

# EBRD lends €5 million to OTP Bank in Albania

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- EBRD and EU join forces to support SMEs in Albania
- SMEs can use funds for upgrades to meet EU standards
- On successful completion of projects, borrowers receive financial incentives

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (<http://www.ebrd.com/>) (EBRD) is providing a €5 million loan to OTP Bank Albania (<https://otpbank.al/en/>) to improve the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the country, following the severe impact of the coronavirus pandemic (<https://www.ebrd.com/what-we-do/coronavirus>) on the local and regional economy.

The programme is part of a wider EBRD-EU initiative to support SMEs across the Western Balkans. Enterprises can benefit from loans to invest in the upgrade of production facilities and equipment or to meet EU standards in product quality, safety and similar areas to become more resilient and competitive in local and external markets.

In addition, SMEs can receive tailor-made technical assistance to prepare projects, as well as grant incentives worth up to 15 per cent of the total loan amount on successful completion of projects. Both the technical assistance and the grants are funded by the European Union (<https://www.ebrd.com/who-we-are/structure-and-management/shareholders/european-union.html>).

Matteo Colangeli, EBRD Associate Director, Head of Albania, said: “We are very pleased to launch the SME Competitiveness Programme in Albania and to expand our partnership with OTP Bank. Following the successful roll-out in other countries of the region, we are confident that the programme will also help Albanian SMEs to introduce EU standards, improving their performance and becoming more competitive, particularly on export markets”

Luigi Soreca, EU Ambassador to Albania, said: “We welcome the launch of the EBRD-EU Competitiveness Programme to support SMEs across the Western Balkans. It represents another step forward for Albanian SMEs in their journey towards a competitive and knowledge-based economy. Technological readiness, business sophistication and innovation are now important drivers towards higher standards and the EU is here to help”.

Bledar Shella, Chief Executive Officer of OTP Bank Albania, said: “The support of SME entrepreneurs in our country has been, is and will continue to be a strategic choice of OTP Bank Albania. When programs, like the one we are launching today with the support of the EBRD arise as opportunities, our commitment to bring them to life is maximal. We have always believed that the potential of Albanian entrepreneurship in the SMEs segment is immense and the opportunity to become competitive in foreign markets is not lacking now. It is this aspect that aims to enhance and facilitate the Competitiveness Programme among SMEs that was formalized today”.

To date, the EBRD has invested more than €1.4 billion in 100 projects in Albania. The Bank’s strategy in the country focuses on governance, private-sector competitiveness, inclusion, energy diversification and low-carbon transition.

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