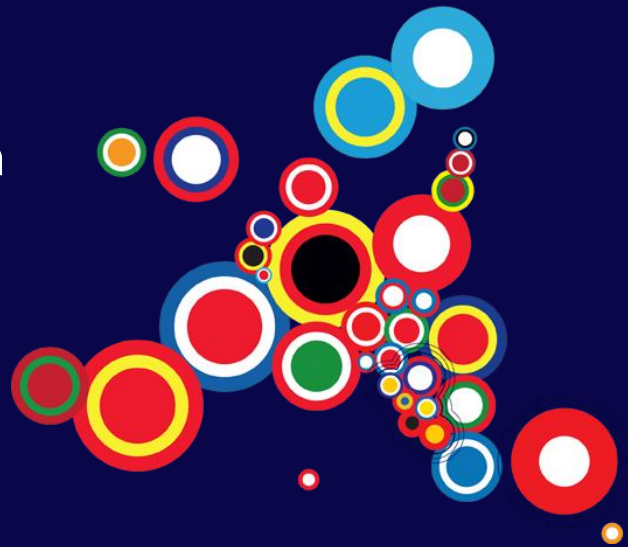




INSTRUMENT FOR PRE-ACCESSION ASSISTANCE (IPA II) 2014-2020

MULTI-COUNTRY

EU support to the Western
Balkans Youth Window
under Erasmus +



Action summary

The European Union shares with the Western Balkans ambitious objectives for smart, inclusive and sustainable growth with a view to delivering high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion. Investing in human and social capital is an essential condition to achieve those growth targets.

The Western Balkans Youth Window reinforces the levels of participation of the Western Balkans in Erasmus+ in a twofold way:

- By increasing the number of Erasmus+ non-formal learning projects involving the participation of organisations and participants – notably young people and youth workers – from the Western Balkans;
- By allowing organisations from Western Balkans to be project coordinators and apply directly for an EU grant under the framework of Erasmus+.

The Programme is implemented by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA).

Action Identification			
Action Programme Title	IPA II Annual Multi-Country Action Programme 2018		
Action Title	EU support to the Western Balkans Youth Window under Erasmus +		
Action ID	IPA 2018/ SI2. 780466.02/MC/Youth		
Sector Information			
IPA II Sector	9. Regional and territorial cooperation		
DAC Sector	11420 – Higher education (Youth)		
Budget			
Total cost	EUR 3.6 million		
EU contribution	EUR 3 million		
Budget line(s)	22.020401 – Multi-country programmes, regional integration and territorial cooperation		
Management and Implementation			
Management mode	Direct management		
<i>Direct management:</i> Implementing Agency	The Programme will be implemented by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA)		
Implementation responsibilities	N/A		
Location			
Zone benefiting from the action	Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, Serbia)		
Specific implementation area(s)	N/A		
Timeline			
Final date for contracting including the conclusion of delegation agreements	At the latest by 31 December 2019		
Final date for operational implementation	At the latest by 31 December 2022		
Policy objectives / Markers (DAC form)			
General policy objective	Not targeted	Significant objective	Main objective
Participation development/good governance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
Aid to environment	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gender equality (including Women In Development)	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trade Development	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence

Reproductive, Maternal, New born and child health	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
RIO Convention markers	Not targeted	Significant objective	Main objective
Biological diversity	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Combat desertification	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Climate change mitigation	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Climate change adaptation	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

1. RATIONALE

The European Union shares with the Western Balkans ambitious objectives for smart, inclusive and sustainable growth with a view to deliver high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion. Investing in human and social capital is an essential condition to achieve those growth targets. Such investments can yield even better returns when they are focused on the young generation, which has to be equipped with the skills it needs to succeed in an increasingly complex and fast-changing social and economic reality and which has to get the opportunity to share a feeling of appropriation and belonging to a common project to which it can contribute.

In this context, Europe and the Western Balkans need to extend and broaden learning opportunities for young people as a whole, including supporting the acquisition of skills through non-formal educational activities. Today, the effectiveness of traditional education is challenged, and learning pathways are no longer the same for everyone. Non-formal learning includes various structured learning situations, which do not have the level of curriculum, syllabus, accreditation and certification associated with 'formal learning', but have more structure than that associated with 'informal learning', which typically takes place spontaneously as part of other activities. Learning can take place everywhere, in schools, but also in associations, on social media or in social life. Many young people are actively engaged and take leadership roles in youth organisations. This helps them acquire transversal skills that allow them to be fit to adapt to the rapidly evolving change in the demands for jobs and skills, even for jobs and skills that do not yet exist.

Moreover, the European Union aims at encouraging people-to-people contacts, in particular among the young generations, as an important dimension of its relations with third countries. People-to-people contacts are important to promote mutual understanding as well as social, cultural and economic development. They are particularly important when promoted at an early stage so as to instil a culture of dialogue and understanding. This has been reaffirmed in various documents and contexts with reference to relations with different partner regions and countries.

The Erasmus+ Programme is one of the key instruments of the European Union for achieving its objectives in terms of young people's personal, socio-educational and professional development. The Erasmus+ programme has a youth dimension, which offers opportunities for young people and youth workers in the area of non-formal learning. Such a youth dimension is also open to young people, youth workers and youth organisations from the Western Balkans, although with resources that are not able to cope with the growing demand of actors from the region.

Therefore, the Western Balkans Youth Window will reinforce the levels of participation of the Western Balkans in Erasmus+ in a twofold way:

- By increasing the number of Erasmus+ non-formal learning projects involving the participation of organisations and participants – notably young people and youth workers - from the Western Balkans;
- By allowing organisations from Western Balkans to be project coordinators and apply directly for an EU grant under the framework of Erasmus+.

Under Erasmus+ Key Action 2, which fosters cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practice and, more specifically, capacity building in the field of youth, the Western Balkan Youth Window will promote the sustained development of youth organisations in the region and the practice of youth work using non-formal learning, as appropriate, by:

Supporting activities encouraging cooperation, networking and exchanges of practices in the field of youth, such as seminars, conferences, workshops, meetings, training courses, study visits and job-shadowing, and notably activities involving young people with fewer opportunities, aimed to develop competences and skills that increase their employability or self-employment prospects, foster their active participation in society and that reinforce their mutual understanding, sense of solidarity and tolerance;

- Supporting Youth Exchanges and the participation of young people in volunteering activities (with a special attention paid to the involvement of young people with fewer opportunities) and the mobility of youth workers between Erasmus+ Programme countries and Western Balkans; Professional development activities for youth workers, that raise the quality, the international dimension and recognition of their work;
- Cooperation activities that foster networking between civil society organisations, public authorities and institutions active in youth to strengthen their capacities, establish or reinforce their cooperation on a trans-national cross-border basis within the region, and with organisations from other Erasmus+ Programme countries.

PROBLEM AND STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

The main challenge of the education and training systems in the Western Balkans and in the EU nowadays is to equip citizens, and in particular young people, with the competences that will prepare them for a demanding and rapidly changing labour market. In this challenging social and economic context, young people are confronted with rising levels of knowledge and multiple skills requirements, a need that cannot be satisfied by the formal education sector alone. "School-based learning and apprenticeship are no longer sufficient to "last" the whole life-course. Human capital is more than ever before about learning to learn, social skills, adaptability, etc.¹. A recent survey of more than 500 business leaders from across Europe found that most (54%) think young people lack 'soft skills' such as confidence, teamwork, self-motivation, networking and presentation skills.

A recent study on the Western Balkans Labour Market Trends in 2017 suggests that overall unemployment is declining but unemployment among women, the low-educated, and youth remain critically high. Although the relationship between overall unemployment and youth unemployment seems to be in line with other countries, there are also other important constraints, like skills mismatches, low levels of entrepreneurship skills and access to productive inputs. Moreover, the share of long-term unemployed in the labour force is the highest among the youth cohort, which indicates that there are significant risks of skills degradation of young people and subsequent labour market challenges later in their careers. Gender differences in youth unemployment are apparent, but differ across countries. Unemployment rates for young women were below the rates for men during most of the 2010-2016 period in Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.²

Furthermore, living in diverse and ageing societies requires more intercultural, inter-community and intergenerational dialogue as well as the development of a culture of solidarity, care and understanding among citizens, especially the youngest generations. Yet, the benefits of intercultural dialogue are challenged by one fourth of the youth population in the EU, as they consider that culture is not enriched by foreigners or immigrants.

Another challenge relates to the development of social capital among youth, the empowerment of young people and their ability to participate actively in society. Young people are much less likely to vote than adults, their voices are much less heard in political debates. Insufficient opportunities for participation, mistrust in the institutions, insufficient youth-targeted information, inadequate tools to reach out to young people are among the causes of such disaffection and the significant decline in participation in society and democratic life. On the other hand, new forms of involvement are emerging through the new media and social networks, which young people have embraced in large numbers.

¹ BEPA – Bureau of European Policy Advisors (2007), Investing in youth: an empowerment strategy

² <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/289221491270732309/pdf/113922-REVISED-PUBLIC-Regional-Report-Western-Balkan-Labor-Market-Trends-2017-FINAL-A4-Logo-WB-neu.pdf>

OUTLINE OF IPA II ASSISTANCE

Formal education systems address above issues to a limited extent, consequently informal learning must be further enhanced. A wide range of skills and attitudes, which are likely to increase young people's achievements in school settings as well as opportunities to find a job, can be developed through out-of-school activities, in non-formal learning settings. Young people who experience a diverse range of educational relationships in different contexts develop a stronger sense of confidence in social interaction, and a better understanding of how relationships work. More flexible learning pathways can facilitate transitions between the phases of work and learning and can better suit the increasingly non-linear transitions that young people experience.

The following groups can be distinguished as the most affected groups:

- **Young people** (and in particular the most disadvantaged ones): Youth is a period of transition, generally agreed as the passage from a dependent childhood to independent, autonomous adulthood. These transitions have lost their linear nature, are less predictable and more diversified, which reflects the diversity of opportunities available to youth today but also introduces new risks and challenges, especially for the most vulnerable.
- **Youth workers**: professionals who work with young people in a wide variety of non-formal and informal contexts (e.g. within youth organisations, municipalities, youth centres, etc.).
- **Non-governmental youth organisations**: these organisations are present at every level of decision making, from the local level to the international level and represent a whole range of youth groups.

RELEVANCE WITH THE IPA II MULTI-COUNTRY STRATEGY PAPER AND OTHER KEY REFERENCES

In accordance to the revised Multi-Country Indicative Strategy Paper (MCSP) 2014-2020³, IPA II will provide financial support for capacity building projects in the field of youth non-formal learning - including a flexible range of activities such as capacity building activities and mobility activities for young people and youth workers - to foster youth cooperation between Erasmus+ Programme Countries and the Western Balkans. The action is also within the SEE 2020 Priorities of Smart Growth and Inclusive Growth.

LESSONS LEARNED AND LINK TO PREVIOUS FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Since 2000, organisations and young people from the Western Balkans have had the possibility to participate as partners in certain activities supported through the Youth programme (2000-2006).

In 2005, the European Commission launched a pilot initiative aimed at reinforcing the level of participation of organisations from the region in the Youth programme. By such means, organisations from the Western Balkans were granted the opportunity to become coordinating organisations for youth projects and to apply directly to the European Commission for a project grant. Despite the limited resources, the results of the pilot phase were successful both in terms of the number of applications received and the quality of the projects submitted. These results showed that there was a demand for greater opportunities to participate in youth projects in the region.

The modalities of participation for Western Balkan organisations introduced in 2005 were confirmed under the Youth in Action programme covering the period 2007-2013. The EU was called upon to increase its actions and instruments supporting non-formal education of young people in the region. In line with this perceived need, the European Commission Communication “The Western Balkans on the road to the EU: consolidating stability and raising prosperity”⁴, reaffirms the commitment made by the EU to reinforce cooperation with the Western Balkans in the area of youth and emphasises that the European Commission

³ C(2018) 3442, 31.05.2018

⁴ COM (2006)27, 27.01.06

will create new opportunities. In this context, the establishment of a Western Balkans Youth Window, funded by IPA within the Youth in Action programme, reflected the commitments made in the European Commission's Communication by allowing for more projects submitted by Western Balkan organisations to be supported.

The Western Balkans Youth Window's over-riding aim is to support young people's transnational non-formal learning and mobility through cooperation projects and activities. The Window also aims at supporting the organisations active in the field of Youth who offer these non-formal learning and mobility activities. They offer a broad scope of activities of a social, cultural, educational or political nature. They provide "out-of-school" education as well as specific leisure time activities managed by professional or voluntary youth workers and youth leaders. These organisations are instrumental to reach young people and in particular young people with fewer opportunities. Actions supported by the Window aim at promoting active citizenship, social inclusion and solidarity amongst young people and the society they live in. The Window fosters key skills and competences of young people, notably contributing to their employability, civic participation and intercultural understanding.

The first Western Balkans Window within the Youth in Action programme was implemented in 2008 with an amount of EUR 1 million. In 2009, 2010 and 2011, the Western Balkan Youth Window dedicated to the Youth in Action programme amounted to EUR 1.5 million per year and was further increased to EUR 3 million in 2012 and EUR 4.5 million in 2013. The amounts allocated to the Western Balkan Youth Window allowed involving between 2008 and 2013 an additional 18,000 young people and youth workers from Western Balkans and the EU into joint activities. Although funds for Western Balkan Youth Window were increased over the years, the demand still exceeds the available budget by far.

After eight years of support for youth activities in the Western Balkans region under the Youth in Action programme (seven years with additional support by the Western Balkan Youth Window), the youth sector continues benefitting from youth non-formal learning opportunities within the framework of the Erasmus+ Programme. The evaluation study "The impact of the cooperation with south-east Europe within the Youth in Action programme" from 2012 depicted programme's significant impact on young people's competences and attitudes, in the area of intercultural learning, self-esteem, communication in foreign languages and ability to plan and organise actions, as well as awareness of learning processes. The results of the study particularly stress the deconstructing of prejudices among young people from the programme countries towards young people from South East Europe and vice versa. Furthermore, Youth workers from reported a stronger impact on acquiring innovative approaches to youth work, awareness of own learning and working with young people with fewer opportunities. Approximately 76 % of respondents believe that the Youth in Action programme has contributed to positive changes in the development of youth work in their countries. More young people now take part in youth organisations and a number of new organisations have been developed under the influence of the programme.⁵

Additionally, the Western Balkans Youth Window, which was re-established in 2015, gives a high priority to increasing financial transparency in the way beneficiaries manage European Union funding, as well as increasing the visible return upon the investment being made.

⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/youth/library/reports/youth-work-nonformal-learning_en.pdf

2. INTERVENTION LOGIC

LOGICAL FRAMEWORK MATRIX

OVERALL OBJECTIVE	OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS (*)	SOURCES OF VERIFICATION	
To increase regional cooperation and reconciliation of young people in the Western Balkans 6	Level of cooperation among the young people in the Western Balkans and the EU	Official statistics of central administrations, surveys of professional evaluation organisations	
SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE	OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS (*)	SOURCES OF VERIFICATION	ASSUMPTIONS
To foster international non-formal learning activities ⁶ that support building mutual understanding and employability of young people (including young people with fewer opportunities) from the Western Balkan 6.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of young people (sex-disaggregated) in the Western Balkan 6 who participate in non-formal learning activities. - Proportion of youth organisations offering youth exchanges and volunteering activities. - Proportion of young people (including young people with fewer opportunities) who have access to youth exchanges and volunteering activities. - Proportion of youth workers from the Western Balkans who have access to mobility activities. - Proportion of youth organisations from the Western Balkans reporting that they have enlarged their international 	<p>Official statistics of central administrations,</p> <p>surveys of professional evaluation organisations</p> <p>Reports from beneficiaries of joint projects.</p>	Involvement of youth organisations, youth workers and young people in joint activities will allow young people to better understand and participate more actively in democratic life and civil society. The special emphasis on young people with fewer opportunities will improve their inclusion into society.

⁶ Such as volunteering, training, common projects, participation in seminars, study visits, job shadowing

	network.		
RESULTS	OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS (*)	SOURCES OF VERIFICATION	ASSUMPTIONS
Result 1: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Degree of cooperation between youth organisations from all Western Balkans with organisations from the Erasmus+ Programme countries as well as the exchange of expertise and know-how between them in the field of youth and non-formal education is strengthened; 	Results 1: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Number of joint projects supported annually under the Western Balkans Youth Window; (ii) Number of meetings, seminars and events between youth organisations from the Western Balkans Partner countries and the Erasmus+ Programme countries 	General statistics on the implementation of the programme by EACEA; official statistics of central administrations; surveys by specialised organisations; use of Youthpass for the personal development of young people and youth workers	See above.
Result 2: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Degree of involvement of young people from Western Balkans in international youth cooperation to acquire socio-economical skills, which could facilitate young people's employability and their integration⁷ in society is increased. 	Result 2: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Number of young people (sex-disaggregated) participating in youth exchanges; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - % of young people with fewer opportunities (girls and boys) out of the total of young people participating in youth exchanges (ii) Number of young people (girls and boys) participating in volunteering activities; 	Reports from beneficiaries of joint projects.	

⁷ Special emphasis will be given to promoting equity and inclusion by facilitating the access to activities for participants with disadvantaged backgrounds and fewer opportunities compared to their peers for reasons such as: disability, educational difficulties (e.g. early school leavers, young people with low school performance), economic obstacles, cultural differences (e.g. immigrant or refugees), health problems, social problems (e.g. people facing discrimination because of gender, age, ethnicity, religion or sexual orientation, geographical obstacles (e.g. people from remote or rural areas)

	<p>- % of young people with fewer opportunities (girls and boys)) out of the total of young people participating in volunteering activities</p> <p>(iii) Degree of employability and level of skills and competences as assessed by young people before and after having participated in a joint activity.</p>		
<p>Result 3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Degree of involvement of Western Balkans youth workers in joint projects with youth organisations from Erasmus+ program countries is increased 	<p>Result 3:</p> <p>(i) Number of youth workers (sex-disaggregated) from Western Balkans participating in joint projects with organisations from Erasmus+ programme countries.</p> <p>(ii) Level of skills and competences as assessed by youth workers before and after having participated in joint projects.</p>	<p>Reports from beneficiaries of joint projects.</p> <p>Reports from beneficiaries of joint projects.</p>	
<p>Result 4:</p> <p>The operational capacity of organisations established in the Western Balkans, notably youth organisations, NGOs and "National Youth Councils" with regard to the management of international cooperation projects supported by European Union funds is improved.</p>	<p>Results 4:</p> <p>Number of joint projects managed by youth organisations from Western Balkans.</p>	<p>Reports from beneficiaries of joint projects.</p>	

(*) All indicators should be formulated as measurement, without specifying targets in the Logical Framework Matrix. The targets should be included in the performance measurement table in section 4. More detailed guidance on indicators is provided in Section 4 on performance measurement.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES

Main activities

In order to reach the Western Balkans Youth Window's objectives, organisational development and capacity building projects in the field of youth will be implemented with the aim to strengthen youth cooperation between Erasmus+ Programme countries and Western Balkans, as well as cross-border cooperation within the Western Balkan region. Activities to be supported will include encouraging cooperation, networking and exchanges of practices in the field of youth, seminars, conferences, workshops, meetings, training courses, study visits and job-shadowing and, for example,

- Promoting strategic cooperation between youth organisations and public authorities;
- Fostering cooperation between youth organisations and organisations in the education and training fields as well as with representatives of the business and the labour market;
- Strengthening the capacities of youth councils, youth platforms and local, regional and central authorities dealing with youth;
- Supporting Youth Exchanges and the participation of young people in volunteering activities (with a special attention paid to the involvement of young people with fewer opportunities) and the mobility of youth workers;
- Enhancing the management, governance, and internationalisation of youth organisations in the Western Balkans.

Project promoters will be expected to plan, organise and evaluate the results of a linked set of these activities. Emphasis will be placed upon the development of the capacities of young people, youth workers and youth organisations.

Expected results

- Strengthening of cooperation between youth organisations from all Western Balkans with organisations from the Erasmus+ Programme countries as well as the exchange of expertise and know-how between them in the field of youth and non-formal education;
- Improved involvement of young people from Western Balkans in international youth cooperation to acquire socio-economical skills that could facilitate young people's employability and their integration in society;
- Increased involvement of Western Balkans youth workers in joint projects with youth organisations from Erasmus+ program countries;
- Improvement of the operational capacity of organisations established in the Western Balkans, notably youth organisations, NGOs and "National Youth Councils", in particular with regard to the management of international cooperation projects supported by European Union funds.

Special emphasis will be given to promoting equity and inclusion by facilitating the access to activities for participants with disadvantaged backgrounds and fewer opportunities compared to their peers for reasons such as: disability, educational difficulties (e.g. early school leavers, young people with low school performance), economic obstacles, cultural differences (e.g. immigrant or refugees), health problems, social problems (e.g. people facing discrimination because of gender, age, ethnicity, religion or sexual orientation, geographical obstacles (e.g. people from remote or rural areas)

RISKS

Risk 1. Uneven delivery of the grant scheme across the region and within the Western Balkans: Variation in the capacity and commitment of civil society organisations across the region may lead to an uneven pattern of grant awards (for example, between the Western Balkans or between urban and rural areas). Grant scheme management should take measures to ensure equity of access for interested stakeholders, particularly focusing on young people with fewer opportunities and participants who traditionally have been

underrepresented in such schemes, and provide opportunities ensuring that NGOs' needs for capacity building are effectively addressed.

Risk 2. Difficulties encountered in reaching key target groups: The majority of young people in Western Balkans do not participate in organised activities. Furthermore, in the case of certain disadvantaged groups, a considerable degree of isolation from mainstream social engagement can be seen, and this affects the information flow to these young people, and their ability to make their voices heard. There is, accordingly, a risk that the programme will not be able to involve these key beneficiaries into its activities. This will be mitigated through the focus of the grants scheme on engaging with disadvantaged youth and through the support to be provided by the SALTO South-East Europe Resource Centre in reaching out to this category of young people.

CONDITIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

EACEA is already responsible for the management of parts of the EU's funding programmes in the fields of education, culture, audiovisual, sport, citizenship and volunteering. This is the third year of implementation of the Programme and consequently EACEA has built up relevant institutional framework, structures and knowledge in order to successfully implement this Programme.

3. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Western Balkans Window will be implemented by the EACEA under the supervision of the European Commission (the Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture and Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations). Regular meetings between the Agency and the European Commission will allow the fixing of the conditions of the implementation (Guidelines for Applicants and Administrative and Financial Handbook) after consultation of the Member States in the relevant support groups. Likewise regular information on the implementation progress and results will be provided by the Agency to the European Commission and the relevant Committees.

Furthermore, the Erasmus+ Sport, Youth and EU Aid Volunteers Unit of the EACEA:

- Provides support to the target public of the Programme, the beneficiary organisations and the participants engaged in project activities;
- Gives support concerning the diffusion of good practice.

The SALTO⁸ South East Europe (SEE) Resource Centre, supported by the Erasmus+ Programme, will promote information about the Window and the involvement of young people, youth workers, youth organisations and other youth stakeholders in joint activities of participants from Erasmus+ Programme countries and Western Balkans. In this context, SALTO SEE offers training and project partner finding activities for youth leaders and youth workers and contributes to the training of volunteers in South East Europe and the production and dissemination of resource material. SALTO SEE is based in the Erasmus+ National Agency of Slovenia. SALTO SEE's activities are complemented by Contact Points in the Western Balkans which ensure proximity of support for those interested in organising or carrying out youth projects under Erasmus+.

⁸ SALTO stands for "Support, Advanced Learning and Training Opportunities".

IMPLEMENTATION METHOD(S) AND TYPE(S) OF FINANCING

The action is co-delegated to EACEA. It will be implemented in direct management by EACEA on the basis of the Erasmus+ Call for proposals.

Projects funded will correspond to Erasmus+, Key Action 2 projects, which foster the cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices and contribute to capacity building in the field of youth.

The activities supported under Key Action 2 of Erasmus+ are to be managed at centralised level. Grant proposals are submitted to, selected and managed by EACEA established in Brussels.

Organisations from the Western Balkans can submit applications under Key Action 2, in accordance with the deadlines for submission of applications set out in the Erasmus+ Programme Guide.

The financial planning prepared by the Executive Agency allows involving annually about 3,000 – 5,000 young people and youth workers from Western Balkans and the EU into joint activities. The selection processes are organised in such a way that the notification of results intervenes normally 1 month before the beginning of the eligibility period. The payment of the pre-financing of the projects is initiated after signature of the grant agreement by both contractual parties (i.e. beneficiary organisation and the EACEA).

4. PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

METHODOLOGY FOR MONITORING (AND EVALUATION)

The European Commission may carry out a mid-term, a final or an ex-post evaluation for this action or its components via independent consultants, through a joint mission or via an implementing partner. In case a mid-term or final evaluation is not foreseen, the European Commission may, during implementation, decide to undertake such an evaluation for duly justified reasons either on its own decision or on the initiative of the partner. The evaluations will be carried out as prescribed by the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations Guidelines on linking planning/programming, monitoring and evaluation. In addition, the action might be subject to external monitoring in line with the European Commission rules and procedures.

Implementation of the Western Balkans Youth Window will be monitored on a permanent basis by the EACEA through analysis of progress reports, financial statements and final reports prepared by the beneficiaries as well as through monitoring visits.

In addition, the outcomes of the Western Balkans Youth Window will be monitored in the context of Erasmus+ surveys launched periodically and targeting samples of beneficiaries and participants. In 2010 and 2011, the European Commission launched two surveys - reaching out a sample of more than 4,500 participants - on the qualitative impact of the past programme in the youth field. The results of these surveys confirm the contribution of these activities to fostering active citizenship, promoting the acquisition of skills leading to personal, social and professional development of young people as well as supporting capacity-building and competence development of youth workers and youth organisations. The detailed results can be found online:

2011 survey:

http://ec.europa.eu/youth/focus/doc/monitoring_survey/main_results_monitoring_survey_2011.pdf
(main results)

http://ec.europa.eu/youth/focus/doc/monitoring_survey/report_monitoring_survey_2011.pdf
(full report)

2010 survey:

http://ec.europa.eu/youth/focus/doc/monitoring_survey/main_results_monitoring_survey.pdf

(main results)

The data will be monitored on an annual basis and checked against the targets set. Baseline figures refer to 2008 being the first year of the first Western Balkans Window. Target figures refer to projects selected in the target year.

INDICATOR MEASUREMENT

Indicator	Baseline (2008)	Target 2020	Final Target (2022)	Source of information
Number of organisations (youth and other) from the Western Balkans participating in joint activities under this Window with organisations from Erasmus+ Programme countries.	127 organisations	300 organisations over the period of 2 years		Official statistics of central governments, surveys of professional evaluation organisations and reports from beneficiaries of joint projects.
Number of young people reached	2400 individuals	4000 individuals over the period of 2 years		Official statistics of central governments, surveys of professional evaluation organisations and reports from beneficiaries of joint projects.
Number of joint projects managed by youth organisations from Western Balkans				
Number of youth workers from Western Balkans participating in joint projects with organisations from Erasmus+ programme countries.				
Number of meetings, seminars and events between youth organisations from the Western Balkans and the Erasmus+ Programme countries				

5. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND GENDER MAINSTREAMING

An important priority of the youth actions supported under Erasmus+ is to give all young people equal opportunities to access the activities supported through the programme. These actions are open to all young people, not having regard of their educational background or their status.. In a scenario of gender equality, girls and boys are expected to participate proportionally to their share of the population. In many areas, however, girls participate less than what would be expected. Girls are at a particular disadvantage or at risk of discrimination in the labour market (employability, transition from education to work, unemployment, low pay and precarious employment as young mothers and lack adequate work-life balance measures), and often choose fields of studies that may translate into lower employment rates. Measures to redress inequalities among girls and boys will be implemented in the selection of participants.

MINORITIES AND VULNERABLE GROUPS

Young people have been hit particularly hard by the economic crisis of 2008 and its aftermath. Today, an increasing number of young people are long term unemployed, face discrimination and situations of social exclusion and poverty, or are at risk of socio-economic marginalisation. The Erasmus+ Programme is taking active measures to counter this by helping some of the most vulnerable people in society: those young people who have fewer opportunities compared to their peers⁹.

The obstacles or difficulties these persons may face are:

- Disability (i.e. participants with special needs): people with mental (intellectual, cognitive, learning), physical, sensory or other disabilities;
- Educational difficulties: young people with learning difficulties; early school-leavers; lower qualified persons; young people with poor school performance;
- Economic obstacles: people with a low standard of living, low income, dependence on social welfare system; young people in long-term unemployment or poverty; people who are homeless, people in debt or with financial problems;
- Cultural differences: immigrants or refugees or descendants from immigrant or refugee families; people belonging to a national or ethnic minority; people with linguistic adaptation and cultural inclusion difficulties;
- Health problems: people with chronic health problems, severe illnesses or psychiatric conditions;
- Social obstacles: people facing discrimination because of gender, age, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, disability, etc.; people with limited social skills or anti-social or risky behaviours; people in a precarious situation; (ex-)offenders, (ex-)drug or alcohol abusers; young and/or single parents; orphans;

⁹ The work on social inclusion in the context of youth is supported by [Erasmus+ Inclusion and Diversity Strategy](#)

- Geographical obstacles: people from remote or rural areas; people living in small islands or peripheral regions; people from urban problem zones; people from less serviced areas (limited public transport, poor facilities).

The projects supported under the Erasmus+ Western Balkans Youth Window will offer young people with fewer opportunities the possibility to take part in transnational activities. The involvement of young people with fewer opportunities will be taken into account in the award criteria of the respective Calls for projects. Specific training related to the involvement of young people with fewer opportunities will be provided. Funding provisions will allow covering additional costs related to young people with fewer opportunities and also, more specifically, to participants with disabilities.

ENGAGEMENT WITH CIVIL SOCIETY (AND IF RELEVANT OTHER NON-STATE STAKEHOLDERS)

Non-profit or non-governmental organisations make up by far the largest group of eligible applicants. These may be organisations of young people, organisations concerned with policies and initiatives relevant to young people, or a combination of the two.

As projects are based upon partnerships this means that non-profit or non-governmental organisations from different eligible Beneficiaries are engaged in joint discussions and activities. Projects should stimulate young people and their organisations, including organisations which act as advocates for young people, to reflect on the essential characteristics of European society and, above all, encourage them to play an active role in their communities. To feel European, young people must become aware of the fact that they play a role in the construction of the current and future Europe. Therefore, a project with a European dimension should not only 'discover' Europe, but also - and most importantly - aim to build it through increased civil society action.

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE (AND IF RELEVANT DISASTER RESILIENCE)

Issues on Environment and Climate Change are by the nature of this activity not directly applicable. However, since the activity is covering youth and several sectors it could be considered secured that environment and climate change will be duly addressed.

Climate action relevant budget allocation: EUR 0 million
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6. SUSTAINABILITY

The interest from youth organisations of the Western Balkans in applying for youth projects reflects their needs to enhance their capacity through participation in cooperation projects and activities with other European and Western Balkans. In addition, the skills and knowledge acquired and developed by young people through their participation in cooperation projects and activities will have a positive impact on their personal and social development also in the mid- and long-term.

7. COMMUNICATION AND VISIBILITY

Communication and visibility will be given high importance during the implementation of the action. The implementation of the communication activities shall be funded from the amounts allocated to the action.

All necessary measures will be taken to publicise the fact that the Action has received funding from the EU in line with the EU communication and visibility requirements in force. All stakeholders and implementing partners shall ensure the visibility of EU Financial assistance provided through IPA II throughout all phases of the programme cycle

Visibility and communication actions shall demonstrate how the intervention contributes to the agreed programme objectives and the accession process, as well as the benefits of the action for the general

public. Actions shall be aimed at strengthening general public awareness and support of interventions financed and the objectives pursued. The actions shall aim at highlighting to the relevant target audiences the added value and impact of the EU's interventions and will promote transparency and accountability on the use of funds. Visibility and communication aspects shall be complementary to the activities implemented by the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations and the EU Delegations in the field.

All projects funded under the Erasmus+ Programme must develop measures aimed at ensuring the visibility of their project and of the Programme. Visibility consists in spreading information about the project, its objectives and attained results, as well as in promoting the contribution of the EU Erasmus+ Programme to the realisation of the project.

Visibility and communication actions shall demonstrate how the intervention contributes to the agreed programme objectives and the accession process.

The European Commission and the EU Delegations shall be fully informed of the planning and implementation of the specific visibility and communication activities. Such measures can be for example: developing information or promotional material; issuing 'press releases' or writing articles for newspapers, magazines, websites or newsletters; creating an e-group, a web space, a photo-gallery or blog on the Internet, etc.

Beneficiaries must clearly acknowledge the European Union's support in all communications or publications, in whatever form or whatever medium, including the Internet, or on the occasion of activities for which the grant is used.