



Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund

A vehicle for Sustainable Development



2025 Report of Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund



THE GOVERNMENT OF THE GRAND DUCHY OF LUXEMBOURG



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List of abbreviations

| Abbreviation | Meaning |
|---------------------|---|
| CRPD | Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities |
| EDP | Entrepreneurial Discovery Process |
| e-GSB | Government Service Bus (central data exchange system enabling communication between state registries) |
| EU | European Union |
| GRB | Gender-responsive budgeting |
| HRDD | Human rights due diligence |
| I4SDR | Innovation for Sustainable Development Review |
| ICT | Information and communication technologies |
| ISPI | Information System for Planning and Reporting |
| MAF | Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund |
| MSME | Micro, small and medium-sized enterprises |
| MPTF | Multi-Partner Trust Fund |
| MPTF-O | Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office |
| OOP | Once-Only Principle |
| RBC | Responsible business conduct |
| S3 | Smart Specialisation Strategy |
| SDGs | Sustainable Development Goals |
| SME | Small and medium-sized enterprises |
| STEAM | Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics |
| TVET | Technical and vocational education and training |
| VAC | Violence against children |
| VAW | Violence against women |

Factsheet

The Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund (MAF) is the United Nations country-based pooled fund that brings together development partners and the Government of Montenegro to accelerate implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and Montenegro’s EU accession. Conceived as both a financing instrument and a partnership platform, it shifts support away from fragmented, stand-alone projects towards strategic, multi-agency projects that are directly anchored in nationally agreed priorities under the umbrella of the United Nations-Montenegro Cooperation Framework 2023-2027. It finances joint UN projects, thus supporting the UN Reform and the role of the Resident Coordinator.

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

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

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

The Fund’s strategic partners are Montenegro, Austria, Ireland, Luxembourg, Switzerland, and the European Union.

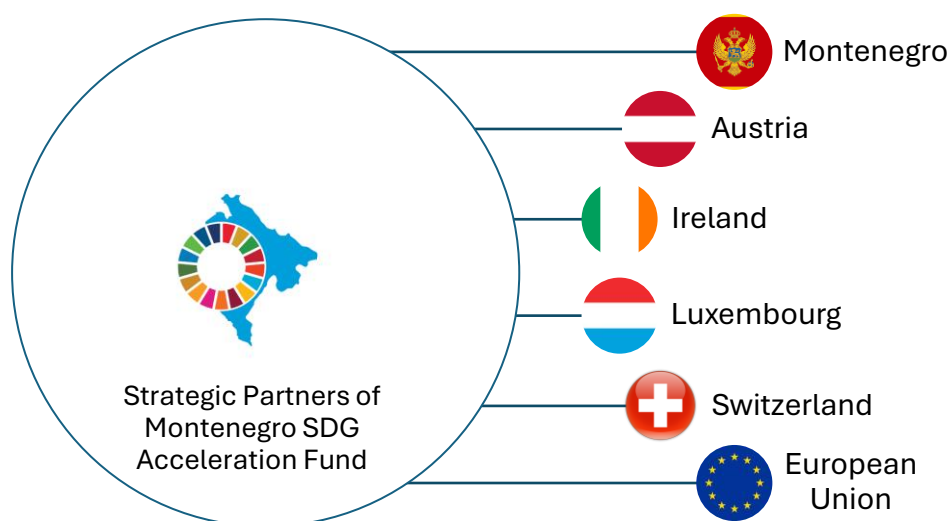
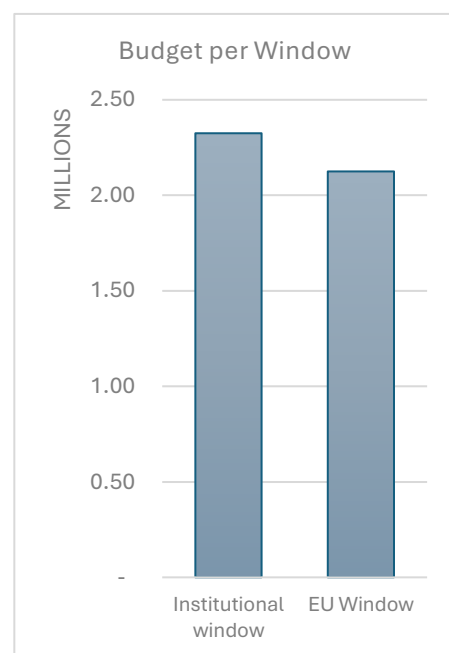
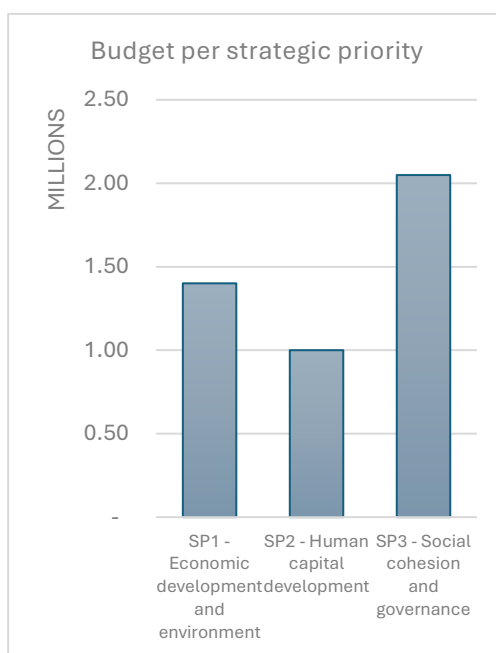
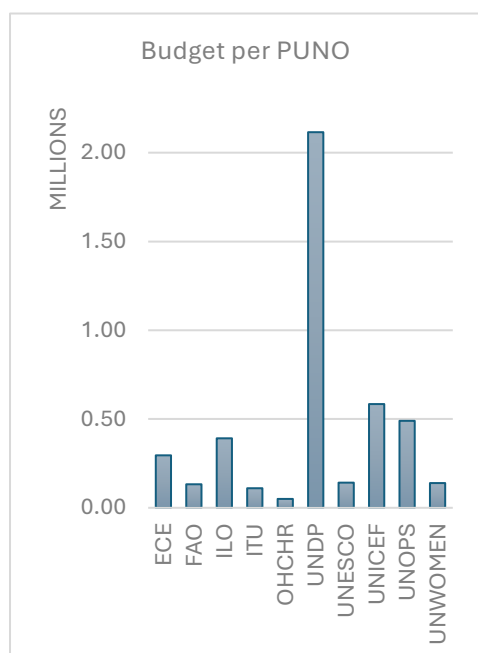


Figure 1 Overview of Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund strategic partners

To date, **the Fund operates with USD 6.6 million¹ invested in nine (9) joint UN project** that deliver results across all strategic priorities of the Cooperation Framework (1- inclusive economic development and environmental sustainability, 2- human capital development, reducing vulnerability, social inclusion, and 3- social cohesion, people-centred governance, rule of law and human rights).

The UN projects financed by the Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund:

- 1- *[finalised]* EmpowHER Montenegro: Fostering Inclusive Rural Development, implemented by UNDP and FAO
- 2- *[finalised]* Digital, inclusive, and transformative: Quality education for Montenegro, implemented by UNICEF, ILO, and UNESCO
- 3- *[finalised]* Optimizing Development Coordination: A Project for Advancing Planning and Reporting through Information System Enhancement, implemented by UNDP
- 4- Optimizing Development Coordination: Advancing Strategic Planning and Reporting through Information System Enhancement, implemented by UNDP, *financed through EU Window*
- 5- Digital Transformation of Local Self-Governments in Montenegro, implemented by UNOPS and ITU
- 6- Strengthening the system support on prevention of violence against women, girls, and boys, implemented by UNICEF and UN Women
- 7- Ending the Denial of Legal Capacity of Persons with Disabilities in Montenegro, implemented by UNDP and OHCHR
- 8- IDEA-ME: Innovation for Development and Economic Advancement in Montenegro, implemented by UNDP and UNECE, *financed through EU Window*
- 9- Circular Transition and Responsible Business Conduct in Montenegro, implemented by UNDP and ILO, *financed through EU Window*



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

Executive summary

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

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

Coordinator. Governance is entrusted to the Joint Steering Committee, co-chaired by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the UN Resident Coordinator, supported by the Resident Coordinator Office as Secretariat and the Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office as Administrative Agent, with independent advice provided by an Advisory Board representing diverse societal perspectives. The Fund operates through three windows (institutional, EU Window, and private sector), with the EU Window featuring an additional decision-making layer to ensure close cooperation with the EU Delegation and the Ministry of European Affairs.

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

Strategic Priority 1 - inclusive economic development and environmental sustainability. In 2025 tangible system-building results positioned Montenegro for accelerated green and innovation-driven transformation. The country has, for the first time, a nationally tailored **Industrial Symbiosis Manual** and **Institutional Roadmap** that translate circular economy concepts into practical guidance for enterprises and institutions, alongside training packages for future MSME capacity building. National evidence base for **responsible business conduct (RBC)** was strengthened through a study and stakeholder mapping, supporting integration of responsible practices into MSME policies and instruments. In rural areas, the combination of a gender-sensitive **Agricultural Census, Country Gender Assessment**, and targeted training and mentorship shifted rural women from statistical invisibility to recognition as economic actors, culminating in Montenegro's first **Rural Women's Parliament**, a formal platform for voice and participation in agrifood and rural development policymaking.

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

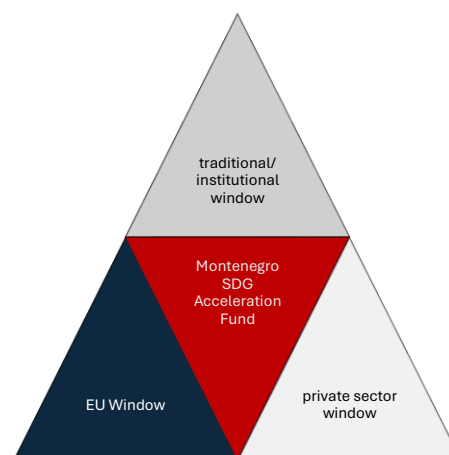


Figure 2 Structure of the Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund

media and information literacy, and STEAM were strengthened at scale, supported by the Digital School platform. The platform hosts **over 12,000 digital lessons** and new digital courses that enable continued access to accredited professional development. The project on prevention of violence against women and children advanced the **Barnahus** model² to the threshold of operationalisation: draft National Standards and a Roadmap were finalised, Barnahus was recognised as a public legal entity in the draft Law on Social and Child Protection, while cross-sector working groups and study visits built institutional consensus and readiness for implementation.

Strategic Priority 3 - social cohesion, people-centred governance, rule of law and human rights. In 2025, the Fund advanced key governance enablers at both central and local levels. The **Information System for Planning and Reporting (ISPI)** is becoming a central tool for unified monitoring of priority reforms, including the EU Reform Agenda, while a comprehensive review of the legal and institutional framework for strategic planning diagnosed fragmentation and bottlenecks and laid foundations for a future **Law on Strategic Planning**. At the local level, 20 municipalities established Municipal Working Groups and developed digital road maps, action plans, and catalogues of services and registers. A major system-level milestone was achieved when **all 25 municipalities signed an Intermunicipal Agreement** enabling shared use of Government Service Bus infrastructure—unlocking interoperability and generating cost savings through shared public digital infrastructure. Finally, the legal capacity project secured a policy milestone by integrating legal capacity reform into the National Action Plan for implementing recommendation of the Committee for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities recommendations 2026–2030 (adopted in November 2025), alongside structured coordination among relevant ministries and organisations of persons with disabilities to support legislative amendments and a supported decision-making model.

² The Barnahus ("Children's House") model is a leading multidisciplinary, interagency approach for child victims and witnesses of violence, combining child-friendly support with legal investigations under one roof.

Results achieved

Economic development and environmental sustainability

Strategic priority 1

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

Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund projects

- 1- *[finalised]* EmpowHER Montenegro: Fostering Inclusive Rural Development, implemented by UNDP and FAO
- 2- IDEA-ME: Innovation for Development and Economic Advancement in Montenegro, implemented by UNDP and UNECE, financed through EU Window
- 3- Circular Transition and Responsible Business Conduct in Montenegro, implemented by UNDP and ILO, financed through EU Window

Total financial envelope

USD 1,375,763.00

In 2025, under this Strategic Priority, the Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund consolidated a set of complementary projects that jointly advanced **inclusive, innovation-driven and environmentally sustainable economic development**. Operating at different levels of the system - from rural communities and MSMEs to national innovation institutions - the three joint projects contributed to a shared outcome. As two of the projects started only in Q3 of the reporting year, the results presented should be interpreted within this shortened implementation timeframe.

Empowering rural women as drivers of local green growth *[finalised]*

Through the joint project *EmpowHer*, the Fund achieved significant outcome-level progress in advancing **rural women's economic empowerment and gender-responsive rural transformation** in northern municipalities of Berane, Bijelo Polje and Plav.

The recently completed UNDP-FAO joint project *EmpowHer* delivered a robust, **gender-responsive evidence base for rural development and catalysed institutional and policy change**. Mainstreaming gender into the **Law on Agricultural Census** enabled the systematic collection of sex-disaggregated data within the **2024 Agricultural Census** marking a structural shift in the national statistical system. The Census, for the first time, captured data on women's roles and contributions in agricultural holdings it revealed that only 12.9% of holdings are owned and managed by women, thereby making visible long-standing gender disparities in the agrifood sector.

In parallel, the newly developed **Country Gender Assessment (CGA) of Agriculture and Rural Livelihoods** consolidated existing official statistics complemented with qualitative evidence providing in depth diagnosis of structural disparities in access to land, finance, services, and decision-making, as well as less visible influencing factors such as limited confidence, networks, and institutional support. In combination these provide now for a robust, policy-relevant foundation, directly informing gender-responsive rural development policies and planning at both national and local levels.

A key milestone was the **establishment of Montenegro's first Rural Women's Parliament** in 2025, institutionalising rural women's participation in policy dialogue and creating a permanent mechanism for direct engagement with decision-makers on agrifood and rural development priorities. At local level, **gender equality action plans were finalised in Plav (adopted) and Bijelo Polje (in process)**, explicitly reflecting evidence-based priorities and the needs of rural women.

The Fund also supported **133 rural women to receive a structured training** in business development, financial management, marketing, digital literacy and sustainable practices, while 18 participants successfully completed training on Green Destination Standards. These efforts were reinforced through extensive networking and mentoring: **over 300 women participated in business networking events**, and experienced rural women entrepreneurs mentored peers operating in rural tourism and agriculture, fostering clustering, knowledge exchange and stronger local value chains. In addition, nine women entrepreneurs received support for eco-upgrade – including investments in solar hot-water systems and bio-toilets - improving the environmental performance and their market positioning.

The project advanced the Cooperation Framework's objectives on inclusive economic development and gender equality, strengthened capacities to align with EU regulations and accelerated achievement of SDGs 2 (Zero Hunger) and 5 (Gender Equality).



Figure 3 Supporting women in rural areas of Montenegro through UNDP-FAO EmpowHER project

Laying the foundations for a circular and responsible private sector **[EU Window]** *[ongoing]*

In 2025, the UNDP-ILO project introduced a suite of analytical, technical and institutional tools that together form a **national framework for industrial symbiosis and responsible business conduct**. The **Industrial Symbiosis Manual** identified six priority resource and waste streams - ranging from organic residues and wood waste to construction debris and waste heat - and provided step-by-step guidance for MSMEs on how to identify and implement resource-sharing opportunities. The **Institutional Roadmap for Industrial Symbiosis** set out governance models, facilitation mechanisms and phased implementation steps. The project identified **three priority industrial symbiosis clusters**: the Nikšić Industrial Cluster (metals, wood, construction, energy), the Coastal Tourism-Food Cluster (Budva–Bar–Kotor corridor) and the Northern Bio-Resource Cluster (Berane–Bijelo Polje). This clustering provides a basis for future demonstration projects, financing and policy support.

The project substantially strengthened the **evidence base and institutional readiness for responsible business conduct and human rights due diligence**. A national RBC/HRDD study assessed the policy and institutional environment, mapped existing initiatives, and identified key barriers and opportunities for MSME uptake of RBC standards. This work initiated the design of a national roadmap for RBC integration into policies and strategies.

Although in an early implementation phase, the project already inspired an enabling environment for MSMEs to undertake resource-efficiency investments, access instruments such as the Eco Fund and Innovation Fund, and align their practices with emerging EU due diligence requirements. The project contributed to institutional capacity and ownership - the Ministry of Economic Development anchored circular economy and RBC within core economic policy priorities, while engagement with employers' and workers' organisations and business support entities strengthened social dialogue on sustainable enterprise.

Strengthening an innovation-driven, EU-aligned economy **[EU Window]** *[ongoing]*

The UNDP-UNECE joint project advanced the **innovation policy framework and institutional capacities** needed for a more dynamic, competitive and gender-responsive economy. Albeit the implementation started recently, the tangible outcome results is the new **Smart Specialisation Strategy (S3) 2026–2031** for Montenegro and **Innovation for Sustainable Development Review (I4SDR)**, both developed in a highly participatory manner utilizing EU recommended approaches and methodologies. The **Entrepreneurial Discovery Process (EDP)** methodology³ engaged more than 150 stakeholders from government, the private sector, academia and civil society. They mapped five priority domains for the forthcoming S3 strategy, as pillars for economic diversification of Montenegro: nature- and people-friendly construction; sustainable agriculture and food value chains; energy and sustainable environment; information and communication technologies; and innovative, regenerative and sustainable tourism.

While key outcome-level results are set for achievement by 2027, the 2025 results clearly show that Montenegro now has a **much stronger platform for innovation-driven economic transformation**, thus directly contributing to achieving of SDGs and advancing the EU accession process.

Combined contribution to economic development and environmental sustainability

Collectively, these three projects demonstrate how the Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund is leveraging pooled resources to **orchestrate change across different layers of the economy**. *EmpowHer* has made rural women visible in statistics and policy, strengthened their economic agency and linked their businesses to green markets. The *Circular Transition and Responsible Business Conduct* project has equipped institutions and MSMEs with the frameworks needed to turn circular economy and responsible business conduct from concepts into operational practice. The *Innovation*

³ Methodology developed by the EU Joint Research Centre.

for Development project has laid the groundwork for a smart-specialisation strategy and innovation system that can steer public and private investment towards competitive, sustainable and gender-responsive growth sectors.

In 2025, outcome-level change is already visible at the level of **women's economic empowerment and local green growth**, and at the level of **institutional frameworks and capacities for circular economy and innovation**. In the coming years, as pilots are implemented, policies adopted and investments mobilised, these foundations are expected to translate into measurable increases in productive, decent and green employment, improved resource efficiency and stronger innovation performance - directly underpinning Montenegro's transition towards an inclusive, low-carbon and EU-ready economy that achieves targets of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Women in rural northern Montenegro face significant barriers in starting and sustaining businesses. With only 13% of women as heads or managers of family agricultural holdings, their economic participation is limited. For Damjana Đalović, a young entrepreneur in rural tourism, the initial challenges were substantial - fear of failure, communication barriers with international guests due to language limitations, and infrastructure issues such as water shortages made it difficult to run her business.

To address these challenges, a mentorship program was developed to provide women like Damjana with practical guidance on business development. The program offered structured mentorship, allowing her to gain insights into setting and achieving business. Thanks to the mentorship, Damjana gained the skills and confidence needed to run her business effectively. Despite initial difficulties, the satisfaction and eagerness of returning guests validated her hard work and dedication. The mentorship also helped her shift from a passive role in her family's business to an active and motivated entrepreneur, committed to improving her services and expanding opportunities in rural tourism.

*Through Damjana's experience, we learned that mentorship plays a crucial role in empowering women entrepreneurs in rural areas. This insight has reinforced the need to expand mentorship programs, ensuring more women receive tailored advice and hands-on learning opportunities. Additionally, her challenges highlighted the importance of **financial accessibility** and **infrastructure improvements**. Limited access to funding remains a major barrier for rural women, suggesting that future projects should incorporate financial literacy training and advocate for better access to grants and microloans. Furthermore, the difficulties with road conditions and water supply demonstrate the need for partnerships with local authorities to improve infrastructure, making rural tourism more viable.*

This case has provided valuable insights that will guide future efforts, ensuring more women in rural Montenegro can overcome barriers and build successful enterprises.



Figure 4 The rural tourism business managed by Damjana Đalović

Human capital development and social inclusion

Strategic priority 2

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

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

Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund projects

- 1- *[finalised]* Digital, inclusive, and transformative: Quality education for Montenegro, implemented by UNICEF, ILO, and UNESCO
- 2- Strengthening the system support on prevention of violence against women, girls, and boys, implemented by UNICEF and UN Women

Total financial envelope

USD 1,000,000.00

In 2025, the Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund's portfolio supported this strategic priority in transforming education systems and strengthening protection responses for women and children.

Quantum leap in quality of education system *[finalised]*

The joint UNICEF-ILO-UNESCO project on transforming education in Montenegro advanced how education systems support human capital development. Initially conceived as a pilot in 12 schools across six underserved northern municipalities, **the initiative catalysed strong national ownership and became a core vehicle** for implementing the Strategy for the Digitalization of Education (2022–2027), the Education Reform Strategy (2025–2035) and the Reform Agenda under the EU Growth Plan for the Western Balkans. This was achieved during the 2-year project implementation period.

At outcome level, the project has **mainstreamed digital pedagogy and 21st-century skills** as central features of Montenegro's human capital agenda. **The EdTech model** tested through the joint project prompted the Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation to scale up investment: by the end of 2025, **106 primary and secondary schools** [project target was 12 schools] were equipped with functional EdTech Hubs, meaning that all primary schools with over 200 students now have such a hub [48% of all schools and 77% of student population covered]. This effectively institutionalises modern, technology-enhanced learning environments as a standard offer in the system rather than a pilot projects.

This physical transformation of schools was complemented by substantial investments in **teacher capacities and digital ecosystems**, which together underpin transformation of education. Over the two-year implementation period, more than 300 teachers were trained in digital pedagogy and Office 365 tools, while 241 teachers were equipped to integrate media and information literacy and critical thinking into their practice. In response to gaps in engaging students in the dual education system, an additional 160 TVET teachers completed e-pedagogy and digital content creation modules. National ICT coordination was strengthened: 170 ICT coordinators across Montenegro were trained to lead the implementation of the Digital School concept.

These capacities are embedded in a **coherent digital learning infrastructure**. **The Digital School platform now hosts over 12,000 digital lessons** and an expanding catalogue of accredited courses,

including eleven new courses developed under the project (five on Office 365 and three on digital safety and prevention of gender-based violence, alongside subject-specific courses such as recycling, coding in Scratch and 3D modelling). As a result, children and adolescents are increasingly engaging in robotics, coding, 3D modelling and project-based learning through EdTech Hubs, digital courses and extra-curricular events such as Digital Skills Summer Camps, which in 2025 alone engaged 80 children and 10 teachers in intensive learning and career-orientation activities, followed by workshops that reached a further 280 students.

Beyond the numbers, this joint initiative has **changed the way education reforms are designed and implemented**. It has promoted a decentralised, school-centred approach in which capacity building is provided on site, laboratories are prepared with direct mentoring, and local ICT coordinators and teachers shape how tools are used. Schools report stronger engagement, more practical uptake and better alignment of training with context-specific needs. At system level, the project has reinforced alignment between UN agencies and the Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation, ensuring that investments in infrastructure, content and teacher development are mutually reinforcing and fully embedded in national strategies rather than standing alone external projects.

The impact of these investments is reflected in outcome-linked indicators under the Cooperation Framework, while setting the basis for quantum leap in achieving SDG targets on quality education.

Preventing violence against women, girls and boys [ongoing]

Although UNICEF-UN Women project started only in Q3 2025, it has already produced some relevant changes in institutional frameworks, cross-sector coordination and social inclusion. The most notable is the **advancement of the Barnahus model**⁴. A cross-sectoral working group led by the Ministry of Social Welfare finalised **draft National Standards for Barnahus and a Roadmap** for its establishment, whereas *Barnahus* has been recognized as a public legal entity in the new Law on Social and Child Protection. This is a structural shift towards an integrated, trauma-informed, child-friendly response for child survivors of violence.

At the same time, the project initiated a set of **reforms that strengthen the broader ecosystem of protection and social inclusion**. A comprehensive policy paper analyses the intersection between violence against children (VAC) and violence against women (VAW), including technology-facilitated violence, which will guide systemic responses and public policy debate and ensure alignment with EU and international standards. In parallel, work has started with the Ministry of Finance to **cost key survivor services** - shelters, legal aid and psychosocial support – at central and local levels, applying gender-responsive budgeting tools. These efforts are strengthening the evidence base for equitable financing of protection services and informing legal reviews of the Gender Equality Law and the Law on Addressing Violence against Women.

The **peaceful conflict-resolution project** has been rolled in nine elementary schools to date, with a four-day basic training delivered to around 60 teachers, psychologists and pedagogues. They are now equipped to lead school mediation, strengthen early detection of violence and foster safer, more inclusive learning environments.

The close collaboration between UNICEF and UN Women has ensured that child- and women-focused projects are coherent, mutually reinforcing and firmly rooted in Montenegro's commitments under EU negotiation Chapter 23 on fundamental rights and SDGs 5 and 16.

Although outcome-level indicators are set for 2027, the 2025 results clearly show that the building blocks of a safer, more inclusive society are being put in place: a legally recognised Barnahus model;

⁴ The Barnahus ("Children's House") model is a leading multidisciplinary, interagency approach for child victims and witnesses of violence, combining child-friendly support with legal investigations under one roof.

cross-sector standards and roadmaps; emerging GRB-based costing of services; and the first wave of school-based mediation programmes.

Combined contribution to human capital development and social inclusion

Collectively, these two projects demonstrate how the Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund is using pooled resources to **link human capital development with social inclusion and protection**. By simultaneously modernising education systems and strengthening responses to violence, the Fund is helping Montenegro to build a society in which children and adolescents can both learn and live in safe, supportive environments – a prerequisite for sustainable, inclusive development.

These projects enabled the UN system to address key drivers of long-term sustainable development, while bridging gaps between policy, delivery capacity, and service financing. This integrated approach ensures that the Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund accelerates SDGs achievement and supports Montenegro's EU accession.

Social cohesion, people-centred governance, and rule of law

Strategic priority 3

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

Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund projects

- 1- Digital Transformation of Local Self-Governments in Montenegro, implemented by UNOPS and ITU
- 2- *[finalised]* Optimizing Development Coordination: A Project for Advancing Planning and Reporting through Information System Enhancement, implemented by UNDP
- 3- Ending the Denial of Legal Capacity of Persons with Disabilities in Montenegro, implemented by UNDP and OHCHR
- 4- Optimizing Development Coordination: Advancing Strategic Planning and Reporting through Information System Enhancement, implemented by UNDP, financed through EU Window

Financial envelope

USD 2,074,190

Under **Strategic Priority 3 – Social cohesion, people-centred governance, rule of law and human rights**, the Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund supported three complementary projects in 2025. They strengthened the institutional foundations for accountable governance, improved coordination of reforms, expanded the enabling environment for digital public services at local level, and advanced rights-based reforms for persons with disabilities. While the three initiatives operate at different layers of the system - centre-of-government, municipal service delivery, and the legal capacity framework - they converge around a common outcome: **more effective, inclusive and rights-based institutions that strengthen trust, equal access to justice and quality public services.**

Strengthening equality before the law through legal capacity reform *[ongoing]*

The joint UNDP-OHCHR project commenced in late-2025 and had limited time to deliver outcome-level results within the reporting timeframe. Nevertheless, early progress was achieved with the development of Montenegro's first **National Action Plan for the Implementation of the Recommendations of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2026–2030**. By integrating legal capacity reform into this national strategic framework, the project strengthened political commitment and the sustainability of the reform pathway. At the same time, it established the **institutional framework for reform implementation**, which can be interpreted as an outcome-level result. The project managed to get the sustained institutional ownership across justice, social welfare and human rights systems.

Results of these projects will have a direct impact on EU negotiation chapter 23 on judiciary and fundamental rights and SDG 10 on inequalities, as well as advancing compliance with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Improving people-centred local governance through digitalisation and interoperability *[ongoing]*

The UNOPS-ITU joint project enabled local self-governments to move from fragmented digital initiatives toward a more coherent, evidence-based and citizen-centred model of digital

transformation. With strong ownership by the Ministry of Public Administration and municipalities, the project surpassed the initial targets and achieved whole-of-the-country results.

A central result has been the establishment of a **system-wide foundation for interoperability and the “once-only” principle**.⁵ The **Intermunicipal Agreement was signed by all 25 local self-governments**, enabling a broader data exchange framework between local and central institutions. The Agreement creates the basis for municipalities to access the Government Service Bus⁶ through shared infrastructure and thereby reduce administrative burden and improve service delivery, bringing Montenegro closer towards a national, scalable framework for shared digital public infrastructure.

The project also strengthened **local governance arrangements for digital transformation**. Municipal Working Groups were established in 20 municipalities, creating institutional mechanisms to coordinate digitalisation processes at the local level. Complementing these governance structures, a full suite of strategic and operational tools was produced - including Digital Road Maps, Activity Plans and Action Plans (2025–2026) - providing municipalities with structured pathways for prioritising services, improving information security and monitoring progress.

A third strand of progress concerns **improved service foundations and data governance**. The development of the Catalogue of Local Services and Catalogue of Data Registers in 20 municipalities enables structured identification and prioritisation of services for digitalisation and lays a foundation for interoperable service delivery. The project further documents that 711 institutions and 2,082 services were recorded across participating municipalities (2,793 entries), highlighting both the scale of local service delivery and the importance of systematic digitalisation for citizen access.

Alongside these system enablers, ITU’s GovStack component translated national ambitions into **practical, locally owned service design processes** - 12 municipalities developed three high-impact digital services [Social Aid for Newborns, Annual Property Tax Payment, and Business Registration for Hospitality Services] and produced service design blueprints. These results strengthen institutional capability to redesign services around user experience, apply building-block approaches and shift municipal practice toward citizen-centric service delivery.

Finally, the project strengthened enabling conditions for trust and resilience through **improved cybersecurity and technical readiness**, reporting that nine municipalities were equipped with security-related ICT equipment that benefits over 1,100 users.

The project has substantially contributed to the public administrative reform as one of the EU accession fundamentals and Montenegro’s readiness to join the EU, as well as SDG 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions, SDG 5 on gender equality, and SDG 10 on reducing inequalities.

Strengthening whole-of-government coordination and evidence-based policymaking [EU Window] [ongoing]

The UNDP project focused on strengthening centre-of-government capacities for strategic planning, coordination, monitoring and reporting of reforms - an essential pillar of people-centred governance and efficient reforms implementation in relation to the EU accession process and beyond. The project is designed to reduce fragmentation and improve monitoring of reforms and alignment between policies and budgets.

⁵ The Once-Only Principle (OOP) is an e-government concept ensuring citizens and businesses provide standard information to public authorities only once, as administrations share and reuse this data securely.

⁶ Government Service Bus (e-GSB) is central data exchange system of the central government that enables smooth communication of all available state registries.

Since the project commenced in Q4 2025, it is too early to report substantive outcome-level results, it however already moved from preparatory work into structured implementation.

The first major contribution was a **comprehensive review of the legal and institutional framework for unified strategic planning and reporting**. Preliminary findings confirm that while Montenegro has a formal strategic planning framework, key systemic bottlenecks persist - fragmented regulation across multiple laws and by-laws, unclear policy coordination functions within ministries, and weak legal linkage between strategic planning and programme budgeting. The review identifies the need to adopt a **Law on Strategic Planning**, which is central to strengthening policy coherence and accountability.

A second major contribution is the ongoing upgrade of the **Information System for Planning and Reporting (ISPI)**, a centralised digital platform for unified monitoring of reforms. In 2025, procurement of technical services enabled renewal of system maintenance and initiation of upgrades including a budget module, automated data processing, visualisation and notification features. Technical assessments confirmed ISPI's robustness and scalability, and an inception report set out the implementation framework for upgrades and new modules. The system will be piloted for monitoring the EU Reform Agenda by mid-2026.

Taken together, these results represent a meaningful step toward outcome-level change: they strengthen the conditions for a unified, transparent and data-driven approach to enhanced strategic planning, monitoring and reporting, which is essential for effective governance and for meeting EU reporting and accountability requirements. As such, the project also substantively contributes to Cooperation Framework Strategic Priority 3 on social cohesion, people-centred governance, and rule of law, as well as SDG 16 on peace, justice, and strong institutions.

Combined contribution to Strategic Priority 3

Across the three projects, the Fund's Strategic Priority 3 portfolio demonstrates a coherent approach: **rights-based governance reforms** must be accompanied by **strong coordination and monitoring capacities at the centre of government**, and by **people-centred service delivery**.

Collectively, outcome-level results achieved towards this strategic priority position Montenegro to progress toward more inclusive institutions and improved trust in governance: legal reforms and coordination mechanisms that protect rights, digital systems and interoperability that reduce administrative burden, and integrated monitoring and planning tools that improve accountability and policy coherence.

Lessons learned and next steps

- 1- Pooled funds deliver “system leverage” when investments are scalable. Strong national ownership and shared prioritisation with Government and other key development partner are critical for sustainability and scaling up of projects.**

In 2025, the Fund’s strongest performance was demonstrated by projects designed to be scaled by national institutions and backed by strong Government ownership. It demonstrated that the pooled funding model is most catalytic when it supports “proof-of-concept” solutions that can be expanded through national policies and budgets (e.g. EdTech hubs, local government e-services).

This is reinforced by the Fund’s design. The Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund is seen as a partnership platform where priorities are set through governance structures and aligned with national reforms, while results show how pilots can translate into national scale. Operationally, the Joint Steering Committee is the space to identify and agree on thematic priorities (informed by the Advisory Board, UN analysis, and inclusive consultations), ensuring that projects are rooted in the Government-UN-experts view of key development bottlenecks. In practice, this shared prioritisation function of the Joint Steering Committee strengthens strategic focus and increases the likelihood that financed solutions are adopted and scaled by national systems.

- 2- The Fund is a unique vehicle to steer strategic, rights-based and development interventions and to enable coherent, joint UN action.**

The Montenegro SDG Acceleration Fund is structured to strengthen country-level UN coherence: it finances joint UN projects and embeds governance through the Joint Steering Committee co-chaired by Government and the Resident Coordinator, with Secretariat support embedded in the Office of the Resident Coordinator and the Division for United Nations in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The 2025 experience reconfirmed that this steering function is most effective when joint projects are framed around system-level change (policy, standards, platforms, institutional arrangements) and explicitly anchored in national priorities, sustainable development policy and EU accession reforms - i.e., when the Fund is used as an instrument to convene and align the UN system around challenges and proposed solutions rather than as an additional funding stream that finances the existing funding gap.

- 3- Strong coordination and cross-project learning materially increase quality, coherence and impact—and are an added value of country-based pooled funding.**

Pooled funding creates value not only through financing, but through enhanced coordination and learning cycles. When joint projects actively exchange approaches, tools and implementation experience (across agencies and across themes), they reduce duplication, improve design quality, and accelerate uptake of good practice. This is consistent with the Fund’s core intent to enhance coherence and reduce fragmentation by bringing partners into a common platform and fostering synergies across projects. Projects’ reports explicitly highlights that results’ quality and feasibility have improved through structured stakeholder engagement, inclusive coordination and joint delivery approaches, including the practical benefit of combining complementary UN mandates in a single package. The implication for the Fund operation is that cross-project learning should be treated as a managed function of the Fund (not an *ad hoc* and sporadic endeavour), with deliberate mechanisms for peer exchange, shared problem-solving and dissemination of reusable tools (e.g., standards, methodologies, digital solutions, engagement models). This increases the likelihood that each joint project contributes not only its own outputs, but also transferable “public goods” that raise the effectiveness of the overall portfolio.

Next steps

In 2026, the Fund will prioritize **turning 2025 foundations into measurable delivery for ongoing projects**, by supporting implementation and scale of ongoing projects: advancing operationalisation of Barnahus (standards/roadmap to implementation), rolling out next steps in local government digitalisation and interoperability, and accelerating centre-of-government reforms through the upgraded ISPI platform and follow-on legal/coordination work on strategic planning. In parallel, EU Window projects will advance from inception phase to full scale implementation and delivery of results in 2026.

On the **Fund management side**, close engagement with the Government, Advisory Board, international development partners, and participating UN Organisations will continue to ensure value-for-money innovative and strategic investments of the Fund. The next round of allocations is set to capitalise on lessons learned and best industry practices, while also testing the grounds for new approaches and strengthened role of the Joint Steering Committee in directing the funding. The Fund will be evaluated along the Cooperation Framework 2023-2027.

Annex – results matrix

1- [finalised] EmpowHER Montenegro: Fostering Inclusive Rural Development, implemented by UNDP and FAO

| | Achieved Indicator Targets | Comment | Source of Verification |
|--|---|--|-------------------------------|
| Outcome 1 Indicator: Gender Equality Index score, dimensions: money, time, work Baseline: Total: 55 (2019); Money: 59.7 (2019); Time: 52.7 (2019); Work: 65.2 (2019) Planned Target: Total: >62 (2027); Money:>67 (2027); Time: >60 (2027); Work: >72 (2027) | Total: 593 (2023) Money: 61.9 (2023) Time: 58.9 (2023) Work: 70.7 (2023) | | MONSTAT |
| Output 1.1 | | | |
| Indicator 1.1.1. a. Number of private sector entities (including micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs)) that innovated their business practices, by mainstreaming environmental, social or economic sustainability elements, with UN support Baseline: 0 Planned Target: 70 (2025) | 300 | | UN Agencies report |
| Indicator 1.1.2. b. Number of gender-responsive policies that promote sustainable and inclusive economic growth, productive employment and decent work, based on international human rights norms and standards, adopted with UN support Baseline: 0 Planned Target: 1 (2024) – midterm target, and 2 (2025) – final target | 2 | CGA finalized and published. Mapping financial support to women entrepreneurship in North region of Montenegro validated Agricultural Census Law (adopted) Gender Equality Action Plan of Municipality of Plav (adopted) Gender Equality Action Plan of Municipality of Bijelo Polje (in adoption procedure) Gender analyses in strategic planning with the special focus on women in rural areas Socio economic profile of rural women Montenegro | UN Agencies report |

2- *[finalised]* Digital, inclusive, and transformative: Quality education for Montenegro, implemented by UNICEF, ILO, and UNESCO

| | Achieved Indicator Targets | Comment | Source of Verification |
|---|--|--|--|
| <p>Outcome 1 is Outcome 2 of Cooperation Framework 2023-2027) Indicator 1.1: Activity rate as proportion of population (15+) Baseline: 59.10% Planned Target: 63%</p> | Yes | Improvement in activity rate across country, as measured by Statistical Office of Montenegro, at a quarterly level. | Labour Force Survey, Statistical Office of Montenegro. |
| <p>Outcome 2 is Outcome 3 of Cooperation Framework 2023-2027)⁷ Indicator 1.2: Proportion of children at the end of lower secondary education, achieving minimum proficiency level in reading, science, and maths Baseline: Reading 55.6 Maths 53.8 Science 51.8. Planned Target: Reading 60 Maths 59 Science 57.</p> | No | Multiple structural reasons as elaborated in OECD PISA 2022 Report, as well as PISA 2022 Montenegro snapshot | Report on PISA by OECD and the Examinations Centre of Montenegro, under MoESI. |
| <p>Output 1.1: Teachers have increased skills for integrating digital tools and technologies in teaching and collaboration, with focus on the use of MS tools, blended teaching, media and information literacy, STEM/coding, and career orientation.</p> | | | |
| <p>Indicator 1.1.1 a. Percentage of IT coordinators, with strengthened capacity to implement the Digital School Concept, at national level Baseline: 0 Planned Target: 80%</p> | Achieved, 170 ICT coordinators were engaged in programme in 2024 solely (100% coordinators within country) | | Project report by MoESI, reports and lists of participants, emails, etc. |
| <p>Indicator 1.1.2: Percentage of teachers with capacities to use digital platforms and implement blended learning methods (UNSCF indicator), in 12 targeted schools: * STEM/coding training * MS tools * MiL * Digital content creation Baseline: 0 Planned Target: 60% (300) of total number of teachers in twelve schools in 6 municipalities (521)</p> | Achieved - 300 teachers trained with coordinated effort of all three agencies. | | Project report by UN agencies, MoESI, reports and lists of participants, emails etc. |
| <p>Output 1.2: Schools are embedded in functional digital eco-systems through Ed Tech hubs, coordinator networks, improved hard- and software, that include considerations of quality, equity and bridging the digital divide.</p> | | | |
| <p>Indicator 1.2.1: Number of targeted municipalities with Ed Tech hubs established and functional Baseline: 0 Planned Target: 6</p> | Achieved as planned within project, however in total 106 EdTech hubs were established by MoESI, based on this seed investment. | | Procurement documentation, signed delivery slips, reports and photos (MoESI and UNICEF). |

⁷ United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework Montenegro 2023-2027, July 2022, p. 85, Podgorica, Montenegro Link: [United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework Montenegro 2023-2027.pdf](#)

| | Achieved Indicator Targets | Comment | Source of Verification |
|--|--|----------------|---|
| Indicator 1.2.2: Number of relevant digital content developed and available at the Digital School Platform Baseline: 4 Planned Target: 10 | Overachieved, 11 out of planned 6 courses are developed and training are already implemented, and published on Digital School platform. | | Digital School Platform, courses scenarios, signed contracts, MoESI report. Photos from training and lists of participants. |
| Output 1.3: Children and adolescents have increased 21st century skills digital and media literacy skills, increased STEM and coding education, as well as employability skills and career orientation. | | | |
| Indicator 1.3.1: Number of girls and boys with increased 21st century & digital literacy skills in targeted schools 1) through extra-curricular activities (Digital Summer Camps and Ed Tech Hubs at schools. 2) through regular classes Baseline: 0 Planned Target: 3200 (50% of all students in all twelve schools in 6 municipalities) | Achieved, with establishment of EdTech Hubs and teacher training, including available, new courses on Digital School platform. The extensive work on their engagement and learning in 2025, with Hubs and programme in place, teachers being capacitated, and two Digital Skills summer camps delivered. | | Reports by MoESI, teachers focus group and discussions, photos and lists of participants from Days of Science 2025. Evidence from two field visits – one in schools and one on summer camp, conducted by Representative of UNICEF, two agencies and Ministry of Education, science and Innovation. |

3- Optimizing Development Coordination: Advancing Strategic Planning and Reporting through Information System Enhancement, implemented by UNDP, financed through EU Window

| | Achieved Indicator Targets | Comment | Source of Verification |
|--|-----------------------------------|---|-------------------------------|
| Outcome 1 Indicator: Baseline: Planned Target: | | | |
| Output 1.1 | | | |
| Indicator 1.1 The new or revised gender responsive regulatory framework is developed and submitted to the Government Baseline: 0 Planned Target: Consolidated framework submitted by 2026 | 0 | Target achievement is planned for end of 2026. The work is ongoing. | |
| Indicator 1.2 Number of internal gender-responsive regulations and operational guidelines developed and submitted to align with the new regulatory framework Baseline: 0 Planned Target: At least 5 SOPs developed and disseminated by 2026 | 0 | Target achievement is planned for end of 2026. The work is ongoing. | |
| Output 2 | | | |
| Indicator 2.1: Number of institutions with access to ISPI actively inputting data Baseline: 1 Planned Target: 26 | 1 | Work is ongoing. Currently, only 1 institution has access. | |
| Indicator 2.2: Information System linked with the Government's Sessions IT Platform Baseline: No Planned Target: Yes | No | Work is ongoing | |
| Indicator 2.3: Number of quarterly / semi-annual reports on prioritised reforms generated using ISPI Baseline: 0 Planned Target: 14 | 0 | Work is ongoing | |
| Indicator 2.4. Number of key stakeholders, equipped with the upgraded ISPI / customized digital solutions for delivery of effective monitoring of key strategic documents Baseline: 0 Planned target: 4 | 0 | Work is ongoing | |
| Indicator 2.5. Number of staff of key stakeholders received targeted gender-responsive capacity-building Baseline: 4 key stakeholders, 17 participants, one-day training Planned target: at least 4 key stakeholders, at least 45 participants, at least five (5) three-day trainings | | Work is ongoing | |

4- Digital Transformation of Local Self-Governments in Montenegro, implemented by UNOPS and ITU

| | Achieved Indicator Targets | Comment | Source of Verification |
|--|---|--|--|
| <p>Outcome 1 Enhanced level of digitalization of internal processes and e-services</p> <p>Indicator: Number of internal processes and services digitalized within six selected municipalities. Baseline: 0 - 4 e-services developed within six municipalities Planned Target: at least one new internal process and service digitalized.</p> | <p>The Intermunicipal Agreement, signed between 24 LSGs and the Capital City of Podgorica, enabled the use of existing digital infrastructure to achieve a higher level of interoperability and data exchange between local and central authorities. Connection to the Government Service Bus (GSB), enabled by this agreement, serves as a prerequisite for the introduction of life-event services and other citizen-centric services.</p> | <p>To formulate the intervention in a manner conducive to the effective and efficient achievement of this outcome and predicted outputs, the programme required the results of the eGovernment Assessment, carried out through the complementary "Supporting Digital Transformation in Montenegro" project, funded by the MPA, which was conducted during 2024. This assessment underpins the aspirations for systemic, evidence-based decision-making and result-driven digitalisation interventions among the six selected municipalities and more than that. It provided insight into the needs, priorities and challenges of the LSGs on their digital transformation paths, based on which the outputs and indicators described below have been set up.</p> | <p>Provider's reports Municipality's endorsements of activities Lists of participants Field visits</p> |
| Output 1.1 LSGs capacities for eGovernance enhanced | | | |
| <p>Indicator 1.1.1 Number catalogue of services established with clearly described procedures for all twenty-five LSGs Baseline: 0 Planned Target: 25</p> | 20 catalogue of services developed | <p>Budva, Herceg Novi, Petnjica, Gusinje, and Nikšić did not engage in these activities. They were informed regularly, invited to meetings, and even participated in almost all project events, but didn't respond to the project's efforts to engage them fully or to absorb all capacity-building activities and technical assistance provided.</p> | <p>E-Government portal, Project reports, and documents distributed to 20 LSGs.</p> |
| <p>Indicator 1.1.2 Number of registers produced in the work of local authorities, with a definition of registers with which it is necessary to cooperate through the Government Service Bus; Baseline: 0 Planned Target: 25</p> | 75 registers identified | | |
| <p>Indicator 1.1.3 Number of developed Digital Road Maps for enabling digitalisation of services; Baseline: 0 Planned Target: 25</p> | 20 Digital Road Maps developed | | |
| <p>Indicator 1.1.4 A set of internal policy documents, protocols, procedures, regulations, instructions, methodologies and templates developed necessary for the functioning of all elements of the local eGovernment system and the delivery of eServices; Baseline: 0 Planned Target: 25</p> | <p>Six comprehensive internal policy and regulatory documents for all 25 LSGs, covering ICT management, information security, data classification, register access, electronic records management, e-service establishment, and user account control (Decision on information security; Decision on electronic records management; Guidelines for municipal e-services; Rulebook on ICT system management; Decision on data classification and user access, Intermunicipal Agreement).</p> | | |

| | Achieved Indicator Targets | Comment | Source of Verification |
|---|---|--|--|
| <p>Indicator 1.1.5 Number of municipalities receiving on-the-job support in the field and capacity building of LSGs' employees designated to deal with the eGovernment/eServices (electronic document, electronic identification, electronic signature, e-payments, cyber security, electronic office business, interoperability of data, significance of identifying the registers and data packages and introducing relevant European directive concerning this area);</p> <p>Baseline: 0 Planned Target: 6 municipalities</p> | <p>20 municipalities received on-the-job support in the field and capacity-building for LSG employees designated to deal with eGovernment/eServices.</p> | | |
| <p>Indicator 1.1.6 Number of specialized workshops organized for six LSGs, organised in a remote area for at least two working days, to strengthen the capacities of employees, decision makers and the consultants in the budget planning process. Topics should include, but are not limited to, the following areas: interoperability, cyber security, management of digitization processes by establishing a coordination unit (local ICT specialist and MPA's officials), budget planning and procurement, reform agenda and national strategies and the legal framework, etc.).</p> <p>Baseline: 0 Planned Target: 2 workshops organized</p> | <p>2 workshops organized. The first on 16 and 17 February, and the second on 19 and 20 February, in Sutomore.</p> | | |
| <p>Indicator 1.1.7 Establishment of an ICT local and central level officials' network.</p> <p>Baseline: 0 Planned Target: 1 ICT Network consisting of local and central level ICT officials established.</p> | <p>20 Municipal Working Group established</p> | | e-Government portal, reports and documents, attendance lists |
| <p>Output 1.2 LSGs ICT resources for e-Governance improved</p> | | | |
| <p>Indicator 1.2.1 Number of municipalities connected to the Government Service Bus (GSB)</p> <p>Baseline: 1 municipality connected to the GSB Planned Target: 6 municipalities</p> | <p>1 municipality - Capital City of Podgorica</p> | <p>The Intermunicipal Agreement among all 25 LSGs was signed at the end of 2025, establishing the administrative and legal prerequisites for their connection to the Government Service Bus (GSB) during 2026. In early 2026, the project further supported the fulfilment of technical requirements for GSB connectivity in nine LSGs through the procurement and installation of essential equipment, including firewalls and endpoint security solutions.</p> | |

| | Achieved Indicator Targets | Comment | Source of Verification |
|--|--|--|--|
| Indicator 1.2.2 Number of new e-services established in LSG, enforcing principles of social inclusion, gender equality and leaving no-one behind. Baseline: 4 Planned Target: 5 | N/A for 2025 | | |
| Output 1.3 GovStack for scalable Digital transformation initiated | | | |
| Indicator 1.3.1 Total Number of Municipalities Participating in GovStack Building-Block Approach workshops Baseline: 0 Planned Target: 6 municipalities | 12 Municipalities engaged in the program | Instead of limiting the program to planned 6 municipalities, the project decision was to open the call for participation in the activities | Attendance lists |
| Indicator 1.3.2 Number of Digital Service Prototypes Developed Using the GovStack Building-Block Approach Baseline: 0 Planned Target: 3 | 3 Digital Service Prototypes: Social Aid for the newborn, Annual Property Tax Payment, Business Registration for Hospitality | Target achieved through structured co-design and prototyping approach | Prototype files, technical documentation, video demonstration of the prototypes of the digital services. |
| Indicator 1.3.3 Number of Capacity-Building Workshops Delivered on the GovStack Building-Block Approach Baseline: 0 Planned Target: 3 | 3 onsite three-day workshops + 8 online sessions | The integration of online training sessions mitigated initial delays and ensured the planned quality and timely delivery of outputs | Agendas, recordings, presentations from the workshops. |

5- Strengthening the system support on prevention of violence against women, girls, and boys, implemented by UNICEF and UN Women

| | Achieved Indicator Targets | Comment | Source of Verification |
|--|----------------------------|--|---|
| <p>Outcome 1 is Outcome 2 of the Cooperation Framework 2023-2027 By 2027, all people, especially the vulnerable, increasingly benefit from equitable, gender-responsive and universally accessible social and child protection system and quality services, including labour market activation and capabilities</p> <p>Indicator: Proportion of children aged 1–14 years who experienced any physical punishment and/or psychological aggression by caregivers in the past month Baseline: 65.8% of children have experienced emotional or physical violence as a form of punishment from adult household member Planned Target: 56% pp</p> | No. | The target set is for 2027, however new MICS data should be available by end 2026. | MICS |
| Output 1.1 Increased availability of quality, innovative and catalytic services for girls and boys survivors of violence in Montenegro through establishment and operationalization of the Barnahus model | | | |
| <p>Indicator 1.1.1 National Road Map for Barnahus operationalization developed and adopted Baseline: No Planned Target: Yes</p> | On track | Developed, pending Government approval. | Government reports |
| <p>Indicator 1.1.2 Number of intersectoral professionals with increased capacities (health, justice, police, social workers) to implement Barnahus service model Baseline: 0 Planned Target: 100 (at least 60% of women)</p> | No. | Capacity building activities are planned for implementation after the development of National Standards and SOPs | Training attendance sheets, post-training assessments |
| <p>Indicator 1.1.3 Number of professionals trained on child-friendly and trauma-informed approaches in line with Barnahus model service Baseline: 0 Planned Target: 50 (at least 60% of women)</p> | No. | Capacity building activities are planned after the development of National Standards and SOPs | Training attendance sheets, post-training assessments |
| <p>Indicator 1.1.4 Number of legal and procedural documents (protocols, SOPs) developed/amended to support intersectoral coordination under the Barnahus model service Baseline: 0 Planned Target: 3</p> | On track. | Preparatory activities started as per envisaged programme dynamics. | Official adoption documents, SOPs |

| | Achieved Indicator Targets | Comment | Source of Verification |
|--|---|---|--|
| Indicator 1.1.5 Number of intersectoral coordination meetings held to prepare for Barnahus operationalisation Baseline: 0 Planned Target: 10 | On track. 2 cross-sectoral workshops held. | The target is set for 2027. | Meeting attendance sheets, meeting minutes |
| Output 1.2 Improved Montenegrin legislative and policy frameworks on VAW and VAC, including adequate costing and budgeting for services for survivors. | | | |
| Indicator 1.2.1 Number of public officials with increased capacities to cost and budget VAW services Baseline: 0 Planned Target: 25 (by sex) | 0 On track | First training planned for Q2 of Y1 of implementation | Pre-post training questionnaire and needs assessment; list of participants |
| Indicator 1.2.2 Number of VAW services costed at central and local level Baseline: 0 Planned Target: At least 2 (one at central and one at local level) | 0 On track | Services to be costed identified with Ministry of Welfare and Ministry of Human Rights and Minorities | Budget circular |
| Indicator 1.2.3 Number of legal amendments proposed for VAW in line with best practices and international/EU standards and a focus on TFVAW Baseline: 0 Planned Target: 1 | 0 On track | Feedback prepared for GEL and VAW Law, will be shared in Q1 and Q2 2026 | Parliament web page |
| Indicator 1.2.4 Policy paper/analysis on intersection between VAC and VAW in Montenegro Baseline: No Planned Target: Yes | No. On track | | Social media, UN web page |
| Output 1.3 Increased awareness and availability of knowledge and evidence of the intersection between VAW and VAC in Montenegro along with the introduction of peaceful conflict resolution programs in schools. | | | |
| Indicator 1.3.1 Analysis and policy paper on intersection between Vac and VaW developed and disseminated Montenegro Baseline: No Planned Target: Yes | No. | | Policy paper publication |
| Indicator 1.3.2 Number of children and teachers benefiting from peaceful conflict resolution programmes in schools Baseline: 6 schools; 0 children and 0 teachers Planned Target: 12 schools; 1000 girls and 900 boys; 420 school staff | On track. | | Ministry of Education report, schools reports |
| Indicator 1.3.3 Number of initiatives conducted aimed at increasing awareness of VAW and VAC and the intersection between them Baseline: 0 Planned Target: at least 2 | No. | | Social media analytics, media reports |

| | Achieved Indicator Targets | Comment | Source of Verification |
|--|-----------------------------------|----------------|---------------------------------------|
| Indicator 1.3.4 Number of people reached through public awareness and SBC campaigns Baseline: 0 Planned Target: In person 300 female and 200 male Online 100,000 | No. | | Social media analytics, media reports |

6- Ending the Denial of Legal Capacity of Persons with Disabilities in Montenegro, implemented by UNDP and OHCHR

| | Achieved Indicator Targets | Comment | Source of Verification |
|---|--|--|---|
| <p>Outcome 1: Outcome 4: By 2027, all people, especially the vulnerable, benefit from improved social cohesion, increased realization of human rights and rule of law and accountable, gender-responsive institutions</p> <p>Indicator: Balkan Barometer: b) Equality before the law</p> <p>Baseline: b) The law is applied to everyone equally. 67% disagrees, 26% agrees</p> <p>Planned Target: The law is applied to everyone equally. 67% disagrees, 26% agrees</p> | <p>No measurable progress against the indicator in 2025. The programme contributed to integrating legal capacity reform into the National Action Plan for the Implementation of the CRPD Committee's Recommendations (2026–2030), adopted by the Government of Montenegro in November 2025, which represents an important policy-level step towards strengthening equality before the law.</p> | <p>The indicator is measured through the Balkan Barometer survey and reflects long-term perception changes. Given the project started in September 2025 and focuses on systemic legal and institutional reforms, measurable changes are expected in later implementation phases.</p> | <p>Government of Montenegro – CRPD National Action Plan 2026–2030; Balkan Barometer survey.</p> |
| <p>Output 1: Legislative amendments drafted, and practical guidelines developed to eliminate the deprivation of legal capacity based solely on disability, aligned with international human rights standards.</p> | | | |
| <p>Indicator 1.1: Gender responsive legal amendments drafted to eliminate deprivation of legal capacity based solely on disability</p> <p>Baseline: 0</p> <p>Planned Target: 1 (2027)</p> | <p>Preparatory work initiated through recruitment of a legal expert and initial consultations with key institutions.</p> | <p>Project started in September 2025 and activities focused on preparatory steps required for legislative analysis and drafting in the next implementation phase.</p> | <p>Draft legal amendments document</p> |
| <p>Indicator 1.2: Number of procedural gender responsive guidelines and judicial practice tools developed to align implementation with human rights standards</p> <p>Baseline: 0</p> <p>Planned Target: 2 (2027)</p> | <p>Preparatory work initiated through recruitment of a legal expert and initial consultations with key institutions.</p> | <p>Project is in initiation phase. Procedural gender responsive guidelines and judicial practice tools will be developed in 2026.</p> | <p>Finalized guidelines and protocols</p> |
| <p>Indicator 1.3: Number of inclusive stakeholder consultations conducted, with participation disaggregated by disability and gender</p> <p>Baseline: 0</p> <p>Planned Target: 2 (2027)</p> | <p>Project kick-off meeting with key government institutions took place in September.</p> | <p>Project is in initiation phase. Inclusive consultations will be organized in 2026.</p> | <p>Consultation reports, participant lists.</p> |
| <p>Output 2: A national gender responsive model for supported decision-making is co-designed, and a pilot community-based service is implemented to enable persons with disabilities, particularly those with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities, to exercise their legal capacity on an equal basis with others</p> | | | |
| <p>Indicator 2.1: Supported decision-making model developed and validated by relevant stakeholders through participatory process</p> <p>Baseline: No system in place</p> <p>Planned Target: Framework finalized and validated (2027)</p> | <p>Preparatory phase initiated through engagement of a legal expert who will lead the design process.</p> | <p>The project was in its inception phase during the reporting period; model design activities will begin in 2026.</p> | <p>Final framework document</p> |
| <p>Indicator 2.2: Number of persons with disabilities receiving support through a pilot supported decision-making service (disaggregated by gender, age and disability)</p> <p>Baseline: 0</p> | <p>Expected in 2027.</p> | <p>Pilot service will be developed and implemented in later stages of the project following the design of the supported decision-making model.</p> | <p>Service provider reports</p> |

| | Achieved Indicator Targets | Comment | Source of Verification |
|--|---|---|---|
| Planned Target: 100 (2027) | | | |
| Indicator 2.3: Scale-up roadmap for supported decision-making system developed based on pilot evaluation Baseline: No roadmap Planned Target: Roadmap finalized (2027) | Expected in 2027. | Development of the roadmap is planned following the pilot implementation and evaluation phase later in the project cycle. | Road map document, evaluation report |
| Output 3: Capacity of judicial, social protection, and policy stakeholders strengthened to apply a human rights-based approach to legal capacity, replacing the medical model with CRPD-aligned practices. | | | |
| Indicator 3.1: Number of professionals (decision-makers, judiciary members, and social protection employees) trained on rights-based approach to disability, legal capacity, international human rights standards and gender equality supported decision making system (disaggregated by sector and gender) Baseline: 0 Planned Target: 80 (2027) | Progress toward the indicator achieved through preparatory activities, including engagement of a legal expert and consultations with key institutions to design the training programme. | Capacity-building activities are planned for 2026 and 2027. | Training reports, attendance lists |
| Indicator 3.2: Percentage of trained professionals demonstrating improved knowledge of rights-based approaches to disability and legal capacity after training(s) Baseline: 0 Planned Target: 75% (2027) | Not applicable at this stage. | Planned for 2026 and 2027. | Evaluation sheets and training reports |
| Indicator 3.3: Human rights-based legal capacity training integrated into the curricula of national institutions Baseline: 0 Planned Target: 2 (2027) | Not applicable at this stage. | Planned for 2026 and 2027. | Media outputs, campaign materials, monitoring reports |
| Indicator 3.4: Awareness campaign implemented and number of human interest stories published/shared Baseline: 0 Planned Target: 3 (2027) | Awareness campaign not yet implemented. | Planned for 2026 and 2027. | Official curriculum documents |

7- IDEA-ME: Innovation for Development and Economic Advancement in Montenegro, implemented by UNDP and UNECE, *financed through EU Window*

| | Progress against Indicator Targets | Comment | Source of Verification |
|---|------------------------------------|--|--|
| <p>Outcome 1</p> <p>Indicator 1: Number of new or revised policies, initiatives, or legislative actions informed by project activities promoting collaboration between universities, research institutes and industry Baseline: 0 (2024) Planned Target: 3 (2027)</p> <p>Indicator 2: Number of new initiatives or projects under the Smart Specialisation Strategy influenced by project activities Baseline: 0 (2024) Planned Target: 5 (2027)</p> <p>Indicator 3: Level of science-business and SME linkages compared to EU average Baseline: 73.5 Planned Target: At least 15% increase (83–84) by 2027</p> | | <p>Initial progress achieved toward strengthening policy frameworks and institutional capacities for a collaborative and gender-responsive innovation ecosystem. Analytical work under the Innovation for Sustainable Development Review (I4SDR) and the implementation of the Entrepreneurial Discovery Process (EDP) for the Smart Specialisation Strategy engaged more than 150 representatives from government, business, academia and innovation institutions, generating evidence and stakeholder inputs that will inform future innovation policy measures and initiatives under the S3 Strategy.</p> | <p>EDP documentation; S3 preparation materials; draft I4SDR chapters</p> |
| Output 1 | | | |
| <p>Indicator 1.1 Baseline: 2024 – None Planned Target: 2027 – 1 I4SDR recommendation integrated into national strategies or policy documents</p> | None, | <p>Analysis for the Innovation for Sustainable Development Review (I4SDR) established an evidence base on innovation performance, governance and policy frameworks to inform policy recommendations for the Smart Specialisation Strategy and other national documents.</p> | <p>Draft I4SDR chapters; UNDP/UNECE project reports; Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation documentation</p> |
| <p>Indicator 1.2 Baseline: 2024 – None Planned Target: 2027 – 3 legislative or policy measures referencing the I4SDR</p> | | <p>I4SDR analysis and stakeholder consultations helped identify priority reforms to strengthen science–business collaboration and innovation governance, informing future EU-aligned and SDG-oriented policy and legislative measures.</p> | <p>I4SDR analytical documentation; stakeholder consultation records; UNDP/UNECE reports</p> |

| | Progress against Indicator Targets | Comment | Source of Verification |
|---|------------------------------------|---|---|
| Indicator 1.3 Baseline: 2024 – None Planned Target: 2027 – 3 high-level national dialogues/meetings presenting policy recommendations | | Preparatory coordination and consultations with national institutions supported the presentation of 14SDR policy recommendations and helped build stakeholder awareness and a foundation for future high-level dialogue on innovation governance reforms. | Meeting records; UNDP/UNECE project reports; MESI documentation |
| Output 2 | | | |
| Indicator 2.1 Baseline 2024: 0 Target 2027: 3 institutions adopting new guidelines or procedures | | Institutional dialogue with key innovation ecosystem actors (the Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation, Innovation Fund, Science and Technology Park, Technopolis and the Technology Transfer Office) supported Smart Specialisation Strategy preparation and expert-group discussions on governance and implementation arrangements. | EDP workshop reports; thematic expert group records; UNDP/UNECE project reports |
| Indicator 2.2 Baseline 2024: 0 Target 2027: 5 thematic expert group meetings/consultations | 5 | Thematic expert groups supported S3 preparation in five priority areas and completed the Entrepreneurial Discovery Process through three phases and workshops involving 150+ quadruple-helix stakeholders, strengthening capacity for participatory innovation policy design and priority setting. | EDP reports; expert group meeting records; UNDP/UNECE project documentation |
| Indicator 2.3 Baseline 2024: 0 Target 2027: 5 policymakers and innovation stakeholders trained (including % women) | 5 | Capacity development for policymakers and innovation stakeholders was advanced through EDP participation and thematic expert group work for the Smart Specialisation Strategy, alongside initial implementation of a gender-responsive framework tracking institutional participation and sex-disaggregated engagement. | |

8- Circular Transition and Responsible Business Conduct in Montenegro, implemented by UNDP and ILO, financed through EU Window

| | Progress towards Indicator Targets | Comment | Source of Verification |
|---|------------------------------------|---|---|
| <p>Outcome 1: Increased adoption of industrial symbiosis practices and RBC/HRDD framework</p> <p>Indicator 1: Number of MSMEs (including women-led) that secure external funding specifically for implementing industrial symbiosis, circular economy, or RBC improvements Baseline: 0 (2024) Planned Target: 25 enterprises (of which at least 3 women-led) by 2027</p> <p>Indicator 2: Number of MSMEs (including women-led) introducing RBC/HRDD policies or verifying compliance with RBC standards Baseline: 0 (2024) Planned Target: 25 enterprises (of which at least 8 women-led) by 2027</p> <p>Indicator 3: Percentage of relevant Government policies and strategic documents that include explicit references to RBC in the context of productivity enhancement Baseline: 0 (2024) Planned Target: At least 50% by 2027</p> | | <p>Foundations established for increased adoption of industrial symbiosis and responsible business conduct practices among MSMEs in Montenegro. Key analytical and institutional tools developed, including the Industrial Symbiosis Manual and Institutional Roadmap, alongside the RBC analytical study and stakeholder mapping. Comprehensive, tailored capacity-building package, including training materials and methodologies specifically designed for MSMEs and institutional stakeholders for the implementation of the IS and collaboration needed for enterprise uptake of circular economy and RBC/HRDD practices.</p> | <p>Industrial Symbiosis Manual (draft); Institutional Roadmap; RBC Study; Training reports; UNDP/ILO project documentation.</p> |
| <p>Output 1: Enhanced capacity and collaboration for industrial symbiosis in targeted sectors, with MSMEs (including women-led) actively adopting resource-sharing initiatives</p> | | | |
| <p>Indicator 1.1 Number of industrial clusters identified and engaged in capacity building process Baseline: 0 Planned Target: 2 clusters engaged by 2027</p> | | <p>Three priority industrial symbiosis clusters were identified (Nikšić Industrial Cluster, Coastal Tourism–Food Cluster, and Northern Bio-Resource Cluster) based on sectoral and geographic relevance and symbiosis potential, with the piloting phase set to validate and refine cluster composition and engagement.</p> | <p>Industrial Symbiosis Manual; Institutional Roadmap; consultation records.</p> |
| <p>Indicator 1.2 Number of MSMEs trained, of which women-led Baseline: 0 Planned Target: 24 MSMEs trained (≥8 women-led) by 2027</p> | | <p>Preparatory capacity-building work advanced through the development of structured training materials and methodologies on industrial symbiosis, resource efficiency and ESG/RBM principles to support future training for MSMEs and institutions.</p> | <p>Training materials; consultation reports; UNDP/ILO documentation</p> |
| <p>Output 2: Strengthened technical and financial support mechanisms, resulting in demonstration projects on resource optimisation among participating MSMEs</p> | | | |

| | Progress towards Indicator Targets | Comment | Source of Verification |
|---|------------------------------------|--|--|
| Indicator 2.1 Number of synergy agreements formed and lead to documented resource-sharing among MSMEs Baseline: N/A (2024) Planned Target: 2 synergy agreements by 2027 | | The Industrial Symbiosis Manual and Institutional Roadmap establish the technical guidance and governance framework needed to pilot, scale and ultimately formalise resource-sharing (synergy) agreements among enterprises. | Training documentation; consultation records; project reports. |
| Indicator 2.2 Number of demonstration projects(including women-led) that successfully implement resource-optimization measures with documented cost savings or reduced waste Baseline: 2024 – 0 Planned Target: 2027 – 3 demonstration projects implemented | | Preparatory consultations with national stakeholders (including the Eco Fund and Innovation Fund) helped define priority areas, roles and coordination modalities for future resource-optimisation demonstration projects and a dedicated support mechanism aligned with national priorities and enterprise needs. | UNDP project documentation; stakeholder engagement records. Consultation records; UNDP reports |
| Output 3: A user-friendly digital platform adopted by MSMEs to facilitate self-assessment and collaboration for industrial symbiosis | | | |
| Indicator 3.1 Number of digital tools developed to support industrial symbiosis Baseline: 0 Planned Target: 1 digital tool developed by 2027 | 0 | Stakeholder consultations helped define user needs and key features for a digital platform enabling MSME self-assessment and matchmaking for industrial symbiosis opportunities. | Consultation reports; UNDP project documentation. |
| Indicator 3.2 Number of MSMEs using the digital tool, of which women-led Baseline: 0 Planned Target: 12 MSMEs using the platform (3 women-led) by 2027 | 0 | Stakeholder consultations shaped key features for an MSME self-assessment and industrial-symbiosis matchmaking platform. | Consultation documentation; project reports. |
| Indicator 3.3: Average user satisfaction rating on scale 1-5 of the tool's usability and relevance Baseline: 2024 – 0 Planned Target: 2027 – User satisfaction rating of at least 4.0 | 0 | User testing and satisfaction assessment will be conducted during the piloting phase. | Project documentation |
| Output 4: Institutional capacities for responsible business conduct (RBC) and human rights due diligence (HRDD) improved | | | |
| Indicator 4.1 Number of digital tools developed to support industrial symbiosis Baseline: 0 Planned Target: Roadmap approved | 0 | The roadmap will be prepared by national stakeholders during a national dialogue on 20-21 April 2026 to ensure commitment and ownership. | RBC study; validation workshop report; project documentation. |
| Indicator 4.2 Number of RBC/HRDD policy measures proposed and approved Baseline: 0 Planned Target: 2–3 policy measures proposed and approved | 0 | The policy measures will be defined in the roadmap to be developed following the national dialogue on 20-21 April 2026. | RBC study; stakeholder mapping; consultation records |

| | Progress towards Indicator Targets | Comment | Source of Verification |
|---|---|---|--|
| Indicator 4.3 Number of trainers trained Baseline: 0 Planned Target: 25 trainers trained by 2027 | 0 | MSMEs will be supported to introduce RBC/HRDD policies and practices during pilot training in June 2026. | Training module inception report; project documentation. |
| Indicator 4.4 Number of RBC/HRDD policy measures proposed and approved Baseline: 0 Planned Target: 2–3 policy measures proposed and approved | 0 | Increased awareness and understanding of RBC and HRDD principles among stakeholders achieved through analytical work, consultations and validation discussions. Foundations established for future enterprise-level adoption of responsible business practices. | RBC study; validation workshop documentation. |
| Indicator 4.5 Baseline: 2024 – 0 Planned Target: 2027 – Training materials institutionalised and trainers certified | 0 | The training on RBC and HRDD for MSMEs will take place in June 2026. | ILO Training materials; project documentation |