

## Italy / Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS)

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### Policy approach

The Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS) Office in Tirana is the regional headquarter competent for the management of development cooperation initiatives in the Western Balkans countries, and more specifically in Albania, Kosovo, North Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. AICS Tirana currently manages 48 projects: 35 initiatives in Albania for a total of EUR 260 million (out of which about EUR 26 million as grant, EUR 213 million soft loan and EUR 20 million through the swap debt agreement), 9 in Bosnia and Herzegovina for a total of about EUR 10 million (grant) and 4 in Kosovo for a total of EUR 3.7 million (grant).

AICS Sub-Office in Sarajevo contributes to the inclusive and sustainable growth of the country and its path to the European integration. It is, therefore, part of the institutional reforms that the B&H government is called upon to put in place for the continuation of EU accession negotiations and for the adoption of the *acquis Communautaire*, as confirmed in Annex 1 of the "Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II), Indicative strategy paper for Bosnia and Herzegovina (2014-2020) - revised 2017 version.

In 2021, the focus of AICS in BiH was in priority sectors such as agriculture and rural development, environment, tourism and heritage, through a complementary approach of technical co-operation and the provision of expertise. More specifically, the initiatives in the sector of agriculture supported by AICS are focused on providing assistance for BiH to align its official phytosanitary control systems with European standards and to activities following the EU regulation 1305/2013.

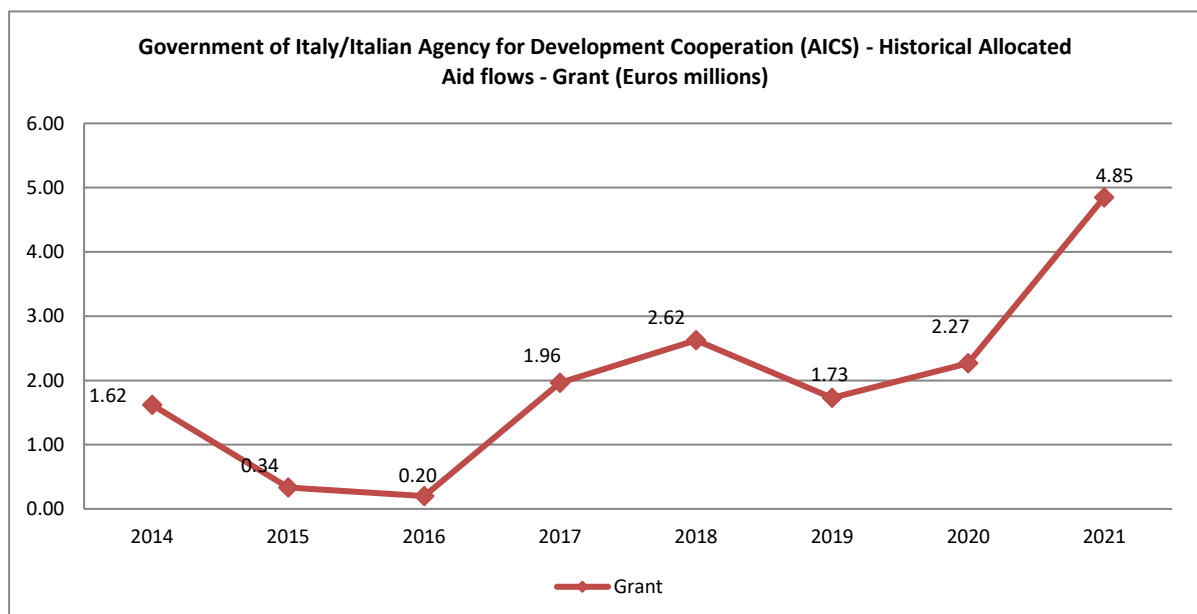
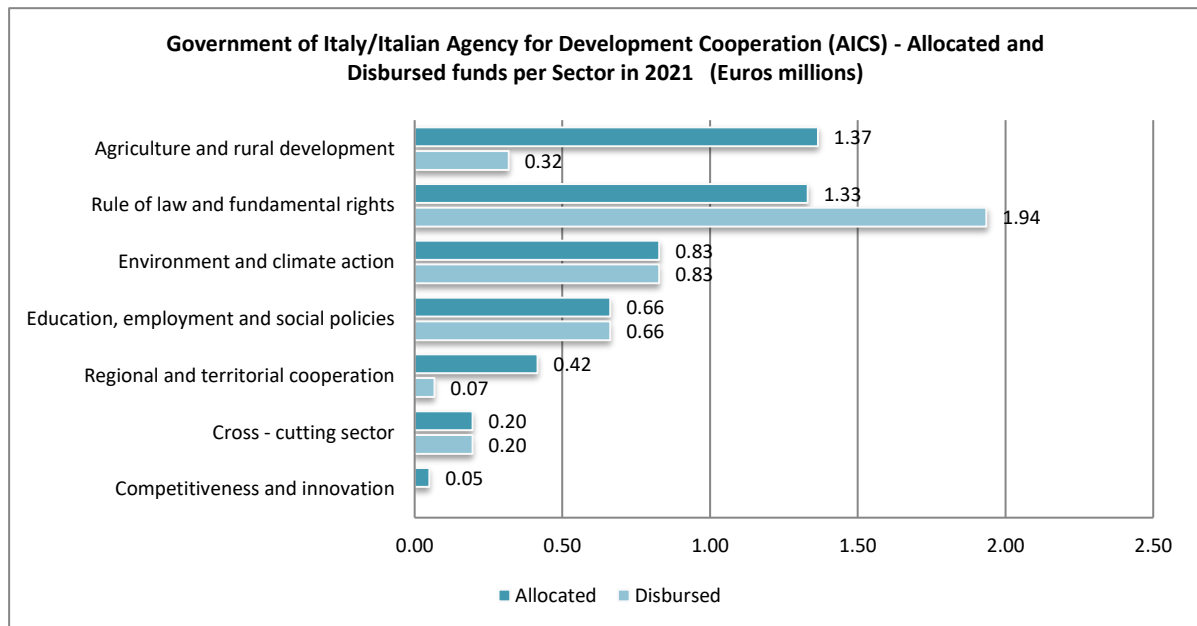
To that end, a new three-year initiative titled „*Sustainable economic development and environmental protection of areas with natural constraints in Bosnia and Herzegovina*” was launched in 2021. The initiative aims to enhance sustainable development in areas officially identified as areas with natural constraints (ANC) through supporting productive activities and implementing a regulatory framework (in accordance with EU Reg 1305/2013) in order to deploy a virtuous cycle encouraging good practices at social and economic level, while protecting the environment and adapting to climate change. The initiative applies a concerted participatory approach at different institutional levels of BiH through the institutional capacity building, governance of rural development, on-ground interventions, network enhancing, training quality improvement. The project favours public-private partnership, sustains the economic growth of rural areas, encourages new and sustainable jobs and generates pre-conditions to access the EU IPARD funds.

In the sector of tourism and environment, AICS is working, *inter alia*, on the preparatory activities to create conditions for the certification of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas (CETS) through the “NaturBosnia” project. In line with AICS’s strategy, the project considers gender equality and supports local-level initiatives in the tourism sector aiming to improve income generation and livelihoods. Finally, particular attention is devoted to initiatives that promote social cohesion, reconciliation, and common heritage.

Currently, besides the 9 ongoing initiatives implemented, additional 3 are in the process of being deliberated and launched, carried out in bilateral, multilateral, direct management and promoted by civil society organizations.

## Key activities in 2021

The Government of Italy allocated € 4.85 million and disbursed € 4.01 million in 2021 in the form of grant to the following sectors: Agriculture and rural development, Rule of law and fundamental rights, Environment and climate action, Education, employment and social policies, Regional and territorial cooperation, Cross-cutting sector and Competitiveness and innovation.



## Medium and long-term approach

AICS will keep on focusing and expanding its activities in the field of environment, tourism and sustainable development by supporting ongoing initiatives as well as scaling up initiatives in sustainable tourism sector. Additionally, actions based on eco-efficiency, innovation, equal opportunities, and environmental protection will be promoted through activation, support and consolidation of sustainable rural practices. In this way, it will be possible to mitigate the risks of abandonment of the territory and, therefore, reduce the risks of desertification and hydro-geological disasters, loss of biodiversity and precious rural landscapes. AICS will, finally, further provide support to initiatives focused on social inclusion, reconciliation and human rights.

### The following initiatives will continue throughout the current year (2022):

Project: *Sustainable economic development and environmental protection in areas subject to natural constraints – AID 12189;*

Project: *From awareness to care: women as protagonists for the right to health in Bosnia and Herzegovina - AID 11861*

Project: *Inclusive4All: inclusive education for all children in Bosnia and Herzegovina -AID 11522-*

Project: *NaturBosnia: Protected Areas and Sustainable Development in Bosnia and Herzegovina’ - AID 12003;*

Project: *New Actions to support the Phytosanitary Sector in Bosnia Herzegovina for the Adaptation to European Standards-AID 11681;*

Project: *Support to the management and the monitoring of the development cooperation initiatives in Bosnia and Herzegovina- AID 11636;*

Project: *Digital Destination Tuzla – AID 12313;*

Project: *Building Relations for intercultural dialogue in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BRIDGE) – AID 11949.*

### New initiatives in 2022

Project: *Ars Aevi. Final Architectural Project Design of the New Contemporary Art Museum of Sarajevo – AID 12005;*

Project: *VIA DINARICA: A Platform for Sustainable Tourism Development and Local Economic Growth;*

Project: *BRAT – Balkan Route: a Welcoming Transit.*

## Development partners coordination efforts

AICS representatives have been taking part in the Agriculture Coordination Meetings. Moreover, among the coordination meetings held in 2021, we would highlight the periodic participation in the EU MS Aid Coordination meeting on the IPA III Annual Action Plan. Furthermore, meetings with the EU and with the UN agencies have been organized, in particular in relation to initiatives carried out in sectors of mutual interest. Finally, bilateral coordination is ensured through periodic meetings held with representatives of other development partners.

### Contact information

#### Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS)

Address: Čekaluša 51

71000 Sarajevo, BiH

Phone: +387 33 560 170

E-mail: [segreteria.sarajevo@aics.gov.it](mailto:segreteria.sarajevo@aics.gov.it)

Web address: <http://aicstirana.org/>