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Photo on the cover page:
RHP beneficiaries
As a consequence of the armed conflicts on the territory of former Yugoslavia in the 1990s, over three million people were displaced both within and beyond the borders of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia.

Over the past two decades, sustained efforts by the four affected states – with support from the international community – have enabled the majority of those affected to either return home or find other durable solutions. Despite these considerable efforts, however, a large number of people remain displaced throughout the region.

The Regional Housing Programme (RHP) – a joint initiative by Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia (the “Partner Countries”) – was established in 2012 to address this protracted displacement situation. The Programme aims to provide sustainable housing to the most-vulnerable refugees and displaced persons following the 1991-1995 conflicts, in addition to internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Montenegro from 1999. The foundations of the initiative were laid by the Belgrade Declaration of 2011, under which RHP Partner Countries committed themselves to the principle of respect for the rights of refugees and internally displaced persons, and to the mutual obligation to closely coordinate activities in order to ensure truly durable solutions, either through voluntary return and reintegration or local integration of the displaced.

The RHP consists of four individual Country Housing Projects, each implemented at country level. Unlike the majority of housing projects in the region, however, the objective of the RHP is not solely to provide housing - it also aims to build the institutional capacity of the Partner Countries to deliver sustainable housing solutions not just to RHP beneficiaries but also, with time, to other population groups with housing needs. In addition, thanks to its regional character, the RHP encourages the four Partner Countries to closely co-operate in solving common problems, thereby improving neighbourly relations and fostering security and stability in the region.

The RHP is scheduled to come to an end in 2022, by which time it will hopefully have provided durable housing solutions to 11,800 most-vulnerable families – or approximately 36,000 persons – across the four Partner Countries.
The implementation of the Regional Housing Programme (RHP) continued uninterrupted throughout 2020, albeit at a slower pace due to COVID-19. By the end of the year, the total number of persons served by the Programme had reached approximately 23 000. This is a praiseworthy accomplishment, considering the massive disruption caused by the pandemic.

If anything, the mandate of providing decent homes to those who were displaced during the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia and are most in need has assumed even greater urgency in light of the ongoing pandemic.

Prior to receiving their new homes, RHP beneficiaries live in substandard homes or collective centres. They often face overcrowded housing conditions, with several generations living together. Some have health issues. Others are elderly. Many experience economic hardship and insecurity. As such, they are particularly vulnerable to the pandemic and its associated consequences.

In recognition of the achievements of the RHP, several Donors contributed additional funding to the Programme in 2020. The European Union provided EUR 1.8 million, Norway EUR 640 000, Spain EUR 100 000 and the Czech Republic EUR 46 000. These new contributions brought to EUR 291 million the total funding provided by the international community, an amount which attests to the importance of the RHP and the recognition it receives.
The Council of Europe Development Bank is proud of its contribution to the RHP. The Programme continues to bring lasting change to the lives of so many persons. It is also fostering reconciliation between the Partner Countries and among their citizens, and has become a model for cross-border cooperation, which is key to the stability and prosperity of the Balkans. While numerous challenges undoubtedly lie ahead, we at the CEB remain fully committed to ensuring the success of this important initiative.
2020 has been a challenging year. This also goes for the Regional Housing Programme, which provides re-housing solutions to vulnerable refugees and persons displaced following the 1991-1995 conflicts in the Western Balkans. However, progress is encouraging. Despite severe constraints brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Partner Countries continued to deliver. During 2020, over 4 500 persons moved into a new home, and finally enjoy decent living conditions. This brings us to a total of more than 23 000 displaced and vulnerable people who have benefitted from this work to date.

The Western Balkans remain a key priority for the EU. Our objective is to accelerate convergence to the EU through comprehensive support to social and economic development built on strong regional cooperation and reconciliation in the region. First, we need to fight the COVID-19 pandemic together. We need to strengthen our health systems and launch the economic recovery. The EU has provided a financial assistance package of EUR 3.3 billion to support the Western Balkans in the health emergency and in the social and economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. The implementation of this financial response is ongoing. In parallel, we have adopted an Economic and Investment Plan for the region that offers EUR 9 billion in grants and, through guarantees, an additional EUR 20 billion in investments. This plan will bring further tangible benefits to all the people in the Western Balkans through better transport, electricity, and digital infrastructure, jobs and education.
The Regional Housing Programme fits into our broader cooperation framework that goes beyond decent housing. Recognising the success of the Regional Housing Programme, we have provided an additional EUR 1.8 million to it at the end of 2020. This new pledge brought the total EU contribution to EUR 235 million, which makes the EU the largest Donor to this vital Programme.

I wholeheartedly congratulate the people and colleagues in the Partner Countries and elsewhere for this work, and commend them for their dedication to the common goals of the Programme. We now need to address remaining needs with renewed energy: thousands of highly vulnerable persons continue to live in precarious conditions. We owe it to them to successfully complete the work together.
RHP Facts and Figures

15 DONORS HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE RHP

EUR 291 million in contributions

EUR 235 million
European Union

24 USA
10 Germany
7.6 Norway
6.4 Switzerland
5.0 Italy
1.3 Denmark
1.0 Turkey
0.5 Luxembourg

4 PARTNER COUNTRIES IMPLEMENTING THE PROGRAMME

3 IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

Bosnia and Herzegovina
Republic of Croatia
Montenegro
Republic of Serbia

UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency
OSCE
CEB
MORE THAN
23 000
VULNERABLE PERSONS
NOW HAVE DECENT HOMES

UP TO
36 000
PEOPLE WILL HAVE A
NEW HOME ONCE THE
RHP IS COMPLETED

31
SUB-PROJECTS
APPROVED

EUR 290 million
TOTAL PROGRAMME COST

EUR 237 million
DONOR CONTRIBUTION

EUR 53 million
NATIONAL CONTRIBUTION
BY PARTNER COUNTRIES
Main Achievements in 2020

RISING TO THE CHALLENGE OF COVID-19

RHP implementation was significantly challenged by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Staff illness and the necessary social distancing measures, lockdowns and travel restrictions resulted in reduced labour force, suspension of field visits, delays in administrative procedures, and disrupted supply chains.

Faced with an unprecedented crisis, RHP stakeholders rose to the occasion. Partner Countries implemented mitigation measures swiftly — including the provision of support for remote working by staff, even closer monitoring of works, and the adoption of agile operational and financial procedures. For their part, the RHP Implementing Partners (UNHCR, OSCE and CEB) supported Partner Countries’ responses to COVID-19 via targeted measures and CEB-managed technical assistance.

A FURTHER 4 500 BENEFICIARIES RECEIVED SECURE HOMES

Thanks to these emergency measures, Programme implementation continued throughout the year. While from March onwards, the majority of public events were cancelled for safety reasons, keys continued to be delivered to beneficiaries. In total, approximately 4 500 beneficiaries moved into secure homes during the year. By year-end, the total estimated number of beneficiaries served had risen to 23 400 – approximately two-thirds of the final Programme target.

This is a remarkable achievement under the circumstances. However, it should not obscure the delays caused by the pandemic and other factors such as repeated tenders, partly due to qualified labour force shortages. While implementation continued, its pace was much reduced – the number of beneficiaries who accessed a new home in 2020 was a third lower than in 2019. Moreover, it is likely that the pandemic will continue to disrupt implementation in the coming months. In these circumstances, completion of the Programme by the deadline of June 2022 will be a considerable challenge.

“Faced with an unprecedented crisis, RHP stakeholders rose to the occasion.”

“By year-end, the total estimated number of beneficiaries served had risen to 23 400.”

“While...the majority of public events were cancelled for safety reasons, keys continued to be delivered to beneficiaries.”
DONORS CONTINUED TO PROVIDE SOLID SUPPORT

In recognition of the continued achievements of the RHP and the importance of its objectives – particularly during this time of acute need – Donors continued to be actively involved in RHP developments. A number of Donors also contributed additional funding to the Programme in 2020. The European Union provided EUR 1.8 million, Norway EUR 640 000, Spain EUR 100 000 and the Czech Republic EUR 46 000.

With these additional contributions, the total funding provided by the international community reached EUR 291 million. The steadfast support of Donors will continue to be of crucial importance for the Partner Countries when addressing the challenges ahead.

“The steadfast support of Donors will continue to be of crucial importance for the Partner Countries.”
Meet the RHP Beneficiaries

“We are all very grateful, as in addition to the new roof over our heads, a cow in the barn will keep my children from starving. The Programme was a significant help to us. I have to say, it really does make a difference to the lives of people.”

Ramiza Husnić, Podveležje, Bosnia and Herzegovina

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Ramiza Husnić, Podveležje, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“Here, we all live together, Muslims and Catholics alike. Despite our experience of war, we are now able to live in peace, and help each other every day. We live together, help each other and celebrate all holidays.”

Ismet Bajramović, Slatina, Bosnia and Herzegovina

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Ismet Bajramović, Slatina, Bosnia and Herzegovina

“When we felt the house shaking, my first thought was that I was going to lose my home for the second time. It was the worst feeling that I have ever experienced. When the earthquake stopped, I went outside, and discovered that my house was actually intact. I am so grateful to have a safe home, amidst all this destruction.”

Božidarka Ivošević, Petrinja, Croatia

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Božidarca Ivošević, Petrinja, Croatia

“Although I must be cautious, and cannot move around as much as I would like due to COVID-19, I enjoy this beautiful view from my balcony. There are so many more opportunities for my son and I here. As he is now able to work, our life is much more normal in comparison to our years as refugees. Despite COVID-19, I feel safe, because this is my home.”

Mara Paripović, Novska, Croatia

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Mara Paripović, Novska, Croatia
“I have never been a pessimist in my life. I always persevered and looked ahead to the future. There is a saying, ‘The fact that you fell doesn’t matter, what matters is that you pick yourself up and keep going.’”

Branko Slavić, Herceg Novi, Montenegro

“After 25 years, I finally have a key to my own home, and a roof over my head. Today, my children have proper conditions in which to study and lead lives that all young people deserve. This is the beginning of a new chapter in our lives.”

Nenad Draganić, Herceg Novi, Montenegro

“I certainly hope that this is it now, I don’t want to move out of my house ever again! You can see how beautiful my house is, thanks to all those people who understood and helped us.”

Ljiljana Pilipović, Obrenovac, Serbia

“I completely feel at home in Serbia. This country has given me a lot, and we are fully integrated. I always tell my friends: ‘In life, there is no giving up – you have to put a smile on your face and keep going forward.’”

Željko Čanak, Grocka, Serbia
2020 was marked by the COVID-19 crisis, and Bosnia and Herzegovina was hit hard by the negative effects of the pandemic, including in the construction sector. While the effects were not that visible during the early months, weaknesses such as a lack of competitiveness and labour shortages surfaced as the crisis continued. Although the work of the administration has been disrupted at all state levels, the Project Implementation Units and the Lead Institution the Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees (MHRR) have invested maximum efforts to alleviate the impact of the crisis, and to provide durable housing solutions for vulnerable refugees and displaced persons affected by the 1992-1995 conflicts in the Western Balkans region.

Key Facts and Figures

- **Target:** 3,136 homes
- **Total cost:** EUR 76 million, of which
  - Donor funding: EUR 65 million
  - Country contribution: EUR 11 million
  - Grants disbursed: EUR 40 million
- **1,778 homes** delivered to approximately 5,300 persons

**Miloš Lučić**

*Minister for Human Rights and Refugees*

*Bosnia and Herzegovina*
2020 has proved to be the most challenging year of the Programme to date, as we were faced with the COVID-19 pandemic and the ‘new normal’ that it has brought. Lockdowns and restrictions have required us to continue the RHP under aggravated conditions. However, with new working protocols established, we managed to bring the HR6 sub-project to its close-out phase and begin implementation of the HR8 and HR9 sub-projects. Although this will be my last year as a part of the RHP family, I am most proud to have been part of such an important Programme, directed at creating new and better life opportunities.

Key Facts and Figures

Total cost: EUR 21 million, of which

| Donor funding               | EUR 15 million |
| Country contribution        | EUR 6 million  |
| Grants disbursed            | EUR 14 million |

**Target:**

409 homes

325 homes delivered to approximately 1,000 persons

79%
The challenges faced by Montenegro related to the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on all fields of activity in 2020. Nevertheless, despite all limitations, the Regional Housing Programme continued its successful implementation, starting with the purchase of 22 apartments in Herceg Novi. Works on RHP construction sites continued, notably the construction of the Home for the Elderly in Niksic. The year 2020 also marked the beginning of construction of 96 apartments in Vrela Ribnicka, under the MNE9 sub-project. At the same time, the administrative structure for the construction of individual houses in various municipalities was largely completed, paving the way for efficient construction of houses for 50 families under MNE8.

Key Facts and Figures

- **Target:** 681 homes
- **Total cost:** EUR 27 million, of which
  - **Donor funding:** EUR 22 million
  - **Country contribution:** EUR 5 million
  - **Grants disbursed:** EUR 17 million
- **417 homes** delivered to approximately **1,250 persons**
RHP implementation in Serbia has not been halted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite all difficulties, Serbia provided homes to a total of more than 1,000 families across the country in 2020. Housing provided included hundreds of newly-constructed apartments and building material packages, as well as prefabricated and village houses and purchased apartments. In early 2021, in addition to the planned purchase of village houses and apartments and the construction of prefabricated houses, we expect that construction of 250 apartments in Ovča and 133 in New Belgrade will start during the spring and summer. Serbia continues to diligently implement the Regional Housing Programme with the aim of providing housing solutions to all refugees in need.

Key Facts and Figures

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<tr>
<th>Total cost: EUR 165 million, of which</th>
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<tr>
<td>Donor funding</td>
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<td>Country contribution</td>
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<td>Grants disbursed</td>
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**Target:**

| 7 582 homes |

| 70% |

| 5 285 homes delivered |

| to approximately 16 000 persons |
Regional Housing Programme

270-apartment complex in Kamendin, Belgrade, Serbia
270-apartment complex in Kamendin, Belgrade, Serbia

276-apartment complex, Novi Sad-Veternik, Serbia
I would like to commend the collective work of Partner Countries, the Council of Europe Development Bank, OSCE, UNHCR, and the Donors in continuing to make progress toward our shared goals, and providing homes to more than 7,800 vulnerable families to date. Despite the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, Partner Countries and RHP stakeholders remained committed to providing durable housing solutions to vulnerable displaced persons. Further, I applaud the Partner Countries for their successful efforts to cultivate new professional relationships, facilitate knowledge sharing, and develop common and long-lasting solutions to displacement.

Beyond the RHP, the United States looks forward to maintaining its ongoing support to international organizations that provide critical assistance to displaced persons in the Western Balkans.

“I applaud the Partner Countries for their successful efforts to develop common and long-lasting solutions to displacement.”
19

2020 was a decisive year for the RHP. The COVID-19 pandemic added new challenges that nobody could have foreseen. Germany is glad to see that despite these challenges, the Partner Countries were able to continue implementation in 2020, albeit at a slower pace. Now, Partner Countries and Donors are called upon to intensify their efforts in order to mitigate the consequences of this unprecedented situation and ensure the completion of the Programme as planned, for the sake of all beneficiaries. For them, a new home signifies a new start and a sustainable transformation of their lives. For the region, it means strengthening cross-border cooperation and partnerships. Thus, the impact that the RHP is having in the region is significant.

In its role as Co-Chair for 2021, Germany will continue to fully support the RHP and the Partner Countries in achieving its goals.

“A new home signifies a new start and a sustainable transformation of... lives.”
Norway is a founding Donor of the Regional Housing Programme, having made its first contribution in 2012. It remains actively involved in the RHP, which plays a key role in its cooperation with the Western Balkan countries.

Norway sees the Programme as a catalyst for positive change in the region. The RHP is providing decent living conditions to tens of thousands of vulnerable people. And, just as importantly, it is improving relations between the Partner Countries.

To support the implementation of this remarkable initiative, Norway contributed an additional EUR 640 000 to the Programme in 2020, thus bringing its total contribution to almost EUR 8 million.

Norway commends the Partner Countries for their steadfast commitment to the Programme, and other RHP stakeholders, especially the UNHCR, OSCE and the CEB, for their active support. We will continue to resolutely support this model initiative until its successful completion.
I would like to commend the efforts that have been made by all Regional Housing Programme partners in the Western Balkans to maintain the pace of implementation despite the COVID-19 pandemic which has affected all our countries.

Switzerland’s total contribution amounts to EUR 6 350 000. The delivery of homes to more than 23 000 people thus far is commendable. For the year 2021, it will be of utmost importance to integrate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic into the remaining construction activities, with a strong focus on the social and economic well-being of beneficiaries and communities.

I look forward to SDC’s continued contribution to harvesting the lessons learnt from the Regional Housing Programme, together with the Fund stakeholders and the Partner Countries, as we come closer to the completion of the Programme.

"The delivery of homes to more than 23 000 people thus far is commendable."
RHP Visibility

While the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic put pause to large RHP ceremonies throughout much of 2020, RHP visibility activity was intensified, including a range of publications, film clips, animations and social media posts. Some examples of these can be found below.

All visibility material is available on the RHP social media channels

**PUBLICATIONS**

- RHP YouTube Channel
- RHP LinkedIn Profile
- RHP on Twitter

**ANIMATIONS**

- "Partner Country Sub-projects" series
- "The RHP is…" animation
- Faces of the RHP
- "Before and after the RHP" series

The total cost of the building complex in Berane was almost EUR 4 million.
FILM CLIPS

Technical and economic sustainability of the RHP

RHP complementary measures: HELP

Beneficiary testimonies I

Beneficiary testimonies II

Beneficiary testimonies III

Beneficiary testimonies IV

RHP complementary measures: CRS

The RHP in Serbia
RHP Events

Delivery of keys to 40 families in Kruševac, Serbia, September 2020

Delivery of homes to 48 families in Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina, June 2020

Delivery of homes to 13 families, Irig, Serbia, June 2020

Visit by Minister Purišić to RHP beneficiaries in Herceg Novi, Montenegro, June 2020

Signature of cooperation agreements with municipalities, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, February 2020

Awarding of keys to 14 families, Prnjavor, Bosnia and Herzegovina, May 2020
Transfer of ownership of 22 purchased apartments to Herceg Novi municipality, Montenegro, March 2020

Delivery of apartments to 30 families in Bijeljina, Bosnia and Herzegovina, May 2020

Delivery of keys to 15 families in Svilajnac, Serbia, June 2020

Handing over of keys to 64 families in Temerin, Serbia, August 2020

Six families receive homes in Istočno Novo Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, February 2020

Transfer of ownership of 22 purchased apartments to Herceg Novi municipality, Montenegro, March 2020
The unprecedented threat of the COVID-19 pandemic posed objective challenges to the implementation of the RHP in 2020.

Within this context, UNHCR and the OSCE are pleased that by the end of 2020, some 7,800 of the most-vulnerable displaced, refugee and returnee families had been assisted by the RHP, which is two-thirds of the total number of solutions the Programme aims to provide by its closure in June 2022.

We commend the Partner Countries for continuously investing significant efforts in the implementation of the RHP, in spite of the operational problems engendered by the pandemic and natural disasters in Croatia. However, the fact that only 58% of the solutions planned in 2020 were realised, raises concern.

In that sense, UNHCR and the OSCE urge the Partner Countries to reinforce the realisation of the RHP by expediting the construction of housing units and by strengthening the coordination and synergy between relevant institutions at the national level.
UNHCR and the OSCE are pleased that, by the end of 2020, an estimated 80% of the RHP beneficiaries had been identified for assistance. We call on the Partner Countries to ensure that the remaining RHP beneficiaries are selected in an efficient and transparent manner, and as soon as possible.

It is vital that all RHP beneficiaries, including those still to be identified, are provided with durable solutions, within the RHP or through some other assistance scheme.

We note with satisfaction that in 2020, the RHP Partner Countries also continued their efforts to systematically embed long-ranging elements of economic, socio-cultural and technical sustainability in the solutions they proposed. Within this context, we encourage the Partner Countries to also incorporate such sustainability measures and deliverables into their overarching national systems.

UNHCR and the OSCE stand ready to further contribute to the joint efforts of the RHP stakeholders and to support the Partner Countries in ensuring that none of the region’s most-vulnerable displaced people selected for RHP assistance are left behind.
Homes Tailored to the Needs of Beneficiaries

RHP beneficiaries are given the choice of either returning and reintegrating within their place of origin, or integrating within their place of current residence. They may also select the housing modality which is best-suited for their needs, from among seven different options. To date, the following housing modalities have been delivered to beneficiaries:

- **Apartments constructed**: 2,604
- **Packages of building material delivered**: 1,972
- **Village houses purchased**: 1,365
- **Houses reconstructed**: 1,287
- **Pre-fabricated houses completed**: 290
- **Apartments purchased**: 145
- **Places provided in 2 homes for elderly**: 142

**Reconstruction of family houses**

This housing modality is suitable for families who own a house but which is in need of renovation or reconstruction in order to become habitable. By providing the financial means for reconstruction, the RHP enables families to either return to their pre-war homes or settle in decent conditions in their places of displacement. This housing modality is particularly important for beneficiaries in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where more than 1,200 individual houses have already been reconstructed, thanks to the RHP.

*[Reconstructed house in Podveležje, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH4).]*
Provision of places in Homes for the Elderly/Disabled

As at end-2020, the RHP has enabled the provision of 142 much-needed places in Homes for the Elderly and Disabled in Croatia and in Montenegro. The Glina Home for the Elderly in Croatia (with 74 places) and the Pljevlja Home in Montenegro (68 places) have not only provided safe havens for the most-vulnerable, but have also, thanks to their exemplary management, ensured that all residents have remained safe and well cared for throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. A further 104 places will become available in Montenegro in the first half of 2021, when the Nikšić Home for the Elderly will be inaugurated.

Purchase of apartments

The purchase of apartments in multi-apartment buildings is most suited to families who live in urban areas and do not own a plot of land on which to build their home. The advantage of this modality is that it makes efficient use of the existing housing stock. Thanks to the RHP, a total of 145 apartments have been purchased for beneficiaries to date: 23 in Serbia, 100 in Croatia and 22 in Montenegro.

Construction of multi-apartment buildings

Large-scale new construction projects (such as Ovča and Kamendin in Belgrade, or Novi Sad-Veternik, all in Serbia) create not only hundreds of new apartments but also boost local economies by creating a demand for services, thereby generating local employment opportunities. This housing modality can also be adapted to the specific needs of beneficiaries (e.g. special fittings for the elderly or disabled). To date, the RHP has enabled the construction of more than 2 600 new apartments in the four Partner Countries: 1 655 in Serbia, 532 in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 90 in Croatia and 327 in Montenegro.
Clockwise, starting top left: Beneficiaries in Kikinda, Serbia; Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina; Tuzla, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Slijivovac, Croatia.
This document was produced with the financial assistance of the European Union. The views expressed herein can in no way be taken to reflect the official opinion of the European Union.
The Regional Housing Programme (RHP) was established to provide durable housing solutions to vulnerable refugees and displaced persons following the 1991-1995 conflicts on the territory of former Yugoslavia. The RHP is implemented by Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia and mostly financed by the international donor community. The main donor is the European Union. The other donors are the United States of America, Germany, Norway, Switzerland, Italy, Denmark, Turkey, Luxembourg, Spain, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and the Slovak Republic.

www.regionalhousingprogramme.org