

# TÜRKİYE'S FRIENDLY HAND TO THE BALKANS



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**TÜRKİYE'S FRIENDLY HAND TO THE BALKANS**

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**Contact**

Kızılırmak Mahallesi Mevlana Bulvarı No:144 Çankaya

Ankara/TÜRKİYE

T +90 312 590 20 00 | [webinfo@iletisim.gov.tr](mailto:webinfo@iletisim.gov.tr)

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# FOREWORD

**T**he Balkans, with which we share profound historical and cultural ties, are one of the centers of Türkiye’s kindred geography. Our ancestors, who ensured that the people of the region lived in peace and tranquillity by safeguarding the diverse ethnic, religious, and multicultural nature of the Balkans for nearly six centuries, bequeathed a priceless legacy to be taken as an example to us. In the region, our ancestors built approximately 15,000 monuments, serving as touristic and historical symbols of our shared cultural heritage.

The fundamental tenet of Türkiye’s Balkan policy is the establishment of peace, stability, and tranquillity in this fragile region and the preservation of the multicultural nature of the Balkans. Our nation embraces its brothers and sisters living in the Balkans, regarding them as “Evlad-ı Fatihan (Children of the Conquerors)”. In light of this understanding, as Türkiye, we are actively engaged in endeavor to strengthen regional stability and peace, encourage dialog for the resolution of conflicts, and foster amicable neighborly relations and regional cooperation. We uphold strong bilateral relations with heads of state and government and maintain diplomatic relations at the highest level with every country in the region without any form of discrimination.

The Balkans occupy a significant position in Türkiye’s strengthening foreign policy and expanding network of foreign missions. Our country has 25 representative offices in 12 Balkan countries. Numerous institutions are active in the region, including Turkish Airlines, the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency, the Yunus Emre Institute, and the Turkish Maarif Foundation. The Turkish private sector contributes to the growth and progress of the region across every field, including employment and production. We are developing our relations through high-level cooperation councils, intergovernmental summit mechanisms and regional organizations. In the face of disasters such as the earthquake in Albania and the flooding in Bosnia-Herzegovina, we rush to the aid of our friends and brothers in the region.

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Maintaining peace, stability and prosperity in the Balkans in a period of increasing instability and global turmoil will remain a priority for our country. We will continue to embrace all societies in the Balkan geography, including cognate and related communities, with an inclusive understanding devoid of any form of discrimination.

I believe that this book prepared by the Presidency's Directorate of Communications will serve as a new token of the friendly hand extending from Türkiye to the Balkans, and I congratulate those who contributed to the preparation of the book.



PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF TÜRKİYE  
**RECEP TAYYİP ERDOĞAN**

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# PREFACE

**T**he Balkans, whose etymological origin is even Turkish and means “forested steep mountain range,” is an extremely important region for Türkiye, as well as a geography where Turkish influence is strong. The importance of the Balkans in Turkish history and of Turks in Balkan history cannot be overstated.

The first interaction of Turks with Balkan geography occurred during the Western Huns period in the fourth century A.D. In the later Middle Ages, the Huns were succeeded by the Cumans and Pechenegs. The Ottoman Empire began to establish a presence in the Balkan Peninsula in the 14th century, spreading Ottoman tolerance and justice throughout the peninsula. For centuries, different peoples and religious groups in the Balkans, a multinational and multi-faith geography, coexisted peacefully under Ottoman rule. The most rare examples of Ottoman architecture have risen all over the Balkan geography. The Balkans became an important part of the Ottoman Empire as Turkish-Islamic culture flourished. During the Ottoman period, a rich cultural mosaic emerged in the Balkans, which lived in peace under equitable rule.

Unfortunately, as Ottoman rule in the Balkans weakened in the nineteenth century and was eventually withdrawn entirely in the early twentieth century, the peninsula witnessed numerous ethnic conflicts, horrific atrocities, and human tragedies. These traumatic events have left dark stains on the pages of human history.

Given its deep historical ties to Balkan geography, Türkiye considers strong relations with the Balkan countries to be critical. The late President Aliya Izzetbegovic of Bosnia and Herzegovina entrusted Bosnia and Herzegovina to our President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, just before his death. In light of his will, it is clear that Türkiye has responsibilities towards the Balkans.

Türkiye, as the Ottoman Empire’s heir, supports the integration of Balkan countries into the global system in the post-Cold War period, engages in efforts to resolve humanitarian crises in the region, and, through our President’s strong leader diplomacy, becomes a reconciliatory actor among Balkan states, striving for the Balkans to regain the peace and stability of the Ottoman period. Türkiye’s assistance to the Balkans has grown in a variety of areas, ranging from security to education, trade to international diplomacy, and is gradually expanding, cementing the deep ties between the Balkan countries and Türkiye.

PRESIDENCY’S HEAD OF COMMUNICATIONS OF THE REPUBLIC OF TÜRKİYE  
**PROF. FAHRETTİN ALTUN**

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# ANCIENT ALLIES: TÜRKİYE AND THE BALKANS

**T**he Turks are not an alien nation to the Balkans. The Turkish presence in the Balkans is at least as longstanding as that of other Balkan societies. According to one of the most compelling hypotheses, the first Turkish presence in the Balkans was recorded in 300 BC. In addition, historical documents indicate that by the second century, Hun-Turkic communities had existed in the east of Europe and south of the Ural Mountains. The Turks came to the Balkans through two paths: one from the Caspian Sea-Black Sea region in the north, and the other from Anatolia in the south. The Yörüks of Anatolia and the Oghuz Turks, Kipchak-Cumans, and the Pechenegs from the north were the first Turks to settle in the region. During the Ottoman Empire, the first permanent Turkish settlement in the Balkans began in 1352 with the conquest of Çimpe Castle, which is located in Çanakkale today.

Travelers, dervishes, and dedes, among other religious leaders, visited the region frequently during the Ottoman Empire and before, particularly during the Seljuk era, contributing significantly to the Turkification and Islamization of the region. The most well-known of them are Sarı Saltuk, Gül Baba, Ayvaz Dede, Otman Baba, and Demir Baba.

Improving their settlements, the Turks have left behind significant monuments in the Balkans. Numerous monuments that are both touristic and historical icons of the Balkans today are representations of the ancient Turkish heritage in the region:

- Ottoman houses in Berat, Albania
- Bosnia and Herzegovina - Mostar Bridge
- Bulgaria - Banyabashi Mosque
- Croatia - Maškovića Han
- Montenegro - Clock Tower of Podgorica
- Kosovo - Tomb of Murad I and Old Stone Bridge in Prizren
- North Macedonia - Stone Bridge
- Moldova - Bendery Fortress
- Romania - Dobruja-Babadag - Tomb of Sarı Saltuk Baba

- 
- Serbia - Belgrade Fortress
  - White Tower of Thessaloniki in Greece

In fact, the Ottoman Empire constructed approximately 15,000 works in the region from 1352, when it came to the Balkans, until its fall in 1453. Approximately four thousand of these works survive today.



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Albania  
**Ottoman houses in Berat**



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Bosnia and  
Herzegovina  
**Mostar Bridge**



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Bulgaria  
**Banyabashi  
Mosque**

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Croatia  
**Maškovića Han**



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Montenegro  
**Clock Tower of Podgorica**





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Kosovo  
**Old Stone Bridge  
in Prizren**



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North Macedonia  
**Stone Bridge**

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Moldova  
**Bendery Fortress**



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Romania  
**Dobruca-Babadag  
Sari Saltuk Tomb**





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Serbia  
**Belgrade Fortress**



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Greece  
**White Tower of  
Thessaloniki**

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### The Number of Works/Structures Constructed by the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans

Country	Number of Works/Structures
Albania	1,015
Bulgaria	3,339
Romania	234
Greece	3,771
Former Yugoslavia	6,616
<b>Total</b>	<b>14,975</b>

**Source:** Ekrem Hakkı Ayverdi (2000), *Avrupa'da Osmanlı Mimari Eserleri*, IV. Vol., İstanbul, İstanbul Fetih Cemiyeti, p. 437.

The Ottoman Empire has sustained the peace and prosperity of diverse ethnic, religious, and multicultural societies in the Balkans for approximately six centuries. In fact, these centuries of peace are now known as the “Pax-Ottoman” or “Ottoman Peace” in international relations. This environment of peace was predominantly maintained by the Ottoman State by respecting the multicultural structure of the Balkans, adapting the regional societies to the management system, and maintaining the life, development, and *istimalet* policies<sup>1</sup> implemented in the region.

The word “*istimalet*,” whose dictionary definition is “enchantment, atonement,” is commonly used to denote “caring for the people and especially non-Muslim citizens, showing tolerance toward them.” Key aspects of Ottoman’s *istimalet* policy include treating the people of conquered territories with respect, safeguarding them, ensuring the safety of life and property against outsiders, granting religious freedom, and providing tax concession.

Instead of treating the region with a colonial attitude, the Ottoman Empire favored social and economic investments that enriched the region and its societies. On the other side, the steps

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<sup>1</sup> Source: <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/istimalet>.

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toward establishing a cultural and economic civilization were taken. The stability of peace in the region has only been made possible by policies of tolerance toward diverse religious and cultural groups.

The istimalet policy has played a significant role in the development of civilization, particularly in the Rumelia region of the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman Empire was able to achieve peace in the region as a result of this policy and other policies such as protecting local and non-Muslim populations, restoring their rights, granting them religious freedom, and exempting them from taxation.

The Ottoman Empire was a Balkan State, a fact which is as ancient as the Turkish presence in the Balkans. Anatolia is one of the Ottoman Empire's two most significant beylerbeyliks (eyalets), while Rumelia is the other. The eyalets of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans were comprised of the eyalets of Rumelia, Bosnia, Budin, Bogdan, Wallachia, Erdel, Temeşvar, Silistria, Kanizsa, Eger, Morea, Uyvar, Varad, Edirne, Manastır, Salonica, Herzegovina, Niş, and Vidin.

Preparations for the conquest of Istanbul were made in Rumelia, and most Anatolian cities were conquered long after the cities of Rumelia. Furthermore, a significant proportion of Ottoman government officials and artists are from Rumelia. Mehmed II, who conquered İstanbul and transformed the Ottoman Empire from a beylik into a world power, was born in Edirne and of Rumelian descent. Additionally, Ghazi Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Republic of Türkiye, was born in Salonika, received his education in Manastır, and was a soldier and statesman from Rumelia. Furthermore, Mehmet Akif Ersoy, the poet of Independence March, is from Peja, Kosovo, and one of the most important Turkish poets, Yahya Kemal Beyatlı is from Skopje, North Macedonia. The poem "Kayıp Şehir (The Lost City)" by Beyatlı is an excellent illustration of the longing of Balkan societies and emigrants:

**"Skopje, the land of Yıldırım Beyazıd Khan,  
The sons of the Conquerors are his heirs.  
The city of our own only with its turquoise domes,  
Only ours, it was us with its face and soul.  
Skopje, the continuation of Bursa through Sharr Mountains  
A tulip garden of pure bloodshed."**

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Instead of treating the region with a colonial attitude, the Ottoman Empire favored social and economic investments that enriched the region and its societies.

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Today, the common cultural heritage provides the most tangible evidence of the ancient partnership between Türkiye and Balkan societies. To the extent that, millions of people across the globe experience elements such as food, folk dances, and, notably, music with the same emotions today. Folk songs such as “Vardar Ovası” (Vardar Plain) and “Deryalar” (Seas) are sung at weddings and other celebrations in the majority of Balkan countries, particularly Türkiye, today, and dishes such as “meatballs and boreks” are a staple on the tables of the vast majority of Balkan societies.

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# ENSURING PEACE AND STABILITY IN THE BALKANS: **TÜRKİYE'S ACTIVE DIPLOMACY IN THE BALKANS**

**S**ince the establishment of the Republic of Türkiye on October 29, 1923, based on the material and spiritual heritage of the Ottoman Empire, diplomatic relations with the Balkan countries have been formalized and embassies have been opened. The following are mainly the inauguration dates of the embassies of the Republic of Türkiye in the Balkans:

- Albania: 1926
- Bosnia and Herzegovina: 1993
- Bulgaria: 1923
- Croatia: 1992
- Montenegro: 2008
- Kosovo: 2008
- North Macedonia: 1993
- Moldova: 1992
- Romania: 1923
- Serbia: 1926
- Slovenia: 1993
- Greece: 1924

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Turkish Embassy  
in Athens



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Turkish Embassy  
in Belgrade





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Turkish Embassy  
in Bucharest



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Turkish Embassy  
in Chisinau

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Turkish Embassy  
in Ljubljana



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Turkish Embassy  
in Podgorica





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Turkish Embassy  
in Prishtina



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Turkish Embassy  
in Sarajevo

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Turkish Embassy  
in Sofia



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Turkish Embassy  
in Tirana





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Turkish Embassy  
in Skopje



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Turkish Embassy  
in Zagreb

Today, with a total of 252 foreign representative offices, Türkiye ranks among the top three nations with the most extensive network of diplomatic representation. Currently, Türkiye has a total of 25 representative offices, including 12 Embassies (Athens, Belgrade, Bucharest, Chişinău, Ljubljana, Podgorica, Pristina, Sarajevo, Sofia, Tirana, Skopje, and Zagreb), in 12 Balkan countries 11 Consulate Generals (Athens-Piraeus, Banja Luka, Burgas, Plovdiv, Komotini, Comrat, Constanta, Mostar, Prizren, Rhodes, Thessaloniki, and Novi Pazar), and 1 Consular Office (Niş). The Directorate General for the Balkans and Central Europe works under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Country	Embassy	Consulate General	Consulate
Albania	Tirana	-	-
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Sarajevo	Banja Luka, Mostar	-
Bulgaria	Sofia	Burgas, Plovdiv	-
Croatia	Zagreb	-	-
Montenegro	Podgorica	-	-
Kosovo	Pristina	Prizren	-
North Macedonia	Skopje	-	-
Moldova	Chişinău	Comrat	-
Romania	Bucharest	Constanta	-
Slovenia	Ljubljana	-	-
Serbia	Belgrade	Novi Pazar	Niş
Greece	Athens	Athens-Piraeus, Komotini, Rhodes, Thessaloniki	-

**Source: Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

After World War II, Türkiye joined North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and then applied to join the European Community. Following this process, Türkiye not only supported the Balkan countries' NATO membership processes, but also strove to build a communication bridge between the Balkan countries and numerous international organizations, particularly the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. In order to put an end to the Bosnian War and the Kosovo Crisis, two of the most important conflicts in the Balkans, and to establish peace, Türkiye took action at the United Nations (UN), NATO, European Union (EU), and Organization of Islamic Cooperation. Moreover, it has contributed to the Peacekeeping Missions undertaken in these two countries.

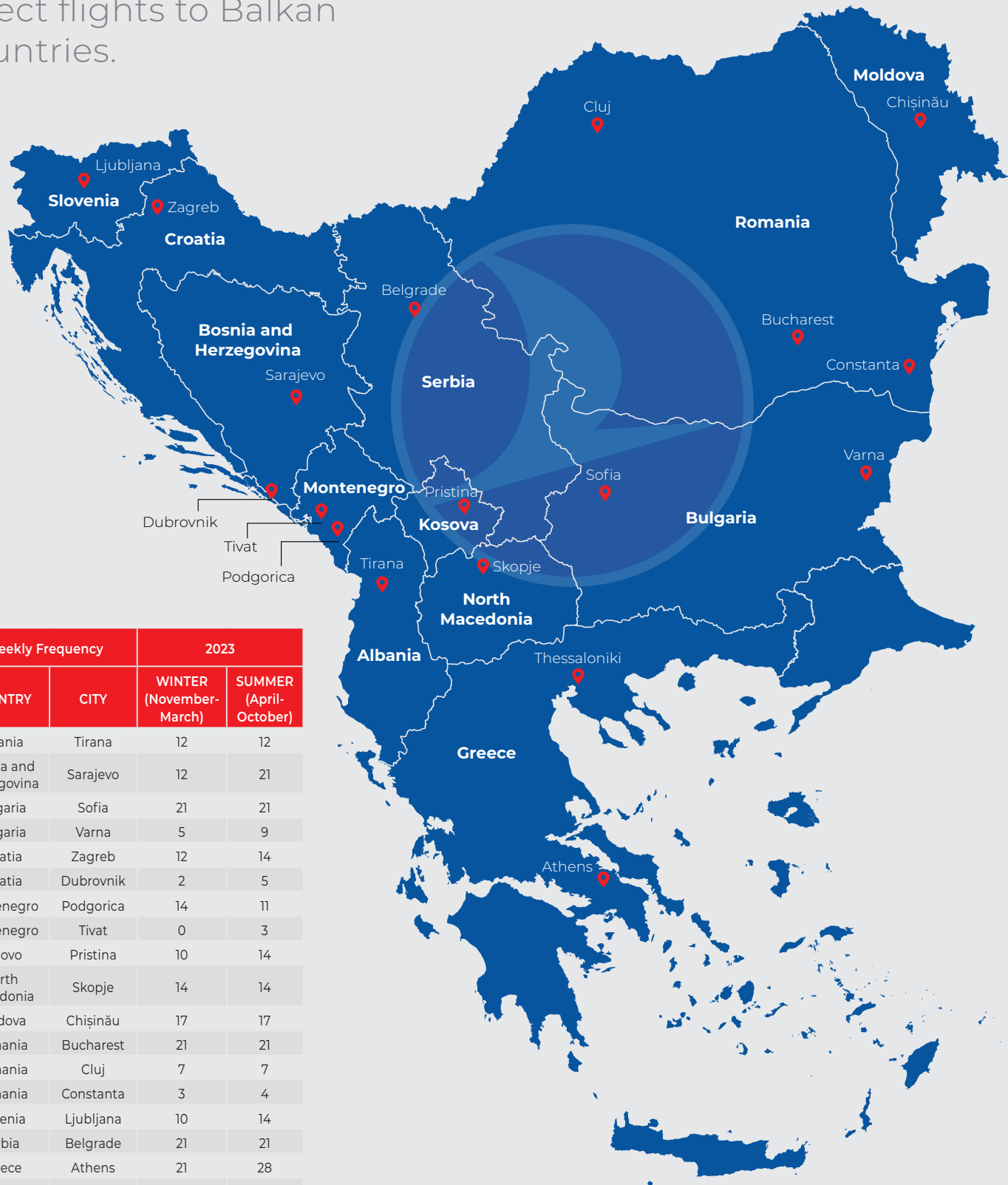
Nations (UN), NATO, European Union (EU), and Organization of Islamic Cooperation. Moreover, it has contributed to the Peacekeeping Missions undertaken in these two countries.

From the early years of the Republic of Türkiye to the present, it has led significant initiatives and engaged in numerous others to build and sustain peace and stability in the Balkans.

From the early years of the Republic of Türkiye to the present, it has led significant initiatives and engaged in numerous others to build and sustain peace and stability in the Balkans. The main regional peace initiatives in the Balkans that Türkiye led or took part in include the First Balkan Pact (1934), The Second Balkan Pact (1953), The Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (1992), and The Southeast European Cooperation Initiative (1996).

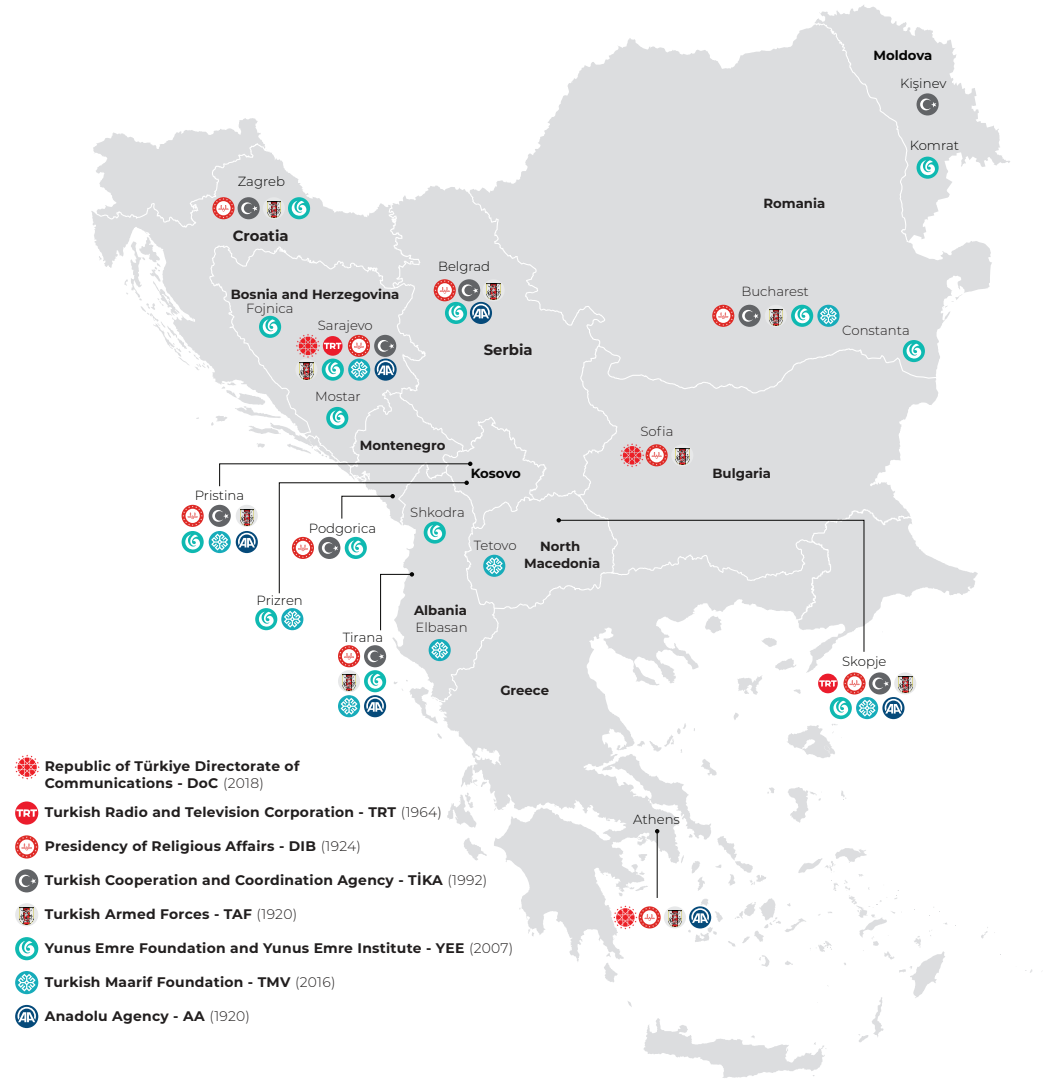
# Turkish Airlines

increases the number of direct flights to Balkan countries.



At the beginning of the 1990s, the Yugoslavian Federation began to disintegrate, and Türkiye's relations with the Balkan countries and its initiatives expanded. Croatia (1991), Slovenia (1991), North Macedonia (1991), Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992), Montenegro (2006), and Kosovo (2008) attained independence in the Balkans, in that order. Türkiye initially supported the independence of these nations and was among the earliest states to recognize them. Subsequently, Türkiye swiftly established embassies in these countries and prioritized the establishment and development of bilateral ties.

These developments were followed by high-level mutual visits at the presidential, prime ministerial, and ministerial levels. Additionally, contacts with Balkan nations have grown in international organizations like the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the UN. Türkiye has backed these nations' membership in the UN, NATO, EU, and OIC. Furthermore, Türkiye has contributed to Balkan peacekeeping missions and trained Balkan law enforcement officers and military personnel. At this point, Türkiye provided tools and instruments, ammunition, and equipment support to the armies of these countries, as well as training to the military personnel of the Balkan countries via Turkish military experts, both in Türkiye and in the Balkan countries.



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Türkiye's economic investments in the Balkan countries have accelerated. Development assistance has also been provided to these countries. Türkiye has endeavored to expand air transport to the Balkans, notably by increasing the number of Balkan destinations served by Turkish Airlines' direct flights.

After 2002, the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) came to power, and under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, a greater emphasis was placed on relations with the Balkan nations. Following this process, both the leader-to-leader diplomacy strategy and public diplomacy approach saw a quick development in relations with the countries of the region in numerous political, economic, and cultural fields. In the field of public diplomacy, in addition to the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA), Yunus Emre Institute (YEE), founded in 2007, the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB), founded in 2010, and the Turkish Maarif Foundation (TMV), founded in 2016, have given the Balkans budgetary and project implementation priority.

Türkiye, which has a vast global cooperation network comprised of high-level cooperation councils, intergovernmental summit mechanisms, and multi-member regional formations, is trying to maintain close ties with the Balkan countries and deepen partnership policies and cooperation by implementing new initiatives for these countries. With President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's active "leader-to-leader diplomacy," Turkish foreign policy towards the Balkans is currently ascending and broadening its horizons. Within the context of leader-to-leader diplomacy, Türkiye has established close ties with Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Kosovo, and Serbia, in particular.



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**26 March 2018,**  
President Recep  
Tayyip Erdoğan  
paid a visit to  
Bulgaria to attend  
the Türkiye - EU  
Summit.

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**August 28, 2021**  
President Recep  
Tayyip Erdoğan  
paid an official visit  
to Montenegro,  
upon the invitation  
of the then-  
President Milo  
Cukanovic of  
Montenegro.



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**January 17, 2022**  
President Recep  
Tayyip Erdoğan  
paid a visit to  
Albania upon the  
invitation of Prime  
Minister Edi Rama  
of Albania.





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**September 6, 2022**  
President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan paid an official visit to Bosnia and Herzegovina, upon the invitation of the members of the Presidential Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina.



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**September 7, 2022**  
President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan paid an official visit to Serbia, upon the invitation of President Aleksandar Vucic of Serbia.



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**September 8, 2022**  
President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan paid an official visit to Croatia, upon the invitation of President Zoran Milanović of Croatia.

The developing close ties between Türkiye and the Balkan countries have also had a positive effect on the volume of bilateral foreign trade. In 2021, the top three exporting countries in the Balkans were Romania (5.1 billion dollars), Bulgaria (3.9 billion dollars), and Greece (3.1 billion dollars). The three countries with the highest imports were Romania (3.4 billion dollars), Bulgaria (2.5 billion dollars), and Greece (2.1 billion dollars).

The foreign trade volume data illustrates one of the most fundamental examples of Türkiye's economic cooperation with Balkan nations. According to data from 2021, Türkiye exports approximately 20.5 billion dollars' worth of goods and services to the Balkan countries while importing approximately 15.6 billion dollars from them.

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In 2022, the countries from which Türkiye exported and imported the most goods were Romania, Bulgaria, and Greece.

The three Balkan countries with the most exports in 2022		
Year	Country Name	Dollars
2022	Romania	6,322,446.969
2022	Bulgaria	4,364,239.516
2022	Greece	3,070,406.139

The three Balkan countries with the most imports in 2022		
Year	Country Name	Dollars
2022	Romania	3,051,085.371
2022	Bulgaria	2,480,445.961
2022	Greece	1,851,059.907

**Source: Republic of Türkiye, Ministry of Trade**

**The data for 2022 covers the period between January and November.**

Reviewing Türkiye's foreign trade relations with Balkan countries between 2002 and 2022 reveals that the foreign trade volume, which was approximately 4 billion dollars in 2002, had surpassed 37 billion dollars by 2022. In 2002, Türkiye's exports to Balkan countries totalled 2.1 billion dollars; by 2022, this figure had surpassed 22 billion dollars. In a similar vein, Türkiye's imports from Balkan countries totalled 1.9 billion dollars in 2002, and this figure surpassed 15 billion dollars by 2022.

Export/Import Figures for Balkan Countries Throughout the Years.			
Value: US Dollars			
Year	Total Exporters	Total Imports	Foreign Trade Volume
2002	2,114,331.339	1,904,929.948	4,019,261.287
2003	3,235,427.018	2,650,627.218	5,886,054.236
2004	4,434,220.816	4,303,303.997	8,737,524.813
2005	5,533,834.305	5,568,337.834	11,102,172.139
2006	7,646,940.232	7,087,708.044	14,734,648.276
2007	11,357,492.422	7,975,873.292	19,333,365.714
2008	12,389,193.450	8,402,623.716	20,791,817.166
2009	7,984,755.987	6,105,253.933	14,090,009.920
2010	8,102,345.042	9,029,866.582	17,132,211.624
2011	9,117,573.238	11,789,741.173	20,907,314.411
2012	8,519,465.511	11,917,518.767	20,436,984.278
2013	10,113,266.977	19,734,023.870	29,847,290.847
2014	10,924,061.028	20,100,144.625	31,024,205.653
2015	10,016,271.970	13,755,145.600	23,771,417.570
2016	11,184,843.426	11,809,320.897	22,994,164.323
2017	13,212,425.631	14,673,294.697	27,885,720.328
2018	15,385,596.447	13,988,787.976	29,374,384.423
2019	15,821,017.778	12,862,096.182	28,683,113.960
2020	14,781,620.330	12,138,114.895	26,919,735.225
2021	20,554,294.732	15,612,497.955	36,166,792.687
2022 (January- November)	22,733,777.290	14,925,439.704	37,659,216.994

Source: TURKSTAT

The contracting projects that Türkiye undertakes in the Balkan nations are another of the most fundamental indicators of the robust economic cooperation between Türkiye and the Balkan countries. To the extent that, between 2002 and 2022, Türkiye undertook 557 projects in the Balkan countries at a total commitment cost of approximately 17.7 billion dollars.

### Contracting Projects Undertaken In The Balkan Countries In The Period 2002-2022

Region / Country	Number of Projects	Total Commitment Cost (US Dollars)	Share (%)
Albania	29	1,795,050.548	0.42%
Bosnia and Herzegovina	45	1,196,121.579	0.28%
Bulgaria	70	2,140,549.272	0.50%
Croatia	21	751,908,965	0.18%
Montenegro	55	412,330,790	0.10%
Kosovo	28	1,486,235.242	0.35%
North Macedonia	40	1,292,177.178	0.30%
Moldova	38	577,620,715	0.14%
Romania	151	6,032,750.947	1.41%
Serbia	65	938,280,057	0.22%
Slovenia	3	880,639,190	0.21%
Greece	12	217,073,680	0.05%
<b>Total</b>	<b>557</b>	<b>17,720,738,163</b>	<b>4.16%</b>

Source: Ministry of Trade of the Republic of Türkiye

The Balkans is one of the regions where the Turkish capital position is particularly strong.

### Türkiye's Capital Position Regarding Its Investments in the Balkan Countries

Country	Years																			
	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002
Albania	593	602	752	615	610	492	51	37	37	4	17	148	136	162	53	2	2	0	0	0
Bosnia and Herzegovina	296	250	252	237	226	197	193	277	343	252	257	240	181	89	44	34	31	24	17	0
Bulgaria	369	349	254	290	278	261	119	87	89	84	75	76	92	40	54	52	51	46	41	39
Croatia	112	138	192	168	149	166	154	174	168	22	9	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Montenegro	67	151	57	41	24	39	51	50	61	0	18	18	15	15	6	0	0	0	0	0
Kosovo	205	176	198	188	201	153	104	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
North Macedonia	280	252	211	176	147	121	103	137	146	125	110	29	25	22	1	0	1	1	1	0
Romania	228	165	215	219	203	152	57	189	198	114	244	277	253	263	185	162	159	133	120	125
Serbia	275	209	195	178	145	76	46	18	19	68	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Slovenia	-5	13	5	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Greece	77	47	32	26	29	15	25	50	52	33	20	23	26	25	2	2	1	1	1	0
Moldova	54	24	16	11	-13	15	4	0	0	0	12	5	1	1	2	0	0	1	1	0

(\*) Figures in the table are in billions of US dollars

Source: Ministry of Trade of the Republic of Türkiye

The economic investments of Türkiye in the Balkans reflect initiatives that will directly improve the welfare of the regional societies. Employment data produced by these investments is one of the most fundamental indicators of this. In 2016, 22 thousand 280 people worked in Türkiye's investments in the Balkans, and only 390 of them were Turkish citizens. By 2021,

the number of workers employed in Türkiye's investments in the region increased to 30 thousand 630. While there are 2 thousand 130 Turkish citizens employed in investments in the region, there are approximately 30,000 people employed from the region's countries.

Employment Data Relating to Türkiye's Investments in Balkan Countries												
Country	2021		2020		2019		2018		2017		2016	
	Local	Foreign	Local	Foreign	Local	Foreign	Local	Foreign	Local	Foreign	Local	Foreign
Albania	43	1901	35	2046	41	608	24	1660	24	1660	26	2029
Bosnia and Herzegovina	22	2055	28	1900	34	1938	3	651	17	1555	16	1701
Bulgaria	116	8366	68	8824	52	7608	80	3871	67	4426	61	4888
Croatia	16	430	15	374	15	457	25	340	25	340	12	494
Montenegro	49	608	36	786	31	789	35	482	35	484	24	475
Kosovo	54	1414	26	1384	64	2220	26	1211	53	1964	49	1921
North Macedonia	270	3363	394	3666	167	3658	46	3008	47	3119	47	2787
Romania	1050	3893	113	4924	97	4935	48	3994	90	4931	99	4338
Serbia	489	5403	447	4650	140	3385	9	1637	22	2894	33	2029
Slovenia	1	88	0	90	1	106	0	57	0	57	0	25
Greece	18	342	7	333	9	410	5	317	12	269	9	311
Moldova	3	594	14	1105	4	259	4	120	9	519	12	895

**Source: Ministry of Trade of the Republic of Türkiye**

“Security Cooperation” is one of the most important areas of Turkish and Balkan cooperation. Türkiye's breakthroughs and progress, particularly in the defense industry, have piqued the interest of Balkan countries. In fact, Balkan countries have begun to view Türkiye as a potential security partner. Türkiye has become an important supplier of strategic weapons to Balkan nations, particularly armed unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) in the defense industry. Türkiye's ability to produce cost-effective and attractive weapons, such as the TAI Anka and Bayraktar TB2 UCAV, strengthens its position as the most significant alternative supplier for the Balkans' defense needs. In fact, five Bayraktar TB2 UCAVs were delivered to the Kosovo Security Forces in May of 2023.

The Albanian authorities acquired a total of three Bayraktar TB 2 UCAVs, while Romania also procured three Bayraktar TB2 UCAVs.

The security cooperation between Türkiye and the Balkans extends beyond trade in the defense industry and support for military training. Türkiye, which places a high priority on the stability of peace and security in the region, continues to contribute to international initiatives



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**TUSAŞ**  
Anka



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**Bayraktar**  
TB2

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aimed at achieving this objective. However, Türkiye can also have troops present, a privilege accorded to it under bilateral cooperation, as is the case with Albania. The base, which was established in 1997 as part of the defense cooperation with Albania, is situated on 20 acres of land in Pasha Port, located in the city of Vlore on the Adriatic coast, and also serves the Albanian Navy. The base is known as the Naval Forces Command Albania Team Presidency.

Regarding Türkiye's international military initiatives in the Balkans, the Turkish military was initially dispatched to Bosnia and Herzegovina as part of the International Peacekeeping Force with the intention of ensuring "peace and stability" in the country. In 1994, the Turk-

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Regarding Türkiye's international military initiatives in the Balkans, the Turkish military was initially dispatched to Bosnia and Herzegovina as part of the International Peacekeeping Force with the intention of ensuring "peace and stability" in the country.

ish Armed Forces (TSK) participated for the first time in the Peace Support Operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. (UNPROFOR 1992–1995, NATO IFOR 1995–1996, NATO SFOR 1996–2004, and EUFOR Althea 2004–ongoing). "Maintaining an atmosphere of peace and trust, improving cooperation with local and international organizations, supporting the international civilian presence, and providing training support to the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina" is the stated mission of the Turkish troops serving under the Turkish Representative Committee of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Türkiye is the non-EU country that made the largest contribution to the EUFOR-Althea operation.

The International Peacekeeping Force in Kosovo has been maintained in accordance with a resolution of the UN Security Council since 1999. In

the KFOR operation, Türkiye assigns personnel to the cadres allotted to it. The primary mission of the Turkish military in Kosovo is to establish a "safe environment," enhance cooperation with local and international organizations, and support the development of the Kosovo Security Forces. Approximately 400 Turkish soldiers are currently stationed in Kosovo. In October 10, 2023, Türkiye took over the KFOR Command for a duration of one year.

As a result of their geostrategic location, the Balkans have significant economic development potential. The region's proximity to numerous seas, such as the Adriatic Sea, the Ionian Sea, the Aegean Sea, the Marmara Sea, and the Black Sea, gives it a strategic advantage in maritime trade. In addition, the region has a critical political and economic mission as it is situated on a land transit route between Europe, or the member states of the EU and Asia. In terms of pipeline diplomacy, the Balkan states are also crucial conduits for transporting Caspian and Middle Eastern energy supplies to EU member states.

Country	Gross Domestic Product (GDP) – Billion Dollars (2021)
Albania	18.2
Bosnia and Herzegovina	23.3
Bulgaria	84.0
Croatia	68.9
Montenegro	5.8
Kosovo	9.4
North Macedonia	13.8
Moldova	13.6
Romania	284.0
Serbia	63.0
Slovenia	61.7
Greece	214.8
<b>Türkiye</b>	<b>819</b>

**Source: World Bank**

In contrast to other actors, the relationship between Türkiye and the Balkan states prioritizes the continent’s development. It is not Türkiye’s intention to exploit the region’s natural resources, both above and below ground; rather, Türkiye’s development model is generally one of peace that seeks to promote the stability and prosperity of the region. Türkiye has steadily increased its investments to raise the standards and quality of the infrastructure and superstructure services of the countries in the region.

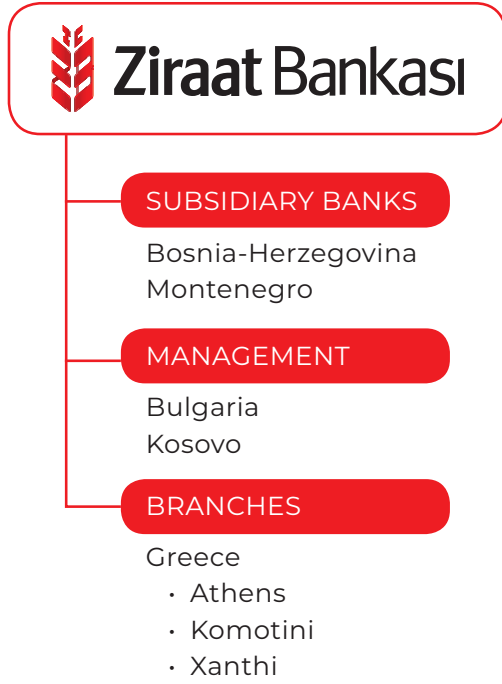
These investments are primarily carried out in projects such as airports, highways, tunnels, bridges and railways. These investments include Skopje, Ohrid, and Pristina Airports, as well as the Belgrade-Sarajevo Highway Project. With an investment cost of almost 3 billion euros, the Belgrade and Sarajevo Highway Project-which unites the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia-represents Türkiye’s greatest single investment in the Balkans.

A few examples of Turkish capital investments in the Balkans are Halkbank, Türkiye Ziraat Bank, and İşbank. Turkish public banks also provide active services in the region’s countries, both in the individual banking transactions of the citizens and in the financing of industrial and agricultural investments. In Serbia, North Macedonia, and the Balkans, Halkbank now offers services. Türkiye Ziraat Bank operates in the Balkans through subsidiaries in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Montenegro, country management in Bulgaria and Kosovo, and branches in Athens, Komotini, and Xanthi in Greece. İşbank holds a branch in Kosovo.



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**Pristina Airport**  
Kosovo



With its peaceful development model, Türkiye not only seeks to raise the production and employment levels of the Balkan countries but also places a high priority on fostering local ties, training human resources with on-site training, and meeting basic needs. The Türkiye Scholarships program by the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB) and the Turkish Maarif Foundation’s educational institutes actively participate in this effort by educating the human resources of the communities in the region.

Development aid and human development hold a significant role in Türkiye’s peaceful development plan for the Balkans, in addition to the region’s economic growth. TİKA, in particular, spearheads Türkiye’s development assistance to the Balkans. Türkiye actively contributes to the Balkans’ development by considering the regional communities’ demands and needs. Türkiye has been “the most generous country” in the world for three years in a row, providing 8.7 billion dollars in humanitarian assistance in 2017, 8.4 billion dollars in 2018, and 7.6 billion dollars in 2019. Türkiye ranked as the second-most generous country in the world in 2020, giving almost 8 billion dollars in humanitarian assistance, according to the Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2021. Türkiye, which continues to be “the most generous country in the world” by allocating 0.98 of its gross national income for humanitarian aid, provided aid to 43 countries in Europe while helping 157 countries and 8 international organizations in the world in 2020. When 2020 is considered, Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Kosovo, Moldova, Serbia, and Montenegro were the countries that benefited most from bilateral official development aid in the Balkans, each receiving 59.9 million dollars, 7.9 million dollars, 5.7 million dollars, and 1.1 million dollars, respectively. TİKA has been one of the driving forces behind the development of the Balkans by implementing approximately 6,000 projects and activities in the Balkans so far. The Balkans have received over 86 million dollars in development aid from Türkiye just in 2020.

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**April 27, 2022**  
TİKA provided food aid in Croatia as part of Ramadan initiatives.



Türkiye supports the mutual development of political, economic, and social independence and places great emphasis on increasing access to basic needs and services as a crucial component of human development. Türkiye contributes to developing hospitals, schools, and similar humanitarian and basic needs and services in the Balkans with public and non-governmental organizations, especially TİKA. For instance, on November 26, 2019, Albania experienced a 6.3 magnitude earthquake. In addition to assisting with search and rescue, Türkiye constructed 522 residences and 37 offices in Albania.

Türkiye has also successfully established a favorable image in the region due to its investments and assistance in supporting the growth of the Balkan countries and societies. For instance, according to a survey conducted in December 2022 and released in North Macedonia by the International Republican Institute (IRI), 87% of the population believes that good relations serve the nation's interests with Türkiye. Türkiye is a country that incorporates the discourses of mutual benefit and equitable partnership in its Balkan policy, which is one of the most significant factors contributing to Türkiye's favorable image in the Balkans. Türkiye, above all, adopts the view that the rise of Türkiye will support the rise of the Balkans, and the rise of the Balkans will support the rise of Türkiye. In this context, Türkiye aspires to develop, grow, and walk side by side with the countries and communities of the Balkans. Because the way to a strong Balkans is through a strong Türkiye, and the way to a strong Türkiye is through a strong Balkans..

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# THE ROLE OF TÜRKİYE IN THE WEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE BALKANS

## THE ENGINE OF PEACEFUL DEVELOPMENT IN THE BALKANS: TURKISH COOPERATION AND COORDINATION AGENCY (TİKA)

**E**stablished in 1992 to foster cooperation with the Turkic Republics and Balkan countries in Turkestan, with which Türkiye has historical and cultural ties, TİKA has been restructured over the years, considering the changes at the regional and global levels as well as the new dynamics that have emerged in Turkish foreign policy. The organizational statute passed in 2011 has given TİKA a flexible and quick decision-making structure and allowed it to generate high-quality projects in every sector that affects human life from birth to death in the Balkans and many other parts of the world. In fact, TİKA currently executes projects in over 170 countries through 63 Programme Coordination Offices in 61 countries, in accordance with Türkiye's humanitarian and entrepreneurial foreign policy approach. Türkiye's engagement with friendly, brotherly, and relative countries through TİKA is founded upon the objective of fostering a new era of peace.





**October 08, 2014**

TİKA completed the renovation and furnishing of Namık Kemal Primary School in Çalıkılı Village, Macedonia.

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Since TİKA opened its first office in the Balkans in 1992 in Serbia, the organization has expanded to ten offices throughout the region. Today, TİKA maintains offices in the following Balkan countries:

- Albania,
- Bosnia and Herzegovina,
- Croatia,
- Montenegro,
- Kosovo,
- North Macedonia,
- Moldova,
- Romania
- Serbia.



TİKA has expanded  
the number of its  
offices to  
**10**  
in the Balkans.

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Some of the projects carried out by TİKA in the Balkan countries are as follows:

- Albania: Project for Distribution of Olive Saplings, Vlora Mustafa Kemal Atatürk School, Renovation and Healthcare Materials for Rrogozhinë Public Health Station
- Bosnia and Herzegovina: Establishment of Sewing Workshop, Rogatica Municipality Stjenice Rural Area Water Network Construction Project, Fisheries Development Project, Food and Life Safety Support Program in the Balkans and Eastern European Countries
- Croatia: Center for the Rehabilitation of Hearing and Speech (SUVAG), Sisak Novi Kindergarten Capacity Improvement
- Montenegro: Olive Processing Facility, Medical Equipment Support for Emergency Health Center in Gusinje Municipality, Improving Greenhouse Farming Project, Bottom Boards for PVC Beehives with Pollen Traps Support for 65 Beekeepers, Medical Equipment Support for Montenegro Clinic Center's Dental Polyclinic
- Kosovo: Milk Collection Center of Little Krusha Female Farmers Association, Agricultural Machinery Support for Farmers in Gjilan Municipality, Central Intensive Care Unit in Kosovo Central University Hospital
- North Macedonia: Greenhouse Support, Improvement of Rice Quality and Productivity Project, Emergency Paediatrics Clinic and Intensive Care Unit in Skopje State Hospital Clinical Center
- Moldova: Renovation of Presidential Palace, Aziz Sancar Diagnostic and Treatment Center, Chisinau Mother-Child Health and Rehabilitation Center, Rehabilitation of Stratan River
- Romania: Bucharest No. 2 Secondary School for the Disabled, Sensory Stimulation Room, Constanta Mecidiye Hospital Equipment Support, Bucharest Sf. Pantelimon Emergency Clinic Hospital Operating Room Construction
- Serbia: The Obstetrics and Gynecology Department of Novi Pazar State Hospital, Supply of 7 Ambulances to Sandžak Region Municipalities, Support to Zvezdara Clinic and Training Center, Improvement of Technical Infrastructure in the Libraries of the University of Belgrade's Faculty of Philology and Renovation of the Oriental Library.

Through TİKA, our country's projects and activities that place people at the center, are result-oriented, and contribute to stability and development have positively differentiated Türkiye from other regional actors and paved the way for the formation of a development cooperation model in the Turkish style. This model is based on an understanding of cooperation between equals, which envisages that the Balkan countries and societies will determine and address their own needs.



**October 31, 2014**  
TİKA renovated the paediatric department building and the emergency department infrastructure of the state hospital in Avlona, Albania.

TİKA engages in numerous activities in the Balkan countries, including the development of social and human resources and the strengthening of administrative mechanisms and institutional infrastructures. Taking into account the concerns of regional countries, TİKA implements projects that benefit all segments of society and support the historical background and cultural distinctiveness of countries, from vocational development to agricultural development projects, from the construction of hospitals and schools to the encouragement of women's entrepreneurship.

Through TİKA, initiatives to combat pandemics were implemented in the Balkan countries during COVID-19, a period in which all countries severed their ties. Hygiene facilities and mask production centers were established, along with the procurement of medical supplies. Some of the projects carried out by TİKA within the scope of COVID-19 are as follows:

- Aid packages consisting of food and hygiene supplies were distributed to 250 families in Serbia.
- Staples and cleaning supplies were distributed to 300 families in need in the districts of Karabuško Polje and Šipčanik in Tuzi Municipality of Montenegro.

- 
- 1,500 food and hygiene parcels were distributed to families over the age of 65 and families in need in Romania.
  - The mask and disinfectant production project initiated in the Sandžak region of Serbia was supported.
  - Face shield masks were manufactured with a 3D printer to be distributed to health-care providers in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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# COOPERATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION: **PRESIDENCY FOR TURKS ABROAD AND RELATED COMMUNITIES (YTB)**



**T**he Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities (YTB), which was established in 2010, contributes to our country's cultural diplomacy, education diplomacy, and citizen diplomacy policies through studies aimed at our citizens living abroad, our sister communities in various countries and regions of the world, and international scholar-

ship students studying in Türkiye. Thus, it has a positive effect on bilateral relations between our country and the aforementioned countries. Likewise, YTB also supports the development of relations between our country and the Balkan countries through its activities.

Strategically, politically, and culturally, our country is in constant contact with the Balkans due to their geographical proximity to our country and our long-standing compassion for the region, which dates back to the Ottoman Empire. In addition to these issues, the region is of particular significance due to the presence of our cognates, relatives, and sister communities living in the relevant geography.

With a number of programs, YTB presently conducts activities in numerous countries, including the Balkan countries. These programs are the Academic and Scientific Research Program (ABAP), Education Support Program (EDEP), Cultural Mobility and Cooperation Program (KHIP) and Alumni Türkiye Program (TMP), and projects and activities are carried out within the scope of these programs.

<b>The Number of Projects/Activities of YTB in the Balkan Countries</b>	
<b>Country</b>	<b>Number of Projects/Activities</b>
Albania	28
Bosnia and Herzegovina	38
Bulgaria	92
Croatia	6
Montenegro	8
Kosovo	55
North Macedonia	48
Serbia	12
Greece	40
<b>Total</b>	<b>327</b>

**Source: YTB, Activities and Projects in the Balkans Region, Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Culture and Tourism Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities, 2022, p. 2.**

A total of 327 projects and activities were carried out by YTB in the Balkans, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Montenegro, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Greece between 2010 and 2022. The prominent works are as follows:

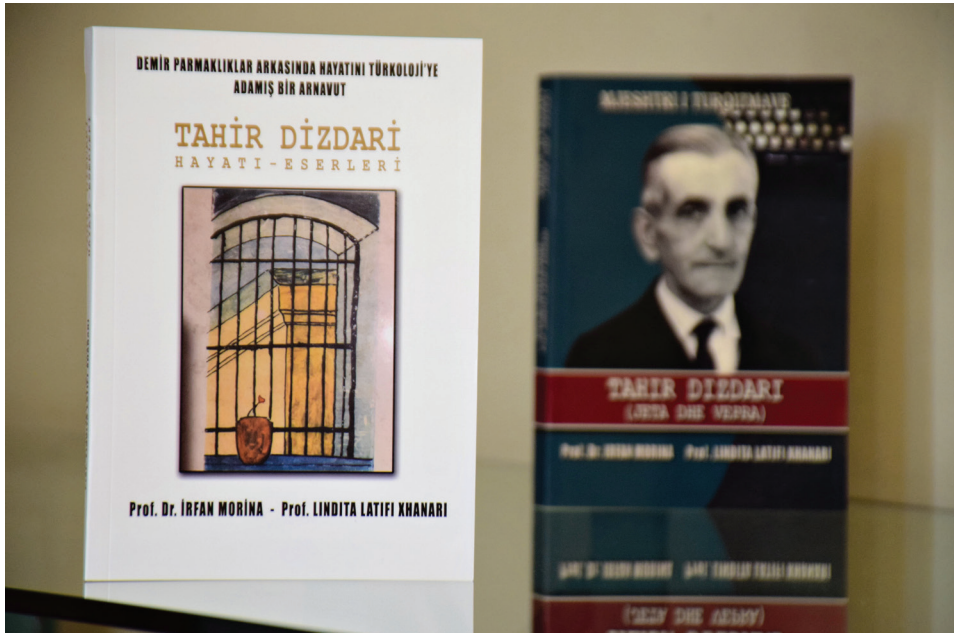
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## Albania

- Balkan Youth School of Albania (Tirana and Shkodra)
- The Life and Works of Tahir Dizdari, an Albanian Behind Bars Who Devoted His Life to Turkology
- Workshop for Türkiye Graduated Businessmen in the Balkans



*Balkan Youth School of Albania*



*The Book of Tahir Dizdari*

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## Bosnia and Herzegovina

- Balkan Youth School of Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Book Translation: Ottoman İstimalet (Accommodation) Policy and Bosnia: XV - XVI Century
- A Trip to Türkiye for Children in Srebrenica
- From the Death Road to the Peace March – Marş Mira
- A Trip to Türkiye for Banja Luka Madrasa Students



*A Trip to Türkiye for Students from Bosnia and Herzegovina*

## Bulgaria

- The Life of the Father of Immigrants Mümin Gençoğlu
- International Summer School Bulgaria
- Online Program: “Unknown Stories of Migration”
- The Book “BELENE: Ground Tough for Death, Sky Far for Flight”



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## Croatia

- Balkan Youth School
- Turks in Croatia Book Project



*The Book on Turks in Croatia*

## Montenegro

- Balkan Youth School



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## TRNC

- TRNC Online Media Training
- TRNC Online Lawyers Training
- TRNC Young Leaders Program
- TRNC Ramadan Gatherings in Lands Dear to our Hearts



*Balkan Youth School of Kosovo*



*Documentary On The School*

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## North Macedonia

- Balkan Youth School Project / North Macedonia 1
- Balkan Youth School Project / North Macedonia 2
- Balkan Youth School Project / North Macedonia 3
- Pioneers of History Project
- Storytelling Time with Kelođlan Project
- Balkan Postgraduate Studies Conference
- Balkan Historiography Workshop
- The Project of Translating Vocational Textbooks into Turkish



*Bridge Association - Balkan Youth School*



*Balkan Studies Conference*

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## Serbia

- Balkan Youth School of Serbia
- The Trip of Belgrade Turkology Students to Türkiye
- Novi Pazar Turkish Cultural Center Students' Visit to Türkiye



*Balkan Youth School Of Serbia*



*Novi Pazar Turkish Cultural Center Visit to Türkiye*

## Greece

- Balkan Youth School of Gümülçine (Komotini)
- Balkan Youth School of İskeçe (Xanthi)
- MINIA BALKANTURK Park Project
- City- Culture Seminar and Certificate Program
- Book on Turkish Image in Greek Perception
- Book on Sadık Ahmet
- Commemoration of Doctor Sadık Ahmet on the Occasion of his 75th Birthday
- Book on Doctor Sadık



*Book On Doctor Sadık Ahmet*



*Commemoration Of Doctor Sadık Ahmet On The Occasion Of His 75th Birthday*

## General Projects

### Distance Learning Project

Since 2015, YTB and Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University have collaborated on a project titled “Distance Learning” to support school lessons and provide education for our compatriots in Western Thrace, from the first grade to the third year of high school, so that they may acquire national and moral values. During the 2020-2021 project period, students from Bulgaria, Kosovo, North Macedonia, and Romania were accepted into the related project in consideration of field demands.

#### YTB's Distance Learning Project



### Balkans Online Writing and Literature Academy

Within the scope of the project titled Balkans Online Writing and Literature Academy, which is carried out in collaboration with YTB and Western Thrace Imam Hatip High School Alumni and Members Association (BIHLIMDER), 60 individuals from Bulgaria, Kosovo, North Macedonia, and Greece receive online writing and literature training. Every weekend, renowned authors and writers share their experiences with the participants as part of the project, which began in March. The participants are scheduled to visit Türkiye at the conclusion of the project, which is expected to be completed in September. It is also planned that, at the conclusion of the project, the works written by the participating students will be published collectively.



#### Balkans Writing and Literature Academy, organised by YTB

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## Higher Education Assistance

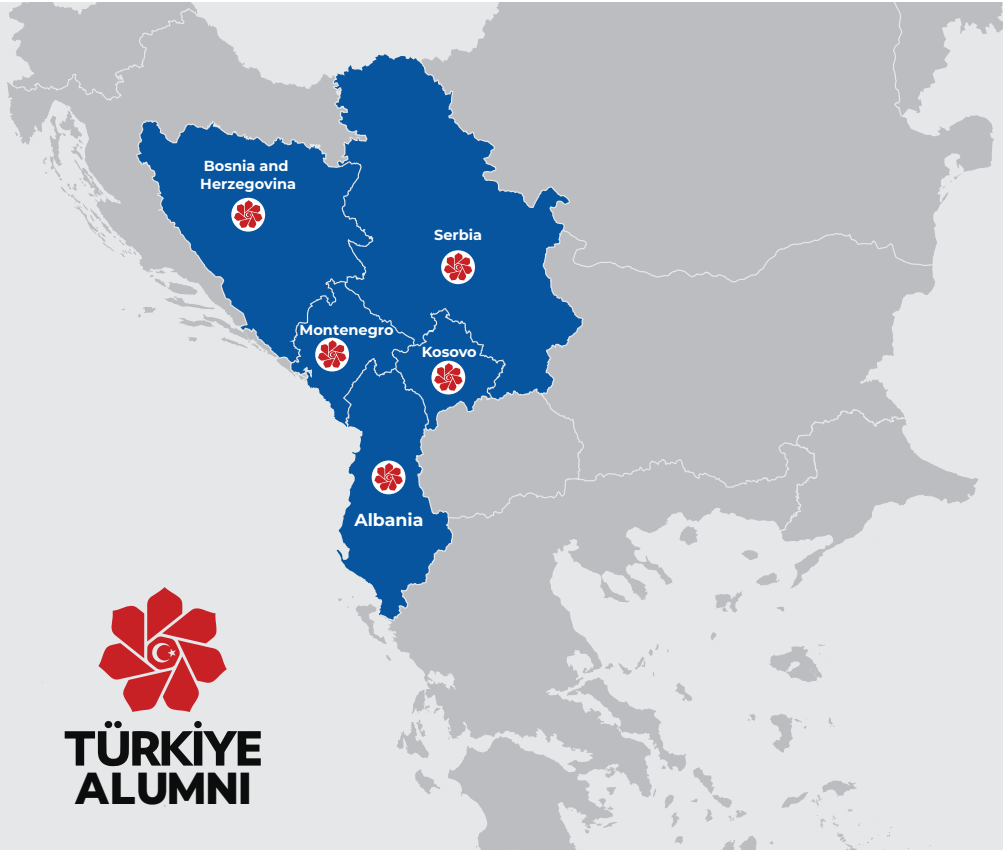
“Türkiye Scholarships” are the most significant of YTB’s higher education assistance programs for the Balkans. After its establishment in 2010, the “Türkiye Scholarships” program was implemented in 2012 as part of the duties assigned to the Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities.

## Scope of Türkiye Scholarships

Full-time or short-term scholarship opportunities are available through the scholarship program. Students who are granted full-time scholarships at undergraduate and postgraduate levels are placed in higher education institutions in Türkiye within the scope of the program, and these students are offered university tuition, a monthly scholarship, a 1-year Turkish language education, housing, general health insurance, and one-time round-trip plane ticket opportunities. As part of its Türkiye Scholarships program, YTB awarded 11,401 students from the Balkans scholarships of varying levels between 1992 and 2021. In 2022, 1,884 scholarship applications have been received from the Balkans. Additionally, 660 students from four countries have received scholarships through on-site scholarship projects.

## Alumni Türkiye Projects

YTB has 34 alumni associations in 30 countries, 5 of which are located in the Balkans. These countries are Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Kosovo and Serbia.



### YTB's Alumni Türkiye Associations in the Balkans

Number	Name Of The Association	Year Of Establishment
1	Alumni Türkiye Association Bosnia and Herzegovina	2014
2	Alumni Türkiye Association Serbia	2017
3	Alumni Türkiye Association Kosovo - Prizren	2017
4	Alumni Türkiye Association Kosovo	2017
5	Alumni Türkiye Association Montenegro	2017
6	Alumni Türkiye Association Albania	2017

### Alumni Türkiye Awards

In accordance with the Alumni Türkiye Awards program, which began in 2020, awards are presented in five categories: Scientific and Academic Studies, Economy and Entrepreneurship, Journalism and Media, Culture and Art, and Lifetime Honor. At the Alumni Türkiye Award Ceremony, which was held in Istanbul on January 20, 2023 with the participation of 200 Turkish graduates from 60 countries, two of the five categories were won by graduates of Balkan origin. The Lifetime Honor Award was presented to Prof Nimetullah Hafız by Vice President Fuat Oktay, while the Journalism and Media Award was presented to Deputy Minister of Culture and Tourism Eran Hasipi by Dr Serdar Çam.

### KATİP (Turkish Communication Program for Public Officials and Academics)

Foreign public servants, diplomats, journalists, bureaucrats, soldiers, and academics receive ten months of Turkish language education and training in various public institutions as part of the KATİP scholarship program administered by YTB. From 2014 until 2022, a total of 157 public officials and academics, including participants from the Balkan countries, arrived in Türkiye as part of the KATİP program.

**November 18, 2022**

Within the scope of KATİP, 26 scholarship holders from 22 countries for the 2022-23 period were involved in the trainings.



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# TÜRKİYE'S CULTURAL AMBASSADOR: YUNUS EMRE INSTITUTE (YEE)

Countries have established organizations that engage in cultural diplomacy on a global scale using historical figures of significance. Goethe Institut (Germany), Alliance Française (France), British Council (UK), Instituto Cervantes (Spain), Societa Dante Alighieri (Italy), Kongzi Xueyuan (China) are examples of organizations that engage in such endeavors. Yunus Emre, a poet and sufi who lived in Anatolia during the 13th century, has become the symbol for Türkiye in this field. Yunus Emre is a figure who represents human affection and social peace. The year 1991 has been designated as Yunus Emre's 750th birthday by UNESCO.

The words and expressions used by Yunus Emre, as well as the meanings and metaphors he employs, represent a significant step toward the development of Turkish as a literary language. This is what sets Yunus Emre apart from other sufi poets. Despite the fact that Turkish literature predated Yunus, he is credited with revealing the first and most beautiful poems written in Western Turkish, which originated in Anatolia. He also developed a Sufi language in Turkish by artistically processing his verbal knowledge. Not only did this remarkable figure contribute to the advancement of the Turkish language through poetry, but he also disseminated messages aimed at uniting humanity around peace and shared values regardless of religion, language, or race.



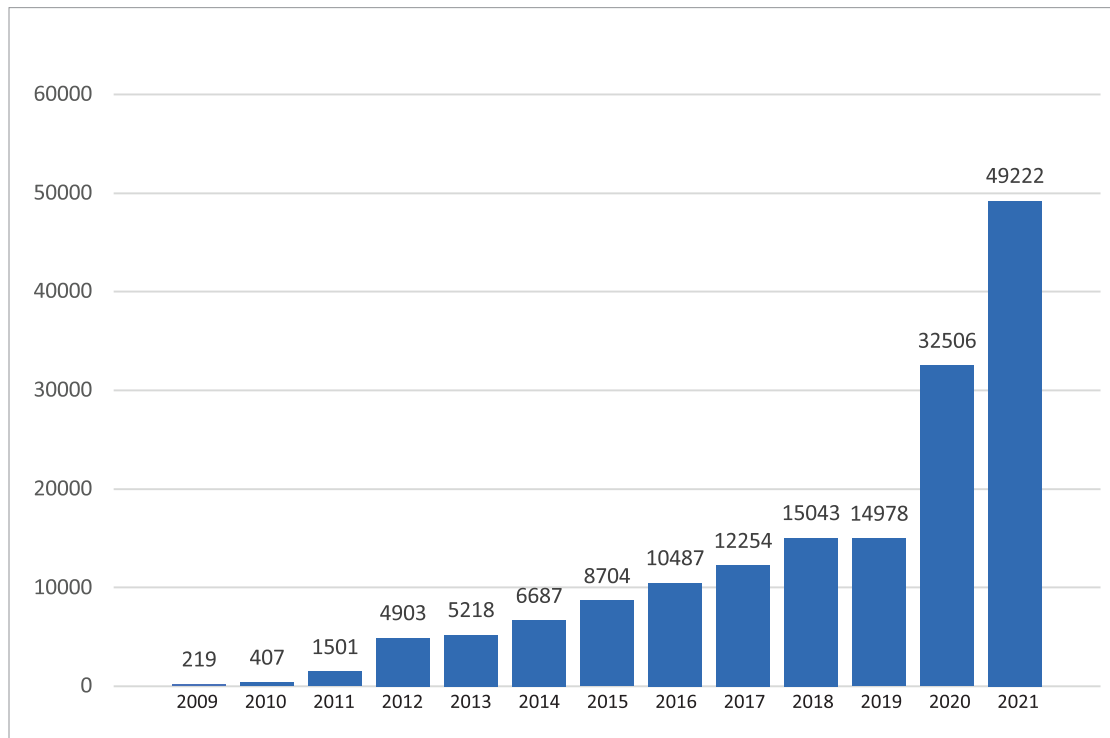


Yunus Emre Institute (YEE) Building in Ulus, Ankara

As part of its cultural diplomacy efforts, Türkiye established the Yunus Emre Foundation in 2007 on the basis of an approach based on Yunus Emre's philosophy. The primary goals of the Yunus Emre Foundation, which is a public foundation, are to advance Turkish language, history, culture, and art, to assist those who wish to pursue an education in these areas abroad, to broaden Türkiye's cultural exchange with other nations, and to foster friendship. The Yunus Emre Institute (YEE), established as an affiliate of the Foundation, conducts cultural and artistic activities in order to teach Turkish to foreigners and promote our country in the centers it has opened abroad.

The Yunus Emre Institute, which began operations in 2009, has over eighty cultural centers abroad. Cultural centers provide Turkish education. By collaborating with educational institutions in other countries, Turcology departments and Turkish education receive support. Through cultural centers, numerous events are organized to promote our culture and art, and our country is represented at national and international events. In this sense, YEE can be thought of as a cultural envoy of Türkiye in other countries.

The teaching of Turkish to the world is one of the core responsibilities of the Yunus Emre Institute. The Institute implements Turkish education in a variety of ways, including in-person, online, with videos, and through a portal in cultural centers. While 219 people were taught Turkish in cultural centers in 2009, this number increased to approximately 49,000 in 2021. The Yunus Emre Institute reached over 70 thousand students in 2021 through online Turkish courses as well as in-person courses. 10,519,000 people viewed the videos in Turkish education. The Turkish education portal has attracted around 600,000 users thanks to its unrestricted access, round-the-clock availability, more than 60 event templates, in-video activities, pronunciation development tools, and many other features.



The Yunus Emre Institute is in charge of preparing and implementing all examinations in the field of teaching Turkish as a foreign language, including certificate exams and placement tests held in cultural centers. The paper-based and web-based Turkish Proficiency Exam (TYS), which determines Turkish proficiency according to international standards, is developed in collaboration with field experts and academics. Between 2013 and 2021, 16,384 people took the exam. In 2021, 1,639 people took the exam, with 76 coming from Balkan countries.

The number of Balkan participants in the 2021 Turkish Proficiency Exam, listed by country	
Country	Number of Participants
Albania	24
Bosnia and Herzegovina	4
Montenegro	2
Kosovo	29
North Macedonia	9
Moldova	2
Romania	5
Serbia	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>76</b>

Elective Turkish Courses is one of the most important Turkish education projects that Yunus Emre Institute has implemented around the world and in the Balkans. While Turkish was taught to 1100 students in these schools in 2011, the figure has risen to 11,248 by 2022.

Elective Turkish Courses Project Activities in the Balkans in 2022		
Collaborated Country	Number of Schools	Number of Students
Albania	7	506
Bosnia and Herzegovina	193	7287
Kosovo	10	618
<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>8411</b>



**July 25, 2019**

A seminar was held as part of the YEE's "Turkish Literature Summer School-2019" programme.

The Yunus Emre Institute has signed protocols with numerous Balkan institutions as part of the Turkology Project since 2011. The following institutions are listed according to their respective countries:

- Bosnia and Herzegovina: University Džemal Bijedić of Mostar, University of Sarajevo, Tuzla University, University of Zenica
- Montenegro: University of Montenegro, Nikšić
- Kosovo: University of Pristina
- North Macedonia: International Balkan University, Goce Delchev University-Stip, State University of Tetova, The Saints Cyril and Methodius University-Faculty of Philology- Blaze Koneski
- Moldova: Comrat State University
- Romania: Ovidius University of Constanta, Andrei Saguna University of Constanta
- Serbia: University of Novi Sad

Currently, the YEE has numerous cultural centres in 9 Balkan countries. They are listed below:

- Albania: Shkodër, Tirana
- Bosnia and Herzegovina: Fojnica, Mostar, Sarajevo
- Croatia: Zagreb
- Montenegro: Podgorica
- Kosovo: Peja, Pristina, Prizren
- North Macedonia: Skopje
- Moldova: Comrat
- Romania: Bucharest, Constanta
- Serbia: Belgrade Cultural Center.



*The YEE's cultural centers in the Balkans*

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In each Balkan country where it has a center, YEE conducts a unique set of activities. These activities are planned and executed by the Yunus Emre Institute's central organization and country-based centers. The following are some examples of cultural centers' activities in various countries:

**Albania:** Academic Bridge from Shkodra to Edirne, Seminar on "Journey to Self with Yunus Emre Poems", 'Albania Once Upon a Time" Historical Postcards Exhibition, Yunus Emre Painting Competition, Tirana "From Heart to Heart Yunus Emre Concert", Tirana Book Fair, Those Who Left Traces from Bukhara to the Balkans, "Culture, Language and History on the 100th Anniversary of Türkiye-Albania Diplomatic Relations" Talk.



*"Culture, Language and History on the 100th Anniversary of Türkiye-Albania Diplomatic Relations" Talk.*



Tirana "From Heart to Heart Yunus Emre Concert"

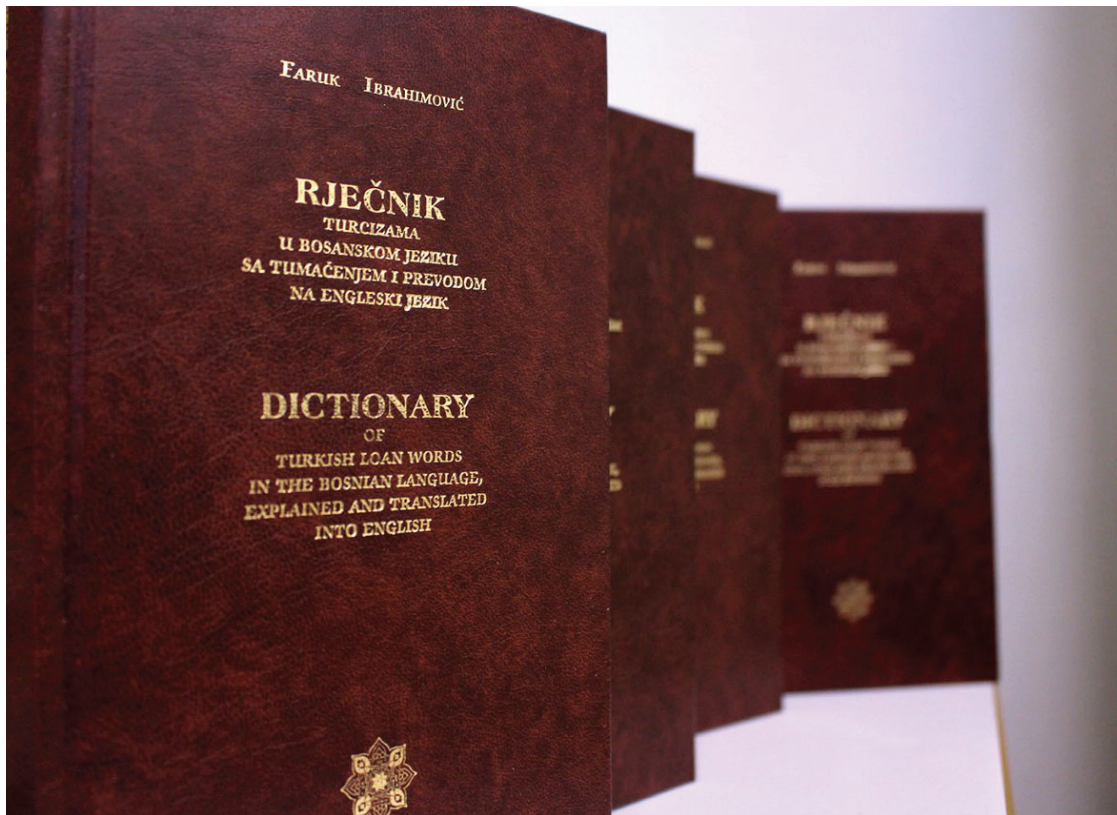


Academic Bridge from Shkodra to Edirne

**Bosnia and Herzegovina:** Fojnica Culture Talks, Software Course for Children, Fojnica Computer Courses, Elective Turkish Courses Project, In-Service Training Program for Bosnian Turkish Teachers, Elective Turkish Courses Project - Herzegovina Neretva Canton Turkish Competition among Secondary Schools and High Schools, "Dictionary of Turkish Loan Words in the Bosnian Language Explained and Translated into English" Book, Photo Contest on "My Bosnia and Herzegovina", "Brotherhood Bridge from Seljukian to Bosnia" Project, "Welcome to My City" Project in Collaboration with Yunus Emre Institute and TRT.



*Fojnica Computer Courses*



*“Dictionary of Turkish Loan Words in the Bosnian Language Explained and Translated into English” Book*



*“Welcome to My City” Project in Collaboration with Yunus Emre Institute and TRT*

Croatia: Ritam Mediterana Festival Introduction of Turkish Culture, Turkish Music Night in Riyeka, Split Jazz Festival, Turcology Students Regional Student Congress, Turkish Archery and Calligraphy Workshop, Zagreb Turkish Film Week.



*Ritam Mediterana Festival Introduction of Turkish Culture*



*Zagreb Turkish Film Week*

**Montenegro:** Traditional Turkish Archery Course, Göbeklitepe Photography Exhibition, Turkish Language Course, "Çanakkale Victory" Painting Competition, Turkish Film Days in Montenegro.



*Göbeklitepe Photography Exhibition*



*Turkish Film Days in Montenegro*

**Kosovo:** Turkish Language Course in Yakova, Online Ottoman Turkish Course, Water Marbling on Silk Course, Çiftelia Course, Water Marbling Course for Children with Down Syndrome.



*Water Marbling Course for Children with Down Syndrome*



*Online Ottoman Turkish Course*

**North Macedonia:** “Spiritual Heritage from Ottoman Rumelia to the Present” Panel, the Game Caravan Project, the Traditional Turkish Archery Training, the Yunus Emre “Come and See Me” Exhibition and the “Bizim Yunus” (Our Yunus) Concert, the Turkish Language Workshop and the Training Seminar for Turkish Teachers.



*Game Caravan Project*



*Yunus Emre “Come and See Me” Exhibition and the “Bizim Yunus” (Our Yunus) Concert*

**Romania:** Intensive Turkish Language Course, Water Marbling Art Course, Calligraphy Course, Cultural Diversity Festival, Turkish Language Courses in Constanta, Turkish Delight and Cologne Conference in Turkish Culture, “One Sea, Two Countries” Painting Competition.



*Cultural Diversity Festival*



*“One Sea, Two Countries” Painting Competition*

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**Serbia:** Children's Festival, Workshop on Media Literacy and Turkish in the Digital Age , Water Marbling Art Course.



*Workshop on Media Literacy and Turkish in the Digital Age*



*Children's Festival*

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# TÜRKİYE'S GATEWAY TO THE BALKANS IN INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION: **TURKISH MAARIF FOUNDATION (TMV)**

**T**he Turkish Maarif Foundation (TMV), founded in 2016, is the only organization authorized to open an educational institution abroad on behalf of the Republic of Türkiye other than the Ministry of National Education. In this regard, TMV serves as Türkiye's international education gateway to the rest of the world. In addition to having a public legal entity, the mission of TMV as a public-benefit foundation is to conduct comprehensive educational activities based on the common knowledge of humanity and the ancient wisdom tradition of Anatolia.

TMV has made official contacts with 11 Balkan countries, and as of 2024, it educates more than 7,000 students through 64 educational institutions in seven countries. As of 2022, TMV has graduated a total of 3866 students in the Balkan countries, where it started its first educational activities immediately after its establishment, and contributes to the strengthening of Turkish-Balkan relations. TMV, which is constantly expanding its education network in the Balkans, offers education and training services at all levels, from preschool to higher education.





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Maarif Foundation Schools



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**April 25, 2017**

Following the cooperation protocol in the field of education signed between the Turkish Maarif Foundation and the International American Academy of Kosovo (IAAK) in Kosovo, the Turkish Maarif Foundation started its education and training activities in Kosovo.

TMV has taken steps to open educational institutions in the Balkans since its inception in 2016, deepening Türkiye's Balkans policy and strengthening humanitarian ties. In this regard, TMV has managed to become a new component of Türkiye's partnership with Balkan countries and societies since December 2016. Given the large youth population, Türkiye's initiative in the field of education in the Balkans represents an extremely valuable strategic investment. First and foremost, education is the foundation of development. A well-educated population is the most valuable asset for nations around the globe.

TMV has made official contacts with 104 countries as of January 2024. It serves over 53 thousand students with formal education in 446 schools and 1 university across 52 countries, as well as non-formal education in 21 education centers. In the last six years, TMV has significantly increased the number of educational institutions in the Balkans. The number of educational institutions in the Balkans increased from 7 in 2017 to 22 in 2018; to 35 in 2019; to 37 in 2020; to 50 in 2021; to 56 in 2022; and to 64 in 2023.

TMV also began higher education activities with the University of New York Tirana (UNYT), which it took over in the Albanian capital in 2018. The University of New York Tirana, which operates in two buildings, stands out as TMV's only higher education institution. The university offers undergraduate and postgraduate education through three faculties and 21 departments, including Law and Social Sciences, Engineering and Architecture, and Economics and Business. Furthermore, the Balkan Research Center, which was established within the university, aims to strengthen the ancient friendships and historical and cultural ties between

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**July 08, 2019**

A graduation ceremony was held at the Maarif Foundation School in Albania.



the Balkan countries and Türkiye, implement Turkish-Balkan projects for common interests, organize international symposia and scientific conferences in these fields, and assist Turkish and Balkan academics and students with archive, library, and field research. The International Symposium on Teaching Turkish in the Balkans and Turcology, the first of which was held in Tirana in 2022, with the second taking place in Istanbul in 2023, was a significant initiative to improve the quality of Turkish language education in the Balkans.

The TMV's policy of establishing educational institutions in the Balkans, which began in 2017, has strengthened Türkiye's friendly and humanitarian relations with the Balkan countries. TMV aims to train future generations as important ambassadors for strengthening relations between Türkiye and the Balkans in accordance with the needs of the era and with awareness about the dynamics of the region by providing high-quality educational opportunities while contributing to employment in the region and the training of a qualified workforce. TMV schools employ over 1000 people from the local community. Furthermore, more than 500 students in various branches graduated from Vocational Training Courses for adults organized in collaboration with Konya Metropolitan Municipality in Bosnia and Herzegovina by February 2023.

TMV prioritizes the implementation of projects that will contribute to the Balkans' peace and prosperity. The Foundation's main mission for the Balkans is to open high-quality educational institutions that will appeal to all segments in order to serve the region's multicultural structure. These educational institutions contribute to meeting educational demands in collabora-

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tion with local authorities and stakeholders that will be involved in the educational process. This demonstrates that TMV takes an all-encompassing view of activity that combines the universal and the local. TMV's educational philosophy represents the Anatolian civilization tradition, which has been characterized for hundreds of years by the concept of a pluralistic society.

TMV intends to expand its educational activities in the Balkans to other countries in the region. It takes the initiative and maintains contacts in order to expand its educational activities in Montenegro, Moldova, and Greece, particularly in our neighbor Bulgaria.

The educational activities of TMV in the Balkans are a concrete manifestation of Türkiye's humanitarian, sharing, and solidarity-focused foreign policy in the Balkans. On the one hand, the Foundation contributes to the entrepreneurial and humanitarian foreign policy of our country; on the other hand, it continues to contribute to the peaceful future of the world by raising "virtuous and good people", which is the common ideal of humanity.

The Anatolian wisdom, which is based on humanity, solidarity, and sharing, is very important for TMV's educational philosophy in the field of Türkiye's foreign policy, particularly in terms of cultural diplomacy and educational diplomacy. The essence of this viewpoint is to treat all people as equals, to love the created for the sake of the creator, and to share the available opportunity. The TMV, which is one of the most permanent and long-lasting manifestations of Turkish foreign policy's dynamism, has adopted the mission of being an institution that feeds on the wealth of history, combines its own tradition with wisdom, and moves into the future by joining the universal and adding new elements to it.

TMV has undertaken three main tasks. The first task is to act for the "other," which is critical in and of itself. Türkiye has developed an inclusive paradigm committed to assisting the most disadvantaged communities in the world. The second mission is the development of communication, interaction and collaboration tools. Türkiye envisions a future based on cooperation rather than xenophobia and strives to spread this outlook. On the one hand, TMV associates its pillar of academic knowledge, skills, and values with the concept of "wisdom," while on the other, it approaches the educational phenomenon from a universal standpoint by equipping this pillar with sub-qualifications that are compatible with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). The third mission is to propose an encompassing mode of operation that combines the universal and the local.

TMV's educational philosophy represents the Anatolian civilization tradition, which has been characterized for hundreds of years by the concept of a pluralistic society. Thanks to this outlook, International Maarif Schools have achieved great success in reaching not only thousands

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The TMV's educational activities in the Balkans provide a tangible manifestation of Türkiye's humanitarian, sharing, and solidarity-based foreign policy in the region.

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of individuals with educational services but also with employment opportunities. TMV's Human Resources Policy demonstrates the significance it places on economic, social, and cultural outputs by hiring approximately 90% of its academic and administrative staff from citizens of the host country.

TMV sets a model for public schools and the private sector in the region through its many collaborations, in addition to contributing to the quality of education in the region through the schools it has opened throughout the Balkans. With the "uninterrupted education" approach and effective distance learning model implemented during the pandemic, Maarif Schools rose to prominence in numerous countries and piqued the interest of the relevant authorities. As a matter of fact, Maarif frequently receives requests for assistance from a number of Balkan countries, and it also provides assistance through initiatives such as experience sharing and teacher training. Furthermore, compulsory Turkish language courses taught at Maarif Schools and Turkish language courses offered at universities generate great interest and represent an important cultural service on behalf of our country.

Given the large number of young people in the Balkans, vocational high schools are clearly essential. Vocational high schools are in high demand in the region in all fields, including agriculture, sports, technology, and health care. TMV has accelerated its efforts to develop a unique vocational high school model in response to requests by focusing special attention on this issue. In collaboration with the Ministry of National Education of Türkiye, TMV plans to introduce vocational high school programs and vocational training courses for the general public in certain Balkan countries with the right infrastructure to directly meet the region's demand for qualified and trained personnel in the coming years.

Maarif School graduates who have demonstrated outstanding academic performance are offered scholarship opportunities to study in Türkiye, in accordance with Türkiye's internationalization of education perspective. In this sense, TMV serves the purpose of ensuring that every child of school age can access quality education, as outlined in the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals, and is a concrete manifestation of Türkiye's humanitarian, sharing foreign policy approach in the field, which prioritizes solidarity in development. On the one hand, TMV contributes to Türkiye's enterprising and humanitarian foreign policy; on the other, in accordance with UN development goals, it offers the young population of Balkan countries and communities the chance to receive a quality education based on equal opportunity. As a result, it continues to serve the peaceful future of the world by raising "virtuous and good people," which is the common ideal of humanity.



# Maarif Foundation Schools In The Balkans



## Albania

- **University of New York Tirana:**  
📍 Rruga e Kavajës, Pranë 21 Dhjetorit (Sheshi Atatürk) Tiranë, Shqipëri.
- **International Maarif Schools of Albania, Elbasan-Primary School,**
- **International Maarif Schools of Albania, Elbasan-Middle School,**
- **International Maarif Schools of Albania, Elbasan-High School:**  
📍 Rr. Kadri Hoxha, Katund i ri, Elbasan, Shqipëri.
- **International Maarif Schools of Albania Farm Kindergarten:**  
📍 Haxhi Dushku” street, near TEG, Tirane, Albania.
- **New York Schools - Primary School**
- **New York Schools:- Secondary School**
- **New York Schools:- High School:**  
📍 Rruga Nacionale Tiranë- Elbasan, Km.5, ngjitur me hotel Arandi, Farkë e Vogël Tirana Albania.



## Bosnia and Herzegovina

- **Maarif Schools of Sarajevo / Kindergarten:**  
📍 Hasiba Brankovića 2A 71000 Sarajevo.
- **Maarif Schools of Sarajevo / Elementary School**
- **Maarif Schools of Sarajevo / Secondary School:**  
📍 Hasiba Brankovića 2A 71000 Sarajevo.
- **Maarif Schools of Sarajevo / High School,**
- **Maarif Schools of Sarajevo / High School (IBDP),**
- **Maarif Schools of Sarajevo / High School (Cambridge):**  
📍 Hasiba Brankovića 2A 71000 Sarajevo.
- **Maarif Kindergarten Isa-Beg Ishakovic/Primary School,**

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- **Maarif Kindergarten Isa-Beg Ishakovic/Secondary School,**
  - **Maarif Kindergarten Isa-Beg Ishakovic/Secondary School (Cambridge),**
  - **Maarif Kindergarten Isa-Beg Ishakovic/High School,**
  - **Maarif Kindergarten Isa-Beg Ishakovic/High School (Cambridge):**  
📍 Banjalučka bb, Sarajevo 71000.



## Kosovo

- **International Maarif Schools of Kosovo-Pristina / Kindergarten:**  
📍 Ferizaj road, 15 KM Qellopek – Lipjan.
- **International Maarif Schools in Kosovo-Pristina / Primary School:**  
📍 Ferizaj road, 15 KM Qellopek - Lipjan.
- **International Maarif Schools of Kosovo-Pristina / Secondary School:**  
📍 Ferizaj road, 15 KM Qellopek – Lipjan.
- **International Maarif Schools in Kosovo-Pristina / High School:**  
📍 Ferizaj road, 15 KM Qellopek - Lipjan.
- **International Maarif Schools of Maarif-Prizren / Primary School:**  
📍 Turgut Ozal St. Pn. 20000 Perlonka - Prizren.
- **International Maarif Schools of Maarif-Prizren / Secondary School:**  
📍 Turgut Ozal St. Pn. 20000 Perlonka - Prizren.
- **International Maarif Schools of Maarif-Prizren / High School:**  
📍 Turgut Ozal St. Pn. 20000 Perlonka – Prizren.
- **International Maarif Schools of Kosovo-Prizren / Kindergarten:**  
📍 Turgut Ozal St. Pn. 20000 Perlonka – Prizren.



## North Macedonia

- **North Macedonia - Türkiye Maarif Schools:**  
📍 + R2233 1216 Tetova, N.Macedonia.
- **Maarif Kindergarten Skopje:**  
📍 Hristijan Todorovski Karpos 94/A
- **International Maarif Schools-Tetovo/Kindergarten,**
- **International Maarif Schools-Tetovo/Elementary School,**
- **International Maarif Schools-Tetovo/High School:**  
📍 Kiro Gligorov 5, Skopje, Republic of Macedonia.



## Romania

- **Maarif International Schools of Bucharest / Kindergarten/ National Curriculum:**  
📍 Bulevardul Pipera, Nr. 206 Bis, Oraş Voluntari, Jud. Ilfov.
- **Maarif International Schools of Bucharest / Primary School/ National Curriculum:**  
📍 Bulevardul Pipera, Nr. 206 Bis, Oraş Voluntari, Jud. Ilfov.
- **Maarif International Schools of Bucharest / Secondary School/ National Curriculum:**  
📍 Bulevardul Pipera, Nr. 206 Bis, Oraş Voluntari, Jud. Ilfov.
- **Maarif International Schools of Bucharest /High School/ National Curriculum:**  
📍 Bulevardul Pipera, Nr. 206 Bis, Oraş Voluntari, Jud. Ilfov.
- **Maarif International Schools of Bucharest / Kindergarten/ British Curriculum:**  
📍 Bulevardul Pipera, Nr. 206 Bis, Oraş Voluntari, Jud. Ilfov.
- **Maarif International Schools of Bucharest / Primary School/ British Curriculum:**  
📍 Bulevardul Pipera, Nr. 206 Bis, Oraş Voluntari, Jud. Ilfov.
- **Maarif International Schools of Bucharest / Secondary School/ British Curriculum:**  
📍 Bulevardul Pipera, Nr. 206 Bis, Oraş Voluntari, Jud. Ilfov.
- **Maarif International School of Bucharest / High School/ British Curriculum:**  
📍 Bulevardul Pipera, Nr. 206 Bis, Oraş Voluntari, Jud. Ilfov.



## Serbia

- **PU Pametnica Diplomat /Petlic Kindergarten:**  
📍 Dobrivoja Jovanovića III prilaz br.4, Velika Moštanica.
- **PU Pametnica Diplomat Kindergarten:**  
📍 Beogradskog batalijona 123, Banovo Brdo
- **PU Pametnica Diplomat (Zenica)Kindergarten:**  
📍 Petra Drapšina 2a,Banovo Brdo.

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- **PU Pametnica Diplomat/Vila Košutica Kindergarten:**  
📍 Kneza Višeslava 44, Banovo Brdo.
  - **PU Pametnica Diplomat/Lane Kindergarten:**  
📍 Kneza Višeslava 44, Banovo Brdo.
  - **PU Baby Palace Andjela/Bela Kula 2 Kindergarten:**  
📍 Bregalnička 9,Zvezdara.
  - **PU Baby Palace Andjela/Bela Kula 1 Kindergarten:**  
📍 Bregalnička 7,Zvezdara.
  - **PU Baby Palace Andjela /Vila Lux Kindergarten:**  
📍 Siljiva Kranjčevića 9,Zvezdara.
  - **PU Baby Palace Andjela/Sanjalia Kindergarten:**  
📍 Kajmakčalanska 42,Zvezdara.
  - **Mina Karadzic Primary School,**
  - **Mina Karadzic Secondary School:**  
📍 Ljutice Bogdana 46, 11 000 Belgrade, Serbia.
  - **Maarif Vrtić Kindergarten-Novi Pazar:**  
📍 Rifata Burdževia 209, ulaz F,stambeno-poslovni kompleks “Drum Panorama”,  
Novi Pazar.
  - **July 15 Kindergarten-Senice:**  
📍 ul. Milorada Jovanica bb. Sjenica.

# TÜRKİYE'S FRIENDLY HAND TO THE BALKANS





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