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**COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING DECISION**

**of 28.2.2024**

**on the financing of the multi-country annual action plan in favour of the Western  
Balkans and Türkiye for 2024**

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## on the financing of the multi-country annual action plan in favour of the Western Balkans and Türkiye for 2024

THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION,

Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,

Having regard to Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 July 2018 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union, amending Regulations (EU) No 1296/2013, (EU) No 1301/2013, (EU) No 1303/2013, (EU) No 1304/2013, (EU) No 1309/2013, (EU) No 1316/2013, (EU) No 223/2014, (EU) No 283/2014, and Decision No 541/2014/EU and repealing Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012<sup>1</sup>, and in particular Article 110 thereof,

Having regard to Regulation (EU) 2021/1529 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 September 2021 establishing the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA III)<sup>2</sup>, and in particular Article 9(1) and Article 5(8) thereof,

Whereas:

- (1) In order to ensure the implementation of the multi-country annual action plan in favour of the Western Balkans and Türkiye for 2024, it is necessary to adopt an annual financing Decision, which constitutes the annual work programme, for 2024.
- (2) The envisaged assistance should comply with the conditions and procedures set out by the restrictive measures adopted pursuant to Article 215 TFEU<sup>3</sup>.
- (3) Some of the actions provided for in this Decision should contribute to climate mainstreaming in line with Commission Communication ‘The European Green Deal’<sup>4</sup> and in the Interinstitutional Agreement of 16 December 2020 between the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union and the European Commission on budgetary discipline, on cooperation in budgetary matters and on sound financial management, as well as on new own resources, including a roadmap towards the introduction of new own resources<sup>5</sup>.
- (4) The Commission has adopted a Pre-Accession Assistance (‘IPA III’) Programming Framework<sup>6</sup> for the period 2021 – 2027, which identifies five thematic windows for the delivery of the specific objectives and thematic priorities of Regulation (EU) 2021/1529.

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<sup>1</sup> OJ L 193, 30.7.2018, p.1.

<sup>2</sup> OJ L 330, 20.9.2021, p.1.

<sup>3</sup> [www.sanctionsmap.eu](http://www.sanctionsmap.eu) Please note that the sanctions map is an IT tool for identifying the sanctions regimes. The source of the sanctions stems from legal acts published in the Official Journal (OJ). In case of discrepancy between the published legal acts and the updates on the website it is the OJ version that prevails.

<sup>4</sup> COM(2019)640 final of 11 December 2019.

<sup>5</sup> OJ L 433I, 22.12.2020, p. 28.

<sup>6</sup> Commission Implementing Decision C(2021)8914 of 10 December 2021 on the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA III) Programming Framework for the period 2021-2027.

- (5) The objective pursued by the annual action plan is to provide assistance for actions addressing issues of regional nature, or when a regional approach will allow for greater efficiency in four of the five thematic windows in line with the IPA III Programming Framework: (1) Rule of law, fundamental rights and democracy; (2) Good governance, EU *acquis* alignment, good neighbourly relations and strategic communication; (3) Green agenda and sustainable connectivity; and (4) Competitiveness and inclusive growth.
- (6) The objective of the action 1 entitled, '*EU4 Rule of Law, Security and Reconciliation*' is to strengthen the rule of law and security in the Western Balkans through enhancing the fight against organised crime, corruption and terrorism and to foster cohesion and resilience by continued support to addressing the legacy of the past and bringing justice to victims of the wars of the 1990s.
- (7) The objective of the action 2 entitled, '*EU4 Social inclusion*' is to strengthen the social inclusion of women and Roma communities in the Western Balkans and Türkiye.
- (8) The objective of the action 3 entitled, '*EU4 Good Governance: Support for Improvement in Governance and Management (SIGMA) in the Western Balkans and Türkiye*' is to improve policy outcomes and public services to citizens and businesses of IPA beneficiaries.
- (9) The objective of the action 4 entitled, '*EU Integration Facility and Technical Assistance and Information Exchange (TAIEX) in the Western Balkans and Türkiye*' is to facilitate progress in key areas of needed reforms required by the Western Balkans and Türkiye to comply with Union values, and their alignment with the Union's rules, standards and practices in the relevant areas.
- (10) The objective of the action 5 entitled, '*Support for the participation of the Western Balkans in Union programmes – entry tickets 2023*' is to improve the knowledge of EU values and policies in different fields among relevant IPA beneficiaries, fostering alignment with EU *acquis* and the convergence to EU standards.
- (11) The objective of the action 6 entitled, '*EU support to facilitate just transition for Western Balkans regions, industries and workers*' is to support the Western Balkans in managing the transition to a sustainable and climate-neutral economy, with a focus on just and fair transition away from coal and carbon-intensive industries.
- (12) The objective of the action 7 entitled, '*EU4Digital - An accelerated digital transition for the Western Balkans – Phase 1*' is to enhance the regional digital connectivity and digital transition of the region, and to accelerate integration of the Western Balkans into the EU Digital Single Market.
- (13) The objective of the action 8 entitled, '*EU4Youth: Supporting Regional Youth Cooperation*' is to foster regional cooperation, trust, and reconciliation among young women and men in the Western Balkans and with the EU.
- (14) The objective of the action 9 entitled, '*EU4 Employment*' is to promote fair and well-functioning labour markets in the Western Balkans in line with the European Pillar of Social Rights.
- (15) The objective of the action 10 entitled, '*Support to the implementation of the Common Regional Market*' is to improve Western Balkans competitiveness and business environment while enhancing the alignment of the region with the EU legal framework.

- (16) In accordance with Article 5(8) of Regulation (EU) 2021/1529, the action set out in Annex 10 is of a global, regional or cross-border nature, fostering regional cooperation with Moldova. Due to the action's nature and the importance to ensure complete regional coverage, the eligibility of the action extends exceptionally to Moldova, as their participation constitutes an important element to ensure the coherence and effectiveness of Union financing or to foster regional cooperation.
- (17) It is appropriate to authorise the award of grants without a call for proposals and to provide for the conditions for awarding those grants.
- (18) Pursuant to Article 62(1), point (c) of the Financial Regulation, indirect management may be used for the implementation of the action plan.
- (19) The Commission is to ensure a level of protection of the financial interests of the Union with regards to entities and persons entrusted with the implementation of Union funds by indirect management as provided for in Article 154(3) of the Financial Regulation.
- (20) To that end, such entities and persons are to be subject to an assessment of their systems and procedures in accordance with Article 154(4)<sup>7</sup> of the Financial Regulation and, if necessary, to appropriate supervisory measures in accordance with Article 154(5) of the Financial Regulation before a contribution agreement can be signed.
- (21) It is necessary to allow for the payment of interest due for late payment on the basis of Article 116(5) of the Financial Regulation.
- (22) In order to allow for flexibility in the implementation of the action plan, it is appropriate to determine the changes which should not be considered substantial for the purposes of Article 110(5) of the Financial Regulation.
- (23) The action plan provided for in this Decision is in accordance with the opinion of the IPA III Committee<sup>8</sup>,

HAS DECIDED AS FOLLOWS:

*Article 1*  
*The action plan*

The annual financing Decision, constituting the annual work programme for the implementation of the multi-country annual action plan in favour of the Western Balkans and Türkiye for 2024, as set out in the Annexes, is adopted.

The action plan shall include the following actions:

- (a) EU4 Rule of Law, Security and Reconciliation, set out in Annex 1;
- (b) EU4 Social inclusion, set out in Annex 2;
- (c) EU4 Good Governance: Support for Improvement in Governance and Management (SIGMA) in the Western Balkans and Türkiye, set out in Annex 3;

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<sup>7</sup> Except for the cases referred to in Article 154(6) of the Financial Regulation, where the Commission may decide, not to require an ex-ante assessment.

<sup>8</sup> The Member States have declared, recalling the Council Conclusions of 18 February 2008, that the adoption of this action plan does not prejudice the position of each individual Member State on the status of Kosovo\*, which will be decided in accordance with their national practice and international law.

\* 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.

- (d) EU Integration Facility and Technical Assistance and Information Exchange (TAIEX) in the Western Balkans and Türkiye, set out in Annex 4;
- (e) Support for the participation of the Western Balkans in Union programmes – entry tickets 2023, set out in Annex 5;
- (f) EU support to facilitate just transition for Western Balkans regions, industries and workers, set out in Annex 6;
- (g) EU4Digital - An accelerated digital transition for the Western Balkans – Phase 1, set out in Annex 7;
- (h) EU4Youth: Supporting Regional Youth Cooperation, set out in Annex 8;
- (i) EU4 Employment, set out in Annex 9;
- (j) Support to the implementation of the Common Regional Market, set out in Annex 10.

*Article 2*  
*Union contribution*

The maximum Union contribution for the implementation of the action plan for 2024 is set at EUR 128 226 000 and shall be financed from the appropriations entered in the following lines of the general budget of the Union:

- (a) budget line 15 02 01 01.01: EUR 84 921 000;
- (b) budget line 15 02 02 01: EUR 43 305 000.

The appropriations provided for in the first paragraph may also cover interest due for late payment.

*Article 3*  
*Methods of implementation and entrusted entities or persons*

The implementation of the actions carried out by way of indirect management, as set out in the Annexes, may be entrusted to the entities or persons referred to or selected in accordance with the criteria laid down in point 4.3.1. of the Annexes 3, 6; in point 4.3.2 of the Annexes 1, 2, 7, 8, 9, 10, and in point 4.3.3 of the Annex 4.

*Article 4*  
*Flexibility clause*

Increases<sup>9</sup> or decreases of up to EUR 10 million and not exceeding 20% of the contribution set in Article 2, first paragraph, or cumulated changes to the allocations of specific actions not exceeding 20% of that contribution, as well as extensions of the implementation and execution period shall not be considered substantial for the purposes of Article 110(5) of the Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046, provided that these changes do not significantly affect the nature and objectives of the actions.

The authorising officer responsible may apply the changes referred to in the first paragraph. Those changes shall be applied in accordance with the principles of sound financial management and proportionality.

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<sup>9</sup>These changes can come from external assigned revenue made available after the adoption of the financing Decision.

*Article 5*  
*Grants*

Grants may be awarded without a call for proposals in accordance with the conditions set out in the Annexes. Grants may be awarded to the bodies referred to in the Annexes selected in accordance with point 4.3.1 of the Annexes 1, 2, 5, 7, 8, 9 and 10.

Done at Brussels, 28.2.2024

*For the Commission*  
*Olivér VÁRHELYI*  
*Member of the Commission*