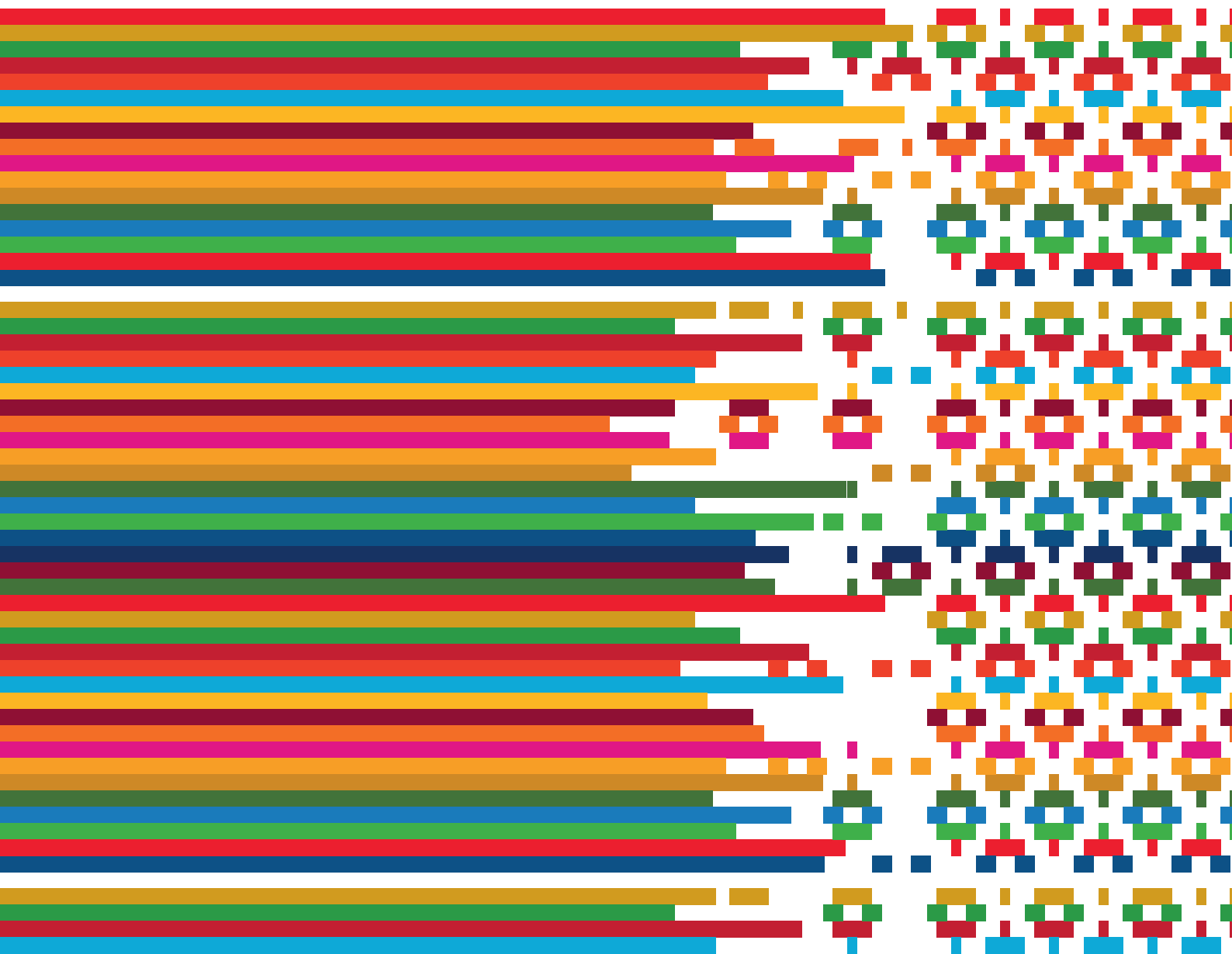




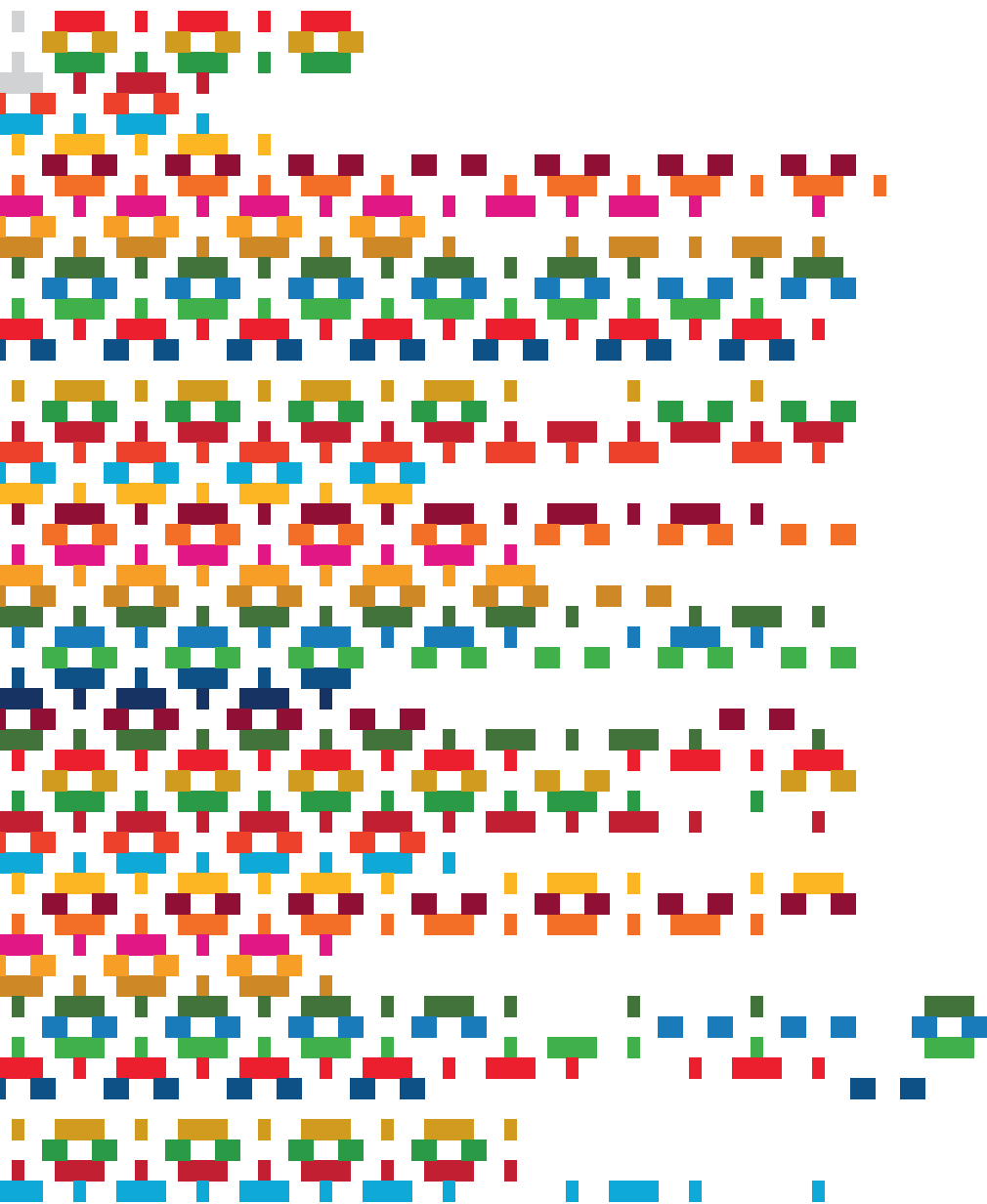
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UNITED NATIONS
SERBIA



UNITED NATIONS
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
COOPERATION FRAMEWORK
SERBIA
2021–2025





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**UNITED NATIONS
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
COOPERATION FRAMEWORK
SERBIA
2021–2025**

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1.

SUMMARY

Since 2015, Serbia has made substantial progress towards attainment of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In 2020, this progress stalled as a result of the COVID-19 crisis. As elsewhere, the crisis presented Serbia with an unexpected and unprecedented shock, critically impacting the entire population and all vital sectors – health, economy, social protection, education, environment and tourism. While the crisis has amplified existing structural challenges and inequalities across communities, it also presents new development opportunities: if well planned, recovery from this crisis could help facilitate achievement of the 2030 SDGs. To ensure a sustainable approach to development, growth must be inclusive: it must “Leave No One Behind” by addressing social exclusion and inequalities, as well as inconsistent human rights policymaking and implementation that could impede achievement of the SDGs. It should be based on evidence-based policy and decision-making, increased policy coherence, with stronger institutional capacities. The national vision of sustainable development is inspired by the 2030 Agenda, in line with the European Union (EU) accession requirements clustered around six EU’s thematic policies of the negotiating framework.¹ This will guide Serbia’s roadmap towards a resilient and low-carbon inclusive growth, strategically drawing on areas of comple-

mentarity between the SDGs and the Green Agenda.² The Green Agenda is the de facto extension of the European Green Deal as the EU implementation strategy for delivering on the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda.³

In response to these challenges, the Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (henceforth “Cooperation Framework”) between the Republic of Serbia (Serbia) and the United Nations system defines the mutual partnership needed to achieve results of the 2030 Agenda for all people in Serbia.

Under UN Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999), an international civil and security presence has been established in Kosovo,⁴ specifically the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and the Kosovo Force (KFOR). The work of the UN Team supporting the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals is carried out as part of the continuing UNMIK mandate under the authority of UN Security Council Resolution 1244

1 European Commission 2020. *Enhancing the accession process – A credible EU perspective for the Western Balkans*. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions COM (2020) 57 final. Brussels, 5.2.2020.

2 European Commission. 2020. Commission Staff Working document. *Guidelines for the Implementation of the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans*. Accompanying the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions an *Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans*. SWD(2020) 223 final. Brussels, 6.10.2020.

3 European Commission. Commission Staff working document.2020. *Delivering on the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals – A comprehensive approach on ECs ambitious policy programme SDGs in the EU*, SWD (2020) 400 final, Brussels,18.11.2020.

4 All references to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999)





(1999). The Cooperation Framework is based upon, and contributes to, the country's development priorities that are primarily articulated through the National Programme for the Adoption of the Acquis (NPAA). It aligns domestic regulations with the EU and adjusts reforms to the accession priorities set under the six EU thematic policy clusters of the negotiating framework, encompassing the Belgrade-Priština Dialogue.⁵ It rests on the core values of the United Nations as well as the principle of "Leave No One Behind". In addition, the Cooperation Framework integrates recommendations issued to Serbia through United Nations human rights reviews of its international commitments and those related to the COVID-19 crisis, with the aim to build forward better. It envisions that, by 2025, with the support of the United Nations and other development partners that complement the EU assistance, Serbia will have made significant progress towards its three strategic priorities to:

- | | |
|----|---|
| 1. | Harness the full potential of a green, sustainable and inclusive economy. |
| 2. | Place wellbeing, social equity and the human potential at the heart of systems, policies and practices. |
| 3. | Build trust and mutual accountability through the rule of law, the rights and duties agenda. |

⁵ The Belgrade-Priština Dialogue is an EU facilitated dialogue towards the normalisation of relations between Belgrade and Priština.

The strategic priorities of the Cooperation Framework were formulated through an extensive consultation process and the findings of several analyses, including the Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support (MAPS) Mission in 2018 and the Voluntary National Review (VNR) presented by Serbia at the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) in July 2019, and on the basis of Serbia's international human rights commitments and related reviews.

The Cooperation Framework priorities are grounded in the successes and lessons identified in the final evaluation of the previous Development Partnership Framework 2016–2020 between Serbia and the United Nations system. The United Nations Common Country Analysis, to which the strategic priorities and outcomes of the Cooperation Framework respond, was developed in late 2019 and updated in October 2020 and represents the main analytical resource, identifying challenges to and opportunities for achievement of the 2030 Agenda.



Science, digitalization and innovations in agriculture bring new opportunities for environmental protection and sustainable development. © UNDP Serbia, Vladimir Živojinović



The processes for development of the Common Country Analysis and the Cooperation Framework each included multiple internal and external consultations with all United Nations, government and non-government counterparts, including the UNDAF steering committee, the Ministry of European Integration (MEI), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), the Cabinet of the Minister without Portfolio for Demography and Population Policy, the Standing Conference of Town and Municipalities, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to identify joint priorities between the United Nations and the government. Through these consultations, the views and insights of authorities, civil society groups, the private sector, academia, international development partners, parliament, media and others were collected and analysed. The internal workshop for the Cooperation Framework took place in early February 2020, with the full engagement of 24 United Nations agencies. During the workshop, key highlights and gaps featured in the Common Country Analysis were presented and the theory of change was discussed. A matrix for the Cooperation Framework was drafted by mid-March and subsequently shared with the MEI, the Cabinet of the Minister without Portfolio for Demography and Population Policy, MFA, and Ministry of Environmental Protection in April/May, ahead of the general elections. Comments on the matrix were provided both verbally and in writing. Consultations with the Government of Serbia were suspended for nearly six months while the cabinet was being formed and resumed at the end of 2020, at which time the draft result matrix was shared with several ministers to further collect feedback.

The strategic priorities will be achieved through the attainment of eight interrelated and mutually reinforcing outcomes designed to advance progress towards the SDGs. The Government of Serbia and the United Nations system share accountability for achievement of the planned results. The Cooperation Framework brings together expertise from the United Nations system and provides a platform for coordinated policy advice and advocacy alongside more effective delivery of results in cooperation with the authorities of Serbia, civil society, and communities, as well as other national and international development partners.



Communities have the capacity to contribute to the protection of ecosystems and natural resources.
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The involvement of a broad range of actors, including governmental and non-governmental partners, with an emphasis on those representing the most vulnerable and marginalised groups, will be critical to the success of the Cooperation Framework. As such, the Cooperation Framework emphasizes strict adherence to the “Leave No One Behind” principle, the human rights-based approach and gender equality principles across all activities.

It prioritises the active engagement of all stakeholders in decision-making, lending to more effective and accountable public institutions, better informed, evidence-based policies and to social inclusion and gender equality.





2.

BASIC FACTS

Location	South-Eastern Europe
Area	88,361 sq. km (including Kosovo - in line with UNSCR 1244 (1999))
Land boundaries	Total: 2,361.7 km Border countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania
Capital	Belgrade 1,694,056 / estimate on December 31 st 2019
Provinces	Two: Autonomous Province of Vojvodina Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija
Municipalities	174
Constitution	Adopted in the Parliament of the Republic of Serbia on September 30 th , 2006, finally adopted at the referendum on October 28 th -29 th , 2006 and entered into force on November 8 th , 2006.
Political system	Republic
Population	7.186 million; 3.499 male and 3.688 female (2011 Census) (estimated 9.031 million with Kosovo - in line with UNSCR 1244 (1999)) 6.945 million (2019 Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia estimate)
Annual pop. Growth	-5.4 (2019 Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia estimate)
Average age:	Total: 42.2 years; Male: 40.9 years; Female: 43.5 years (2011 Census) Total: 43.3 years; Male: 41.9 years; Female: 44.7 years (2019 Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia)
HDI	0.806 (64 th out of 189 countries and territories)
Life expectancy at birth	Total population: 75.7 years (2019 Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia) Male: 73.09 years Female: 78.35 years
Total fertility rate	1.5 births per woman (2019 Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia)
Nationality	Serbian
Ethnic groups	Serb, Hungarian, Roma, Bosniak, Albanian and other
Religion	Serbian Orthodox, Catholic, Muslim, Protestant, Atheist, other
Languages	Serbian (official), Hungarian, Bosnian, Roma language, Albanian and other <i>Note: Serbian, Hungarian, Slovak, Romanian, Rusyn and Croatian all official in Vojvodina</i>
EU status	Accession country
Labour force	Total (15-64 years): 4,445,100; Active 3,010,000; Inactive: 1,435,100 (2020 Labour Force Survey, Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia)
Income Level	Upper middle income





GDP	GDP: 53,039.2 USD million (2020 Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia estimate) GDP per capita: 7,657 USD (2020 Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia estimate)
Inflation rate	1.3% (2020 December National Bank of Serbia)
Unemployment rate	Total: 9%; Men: 8.7%; Women: 9.4% (Population 15 and over, 2020 Labour Force Survey)
Budget	Revenues: RSD 1,257,436.7 million Expenditures: RSD 1,716,543.6 million <i>Note: this is a consolidated budget, including both central government and local government budget (2020 Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Serbia)</i>
Public debt	53.5% of GDP (February 2021)
Context	EU accession; Belgrade-Priština Dialogue under the auspices of the EU; Comprehensive institutional, political, economic reforms, COVID-19 pandemic
Refugees	Ex-Yugoslavia total: 25,991 (March 2021); Country of origin: 17,670 - Croatia, 8,124 - Bosnia and Herzegovina (Commissariat for Refugees and Migration); Persons accorded international protection total: 194; Refugee status: 90; Subsidiary protection: 104 (UNHCR/Ministry of Interior, Asylum Office)
Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)	IDPs: 212,754 (including IDPs in Kosovo - in line with UNSCR 1244 (1999)) – source: UNHCR and Commissariat for Refugees and Migration the Republic of Serbia – most are ethnic Serbs and some are Roma, Ashkalis and Egyptians (RAE); some RAE are unregistered (March/April 2021) IDPs with displacement related needs: 68,500 Persons at risk of statelessness: 2,139 (2020 UNHCR Survey) Persons without birth registration: 253 Note: As citizens of Serbia, IDPs have all the rights ensured by the Constitution and law
Terrain	Extremely varied; to the north, rich fertile plains; to the east, limestone ranges and basins; to the southeast, ancient mountains and hills
Natural resources	Oil, gas, coal, iron ore, copper, zinc, antimony, chromate, gold, silver, magnesium, pyrite, limestone, marble, salt, arable land

***Sources:**

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<https://mfin.gov.rs/>

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<https://www.stat.gov.rs/>

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<https://en.unesco.org/countries/serbia>





3.

PROGRESS TOWARDS THE 2030 AGENDA – THE COMMON COUNTRY ANALYSIS

The national vision for sustainable development is articulated in key strategic statements and documents:

- The National Programme for the Adoption of the Acquis (NPAA) aligning domestic regulations with the EU and adjusting reforms to the accession priorities set by the six EU's thematic policy clusters of the negotiating framework (amending of the third revision from March 2018 is in process);
- The Economic Reform Program (ERP), 2021–2023 and Employment and Social Reform Programme (ESRP), adopted in 2016;
- The National Priorities for Development Assistance (NPDA), covering the period until 2025 (pending adoption by the government);
- The National Investment Plan „Serbia 2025“ (publicly presented in December 2019);
- The Low-Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) with an Action Plan (pending adoption);
- Voluntary National Review (VNR), 2019;
- Sustainable Urban Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia until 2030 (*Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia*, No 47/2019), adopted in 2019;
- Tourism Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia 2016–2025 (*Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia*, No 98/2016), adopted in 2016; and
- The strategic priorities of the new government (fighting the coronavirus pandemic and strengthening the healthcare system; preserving the vital interests of the Kosovo Serbs; fighting organized crime; maintaining

Serbia's independence and independent decision-making; the rule of law, human rights and expediting reforms on the EU path; and strengthening the country's economy), which were announced in October 2020 and elaborated in detail in the Action Plan for the Implementation of the Government's Programme for the period 2020–2022, which was adopted at the Government's session on January 28th 2021.

According to the rapid integrated assessment of the alignment between national development policies and the EU accession framework with the United Nations 2030 Agenda (commissioned by the UNCT), the major development programmes and sectoral policy documents correspond, at least partially, with 121 of 138 relevant Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets.⁶ In June 2019, at the proposal of the Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure, the Government of the Republic of Serbia adopted the Sustainable Urban Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia until 2030 (*Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia*, No. 47/2019) which directly contributes to the achievement of SDG 11. In the drafting process, this Strategy was also harmonized with all other recommendations and guidelines of the United Nations and the EU in the area of sustainable urban development. The Action Plan for Strategy Implementation for the period 2021–2022, which foresees activities in partnership with UN-Habitat, was adopted on March 18th 2021 at the session of the Government of the Republic of Serbia (*Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia* No. 28/2021).

6 Serbia currently does not have a national SDG prioritisation strategy.





Air pollution affects the health and quality of life of all people and is the most important environmental problem of our time.
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In its analysis of the national policy framework (2018), the Public Policy Secretariat of the Republic of Serbia found it too detailed and its goals overly ambitious and inadequately harmonised. In addition, the resources for implementation were limited. The **Law on Planning System of the Republic of Serbia** is being effectively implemented since October 29th 2018. Article 6 of this law stipulates the mandatory drafting of the Development Plan as the supreme long-term document of development planning in the Republic of Serbia, which the National Assembly shall adopt for a period of at least 10 years. Additionally, Article

9 stipulates the mandatory drafting of local self-government development plans as long-term documents of development planning, which local assemblies shall adopt for at least seven years, at the proposal of the competent executive authority of the local self-government.

The United Nations has grouped the SDGs into “five Ps” – People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, and Partnerships – which capture the broad scope of the global agenda. The Government of Serbia’s mapping of its national strategies and policies is based on four areas.



People

Human resource development
(SDGs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 10)



Planet

Environment and climate
(SDGs 6, 7, 11, 12, 13 and 15)



Prosperity

Economic growth
(SDGs 8 and 9)



Peace and Partnerships

Institutions, finance and cooperation
(SDGs 16 and 17)





Serbia actively contributed to the formulation and adoption of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs through the national campaign, “The Serbia We Want”. Serbia submitted a Voluntary National Review (VNR) on implementation of the 2030 Agenda to the 2019 United Nations High-Level Political Forum.

To complete the process of nationalisation of the global SDG priorities, significant new capacities are required for data collection, monitoring and mainstreaming the “Leave No One Behind” principle at the national and local levels. This capacity-building would help Serbia further mainstream the SDGs into the national budget: The United Nations Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support (MAPS) mission to Serbia in 2018 found that 47% of national budget spending could be linked to one of the SDGs. Initial mainstreaming of the 2030 Agenda has been done in a new multi-year planning document, through 2025, coordinated by the Ministry of European Integration.⁷

The Common Country Analysis (CCA) identifies the challenges and opportunities related to SDG achievement that underpin the strategic priorities of the new Cooperation Framework for Serbia. This analysis integrates the context of COVID-19 crises that Serbia responded decisively to, both on prevention and clinical treatments, and later, in planning and execution of one of the most successful vaccination campaigns even in global terms. Procurement was initiated and executed quickly, with the health system showing commendable agility and responsiveness. Public and private partners were flexible and generous. The opportunities stemming from the CCA include:

- Building a robust, **innovative, and resilient low-carbon economy for accelerated and job-rich growth** in line with EU requirements, fully integrating a people-centred approach and **decoupling economic growth from**

environmental pressures, which represents a development opportunity for Serbia. This opportunity includes mitigation and adaption to climate and other environmental challenges in line with obligations under the Paris Agreement and the EU environmental and climate change standards by improving performance in all areas of environmental protection and climate change and environmental governance, by managing cultural and natural resources more sustainably – including agriculture and forest management, by improving human health, and by building multi-level resilience.

- **Strengthening health and social protection systems**, including in the context of an emergency (e.g. COVID-19), is essential for achievement of the SDGs. This is followed by opportunities that would **increase the quality of jobs and develop effective solutions to curb emigration of the labour force**, by reducing the informal economy and existing inequalities, creating decent employment opportunities, and promoting and upholding rights in the workplace. These opportunities should be equally accessible to all. Also, migration is largely an issue of opportunity. Ensuring quality education geared to labour market needs, responsive local governance and a healthy environment, along with broad-based economic growth that provides stable employment, could incentivise Serbia’s young people to build their futures at home. The integration of refugees is also a potential for filling gaps in the labour market.
- The persistence of social exclusion, inequalities, and incomplete human rights policymaking and implementation could impede achievement of SDGs. **To make growth more inclusive, achieve fuller enjoyment of all human rights, and “Leave No One Behind”,** a decisive action that addresses **exclusion and inequalities** that affect groups at risk of being left behind (women and children; youth not in employment, education or training (NEET); Roma; the rural population; LGBTI persons; persons with disabilities; asylum-seekers, refugees, inter-

⁷ This document sets out national strategic priorities for co-financing by international development assistance. Indicators provide links to relevant goals of the 2030 Agenda.



nally displaced persons and migrants; older people; and other vulnerable groups) is crucial. **Further promotion of social coherence by building trust and strengthening regional and transborder/transboundary cooperation across the region** also presents an opportunity for Serbia. It is necessary to **improve governance** and accountability by taking action against system inefficiencies and corruption, making the judiciary independent and effective, improving policy coherence across sectors, and consulting broadly and meaningfully during the policymaking process (with CSOs and rights-holders, the private sector, and academia).

Three elements cut across challenge areas: governance; data; and gender.

- **Effective reform of the judiciary and realisation of fundamental rights, justice, security, and public procurement** that rest on **accountability and transparency principles** are all critical to the country's reform agenda, and at the centre of the EU acquis communautaire. Serbia needs to continue and harmonise its national development policies in the form of an overarching development plan, aligned directly and explicitly with the SDGs. The government's commitment to decentralisation adds a new and critical dimension to this process, while the introduction of a more "people-centered" approach to development would be a significant step forward. **Serbia should also "nationalise" the 2030 Agenda by defining nationally specific SDG targets**, enabling the tracing of fund allocations to the policies, measures, and interventions facilitating SDG achievements in line with the Addis Ababa Convention. The full nationalisation of the 2030 Agenda should respect the principles of policy consistency and effectively include the "Leave No One Behind" considerations and analysis.
- To move towards **evidence-based policymaking** and **data-driven design of policy choices**, data collection across all sectors and levels will be improved.

Comprehensive, disaggregated data should serve as a basis for tackling the structural roots of the main challenges and is indispensable to the development of alternative policy scenarios which must underpin policy decisions and solutions. National capacities for monitoring the delivery of policies and programmes should be improved to enable a comprehensive assessment of policy implications and better targeting of those in need.

- The previous 2018 DPF offers a strong foundation **for increasing gender mainstreaming**.



Progress was achieved, as is reflected in the consistent and substantial increase of women's participation in the political life in Serbia, culminating with the equal share of women and men in the Government formed in October 2020. This indicates the strong political will and intense work to keep up with this trend. However, special attention must be paid to the promotion of gender equality and the inclusion for vulnerable groups, especially among those for whom traditional cultural norms are strong.





4.

FROM THE COMMON COUNTRY ANALYSIS TO STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The United Nations system and the Government of Serbia agree to work on three overarching strategic priorities over the next five years. These priorities emerged from the evaluation of the 2016–2020 UNDAF, the Common Country Analysis, and a broad consultative process between the United Nations agencies, the Government of Serbia, international partners, civil society, and other relevant stakeholders. They were re-confirmed as priorities through the United Nations COVID-19 impact assessment and recovery plan finalised in September 2020.

The strategic priorities and outcomes reflect both the needs of the country and the UNCT's comparative advantage in supporting the Government of Serbia to address them. The UNCT actions are framed in the larger setting of the United Nations Secretary General's Call for the Decade of Action to accelerate the implementation of the SDGs.

Now more than ever: we need health security, improved wellbeing and equality for all, stronger resilience of society and the economy to future potential shocks, a green recovery with a triple objective to reduce pollution in the coming years, reach carbon neutrality by 2050, and create new jobs.

Together with human rights and gender equality, these objectives embody a nexus of change and partnership that, together, offer an effective pathway for the United Nations system in Serbia to make tangible, measurable contributions towards achievement of the 2030 Agenda. The prioritisation and development of outcomes are grounded

in the international human rights standards and commitment reviews by the United Nations human rights mechanisms and actors. They integrate the needs resulting from the COVID-19 crisis that have revealed or magnified vulnerabilities with respect to preparedness and underscored common challenges. The United Nations system in Serbia will continue to focus on protecting lives and providing integrated support to Serbia, with a special focus on the most vulnerable, in order to address the health, economic, and social impacts of COVID-19 and recover back better. Instead of focusing on the losses and constraints, it is important to highlight the positive impacts in terms of economic gain, quality of life and reduction of inequalities. Engagement in a clean and green agenda is an innovative and exciting opportunity for young people in the next 30 years, and it should be emphasized and promoted, notably in a region with sustained outmigration trends.

4.1 Theory of change for strategic priorities

Recognising the interconnected nature of the development challenges in Serbia, the priority areas are addressed with consideration of the three dimensions of social, economic and environmental progress whilst integrating the concepts of sustainability, inclusiveness and resilience into implementation. Strategic communication will also be crucial to the effectiveness of any intervention associated with this Cooperation Framework.

The theory of change for the Cooperation Framework (Figure 1: Overall Theory of Change) envisions that by 2030, Serbia will make significant progress towards achievement





of the country-specific development goals aligned with the 2030 Agenda and SDGs (impact-level change). This cooperation combines the work of the United Nations system in a single coherent framework that provides a platform for common policy advice, advocacy, capacity-building, coordination and delivery of results in collaboration with all counterparts (Government of Serbia, civil society, local communities, private sector, academia, international and development partners).

The cooperation results will support the ongoing transformation of the economy and society towards greener, sustainable and more inclusive growth. These will be combined with renewed efforts to provide young people the opportunity to remain in Serbia to create a more prosperous future and will tackle structural barriers towards equal valuation and recognition of women's economic participation.

Complementarity with the requirements of EU accession, 2030 Agenda, human rights standards and commitments and international financing institutions in the domains of rule of law, good governance and the green agenda will be important contribution to all three priorities. It is only by making significant progress in each priority area, as well as in cross-cutting themes guided by the principles of human rights and non-discrimination, gender equality, and leaving no one behind, that the SDGs will be achieved.

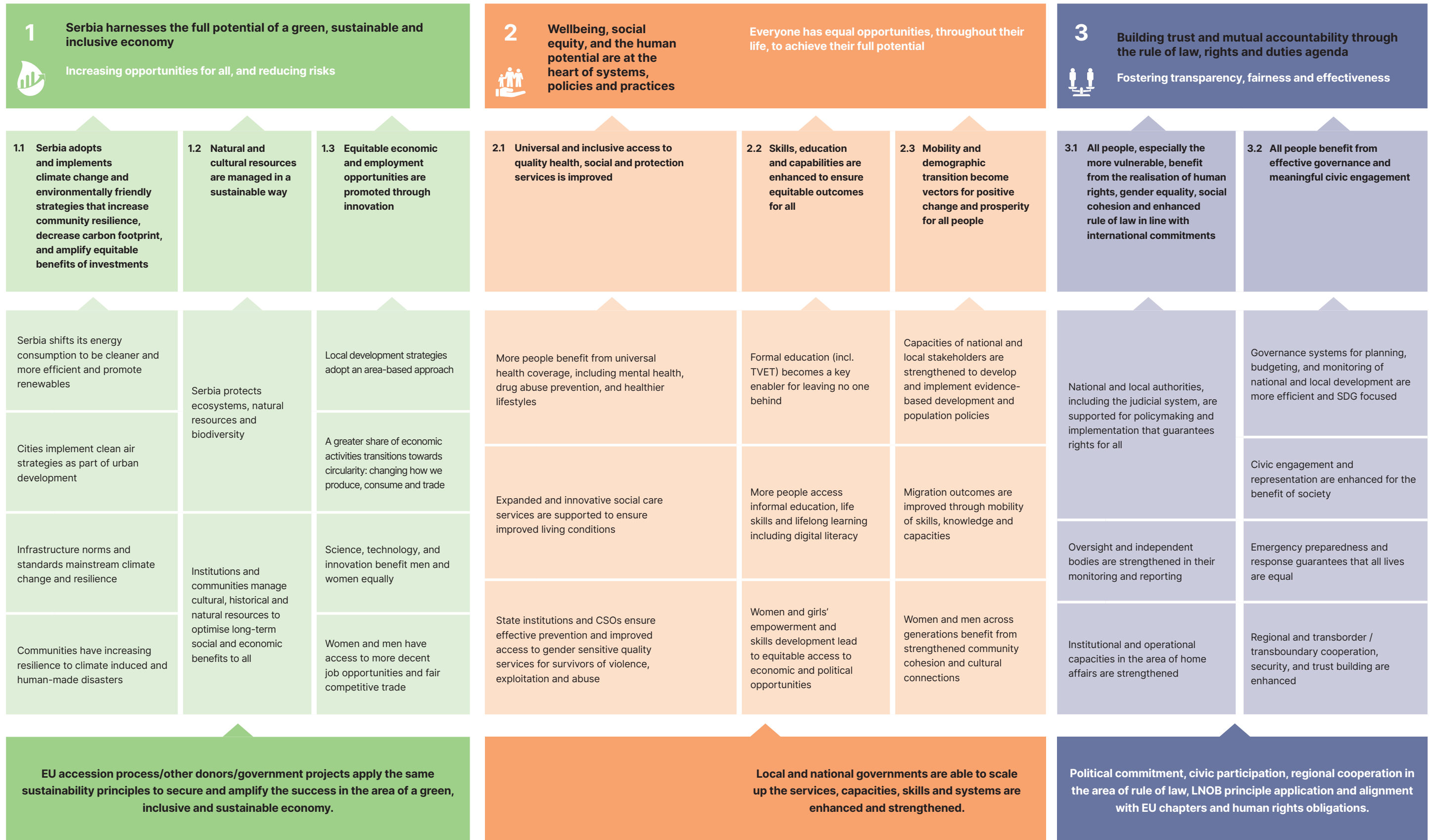
Across all priorities, cooperation efforts will focus on addressing gaps in the legislative and institutional framework for the observance of international human rights and gender equality standards and related obligations, and to contribute to stronger institutional capacities for gender analysis and gender-responsive programming.

Achievement of Serbia's objectives and of the SDG targets depends on whether public institutions, the private and civil sectors, and people themselves are ready and capacitated to both contribute to – and benefit from – the new development trajectory that paves the way towards the 2030 Agenda. Making a vision become reality requires shared responsibility and mutual accountability between people, the state, and neighbouring countries.

Achievement of this vision relies on Serbia's commitment and ability to meet each of the strategic priorities defined in the Cooperation Framework, as outlined further below.



FIGURE 1:
Overall Theory of Change



Key assumptions:

- 1 Government engagement,
- 2 Secured and sustained finance,
- 3 Engagement and coordination with international partners,
- 4 Coordination of United Nations agencies for greater efficiency and impact,
- 5 Involvement of people and whole society,
- 6 Strategic communication.



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1

Harness the full potential of a green, sustainable and inclusive economy that increases opportunities for all and manages risks. This priority aims to contribute to the long-term prosperity and resilience of the country's economy and ecosystem for the benefit of all people in Serbia. The urgency of supporting and promoting greener, more inclusive and resilient economic development that produces jobs and prosperity, reduces emissions and negative impacts on public health, builds resilience to the impact of climate change has been reaffirmed in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. This cooperation aims to address the remaining structural weaknesses of the economy that underpin its competitiveness and social inclusion. Factors impeding a greener, more sustainable and more inclusive economy include:

- Insufficiently fast introduction of renewable energy sources;
- Limited capacity for innovation;
- Inefficient markets;
- Significant long-term unemployment, which is disproportionately high among youth, women, rural communities, and vulnerable groups;
- Unequal distribution of unpaid care work by gender;
- Structural and long-term levers of social exclusion and neglect towards marginalised groups;
- High levels of migration, to larger cities in Serbia or abroad, often driven by the lack of decent job opportunities;
- Limited access to finance; and
- Inadequate state and management of natural resources.

Achievement of this strategic priority requires the adoption of new green values in the Serbian economy and a significant increase in ambitions to decarbonise it, including through the country's NDC commitments (Nationally Determined Contributions). Serbia is characterised by high energy and carbon intensity. A new Law on Climate Change, two new energy related laws (the Law on Renewable Energy Sources and the Law on Energy Efficiency and

Rational Use of Energy), and amendments to two laws (the Law on Energy and the Law on Mining and Geological Research) were adopted in early 2021. These provide the grounds to develop and adopt the National Plan for Energy and Climate, which shall define the national goals for energy efficiency, renewable energy, and reduction of GHG emissions.

The new development strategy is expected to ensure economic progress through a green transition that will lead to a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy.

Further economic growth must be decoupled from the environmental and societal pressures that are significant in Serbia. This approach has the potential to impact the region. Common regional challenges in energy transition, air pollution and their effects, combined with the established regional cooperation through the Energy Community – which Serbia is chairing in 2021 – provide an array of opportunities for robust regional and transborder/transboundary cooperation and development.

For this to be achieved, a thoughtful and comprehensive overhaul of all economic sectors and a transformation of the way we produce and consume will be necessary. This requires proper strategies and policies to be put in place, while also ensuring their full enforcement through a concerted action across different sectors. Serbia needs to increase its focus on the main drivers of pollution, CO₂ emissions and depletion of resources, namely: the energy and transport sectors; industrial and infrastructure development and the linear production and consumption model (take-make-use-dispose); the food, agriculture and forestry sector; and the limited protection of cultural, natural resources and its ecosystems. It is also necessary to foresee the negative economic and social effects of this transition, and to formulate programmes and policies to prevent and mitigate these effects. Therefore, electricity producers should become partners in creating strategies, policies and plans to implement this transition. A significant increase in the use of renewable energy sources for electricity production and heat, and improvement in energy ef-



efficiency planning, will reduce CO₂ emissions, while investment in sustainable development of forestry sector has great potential to generate carbon sinks. As the main contributors to climate change in the country (responsible for 70–80% of GHG emissions), the energy and transport (mobility) sectors must be among the first priorities to be adequately addressed and transformed following the principles of green and sustainable development.

A shift to sustainable management of cultural and natural resources and protection of biodiversity in a way and at a rate that maintains and enhances their resilience and the benefits they provide will increase solidarity with future generations. It will also boost other sectors (e.g. sustainable tourism and ecotourism and sustainable agriculture), while spurring rural development and narrowing the geographical and gender gaps in the level of development. It is equally as important to address the risks stemming from climate change as it is to address other disasters (e.g. health emergencies, natural disasters).

Serbia is already facing consequences that can be clearly attributed to climate change, including an increased frequency and magnitude of extreme weather events and disasters. Summer precipitation has reduced, which is detrimental to agricultural production and forest growth and regeneration. At the same time, the country now experiences more extreme rainfall, receiving vast amounts of water during short time periods. The loss of summer precipitation in Serbia has increased the risk of drought, while, on the other hand, intense precipitation has intensified the risk of floods.

The COVID-19 crisis also underscores the necessity of building disaster resiliency within other sectors, such as health and social welfare. Therefore, a concerted action on resilience building, prevention and preparedness to adapt to climate change and other disasters is needed more than ever before. Otherwise, the country will continue to be heavily affected by an increased risk of floods or droughts, potential forest fires, soil erosion, land degradation, and further public health crises in the wake of COVID-19, all of which could result in significant human, economic and environmental losses and costs.

In addition to the need to be greener and more sustainable, the Serbian economy needs to become more inclusive. It should address long-term unemployment and lack of opportunities that is disproportionately high among youth, women, rural communities and vulnerable groups. In parallel, it needs to address a large informal economy and high levels of youth migration.



Workers employed in the social enterprise "Radanska ruža" in Lebane, founded with the aim of empowering women from marginalized groups. © UNOPS Serbia, Saša Đorđević

Several structural gender inequalities persist, such as unequal distribution of unpaid care work by sex, discrimination against women in recruitment, promotion, pay and benefits, and maternity and parental leave. Migration trends are also partly driven by the lack of decent job opportunities available in – and especially outside – the cities. The design and implementation of new mechanisms that support the transformation of SMEs to increase competitiveness will spur economic development and technological, business, governance and social innovation. If this transformation includes all members of society, it will result in more equitable economic and employment opportunities, a more inclusive labour market, the creation of new jobs and improved social wellbeing. This transformation will also require significant financial investments and support in order to provide a balanced transformation that in-





cludes all regions of different levels of economic development, such as rural and depopulated areas.

The prioritisation of greener growth will unlock the benefits of an innovative and inclusive economic model, improve competitiveness and biodiversity, and contribute to a more diverse, nutritionally balanced diet for all, while also limiting current and future negative impacts to the environment, communities, livelihoods and productive assets. At the same time, the committed application of the “Leave No One Behind” principle will ensure that the disproportionate environmental and economic impact on groups that have mostly been left behind will be mitigated and prevented, thus ensuring that benefits from growth and advancement are non-discriminatory and equitable.

This strategic priority will be achieved if Serbia:

- 1.1 adopts and implements more ambitious climate change and environmental strategies that are focused on the reduction of the adverse effects of the current model of production and consumption on people and the environment, increased community resilience and decreased carbon footprint, and amplified equitable benefits of investments;
- 1.2 manages natural and cultural resources in a sustainable way to increase solidarity with future generations; and
- 1.3 designs and promotes alternative and equitable economic growth and employment strategies based on circularity and innovation that will result in decreased developmental mismatch between urban centres and underdeveloped and rural areas, reduction of GHG emissions, creation of new jobs, an inclusive labour market and increased competitiveness.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2

Place wellbeing, social equity and the human potential at the heart of systems, policies and practices. This priority aims to promote a people-centred approach that reduces inequalities by ensuring that all people have equal opportunities to achieve their full potential and equal access to a better quality of life. This is regardless of gender, age, income, location, status or any other personal trait.

To prioritise wellbeing and social equity and to drive a shift to a more diversified, knowledge-based and inclusive economy, renewed efforts are needed to strengthen the health, social protection and education systems and to improve the coverage, accessibility, non-discrimination and quality of all services.

The first and second strategic priorities are interrelated and interdependent, as they represent an integrated response to wider societal challenges. If the economy is greener, more sustainable and inclusive, it will be more competitive with more decent job opportunities in an inclusive manner. This will maximise resources for social protection and investments in quality health, education and other public services which, in turn, will incentivise people to stay in the country where they will enjoy equal access to services, development and protection. These are the prerequisites for human-centred development and wellbeing.

Although access to essential health and social services is universal in Serbia, availability and access vary for different social groups. In general, in the past 15 years, the life expectancy of the Serbian population has improved. Despite this positive trend, however, a gap in life expectancy remains between Serbia and the EU countries. According to the WHO global health estimates, non-communicable diseases (NCDs) accounted for 94% of all deaths in Serbia in 2016. There is a health gap between different social groups, notably vulnerable groups (e.g. older persons in rural areas, the Roma, persons with disabilities, and people with multiple disadvantages) as these groups are more exposed to health risk factors in Serbia. There is also an evident lack of integration between health services and social services at the local level, including limited long-term care,





A female resident of the social housing complex in Orlovsko naselje, Belgrade, built for Roma families relocated from informal settlements.
©UNOPS Serbia, Igor Pavićević

older people care, palliative care, mental health services, suboptimal implementation of prevention programmes, and limited access to healthcare institutions in remote and rural areas. In addition to availability, different groups of people have different experiences in terms of equality of enjoyment and non-discrimination, inviting further advancement in ensuring equality in healthcare.

Some social services, such as childcare and family support services, are insufficient, and this is especially true for children who are without parental care and/or at risk of family separation, in social protection or residing in rural/remote areas. Limited social services and long-term care services contribute to the lower level of female participation in the labour market in Serbia, as women take on an unequal burden of unpaid care work. Also, women, children and the Roma, as well as asylum-seekers, refugees, internally displaced persons and migrants who have experienced violence and abuse do not have equitable access to quality shelter or psychosocial support depending on their location. Serbia needs to look beyond income only in tackling inequality – to dismantle the barriers that people faced even before the pandemic, including limited access to public health services and information, higher rates of violence, neglect and abuse, and more obstacles to decent, dignified work and to social protection. In addition, cross-sectoral cooperation at the national level can be strengthened. Marginalised social groups (e.g. persons with disabilities) show lower access to services, while the availability of services is not entirely in line with human rights or “Leave No One Behind” standards.

The education and skills development sectors need to address the high unemployment rate among young people and school leavers, which suggests a mismatch between education/skills and jobs. An essential tool to ensure people have access to economic opportunities and lead more fulfilling lives is full access to both formal and informal education, digital literacy and lifelong learning. In Serbia, secondary education is not compulsory, and the participation rate in preschool education is still relatively low, particularly among children aged 3 to primary school age (76% in 2019/2020, i.e. 76.6% in 2020/2021),⁸ in comparison to other European countries (where the average participation rate for this age group was 93% in 2020). Even though the overall rate of participation in education in Serbia is high, vulnerable groups are more likely not to attend school or to be segregated. Attendance rate of compulsory primary education for students from Roma settlements is below the general average (92% vs. 99%), as well as primary education completion rate (64% vs. 100%).

The secondary school attendance rate is significantly lower for children from Roma settlements compared to the general average (28% vs. 94%), as well as the secondary education completion rate (61% vs. 98%).⁹ Nearly 5,000 students are educated in schools for the education of students with disabilities.¹⁰ This inequitable access to education and the low educational achievement rate has detrimental and long-term effects on people’s development of technical and life skills. The COVID-19 crisis has exacerbated

8 According to the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia

9 MICS 2019

10 National Report on Inclusive Education, UNICEF Serbia/ MOESTD 2020





bated the existing inequalities and limitations of the current systems. Establishing a foundation for learning and skills development from the early years throughout life is essential for learning, opportunities and employment success. It will also strengthen community cohesion and intergenerational solidarity.



A special focus with the more vulnerable groups is still required to ensure that everyone has equal rights to education, life-long learning and equal opportunities to achieve their full potential.
© UNDP Serbia

This strategic priority will be achieved if Serbia:

- 2.1 improves universal and inclusive access to quality health, social and protection services;
- 2.2 enhances the quality of education to ensure required skills, education and capabilities for equitable outcomes for all; and
- 2.3 ensures that mobility and the demographic transition become vectors for positive change and prosperity for all people.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3

Build trust and mutual accountability through the rule of law, rights and duties agenda. This strategic priority aims to foster transparency, fairness and effective systems that guarantee and advance equality and non-discrimination for all people, towards the full enjoyment of all human rights. The first two priorities of this cooperation – a green, sustainable and inclusive economy and a society where well-being, social equity, and the human potential are at the heart of systems, policies and practices – are dependent on more effective governance, improvement of the rule of law and Serbia’s resolve to fully embrace and realise its human rights commitments. A more effective and committed implementation of the rights-centered approach will also help maintain people’s health, safety, dignity, independence and participation in their communities, in both successful and challenging times.

The advancement of gender equality and persisting discrimination against, or exclusion of, certain groups (such the Roma, persons with disabilities, specific subgroups among older people, asylum-seekers, refugees, internally displaced persons, migrants, children, youth and LGBTI) should be continuously addressed in Serbia.

While the legislative framework largely recognises rights of and protection to all, there are gaps in the implementation of those provisions that affects vulnerable groups the most. Strategies, policies and practices that narrow this gap and advance gender equality are central to this cooperation, as well as meeting the human rights of all, including asylum-seekers, refugees, internally displaced people and migrants. The same holds true for empowering the rights-holders through an increased focus on inclusive and participatory social, health, education and employment outcomes and through the increased participation of rights-holders and the civil society.



The effectiveness of institutional responses to diversified social groups, the implementation of the principle of participation, and a renewed focus on government accountability, transparency and meritocracy will increase public trust and social cohesion.

More accountable and transparent governance systems will enable effective and meaningful interaction between institutions and people. Civic engagement is essential to ensure that institutions work transparently and are held accountable, and effective institutions that integrate principles of transparency, accountability and rule of law are necessary for better civic engagement.

This will result in more responsive and inclusive policies, laws, practices and public services including in emergency situations, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, or in the mixed movement of asylum-seekers, refugees and migrants. Leveraging technology to modernise public performance and support digital governance will make public services more effective and accessible. Public procurement represents a key strategic lever to advance this policy agenda across sectors, in social protection, health, education and all infrastructure and environmental agendas. Improved system efficiencies and transparency will allow significant financial gains from public procurement to be reallocated to social expenditures that will foster equity, trust and participation. These efforts combined will build public confidence in the institutions and the rule of law. Improved rule of law, increased accountability coupled with increased gender equality, greater empowerment of rights-holders, improved compliance with human rights standards and increased resources generated from more sustainable and inclusive economy will also improve social justice, social inclusion and non-discriminatory policies. Another driving lever of this priority is strengthening and advancement of transformative processes in the areas of judiciary independence, media freedoms, and roles of democratic and independent institutions, together with the promotion of a strong and wide civic space. Finally, deepening regional

and transborder/transboundary cooperation in the spirit of good neighbourly relations is a prominent part of reconciliation efforts to overcome the legacies of the past by building trust and mutual accountability. Strengthening regional and transborder/transboundary cooperation in the fields of border management, security, transitional justice, organized crime, economy and trade, the digital agenda, women and youth will support this priority. During the COVID-19 crisis, inclusive regional and transborder/transboundary cooperation has also proven essential to address common challenges swiftly and efficiently. Most importantly, this priority will support the most recent (re)commitments to the EU pre-accession reform agenda, and alignment with regional human rights and democratic standards.



Society will benefit from the untapped human capital within the refugee population through inclusion and integration.
© UNHCR Serbia, Vesna Lalić

This strategic priority will be achieved if Serbia:

- 3.1 enhances the rule of law and ensures that all people, especially the more vulnerable, benefit from the full realisation of all human rights, gender equality, social cohesion, and enhanced rule of law in line with international commitments; and
- 3.2 ensures that all people benefit from effective governance and meaningful civic engagement.





The United Nations system is well-placed to support the Government of Serbia across all three strategic priorities. It will support Serbia in advocating for and mainstreaming new and greener values, and provide expertise, capacity development and technical assistance for the promotion of social cohesion and both equitable and sustainable growth that will increase opportunities for all and reduce exposure to risks and hazards.

The United Nations system will support institutions directly at all levels with respect to policy development, innovative tools and capacity development to enhance transparency, fairness and effectiveness, and to improve access to and enjoyment of equitable, qualitative, integrated and inclusive social protection, universal healthcare services and quality education. In addition, the United Nations will continue to support the Government in further strengthening of the rule of law and implementation of international conventions in the spheres of fundamental rights, peace, justice and democracy. It will contribute to the strategic priority through extensive advocacy efforts that support full commitment to values and principles in these areas. In addition, the United Nations have the capacity to support regional and transborder/transboundary initiatives and dialogue, and to strengthen capacities in the area of home affairs that are essential for trust-building and positive regional and transborder/transboundary cooperation. The capacity development interventions will be embedded in a shared strategic vision, which considers institutional, organizational and individual needs of all relevant counterparts. This cooperation can be effective and would be reinforced if the following key assumptions continue to hold true:

a. Serbia continues to show commitment to the 2030 Agenda and engages effectively in the realisation of the SDGs, including human rights and gender equality;

- b. Serbia upscales its ambitions towards partial and full decarbonisation of the economy by 2030 and 2050;
- c. all other development partners engage in the achievement of these priorities in a coordinated way;
- d. financing for envisaged interventions is available, secured and sustained; and
- e. national capacities to implement the political vision and ambitions are available, strengthened, and spear-headed by relevant Government donor coordination mechanisms.

Finally, none of the strategic priorities concerns a single sector or a single stakeholder. They rather represent a combination of changes and partnerships that offer an effective pathway for cooperation between Serbia and the United Nations system to make a tangible contribution towards development priorities. Strategic and effective management of the COVID-19 pandemic and recovery efforts is crucial to achieve the proposed strategic priorities and the SDGs. The United Nations system aims to address both the needs to adapt to the COVID-19 crisis and the new world it has created, and to mitigate the impact of future similar situations by building forward better, accelerating the reform processes, nurturing trust and transparency, and anchoring sustainability, resilience and cohesion in the country's development vision, as detailed in the COVID-19 Socio-Economic Response Plan.

The three strategic priorities will be achieved through eight outcomes of this cooperation. Strategic Priority 1 will yield three outcomes (Outcomes 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3), Strategic Priority 2 will also yield three outcomes (Outcomes 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3), and Strategic Priority 3 will yield two outcomes (Outcomes 3.1 and 3.2). All outcomes and related outputs are explained further in the following section. The indicators for each outcome are listed in the Results Matrix (Annex 3).





Partnerships:

The United Nations system serves as a neutral, normative and operational development partner to the Government of Serbia. The SDGs and EU Chapters are closely aligned and the focus on SDG achievement will support Serbia in the EU integration process. This Cooperation Framework is based on the engagement of the United Nations with a wide range of stakeholders; it will build on existing partnerships and create new ones, drawing on the specific skills and expertise of these organizations and institutions. In addition to partnering with central and local level government, specialized agencies, and independent governmental offices, partnership will focus on:

- 1.1.** The civil society will remain a key partner of the United Nations in the implementation of the Cooperation Framework. The collaboration will focus on social protection, climate change, disaster risk reduction, education and health, youth engagement, gender equality and women empowerment, gender-based violence, human rights, labour rights, and other areas.
- 1.2.** The European Union and the United Nations Member States represented in Serbia, active as development partners.
- 1.3.** International Financial Institutions (IFIs) such as the World Bank, the EIB, the EBRD, IMF, AFD, and KfW, with which the United Nations seek common understanding and principled investments on key development challenges such as climate change and social protection;
- 1.4.** Other regional and international partners, regional mechanisms and programmes, such as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the Council of Europe (CoE), the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA), the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO), Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), and other United Nations teams in the region.
- 1.5.** The private sector - including local businesses, international companies, employers' associations and chambers of commerce - will be engaged to develop and upscale innovative solutions for sustainable development challenges, investments in areas that promote a shift to more sustainable production and cleaner industrial models, and for development of new skills.
- 1.6.** The media, including social media, to amplify joint advocacy and messaging around core areas of sustainable development and COVID-19 recovery.
- 1.7.** Academia, to develop and experiment social and economic pilots, or to foster cooperation on analysis of multiple trends and impacts.





4.1.1 Strategic Priority 1: Serbia harnesses the full potential of a green, sustainable and inclusive economy

Outcome 1.1: Serbia adopts and implements climate change and environmentally friendly strategies that increase community resilience, decrease carbon footprint, and amplify equitable benefits of investments

Outcome 1.1 will be realised if the measures outlined below are put in place.

- **Energy production and consumption become more efficient and cleaner, with an accelerated shift towards renewable energy sources:** The first pathway includes promotion of, and support to, the deployment of local renewable energy through the development of enabling regulatory, administrative, technical and financing frameworks, alongside upscaled energy efficiency initiatives.

The negative effects of this transition on the economy and social status of companies and local population, which will be directly affected by the transition, are identified, and measures to prevent and mitigate these effects will be developed. This will necessitate cooperation between state and private energy production and distribution networks, between producers and retailers of heating systems, and awareness raising and incentives for the population.

Incentives to the banking system, the construction industry and homeowners with individual heating systems will encourage the adoption of energy efficiency measures and result in the fuel switch to cleaner sources. Incentives targeted towards local actors, communities and individuals are also required.



The lack of adequate and well managed waste leads to pollution of soil, water and spread of diseases.
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- **Clean air strategies are implemented by cities as an integral and systematic requirement of urban development:** The challenges of air pollution and of climate change are interlinked. Serbia's current production and consumption patterns simultaneously affect air quality, including from a transboundary dimension, while also contributing to increased CO₂ emissions. Local-level decision makers need to develop evidence-based strategies that tackle the high levels of air pollution in the short-, medium- and long-term. This requires a focus on sustainability in local management processes and on local level policies and solutions that promote clean air in the heating, sustainable transport, agricultural and waste sectors. Through more inclusive, people-centred and sustainable urban planning and development, this will result in improved air quality, wellbeing and health of all citizens and urban dwellers. It will also decrease health costs and improve urban and peri-urban environments.
- **Parameters of climate proofing, energy efficiency, social and environmental impact** (including protection of water and land/soil in general, and in a context of urban expansion in particular, challenges related to landfills and contaminated zones; erosion; floods and noise) **and Disaster Risk Reduction** (including disasters that aren't



caused by climate change, such as earthquakes, technical and technological accidents, human factor, etc.) **are mainstreamed into, and across, infrastructure norms and standards, to improve resilience and reduce carbon emissions along with comprehensive preventive action:** The outcome will be achieved through mainstreaming low-carbon standards and resilience best practices into the normative and regulatory frameworks for infrastructure - including urban development, transport infrastructure, primary sectors particularly vulnerable to climate change and possible disasters (agriculture, forestry and water management) - and through the management and reduction of all types of pollution. Standards should be applied to all horizontal and vertical infrastructure, public and private, while harnessing new skills and developing new value chains for the private sector. Selected existing infrastructure will need to be retrofitted, replaced or managed differently, as it reaches the end of its economic life or in response to policy imperatives. New infrastructure projects need to be designed, built and managed to be more resilient to the projected impacts of climate change and potential disasters, including all new urban extensions. Nature-based solutions need to be developed to contribute to increasing resilience.

National standards and processes, as well as regulatory and monitoring bodies, need to be strengthened and expanded with the aim of influencing investment decisions, enhancing value for money, and promoting quality infrastructure investments for the delivery of better social, economic and environmental outcomes. This will require engagement and coordination at the policymaking level, within the national state and financing institutions, and from all development partners and investors in Serbia.

In particular, with the increased impact of climate change on the magnitude and occurrence of disasters in Serbia, the management of risks, as outlined in the Sendai Framework, becomes critical to ensuring cost-efficient, people-centred and sustainable development. Strengthening the governance-human rights-en-

vironment nexus and mainstreaming gender into environmental policies will provide interlinkages with all three dimensions of sustainable development.

- **The resilience of communities to climate-induced and human-made disasters is enhanced:** Strengthening communities' resilience to disasters first and foremost saves lives and livelihoods. Resilience-building and climate adaptation is even more critical for local and rural communities that rely on agriculture as their primary source of income, as they are increasingly vulnerable to the combined effects of droughts, flooding and other climatic events. They are disproportionately affected by disasters as they have limited productive assets for coping and recovery, and limited exposure to early warning systems. Involving communities in disaster preparedness, including industrial accidents (*inter alia* through launching of national policy dialogues), is critical as it allows for a better understanding of – and response to – their specific needs, especially those of the most vulnerable. Building community health resilience by strengthening public health and healthcare systems is especially relevant during the COVID-19 crisis. Improving the community's physical, behavioural, and social health ensures improved ability to withstand, adapt to, and recover from adversity.

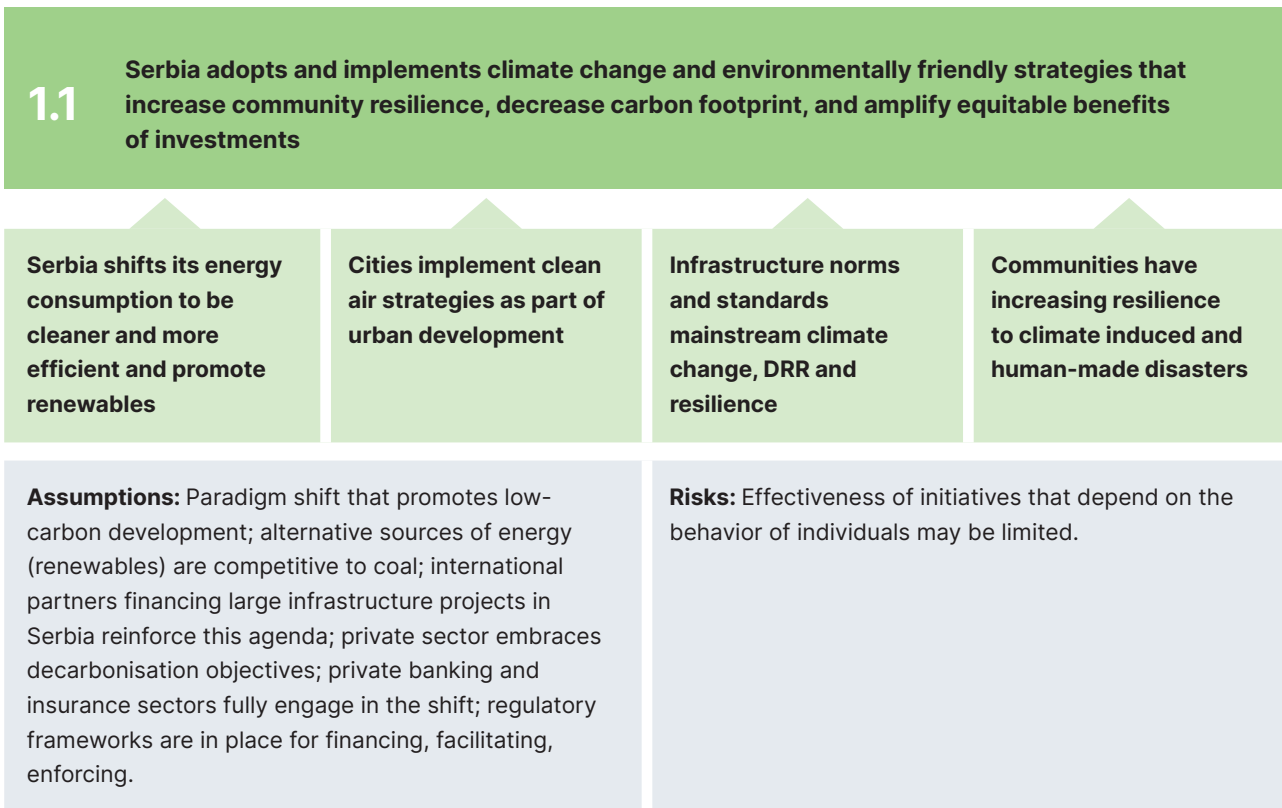
These results require a long-term vision and commitment from all political, economic and development stakeholders, and the COVID-19 crisis is a sharp reminder that long-term action starts now. Such fundamental changes will increase resilience and create new paths and opportunities for prosperity and wellbeing. The underlying assumption requires a paradigm shift at the strategic level, followed by reforms that promote low-carbon development at both the national and local levels. The need to apply a thorough Cost Benefit Analysis to all future small and large-scale infrastructure investments is equally important. **This will partly be achieved by integrating environmental, climate and health considerations into sectoral strategies and policies – namely in energy, mining, transport, infrastructure, construction, agriculture, and forestry – across the policy-design and implementation stages.**





FIGURE 2:

Theory of Change for Outcome 1.1



Planned United Nations Contribution

Together with its government counterparts and financing bodies, the UNCT will support institutions in Serbia to:

- Design and implement a robust and more ambitious strategic policy framework towards decarbonisation by 2050 (including a revision of NDCs for 2030);
- Design and implement national and local strategies to reduce emissions of other pollutants and improve air quality;
- Implement more ambitious objectives for reducing carbon emissions (and other pollutants) and increase carbon sinks;
- Improve local renewable energy deployment and energy efficiency and fast-track changes in urban mobility;
- Ensure a just transition where the most vulnerable population is not left behind;
- Mainstream approaches that prevent, reduce and manage disaster risks and strengthen community resilience;



- Promote the adoption and the enhanced implementation of specific norms and standards for regulating, planning, implementing, approving, improving of the construction fund, maintaining and operating existing and new infrastructure and buildings;
- Mainstream approaches that prevent, reduce and manage disaster risks and strengthen community resilience;
- Implement Serbia's commitments to the Sendai Framework for DRR, across the pillars of economic recovery, good governance and social equity.

The UNCT will provide technical assistance, capacity building, advocacy initiatives and operational support at the local level to:






- Support evidence-based strategies that integrate multi-sectoral approaches to implement and scale up local DRR and resilience strategies;
- Enhance local capacity to deal with crises alongside their day-to-day functions, including their ability to respond to the needs of vulnerable populations in the wake of a disaster;

- Develop local air quality strategies;
- Apply nature-based solutions, especially in dense urban environments;
- Scale up existing DRR and climate change adaptation interventions; and
- Increase knowledge and awareness to decrease the risk of diffuse soil pollution and improve pesticide and fertilizer management, including empty pesticide containers and plastic use in agriculture.

This approach will be supplemented with the UNCT facilitation and coordination role including with different stakeholders to ensure that the COVID-19 response and recovery stimulus measures further advance the adoption of climate and environmentally friendly policy solutions and technologies. The UNCT will continue to support Serbia in its implementation of the country's commitments under the Energy Community Treaty and the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans. It will, as needed, facilitate access to the community of knowledge at regional and global levels.

FIGURE 3:

The alignment of Outcome 1.1 with the SDGs, EU Accession and national priorities and its contribution to each

Outcome 1.1 Serbia adopts and implements climate change and environmentally friendly strategies that increase community resilience, decrease carbon footprint, and amplify the benefits of investments	
SDGs:	    
EU Accession Policy Area Cluster: 4; Negotiating Chapters	15: Energy; 21: Trans-European Networks; 27: Environment and climate change
National Investment Plan's areas of focus:	Renewable energy and energy efficiency
Contributing United Nations Agencies:	FAO, ITU, UNDP, UNDRR, UNECE, UNEP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UN-Habitat, UNICEF, UNIDO, UNOPS, WHO





Partnerships for Outcome 1.1:

- Government partners (Ministry of Culture and Information; Ministry of Environmental Protection; Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management; Ministry of Mining and Energy; Ministry of Economy; Ministry of Finance; Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure; Ministry of Health; Ministry of Interior; Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue; Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit; the Public Policy Secretariat of the Republic of Serbia; the Provincial Secretariat for Urban Planning and Environmental Protection; the Public Investment Management Office; the Development Agency of Serbia; the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities; Republic Hydrometeorological Service of Serbia; Institute of Public Health of Serbia with network of institutes of public health and municipalities)
- Publicly and privately owned electricity producers
- CSOs, including organizations supporting sustainable development, environmental protection, youth, and gender equality
- Media
- Academia and universities
- Global Environmental Facility, Energy Community, the Regional Cooperation Council, the Green Climate Fund, the Adaptation Fund, and the French Development Agency
- IFIs (e.g. IMF, WB Group, EBRD, EIB, COEDB and KfW), the National Bank of Serbia and commercial banks

Outcome 1.2: Natural and cultural resources are managed in a sustainable way

This outcome requires a shift to the more sustainable management of natural resources and cultural heritage, moving from short-term utilization and exploitation to ensuring long-term protection and sustainable use. This will enable long-term wealth and intergenerational solidarity that takes into account the needs of future generations.

Outcome 1.2 will be realised if the measures outlined below are put in place.

- **The protection of ecosystems, natural resources and biodiversity is improved and expanded:** Ecosystems, natural resources and biodiversity must be valued and exploited with a long-term perspective. All aquatic and terrestrial habitats need to be further protected

through restoration, damage control and sustainable management practices. At the community level, sustainable forest management can improve livelihoods, income generation, employment and opportunities for recreational activities. At the environmental level, protecting forests will contribute to conserving biodiversity, increase carbon sequestration and improve air quality. Soil pollution and restoration (and protection) of degraded lands, as well as protection of genetic resources are requiring close attention. Areas at risk of and damaged by floods need to be managed and restored by applying principles of sustainable flood management. This will reduce biodiversity losses, restore degraded habitats and optimise livelihood opportunities and human wellbeing. Policies need to embed resource efficiency as a core sustainability principle. Protection from pollution and a more rational use of



natural resources will increase resilience, drive more sustainable consumption and production, and contribute to a “greener”, more inclusive economy. Key natural resources in Serbia include water, air, soil, forests. Strengthening waste management policies will minimize waste quantity, reduce the amount of raw materials consumed, and improve the cost-effectiveness of the disposal of non-hazardous waste. Improved waste management strategies will also minimize the risks of hazardous waste to human health and to the environment across the country and create new economic opportunities and jobs. Improved transboundary water cooperation, including the essential water–health linkage, ensures protection and sustainable management of water resources in a collaborative way.

- **Institutions and communities manage cultural and historical resources in a way that optimises the long-term social and economic benefits for all, while preserving their values:** Cultural and historical resources are abundant in Serbia and will continue to be import-

ant development assets for the country in terms of economic opportunities, including for boosting national and international tourism in areas outside Belgrade. The expansion of sustainable cultural and ecological tourism will create social, environmental and economic benefits for local and rural communities.

The enhanced protection and conservation of cultural and natural resources and the restoration of biodiversity will benefit the country’s development. It will create new jobs and optimise the long-term social and economic benefits. **Financing is instrumental to ensure progress and achievement of sustainable results.** Initiatives related to this outcome will consider the livelihoods of those relying on natural resources, such as the rural poor, by ensuring a just transition to sustainable and innovative alternatives. In this respect, the long-term costs and benefits will be framed, understood and costed, while short-term actions will be adapted to minimize negative impacts. Meeting these challenges requires a new way of thinking and the engagement of the whole society.

FIGURE 4:
Theory of Change for Outcome 1.2





Planned United Nations Contribution

At the strategic level, the UNCT in Serbia will support national and local institutions and communities in Serbia to:

- Develop and strengthen evidence-based, coordinated policymaking and implementation around sustainable management of natural and cultural resources;
- Adopt the appropriate site management strategies and plans to ensure balance between safeguarding, conserving and promoting natural, cultural and historical heritage resources;
- Adopt, transform and develop sustainable and nature-based economic activities and production practices in the agro-rural, forestry, water management, and tourism sectors;
- Develop strategies and regulations to foster the digital transformation of sectors such as agriculture and tourism;
- Create innovative multi-stakeholder partnerships to prevent, reduce and monitor pollution of the environment, thereby contributing to a better health for all;
- Foster public-private partnerships; and
- Implement educational programmes and the mainstreaming of urban rehabilitation into urban management processes.

This combined approach will ensure greater prevention of environmental degradation, which will provide multiple benefits for both people and the environment, now and into the future, whilst continuing to improve resilience.

FIGURE 5:

The alignment of Outcome 1.2 with the SDGs, EU Accession and national priorities and its contribution to each





Partnerships for Outcome 1.2:

- Government partners (Ministry of Environmental Protection; Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management; Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure; Ministry of Culture and Information; Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development; Ministry of Trade, Tourism and Telecommunications; Ministry of Rural Welfare; Ministry of Youth and Sports; Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Ministry of Finance; Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit; the Public Policy Secretariat of the Republic of Serbia; Serbian Environmental Protection Agency; Development Agency of Serbia; Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities; the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia; Republic Geodetic Authority; Institute for Nature Conservation of Serbia; Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments of Serbia)
- CSOs, including organizations supporting sustainable development, promotion of culture and popularization of science, environmental protection, rural development, youth, and gender equality
- Media
- Academia and universities

Outcome 1.3: Equitable economic and employment opportunities are promoted through innovation

The successful realisation of this outcome requires policy and regulatory reforms that create stronger conditions for equitable, innovative and inclusive economic development that, in turn, incentivises sectors to shift to circular, low-carbon development, increases private sector competitiveness and trade, and creates decent jobs. Changing the way production, consumption and trade is done will increase the competitiveness of the economy, spur innovation, and create new income generation opportunities. Sustainable, equitable and diversified economic development of the country will ensure that the expected benefits of growth are more widely shared. This outcome will be achieved if:

- **Local development strategies adopt an area-based approach addressing the biggest challenges in the development of rural areas:** Challenges include lack of service, ageing, depopulation, and few economic opportunities. To make rural areas better places to live and thrive – and to develop economic opportunities outside of urban centres – it is crucial to support rural development with a focus on improved basic services, infrastructure, economy, and food and agricul-

ture. The development of small-scale farming, improving rural livelihoods for women and men in an inclusive manner, increasing finance for businesses led by women and youth, and increasing the competitiveness of the agri-food sector by modernising market chains underpin this effort.

- **The share of circular economic activities increases; circular and low-carbon economy becomes a source of opportunities rather than restrictions:** Inclusive growth, innovation and job creation will be stimulated by a revised strategic, regulatory and financing framework for SMEs. SMEs are insufficiently integrated into value chains and markets while their competitiveness will need to be improved in order to benefit from, and support, the regional trade opportunities created by the EU investment plan. Simplified procedures, improved access to information, innovative technology and financing will strengthen and sustain SMEs by improving competitiveness and productivity. Improved availability of innovative and diversified financial (fiscal, insurance, and investment) and banking instruments to support the dynamic development of a green and circular economy, along with institutional and regulatory systems, will foster a favourable climate that attracts private capital and foreign investments and supports fair trade.





- **The distribution of benefits to men and women from science, technology, and innovation is fair and balanced:** Serbia invests far less in science and research than the EU countries, and financing for innovative companies and start-ups is still insufficient. It is critical that public institutions and the private sector strengthen human, institutional, and R&D capacity through increasing investment in science, technology and innovation (STI). Activities aimed at strengthening human capacity need to reduce the gender gap in STEM and digitalisation through the promotion of formal and non-formal STEM-related education among girls and women, and through the support of women's employment in STEM fields by reducing gender discrimination in recruitment, promotion and gender pay gap.
- **Access to more decent job opportunities and fair competitive trade is levelled for all:** Effective realisation of programmes on diversification and digitalisation of selected sectors of the economy will help with a strategic focus on youth, women and vulnerable groups. Economic growth based on innovation and circularity, coupled with improved policies and capacities in the labour market that address the root causes of youth and women's lower economic participation – both in the private and the public sectors – is expected to create more decent job opportunities, especially for youth and wom-

en. Establishing wide partnerships between the public and private sectors to increase employment of young people will help them transition smoothly from education to work. Targeted employment programmes of the more vulnerable (e.g. Roma, persons with disabilities, asylum-seekers, refugees, migrants, and internally displaced persons) will support them in becoming active and contributing members of society. Increased employability of the workforce (youth in particular) and improved working conditions will also help to address key drivers of migration.

Achieving these results requires the promotion of equitable and inclusive economic growth, decoupled from environmental degradation, across different population groups and across geographical locations. An optimal mix of incentives, enabling programmes, and market signals is required to spur a more dynamic, growing economy and the creation of decent jobs. The capacities of public institutions with regards to the collection, analysis, and availability of disaggregated quality data on economic development, trade, private sector development, and investments needs to be strengthened to support this outcome. Serbia's participation in the Common Regional Market is expected to generate enhanced opportunities for entrepreneurs and create new jobs, including for women and the young.

FIGURE 6:
Theory of Change for Outcome 1.3

1.3 Equitable economic and employment opportunities are promoted through innovation

Local development strategies adopt an area-based approach

A greater share of economic activities transitions towards circularity: changing how we produce, consume and trade

Science, technology, and innovation benefit men and women equally

Women and men have access to more decent job opportunities and fair competitive trade

Assumptions: Paradigm shift in accepting a circular and low-carbon economy as a source of opportunities rather than restrictions; funding is available; ability to scale/expand to new areas is essential.

Risks: The private sector is critical to these efforts, and there is a risk that without incentives to engage in greening the economy, the private sector may not participate fully.



Planned United Nations Contribution

The UNCT will provide policy advice and capacity building to institutions in Serbia to:

- Develop and implement environmentally, socially, and economically sustainable policies that are more inclusive and associated with increased creation of decent jobs, particularly in the private sector;
- Foster the development of the digital innovation ecosystem through a strengthened institutional systemic approach and adapted policies;
- Change the service delivery models for key sectors through digitalization and increased efficiency, with the aim of restoring and expanding the economic participation of groups left behind;
- Address key structural barriers (including discriminatory gender norms, the rigid understanding of gender roles and the unequal distribution of unpaid care work that tends to burden women more than men) that have sustained the low rate of women in the labour force;
- Contribute to the improvement in the quality of jobs and attainment of modern labour rights, with an emphasis on disproportionately affected groups such as the Roma;
- Foster the efficiency of regional platforms and promote Serbia's participation in regional and international platforms – including the RCC and the WTO – to up-scale economic cooperation through the improvement of trade policies;
- Improve the capacities of labour market institutions to enhance their linkages with the education system and provide decent work opportunities for youth;
- Implement a placement programme for disproportionately affected groups such as the Roma; and
- Address the issues of integration and empowerment of small-scale agricultural producers and family farms into the value chains, improving their rural labour market prospects, enhanced access to knowledge and new mechanisms facilitating exit and entry strategies, with a particular focus on access to land for young farmers.



Energy transition will be the biggest socio-economic challenge - and opportunity - in the coming years.
© UN Serbia, Đorđe Novaković

The UNCT will specifically support communities and work with the private sector to:

- Strengthen their adaptive capacities in rural and urban areas and promote the establishment of new micro- and small enterprises and self-employment opportunities;
- Identify new sources of growth, which must be green and inclusive, including by supporting access to regional and global markets;
- Promote responsible employment/decent work criteria and integrated responsible recruitment systems; and
- Increase competitiveness of agro-food businesses in order for them to expand their access to national and international markets.

This support facilitates Serbia's economic recovery efforts from COVID-19.





FIGURE 7:

The alignment of Outcome 1.3 with the SDGs, EU Accession and national priorities and its contribution to each

Outcome 1.3 Equitable economic and employment opportunities are promoted through innovation	
SDGs:	
EU Accession Policy Area Cluster: 3 and 4; Negotiating Chapters:	19: Social policy and employment; 20: Enterprise and industrial policy; 25: Science and research; 27: Environment and climate change
National Investment Plan's areas of focus:	Innovation; Work with youth; Labour and employment; Green jobs; Digitalization; Agriculture
Contributing United Nations Agencies:	FAO, ILO, ITU, UNCTAD, UNDP, UNECE, UNEP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UN-Habitat, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIDO, UNOPS



Partnerships for Outcome 1.3:

- Government partners (Ministry of Culture and Information; Ministry of Finance; Ministry of Economy; Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management; Ministry of Rural Welfare; Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs; Ministry of Youth and Sports; Ministry of Trade, Tourism and Telecommunications; Innovation Fund; the Public Policy Secretariat of the Republic of Serbia; the National Employment Agency; the Chamber of Commerce; the Public Investment Management Office; and the Development Agency of Serbia)
- Serbian Association of Employers
- The private sector, including international private companies and local businesses
- IFIs (e.g. IMF, WB Group, EBRD, EIB, COEDB and KfW)
- CSOs, including organizations supporting sustainable economic development, local development, economic transformation, innovation and gender equality
- World Trade Organization
- Regional Cooperation Council



4.1.2 Strategic Priority 2: Wellbeing, social equity and the human potential are at the heart of systems, policies and practices

Outcome 2.1: Universal and inclusive access to quality health, social and protection services is improved

The successful realisation of this outcome requires actions that ensure that the fundamental rights and needs of all people in Serbia are met, and particularly those most left behind – children; youth; women from rural communities; women in reproductive age; survivors of gender-based violence, exploitation and abuse; persons with disabilities; older people; asylum-seekers, refugees and migrants; internally displaced persons, LGBTI, and others. Their access to health advancement needs to be improved, and the conditions for them to become contributing members of society need to be expanded. The latter is essential to economic success and human development, as well as to the experience of more fulfilling lives for all. Urban development and spatial and urban planning will play a key role in this outcome, if carefully and equitably developed and implemented. Public services must be in accessible geographic locations, infrastructure and equipment must be accessible and inclusive, and urban mobility must be facilitated. Integrated health and social services at the local level will particularly benefit those in remote and rural areas.

This outcome will be achieved if:

- **The capacities, quality, flexibility of and access to the public health system are strengthened and expanded – including mental health and drug abuse services – in a gender-sensitive and rights-based manner, including for a wide range of people with special conditions and circumstances:** Conditions for healthier lifestyles are expanded and promoted, at national, local and community levels.
- **Inclusive social care services are supported and expanded to ensure improved living conditions for all, and better resilience to shocks:** The aim is to close the gap in the provision and quality of support to older people, long-term care, social housing and living in the community, foster care, and psycho-social support services. This requires strengthening community-based care and support and health/social intersectoral cooperation; providing guidance for community-based services; and supporting alignment with human rights standards, including developing social housing and providing services for asylum-seekers, refugees and migrants in Serbia.
- **State institutions and CSOs ensure effective prevention and improved access to gender-sensitive quality services for survivors of violence, exploitation and abuse:** A gender dimension is mainstreamed throughout all initiatives, while improving gender-sensitive services is integrated in a standalone output.

Achieving this outcome will require measures to:

- Strengthen and innovate the legislative, regulatory and financial frameworks for health and social protection that is people- and rights-centred;
- Augment the size, competencies and skills of health and social services workforce;
- Strengthen data collection, disaggregation and analysis for a more strategic monitoring and decision-making process, and ensure the inclusion of the most disadvantaged groups;
- Analyse the value of services with respect to the needs; and
- Communicate widely to the general public and specific audiences on key topics around prevention of violence, healthy lifestyles, road safety, and social protection, including risk communication.





FIGURE 8:

Theory of Change for Outcome 2.1

2.1 Universal and inclusive access to quality health, social and protection services is improved

More people benefit from universal health coverage (including mental health and drug abuse services) and healthier lifestyles

Expanded and innovative social care services are supported to ensure improved living conditions

State institutions and CSOs ensure effective prevention and improved access to gender sensitive quality services for survivors of violence, exploitation and abuse

Assumptions: Data collection and analysis is improved; services are integrated with current systems / models/initiatives for sustainable implementation.

Risks: Lack of funding limits the ability to scale up initiatives, preventing national impact; individuals do not adopt behaviour changes that would lead to healthier lifestyles; difficulty obtaining accreditations for non-formal or alternative services provided by CSOs.

Planned United Nations Contribution

The UNCT in Serbia will support policymaking and implementation of institutional reforms that:

- Achieve universal and inclusive health coverage, and provide access to safe, quality and affordable essential health services, medicines and vaccines;
- Deliver more equitable and better-quality health, social and protection services, particularly to the most vulnerable;
- Conduct campaigns to inform the general public on healthcare and access to healthcare services provided by the state health system and outside the system;
- Improve health/social intersectoral cooperation and innovative approaches to new models of long-term care (services that support persons with disabilities, older people, and other vulnerable groups, at all levels);
- Improve the links between protection services and integrated social protection mechanisms and services, with a focus on tangible improvements in services and support provided to domestic violence survivors, victims of human trafficking, asylum-seekers, refugees, internally displaced persons and migrants in situations of vulnerability, as well as to other groups;
- Incentivise a shift in lifestyle towards one that is more active and more health-conscious; and
- Support the health system recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, while also helping the institutions in Serbia to detect and respond to health emergencies, including COVID-19, more effectively.








The UNCT will provide capacity-building support to:

- Increase access to inclusive, quality healthcare services and enable improved treatment and non-discrimination of certain groups, particularly as it pertains to reproductive health;
- Strengthen capacities in the implementation of the national e-health programme;
- Develop community-based initiatives that strengthen their demographic resilience by promoting healthy ageing and healthy lifestyles for all groups; and
- Diversify local social services provision.

Examples include strengthening community-based care for older people; providing guidance to community-based services; strengthening gender-responsive family-friendly services and alternative care; developing social housing; providing services to protect migrants in vulnerable situations through local partnerships for asylum-seekers, refugees, internally displaced persons and migrants; and early childhood development, sexual and reproductive health for young persons and persons with disabilities.

FIGURE 9:

The alignment of Outcome 2.1 with the SDGs, EU Accession and national priorities and its contribution to each

Outcome 2.1 Universal and inclusive access to quality health, social and protection services is improved	
SDGs:	    
EU Accession Policy Area Cluster: 2 and 3; Negotiating Chapters	28: Consumer and health protection; 19: Social policy and employment
National Investment Plan's areas of focus:	Health (including sexual and reproductive health)
Contributing United Nations Agencies:	IOM, ITU, OHCHR, UNDP, UNFPA, UN-Habitat, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNODC, UNOPS, UN Women, WHO





Partnerships for Outcome 2.1:

- Government partners (Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure; Ministry of Health; Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs; Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue; Ministry of Finance; Ministry of Economy; Ministry for Family Welfare and Demography; Ministry for Rural Welfare; Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit; the Public Policy Secretariat of the Republic of Serbia; the Institute of Public Health with network of institutes of public health; Office for Combating Drugs; the Agency for Accreditation of Health Care Institutions; Commissariat for Refugees and Migration); healthcare service providers and Centers for Social Welfare; local self-governments
- Chambers of doctors and nurses
- CSOs (e.g. organizations supporting improvement of social protection and healthcare, OPDs, women's organizations, youth-led organizations, minority-led organizations, organizations working towards rights of other groups in focus and at risk)
- IFIs (e.g. IMF, WB Group, EBRD, EIB, COEDB and KfW)
- Private sector
- Global multi-partner trust funds (including the Joint SDG fund and the COVID-19 fund)
- Academia and universities
- Media

Outcome 2.2: Skills, education and capabilities are enhanced to ensure equitable opportunities for all

Prerequisites of this outcome are instrumental to ensuring that all people have access to equal opportunities and lead more fulfilling and productive lives. Moreover, education empowers people with the civic values, socio-emotional competences and critical thinking skills needed to contribute actively to their communities. The radical upheaval of the education system during the COVID-19 pandemic has brought to the open the remaining structural gaps in making quality education accessible to all, no matter the circumstances. It has also triggered both new needs and new opportunities to fast-track a smart digital agenda that is both safe and empowering. Renewed policies and innovative efforts are required to forge effective, flexible and more strategic links between the education systems, the labour market and employers' and workers' organisations, expand employment size and improve the quality of employment.

Outcome 2.2 will be realised if the measures outlined below are put in place:

- **Formal education systems, including technical and vocational training, are strengthened as a key enabler for all children and young people to reach fulfilling lives:** It's of critical importance to provide access to formal and informal education and life skills development for children at risk of being left behind, especially children with disabilities and the Roma. Increased access to quality preschool education for all children, including children with developmental challenges and disabilities, and a strengthened secondary education system are also required. As in other sectors, tools and data to monitor the performance of the education system and learning outcomes should be strengthened and expanded in order to inform policies and programmes, while fine-tuning measures to integrate students' socioeconomic background and addressing differences of student outcomes across specific groups. Alternative models should be tested without compromising their financial sustainability, inclusiveness or quality.



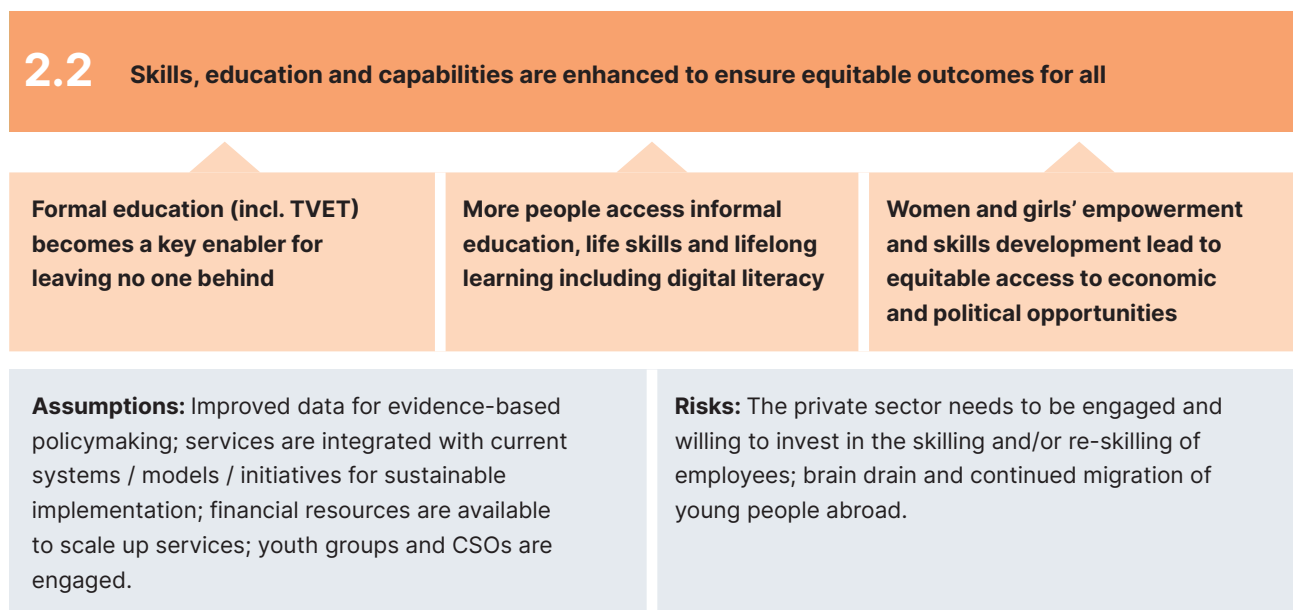
In spite of recent increased attention, the promise of quality education for all is yet to be fulfilled. In particular, the efficient and equitable use of limited financial resources is required, whereby planning procedures can inform the preparation of education budgets and ensure their long-term sustainability and alignment with policy priorities. Resources resulting from economic growth, increased awareness among rights-holders on access to quality education, and key advancements in the policies and capacities of institutions will facilitate improvements and educational outcomes.

- **More people access informal education, life skills and lifelong learning, including digital literacy, and acquire new skills for employability:** Education and training systems, labour markets, workers and workplaces will have to become more adaptable. Skill requirements are changing rapidly as a result of structural shifts, particularly in the new environment and constraints shaped by the global pandemic, and by the urgency of climate change action. Lifelong learning and skills development,

which increase workforce employability, are essential to turn structural change into an opportunity for all. Skill-based programmes help reinforce effective social skills, mental resilience, and emotional wellbeing of students. These are key protective factors that are critical for promoting healthy development. The involvement of, and incentives to, the private sector will be necessary to promote labour reallocation, re-training and mobility, in the face of structural changes. Once again, the production and use of robust and accessible data will be needed to anticipate emerging skill needs and adapting policies accordingly.

- **The employment gap is narrowed between men and women:** Women’s empowerment, skills development and more inclusive gender sensitive policies in multiple sectors will lead to increased employability of women, as well as political representation. Improved labour market analysis and forecasting will formulate efficient active labour market measures for women, youth and the vulnerable population, including refugees.

FIGURE 10:
Theory of Change for Outcome 2.2





Planned United Nations Contribution

The UNCT in Serbia will support the development and implementation of policies that:

- Improve access to, and the quality of, education, focusing particularly on empowering young people and vulnerable groups, and closing critical gender gaps;
- Strengthen the systemic and institutional approach to digital skills development, including a focus on human capacity and digital skills development for creating equal opportunities for girls and women in the STEM sector;
- Strengthen the TVET system's ability to offer skills training that is linked to the market needs of a growing private sector;
- Create more opportunities for obtaining higher and vocational education for young women and men, matching the number of school graduates;
- Promote the equitable engagement of women in the formal economy;
- Support the government to improve the employability of their workforce in a broader context of effective labour market policies and balanced employment protection legislation; and
- Highlight the importance of policy coherence through a whole-of-government approach with full stakeholder engagement, including the private sector, and strengthened interactions between the world of work and the world of education and training.

The UNCT in Serbia will provide capacity-building advocacy and technical support to:

- Enable a wider inclusion of children in preschool education programmes, including specific support through local self government;
- Strengthen the education system's ability to provide inclusive and quality education on relevant skills for work and life, to ensure that adolescents are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills for the labour market, and that they become social change agents;
- Develop informal education programmes supporting youth, adults, teachers and older people in life skills development, volunteering, peer support, healthy ageing, digital literacy, intergenerational cooperation, and interculturalism;
- Develop and implement prequalification programmes that help with job placements and encourage important life skills for youth;
- Develop digital skills and digital literacy, and ensure access to internet for all generations; and
- Improve and promote inclusive approaches, policies and practices to support the wellbeing of children, students and adults in education system, especially members of vulnerable social groups.



FIGURE 11:

The alignment of Outcome 2.2 with the SDGs, EU Accession and national priorities and its contribution to each

Outcome 2.2 Skills, education and capabilities are enhanced to ensure equitable outcomes for all	
SDGs:	
EU Accession Policy Area Cluster: 3; Negotiating Chapters:	19: Social policy and employment; 26: Education and culture
National Investment Plan's areas of focus:	Early childhood development; Education; Work with youth
Contributing United Nations Agencies:	FAO, ILO, ITU, OHCHR, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UN-Habitat, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNODC, UNOPS, UN Women; WHO



Partnerships for Outcome 2.2:

- Government partners (Ministry of Culture and Information; Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs; National Employment Service; Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development; Ministry of Youth and Sport; Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue; Office for Combating Drugs; the Institute for Improvement of Education; the Institute for Evaluation of Education Quality; and the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities) and local self-governments
- Independent bodies, including the Protector of Citizens and the Commissioner for Protection of Equality
- Academia and universities
- CSOs (e.g. organizations supporting human and minority rights, rights of persons with disabilities, popularization of science, education, arts and sport, democratic values, women's organizations, youth-led organizations, minority-led organizations)
- Multilateral organizations (including the EU and Council of Europe) and bilateral ODA partners (e.g. USAID) active in the education sector



Outcome 2.3: Mobility and demographic transition become vectors for positive change and prosperity for all people

Current demographic trends in Serbia are driven by many interconnected factors: low fertility (long-term negative natural growth); negative migration balance (increased outmigration); rural-to-urban migration; population ageing.

At the same time, the country is faced with an interplay of migration trends, both internally and internationally, including a steady return of Serbian citizens (both voluntary and non-voluntary), and other populations with migration experiences, including those individuals and communities exposed to negative effects of migration.

Combined, these factors bring a set of clear macro-economic challenges that affect the economy and the sustainability of healthcare and social security systems, vital infrastructures and services, particularly in areas with low or decreasing population density and multiple migration issues. Most immediately, these relate to the balance of contributions and payments and the solvency of pension funds. Addressing these demographic trends is a complex issue, as for example, the decision to migrate depends on several factors, including poverty, unemployment, and a general lack of opportunities, perceived or real. Mobility and the demographic transition can become vectors for positive change, quality of life and prosperity, if the root causes of these trends are addressed in the following way:

- **Capacities of national and local stakeholders are strengthened to develop and implement evidence-based development and population policies:** This will be achieved if development and demographic policies and services, offered by national and local stakeholders to manage demographic trends and migration issues, are strengthened and shaped according to clear development objectives and robust people-centered data. It is necessary to improve the capacity at all levels to collect and understand the data, predict demographic changes, understand their implications, and develop policy responses that are based on evidence and human rights. An understanding of demographics is important to spatial and urban plans, for example, and

should be carefully considered to ensure accessibility for all. If developed in an inclusive manner, these plans can positively impact the mobility of the population, reversing migration in support of a more favourable environment that has the potential to attract inhabitants and others, build the labour force, and foster tourism and investments. Skills, tools, political will and public support is needed to mitigate potentially negative effects for individuals, society, economy and the environment, and harness the opportunities for development that come with demographic change, and migration governance for the benefit of all, including well-managed, locally-responsive and evidence-based local migration policies.

- **Migration outcomes are improved through mobility of skills, knowledge and capacities:** This can be achieved by promoting mobility, future-fit skills, knowledge and competencies as key parameters for smart migration policies. Creating education, employment, and economic opportunities – alongside opportunities for creating a family and fulfilling one’s potential in every aspect of life – would increase the probability that young people living abroad will return to Serbia. These policies would also support asylum-seekers, refugees and migrants in participating in local economic life. This will in turn have a positive impact on economic development. At the same time, comprehensive local migration policies will create local settings conducive of well-managed mobility of skills, knowledge and capacities.



Wellbeing of all people across generations and social equity have a central role in building resilient and prosperous communities.
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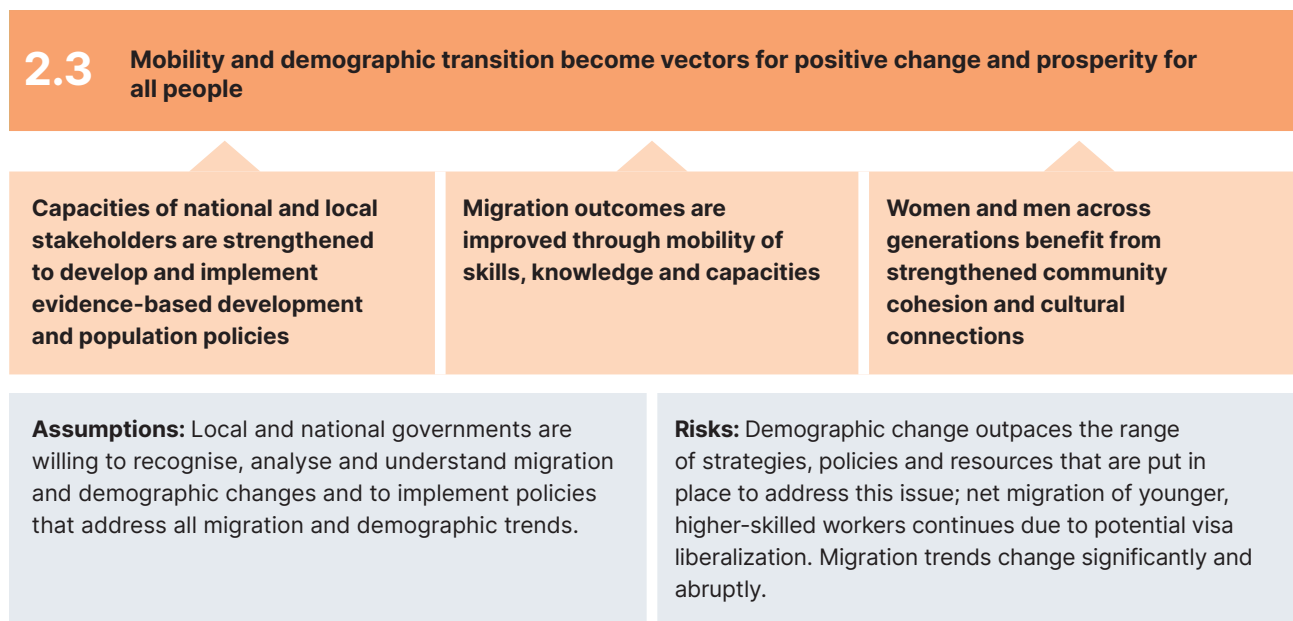
■ **Women and men across generations benefit from strengthened community cohesion and cultural connections:** Territorial inequalities across regions in Serbia are high, especially with regards to the availability of employment opportunities appealing to youth and the capacity of health and social protection services. Further population decline, if not addressed, might further increase inequalities with fewer people available to drive economic growth and contribute to social security needed to care for an ageing population. The COVID-19 crisis exposed these inequalities, but it also encouraged strong volunteering activity and solidarity between and within communities, and new trading opportunities. Creating opportunities for young generations to strive in a rural setting is critical for Serbia's future, including by upscaling the existing agricultural economy towards sustainable farming. At the heart of this objective is to ensure that vulnerable populations are not disproportionality affected by the demographic transition. It is necessary to approach demographic challenges in a holistic manner, and create an environment in which

more people, including those often excluded (such as people older than 65, women caring for their families, persons with disabilities) are fully integrated as active members of community and society who contribute to their development.

Putting people first, supporting their rights and choices, and increasing gender equality will contribute to greater cohesion and improved productivity, with an economy that can grow and expand even when population numbers are decreasing.

On the other hand, complex migration patterns in Serbia require intensive work on social cohesion, especially in those local communities that are strongly affected by migration, thus fighting xenophobia, hate speech and anti-migrant sentiment through concerted community action open to all.

FIGURE 12:
Theory of Change for Outcome 2.3





Planned United Nations Contribution

The UNCT will provide technical assistance and policy advice to both local and national governments to support them to:

- Design and implement evidence-based policies that turn rapid demographic change into positive development and restore demographic resilience.





The UNCT in Serbia will assist institutions in Serbia to:

- Integrate an array of development solutions into population policy through a concerted and coordinated effort;
- Mitigate the risk that stems from the possibility that negative demographic trends outpace the implementation of strategies and policies that aim to address this issue;
- Enable evidence-based and timely policy responses through data collection, monitoring and analysis;
- Develop new skills and education to spur gender-balanced empowerment of people across generations, and support in tackling the root causes of depopulation, focusing on youth;

- Create conditions for increased community engagement of all generations and expanded inter-generational dynamics to bring social and economic benefits to all communities;
- Narrow the gap in the provision of services, to ensure people of all generations benefit equally; this will be accomplished through initiatives that address depopulation from a strategic policy perspective, and through supporting pre-departure learning for youth, community based vocational trainings, access to education or jobs for returnees, as well as sustainable reintegration;
- Develop local migration policies which contribute to personal development and empowerment for migrants and their families as development actors, as well as to communities through innovation, such as social remittances, skills transfers and return migration; and
- Promote social cohesion to address issues of xenophobia, negative perceptions and sentiments towards migrants/migration, as part of locally owned and well-managed migration governance.

FIGURE 13:

The alignment of Outcome 2.3 with the SDGs, EU Accession and national priorities and its contribution to each

Outcome 2.3 Mobility and demographic transition become vectors for positive change and prosperity for all people	
SDGs:	   
EU Accession Policy Area Cluster: 1 and 2; Negotiating Chapters:	18: Statistics; 24: Justice, freedom and security; 28: Consumer and health protection
National Investment Plan's areas of focus:	Work with youth; Population dynamics; Labour and employment; Digitalization
Contributing United Nations Agencies:	IOM, UNDP, UNFPA, UN-Habitat, UNHCR, UNICEF, WHO





Partnerships for Outcome 2.3:

- Government partners (Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure; Ministry of Culture and Information; Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veterans and Social Affairs; Ministry of Youth and Sport; Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue; Ministry of Family Care, Children and Demographics; Ministry of Culture and Information; Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development; Ministry of Health; Ministry of Interior; Ministry for European Integration; Ministry of Economy; Ministry of Finance; the Office for the Diaspora; Commissariat for Refugees and Migration) and local self-governments
- Independent bodies, including the Protector of Citizens and the Commissioner for Protection of Equality
- Academia and universities
- CSOs (e.g. organizations supporting human and minority rights, sustainable migration, intergenerational exchange, rights of people with disabilities, women's organizations, youth-led organizations, minority-led organizations)
- Multilateral organizations (including the EU, OSCE) and bilateral ODA partners
- IFIs (e.g. IMF, WB Group, EBRD, EIB, COEDB and KfW)

4.1.3 Strategic Priority 3: Building trust and mutual accountability through the rule of Law, rights and duties agenda

Outcome 3.1: All people, especially the more vulnerable, benefit from the realisation of human rights, gender equality, social cohesion, and enhanced rule of law in line with international commitments

This outcome aims to achieve a fuller implementation of the fundamental rights and freedoms of all rights-holders' groups, enhance gender equality, promote social cohesion, and strengthen the rule of law. The outcome responds to the prioritisation of human rights, gender equality, social cohesion, the rule of law and non-discrimination in Serbia's international commitments (including the United Nations standards, the EU accession processes and regional frameworks) and instrumentalises it with a variety of actors – the Government and its services, civil society, the judiciary, international partners, the private sector and stakeholders at the local level. As true equality can only be achieved through full realisation of all human rights

and gender equality standards, this outcome is focused on advancing the policies, practices and capacities concerning the respect for non-discrimination, social inclusion and participation of all rights-holders in Serbia. Enhancing democratic processes and the position of independent institutions will strengthen the adherence to the rule of law, as a priority commitment in the EU accession process, and to universal human rights standards and the international standards for gender equality, while also advancing elimination of violence against women and women's empowerment. This will also include the strengthened integrated institutional capacities to prevent, protect and respond to violence against women, transparency in the area of media freedoms, and the fight against systemic corruption, false information, divisive narratives and hate speech, gender stereotypes and xenophobia. This will be achieved if:

- **The reform processes in the area of the rule of law – involving the state government, the judiciary branch and local governments – are accelerated, strengthened and expanded; the implementation of recent and future policies and strategies is effective, and their impacts benefit all, resulting in equal access to and enjoyment of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, in line with the requirements of international treaties and bodies:** Normative principles and





frameworks are advanced and strengthened towards full compliance with universal human rights standards and Human Rights Mechanisms' recommendations to Serbia, and they ultimately consolidate democratic governance. Processes guaranteeing the independence and effectiveness of the judicial system are strengthened. This, together with their impartiality and integrity, upholds the rule of law and ensures that there is no discrimination in the administration of justice and protection of human rights. This also includes the systematic application of investigations, prosecutions and final convictions. Improvements in the capacities of duty bearers at the national and local level to uphold the rule of law, address discrimination, and protect human rights will empower rights-holders and increase their trust in the government, including the most marginalised.



Women Parliamentary Network conference in Serbian National Assembly. © UNDP Serbia

- **The reform processes, policies and strategies advance gender-responsive principles that empower women and girls across political, economic and social domains:** This includes 1) support for political and economic decision-making bodies to be inclusive, gender-balanced and gender-sensitive, and addressing stereotypes that work against women's leadership; 2) support to promoting the rule of law, the implementation of relevant international standards for gender equality and women's empowerment; 3) policies that promote decent work and social protection for women, addressing women's disproportionate share of unpaid domestic

and care work and the gender pay gap, as well as women's representation, including through trade unions.

Efforts must be made to ensure strengthened integrated institutional capacities to prevent, protect and respond to gender-based and domestic violence and deliver quality essential services to survivors with attention to women and girls at greater risk.

- **The operational, monitoring and reporting capabilities of oversight and independent bodies are strengthened:** This refers to independent institutions such as the National Institution for Human Rights, the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality, and the Commissioner for Information of Public Importance and Personal Data Protection, as well as to active monitoring supported by the civil society. In addition, functionality and quality of work of the National Mechanism for Reporting and Follow-up (NMRF) will secure that a variety of actors are included in the interaction with the United Nations Human Rights Mechanisms, and ensure an effective follow-up to recommendations. For monitoring bodies to be effective, human rights risks need to be visible, which requires engagement from CSOs, the judiciary and the Parliament, particularly those that represent marginalised groups to ensure ground-level information.
- **National institutions are strengthened in specific areas of home affairs:** Improved institutional and operational capacities in rooting out organized crime including corruption; terrorism; money laundering; human, firearms, cultural goods and drugs trafficking and migrant and refugee smuggling; and in statelessness prevention, strengthening a fair and efficient asylum system, and protection-sensitive migration governance systems – while contributing to the reform efforts – will ensure an efficient institutional response with the full respect of human rights.

Long-existing inequalities have intensified during the COVID-19 crisis and need to be tackled through unified, focused and coordinated systemic action that is rights-based, gender-responsive and leaves no one behind. Only with the full engagement of both the Government and CSOs will this outcome be realised.

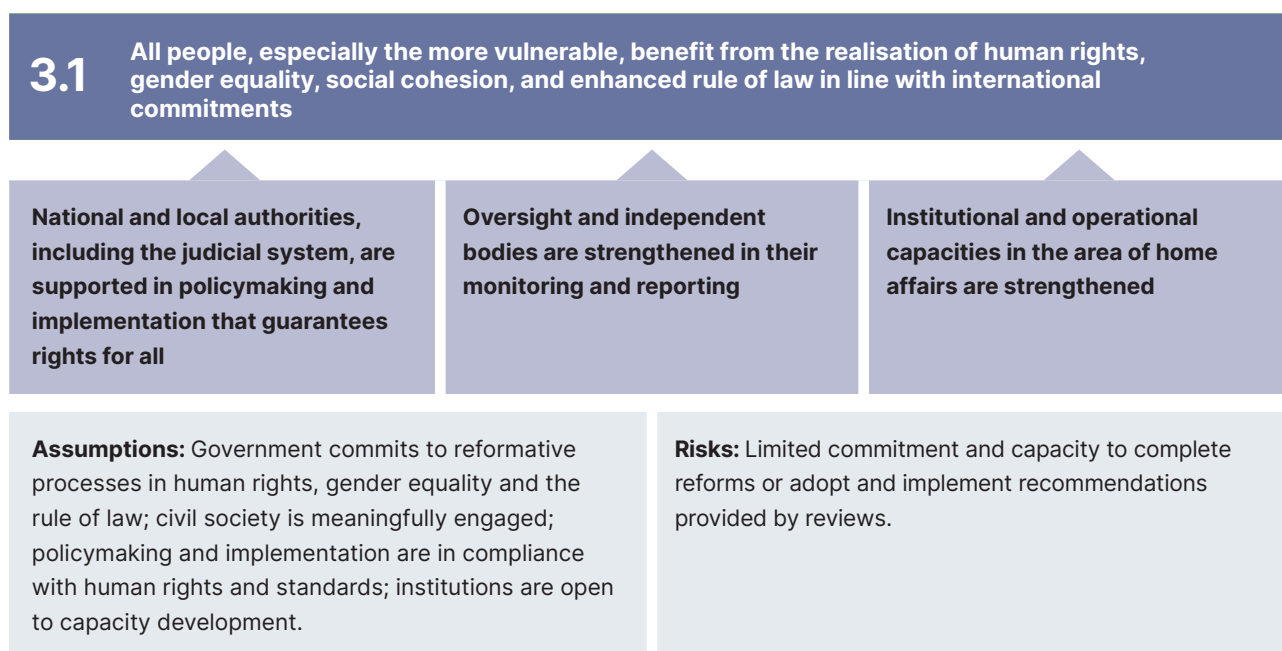


The direction is and will continue to be outlined by a vast number of recommendations stemming from reviews undertaken by the United Nations Treaty Bodies, Special Procedures and in the Universal Periodic Review, with regard to which the UNCT holds strong partnerships with all stakeholders and supports their implementation and monitoring. Strengthening and advancement in the areas of judiciary independence, media freedoms and the roles of democratic and independent institutions under-

pins this transformative process. Increased empowerment of rights-holders, increase in compliance with human rights and gender equality standards, together with commitments and capacity improvements among duty bearers, is expected to bring transformative change towards true equality, social inclusion, and accountability for human rights and the rule of law. This approach will enable Serbia to reach closer to true equality and build a more resilient and cohesive society altogether.

FIGURE 14:

Theory of Change for Outcome 3.1



Planned United Nations Contribution

The UNCT in Serbia will support the government and other stakeholders to:

- Implement human rights standards and the rule of law in line with international commitments and recommendations, including as they pertain to gender equality and the “Leave No One Behind” standards, in policymaking and implementation, with full participation of rights-holders and civil society;
- Create space for further advancement of human rights enjoyment, security and equality of all marginalised or excluded groups, in particular persons with disabilities, LGBTI, youth, Roma, human rights defenders and media workers, migrants and refugees, women and girls experiencing multiple discrimination, and other groups of rights-holders at risk of violence, exclusion and discrimination; which might include older persons, national and ethnic minorities, people living with HIV/AIDS and others;










- Support independence and effectiveness of the judiciary, courts and public prosecutors' offices in criminal proceedings, so that they can address structural deficiencies and sources of inequalities in policy and practice, with emphasis on the most marginalised groups;
- Advance judiciary capacities and preparedness for human rights protection;
- Build capacities and support the oversight function of independent bodies and CSOs to monitor the rule of law implementation and report on human rights violations;
- Engage with CSOs, women's groups, refugee community, educational institutions and other implementing partners to empower people in Serbia, especially women, young people and vulnerable groups, to exercise and protect their basic rights and civic responsibilities, and encourage them to self-advocate if such rights are undermined by duty bearers;
- Address drivers of discrimination and gender inequality, such as discriminatory gender norms/stereotypes, child and early marriages, and other harmful practices;
- Address challenges in security and home affairs to reach greater compliance with the human rights agenda and the participation of rights-holders; this includes strengthening an efficient and fair asylum system and preventing statelessness, strengthening migration governance systems, addressing organized crime, in particular corruption, terrorism, money laundering, human, firearms, cultural goods and drugs trafficking and migrant smuggling, and recovering the proceeds of crime or its laundering to take the profit away from crime;
- Continue facilitating cooperation with relevant UN entities and other partners concerning returns of those internally displaced persons from Kosovo who decide to opt for return instead of local integration;
- Provide policy advice, capacity-building and technical assistance in the fields of ICT infrastructure and digital accessibility in these areas.

FIGURE 15:

The alignment of Outcome 3.1 with the SDGs, EU Accession and national priorities and its contribution to each

Outcome 3.1 All people, especially the more vulnerable, benefit from the realisation of human rights, gender equality, social cohesion, and enhanced rule of law in line with international commitments	
SDGs:	    
EU Accession Policy Area Cluster: 3 and 1; Negotiating Chapters:	10: Information society and media; 23: Judiciary and fundamental rights; 24: Justice, freedom and security
National Investment Plan's areas of focus:	Regional and transborder/transboundary cooperation
Contributing United Nations Agencies:	IOM, ITU, OHCHR, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UN-Habitat, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNODC, UNOPS, UN Women, WHO





Partnerships for Outcome 3.1:

- Government partners (Ministry of Culture and Information; Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs; Ministry of Youth and Sports; Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue; Ministry of Finance – Customs Administration; Ministry of Trade, Tourism and Telecommunications; Office for Kosovo and Metohija; Coordination Body for Gender Equality; Ministry for Family Welfare and Demography; Ministry for Rural Welfare; Ministry of Justice; Ministry of Interior; Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit; Coordination Body for Bujanovac, Preševo and Medveđa; the Public Policy Secretariat of the Republic of Serbia; the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia; the Institute for Social Protection; Centres for Social Welfare) and local self-governments
- Parliament
- Courts, High Judicial Council, Republic Public Prosecutors' Office, State Prosecutorial Council, Bar Association of Serbia, providers of legal aid, providers of free legal aid, and the Judicial Academy
- Independent bodies, including the Protector of Citizens, the Commissioner for Protection of Equality, and the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration
- CSOs (e.g. the Platform of CSOs for United Nations Mechanisms, OPDs, women's organizations, youth-led organizations, minority-led organizations, organizations working towards rights of other groups in focus and at risk)
- Media
- Multilateral organizations (including the EU, Council of Europe, and OSCE) and bilateral partners (e.g. embassies)

Outcome 3.2: All people benefit from effective governance and meaningful civic engagement

More effective governance in the public sector will encourage better decision-making and efficient use of resources, while strengthening the accountability for the stewardship of those resources. Increased incentives from the EU accession process coupled with advanced capacities, tools and policies in these areas will help lead to more accountable, effective and transparent institutions. These will receive both political and financial support from constituents, which in turn facilitates high-quality services for people and businesses and legitimises other components of governance. This outcome will be achieved if:

- **Governance systems for planning, budgeting, and monitoring of national and local development are more efficient and SDG-focused:** The 2030 Agenda will only be achieved if it is backed by appropriate planning, budgeting, and monitoring systems at the national and local levels. Policy planning and budgeting require full synchronisation in order to support national and local level development strategies and the allocation of resources. A governance gap, stemming from limited coordination between different governmental levels, limited access to publicly available data, and insufficiently integrated gender- and child-focused budgeting, needs to be closed to deliver on this outcome. The application and improvement of information and communication technologies (ICT) in public administration – including advancing e-governance as part of the digital transformation – will enhance coordination and transparency. A continuous attention to strengthen effective procurement and budget implementation procedures will also generate substantial budget savings that can be reallocated to social expenditures.
- **Effective governance for emergency preparedness and response is in place guaranteeing that all lives are equal:** There are remaining gaps at the national and local levels that need to be closed in order to achieve effective emergency preparedness and response capabilities. Local authorities must have the capacity and autonomy to act and coordinate at various levels,





whether in the context of natural and man-made disasters such as floods, current health and economic crises resulting from pandemics, increased mixed migration flows, or other contingencies and emergencies.

- **Civic engagement and representation are enhanced for the benefit of society:** Strengthened capacities of CSOs and multiple platforms of engagement with the Government will empower the civil society and all people in their participation in social and political processes, policymaking, monitoring and reviewing of state and non-state actions. A broad participation will increase inclusiveness and ownership over policy solutions that will lead to a more effective implementation, especially at the local, community and individual levels. This includes participation in the process of spatial and urban planning where the participation requirement is met by providing early public insight as a basic form of citizens' participation in the decision-making processes concerning plans with territorial and urban dimensions. Only

through the balance ensured by a free and strong civil society will the mutual accountability and trust be enhanced between the state and people. This is directly linked to the success of other outcomes related to human rights, gender equality, and enhanced rule of law.

- **Regional and transborder/transboundary cooperation, security, and trust building are intensified:** Multilateral, regional and transborder/transboundary cooperation will uphold progress in reconciliation and enhance safety and security, especially with regard to organized crime, particularly corruption, money laundering, human trafficking and smuggling, and the recovery of the proceeds of crime or its laundering. Continued regional and transborder/transboundary cooperation and dialogue that focuses on youth, women and their prosperity and future in South East Europe will be critical both for regional economic developments, and for building trust and sustaining peace.

FIGURE 16:

Theory of Change for Outcome 3.2

3.2 All people benefit from effective governance and meaningful civic engagement

Governance systems for planning, budgeting, and monitoring of national and local development are more efficient and SDG focused

Civic engagement and representation are enhanced for the benefit of society

Emergency preparedness and response guarantees that all lives are equal

Regional and transborder / transboundary cooperation, security, and trust building are enhanced

Assumptions: CSOs and people have sufficient trust to engage with new initiatives; the United Nations initiatives are coordinated to improve advocacy.

Risks: The government's sector working groups do not increase engagement with the United Nations; regional relations deteriorate.



Planned United Nations Contribution

The UNCT in Serbia will support the institutions in Serbia to:

- Build human, organizational and procedural capacities for institutional reform;
- Implement governance reforms driven by the EU accession process and demands for accountability made by civil society and rights-holders;
- Develop, build capacities and implement innovative tools to improve transparency and public dialogue which promote good governance, social cohesion, planning, and national and local monitoring of development;
- Support engagement of citizens of all generations related to youth, vulnerable population groups and development, gender relations, gender-based violence, ageing, peer support, intergenerational cooperation, peace building, etc.;
- Introduce innovation and its mainstreaming into policies such as gender-sensitive planning and budgeting, and a risk assessment plan for violations of gender equality principles, integrity plans in the area of human rights, etc.;
- Foster innovation, digital transformation and e-governance to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of public administration and governance, while also building its capacity to absorb external financial assistance;
- Increase intra-regional support in further strengthening of migration management, as well as effective countering of human trafficking and migrant smuggling; and

- Build capacities to improve emergency preparedness and response, including ongoing emergencies such as the COVID-19 crisis and the mixed migration management.

The UNCT, as facilitator and convener of different stakeholders at the local, national and regional levels will:

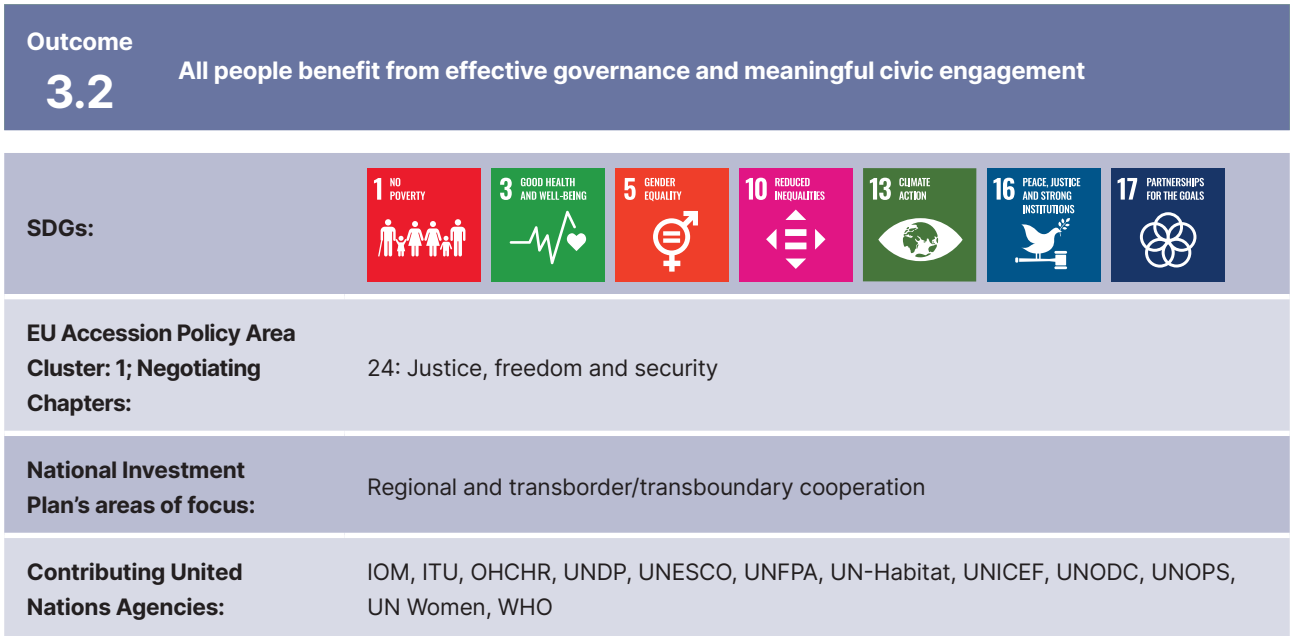
- Facilitate the dialogue between institutions, civil society, and individual groups, which addresses sources of mistrust, builds trust, and ensures greater social cohesion;
- Support institutions to develop and implement a participatory approach that empowers youth and vulnerable groups with the aim to increase public confidence in institutions, including at the community level, especially among youth, women, and vulnerable groups;
- Strengthen civic engagement and community dialogue through its unique positioning as an impartial, non-partisan actor;
- Support the Government of Serbia in regional and transborder/transboundary cooperation, regional border management and in the human rights agenda, right to asylum and integration; including in the wider transitional justice area; and
- Foster positive and fruitful neighborly, regional and transborder/transboundary relations, security, rule of law and effective cooperation.





FIGURE 17:

The alignment of Outcome 3.2 with the SDGs, EU Accession and national priorities and its contribution to each



Partnerships for Outcome 3.2:

- Government partners (the Ministry of Public Administration and Local self-government; Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue; Ministry of Justice; Ministry of Interior; Ministry of Finance; Ministry of Youth and Sport; Ministry for European Integration; Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia; the Public Policy Secretariat of the Republic of Serbia; Public Procurement Office; Administration for the Prevention of Money Laundering; and the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities) and local self-governments
- Parliament
- Independent bodies, including the Anticorruption Agency, Protector of Citizens, and Commissioner for Protection of Equality; the State Audit Institution; the Republic Public Prosecutor's Office
- CSOs (e.g. organizations supporting human and minority rights, anticorruption, regional cooperation, gender equality, community-based and faith-based organizations)
- Media
- Academia
- Multilateral organizations (including the EU, Council of Europe, and OSCE), bilateral ODA partners and IFIs





4.2 Synergies

All priorities outlined in this Cooperation Framework are fully aligned with and contribute to the advancement of the national development priorities, as well as to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Taking into account the country's status as an EU accession candidate country, all the objectives are closely aligned with EU accession reform processes and the EU *acquis communautaire*, including the Belgrade-Priština Dialogue. There is great potential for complementarity between the implementation of both the EU reform processes and the 2030 Agenda, which is fully captured in the Results Matrix of this strategic document (Annex 3). In line with the country's plan for recovery after the COVID-19 crisis, the objectives of this strategy leave space for development of concrete activities that will support the country's efforts to recover back better. Finally, this strategy has identified priority areas where progress achieved in Serbia will also contribute to positive change in the region. This will impact the progress of the entire region, for example in terms of the environment, trade, demographic trends, security, peace and dialogue.

Beyond these overarching synergies, strategic priorities and outcomes are interlinked, as outlined below.

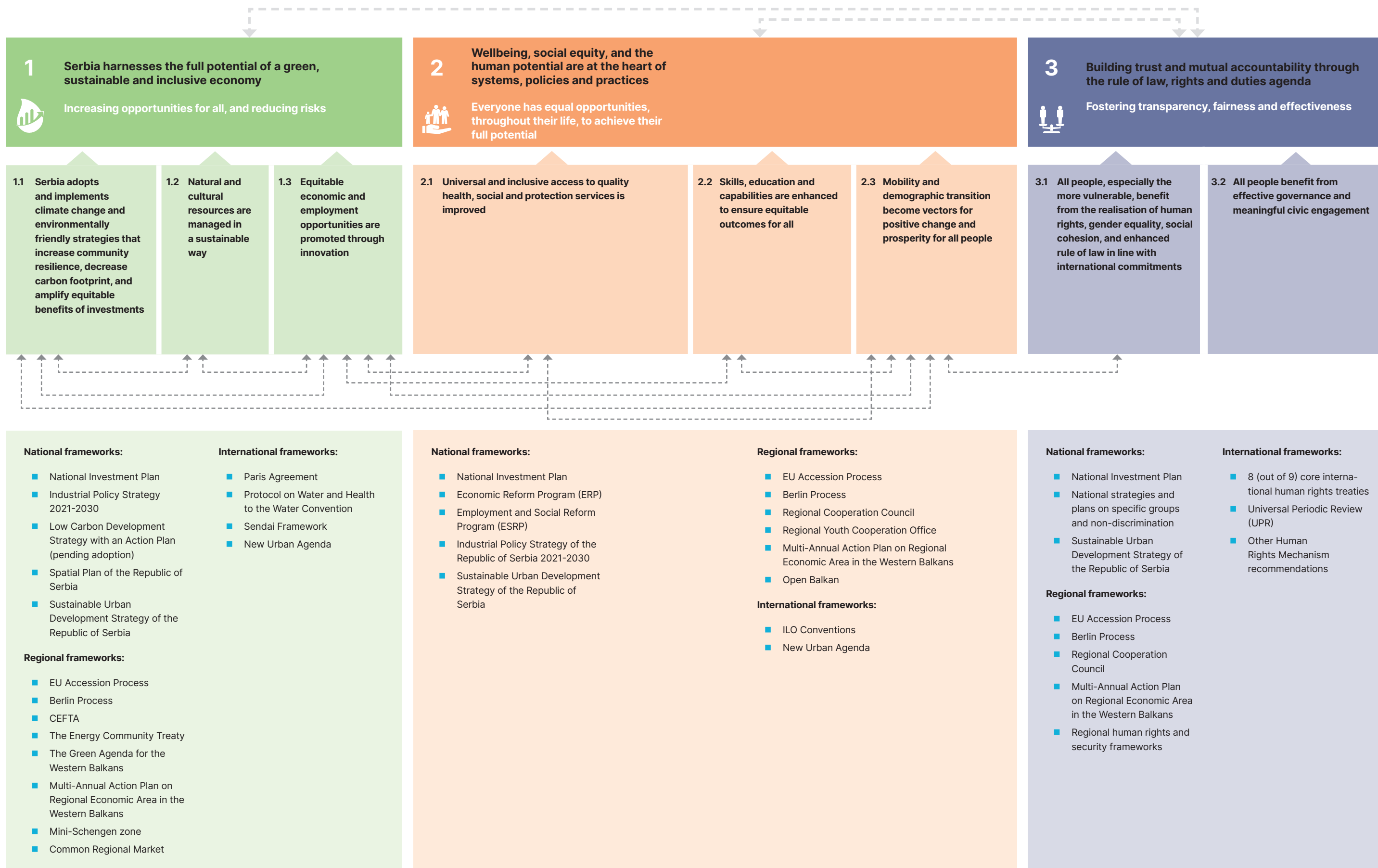
- Under the first priority, outcomes 1 and 2 are interlinked, and outcome 3 is interlinked with outcomes 1, 2, 4 and 5, as these will be essential in ensuring that people, in all areas, have access to more employment opportunities that support a green, sustainable and inclusive economy. Environmentally sustainable economic growth, coupled with increased quality of education, improved policies and capacities in labour market management, and addressing the root causes of women's low economic participation – both in the private and the public sectors – is expected to create more decent job opportunities, especially for youth and women. Outcome 3 is also dependent on the success of other outputs in terms of promoting job creation, ensuring that these jobs are in

line with decent work criteria, and supporting Serbia in its economic recovery efforts from COVID-19.

- The second priority is considered an overarching priority for the entire Cooperation Framework. The issues relevant when prioritising wellbeing, social equity, and human potential influence the success and implementation of all 8 outcomes. Outcome 4 and outcome 5 contribute to strengthening of human capital and improving the wellbeing of people in Serbia, so that they can live a life of equality and participation and contribute effectively to the overall development of the country, along with other priorities. Outcome 6 broadly aims to address the migration challenges in Serbia, emigration of Serbian youth, and the demographic challenges of the country. It is interlinked with outcomes 1, 3, 4, 5 and 7. Synergies exist between efforts to improve access to higher quality healthcare, strengthen the education system, improve the policy and regulatory environment for business development and job creation, enhance governance performance at local levels, and increase social cohesion. Increased employability, equitable territorial development, and improved working conditions will help address the key drivers of outmigration. It will create the necessary conditions for the people to have confidence in building a future in their own country, and therefore contribute to reversing the negative population trends.
- Finally, both outcomes under the third pillar are essential to the realisation, effectiveness and sustainability of all outcomes, focusing on the full enjoyment of human rights and equality, as well as on the "Leave No One Behind" principle and rule of law. They have been identified as standalone outcomes, and not only as mainstreamed principles, as the United Nations system in Serbia has significant comparative advantage and sizeable impact that directly support these outcomes.



FIGURE 18:
Theory of Change showing synergies between outcomes and with national, regional and international frameworks





4.3 Sustainability

The Cooperation framework strategic priorities and outcomes represent a clear, validated response to Serbia's development priorities, based on the country's needs and fully aligned with key national development plans, EU accession priorities, and national priorities set with a view of achieving the 2030 Agenda. This complementarity is an important precondition for sustainability. The cooperation results will be addressed through capacity development and enhanced cross-sectoral collaboration. Tangible capacity development that will extend beyond training and skills development will be undertaken, in order to generate sustainability, support the scaling-up of good practices, and address any discriminatory attitudes and practices. The United Nations system and authorities of Serbia will base capacity development initiatives on sound capacity assessments and innovative measures to address institutional bottlenecks that impede results at local levels. This partnership will continue to promote stronger and deeper engagement with the private sector – as drivers of economic diversification – and with civil society groups to create more space for their services at community level, and especially for vulnerable groups.

The Government of Serbia and the United Nations system will pursue *cross-sectoral approaches*, including mechanisms to encourage greater inter-ministerial and inter-agency coordination for enhanced planning, implementation, and monitoring in line with international standards.

4.4 UNCT configuration and comparative advantage

The UNCT will place a greater emphasis, compared to past frameworks, on its normative, convening, and facilitating roles. Policy, legal, and technical advice – in line with international standards and the commitments of Serbia – will be at the core of cooperation efforts. Service delivery and alternative implementation arrangements will be considered in the absence of alternative capacity in Serbia.

To fully deliver on its commitments under this Cooperation Framework, the United Nations agencies will review their competencies and staffing structures to capitalise on resident and non-resident United Nations agency capacities and assets.

Where needed, additional expertise will be sought to deliver cooperation results and initiatives. The United Nations organizations' management arrangements will be fully guided by the Management and Accountability Framework of the United Nations Development System (MAF) document.

The United Nations is committed to harness its comparative advantages and work jointly and effectively with partners. The strategic priorities and expected outcomes of this cooperation are catalytic, cross-sectoral, and based upon multi-stakeholder engagement and action. Full imple-





Agricultural landscape in Vojvodina, north Serbia – Sustainable food systems will become a key component of the Green transformation.
© Bits And Splits / Shutterstock

mentation will draw upon the several comparative advantages that the UNCT brings to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Serbia. These include:

A long-standing presence and a broad mandate

- The United Nations' long-standing and wide presence in Serbia is supported by a global and regional network of expertise and partnerships. The United Nations development system can provide comprehensive, contextual knowledge and established relationships with a range of stakeholders, including international development partners and financial institutions such as the EBRD, IFC, IMF, and WB. Such established partnerships mean greater reach and impact.
- A broad mandate across the humanitarian development spectrum includes initiatives on human rights, peace, and security, and capacities for providing integrated support based on in-house assessments and analysis. As one United Nations development system, strengthened by the Resident Coordinator (RC) system, the UNCT builds continuity between immediate measures and longer-term development pathways. The support that the UNCT offers includes not only resident in-country capacities, but also relevant expertise sourced from other regional or global locations, including through the proposed Regional Collaborative Platforms. The UNCT in Serbia comprises of:¹¹ the United Nations Resident

Coordinator's Office (RCO); seven country offices (IOM, UNDP, UNFPA,¹² UNHCR, UNICEF, UNOPS, WHO); five project offices with in-country presence (FAO, ILO, UNODC, UNEP, UN Women); and eight members without in-country presence (OHCHR,¹³ UNCTAD, UNDRR, UNECE, UNESCO, UN-Habitat, UNIDO, ITU). It benefits from the presence of an observer to the UNCT, United Nations Office in Belgrade (UNOB), and a special United Nations unit working closely with the RCO, United Nations Department for Safety and Security (UN DSS), both with in-country presences.¹⁴ While not a member of the UNCT, UNOB's status and functions are derived from the mandate of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999), which includes monitoring and reporting¹⁵ on regional developments in the Western Balkans of special relevance to United Nations and UNMIK work,¹⁶ while to the extent possible fully complementary and supportive to that of the UNCT in Serbia and UNCTs in other parts of the region. While the high-level political dialogue is facilitated by the EU, since 1999, the United Nations Interim Administration in Kosovo (UNMIK) and the United Nations Office in Belgrade (UNOB) continue to play a supporting role under Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).

11 Alphabetical order.

12 Operates under UNFPA CPD 2021-25, legally covered by UNDP SBAA.

13 With national programmatic capacity embedded in the RCO.

14 As per the new guidance for Cooperation Frameworks, the new generation of UNSDCFs should not make a distinction between resident and non-resident agencies (and not refer to them as such) but instead make use of all the available capacities through available operational business models regardless of their physical presence.

15 As per the 2003 Exchange of Letters between DPKO and MFA.

16 Ibid.





- The UNCT exercises an impartial, normative approach to human rights and dignity of all people, without discrimination. It has a unique, global role in human rights, and a trusted, neutral national presence as a partner. It can help promote the full implementation of rights-based national commitments and help define and establish a new rights-based relationship between citizens and state institutions. The integration of international norms and standards in the design and implementation of development pathways, in line with the international commitments of the authorities of Serbia, is as critical as ever. It is a matter of effectiveness and sustainability.
- The UNCTs have a range of competencies and established relationships critical for leave-no-one-behind interventions across the full range of affected groups. The UNCT can assist the government in developing and implementing the leave-no-one-behind strategy. The United Nations' role in advocating, promoting, and modelling the "Leave No One Behind" approach, whether in lower-income communities and regions, around gender and identity issues, or with marginalised social groups, is a core competency of the United Nations system.

A wide range of expertise and skills

- The UNCT brings in a breadth of expertise and the know-how needed to help Serbia achieve the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. A broad expertise includes areas that have to be mainstreamed and integrated into strategic processes and partnerships, including the

Cooperation Framework, such as human rights, gender, climate change, and disaster risk reduction.

Sectoral expertise includes public health, labour, social protection and poverty, migration, cultural and nature conservancy and management, environment, energy, trade, transport connectivity, urban development, modernisation of statistics systems, industry agriculture, food system, forestry, innovation and public-private partnerships. And this is not an exhaustive list.

The UNCT across all areas can support Serbia in awareness-raising, activism and advocacy to evidence-based policy analysis and technical expertise, including the support for the collection, analysis, and use of **disaggregated data**, access to finance, innovative approaches to policymaking and solutions, and response to emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

- The UNCT applies **cross-sectoral approaches** that are critical for the coordination of complex cross-cutting issues, such as efforts to address exclusion and vulnerability (in an effort to "leave no one behind"), gender equality and women's empowerment, climate change, environmental policy reforms, and rights-based approaches to development;
- Wider **regional and thematic perspectives** can be tailored to respond to the sustainable development agenda and the SDGs.





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Convener and dialogue facilitator

■ In Serbia, the United Nations' support encompasses the whole country. It reaches out to underdeveloped regions and local levels through extensive connections with local communities and municipalities, civil society organizations, the private sector, women's groups, youth, volunteer groups, etc. The UNCT system provides a breadth of know-how needed to help Serbia address the multisectoral aspects of sustainable development. As a result, it can connect Serbia to expertise – in-house and beyond – to help mobilise the vast network of partnerships that will enable the societal-scale transformations required by the SDG agenda.

Flexible support modalities and operational infrastructure

- The UNCT brings a large development portfolio of programmes to the table, delivering from 40 to 60 million EUR annually across all SDGs. The development portfolio can be adjusted, partly re-purposed, and expanded in response to unforeseen contingencies and emergencies. Examples include the COVID-19 related needs. Repurposing efforts can be accelerated to expand social protection coverage, extend psychosocial support, or implement emergency job support measures, among others.
- A wide and flexible range of support modalities for national and local governments can be tailored to in-country capacities and needs and can be adapted to shifting

situations. The United Nations development system can make use of several funding modalities for rapid disbursements to quickly channel funds to programmatic interventions. New sources (such as pooled funds) can be established within days, notably at the country level, using globally endorsed standards and procedures.

- The UNCT has a robust operational infrastructure around the world that can be fully mobilised and expanded quickly for support. The system's logistics and procurement capabilities are being increased. With additional resources, they can support accelerated delivery while ensuring duty of care for staff.



Young people actively participate in finding solutions for the climate crisis, through sharing opinions, knowledge and local experiences.
© Youth Program Belgrade Centre for Human Rights, Nebojša Petrović





5.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The implementation of the Cooperation Framework is based on the principle of partnership with the relevant authorities of Serbia, with full respect of the Constitution of Serbia. In order to ensure coherence and effectiveness, as well as nationwide results, implementation will take place through a coordinated approach involving relevant authorities of Serbia at all governing levels, as well as select non-governmental partners.

5.1 Implementation strategy and strategic partnerships

Authorities of Serbia and the United Nations system will employ cost-effective and coherent mechanisms to plan, finance, deliver, monitor and report on the Cooperation Framework results and their expected contribution to advancing the development priorities in Serbia. Based upon the detailed cooperation results and strategies described in the narrative and presented in the Results Matrix (Annex 3), emphasis is placed on coordinated, coherent efforts to make tangible, measurable contributions to the development priorities in Serbia.

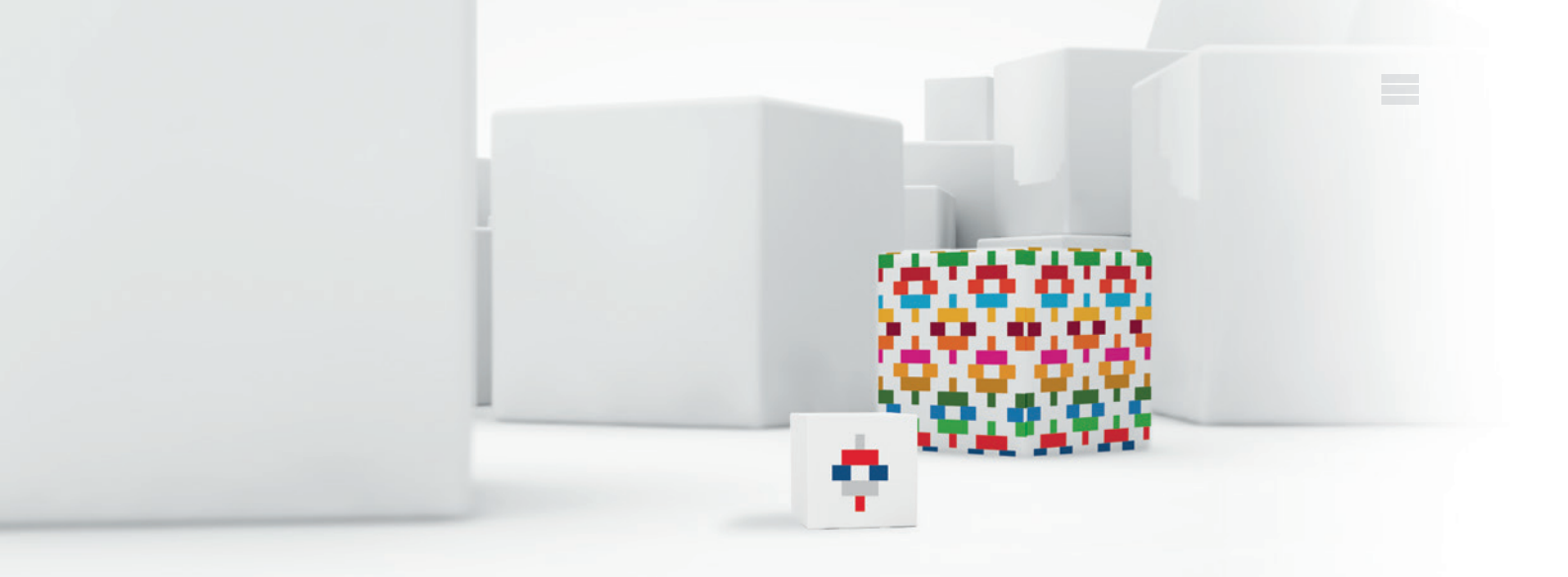
A Funding Framework will be developed to assess the resources required to deliver on the Cooperation Framework and address the funding gaps for Cooperation Framework outcomes. Financing strategies and approaches will be developed to address (1) funding gaps for Cooperation Framework outcomes, and, pending its endorsement by the authorities in Serbia, (2) SDG Financing strategy and nationalized SDG targets. For the SDG framework, this will involve costing of the framework and mapping and align-

ment of sector budgets against the SDG pathways and drivers. All funding and financing strategies will promote cost-sharing, as well as stronger partnerships with the private sector, including individual donors and corporate partners, for the planned outcomes and related programmes and projects. New sources of finance will be identified, including options for blended finance and through influencing the policy environment to facilitate greater resource flows for SDG-related country priorities.

The programme will be nationally executed under the overall coordination of the Cooperation Framework Joint National Steering Committee in Serbia. Authorities of Serbia, NGOs, INGOs and the United Nations system agencies will implement programme activities.

The Cooperation Framework will become operational through the development of joint workplans and/or agency-specific workplans and project documents as necessary that describe the specific results to be achieved. These will form an agreement between the United Nations system agencies and each implementing partner, where required, on the use of resources. To the extent possible, the United Nations system agencies and partners will use the minimum documents necessary, namely the signed Cooperation Framework and signed joint or agency-specific workplans and project documents to implement programmatic initiatives. However, when necessary and appropriate, project documents can be prepared using, inter alia, the relevant text from the Cooperation Framework





and joint or agency-specific workplans and/or project documents.¹⁷

All individual agency Country Programme Documents and other programming instruments in Serbia will derive from this Cooperation Framework and will contribute to the results outlined in the Results Matrix (Annex 3).

5.2 Governance arrangements

Governance arrangements for the Cooperation Framework, which will enhance joint work and reduce duplication, are as follows:

5.2.1 Joint National Steering Committee

The Cooperation Framework Joint National Steering Committee (CF JNSC) is tasked with the responsibility to:

- Provide strategic guidance, oversight and direction to the Cooperation Framework, including approval of all documents relevant for its implementation (strategies, workplans, etc.);

¹⁷ In the case of UNDP, the Government Coordinating Authority will nominate the Government Co-operating Agency directly responsible for the Government's participation in each UNDP-assisted workplan. The reference to "Implementing Partner(s)" shall mean "Executing Agency(s)" as used in the SBAA. Where there are multiple implementing partners identified in a workplan, a Principal Implementing Partner will be identified who will have responsibility for convening, coordinating and overall monitoring (programme and financial) of all the Implementing Partners identified in the workplan to ensure that inputs are provided and activities undertaken in a coherent manner to produce the results of the workplan.

- Review the overall performance of the Cooperation Framework, including the United Nations Results Report and evaluation reports;
- Ensure alignment of the Cooperation Framework with national, regional and international development processes, mechanisms and goals;
- Ensure alignment with unforeseen circumstances (including humanitarian, economic, political, health emergencies and others) that require modified/immediate response by the United Nations development system;
- Liaise and share information regularly with the national institutional mechanism for coordination of SDG work in Serbia to ensure full alignment of the Cooperation Framework with SDG-related planning and implementation activities; and
- Liaise regularly with the national institutional mechanism in charge of development effectiveness and donor coordination to ensure full complementarity between the Cooperation Framework work and other development partner contributions.

The Cooperation Framework JNSC's membership and decision-making are inclusive and adapted to the context of Serbia. The JNSC is co-chaired by the United Nations Resident Coordinator (RC) and designated senior officials of the Government of Serbia (Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs and Assistant Minister for European Integration). Its members will include representatives of Serbia and the heads of United Nations system agencies, as well as other relevant members who are involved in the implementation of the Cooperation Framework (for example, IFIs, NGOs, local level partners, international development partners,





and private sector actors). It will meet at least once per year, and may be convened by the co-chairs as required, including via online sessions.

The work of the Cooperation Framework JNSC will be supported by the United Nations RCO, acting as a secretariat. Discussions and decisions of the JNSC will be reported to the relevant authorities of Serbia for formal information sharing and accountability.

5.2.2 Internal UNCT Coordination

Internal UNCT coordination bodies will be established to facilitate the implementation of the Cooperation Framework. They are expected to closely coordinate their work for effectiveness, in line with the provisions set in the Management and Accountability Framework (MAF). The UNCT will serve as an overarching reporting and decision-making mechanism for all internal UNCT coordination bodies. The chairing authorities set at the Heads of Agency level will update and inform the UNCT on the work of the internal UNCT coordination bodies during regular UNCT meetings, ensuring full alignment and synergy across their work. The UNCT is the decision-making authority for all aspects related to the internal UNCT coordination bodies.

Results Groups

Three Results Groups (RG) will be established at the level of the three strategic priorities.

The role of each of the Results Groups will include the following:

- Conduct joint thematic analysis and data collection to inform actions, common country analysis, and other UNCT joint documents;
- Develop and implement joint workplans;
- Ensure cross-agency coordination of activities;

- Identify potential joint initiatives, including potential joint programmes;
- Identify and shape relevant partnerships and new sources of funding;
- Coordinate with government structures (e.g. sector working groups), and facilitate joint development work and ensure coherence with the work of other development partners; and
- Monitor progress towards joint outputs and develop reports (including SDG reports, UN Info, and United Nations Results Report).

The UNCT will appoint respective Heads of Agencies to act as chairs and co-chairs for each of the RGs. Selected Heads of Agencies will work in the interest and on behalf of the entire group of Agencies, with respect to the guidelines of the UN Mutual Accountability Framework. Their role will include the responsibility to:

- Convene the RGs and ensure a coherent, system-wide approach to the respective outcome and overarching strategic priority;
- Convene discussions with external partners as appropriate on the specific outcome;
- Represent the UNCT at government-led (and other relevant) meetings/forums in relation to the respective outcome; and
- Advise the RC, UNCT and JNSC on developments and opportunities within the domain of the specific outcome.

RG Chairs/Co-chairs are accountable to the UNCT and will be supported by the RCO. RGs will meet at least every quarter, and more frequently when required by programmatic or circumstantial exigencies. Participation in the RGs should be at the Deputy or Senior Programme Officer levels.

Twice a year, **the Chairs of the RGs** will report to the UNCT on the progresses and challenges against the objectives of the Cooperation Framework. The main objective of such discussions will be to strengthen the coherence and convergence around the Cooperation Framework's three **stra-**



tegic priorities. RGs will be responsible for consolidating inputs and strategic messages under their respective strategic priority, and for briefing the JNSC on an annual basis.

RGs will liaise closely and contribute to the work of the UN Communications Group, Monitoring and Evaluation Group and other United Nations thematic groups as required.

Other inter-agency groups

The UNCT will establish two other permanent working groups, a **Gender Thematic Group** and a **Human Rights and LNOB Group**. Additionally, the UN Network on Migration will be established, in line with provisions laid out in GCM, and in close cooperation with the Government of Serbia that supported the Compact in 2018. Upon the decision of the UNCT and in line with the identified needs, other working groups, such as refugees and migration management, and ad-hoc UNCT Task Teams, may be established addressing a specific issue within a limited time-frame, or theme with a regional dimension. These groups will share information and support the integration of thematic concerns as well as measures to ensure gender equality, adherence to the “Leave No One Behind” principle, and a human rights-based approach during the Cooperation Framework implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.

In case of emergencies, the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) or a similar platform will be activated to support the Government’s efforts on humanitarian response, and it will ensure synergies between humanitarian and developmental processes, in order to build resilience and mitigate future natural hazards or other emergencies.

Joint Workplans

Joint workplans will be developed for each of the Cooperation Framework priorities by the respective Results Groups and reviewed to ensure adherence to gender equality, the “Leave No One Behind” principle and a

human rights-based approach. The first joint workplan will cover a one-year period and will report on progress through the Annual Results report. The joint workplans reflect planned cooperation outputs, all key United Nations system-supported activities (delivered jointly or by individual agencies), resources that are required and available, as well as funding gaps.

The joint workplans aim to maximise synergies across the Cooperation Framework outcomes and avoid duplication, as well as to reduce transaction costs for the UNCT and partners in Serbia. Upon the annual review and reporting exercises, the joint workplans will be reviewed, re-assessed and potentially adjusted in line with new and emerging priorities in the country.

Monitoring and Evaluation Group

The Monitoring and Evaluation Group (MEG) is chaired and co-chaired by the selected Heads of Agencies. Its members are United Nations Agency M&E Officers or dedicated United Nations Agency focal points. Its main objective is to support the Cooperation Framework RGs in monitoring and reporting results against the expected outcomes. As such, the MEG assumes the responsibility to:

- Collect and consolidate data/information on SDGs monitoring and reporting in the country;
- Collect and consolidate data relevant to the Common Country Analysis update;
- Conduct routine Cooperation Framework implementation progress monitoring and review in close consultation with the RGs;
- Support annual review exercises organized by the RGs to assess progress towards expected Cooperation Framework outcomes;





- Draw on RGs' annual reports which describe outputs, or the results of major activities delivered against those in the workplans (including financial), and use data from monitoring efforts;
- Collect data on other partners' contributions towards the same Cooperation Framework outcomes and consolidate the data for the analysis; and
- Support preparation of the Annual United Nations Results Report based on inputs from the RGs.

The group will meet every two months. The RCO M&E Coordination Officer will act as a secretary to the group. Close cooperation between this group and the UN Communications Group (UNCG) will take place throughout the Cooperation Framework implementation.

Operations Management Team and Business Operations Strategy

The Operations Management Team (OMT) provides support and advice to the UNCT and SC on efforts to harmonise business operations and contribute to the delivery of the Cooperation Framework results. The OMT will also be responsible for the design, implementation and monitoring of the UNCT Business Operations Strategy, outlining mid-term strategic goals for greater UNCT operational cohesion, effectiveness and efficiency in line with the ongoing United Nations reform efforts. The OMT will explore opportunities for common back office (CBO) services for timely and cost-effective support for procurement, finance, human resources, logistics, ICT, and facility management. The OMT is chaired/co-chaired by selected (resident) Heads of Agencies on a rotational basis. Members are drawn from among senior Operations Officers within

United Nations system agencies or assigned Agency focal points. The RCO Executive Associate will act as secretary to this group.

United Nations Communication Group

The United Nations Communication Group (UNCG) will work to increase awareness and visibility of the Cooperation Framework results and SDG advocacy efforts. It pools communication expertise and resources and enhances joint communication. It is chaired/co-chaired by selected Heads of Agencies on a rotational basis, who report directly to the UNCT on the group's planned activities and results.

The UNCG will develop the Cooperation Framework Communication and Advocacy Strategy, which will support a coordinated and coherent approach to UNCT joint messaging.

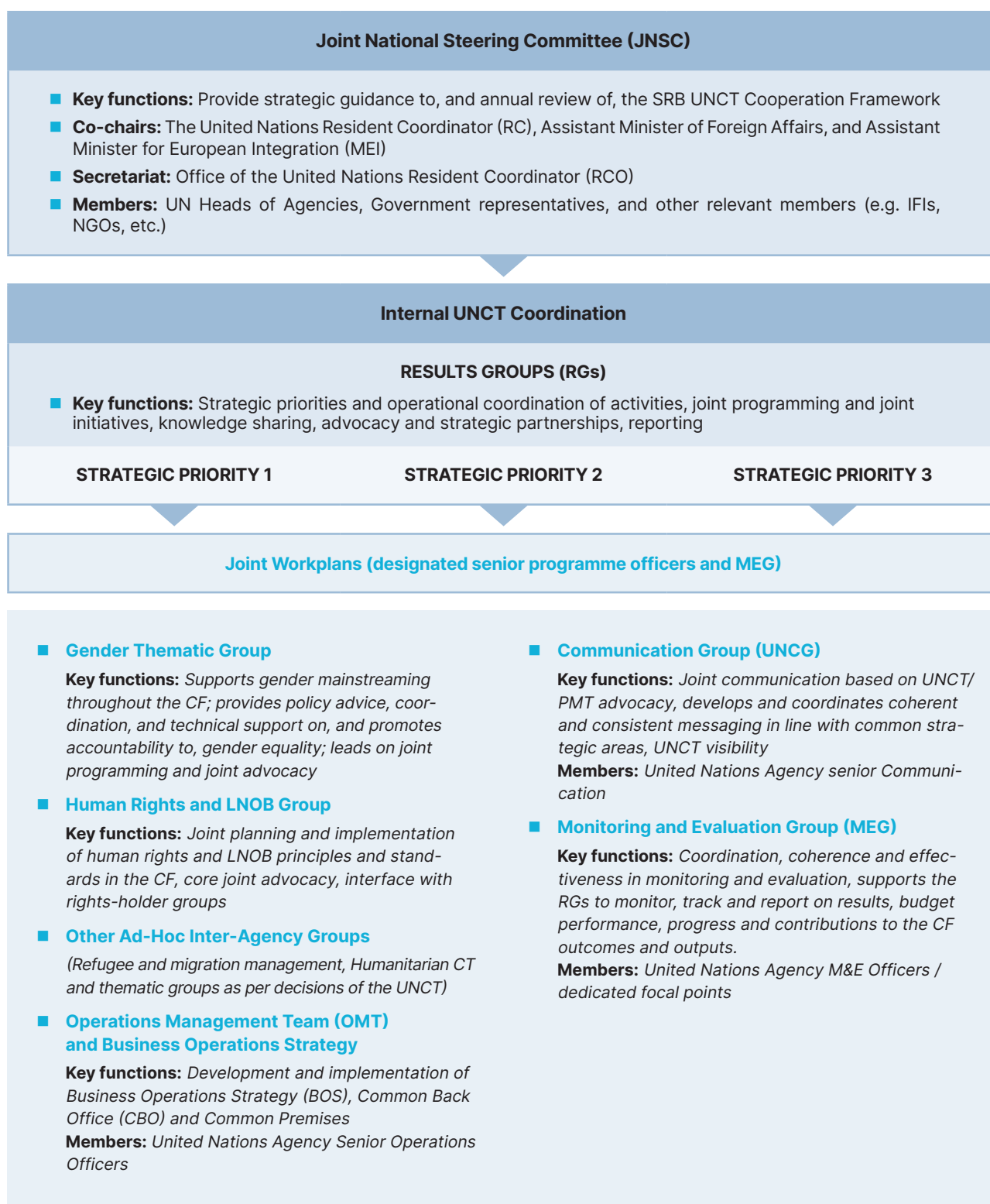
The group will also closely collaborate with the RGs and with the MEG with a view to formulating joint messages and receiving strategic guidance regarding the organization of high-level events.

The group will meet every two months and its members will be senior Communication Officers of the United Nations agencies. The RCO Communication and Advocacy Coordination Officer will act as secretary to this group.



FIGURE 19:

Governance arrangements for the Cooperation Framework





5.3 Resource mobilisation

The United Nations Agencies will provide support to the development and implementation of activities within the Cooperation Framework, which may include technical support; cash assistance; supplies, commodities and equipment; procurement services; transport; funds for advocacy; research and studies; consultancies; programme development; monitoring and evaluation; training activities; and staff support. Part of the United Nations system agencies' support may be provided to civil society organizations as agreed within the framework of the individual workplans (WPs) and project documents.

Additional support may include access to the United Nations organization-managed global information systems, to the network of the United Nations system agencies' country offices and specialized information systems (including rosters of consultants and providers of development services), and to the support provided by the network of United Nations Specialized Agencies, Funds and Programmes. The United Nations agencies shall appoint staff and consultants for programme development, programme support, technical assistance, and monitoring and evaluation activities.

Subject to annual reviews and progress in the implementation of the programme, the United Nations system agencies' funds will be distributed by calendar year and in accordance with the Cooperation Framework. These budgets will be reviewed and further detailed in the workplans and project documents. By mutual consent between the Government and the United Nations system agencies, funds not earmarked by donors to the United Nations system agencies for specific activities may be re-allocated to other programmatically equal and worthwhile activities.

The Government will support the United Nations system agencies' efforts to raise funds required to meet the needs of this Cooperation Framework, and will cooperate with the United Nations system agencies, including by: encouraging potential donor Governments to make available to the United Nations system agencies the funds needed to implement unfunded components of the programme; endorsing the United Nations system agencies' efforts to raise funds for the programme from other sources (including the private sector, both internationally and in Serbia); and permitting contributions from individuals, corporations and foundations in Serbia to support this programme (which will be tax exempt for the Donor, to the maximum extent permissible under applicable law). A Cooperation Framework Partnership and Financing Strategy will be developed, once the Cooperation Framework has been signed.



5.4 Harmonised approach to cash transfers

UNDP, UNFPA, and UNICEF use a harmonised approach to cash transfers (HACT). All cash transfers to an Implementing Partner are based on the workplans agreed between the Implementing Partner and the United Nations system agencies. Cash assistance for travel, stipends, honoraria and other costs shall be set at rates commensurate with those applied in the country, but not higher than

those applicable to the United Nations system (as stated in the ICSC circulars).

Cash transfers for activities detailed in the Joint Workplans can be made by the United Nations system agencies using the following modalities:

1.	Cash transferred to a national institution for forwarding to the Implementing Partner:
a.	Prior to the start of activities (direct cash transfer), or
b.	After activities have been completed (reimbursement).
2.	Direct payment to vendors or third parties for obligations incurred by the Implementing Partners based on requests signed by the designated official of the Implementing Partner.
3.	Direct payments to vendors or third parties for obligations incurred by United Nations system agencies in support of activities agreed with Implementing Partners.

Detailed approach to harmonised cash transfers are presented in Annex 4.





6.

MONITORING, REPORTING AND EVALUATION

Core Principles: Monitoring, reporting and evaluation of the Cooperation Framework are based on the expected results and indicators in the Results Matrix (Annex 3). Monitoring and evaluation will enable the authorities of Serbia and the United Nations system to track progress against the planned results, report on resources mobilised and delivered, identify lessons learned, and adapt results and strategies to respond to changes in socioeconomic conditions and emerging priorities.

The primary responsibility for assessing performance rests with the JNSC and UNCT, based on the routine monitoring and reporting undertaken by the RGs.

The primary steps involved in monitoring, reviewing and reporting on the planned Cooperation Framework results are outlined below.

■ **Effective reviewing and reporting** will compare actual progress against expected results and communicate the *contribution* of cooperation results to the development priorities of Serbia. Progress monitoring by the RGs, MEG and UNCT, as well as annual reviews by the JNSC, will track the achievement of the Cooperation

Framework outputs and their contribution towards the Cooperation Framework outcomes, and to country priorities and related SDG targets.

■ **Role of the Results Groups:** the RGs will jointly review the Results Matrix, activities and budgets in response to new information, lessons and risks emerging from continuous analysis, monitoring and evaluation. **Specialized thematic groups (e.g. gender, human rights, migration) and MEG will meet at least twice a year** to reflect on - and learn from - implementation monitoring reports, including on SDG indicators, issues and synergies across priority areas. The MEG will provide support on routine progress monitoring and reviews by RGs; highlight implementation progress (and constraints) against planned outputs and activities in workplans; and identify the key issues for attention of the JNSC.

■ Preparation of the **United Nations Results Report:**¹⁸ This describes actual outputs delivered against those planned in the joint workplans and progress towards the Cooperation Framework outcomes and to development priorities, the sentinel impact indicators and other relevant SDG indicators and targets, as shown in the Results Matrix (Annex 3). The report will be prepared by the UNCT, supported by the relationship with the Government authorities in charge of coordinating development assistance and SDG related work in Serbia.

¹⁸ The progress update will follow the UNSDG Standard Operational Format and Guidelines for Reporting Progress on the Cooperation Framework.





- **UN Info:** The UNCT will periodically report to the JNSC and RC on progress in achieving the Cooperation Framework outcomes and outputs through UN Info. UN Info is an online monitoring platform and its dashboard tracks the United Nations contributions to the achievement of the SDGs in all countries where United Nations Country Teams operate.

UN Info is a planning, monitoring and reporting system that will allow the United Nations system in Serbia to provide a detailed and transparent visual overview of its activities to the JNSC, development partners and citizens of Serbia.

- **Monitoring Progress on 2030 Agenda: SDGs are a priority for the UNCT as well as the Government of Serbia, and the Results Matrix identifies the SDG indicators to be tracked in line with the defined strategic priorities.** Since a number of global SDG indicators have to be adjusted to Serbia's development context, Cooperation Framework partners will jointly identify the proxy national indicators that will accurately measure progress against the defined outcomes.

The minimum criteria for the Cooperation Framework Results Matrix indicators will be the availability of accurate data with valid sources of verification throughout – and at the end of – the Cooperation Framework cycle (2021–2025).

The United Nations system agencies will continue to support the capacities of the Government of Serbia to produce disaggregated data, aligned with the SDGs, and to support authorities in charge of strengthening the dissemination and use of data and statistics for evidence-based policy formulation and planning.

- **Monitoring of implementing partners to the UNCT:** In addition, implementing partners agree to cooperate with the United Nations system agencies for monitoring of all activities supported by **cash transfers**, and will facilitate access to relevant financial records and personnel responsible for the administration of cash provided by the United Nations system agencies. To that effect, implementing partners agree to the following:
 - Periodic on-site reviews and spot checks of their financial records by the United Nations system agencies or their representatives, as appropriate, and as described in the specific clauses of their engagement documents/contracts with the United Nations system agencies;





Re-evaluating the short and long costs/benefits analysis of multiple energy sources is a prerequisite to a sustainable future.
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- Programmatic monitoring of activities following the United Nations system agencies' standards and guidance for site visits and field monitoring;
- Special or scheduled audits, whereby each United Nations organization, in collaboration with other United Nations system agencies (where so desired and in consultation with the respective coordinating Ministry) will establish an annual audit plan, giving priority to audits of implementing partners with significant amounts of cash assistance provided by the United Nations system agencies, and those whose financial management capacity needs strengthening.

Evaluation of the Cooperation Framework in early 2025 will be used to measure achievements and to support the formulation of the next Cooperation Framework. The evaluation will assess the relevance of the Cooperation Framework outcomes, the effectiveness and efficiency of implementation by the United Nations system agencies and partners, and the sustainability of results and their contribution to development priorities in Serbia and related SDG targets. The final Cooperation Framework evaluation will be executed by independent external consultants.

The UNCT ensures an independent final evaluation of the Cooperation Framework by facilitating and promoting national ownership, through involvement of national partners throughout the process, and timely incorporation of findings, recommendations and lessons into decision-making around subsequent United Nations Common Country Analyses and Cooperation Frameworks.

The Cooperation Framework evaluation must adhere to international best practices and aim to reflect the evaluation indicators in the Funding Compact, the UN-SWAP (UN System-wide Action Plan) and the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy. The MEG will be responsible for overseeing the quality and independence of the evaluation, and ensuring the process is in line with the UNEG (United Nations Evaluation Group) Norms, Standards and Ethical Guidelines.



7.

RISKS AND MITIGATION

Based on the country analytical work, the major risks that may impact the implementation of the Cooperation Framework towards achievement of the SDGs are:

- Delays in engagement from the government on implementation of the Cooperation Framework (i.e. formation of the JNSC) following establishment of the new government after the 2020 elections;
- Protracted COVID-19 health crisis that may redirect the focus of partners away from core development priorities towards addressing health priorities;
- Weakened capacities for implementation of the Cooperation Framework planned activities due to the socioeconomic impact of the COVID-19 crisis; and
- Insufficient coordination within RGs, within each strategic priority and across strategic priorities, overburdening of member agency resources with coordination processes and requirements.

The main risks and assumptions in achieving the Cooperation Framework will be evaluated during the annual reviews, when new approaches to mitigating those risks will also be recommended.

The risk management strategy will involve:

- Stronger, more sustained cross-sectoral policy and programme coordination, led by the JNSC, in order to help sustain links between the planned Cooperation Framework results and the policies and plans of Government authorities, and to ensure that data and evidence are being used to influence the Cooperation Framework implementation, understanding that a focus will be placed on incorporating the aim to “build back better” into all Cooperation Framework activities after the COVID-19 crisis;
- Efforts to operationalize the *existing* policies, strategies and service delivery frameworks of the authorities of the Government of Serbia, and to build new capacities for effective, cross-sectoral approaches at all levels, with a focus on vulnerable groups;
- Consistent, impartial advocacy and policy dialogue, based on the SDGs, to develop cost-effective models and options to enhance the quality and coverage of essential services, within programmatic and budgetary constraints;
- Ongoing review and updating of the contingency plans of the United Nations system in cooperation with the Government of Serbia to respond to natural hazards or disasters and emergencies; and
- A Cooperation Framework financing strategy, driven by the JNSC, that promotes stronger partnerships with civil society, the private sector, and IFIs.





8.

LIST OF ANNEXES

Annex 1: **Legal Annex**

Annex 2: **Strategic Priorities, Outcomes and Outputs**

Annex 3: **Results Matrix**

Annex 4: **Harmonised Approach to Cash Transfers**



Annex 1: Legal Annex

This Legal Annex refers to the cooperation or assistance agreements and other agreements that provide the legal basis for the relationship between the Government of the Republic of Serbia and each United Nations organization supporting the country to deliver on the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (Cooperation Framework) 2021 to 2025.

Whereas the Government of the Republic of Serbia (hereinafter referred to as “the Government”) has entered into the following relationships:

- a) With UNDP based Standard Basic Assistance Agreement (SBAA) which was signed between the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the United Nations Development Programme, on March 24th 1988. Based on Article I, paragraph 2 of the SBAA, UNDP’s assistance to the Government shall be made available to the Government and shall be furnished and received in accordance with the relevant and applicable resolutions and decisions of the competent UNDP organs, and subject to the availability of the necessary funds to the UNDP. In particular, decision 2005/1 of January 28th 2005 of UNDP’s Executive Board approved the new Financial Regulations and Rules and along with them the new definitions of ‘execution’ and ‘implementation’ enabling UNDP to fully implement the new Common Country Programming Procedures resulting from the undg simplification and harmonisation initiative. In light of this decision, this Cooperation Framework, together with a workplan (which shall form part of this Cooperation Framework and is incorporated herein by reference) concluded hereunder, constitute together a project document as referred to in the SBAA.

The following United Nations Agencies, Funds and Programmes participating in the Cooperation Framework 2021–2025 operate in the Republic of Serbia under the UNDP Standard Basic Assistance Agreement applied *mutatis mutandi* (see above):

With in-country presence: United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), International Labour Organization (ILO), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UN DSS).

Without in-country presence: United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), United Nations Habitat (UN-Habitat), United Nations Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), International Telecommunications Union (ITU).

UNESCO’s assistance to the Government shall be made available and shall be furnished and received in accordance with the applicable resolutions of the General Conference and Executive Board of the Organization.





Specific details relevant for the type of activities and scopes of the mission in Serbia of the above listed United Nations system agencies, funds and programmes are being addressed in the communication from their HQ or Regional Offices to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia.

Several of the above listed United Nations system agencies, funds and programmes are in different stages of negotiating a stand-alone host country agreement with the Government of the Republic of Serbia.

- b) With the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) a Basic Cooperation Agreement (BCA) concluded between the Government and UNICEF on November 20th 1947 and revised on November 7th 1955.
- c) With the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) an Accord de Siège concluded between the Government and UNHCR on July 2nd 1996.
- d) With the World Health Organization (WHO) based on the Basic Agreement on the status of the Office of the World Health Organization in Serbia and Montenegro signed in 2003 between the Federal Government of Serbia and Montenegro and the World Health Organization, as well as based on Biennial Collaborative Agreements (BCAs) between the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for Europe and the Ministry of Health of Serbia, on behalf of its Government (the last signed agreement of which covers the period 2020–21, and the next of which highlights the priorities for 2022–23 and is currently in preparation).
- e) With the International Organization for Migration (IOM) the "Agreement between the International Organization for Migration and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia", signed on September 14th 1994. The Republic of Serbia became an IOM Member State in November 2001.

- f) With United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) the Agreement between UNOPS and the Government Concerning Establishment of an Office of UNOPS in Belgrade was signed with the Government of Republic of Serbia on June 13th 2017.

Some of the above listed United Nations agencies, funds and programmes are in the process of renegotiating their existing country agreements.

For all United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, assistance to the Government shall be made available and shall be furnished and received in accordance with the relevant and applicable resolutions and decisions of the competent United Nations system agency's governing structures.

The Cooperation Framework will, in respect of each of the United Nations system agencies signing, be read, interpreted, and implemented in accordance with and in a manner that is consistent with the basic agreement between such United Nations system agency and the Host Government.

The Government will honor its commitments in accordance with the provisions of the cooperation and assistance agreements outlined in paragraph on the basis of the Relationship.

Without prejudice to these agreements, the Government shall apply the respective provisions of the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations (the "General Convention") or the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the Specialized Agencies (the



“Specialized Agencies Convention”) to the Agencies’ property, funds, and assets and to their officials and experts on mission. The Government shall also accord to the Agencies and their officials and to other persons performing services on behalf of the Agencies, the privileges, immunities and facilities as set out in the cooperation and assistance agreements between the Agencies and the Government.

In addition, it is understood that all United Nations Volunteers shall be assimilated to officials of the Agencies, entitled to the privileges and immunities accorded to such officials under the General Convention or the Specialized Agencies Convention.

The Government will be responsible for dealing with any claims, which may be brought by third parties against any of the Agencies and their officials, experts on mission or other persons performing services on their behalf, and shall hold them harmless in respect of any claims and liabilities resulting from operations under the cooperation and assistance agreements, except where it is any claims and liabilities resulting from operations under the cooperation and assistance agreements, except where it is mutually agreed by Government and a particular Agency that such claims and liabilities arise from gross negligence or misconduct of that Agency, or its officials, advisors or persons performing services.

Without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing, the Government shall insure or indemnify the Agencies from civil liability under the law of the country in respect of vehicles provided by the Agencies but under the control of or use by the Government.

“Nothing in this Agreement shall imply a waiver by the United Nations or any of its Agencies or Organizations of any privileges or immunities enjoyed by them or their acceptance of the jurisdiction of the courts of any country over disputes arising of this Agreement”

Nothing in or relating to this document will be deemed a waiver, expressed or implied, of the privileges and immunities of the United Nations and its subsidiary organs, including WFP, whether under the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations of February 13th 1946, the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the Specialized Agencies of November 21st 1947, as applicable, and no provisions of this document or any Institutional Contract or any Undertaking will be interpreted or applied in a manner, or to an extent, inconsistent with such privileges and immunities.



Annex 2: Strategic Priorities, Outcomes and Outputs

SERBIA 2025: CHANGING THE NARRATIVE AND PAVING THE WAY FOR 2030

1 Serbia harnesses the full potential of a green, sustainable and inclusive economy



Increasing opportunities for all, and reducing risks

1.1 Serbia adopts and implements climate change and environmentally friendly strategies that increase community resilience, decrease carbon footprint and amplify equitable benefits of investments

- Serbia shifts its energy consumption to be cleaner and more efficient and promote renewables
- Cities implement clean air strategies as part of urban development
- Infrastructure norms and standards mainstream climate change and resilience
- Communities have increased resilience to climate induced and human-made disasters

1.2 Natural and cultural resources are managed in a sustainable way

- Serbia protects ecosystems, natural resources and biodiversity
- Institutions and communities manage cultural and historical resources to optimise long-term social and economic benefits to all

1.3 Equitable economic and employment opportunities are promoted through innovation

- Local development strategies adopt an area-based approach
- A greater share of economic activities transition towards circularity: changing how we produce, consume and trade
- Science, technology, and innovation benefit men and women equally
- Women and men have access to more decent job opportunities and fair competitive trade

2 Wellbeing, social equity and the human potential are at the heart of systems, policies and practices



Everyone has equal opportunities, throughout their life, to achieve their full potential

2.1 Universal and inclusive access to quality health, social and protection services is improved

- More people benefit from universal health coverage, including mental health, drug abuse prevention, and healthier lifestyles
- Expanded and innovative social care services are supported to ensure improved living conditions
- State institutions and CSOs ensure effective prevention and improved access to gender sensitive quality services for survivors of violence, exploitation and abuse

2.2 Skills, education and capabilities are enhanced to ensure equitable outcomes for all

- Formal education (incl. TVET) becomes a key enabler for leaving no one behind
- More people access informal education, life skills and life-long learning including digital literacy
- Women and girls' empowerment and skills development lead to equitable access to economic and political opportunities

2.3 Mobility and demographic transition become vectors for positive change and prosperity for all people

- Capacities of national and local stakeholders are strengthened to develop and implement evidence-based development and population policies
- Migration outcomes are improved through mobility of skills, knowledge and capacities
- Women and men across generations benefit from strengthened community cohesion and cultural connections

3 Building trust and mutual accountability through the rule of law, rights and duties agenda



Fostering transparency, fairness and effectiveness

3.1 All people, especially the more vulnerable, benefit from the realisation of human rights, gender equality, social cohesion, and enhanced rule of law in line with international commitments

- National and local authorities, including the judicial system, are supported in policymaking and implementation that guarantees rights for all
- Oversight and independent bodies are strengthened in their monitoring and reporting
- Institutional and operational capacities in the area of home affairs are strengthened

3.2 All people benefit from effective governance and meaningful civic engagement

- Governance systems for planning, budgeting, and monitoring of national and local development are more efficient and SDG focused
- Civic engagement and representation are enhanced for the benefit of society
- Emergency preparedness and response guarantees that all lives are equal
- Regional and transborder/transboundary cooperation, security, and trust-building are enhanced



Annex 3: Results Matrix

SERBIA 2025 - CHANGING THE NARRATIVE AND PAVING THE WAY FOR 2030

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1: SERBIA HARNESSSES THE FULL POTENTIAL OF A GREEN, SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE ECONOMY: INCREASING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL, AND REDUCING RISK

OUTCOME 1.1 SERBIA ADOPTS AND IMPLEMENTS CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY STRATEGIES THAT INCREASE COMMUNITY RESILIENCE, DECREASE CARBON FOOTPRINT, AND AMPLIFY EQUITABLE BENEFITS OF INVESTMENTS

Performance indicators (SDG, disaggregation)	Baseline (year)	Target (2025)	Data source/MoV
<p>1. Climate change strategies are drafted, adopted, operationalised and implemented in line with principles of gender equality and LNOB:</p> <p>a) Climate change b) Air Quality national c) Disaster Risk Reduction local plans (assessments and protection and rescue plans) d) Number of analysis based on the “leave no one behind” methodology conducted in policy development</p>	<p>a) Climate change draft phase (2020) b) No national draft c) 76 (2019) d) 0</p>	<p>a) Climate change strategy adopted and NDC 50% implemented b) National strategy adopted c) 130 d) 3</p>	<p>Ministry of Environmental Protection Ministry of Interior – Sector for Emergency Management</p>
<p>2. Renewable energy share in the total final energy consumption SDG 7.2.1; Tier 1</p>	20.32 (2018)	To be determined by the Integrated National Energy and Climate Plan of the Republic of Serbia, to be adopted by the Government	Energy Balance Republic of Serbia (EUROSTAT)
<p>3. Energy intensity measured in terms of primary energy and GDP SDG 7.3</p>	6.09 (2017)	To be determined by the Integrated National Energy and Climate Plan of the Republic of Serbia, to be adopted by the Government	Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia: The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (Group of Energy Statistics and Department of National Account) provides data as input elements for calculation indicator. The indicator is calculated by the United Nations because, for international comparison purposes, GDP is measured in constant terms at purchasing power parity.
<p>4. Quantities of GHG emissions avoided/reduced/sequestered as a result of inclusive climate change and environmentally friendly strategies</p>	GHG emissions including removals 66,664.14 Gg CO ₂ eq (1990)	To be determined by the Integrated National Energy and Climate Plan of the Republic of Serbia, to be adopted by the Government	Per the National Climate Change Strategy with the Action Plan – SEPA inventory for MoV





5. Annual mean levels of fine particulate matter (e.g. PM2.5 and PM10) in cities (population weighted) SDG 11.6.2, Proxy indicators: a) Annual limit value for PM2.5 particles b) 24-hour value for PM10 particles	a) PM 2.5 exceeded legally prescribed annual limit value PM10 exceeded legally prescribed limit of 35 annual days of exceedance (2019) b) PM10 exceeded legally prescribed limit of 35 annual days of exceedance (2019)	a) Does not exceed 25 µr/m ³ b) Not exceeded for more than 35 days in the calendar year	UN Stats SDG available, sent by SEPA, to be added to the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SORS) SEPA Annual report
6. INFORM Global Risk Index Value/Rank	3.1 (Low)/114 (2020)	1.9 (Very low)/above 150	Inter-Agency Standing Committee Reference Group on Risk, Early Warning and Preparedness and the European Commission
OUTCOME 1.2 NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES ARE MANAGED IN A SUSTAINABLE WAY			
Performance indicators (disaggregation)	Baseline (year)	Target (2025)	Data source/MoV
1. Number of natural and cultural heritage sites with approved tourism management plan SDG 8.9.1	0	3	UNESCO, GoS Reports, UNEP
2. Percentage of important sites for terrestrial and freshwater biodiversity that are covered by protected areas, by ecosystem type (a. Freshwater; b. Land) (Tier 1) SDG 15.1.2 a) Number of improved forest management plans b) Ecological networks c) Estimated percentage of degraded land d) Protected areas	a) 0 (2020) b) 20 (2018) c) 6.47% (2019) d) 7.4 (2018)	a) 50 b) 25 c) 6% d) 12	Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SORS) MAFWM, Directorate of Forest OECD and Government reports
3. Proportion of population using safely managed drinking water services (Tier 2) SDG 6.1.1 a) Access to safe water, electricity and sanitation in sub-standard Roma settlements in Serbia, in line with principles of inclusion and non-discrimination	74.7 (2017) 159 of 702 (no or irregular access to safe water) 457 of 702 (no or irregular access to sanitation) 64 of 702 (no or irregular access to electricity)	80 50% increase of access to safe water 50% increase of access to sanitation 100% increase of access to electricity	The WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) on WASH https://washdata.org/data/household#/ Mapping of substandard Roma settlements according to risks and access to rights 2020 (SIPRU/OHCHR database)





OUTCOME 1.3 EQUITABLE ECONOMIC AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES ARE PROMOTED THROUGH INNOVATION			
Performance indicators (disaggregation)	Baseline (year)	Target (2025)	Data source/MoV
1. Proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, by location and sex SDG 5.4.1	W urban: 17.9% W rural: 21.1 % M urban/rural: 8.7% (2015)	W urban: 13.9 % W rural: 17.1 % M urban/rural: 12.7 %	Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SORS)
2. Proportion of informal employment in total employment, by sector and sex SDG 8.3.1 (Tier 2) Proportion of informal employment in non-agriculture employment, by sex	8.2 M: 10.2 F: 5.8 (2019)	4.0 M: 5.0 F: 3.0	Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SORS) SDG database
3. Employment rate aged 15-64, disaggregated by sex	58.8 (2018); M: 65.6 F: 52	(2025): 72.50 M: 74 F: 70	Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SORS), Labour Force Survey
4. Innovation capability (Pillar 12 Global Competitiveness Index)	59/2019	48	Global Competitiveness Report
5. Research and development expenditure as a proportion of GDP SDG 9.5.1 (Tier 1)	0.89 (2019)	1.0	Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SORS) SDG Database
6. Proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions SDG 1.2.2 (Tier 2), rural/urban (People at risk of poverty or social exclusion)	31.7 M: 31.2 F: 32.3 2019	25 or below by 2025 for M and F	Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SORS) SDG database Survey on income and living conditions (SILC), Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia
7. Number of countries with sustainable consumption and production (SCP) national action plans or SCP mainstreamed as a priority or a target into national policies SDG 12.1.1 Proxy. Waste treatment in the Republic of Serbia, share of recycled waste	2.48% (2019)	15% (2025)	Serbian Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) and Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SORS)



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2: WELLBEING, SOCIAL EQUITY, AND THE HUMAN POTENTIAL ARE AT THE HEART OF SYSTEMS, POLICIES AND PRACTICES:

EVERYONE HAS EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES, THROUGHOUT THEIR LIFE, TO ACHIEVE THEIR FULL POTENTIAL

OUTCOME 2.1 UNIVERSAL AND INCLUSIVE ACCESS TO QUALITY HEALTH, SOCIAL AND PROTECTION SERVICES IS IMPROVED

Performance indicators (disaggregation)	Baseline (year)	Target (2025)	Data source/MoV
1. Mortality rate attributed to cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes or chronic respiratory disease, disaggregated by sex SDG 3.4.1 (Tier 1)	20.7 (2019) M: 26.6 F: 15	18.7 M: 22 F: 13	Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SORS) SDG database http://devinfo.stat.gov.rs/diSrbija/diSDG_Indicators.aspx
2. Coverage of essential health services - Index (Tier 1) SDG 3.8.1	65 (2015E)	75	WHO Country progress towards UHC (annex 1, page 52) https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/259817/9789241513555-eng.pdf?sequence=1
3. Proportion of population with large household expenditures on health as a share of total household expenditure or income SDG 3.8.2.	8.05 E (2015)	7	WHO, The Global Health Observatory https://www.who.int/data/gho/data/indicators/indicator-details/GHO/population-with-household-expenditures-on-health-greater-than-10-of-total-household-expenditure-or-income-(sdg-3-8-2)-(-)
4. Measuring healthier population: a) Alcohol per capita consumption (aged 15 years and older) within a calendar year in liters of pure alcohol, by sex (%) SDG 3.5.2. b) Age-standardised prevalence of current tobacco use among persons aged 15 years and older, by sex (%) SDG 3.a.1.	a) 9.2 (2016) (M: 18.5, F: 4.1) b) 35 (2019) (M: 37, F: 32)	a) 8.2 (M: 17, F: 3.7) b) 30 (M: 32, F: 27)	Alcohol: WHO Global status report on alcohol and health (page 287) https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/274603/9789241565639-eng.pdf?ua=1&ua=1 Tobacco: Survey based data, IPH http://www.batut.org.rs/download/izdvajamo/PoredjenjeRezultata2010-2019.pdf





5. Proportion of the target population covered by all vaccines included in their national programme SDG 3.b.1 (Tier 1) Percentage of children who at age: a) 24-35 months had received all basic vaccinations at any time before the survey b) 24-35 months had received all vaccinations recommended in the national immunization schedule	a) 81 Boys: 78.7 Girls: 83.3 Roma: 66.2 Roma Boys: 67.1 Roma Girls: 65.4 b) 65.8 Boys: 64.5 Girls: 67.1 Roma: 45.2 Roma Boys: 40.7 Roma Girls: 49	a) 85 Roma: 70 b) 70 Roma: 50	Data in Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SORS) available from MICS 2019
6. Impact of social transfers (other than pensions) on poverty reduction disaggregated by sex	17.91 F: 17.53 M: 18.27 (2018)	24.94 F: 24.81 M: 25.39	Survey on income and living conditions (SILC), Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SORS)
7. Proportion of victims of violence in the previous 12 months who reported their victimization to competent authorities or other officially recognized conflict resolution mechanisms SDG 16.3.1	26.3 (2018) 40 Women 67 Women in Roma settlements (2019)	50 Women 70 Women in Roma Settlements	Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SORS) / NHRI MICS 2019
8. Adolescent birth rate (aged 15-19 years) per 1,000 women, in general population and Roma settlements SDG 3.7.2	13.6 General Pop. (2019) 163 Girls 15-19 in Roma Settlements	10 General Pop. 100 Girls 15-19 in Roma Settlements	Vital statistics, Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia 2019 MICS 2019

OUTCOME 2.2 SKILLS, EDUCATION AND CAPABILITIES ARE ENHANCED TO ENSURE EQUITABLE OUTCOMES FOR ALL

Performance indicators (disaggregation)	Baseline (year)	Target (2025)	Data source/MoV
1. Participation rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education and training in the previous 12 months, by sex (%) SDG 4.3.1 (Tier 2)	66.9 (2019) M: 62.4 F: 71.7	75 M: 70 F: 80	Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SORS) SDG Database
2. Net attendance in upper secondary education, disaggregated by sex	94.1 (2019) M: 94.7 F: 93.3 Poorest Quintile: 78.6 Roma: 28.5 M: 30 F: 26.6 (2019)	Poorest Quintile: 85 Roma: 35 M: 35 F: 35	UNICEF/Ministry of Education





3. Proportion of children and young people (a) in grades 2/3; (b) at the end of primary; and (c) at the end of lower secondary achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in (i) reading and (ii) mathematics, by sex SDG 4.1.1 (Tier 1)	Data available for (c) c) math 60% reading 62% science 62% (2018)	c) math 75% reading 75% science 75%	UN Stats SDG data available (2018) TIMSS baseline TBD
4. Percentage of children aged 36–59 months from disadvantaged groups attending an early childhood education programme, disaggregated by sex	Poorest Quintile: 10.5 Roma: 7.4 Roma Boys: 6.8 Roma Girls: 8 (2019)	Poorest Quintile: 20 Roma: 20 Roma Boys: 20 Roma Girls: 20	Data in Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SORS) available from MICS
5. Adult (25–64) participation in lifelong learning disaggregated by sex	4.1 (2018) F: 4.5; M: 3.7	7 (2025)	Labour Force Survey, Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SORS)
6. Proportion of youth (aged 15–24 years) not in education, employment or training, Labour Force Survey, disaggregated by sex Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SORS) SDG 8.6.1	15.3 (2019) F: 15.8 M: 14.8 Roma men: 73 Roma women: 88	Man: 10 Women: 12 Roma men: 50 Roma women: 70	Labour Force Survey, Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SORS)
OUTCOME 2.3 MOBILITY AND DEMOGRAPHIC TRANSITION BECOME VECTORS FOR POSITIVE CHANGE AND PROSPERITY FOR ALL PEOPLE			
Performance indicators (disaggregation)	Baseline (year)	Target (2025)	Data source/MoV
1. Human Development Index (HDI) – 1) a long and healthy life, 2) being knowledgeable and 3) have a decent standard of living	Rank 64 (2019) 0.806	Rank 45 and below	UNDP http://hdr.undp.org/en/humandev
2. At-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rate (AROPE) Gender disaggregation will be calculated by Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SORS)	31.7 (2019) M: 31.2 F: 32.3	25 (2025)	Survey on income and living conditions (SILC), Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SORS)
3. Migration policies that facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people SDG 10.7.2	MGI as of 2021	MGI TBC (when MGI is fully endorsed by Commissariat for Refugees and Migration and methodology of MGI is agreed upon)	Commissariat for Refugees and Migration Republic of Serbia
4. Migration balance by regions of the Republic of Serbia, 2019 (West, East and South Serbia)	West (- 4597) South and East (-3646) - 2019	TBA	Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SORS)



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3: BUILDING TRUST AND MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY THROUGH THE RULE OF LAW, RIGHTS AND DUTIES AGENDA

FOSTERING TRANSPARENCY, FAIRNESS AND EFFECTIVENESS

OUTCOME 3.1 ALL PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY THE MORE VULNERABLE, BENEFIT FROM THE REALISATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS, GENDER EQUALITY, SOCIAL COHESION AND ENHANCED RULE OF LAW IN LINE WITH INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENTS

Performance indicators (disaggregation)	Baseline (year)	Target (2025)	Data source/MoV
<p>1. Proportion of population reporting having personally felt discriminated against or harassed in the previous 12 months on the basis of a ground of discrimination prohibited under international human rights law SDG 16.b.1, disaggregated by sex SDG 10.3.1</p>	<p>6.9 (Women) 12.5 (Women in Roma Settlements) 25% (Representative stratified sample)</p>	<p>5 (Women) 10 (Women in Roma Settlements) 20%</p>	<p>MICS (for women), Commissioner for Protection of Equality Annual Report Public Perception Survey, Human Rights in the eyes of Serbia's citizens, Belgrade Centre for Human Rights, November 2020.</p>
<p>2. Proportion of non-discriminatory and gender inclusive laws and policies adopted and amended in line with international human rights and gender equality standards (UPR, TBs, SPs, CEDAW, Istanbul Convention) SDG 10.3</p> <p>a) Proportion of UPR recommendations that reported at least 50% implementation progress SDG 10.3 (16.b)</p> <p>b) Independent monitoring mechanism for Implementation of CRPD Convention</p>	<p>a) 1 b) Up to 5% c) No mechanism</p>	<p>a) 10 b) 50% c) Established mechanism with enhanced data collection and analysis</p>	<p>NHRI/OHCHR (HRMs) UN Report, State Report and CSOs Reports on UPR NHRI (Regular reports)</p>
<p>3. Whether legal frameworks are in place to promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex SDG 5.1.1 (Tier 2)</p>	<p>Legal frameworks and public life a) Violence against women - 58.33% b) Employment and economic benefit - 100% c) Marriage and family - 72.7%</p>	<p>Legal frameworks fully in place a) 100% b) 100% c) 100%</p>	<p>Coordination Body for Gender Equality, Parliament of the Republic of Serbia, national and international independent monitoring bodies, Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SORS), Annual EU Progress Report</p>
<p>4. Proportion of seats held by women in (a) national parliaments and (b) local governments (local assemblies) SDG 5.5.1 (Tier 1/3)</p> <p>Additional proxy indicators: (c) Proportion of elected women mayors</p>	<p>a) 38.8 (2020) b) 37.2 (2020) c) 20</p>	<p>a) 45 b) 45 c) 50</p>	<p>Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SORS) SDG Database</p>
<p>5. Total number of interim orders to freeze, seize or confiscate assets.</p>	<p>0</p>	<p>30% Increase</p>	<p>UNODC Progress Report</p>





6. Protection centered migration management (qualitative)	a) 18 reception centers (5 asylum centers)	a) Enhanced reception standards	Action Plan for Chapter 24 national reports, EU Progress Report, JHA reports
	b) Identification and referral of vulnerable migrants standardized	b) Service provision for vulnerable migrants in all centers, including Covid-19 related services	
	c) Paper based case management on return and readmission	c) Electronic readmission case management system in place	
	d) Border policy capacities responding to mixed migration	d) Border police capacities responding to mixed migration improved	

OUTCOME 3.2 ALL PEOPLE BENEFIT FROM EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE AND MEANINGFUL CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Performance indicators (disaggregation)	Baseline (year)	Target (2025)	Data source/MoV
1. Government Effectiveness Estimate	0.11 (2018)	0.25	World Bank, annually
2. Statistical capacity indicator for Sustainable Development Goal monitoring SDG 17.18.1 Proportion of sustainable development indicators produced at the national level with full disaggregation when relevant to the target in accordance with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics	30%	75%	Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SORS) SDG Database (TBD)
3. Proportion of population satisfied with efficiency of administrative procedures in public institutions (Proxy for SDG 16.6.2 Proportion of population satisfied with their last experience of public services)	51 (2018)	60	Sigma, annually
4. Proportion of persons who had at least one contact with a public official and who paid a bribe to a public official, or were asked for a bribe by those public officials, during the previous 12 months SDG 16.5.1 Proxy: a) Transparency International Corruption Perception Survey b) Corruption Perception Index value	a) Rank 94/179 b) 39 (2019)	At least 15 point decrease in ranking (79) 50	Transparency International Corruption Perception Survey
5. Enhanced trust and reconciliation in the South East Region, inclusive of gender approach. Number of initiatives initiated and led by UNCT Serbia	Peacebuilding Eligibility criteria EU engagement strategy Consultations on EU green agenda and common regional market	5 new initiatives started	United Nations Serbia Resident Coordinators Office
6. Number of countries that adopt and implement national disaster risk reduction strategies in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, SDG 13.1.2 (1.5.3, 11.6.1)	0.025 (2018)	Adopted and implemented National strategy for disaster risk reduction	Sendai Framework Monitoring System as provided by designated national focal points





Annex 4: Harmonised Approach to Cash Transfers

UNDP, UNFPA, and UNICEF use a harmonised approach to cash transfers (HACT). All cash transfers to an Implementing Partner are based on the workplans agreed between the Implementing Partner and the United Nations system agencies. Cash assistance for travel, stipends, honoraria and other costs shall be set at rates commensurate with those applied in the country, but not higher than those applicable to the United Nations system (as stated in the ICSC circulars).

Cash transfers for activities detailed in the joint workplans can be made by the United Nations system agencies using the following modalities:

1. Cash transferred to a national institution for forwarding to the Implementing Partner:
 - a) Prior to the start of activities (direct cash transfer), or
 - b) After activities have been completed (reimbursement).
2. Direct payment to vendors or third parties for obligations incurred by the Implementing Partners on the basis of requests signed by the designated official of the Implementing Partner.
3. Direct payments to vendors or third parties for obligations incurred by United Nations system agencies in support of activities agreed with Implementing Partners.

Direct cash transfers shall be requested and released for programme implementation periods not exceeding three months. Reimbursements of previously authorised expenditures shall be requested and released quarterly or after the completion of activities. The United Nations system agencies shall not be obligated to reimburse expenditure made by the Implementing Partner over and above the authorised amounts. Following the completion of any activity, any balance of funds shall be refunded or programmed by mutual agreement between the Implementing Partner and the United Nations system agencies.

Cash transfer modalities, the size of disbursements, and the scope and frequency of assurance activities shall depend on the findings of a review of the public financial management capacity in the case of a Government Implementing Partner, and of an assessment of the financial management capacity of the non-United Nations¹⁹ Implementing Partner. A qualified consultant, such as a public accounting firm, selected by the United Nations system agencies may conduct such an assessment, in which the Implementing Partner shall participate. The Implementing Partner may participate in the selection of the consultant. Cash transfer modalities, the size of disbursements, and the scope and frequency of assurance activities may be revised in the course of programme implementation based on the findings of programme monitoring, expenditure monitoring and reporting, and audits.

In case of direct cash transfer or reimbursement, the United Nations system agencies shall notify the Implementing Partner of the amount approved by the United Nations system agencies and shall disburse funds to the Implementing Partner within 14 days. In case of direct payment to vendors or third parties for obligations incurred by the Implementing Partners on the basis of requests signed by the designated official of the Implementing Partner, or to vendors or third parties for obligations incurred by the United Nations system agencies in support of activities agreed with Implementing Partners, the United Nations system agencies shall proceed with the payment within 14 days. The United Nations system agencies shall not have any direct liability under the contractual arrangements concluded between the Implementing Partner and a third-party vendor. Where the United Nations system agencies provide cash to the same Implementing Partner, programme monitoring, financial monitoring and auditing will be undertaken jointly or coordinated with those United Nations system agencies.

¹⁹ For the purposes of these clauses, 'the UN' includes the IFIs.



A standard Fund Authorization and Certificate of Expenditures (FACE) report, reflecting the activity lines of joint workplans will be used by Implementing Partners (IPs) to request the release of funds, or to secure the agreement that the United Nations organization will reimburse or directly pay for planned expenditure. IPs will use the FACE to report on the utilization of cash received.

The Implementing Partner shall identify the designated official(s) authorised to provide the account details, request and certify the use of cash. The FACE will be certified by the designated official(s) of the IP. Cash transferred to Implementing Partners should be spent for the purpose of activities and within the timeframe as agreed in the WPs only.

Cash received by the Government and national NGO IPs shall be used in accordance with established national regulations, policies and procedures consistent with international standards, in particular ensuring that cash is expended for activities as agreed in the WPs, and ensuring that reports on the utilization of all received cash are submitted to the relevant United Nations organization within six months after receipt of the funds, unless prescribed differently by agency requirements. Where any of the national regulations, policies and procedures is not consistent with international standards, the United Nations system agency financial and other related rules and system agency regulations, policies and procedures will apply.

In the case of IPs that are international NGOs, CSOs, and IGOs, cash received shall be used in accordance with the international standards, in particular ensuring that cash is expended for activities as agreed in the WPs, and ensuring that reports on the full utilization of all received cash are submitted to the United Nations organization within six months after receipt of the funds, unless prescribed differently by agency requirements.

To facilitate scheduled and special audits, each IP receiving cash from a United Nations system agency will provide the United Nations system agency or its representative with timely access to:

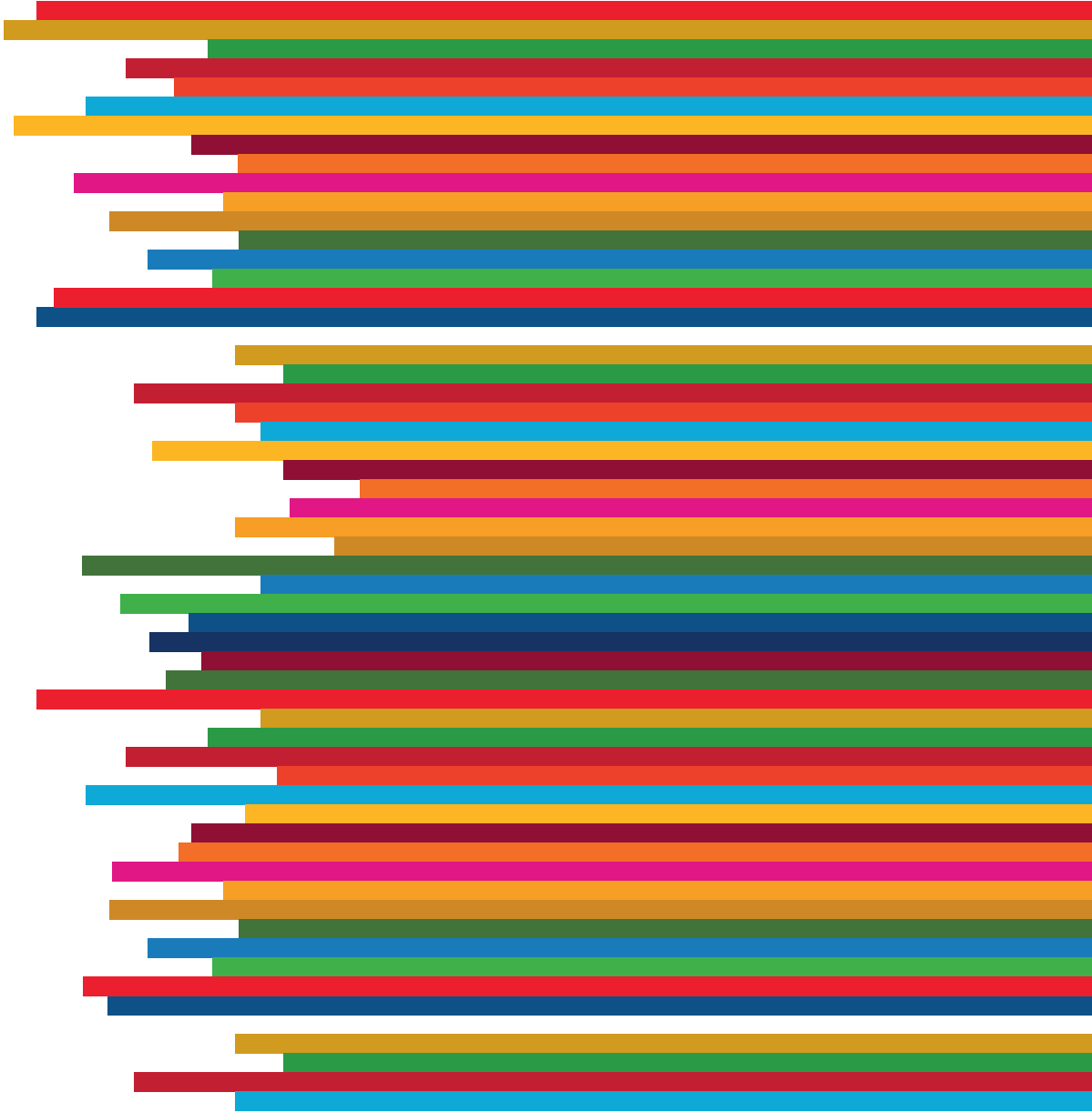
- All financial records which establish the transactional record of the cash transfers provided by a United Nations system agency, together with relevant documentation;
- All relevant documentation and personnel associated with the functioning of the Implementing Partners' internal control structure through which the cash transfers have passed

The findings of each audit will be reported to the IP and United Nations system agency. Each IP will furthermore:

- Receive and review the audit report issued by the auditors;
- Provide a timely statement of the acceptance or rejection of any audit recommendation to the United Nations organization that provided cash, and to the SAI, before submitting it to the United Nations system agency;
- Undertake timely actions to address the accepted audit recommendations;
- Report on the actions taken to implement accepted recommendations, to the United Nations system agencies and to the SAI, on a quarterly basis or as locally agreed.

The audits will be commissioned by the United Nations system agencies and undertaken by third party audit services.





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United Nations
Resident Coordinator's Office in Serbia
Bulevar Zorana Đinđića 64
Belgrade

-  serbia.un.org
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