustainability; b) Human capital development, reducing vulnerability and social inclusion and c) Social cohesion, people-centered governance, rule of law and human rights.

Highlight of results in 2025

In 2025, Montenegro advanced a broad set of policy and legislative reforms strengthening inclusive governance, economic transformation, social protection, climate resilience, and the rule of law.

Gender equality advanced through strengthened legal frameworks, economic inclusion measures and institutional capacity. A 40% quota for women in political and corporate decision-making was introduced, and gender equality standards were integrated across 25 laws and strategies, including a new Law on Gender Equality. Women's economic empowerment was further reinforced through the Women's Entrepreneurship Strategy and labour market reforms, including draft amendments to the Labour Law aimed at strengthening equal pay, improving workplace protections and aligning with EU standards, thereby addressing structural barriers to women's participation, earnings and access to quality employment. Evidence and institutional capacity for gender-responsive policymaking improved through the development of the Montenegro Gender Profile and targeted surveys, the introduction of sex-disaggregated data collection in the Agricultural Census, and capacity building of over 140 civil servants across more than 20 institutions, establishing a national pool of gender trainers and reinforcing gender mainstreaming across government.

Labour governance reforms progressed, with draft amendments to the Labour Law, Law on Strike and Law on Representativeness advancing alignment with EU standards and modernizing collective bargaining and social dialogue. In the digital economy, connectivity

and trade facilitation, regulatory frameworks were aligned with international best practice, with Montenegro committing to Global Best Practice Guidelines that prioritize gigabit connectivity, quality of service standards, consumer protection and network resilience.

Climate and environmental governance were significantly reinforced. Montenegro adopted an updated **Nationally Determined Contribution** and a **National Adaptation Plan**, established a unified disaster recovery framework through the Law on Recovery after Hazards, and embedded biodiversity protections in the legally binding Spatial Plan 2040. Energy transition reforms included expansion of the **National Energy Efficiency Programme** and establishment of a **Just Transition Council** with an adopted reform and investment roadmap. **The Fourth Environmental Performance Review** has been finalized, to guide cross-sector reforms across the green economy, air, water, waste and biodiversity to advance alignment with UN and EU standards. Through the FINSTEM partnership, the Central Bank is strengthening its capacity to assess climate-related financial risks and integrate climate considerations into financial regulation.

Social and human capital reforms delivered structural change. A **new Law on Uniform Disability Assessment** unified disability determination under a single national institute, while reforms to social and child protection advanced deinstitutionalization, foster care and community-based services. **Education governance** was reset through adoption of the Education Reform Strategy 2025–2035, legal amendments expanding access for refugees and stateless learners, and nationwide digital education reforms, e.g. expansion of EdTech Hubs (school-based digital learning spaces equipped with modern technologies, 12 schools financed by UN MAF, scaled up to 102 schools).

Finally, the UN supported Montenegro to address institutional fragmentation, strengthen accountability and justice sector performance, and mitigate societal polarization. Governance, justice and human rights frameworks were strengthened through adoption of a comprehensive **anti-discrimination law**, digital justice modernization, and enhanced integrity and anti-corruption systems. **In addition, Government drafted an article making femicide a distinct criminal offence. Local commitments were made to counter hate speech**, strengthen trust in institutions, and improve equitable access to local services, demonstrating the readiness of institutions to respond to citizens' needs. **Digitalization of public services** was advanced across education, health, justice and local governance, improving transparency, accessibility and efficiency. Together, these reforms strengthened institutional accountability, rights protection and Montenegro's alignment with EU and international standards.

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights made [his first visit to Montenegro](#) since the restoration of independence, on 19 May, meeting the President, Government, Parliament, the Protector, civil society, UN and international community. He noted progress but also the need to address persisting challenges of discrimination, hate speech and divisive narratives.

The UNCT in Montenegro has aligned closely with the principles of the UN reform fully embracing the ambitions of the UN 2.0. A more strategic and integrated approach was pursued through **nine joint programmes**: a PBF funded project on social cohesion, the continuation of the joint program on rights of persons with disabilities, and seven joint projects funded through the national pooled fund –

Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund (MAF). As an important fundraising and integrating mechanism, the Fund also serves as a platform for strategic exchange and joint identification of development priorities between the UN, Government, donor community and experts.

In 2025, the UN has initiated discussions with the Government on the UN's presence and engagement beyond 2027 (finalization of the ongoing UNSDCF) i.e. from 2028 onwards when Montenegro aspires to be an EU member state. For that purpose, the UNCT has conducted an analysis of the convergence and divergence between Agenda 2030 and EU accession benchmarks, aiming at identifying areas of the utmost importance for the long-term development of society including beyond EU accession requirements. The analysis will be followed by consultations and further strategic positioning, and it will be based on the ambition of the UN 80 reform agenda.

The monitoring of the UNSDCF results framework show that targets at the output level are broadly on track, with the achievement of 93%.

Following the trends identified in 2024, Figure 2 shows that most UN investments focused on SDGs 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) and SDG 10 (Reduced inequalities), followed by SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 1 (No poverty) and SDG 4 (Quality education). More than 2 mill USD was invested in SDGs 13, 3, and 8.

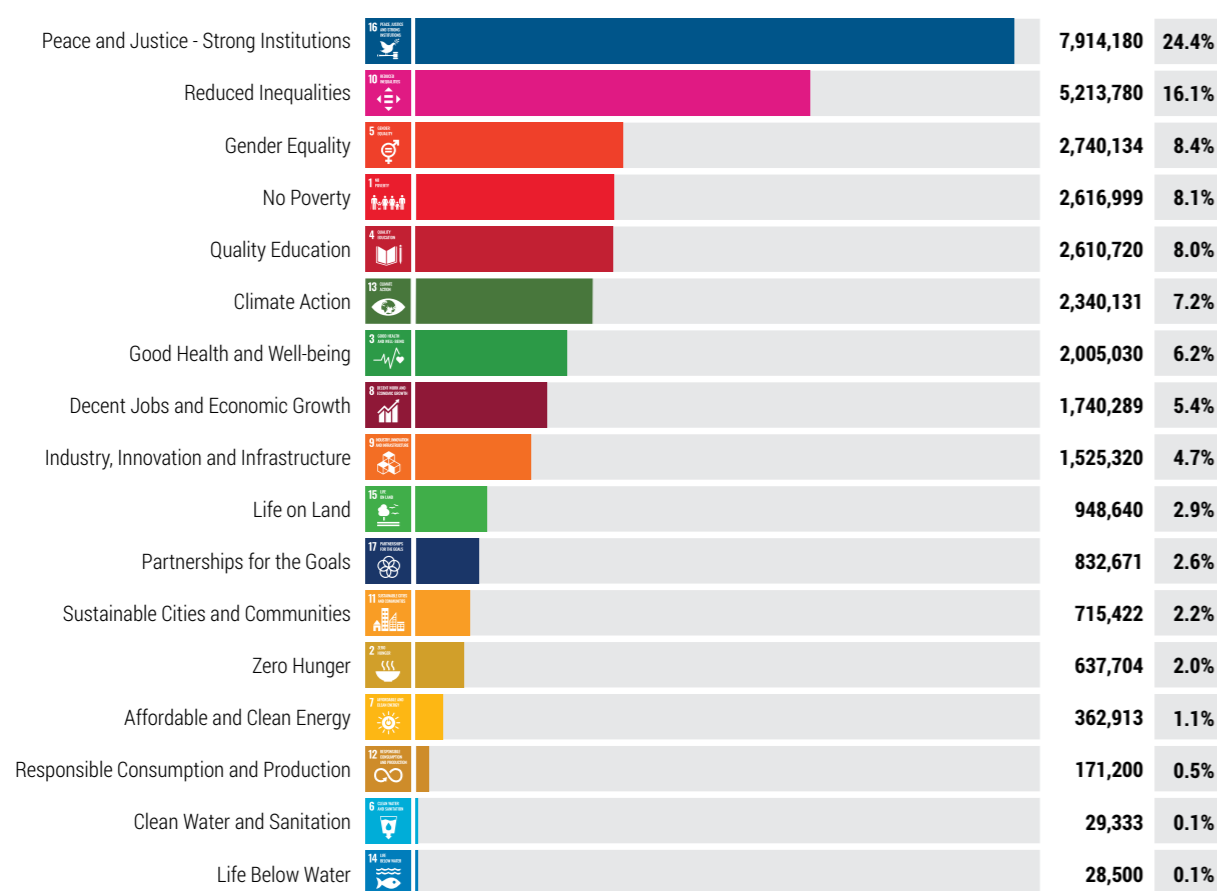


Figure 2: Distribution of funds available in 2025 per SDG (in USD)

To better illustrate the synergies between Agenda 2030 and the EU accession process, it is important to note that 91% of all funding delivered in 2025 was tagged against EU chapters. The data show that at least 22.1% of total disbursed funds supported Chapter 24

– Justice, Freedom, and Security, while 16.6% was invested in Chapter 27 – Environment and Climate Change, and 15.7% in Chapter 23 – Judiciary and Fundamental Rights. Significant allocations also went to Chapter 19 – Social Policy and Employment (12.9%), Chapter 28 –

Consumer and Health Protection (7.2%), and Chapter 26 – Education and Culture (7.1%). In addition, eight other chapters received support (see Figure 3 below).

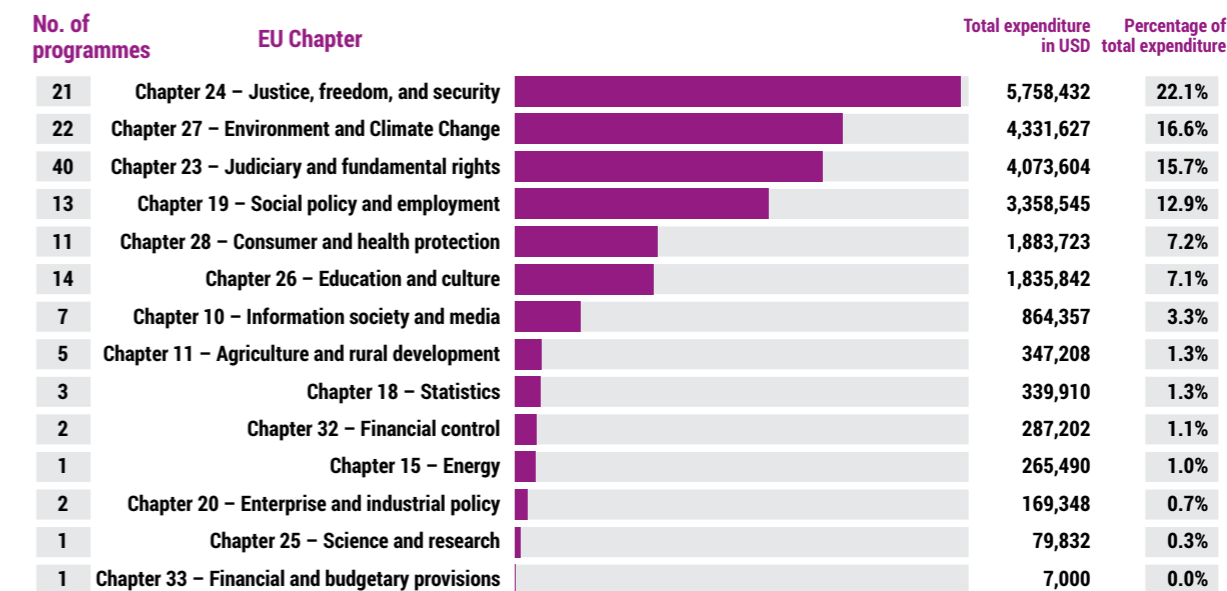


Figure 3: Distribution of spent funds in 2025 per EU chapter (in USD)

The guiding principles of gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE) and a human-rights based approach (HRBA) were strongly upheld. This is evidenced by the fact that 61 % of funds available in 2025 were invested in programs that have gender equality as a significant (55%) or primary objective (7%). Similarly, investment in programs with a strong human rights component stood at 65%, an increase of 4 percentage points with respect to year before.

The number of sub-outputs (programs) per Gender and Human Rights Marker is shown in the graph below.⁵ It shows steady progress towards more GEM/HR 2 and 3 programs.

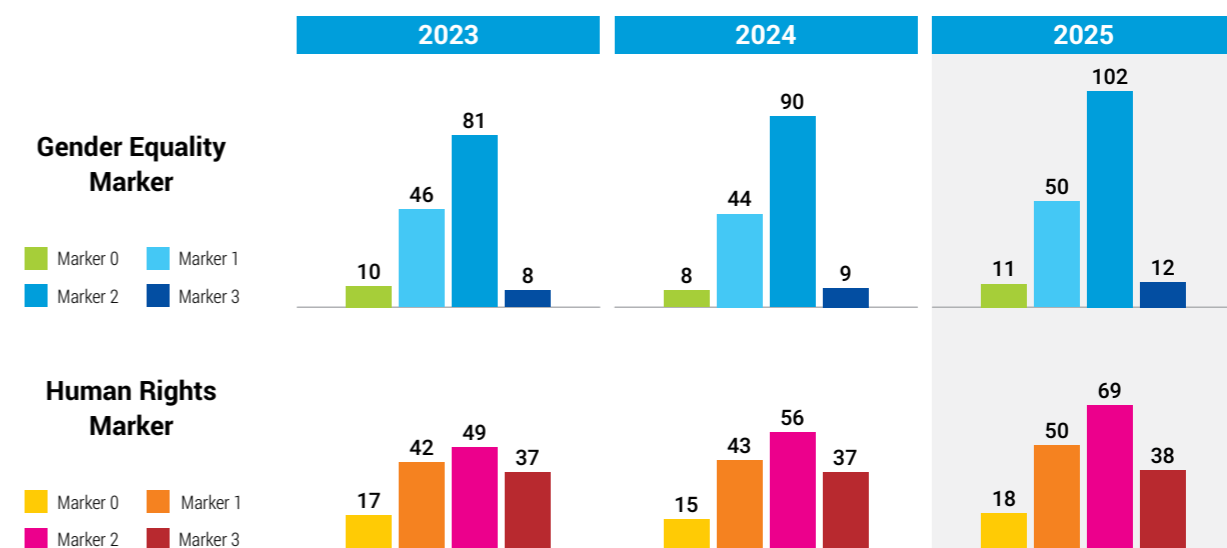


Figure 4: Number of sub-outputs per Gender and Human Rights marker

5 0 - Not expected to contribute; 1 - Contributes in a limited way; 2 - significant objective; 3 - principal objective

Output Indicator Framework for Measuring the UN contribution towards the SDGs⁶



6 - Where not stated otherwise, numbers represent cumulative count from 2023 to 2025

Target 1.1

ERADICATE EXTREME POVERTY



5 new national social protection policies to extend coverage, enhance comprehensiveness and/or increase adequacy of benefits

Target 6.5

IMPLEMENT INTEGRATED WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT



3 transboundary water bodies in which programs have been initiated to strengthen cooperation and joint management

Target 8.3

PROMOTE POLICIES TO SUPPORT JOB CREATION AND GROWING ENTERPRISES



7 cases in which business support institutions/organizations have increased their capacity to provide services to their clients/ members to promote economic development and decent work

Target 9.2

PROMOTE INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE INDUSTRIALIZATION



133 private sector entities innovated their business practices, by mainstreaming environmental, social or economic sustainability elements

Target 2.3

DOUBLE THE PRODUCTIVITY AND INCOMES OF SMALL-SCALE FOOD PRODUCERS



27 institutions with increased capacity to design, implement and fund policies preventing and reducing malnutrition and promoting healthy diets in 2025 only

Target 3.1

REDUCE MATERNAL MORTALITY



23 national policies on health in accordance with human rights standards are developed and adopted

Target 3.3

FIGHT COMMUNICABLE DISEASES



8,620 girls and boys directly benefitted from UN-supported health services in 2025 only

Target 10.2

PROMOTE UNIVERSAL SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL INCLUSION



23 bilateral, national, and local development and sectoral policies that integrate migration and recognize migrants as contributors for sustainable development developed with UN support and implemented by the Government

Target 10.3

ENSURE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND END DISCRIMINATION



Close to **2,500** people who are internally displaced, migrants, refugees benefitted from integrated and targeted interventions, including on strengthening social cohesion, in 2025 only



© UNICEF Montenegro / Duško Miljanic

A young child holds a basketball while walking through a simple indoor obstacle course marked by colorful cones and poles, with other children and adults in the background.

Target 4.2

EQUAL ACCESS TO QUALITY PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION



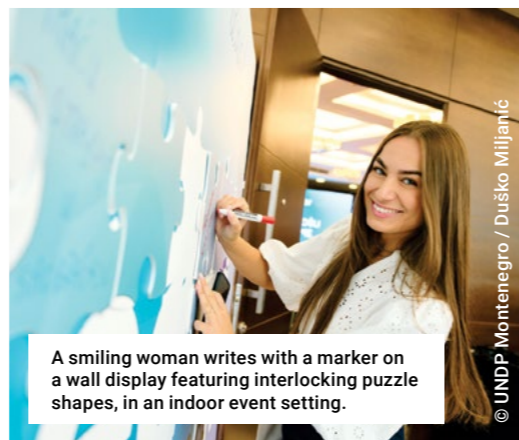
14 technical and vocational education and training institutions with improved capacity to deliver training and assessments

Target 4.3

EQUAL ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE TECHNICAL, VOCATIONAL AND HIGHER EDUCATION



Almost 50,000 children and youth directly benefitted from improved access to skills and lifelong learning programmes



A smiling woman writes with a marker on a wall display featuring interlocking puzzle shapes, in an indoor event setting.

© UNDP Montenegro / Duško Miljanic

Target 12.1

IMPLEMENT THE 10-YEAR SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION FRAMEWORK



4 national policy instruments aimed at supporting the shift to sustainable consumption and production, developed with UN support



© UNICEF Montenegro / Duško Miljanic

A teenage girl works on a laptop while seated at a wooden desk in a classroom, with other students using laptops in the background.

Target 13.3

BUILD KNOWLEDGE AND CAPACITY TO MEET CLIMATE CHANGE



The new national DRR Strategy developed and adopted with UN support to be implemented by the Government, in line with the Sendai Framework for DRR



Two uniformed guards, woman and man, in red ceremonial attire stand at attention in the foreground, while several formally dressed speakers stand on a stage behind them at an outdoor event.

© UN Montenegro / Nebojša Nikolic

Target 5.1

END DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS



8 laws and regulations, based on international human rights norms and standards, improved with UN support to eliminate violence against women and girls and promote access to sexual and reproductive health

Target 5.2

END ALL VIOLENCE AGAINST AND EXPLOITATION OF WOMEN AND GIRLS



32 measures implemented with UN support to remove structural barriers to women's empowerment in 2025 only

Target 5.6

UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS



37 girls and women received services related to harmful practices, including child early and forced marriage, in 2025 only

Target 5.8

ADOPT AND STRENGTHEN POLICIES AND ENFORCEABLE LEGISLATION FOR GENDER EQUALITY



More than **3,000** children and adults have gained access to a safe and accessible channels to report sexual exploitation and abuse, in 2025 only

Target 16.3

PROMOTE THE RULE OF LAW AND ENSURE EQUAL ACCESS TO JUSTICE



21 gender-responsive, conflict-sensitive development institutions, policies, plans, or cross-border initiatives in place, with UN support, that safeguard human rights

Target 16.6

DEVELOP EFFECTIVE, ACCOUNTABLE AND TRANSPARENT INSTITUTIONS



More than **3,000** adults and children were supported in access to justice, in 2025 only

Target 16.7

ENSURE RESPONSIVE, INCLUSIVE AND REPRESENTATIVE DECISION-MAKING



Meaningful participation of rights-holders, especially women, youth and discriminated groups, in selected public processes **reached level 3 out of 4**

Target 16.9

PROVIDE UNIVERSAL LEGAL IDENTITY



More than **15,000** people registered with legal identity, with UN support, in 2025 only

Target 17.1

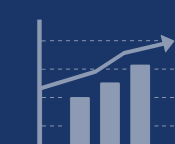
MOBILIZE RESOURCES TO IMPROVE DOMESTIC REVENUE COLLECTION



6 policies developed or improved for the benefit of MSMEs with business sector input, and promulgated or implemented, with UN support

Target 17.19

FURTHER DEVELOP MEASUREMENTS OF PROGRESS



Support provided to **data collection and analysis mechanisms/initiatives providing disaggregated data** to monitor progress towards the SDGs

2.2. COOPERATION FRAMEWORK PRIORITIES, OUTCOMES AND OUTPUTS

2025 marked the third year of implementation of Montenegro's UNSDCF. Its implementation around three key strategic priorities remained aligned with UNSDCF guiding principles and cross-cutting strategies. The former includes Leave no one behind (LNOB) and gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE), while the latter includes, among others, ensuring synergies with EU accession process. Despite the persistent system-level challenges, the utilization of funds was at 76% and output-level progress at 93%.



© UNDP Montenegro / Željko Bracanović

Aerial view of a group of people standing in a circular formation around a tall conical stone monument in a forest clearing, with curved stone seating arranged in a ring and pathways leading through the surrounding trees.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY #1:
**INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY**



All people, especially the vulnerable, benefit from improved management and state of natural resources and increasingly innovative, competitive, gender-responsive and inclusive economic development that is climate resilient and low-carbon.

by 2027

Agencies:



SDGs:



EU Chapters:



Required budget
\$ 9,908,168



Available budget
\$ 9,775,168



Expenditure
\$ 7,686,803

12 output indicators: 90% average progress rate



■ Fully achieved ■ Partially achieved

Delivery rate: 78%

Overall output Indicator progress rate 90%

Multiple analyses show that persistent structural constraints continue to hinder inclusive and sustainable development in the country. The challenges range from slow and uneven economic transformation, regulatory and fiscal governance gaps, labour market informality, and limited gender-responsive policymaking, to acute climate and environmental vulnerabilities, weak risk reduction systems and fragmented data ecosystem. Against this backdrop, the UN system's 2025 achievements demonstrate how integrated UN efforts addressed the very drivers of exclusion, vulnerability and environmental risk, by strengthening institutional capacities, expanding equitable economic opportunities, and laying the groundwork for more resilient, sustainable development pathways in Montenegro.

Output 1.1 - Private sector growth, economic transformation and decent jobs

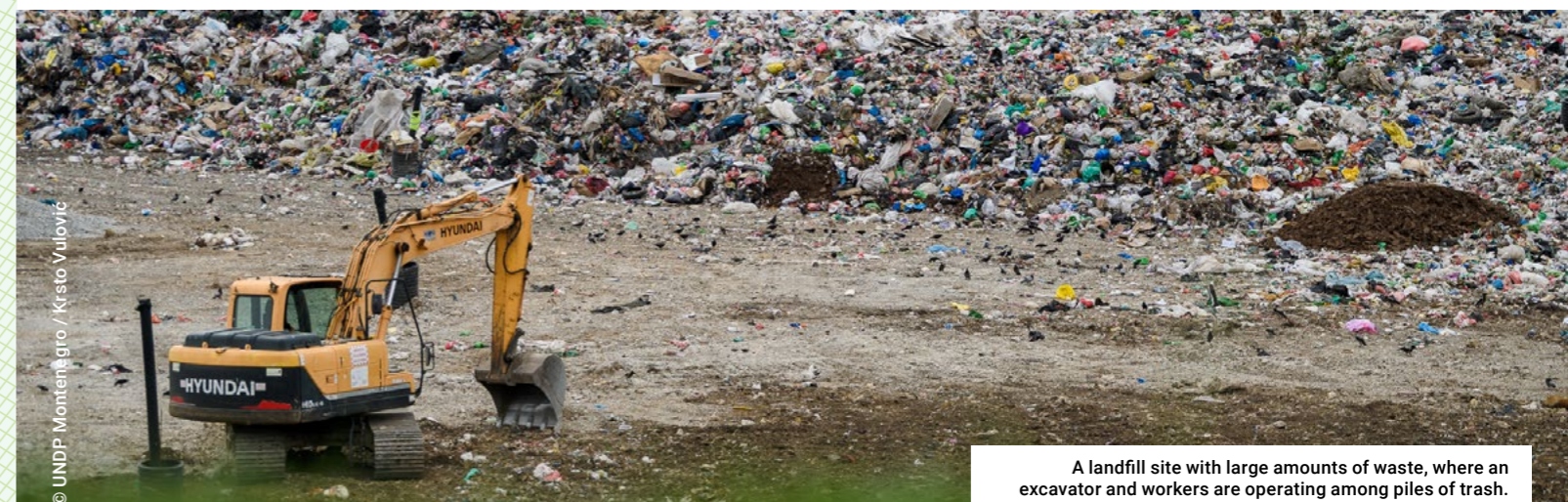
Gender-responsive economic governance and women's economic empowerment.

The Women's Entrepreneurship Strategy 2025-2028 was adopted, while the Company Law amendments introduced a 40% quota for women in management and mandatory gender parity reporting. This widens pathways for women - especially in STEM, green and digital sectors - and strengthens corporate accountability. The Agricultural Census framework now requires sex-disaggregated data, making rural women's contributions visible. More than 20 public institutions embedded gender expertise with over 140 professionals

trained and a [national pool of certified gender trainers](#) established. These reforms were further supported by analytical tools such as the [Gender Equality Profile](#), and a [Perceptions and Attitudes Survey](#), strengthening accountability and monitoring of gender gaps in the labour market and entrepreneurship.

Business climate, regulatory quality and formalization. Regulatory quality has been improved and gender integrated in lawmaking. Namely, a national Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) Manual was adopted with 25 national trainers, improving predictability and transparency of policymaking and requiring gender-responsive analysis. A Communication Strategy on suppression of the informal economy was adopted, and accrual accounting reforms received national co-financing supporting fair competition, fiscal transparency and long-term planning (EU Ch.16 and 32).

Digital economy, connectivity and trade facilitation. Telecom regulation was [aligned with international best practice](#), prioritizing gigabit connectivity, quality-of-service standards, consumer protection and network resilience, benefiting operators and end-users (EU Ch. 10). Regional dialogue on digital trade/trade facilitation supported progress toward standards based multimodal data exchange, enabling more efficient and transparent cross-border trade in the Western Balkans. National capacity for sustainable transport and connectivity increased, with new skills and tools enabling the development of environmentally sustainable transport policies. Training through the Smart and Sustainable Connectivity



© UNDP Montenegro / Kristo Vulovic

A landfill site with large amounts of waste, where an excavator and workers are operating among piles of trash.



eLearning Platform strengthened knowledge exchange and supported the publication of Montenegro's Sustainable Transport Action Plan, promoting vehicle renewal and reducing environmental impacts.

Rural competitiveness, agrifood value chains and land governance.

Northern municipalities advanced rural competitiveness by translating EU accession-linked rural development tools and gender commitments into practice. More than 60 rural women strengthened their financial, marketing, business and digital skills, while the Country Gender Assessment helped shape gender-responsive policies and local planning. Furthermore, land and livestock reforms were grounded in strong evidence. A national land-consolidation feasibility study identified priority areas and selection criteria for pilots; a draft cattle breeding strategy based on EU good practice was developed; and 75 smallholders completed Farmer Field Schools, introducing improved techniques through local advisory services. National capacity to implement the EU LEADER approach improved via enhanced frameworks and procedures, while 11 officials from relevant authorities strengthened competencies for community-led local development under IPARD.

SME sustainability, creative industries and green transition partnerships.

Regional surveys and focus groups with SMEs, research bodies and Business Support Organizations

(BSOs) identified cooperation opportunities and investment prospects in green manufacturing and circularity, supporting progress under EU Ch.20 and 27. An inclusive, [participatory mechanism](#) improved public institutions' and CSOs' access to finance, strengthening cultural policy effectiveness, regional cooperation, mobility of artists and circulation of creative goods and services.

Labour governance, sectoral formalization and just transition social dialogue.

Labour relations legislation progressed toward alignment with the EU acquis: the Labour Law and Law on Strike were submitted to the European Commission after public consultations and are under alignment (adoptions planned in 2026), while the Law on Representativeness completed public consultations. Once enacted, these will modernize collective bargaining, labour rights and dispute resolution. A study on sustainable, responsible and inclusive business practices for SMEs was prepared, trade union position papers on roles in just transition were produced, while employers developed an assessment of NDCs from a business perspective. Employers and trade unions use these analyses for their strategic planning. Mapping of tourism enterprise formalization identified measures to bring more firms into the formal economy, and the Ministry of Finance used it to formulate an initial Action Plan for combating the grey economy and subsequently the sector-specific plan.

Stories from the field



[Check out how women entrepreneurs in northern Montenegro are transforming rural tourism and overcoming prejudice.](#)



[Discover the resilience and leadership of women who sustain rural communities across Montenegro.](#)



[Find out how local farmers are turning traditional knowledge into new economic opportunities.](#)

Output 1.2 – Climate action: Mitigation and adaptation, DRR

Climate ambition, transparency and adaptation planning institutionalized.

The National Adaptation Plan (adopted in July 2025) identified cca USD 30 million in priority adaptation investments across key sectors, creating a pipeline for resilience projects and access to climate finance, while technical inputs to the Draft Climate Law supported alignment with the respective EU Acquis.

Nature-based risk reduction and landscape governance.

Biodiversity was mainstreamed into national spatial planning. The [Spatial Plan](#) 2040 introduced legally binding biodiversity provisions and designated 96 conservation priority areas (3,550 ha), limiting construction in high-risk zones and protecting water sources, ecosystems and tourism assets. [The Coordination Body of Protected Area Managers was reactivated](#) for national coverage, and a governance framework for the Tara River Basin UNESCO Biosphere Reserve was renewed via a dedicated coordination body.

Disaster risk governance and resilient recovery.

The [Law on Recovery after Hazards](#) established, for the first time, a unified, needs-based recovery system aligned with Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA), replacing ad hoc compensation with transparent, targeted support for affected citizens, households and businesses. Emergency telecommunications were strengthened regionally and nationally. Namely, Western Balkans emergency telecoms blueprint and partnership manifesto were jointly endorsed, while Montenegro initiated targeted technical assistance and a cell broadcast feasibility study, improving crisis response readiness and regulatory alignment (EU Ch. 10).

Energy efficiency and just transition.

A Just Transition Council was established under the Ministry of Energy and Mining as the first high-level platform uniting government, civil society and partners, adopting a Framework of the Just Transition Roadmap (2025–2027) with concrete

Montenegro updated its NDC (2025) - first in the Western Balkans.

It committed to 55% or more net GHG cuts by 2030 and 60% by 2035 vs. 1990, with a supporting finance overview to prioritize and mobilize investments. The UN supported submission of the 4th National Communication and 1st Biennial Transparency Report, standardized GHG inventories (1990–2022), and finalized Methodologies, Procedures and Guidelines for mitigation, adaptation and climate finance-embedding a national transparency architecture.

reform, investment and reskilling measures. A Green Employment Diagnostics for a Just Transition report was also prepared to guide labour market measures in the energy transition.

Gender-responsive system resilience.

Through the FINSTEM partnership, [the Central Bank strengthened capacity to assess climate related financial risks](#), develop resilience scenarios, and integrate climate into financial regulation; a Cybersecurity Operations Center was established, bolstering operational resilience and continuity of critical financial services.

Household energy efficiency was scaled.

Under the EU Energy Crisis Package, the UN enabled expansion of the National Energy Efficiency Programme by establishing a roster of qualified engineers for application assessment and quality assurance; 3,500 households received subsidies and 2,500 completed renovations by end 2025, cutting energy use and CO₂ and easing energy poverty (EU Ch. 15).

Strengthening Ozone Protection. Compliance with HCFC/HFC controls advanced, with Montenegro achieving a 100% reduction of HCFC consumption by banning imports as of 1 January 2025, ahead of the Montreal Protocol deadline for Article 5 countries. Namely, 18 technicians were nationally certified and 29 trained on natural refrigerants; 23 importers/inspectors/technicians trained on EU aligned safety standards; and a finalization of the national inventory of controlled substance banks across refrigerator and firefighter sectors, with a goal of phasing out from HFC 227ea, strengthening monitoring, safe disposal and reporting.

Transboundary water security. Aquifer cooperation frameworks advanced, with Montenegro contributing to a draft multilateral agreement for transboundary aquifers, introducing monitoring protocols for the Cijeva/Ćemi aquifer, and building evidence for sustainable water management, pending government adoption in 2026.

Youth action. Youth-led air quality action was scaled. 1,651 adolescents progressed from awareness to co designing and implementing local air quality initiatives, enhancing civic participation and improving local environmental practices. The programme also supported the implementation of the National Adaptation Plan, reinforcing inclusive and youth-driven climate action and civic engagement as per EU recommendations.

Output 1.3 - Management of infrastructure, cultural and natural resources

Chemicals and hazardous waste governance. A unified digital reporting system covering the Basel, Rotterdam, Stockholm and Minamata Conventions replaced fragmented reporting, improving data quality, inter institutional coordination and compliance, and reducing environmental health risks for communities (EU Chapter 27). Contaminated hotspot management advanced through detailed

environmental assessment at the Port of Bar, building on earlier analyses in Tivat Bay and Risan Harbour that identified exceedances of PCBs, mercury, heavy metals and organic pollutants. This strengthened evidence for site-specific monitoring and remediation planning and supported preparation of an environmentally sound management plan for priority marine areas.

Environmental governance, data and equitable access. The 4th Environmental Performance Review (EPR) provided a comprehensive assessment across green economy, air, water, waste, biodiversity and protected areas, guiding cross-sector reforms; while targeted training improved emission inventory compilation in line with the European Monitoring and Evaluation Programme/ European Environment Agency Guidebook, raising transparency and international alignment. Completion of the self-assessment under the Protocol on Water and Health identified access gaps, particularly for vulnerable and marginalized groups, orienting partners toward measures aligned with the EU Drinking Water Directive.

Forest data systems and policy financing readiness. Second National Forest Inventory was prepared. Analytical reports consolidated stakeholder information needs, defined nationally relevant indicators, and recommended improvements for data quality and international alignment, strengthening sustainable forest management and reporting. A forest policy making framework and a private forest management methodology were developed, creating conditions to access IPARD III financing.

Systematic school infrastructure planning initiated. Institutional capacity in the education sector was strengthened to better plan, manage and oversee investments. Preparations advanced for the development of technical documentation for at least five schools, as well as for a nationwide assessment of 813 education institutions with gender equality and social inclusion integrated, contributing to improved learning environments.

Culture, tourism innovation and evidence-based policy. Montenegro advanced the transition to Tourism Industry 4.0. Extended reality (XR) based digital heritage pilots—including laser scanning and photogrammetry at priority sites (e.g. Žabljak Crnojevića)—enabled virtual reconstructions and digital storytelling, diversifying tourism products and

enhancing visitor experience (EU Ch.10 and 26). National capacity for tourism digitalization was built through training in digital storytelling, laser scanning and photogrammetry, strengthening the capabilities of academic institutions, public authorities and tourism stakeholders to integrate advanced tools into tourism strategies and destination management.





**STRATEGIC PRIORITY #2:
HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT, REDUCING
VULNERABILITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION**

2 OUTCOME

All people, especially the vulnerable, increasingly benefit from equitable, gender-responsive and universally accessible social and child protection system and quality services, including labour market activation and capabilities

by 2027

3 OUTCOME

All people, especially the vulnerable, benefit from strengthened human capital including early childhood development, and more resilient, gender-responsive, and quality healthcare and education

by 2027

Agencies:



SDGs:



EU Chapters:



Required budget
\$ 7,855,894

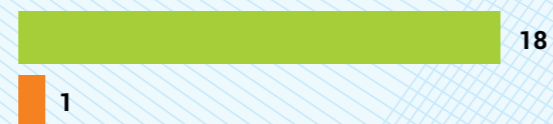


Available budget
\$ 7,441,189



Expenditure
\$ 7,054,430

19 output indicators: 97% average progress rate



■ Fully achieved ■ Partially achieved

Delivery rate: 95%

Overall output Indicator progress rate 97%

Human capital development in Montenegro continues to face persistent constraints despite evident progress. Key bottlenecks remain in the areas of social inclusion, disability rights, child protection, migration management, and uneven transition from education to the labour market. Vulnerabilities are pronounced among children, persons with disabilities, Roma, Egyptians and other at-risk groups, while institutional inefficiencies and fragmented services further impede progress.

The achievements in 2025, ranging from accelerated deinstitutionalization and improved disability assessment systems to expanded youth services, improved mixed migration governance, and enhanced access to health, education and early childhood development - demonstrate a shift from analysis to concrete, system-level improvements. Collectively, these efforts have helped address structural bottlenecks and have contributed to advancing equity, resilience, and inclusion across Montenegro.

Output 2.1 - Social and child protection

Deinstitutionalization accelerated and family-based care expanded. With UN technical support, implementation of the Deinstitutionalization Strategy 2025–2028 drove the lowest-ever number of children in residential care (22% vs 2024; 44.7% vs 2020; 74.8% vs 2010), eliminated placement of children under three, reduced the share of children with disabilities in institutions (from 47% to 33%), and increased foster placements (+12% since 2020; +45% non-kinship).

In parallel, a draft Law on Social and Child Protection was prepared, introducing preventive services, expanded community care, stronger gatekeeping, and a Centre for Foster Care.

To ensure sustainability, the UN supported the establishment of a Reference Group for foster care, training of nearly 100 professionals in urgent and specialized foster care, and accreditation of four training programmes, embedding foster care competencies into the national professional development system (EU Ch. 23, deinstitutionalization benchmark).

European Child Guarantee operationalization advanced and local access improved.

Evidence-based inputs to the European Child Guarantee National Action Plan were produced; an individualized transition programme supported nine care leavers in Bijela; and four northern municipalities conducted needs assessments for launching at least three community-based social and child protection services for children with disabilities and families (EU Ch.23 and 19).

Disability determination system unified and rights strengthened.

With the adoption of the [Law on Uniform Disability Assessment](#) and amendments to seven sectoral laws in Oct 2025, Montenegro established a standardized, person-centred disability determination system aligned with UN CRPD. A single national Institute for Disability Assessment will replace over 50 commissions and improve equity and access for over 60,000 persons with disabilities through new by-laws, methodologies and protocols ready for 2026 rollout (EU Ch. 19).

Social protection payments safeguarded through digital systems.

The e-Social platform ensured uninterrupted processing of over 200,000 monthly cash transfers (cca €240m/year) for a 10th consecutive year and was strengthened with ISO-aligned security and new state datacenter infrastructure.

Legal capacity reform and CRPD implementation roadmap established.

Financing for implementation of the [Roadmap](#) for transitioning to supported decision-making was secured, and Government adopted the 2026–2030 CRPD Action Plan, aligning reforms with international standards.

Community-level social protection services expanded. A new [day care centre for older persons](#) was opened in Berane, expanding the network to 13 centres in 11 municipalities - primarily in Montenegro's northern region – and serving up to 150 people (44% women). The availability of this service was further enhanced through the licensing of 10 day care centres. The reconstruction of Berane facility enabled the establishment of a supported living service, allowing people to live independently, rather than in institutional settings. At national level, the social protection framework was strengthened with the new draft Law on Social and Child Protection, expected to enter public debate in 2026.

Stories from the field



[Want to know how specialized services and assistive technologies are helping children with developmental disabilities reach their potential?](#)



[Learn how coordinated support is transforming the lives of children facing behavioral challenges.](#)



An adult speaks with two children seated at a table indoors, while other adults sit blurred in the background.

© UNICEF Montenegro / Duško Miljanić

Output 2.2 - School to work transition and employability

Youth governance and youth services were significantly strengthened. A new Youth Law, in the final drafting stage, aims to improve policy implementation by establishing a high-level inter ministerial Council on Youth, enhancing youth participation, and professionalizing youth work. A youth centre in Plužine was opened. At the same time, Youth Guarantee readiness was advanced: the Employment Agency piloted the Youth Guarantee in Bijelo Polje, Nikšić and Ulcinj, while the Ministry of Sports and Youth laid out the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan, aiming to connect young people with jobs, training, and education opportunities. Furthermore, the Employment Agency of Montenegro and the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Dialogue received training on how to collect and report employment data using EU-level EMCO standards. This means they now follow a unified European method for tracking how well employment programmes- including the Youth Guarantee-are working, so results can be compared and monitored more accurately.

Socio emotional learning (SEL) scaled system-wide. 206 teachers were trained and SEL expanded to 138 schools (approximately two thirds nationally), reaching 46,399 adolescents. As a result, students benefited from improved socio-emotional competencies, contributing to more inclusive, safe, and supportive learning environments. SEL was also embedded as a priority in the new 10-year Education Strategy (EU Ch. 26).

School-to-work transition broadened through partnerships. The Prilike programme reached nearly 2,000 adolescents with career meetups, company matching, placements and coaching, informing reforms to Career Guidance and serving as a precursor to EU Youth Guarantee implementation. 160 Vocational Education Training (VET) teachers were trained in employability and e-pedagogy (EU Ch. 26 and 19).

Stories from the field



[Explore how an inclusive classroom helps a girl feel accepted and supported.](#)



[Meet Aleksa and Marko, young programmers who turned training into their own IT startup.](#)



Output 2.3 - Mixed migration

Border police investigative capacity upgraded. New ICT and office systems strengthened inter-departmental information sharing, case coordination and secure communications for the Division combating cross-border crime and corruption, improving investigative effectiveness (EU Ch. 24.)

Diaspora policy and skills transfer strengthened. The mapping of the USA based diaspora informed the National Strategy on Cooperation with Diaspora 2025–2029 and mobilized [two diaspora medical fellowships](#)

Safe Return and New Beginnings for Migrants Supported. Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) programme enhanced humane migration management by enabling migrants to make informed, voluntary return decisions and rebuild their lives with dignity. 19 voluntary returns were supported (majority to the Russian Federation), 14 received reintegration abroad. 29 returnees to Montenegro were recorded (21 received reintegration support), 480 individual counselling sessions improved decision-making and linkage to services. These results strengthened national capacities for orderly and rights-based return, aligning Montenegro's migration practices with EU standards on voluntary return and fundamental rights (EU Ch. 24).

Access to asylum information increased. Through regular presence at entry points, free legal aid partners (NGO Civic Alliance) informed 1,583 people (58% of 2,746 registering asylum intentions) on rights and procedures.

for clinical mentoring and policy advice in priority specialties.

Rights-based migration and labour management advanced. National/regional [Alternatives to Detention assessments](#) identified legal and operational gaps, with recommendations shared with the Ministry of Interior and Ombudsperson ahead of 2026 piloting; a regional [Labour Migration conference](#) (Budva, May 2025; 170 participants) adopted a Joint Statement aligning policy dialogue with EU/ILO standards—the conference was the first to address the topic at regional level. (EU Ch. 23 and 24)

Visa system reform roadmap defined. A comprehensive national Visa Information System [VIS reform Roadmap](#) set actions, timelines and roles for EU alignment, including eVisa, interoperability and biometrics; it was informed by a study visit to Slovenia. Transition to a COTS solution harmonized with EU VIS was recommended. (EU Ch. 24)

Protection of stateless children strengthened. SOPs were prepared to implement Article 7 of the Nationality Law (access to nationality for otherwise stateless children born/found in Montenegro), and shared with Ministry of Interior's branch offices to improve consistent practice.

Employment access improved for refugees. Parliament adopted a *Law on Mediation in Employment and Rights during Unemployment* granting Ukrainian temporary protection holders the right to register with the Employment Agency and access placement, up/reskilling and rehabilitation services.

Stories from the field



[Read about Hamza and Jasmina who rebuilt their lives after returning home with reintegration support.](#)

Output 3.1 - Healthcare

Quality of care institutionalized. A first ever Executive Training Programme on Quality of Care and Patient Safety engaged 55 health leaders with team-based quality improvement projects; a Hospital Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan was developed for the Clinical Centre.

Equity for persons with disabilities advanced in health. An Action Plan on Health Equity for People With Disabilities (2025–2028) was adopted, and health finance/performance indicators were defined for providers to improve transparency and efficiency.

Public health policy strengthened. Technical advice enabled tobacco track-and-trace legislation (amendments adopted) and explored eco-fee models; mercury free healthcare progressed via inventories, safe handling training and a medical hazardous waste feasibility study. A comprehensive human rights based mental health assessment has been developed to inform system improvements.

Nutrition surveillance gaps filled. A FEED cities street food/takeaway survey in Podgorica generated data for Non-Communicable Disease policy and salt/sugar reduction strategies.

Immunization and Maternal and Neonatal Health (MNH) performance improved.

Programme of Measures for Immunizations 2026-2028 has been adopted. Provisions on early intervention and breastfeeding have been incorporated into the new Healthcare Law, reinforcing preventive and child-centred healthcare. Registry improvements and a nationwide call centre secured 800 additional MMR1 vaccinations, although coverage still remains concerningly low. To strengthen workforce sustainability, the UN partnered with the University of Montenegro Medical Faculty to deliver immunization and breastfeeding education and trained over 20 senior medical students in interpersonal communication for immunization. When it comes to MNH, over 80 health workers were trained in essential childbirth and preeclampsia/eclampsia management (PE/E), and five MNH clinical guidelines were finalized. (EU Ch. 28)

HIV prevention and stigma reduction sustained. Comprehensive packages reached 1,228 Men Having Sex With Men, 1,366 people who use drugs and 119 sex workers; 153 prisoners received counselling; 23,450 sterile needles, 25,748 syringes and 21,730 condoms were distributed; while 50 PLHIV received linkage/psychosocial support and 15 health workers trained on anti-stigma. (EU Ch. 23/24/28)

Stories from the field



[Discover why trust in science and timely immunization is essential for every child's health.](#)



[Learn why a life free of infectious diseases should be every child's right, not a privilege.](#)



A girl sits at a classroom desk and raises her hand while smiling, with two other children seated behind her and school supplies placed on the desks.

© UNICEF Montenegro / Duško Miljanić

Output 3.2 - Quality education

Sector strategy and system governance strengthening. Government adopted the [Education Reform Strategy 2025–2035](#) with a Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) (2025–2027) and Action Plan (2025–2026) with UN support. A functional review of the Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation (MoESI) and assessments of Teacher Professional Development and teaching assistants were conducted, and a directorate for strategic management established. A new National

Curriculum Framework was initiated, and an Education Management Information System HR database improved workforce planning. (EU Ch. 26)

Inclusion of Roma, Egyptian and children with disabilities expanded. 782 Roma and Egyptian children in early grades and 333 in preschools accessed quality learning, while a Romani picture dictionary supported linguistic inclusion. 204 preschoolers and 351 primary school children with disabilities received individualized support/assistive technology.

System capacity and local ownership were strengthened by supporting over 60 preschool professionals and 12 preschools across close to half municipalities (11) in Montenegro to improve outreach and inclusive practices. (EU Ch. 23 and 26)

Legal access to education widened for displaced/stateless learners. Amendments to the Recognition of Foreign Educational Documents Law and the General Law on Education extended eligibility to refugees/stateless persons and mandated up to one year of preparatory language classes.

Evidence-based school prevention expanded in school settings. Lions Quest Skills For Adolescence Programme expanded via six additional trainings engaging **164 teachers** and reaching over **3,000 students**; Lions Quest Skills For Growing Programme continued with evaluation of the effectiveness of the programme (in 7 schools) showing strong student engagement, parental support, and informing further programme adaptation; while Friends in Focus Programme trained **16 youth facilitators toward reaching over 300 adolescents**.

Teacher digital skills, Media and Information Literacy (MIL) and remembrance education strengthened. Over 300 teachers were [upskilled in Office 365](#), over 250 integrated MIL, and three [online courses on prevention of online GBV violence](#) were developed. [Two digital summer camps](#) engaged 91 students. Holocaust education materials were adapted to the national curriculum with a travelling exhibition planned.

Stories from the field



[Check out how inclusive education practices are transforming classroom experiences for children.](#)



[Meet Stefan and see his journey in promoting school-based prevention.](#)

Enrollment data highlights progress and remaining equity gaps: overall early childhood education participation rose by 3% to 26,786 children, while enrollment of Roma and Egyptian children increased by 14.4%; preschool enrollment of children with disabilities declined slightly by 3%, indicating the continued need for targeted support.

Digital learning scaled nationally. EdTech Hubs, school-based digital learning spaces equipped with modern technologies, were scaled up from the 12 initially established with UN support, to 102 schools (90 new). Labs were equipped with 3D printers, robotics, micro:bit, PET recyclers etc. Over 300 teachers were trained and 21,623 students used the Digital School platform. (EU Ch. 26)

Output 3.3 - Early childhood development

Family-centred early intervention scaled. The UN supported [the expansion of family-centred early intervention services](#). Services were delivered in Bijelo Polje, Berane, and partially in Podgorica, with training initiated in Cetinje, Tivat, and Bar, reaching 525 children through child development monitoring and targeted early intervention. To strengthen system-level sustainability, technical assistance was provided in drafting an Operational Plan for scaling up family-centred early intervention, establishing a framework for wider national implementation. (EU Ch. 23 and 19)

Parenting support and home visiting systems strengthened. The Bebbio app recorded around 1,700 downloads in 2025 (cumulative 16,000); Caring Families reached 316 caregivers across 17 municipalities (14% fathers) and a tailored track for caregivers of children with developmental delays reached 62. A national home visiting maturity assessment informed a new integrated home visiting model.

Stories from the field



[Discover why parental support is essential for children's early development and wellbeing.](#)



[Want to know how early learning and care support children's growth and wellbeing?](#)



© UNICEF Montenegro / Duško Miljanić

A caregiver interacts closely with a young child indoors, supporting early learning or development activities.



**STRATEGIC PRIORITY #3:
SOCIAL COHESION, PEOPLE-CENTRED
GOVERNANCE, RULE OF LAW
AND HUMAN RIGHTS**



All people, especially the vulnerable, benefit from improved social cohesion, increased realization of human rights and rule of law and accountable, gender-responsive institutions

by 2027

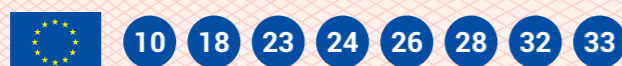
Agencies:



SDGs:



EU Chapters:



Required budget
\$ 15,561,142

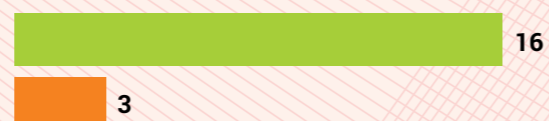


Available budget
\$ 15,216,608



Expenditure
\$ 11,284,037

19 output indicators: 93% average progress rate



Delivery rate: 74%

Overall output Indicator progress rate 93%

■ Fully achieved ■ Partially achieved

The UN system's 2025 results in Montenegro addressed structural gaps and challenges in **social cohesion, people centred governance, rule of law and human rights**. These challenges include fragmented institutions, limited accountability, uneven performance across the justice sector, and increasing societal polarization. Weak institutional coordination, persistent discrimination and vulnerabilities of at-risk groups, and pressures on civic space continue to constrain progress. The achievements captured in this section demonstrate targeted, system-wide efforts to respond to these constraints: strengthening judicial independence and forensic capacities; expanding access to justice; improving gender-responsive governance; broadening civic participation; accelerating the digitalization of public administration; and reinforcing mechanisms that promote social cohesion and protect human rights. Collectively, these interventions support Montenegro's trajectory toward more inclusive governance, equitable institutions, and resilient communities.

Output 4.1 - Rule of law and justice for all

Transitional justice and missing persons. Processing of **war crimes** advanced. In 2025, one person was convicted in a conflict-related sexual violence; this is the first time such a case is tried in Montenegro. Guidelines for the Search for Missing Persons were developed with the national commission, [published in Montenegrin and English](#), and were presented to the UN Committee on Enforced Disappearances when it reviewed Montenegro in September. The guidelines support protection of the rights of families of the missing and enhance institutional capacity to implement the Convention. A new annex to the 2006 cooperation agreement between Montenegro and Croatia's prosecutors introduced reciprocity measures to progress cross-border war crimes cases.

Forensics and Crime Scene Investigation standardized for stronger prosecutions. Crime Scene Investigation procedures were

standardized and ISO/IEC 17020 preparedness advanced, including guidance and training that improved forensic responses to gender-based violence. This increased the quality, diversity and credibility of evidence for prosecuting weapons, ammunition and explosives-enabled crime and for international cooperation.

Gender-responsive public administration strengthened. The Human Resource Management Authority Gender Roadmap 2025–2030 established a three-tier gender coordination architecture and safeguards on equality, parental protection and non-discrimination. A methodology to prepare institutional Gender Action Plans was piloted and a national pool of accredited gender trainers established, reinforcing compliance and sustainability.

Access to justice widened for at-risk groups.

The UN Human Rights Committee issued concluding observations recommending amendments to the Law on Free Legal Aid to cover persons at risk of statelessness and those seeking international protection across birth registration, statelessness and refugee status determinations, at both application and appeal stages-including the option of state funding for qualified CSOs. If implemented, this will represent a major shift toward state-funded access for groups previously served mainly by humanitarian support, provided that the Government acts upon those recommendations.

Anti discrimination protections strengthened and civic space safeguarded.

Parliament adopted a new Law on the Protection of Equality and the Prohibition of Discrimination, aligning more closely with international standards. Montenegro is now among 47 UN Member States that has comprehensive anti-discrimination laws. Separately, Parliament withdrew proposed restrictions to peaceful assembly after UN, civil society and international community advocacy, maintaining alignment with international norms. (EU Ch. 23)

Independent monitoring and child rights oversight reinforced. The Independent

Monitoring Mechanism on the rights of persons with disabilities (Ombudsperson and 11 Organizations of Persons with Disabilities) produced regular analyses and catalyzed renewal of work on the Law on Professional Rehabilitation and Vocational Training. The Council on the Rights of the Child expanded its mandate and adopted a 2025 plan emphasizing cross-sectoral results and child rights budgeting; Parliament and the Ombudsperson increased child rights monitoring, and a Deputy Ombudsperson for Children mandate was defined in draft law, which is still pending. (EU Ch. 23)

Gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) and policy frameworks advanced. GRB inputs were provided to the organic budget law, informed by the 2024 [State of Play of GRB report](#); the National Strategy for Gender Equality 2026-2029 incorporated objectives on VAW, care work and women’s economic empowerment, with UN inputs to align with international standards.

Digital justice transformation lifted transparency and safety. The Unique Information System of the Judiciary gained

key modules (automated anonymization of court decisions; accessible portal features; automated SMS/email notifications), improving user experience and trust. AI-capable infrastructure (including an NVIDIA DGX H200 server) was installed to enable future AI services and digital forensics; ISO 27001/27701 were adopted in key institutions; physical security was upgraded, while wide-ranging ICT/cybersecurity/ International Certification of Digital Literacy (ICDL) training have built staff capacity. A judicial infrastructure assessment and preparatory steps for a Judiciary Complex improved evidence-based investment planning; methodologies for HR strengthening and ICT capacity assessment were introduced; and inputs to Court Fees Law reform supported financial sustainability. (EU Ch. 23)

Output 4.2 - Public administration, data and digitalisation

Public institutes governance framework advanced. Legal and institutional framework governing the work of public institutes at both

central and local levels was strengthened; technical support to a new law advanced inclusive consultation. Once adopted, it will regulate establishment, recruitment, human resources management, accountability and oversight, improving transparency and performance.

Recruitment oversight and inspections strengthened. Administrative Inspection received new inspection methodologies, was integrated into the Unique Inspection Supervision System, and adopted a risk-assessment matrix to target high-risk areas; equipment upgrades and staff training (including the Appeals Commission) improved due process and oversight of recruitment practices.

Long standing displacement resolved and health access for stateless secured. The Ministry of Interior issued permanent residence to the remaining refugees from the former Yugoslavia, effectively closing a 30 year chapter and enabling durable integration (around 12,500 people historically). A new Law on Health Care recognized stateless persons as entitled to health care. A separate by-law will be adopted to define its scope.

National statistics for equity and SDGs upgraded. The [MICS7 rolling out](#) across 6,720 households (with additional targeted data collection among Roma and Egyptian communities) was co-financed by Government and the UN, closing key data gaps across health, education, ECD, social protection, WASH and housing, strengthening CRC reporting and SDG monitoring (EU Ch. 18.)

Inclusive public finance capacity built. 22 officials across finance and social sectors were trained to integrate CRPD-compliant budgeting and link strategic planning to allocations, with a study visit to Estonia to reinforce practice improvements.

Digital health architecture set. A Blueprint for national digital health architecture was finalized, underpinning medicine/equipment tracking,

Electronic Health Record, and a modernized primary care information system. Registries for health institutions, personnel and equipment were developed and a national teleradiology platform (also piloting tele-ophthalmology) moved forward, strengthening diagnostics and continuity of care.

Ombudsperson office digitalised. A secure case-violations database, in addition to visitor and mail tracking systems were designed, with training and functionality for gender and vulnerability disaggregated data, improving responsiveness and accountability.

Local e-Government services and Tourism digitalisation. An e-Government Assessment covered all 25 municipalities, guiding targeted support in seven LSGs. Three citizen-centric service prototypes (Social Aid for Newborns, Annual Property Tax, Hospitality Business Registration) were codesigned with 11 local self-governments; common service blueprints, data-sharing models, and security/resilience requirements were adopted- laying foundations for interoperable, scalable services aligned with EU Ch. 10 and 23 recommendations. A sectoral analysis mapped tourism data tools/flows and proposed a centralised Tourism Information System (TIS) enabling real-time data, transparency and reduced informality across multiple authorities.

Preparations for the state’s central digital infrastructure finalized. A Feasibility Study for the State Data Center and Disaster Recovery Center proposed three models to serve over 150 institutions, enabling secure, interoperable, resilient data management and evidence-based digital investment.

Montenegro has initiated the development of its national AI Strategy, to establish a coherent policy framework for the safe, inclusive, and innovation-driven deployment of artificial intelligence. The UN’s AI Landscape Assessment provided key analytical inputs, including a mapping of institutional capacities, regulatory gaps, and priority use cases aligned with national development needs.



Panelists at the stage in a formal setting, during a public event dedicated to strengthening social cohesion.

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Output 4.3 - Citizens' participation

Civic oversight strengthened. CSOs, some for the first time, engaged with UN human rights mechanisms on journalists' rights and independence of lawyers, and convened a dialogue between the UN Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers and all high-level officials from the justice and civil society on the implementation of [2024 Special Rapporteur recommendations](#). (EU Ch. 23)

Municipal civic funding reformed and capacities upgraded. Within ReLOad programme (Phase III), opportunities were identified to strengthen transparency, civic participation, and cooperation between local governments and civil society, while raising capacities of 32 municipal officials from 11 municipalities on project cycle management and transparent NGO funding. Municipality of Mojkovac adopted a decision aligning its NGO funding with programme standards.

Women's political participation widened. [Amendments to the Election Law introduced a 40% quota](#) for women with placement rules, ensuring tangible gains in women's representation; gender mainstreaming methodologies for laws and public policies and the [Gender Equality Strategy](#) further

reinforced commitment to women's leadership. Multisectoral coordination was strengthened through the Women's Leadership Network, connecting women leaders from justice, security, parliament, government, academia, and civil society, and the [Women in Diplomacy Network](#). These platforms enabled sustained advocacy, policy dialogue, and joint engagement at national and international levels, including [participation in CSW69](#).

Youth civic leadership built. The 18th Summer School for Young Diplomats equipped emerging leaders with knowledge and networks on democratic governance, human rights, security, AI and climate, strengthening inclusive civic space and accountability. As a result, participants are better positioned to act as informed change agents contributing to social cohesion and people-centred governance.

Protocol for the Protection of Journalists. A Protocol, signed by key state institutions, unions and media outlets (10 Oct 2025), provides the basis for establishing a national mechanism on the safety of journalists. While OSCE is the lead international support, various UN human rights bodies recommended setting up the mechanism, and the UN provided some technical support. (EU Ch. 23)

Stories from the field



[Discover how inclusive engagement is helping communities solve local challenges together.](#)



[Learn about the power of local leadership to transform community life and strengthen solidarity.](#)

Output 4.4 - GBV and violence against women, children and the elderly

GBV accountability and legal change accelerated. Mandatory prosecutorial guidelines on domestic/family violence and targeted training for [prosecutors](#) and [heads of prosecutors offices](#) improved survivor-centred practice and risk assessment. High-level dialogues (Gender Talks), **building on a CEDAW Committee recommendation to criminalise femicide**, catalysed Government drafting an article on [femicide](#) as a distinct criminal offence – adoption of which would represent a major step toward stronger protection. These efforts were further informed by analytical evidence highlighting that, despite women comprising most judges (63%) and prosecutors (56%), institutional practices require continued strengthening to ensure gender-sensitive, consistent and accountable justice responses.

Child friendly justice institutionalized. The Barnahus model has been recognized as a public legal entity in the draft law on Social and Child Protection, clarifying mandates, funding, staffing and resources; a cross sector working group has finalized Standards and a Roadmap. Over 100 professionals were trained in GBV/ violence against children and intersectoral cooperation and over 100 justice and social work professionals trained on child friendly standards, advancing a coordinated, rights-based response. (EU Ch. 23)

Electronic Monitoring System (EMS) for survivor protection scaled. The Electronic Monitoring System (EMS) for survivor protection was scaled up, supported by accredited multisector trainings and local capacity-building sessions that strengthened institutional coordination. A nationwide campaign and outreach materials reached more than 14,000 people. By August 2025, the number of EMS protection measures had tripled year-on-year, enhancing survivor safety and trust in the system. Advocacy efforts advanced the introduction of mandatory EMS and promoted the adoption of a comprehensive

Harmful practices and school violence prevented. Peer education reached 60 children/adolescents (10–19) on child rights, child marriage risks and gender equality, specifically Roma and Egyptian girls and boys; 6 workshops supported at-risk primary students; 50 parents (incl. 30 fathers) were engaged. [School mediation](#) has been piloted in 6 schools (training 36 representatives and 120 peer mediators). A national Protocol on [Sexual Harassment in Schools](#) was developed, to be rolled out in 2026. (EU Ch. 23 and 26)

legal definition of femicide. Community outreach empowered 32 women with essential information on restraining orders and EMS options. Continued engagement with the justice sector improved the enforcement of protective measures and the development of gender-sensitive judicial guidelines.

Output 4.5 - Building trust, social cohesion, and countering hate speech

Social cohesion compacts created. Innovative dialogue model on social cohesion strengthened citizen participation and trust in institutions. Local dialogues in five municipalities engaged over 430 participants across communities, municipal authorities, civil society, youth, academia, and service providers, generating over 150 citizen-led recommendations to address polarization, low trust, and limited participation and to counter hate speech and divisive narratives. The process resulted in Social Cohesion Pledges adopted by the Municipal Assemblies of Bar, Bijelo Polje, Podgorica, and Ulcinj. It turned dialogue outcomes into formal commitments to strengthen institutional responsiveness, curb hate speech, and improve equitable access to local services.



Citizen innovation financed and youth leadership grown. Through a joint Social Cohesion Innovation Lab, 34 citizen/youth initiatives were designed and 21 funded (themes: hate speech, mental health, migrant inclusion, gender equality, digital exclusion, environment). 60 youth leaders were trained (#NextGen), and the Ombudsperson’s hate speech monitoring tools were strengthened for evidence-based response.

To elevate citizen recommendations, a National Dialogue on social cohesion was convened with over 120 citizens and institutional representatives from Bar, Bijelo Polje, Podgorica, Pljevlja and Ulcinj, alongside national institutions. Participants called for a united response to hate speech, discrimination and polarizing narratives—especially to protect vulnerable groups—and agreed priority areas to strengthen trust, inclusion and societal resilience, producing national policy recommendations and inputs for a future National Social Cohesion Pledge.

Stories from the field



[Meet Adnan and learn how his voice inspires a push toward a more inclusive community.](#)



[Find out how solidarity and activism can help breaking down discrimination and building social cohesion.](#)

Child/adolescent participation scaled.

3,379 children joined social cohesion actions; a [Child Parliament convened](#) in the national Parliament (20 Nov 2025); Children’s Parliaments launched in 5 municipalities engaged 187 children who mobilized over 2,000 peers; 120 adolescents trained as peer educators on hate speech/civic participation. A new civic education curriculum was codesigned with over 400 stakeholders, advanced system-level reform advocating for its integration as a regular school subject. Furthermore, 10 youth-led solutions were developed (5 funded), engaging over 1,000 adolescents. Targeted psychosocial support after the Cetinje tragedy reached around 1,000 beneficiaries over eight months.

Positive public narratives promoted.

30 young people co-created artistic content on identity and cohesion, disseminated via the public broadcaster. Over 170 students took part in structured dialogues, reducing polarization, while 30 journalism students [were trained in solutions journalism](#). A 2024 Media Law amendment secured sustainable financing for media self-regulatory bodies via the Media Pluralism Fund, reinforcing professional standards.

Output 4.6 - Combating corruption and organized crime

Integrity systems strengthened across public service.

Ethics and whistleblower protection capacities improved through specialized trainings for 30 officials, the establishment of a standardized operational model and a Training-of-Trainers cohort of 11 who now deliver integrity training nationwide. Upgraded IT equipment further enhanced prevention and monitoring functions. A 2025 integrity assessment in healthcare generated 717 institution-specific recommendations; 17 institutions implemented 53 actions covering whistleblowing, ethics committees, conflict of interest, gift rules, recruitment, risk management and access to information, substantially increasing their preventive capacity. A web app was upgraded to track implementation progress, and a Guide for Building Integrity was published. Montenegro shared its experience internationally through South-South and Triangular Cooperation.

Counter-trafficking: Coordination and skills upgraded.

A national Protocol and Guidelines on [trafficking for labour exploitation](#) were adopted by key institutions; [simulation based, multidisciplinary training](#) enhanced operational responses, interagency coordination and courtroom practice; a nationwide [awareness campaign](#) (Jul–Oct) generated 690,000 views, over 150,000 engagements, over 40 TV broadcasts and an immersive performance reaching over 500 visitors. Nine regional events strengthened cooperation across Southeastern Europe (34 participants from Montenegro).

Victims’ rights advanced.

National Guidelines on the right to compensation for victims in criminal proceedings were co-developed with the Supreme Court of Montenegro and Supreme State Prosecutor’s Office.

Capacities to counter illicit firearms strengthened.

Five knowledge products on [firearms-related investigation and prosecution](#) (legal commentary, training

curriculum/manual, caselaw collection, guidance) were developed institutionalized in the judicial training centre. Following [„Firearms in the Courtroom“ training](#), 40 judges/prosecutors reported up to 25% increase in knowledge, contributing to initiation of first investigations into illicit firearms trafficking. (EU Ch. 24)

Anti-corruption strategy implementation monitored with public participation.

A national multistakeholder consultation evaluated the anti-corruption [2024–2028 Strategy](#), confirming 58% of the activities were implemented (2024–2025) and improving accountability and inter institutional coordination in line with UNCAC Article 5. (EU Ch. 23)

Border security and data exchange modernized.

Launched in January 2025, the Automatic Data Exchange System project initiated procurement of hardware and development of two software solutions, strengthening real-time information sharing for corruption, organized crime, trafficking and migrant smuggling investigations. This advanced IBM and Schengen alignment and longstanding EC recommendations (EU Ch.24.)

Illicit trafficking of cultural property further addressed.

Cultural heritage, law enforcement and judiciary professionals were capacitated to prevent illicit trafficking; national legislation (Law on Protection of Cultural Goods) was aligned with international treaties and EU acquis on import/export/restoration; and security measures were installed for the Diatreta artefact in Pljevlja Museum, protecting heritage and public access.



A man hoes a field in a rural landscape, while two boys stand nearby with tools.

© FAO / Vuko Jovanović

Below is the non-exhaustive list of the most commonly identified challenges faced in programme implementation, as well as recommendations and lessons learnt:

CHALLENGES

- **Human and institutional capacity constraints** persist across ministries and public institutions, including limited staff numbers, gaps in technical expertise, and high turnover rates, which affects continuity and institutional memory. It also constraints ownership and sustainability.
- **Cross sectoral and inter-institutional cooperation remains insufficient.** Coordination remains often inconsistent, under-resourced, or lacking accountability mechanisms. Coordination between the central level and local self-governments needs to be strengthened, as well as cooperation among municipalities.
- **Weak coordination, overlaps in support from international partners** sometimes result in duplicated efforts or fragmented interventions, underscoring the need for more coordinated external assistance.
- **Data availability, quality, use and analysis, remain limited,** affecting the ability to plan, implement, and monitor policies and programmes effectively. Lack of interoperability of information system limits the data exchange, evidence-based policymaking, and coordinated service delivery.
- **Financing and long-term sustainability of newly introduced or multisectoral services** continue to pose challenges, particularly where resources and mandates are shared across institutions.



LESSONS LEARNT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Strengthening institutional capacities is essential.** Stable staffing, clearer mandates, strengthened internal planning units, and better knowledge transfer mechanisms are needed to ensure consistent reform implementation.
- **Coordination needs to be more systematic.** Regularly convened coordination platforms could improve planning, follow-up and accountability across ministries and sectors, as well as with and among international and local partners. Structured information sharing and mapping of interventions by international partners would reduce duplication and enhance the collective impact of external partners.
- **Reform process.** Integrate projects into a systemic approach, that combines infrastructures with support to institutional capacities and reforms.
- **Digital transformation must integrate legal, technical and operational reforms.** Inter-operability frameworks and clarified data protection provisions and common standards are needed for functioning e-services.
- **Sustainable financing underpins long term reforms.** Integrating multisectoral priorities into the MidTerm Budget Framework and aligning planning cycles strengthens continuity and sustainability. Monitoring spending effectiveness and efficiency could be improved.
- **Evidence-based policymaking requires better data systems.** Strengthened sectoral monitoring units, harmonized indicators, and improved data availability are necessary for tracking reforms and EU alignment, and inform policy implementation.
- **Meaningful participation improves policy relevance.** Participation needs to be strengthened by making full use of existing legal frameworks and engagement mechanisms, ensuring that minorities, children, youth, vulnerable groups and local communities, persons with disabilities are meaningfully included.
- **Strategic communication supports inclusive development and human rights.** Public awareness efforts should counter discrimination, address hate speech, and promote trust in institutions.
- **Links with EU requirement and SDGs should be explicit.** UN-supported interventions benefit from consistently demonstrating how they contribute to EU accession requirements and SDG targets.

2.3 SUPPORT TO PARTNERSHIPS AND FINANCING THE 2030 AGENDA

In 2025, the UN system in Montenegro continued to build and deepen its long-standing partnerships with institutions, civil society, academia, private sector, and communities under the overarching framework of the Cooperation Framework. This collective effort has contributed to enhanced alignment of policy advice and financing with Cooperation Framework outcomes, the National Strategy for Sustainable Development, and EU accession priorities.

The Government of Montenegro continued to provide significant cost-sharing contributions to the United Nations system.⁷ Through close collaboration with line ministries, government institutions have used cost-sharing to co-finance implementation and pilot innovative policy solutions and strengthen institutional capacities in priority areas linked to EU accession. In this context, the United Nations contributes targeted technical expertise and access to global knowledge and good practices.

The **Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund (MAF)** continued to function as the leading pooled financing mechanism for joint UN–Montenegro–partner initiatives. The Fund supports joint UN interventions aligned with the Cooperation Framework priorities: (i) inclusive economic development and environmental sustainability; (ii) human capital development, reduced vulnerability and social inclusion; and (iii) social cohesion, people-centred governance, rule of law and human rights, through two active windows of the Fund: (i) institutional and (ii) EU Window.⁸

The Fund is a platform for partnership between Montenegro, European Union, Switzerland,

⁷ The Government contributions/cost-sharing apply only for UNDP, UNOPS, IFAD, and UNECE.

⁸ The Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund has three windows: (i) institutional, (ii) EU Window, and (iii) private sector window. The private sector window did not achieve its potential to date.

Austria, Luxembourg, Ireland, and the United Nations. It currently operates with 6.5 million USD invested in nine joint UN interventions. In 2025, it invested 3.0 million USD to support five joint UN interventions spanning from governance (*optimization of development coordination*) and human capital (*violence against women and children and ending the denial of legal capacity of a person*) to environment (*circular economy*) and economic development (*innovation for development*).

The strong partnership with the European Union remained central to Montenegro’s development and human rights landscape, reflecting the strong alignment between SDG targets and EU Acquis. The EU-UN cooperation is anchored at strategic level with close alignment and complementarity of approaches for development and human rights advancement in Montenegro. The strategic dialogue was enhanced through key strategic platforms, joint field visit and policy dialogue, with a focus on key development priorities and bottlenecks.

Tangible results were reached in digitalization of public services, local governance, women’s political participation and entrepreneurship, access to justice and prevention of gender-based violence, as well as environment and climate change. The UN convened multi-stakeholder initiatives with civil society and local authorities, enhancing partnership and participation (SDG 17).

The UN’s partnership with development partners continued to leverage resources from international financial institutions (IFIs) to support programmes and, through strengthened coordination, increase the overall impact of interventions. A whole-of-system approach in the education sector—in cooperation with the European Investment Bank—will reinforce both policy reform and infrastructure investments. Close coordination with the World Bank and the EBRD in areas such as the innovation ecosystem and state-owned enterprise reform further enhanced the value and sustainability of

results. During the reporting period, the IFIs coordination platform⁹, chaired by the Resident Coordinator, focused on priority areas where strengthened cooperation with national and local authorities was particularly important. This included environment and climate change, with attention to just transition and circular economy dimensions.

The UN system broadened its partnerships with civil society, academia, social partners (labour unions and employers), and the private sector. Joint programmes mobilized NGOs, women’s groups, youth organizations and communities to co-design and implement solutions on gender equality, social inclusion, social cohesion, transitional justice, and digital innovation. Through Together for Common Good, the UN programme financed by the UNSG Peacebuilding Fund, multiple dialogue platforms were established at local and national levels, using a whole-of-the-society approach and defining key development and human rights bottleneck facing society. Active participation of decision makers ensured all voices are heard, solutions are piloted and tested, and, finally, acted upon in a systemic

⁹ Primarily referring, but not limited to: German development bank – KfW, European Investment Bank – EIB, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development – EBRD, French Agency for Development – AFD, the World Bank and GIZ.

manner. The PBF project reinforced the UN Montenegro positioning as a strong, impartial, and neutral partner and convener, able to facilitate social and systemic changes.

Strengthened cooperation with the private sector and philanthropic actors. A notable example of philanthropy-driven support was the fundraising initiative led by the Women’s Parliamentary Club, the International Women’s Club and the HEMIIAS Foundation, channeled through UN agency to provide equipment and educational materials for 17 daycare centres. Private sector engagement also contributed to youth employability and skills development, including the “Prilike” programme delivered with schools, businesses and civil society, supported financially by the TUI Care Foundation. Collaboration with domestic companies helped translate public programmes into local economic benefits: the national energy-efficiency programme supported thousands of households while engaging 27 Montenegrin companies, reinforcing jobs and local supply chains. Finally, partnerships with high-profile private platforms such as the Ocean Race amplified public awareness on sustainability and marine protection, demonstrating how strategic alliances can extend the reach and influence of the UN’s SDG messaging beyond traditional stakeholders.



© UNDP Montenegro / Vladimir Vučinić

A woman in a field, holding a cabbage and a knife, with crops growing around them and a bright sky with scattered clouds in the background.



2.4. RESULTS OF THE UN WORKING MORE AND BETTER TOGETHER: UN COHERENCE, EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY

To maximize development results, the **Results Groups and Thematic Groups**, gathering the government and the UN, leveraged the added value of a joint, integrated, and holistic UN approach. They tracked the substantial progress made in advancing implementation of the UNSDCF across priority areas, including economic development and environmental protection; health, education, and social protection; as well as good governance, social cohesion, and human rights.

The focus was set on areas of convergence between the 2030 Agenda and EU accession priorities, ensuring strong alignment with Montenegro's national priorities. Results Groups further strengthened collaboration with national coordination mechanisms responsible for EU accession, most notably the Ministry of European Affairs and the chairs of Government Working Groups on EU negotiation chapters.

In 2025, The UN **Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL)** Group coordinated inter agency efforts to identify information gaps, address capacity needs, and enhance production of disaggregated SDG-related data. In close consultation with MONSTAT and the Office for Sustainable Development, the SDG Dashboard was improved, to expand the mapping of indicator data sources, and the efforts toward its long-term sustainability. These developments align with Montenegro's commitments presented at the 2023 SDG Summit.

The **Gender Thematic Group** further promoted gender equality and empowerment of girls and women, with a joint statement and joint events on the International Women's Day and the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence.

The **PSEA Task Force** led the inter-agency efforts to strengthen an organizational culture of zero tolerance and to maintain safe and trusted reporting mechanisms. A 24/7 system for reporting alleged cases of SEA is operational. No Excuse cards are disseminated to all UN contractual partners. In 2025 the *Know your rights* and *How to report* PSEA brochure was developed and printed for beneficiaries

in Montenegrin, English, Arabic, Russian, and Ukrainian. To strengthen the protection of beneficiaries from SEA, an Inter-Agency Risk Assessment on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (IARA SEA) was conducted. The assessment has identified risks in the context of engagement with beneficiaries, assessed the role of the PSEA Focal Point and of existing capacities and mechanisms for prevention and response. The findings and recommendations will be reflected in the annual PSEA Action Plan and addressed through the lenses of leadership and accountability, community awareness and training, partnerships, and other relevant areas to reinforce protection systems.

The UNCT, under the leadership of the **Human Rights and LNOB group**, submitted a confidential report to the **UN Human Rights Committee in advance of its March review of Montenegro**. The report was based on UN agency analyses of developments in civil and political rights and was informed by consultations with civil society. The UNCT and individual agencies continue using recommendations issued by the Committee and other UN human rights mechanisms to guide advocacy with the Government and shape joint UN programming, with the aim to strengthen laws, policies, and institutional practices. In August, the UN submitted a confidential report to the UN Committee on Enforced Disappearances.

The UNCT dedicated International Human Rights Day to discussions on a safe and enabling space for civil society, bringing together 70 representatives of Government, the National Human Rights Institution, civil society and the international community.

The UNCT continued to advance **disability inclusion at programmatic and operational levels**. The updated Common Country Analysis integrated disability perspectives across all three priority areas of the Cooperation Framework. In line with the UNCT's 2024 disability-inclusive employment statement, agencies encouraged persons with disabilities to apply for vacancies and shared these directly

with organization of persons with disabilities. Two UN joint programmes dedicated to the rights of persons with disabilities were implemented, to foster disability inclusion.

Business Operations Strategy (BOS): As a Delivering as One country since 2009, with an annual operational volume of approximately USD 20 million, the UNCT has already realized most potential efficiencies from existing common services. While these services are now considered legacy arrangements, the UNCT continues to benefit significantly from them in terms of cost reduction, increased efficiency, effectiveness, and service quality. Cost avoidance during the 2019–2023 period averaged approximately USD 90,000 per year.

In 2025, the Operations Management Team successfully implemented a total of 24 common services. Main efficiencies derived from shared administrative and ICT services, with particular emphasis on interpretation, translation and editing services, travel arrangements, and internet access. Sustainability considerations were integrated into core operational processes and collaboration with vendors to enhance service quality and transparency. Inclusivity was further promoted through the harmonization of workplace policies for persons with disabilities across UN agencies, including the adoption of affirmative measures in recruitment processes.

The **UN joint approach to programming** was further strengthened in 2025. Four joint initiatives financed through the Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund (MAF) continued implementation, while five new joint programmes were launched. In addition, a no-cost extension was approved for the joint programme on strengthening social cohesion, funded by the UN Peacebuilding Fund. This programme engages national partners in addressing emerging societal challenges, including divisive narratives and hate speech, as a critical contribution to social cohesion and a prerequisite for sustainable peace and security.



Six officials, women and men, sit at a conference table in front of a backdrop reading "United Nations Montenegro," with UN and Montenegro table flags displayed, as participants applaud during a formal meeting or event.

The UN continued the implementation of System-Wide Action Plan (SWAP) on Gender Equality and Women’s empowerment, the Disability Inclusion Strategy and Youth 2030 Strategy. All three respective scorecards are shown below:




	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	trend
 Youth scorecard Moving forward/at milestone	85%	88%	88%	85%	85%	↔
 Gender scorecard Meeting/Exceeding	80%	80%	100%	80%	64%	↓
 Disability scorecard Meeting/Exceeding	50%	64%	71%	64%	79%	↑

Figure 5: progress on Youth, Gender and Disability Scorecard indicators



Two men stand outside a facility as one hands a large water container labeled “IOM UN Migration” to the other, with a poster behind them reading “Want to go home?” and referencing assisted voluntary return and reintegration (AVRR).

© IOM Montenegro / Dejan Lepčić

One UN Voice: Strengthening Coherence, Trust and Impact



Joint UN communications in 2025 helped further position the United Nations in Montenegro as a coherent, credible and responsive partner across human rights and sustainable development. Rather than operating as parallel agency efforts, communications were increasingly aligned to amplify shared priorities, strengthen public trust, and ensure consistent messaging.

A collective UN voice came through most clearly in coordinated public outreach and advocacy. Joint events, observances and media engagement, supported by regular newsletters, visual storytelling and the visibility of the UN Resident Coordinator, helped create a unified narrative around key development and human rights issues. This approach proved particularly valuable in moments requiring a collective response, enabling the UN to speak clearly and promptly on issues ranging from national tragedies and crises to pressures on civic space.

Digital platforms played an important role in extending this unified voice. Strengthening web and social media channels increased reach and interaction, while targeted campaigns, such as UN80, the 16 Days campaign and the Ocean Race partnership, reaching over 200,000 people. Communications also linked national work with global UN priorities by amplifying key messages and the Secretary-General’s voice in national media.

Communications helped sustain the visibility of sustainable development priorities, with a focus on social inclusion, digital transformation of public services, energy efficiency and the green transition, youth engagement and gender equality. Through strategic media engagement, digital storytelling and joint campaigns with the Government, development results were made more relevant to citizens. Priorities such as more efficient public services, clean energy solutions, women’s empowerment and inclusive governance. In 2025, were reflected in over 2,500 media mentions, reinforcing the UN’s position as a trusted partner in sustainable and human development.

Communications played an important role in advancing the human rights agenda, keeping issues such as violence prevention, gender equality, access to services and inclusion of vulnerable groups high on the public agenda. Child rights were an important part, generating 1,300 media mentions and frequent front-page coverage on issues such as violence, child poverty, immunization and the inclusion of children with disabilities. Innovative approaches, including youth-led storytelling, use of new technologies, and campaigns against hate speech, further strengthened engagement and messages of inclusion and social cohesion.

Joint communications further supported programme delivery, particularly through joint initiatives funded by the Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund and the Peacebuilding Fund. Consistent branding, storytelling and reporting made results more visible and easier to understand, helping show results and strengthen accountability.

Internally, regular coordination through the Joint Communications Team enabled quicker alignment, shared planning and more efficient use of resources. This internal coherence translated into more consistent external UN voice, reinforcing the UN’s position as a trusted and unified partner in Montenegro.

2.5. FINANCIAL OVERVIEW AND RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

2025 marked the third year of implementation of the Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2023-2027. The multi-year Funding Framework - developed during the design phase of the UNSDCF - estimated that UN entities would require USD 83.3 million to deliver on the programmatic priorities set out in the Cooperation Framework. Based on expenditures in 2023-2025 and available resources for 2026 (including funding announced through 2027), total available funding is expected to exceed the initial estimate. However, given the ambitions of the UNSDCF Results Framework and the fact that several outcome indicators are currently off track, overall funding needs over the remaining two years are expected to surpass the levels initially outlined.

In 2025, UN organizations required USD 35.18 million for programme implementation, with 97% of this amount being made available. Of the USD 34.2 million available (USD 9 million more than the previous year), the UN in Montenegro delivered USD 26 million, or 76%. UNDP accounted for 44% of total delivery, as the largest UN agency in Montenegro, followed by IOM with USD 3.9 million and UNICEF with USD 3.2 million. UNESCO and UNHCR each delivered more than USD 1 million. Other UN organizations with a country presence (UNOPS, WHO, FAO, OHCHR and ILO) delivered USD 2.1 million, while the remaining amount was delivered by UN organizations without a country presence (figure 6).¹⁰

¹⁰ All the financial data are taken from UNINFO on 03/03/2026, and any potential changes following that date are not reflected.

UN Agency	2025 Required Resources	2025 Available Resources	2025 Expenditure
UNDP	14,617,597	14,509,597	11,535,194
IOM	6,280,200	6,072,750	3,931,123
UNICEF	4,204,355	4,073,399	3,256,980
UNESCO	1,708,459	1,708,459	1,708,459
UNHCR	1,572,341	1,338,103	1,338,103
UNOPS	1,759,790	1,684,790	724,822
UNODC	815,205	814,485	655,961
ILO	598,414	588,414	588,414
UNIDO	538,347	538,347	538,347
FAO	416,500	416,500	366,476
UNECE	355,447	355,447	354,575
IFAD	1,355,861	1,355,861	239,742
WHO	257,000	243,000	238,723
OHCHR	295,500	223,625	208,625
ITU	175,210	175,210	155,000
UNEP	104,000	104,000	104,000
UN Women	105,479	90,479	80,725

Figure 6: Funding framework per UN organization, in USD

Thematically, the UN in Montenegro allocated most resources to the strategic priority on social cohesion, people-centred governance, the rule of law and human rights (USD 11.28 million, or 43% of total expenditure). This was followed by the strategic priority on inclusive economic development and environmental sustainability (USD 7.6 million, or 29% of total expenditure). The remaining USD 7 million was invested in the strategic priority on human capital development, reducing vulnerability and social inclusion (figure 7).

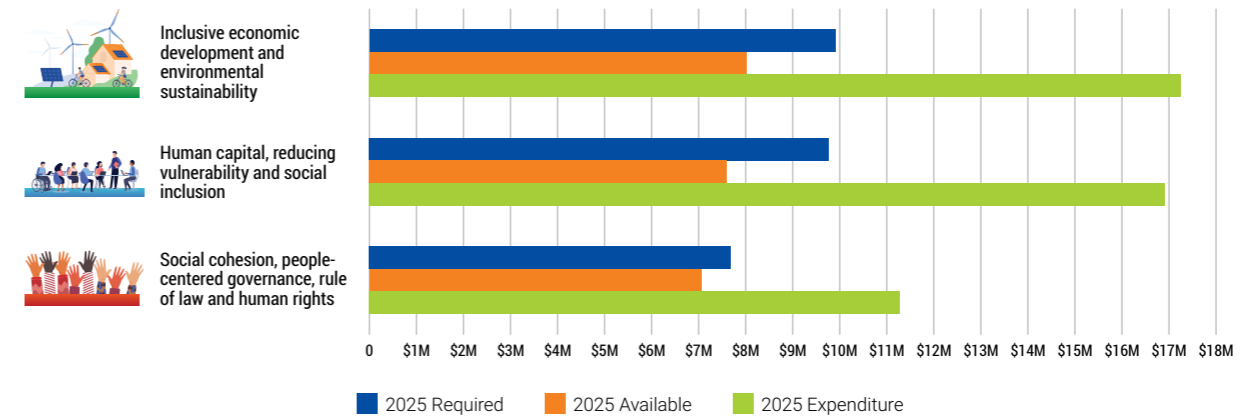


Figure 7: Financial breakdown per Strategic priority, in USD

In 2025, the European Union remained the most significant partner of the United Nations in Montenegro, investing USD 10.3 million in UN programmes, or 30% of all available funding (excluding separate investments through the EU Window of the Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund). This was followed by USD 8 million invested by the Government of Montenegro- both central and local level (23%). UN agencies' core and thematic funds accounted for 13.7% of the overall available funds, while Vertical funds (Adaptation Fund, GEF, Green Climate Fund, Montreal Protocol, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria) represented 12.6% Pooled funds (MAF, WB SALW MPTF, UNPRPD and UNPBF) amounted to 11.7%, while bilateral donors contributed with 6.8% (Slovakia, Sweden, Norway, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Germany, Denmark, the Republic of Korea and Slovenia). Foundations supported UN interventions with 1%, while the private sector contributed 0.2% (figure 8).

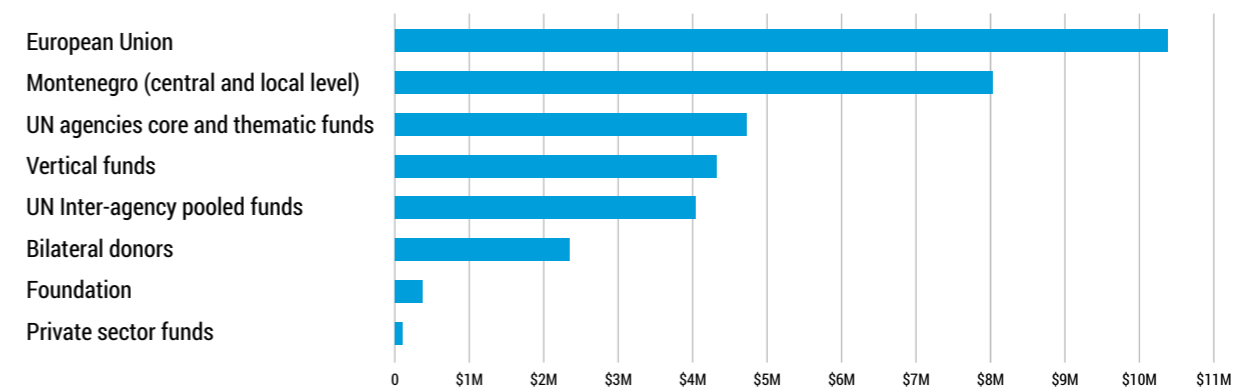


Figure 8: Total available funds, per funding modality, in USD

Regarding the Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund, the main donors are Switzerland, Luxembourg, Austria, Ireland and the Government of Montenegro, with the European Union contributing through a separate funding window.

CHAPTER 3

3

UNCT key focus for next year

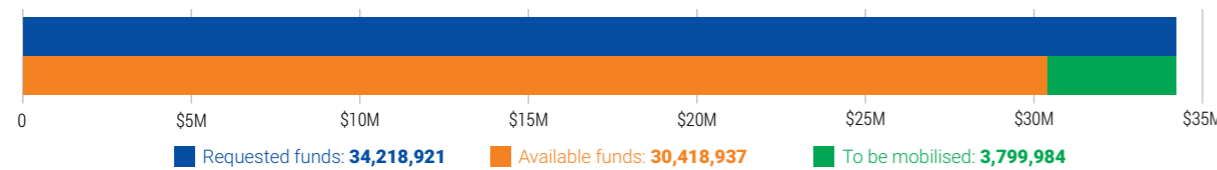


Figure 9: Financial framework for 2026, in USD

In the penultimate year of UNSDCF implementation, the United Nations system and the Government of Montenegro will continue delivering on the Cooperation Framework’s priorities, with a strong emphasis on national priorities linked to European Union accession. This cooperation will be operationalized through a **two-year Joint Work Plan** and the three Results Groups, which bring together the UN and the Government for policy dialogue, coordination, monitoring, and assessment of progress and results..

In 2026, particular emphasis will be placed on independent **evaluation of the UNSDCF**, aimed at assessing results, identifying key achievements and challenges, and distilling lessons learned. The findings will inform the design of the next UN programming cycle.

A potential **EU accession in 2028** would represent the first transition of its kind since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and the 2019 UN development system reform. This milestone calls for a more strategic, agile, and coherent One UN approach, fully aligned with UN reform objectives. In the coming period, the UN in Montenegro will invest in new skill sets to enhance system-wide efficiency and effectiveness. Digital transformation will be accelerated through modernization of business

models, strengthened internal systems, and the responsible use of artificial intelligence. Innovative modalities, such as “expertise on demand”, will be piloted and scaled where appropriate.

Internal coordination mechanisms will be strengthened through two inter-agency groups on Digitalization and SDG Financing, enabling a coordinated UN engagement around emerging national priorities. The UNCT will also seek new opportunities to deepen partnerships with the European Union and international financial institutions, while continuing joint engagement on just transition.

The Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund (MAF) will remain one of the key platforms for innovative SDG financing, prioritizing interventions with high multiplier effects. In parallel, strategic dialogue with the EU will be strengthened, focusing on programmes with transformational potential and direct relevance to EU accession priorities.

In collaboration with the Government Office for Sustainable Development, the UNCT will support a stocktaking exercise on implementation of **Montenegro’s National Pledge** submitted at the 2023 SDG Summit, providing an overview of progress across

prioritized SDGs and helping accelerate achievement of relevant targets by 2030. The UN will maintain a strategic, context-sensitive approach grounded in international norms and standards and focused on capacity development. This will be particularly important in light of heightened pressures on **human rights, including child rights and gender equality**. The UN will further focus on the Agenda 2030 and align its support with the Government’s Reform Agenda and EU accession priorities.

In 2026, specific attention will be given to expertise for performance-based financing and to strengthening data-driven policymaking, ensuring stronger linkages between evidence, policy design, budgeting, and monitoring. Priority areas of engagement will include reducing inequalities, protecting fundamental rights, promoting social cohesion, and systematically integrating child rights across EU accession-related processes. Support will also continue in labour mobility and migration governance in line with the EU Pact on Asylum and Migration, the Youth Guarantee, health sector reform, and efforts to improve the effectiveness of public spending, including through joint UN-IFI fiscal space analysis. The UN will leverage diaspora contributions and remittances for development and continue addressing hate speech and human rights concerns while promoting multilateralism.

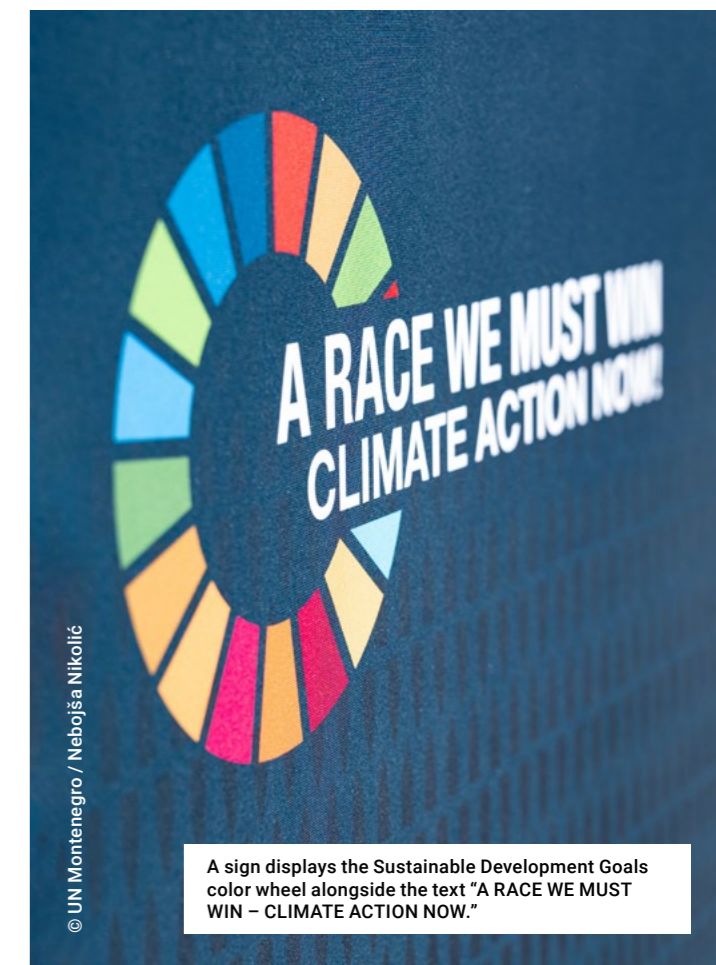
Delivery will be strengthened through **enhanced coordination and visibility** of agency contributions, greater UN coherence, and a structured coordination platform with national authorities and the EU. A responsible, strategic focus on a few high-impact priorities will help ensure sustainability and lasting results for Montenegro.

Collective UNCT knowledge will be strengthened through regular **joint analytical products**, including updates to the Common Country Analysis and thematic policy briefs, complemented by agency-specific products. The UNCT document depository will remain the central platform for consolidating and sharing

knowledge products, ensuring easy access for UN agencies and national counterparts.

Joint communications efforts will continue to project unified messaging and highlight collective UN achievements, strengthening engagement with the public and key stakeholders. Implementation of the Business Operations Strategy will prioritize opportunities to further improve operational efficiency and effectiveness.

Gender mainstreaming will be strengthened through the Gender Thematic Group, ensuring systematic integration across programmes and operations. Efforts to strengthen the UN system’s **internal organizational culture** in Montenegro will continue, with a focus on the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA), human rights, Leaving No One Behind (LNOB), and disability inclusion.



ANNEX I - List of implementing partners of the UN in 2025*

- Agency for Prevention of Corruption Montenegro
- Capital city Podgorica
- Central Bank of Montenegro
- Centre for Training in Judiciary and State Prosecution Montenegro
- Chamber of Economy of Montenegro
- Clinical Center of Montenegro
- Confederation of Trade Unions Montenegro
- Council on the Rights of the Child Montenegro
- Elementary schools
- Employment Agency of Montenegro
- Environment Protection Agency
- Faculty of Political Sciences Montenegro
- Forensic Center Montenegro
- General Secretariat of the Government of Montenegro
- Higher Court in Podgorica
- Hospitals Montenegro
- Institute for Emergency Medical Assistance Montenegro
- Institute for Public Health Montenegro
- Institute for Social and Child Protection Montenegro
- Institute for Unified Disability Assessment
- Labour Inspectorates Ministry of Labor, Employment, and Social Dialogue
- Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management
- Ministry of Culture and Media
- Ministry of Diaspora Affairs
- Ministry of Ecology, Sustainable Development and Northern Region Development
- Ministry of Economic Development
- Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation
- Ministry of Energy and Mining
- Ministry of European Affairs
- Ministry of Finance
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs Montenegro
- Ministry of Health
- Ministry of Human and Minority Rights
- Ministry of Interior Montenegro
- Ministry of Interior/Border Police Sector Montenegro
- Ministry of Justice
- Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Dialogue
- Ministry of Maritime Affairs
- Ministry of Public Administration
- Ministry of Social Welfare, Family Care and Demography
- Ministry of Sports and Youth
- MONSTAT
- Montenegro Employers Federation
- Montenegro Media Trade Union
- Municipality of Berane
- Municipality of Bijelo Polje
- Municipality of Petnjica
- Municipality of Pljevlja
- Municipality of Tuzi
- Municipality of Ulcinj
- Municipality of Zeta
- National Ozone Unit Montenegro
- National Security Agency Montenegro
- Network for Rural Development of Montenegro
- NGO Association for democratic prosperity ZID
- NGO Association of youth with disabilities Montenegro
- NGO Civic Alliance Montenegro
- NGO Juventas
- NGO Montenegrin Association Against AIDS
- NGO Montenegrin Foundation for HIV and Viral Hepatitis
- NGO Parents Association of Montenegro
- NGO Red Cross Montenegro
- NGO Scout Association of Montenegro
- NGO Ukrainian association Dobro djelo
- NGO Young reporters MNE
- Office for Sustainable Development Montenegro
- Ombudsman Montenegro
- Operational Team for Combating Human Trafficking in Human Beings, Illegal Cross-Border and Smuggling of Migrants Montenegro
- Parliament of Montenegro
- Parliament of Montenegro Women's Club
- Police directorate Montenegro
- Post office Montenegro
- President of Montenegro
- Primary Health Centers Montenegro
- Revenue and Customs administration Montenegro
- Secondary schools
- Social Welfare Centers Montenegro
- Special Prosecutor's Office Montenegro
- Supreme Court Montenegro
- Supreme State Prosecutor Montenegro
- Team for Formal Identification of Victims of Human Trafficking Montenegro
- Union of Free Trade Unions of Montenegro
- Union of municipalities Montenegro
- University of Donja Gorica
- University of Montenegro

* As captured in UN internal information system

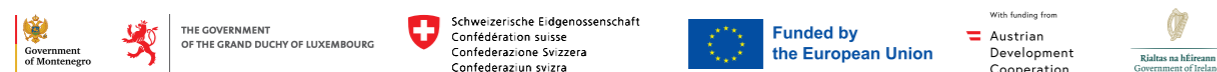
ANNEX II - List of acronyms and abbreviations

AI	Artificial Intelligence	IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome	IFI	International Financial Institutions
AVRR	Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration	ILO	International Labour Organization
BOS	Business Operations Strategy	IMM	Independent Monitoring Mechanism (Disability Rights)
CCA	Common Country Analysis	IOM	International Organization for Migration
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women	IPARD	Instrument for Pre Accession Assistance in Rural Development
CHF	Swiss Franc	ISO	International Organization for Standardization
COTS	Commercial Off-the-shelf	ITU	International Telecommunication Union
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child	KfW	German Development Bank
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	LNOB	Leave No One Behind
CSI	Crime Scene Investigation	MAF	Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund
CSO	Civil Society Organization	MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction	MIL	Media and Information Literacy
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development	MMR	Measles, Mumps and Rubella
EC	European Commission	MNH	Maternal and Neonatal Health
ECD	Early Childhood Development	MONSTAT	Statistical Office of Montenegro
EMS	Electronic Monitoring System (GBV protection)	MPTF	Multi Partner Trust Fund
EPR	Environmental Performance Review	MSME	Micro, Small and Medium Sized Enterprises
EU	European Union	NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution
EUR	Euro	NEET	Not in Employment, Education or Training
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization	NGO	Non Governmental Organization
FEED	FAO FEED Cities Initiative	OECD	Organisation for Economic Co operation and Development
GEF	Global Environment Facility	OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
GEM	Gender Equality Marker	OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
GEWE	Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment	PBF	Peacebuilding Fund
GHG	Greenhouse Gases	PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
GRB	Gender-Responsive Budgeting	PLHIV	People Living With HIV
HCFC	Hydrochlorofluorocarbons	PSEA	Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
HDI	Human Development Index	RC	Resident Coordinator
HFC	Hydrofluorocarbons	RCO	Resident Coordinator's Office
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus	SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
HRBA	Human Rights Based Approach	STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
HRM	Human Resource Management	TIP	Trafficking in Persons
IARA	Inter Agency Risk Assessment (PSEA)	UNCT	United Nations Country Team
IBM	Integrated Border Management	UNPRPD	UN Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
ICT	Information and Communications Technology	UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
IDAHOT	International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia	VAW	Violence Against Women

ANNEX III: Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund

Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund

A vehicle for Sustainable Development



FACTSHEET

The Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund (MAF) is the United Nations country-based pooled fund that brings together development partners and the Government of Montenegro to accelerate implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Montenegro's EU accession. Conceived as both a financing instrument and a partnership platform, it shifts support away from fragmented, stand-alone projects towards strategic, multi-agency interventions that are directly anchored in nationally agreed priorities under the umbrella of the United Nations-Montenegro Cooperation

Framework 2023-2027. The Fund finances joint UN interventions, thus supporting the UN Reform and the role of the Resident Coordinator.

At its core, the Fund enables the UN system in Montenegro to offer an integrated response to complex reforms - spanning inclusive economic development and green transition, human capital and social protection, and governance, rule of law and human rights - by pooling contributions from bilateral partners and the European Union and allocating them competitively to joint interventions that demonstrate strong national ownership, strategic impact, and clear results chains.



Figure 1: Overview of Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund strategic partners

The governance of the Fund is entrusted to the Joint Steering Committee co-chaired by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the United Nations Resident Coordinator, while two line ministries and two representatives of the UN Country Team are members of the Steering Committee. The secretariat functions are assigned to the Office of the Resident Coordinator, while Multi Partner Trust Fund Office (MPTF-O) performs duties of the Administrative Agent. An Advisory Board, consisting of prominent intellectuals and representatives of various social groups (youth, women, international organisations, vulnerable groups, human rights, academia, and media) provides independent advice to the Joint Steering Committee.

The Fund operates through three windows: (i) institutional, (ii) EU Window, and (iii) private sector. While the overall management remains under the Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund Joint Steering Committee, the EU Window has an additional decision-making layer co-led by the Delegation of European Union to Montenegro and the Ministry of European Affairs.

The Fund's strategic partners are Montenegro, Austria, Ireland, Luxembourg, Switzerland, and the European Union. To date, the Fund operates with 6.6 million USD¹ invested in nine (9) joint UN interventions

that deliver results across all strategic priorities of the Cooperation Framework (1- inclusive economic development and environmental sustainability, 2- human capital development, reducing vulnerability, social inclusion, and 3- social cohesion, people-centred governance, rule of law and human rights).

The UN interventions financed by the Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund:

1. (finalised) EmpowHER Montenegro: Fostering Inclusive Rural Development, implemented by UNDP and FAO
2. (finalised) Digital, inclusive, and transformative: Quality education for Montenegro, implemented by UNICEF, ILO, and UNESCO
3. (finalised) Optimizing Development Coordination: A Project for Advancing Planning and Reporting through Information System Enhancement, implemented by UNDP
4. Optimizing Development Coordination: Advancing Strategic Planning and Reporting through Information System Enhancement, implemented by UNDP, financed through EU Window

¹ Sum of all commitments to date. Actual cash that was disbursed and currently in the Fund amount to 4.8 million USD.

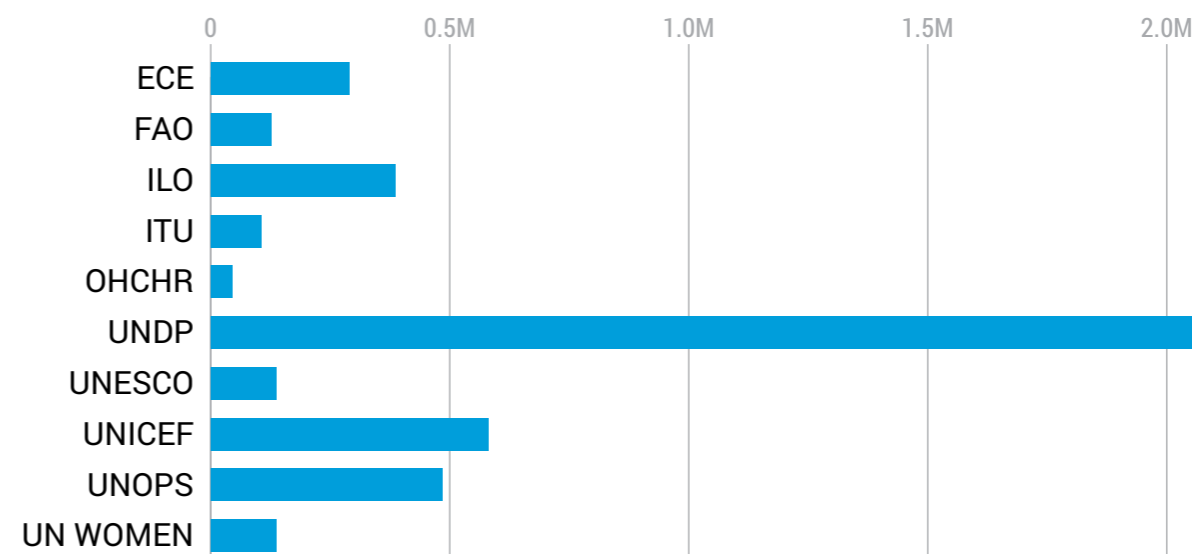


Figure 2: Budget per PUNO

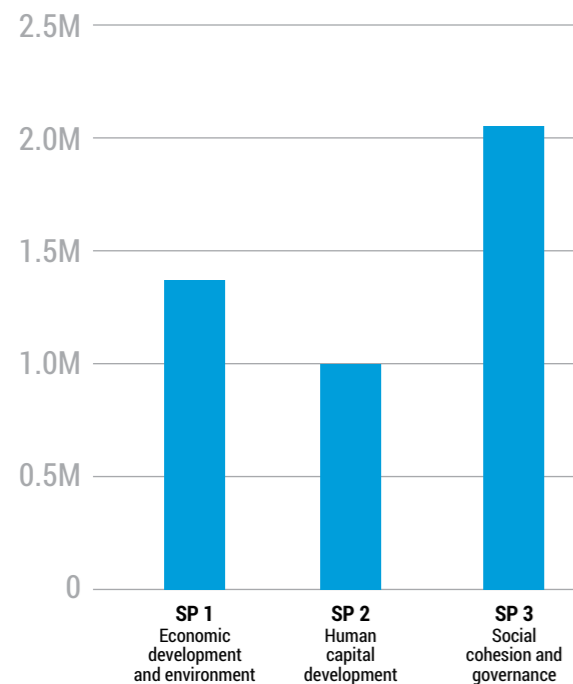


Figure 3: Budget per strategic priority

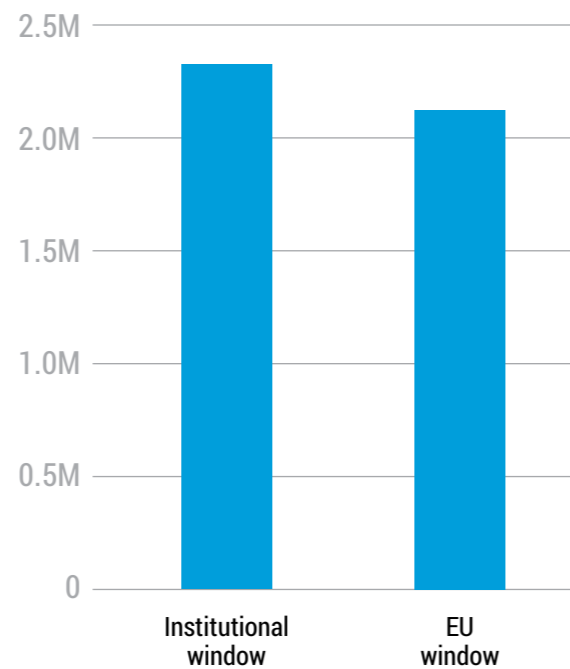


Figure 4: Budget per Window

- Digital Transformation of Local Self-Governments in Montenegro, implemented by UNOPS and ITU
- Strengthening the system support on prevention of violence against women, girls, and boys, implemented by UNICEF and UN Women
- Ending the Denial of Legal Capacity of Persons with Disabilities in Montenegro, implemented by UNDP and OHCHR
- IDEA-ME: Innovation for Development and Economic Advancement in Montenegro, implemented by UNDP and UNECE, financed through EU Window
- Circular Transition and Responsible Business Conduct in Montenegro, implemented by UNDP and ILO, financed through EU Window

process. The Fund is programmatically anchored in Montenegro-United Nations Cooperation Framework 2023–2027 and finances joint UN interventions, thereby strengthening coherence and coordination across the UN system and the convening role of the Resident Coordinator.

The Fund’s strategic partners are Montenegro, Austria, Ireland, Luxembourg, Switzerland, and the European Union. By the end of the reporting period, the Fund operated with **USD 6.6 million** in commitments (out of which **USD 4.8 million** were disbursed) invested across **nine (9) joint UN interventions** spanning all three strategic priorities of the Cooperation Framework. This portfolio enables addressing development bottlenecks through reinforcing investments - linking policy and institutional reform with practical implementation tools, service delivery, and capacity development.

Strategic Priority 1 - inclusive economic development and environmental sustainability. In 2025, tangible system-building results positioned Montenegro for accelerated green and innovation-driven transformation. The country developed, for the first time, a nationally tailored **Industrial**

Symbiosis Manual and **Institutional Roadmap** that translate circular economy concepts into practical guidance for enterprises and institutions, alongside training packages for future MSME capacity building. A national evidence base for **responsible business conduct** (RBC) was strengthened through a study and stakeholder mapping, supporting integration of responsible practices into SME policies and instruments. In rural areas, the combination of a gender-sensitive **Agricultural Census, Country Gender Assessment**, and targeted training and mentorship shifted rural women from statistical invisibility to recognition as economic actors, culminating in Montenegro’s first **Rural Women’s Parliament**, a formal platform for voice and participation in agrifood and rural development policymaking.

Strategic Priority 2 - human capital development and social inclusion. The Fund supported transformative progress in education and strengthened the foundations of protection systems for women and children. The EdTech initiative catalysed national investment beyond its original pilots: the Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation scaled **EdTech Hubs to 106 schools** and integrated the model into the 10-year national Education Reform Strategy. Teacher capacities in digital pedagogy, media

and information literacy, and STEAM were strengthened at scale, supported by the Digital School platform. The platform hosts **over 12,000 digital lessons** and new digital courses that enable continued access to accredited professional development. The intervention on prevention of violence against women and children advanced the **Barnahus** model to the point of operationalisation: draft National Standards and a Roadmap were finalised, Barnahus was recognised as a public legal entity in the draft Law on Social and Child Protection, while cross-sector working groups and study visits have built institutional consensus and readiness for implementation.

Strategic Priority 3 - social cohesion, people-centred governance, rule of law and human rights. In 2025, the Fund advanced key governance enablers at both central and local levels. The Information System for Planning and Reporting (ISPI) is becoming a central tool for unified monitoring of priority reforms, including the EU Reform Agenda, while a legal and institutional review for strategic planning diagnosed fragmentation and bottlenecks and laid foundations for a future **Law on Strategic Planning**. At the local level, 20 municipalities established Municipal Working Groups and developed digital road maps, action plans, and catalogues of services and registers. A major system-level milestone was achieved when **all 25 municipalities signed an Intermunicipal Agreement** enabling shared use of Government Service Bus (GSB) infrastructure—unlocking interoperability and generating cost savings through shared public digital infrastructure. Finally, the legal capacity intervention secured a policy milestone by integrating legal capacity reform into the National Action Plan for implementing the recommendations of the Committee for Rights of People with Disability (adopted in November 2025), alongside structured coordination among relevant ministries and organisations of persons with disabilities to support legislative amendments and a supported decision-making model.

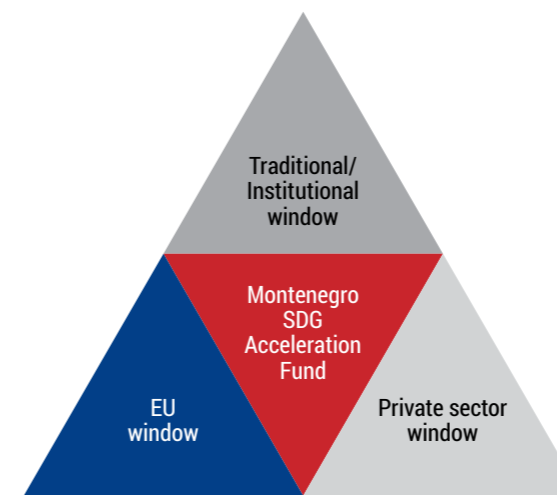


Figure 5: Structure of the Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund

2025 RESULTS

In 2025, the Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund (MAF) consolidated its role as the United Nations country-based pooled fund and partnership platform that supports the Government of Montenegro and development partners in accelerating implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Montenegro’s EU accession

This case has provided valuable insights that will guide future efforts, ensuring more women in rural Montenegro can overcome barriers and build successful enterprises. Women in rural northern Montenegro face significant barriers in starting and sustaining businesses. With only 13% of women as heads or managers of family agricultural holdings, their economic participation is limited. For Damjana Đalović, a young entrepreneur in rural tourism, the initial challenges were substantial - fear of failure, communication barriers with international guests due to language limitations, and infrastructure issues such as water shortages made it difficult to run her business.

To address these challenges, a mentorship program was developed to provide women like Damjana with practical guidance on business development. The program offered structured mentorship, allowing her to gain insights into setting and achieving business. Thanks to the mentorship, Damjana gained the skills and confidence needed to run her business effectively. Despite initial difficulties, the satisfaction and eagerness of returning guests validated her hard work and dedication.

The mentorship also helped her shift from a passive role in her family's business to an active and motivated entrepreneur, committed to improving her services and expanding opportunities in rural tourism.

Through Damjana's experience, we learned that mentorship plays a crucial role in empowering women entrepreneurs in rural areas. This insight has reinforced

the need to expand mentorship programs, ensuring more women receive tailored advice and hands-on learning opportunities. Additionally, her challenges highlighted the importance of **financial accessibility and infrastructure improvements**. Limited access to funding remains a major barrier for rural women, suggesting that future program interventions should incorporate financial literacy training and advocate for better access to grants and microloans. Furthermore, the difficulties with road conditions and water supply demonstrate the need for partnerships with local authorities to improve infrastructure, making rural tourism more viable.



A wooden A-frame cabin in a snowy landscape, framed by snow-covered branches.

Figure 6: The rural tourism business managed by Damjana Đalović



A mountain Durmitor landscape with a forested shoreline reflected in a Black Lake, with low clouds drifting across the slopes and autumn colors visible among the trees.

2025

UN Country Results Report Montenegro



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