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ANNEX 4

to the Commission Implementing Decision on the financing of the multi-country annual action plan in favour of the Western Balkans and Türkiye for 2024

Action Document for “EU Integration Facility and Technical Assistance and Information Exchange (TAIEX) in the Western Balkans and Türkiye - 2024”

ANNUAL ACTION PLAN

This document constitutes the annual work programme in the sense of Article 110(2) of the Financial Regulation, and annual and multiannual action plans and measures in the sense of Article 9 of IPA III Regulation and Article 23(2) of NDICI - Global Europe Regulation.

1. SYNOPSIS

1.1. Action Summary Table

Title	EU Integration Facility and Technical Assistance and Information Exchange (TAIEX) in the Western Balkans and Türkiye – 2024 Multi-country annual action plan in favour of the Western Balkans and Türkiye for 2024
OPSYS	ACT-61924; IPA III/2024/NEAR>REGIO.04
ABAC	ABAC Commitment level 1 number: JAD.1161483
Basic Act	Financed under the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA III)
Economic and Investment Plan (EIP)	Yes
EIP Flagship	No
Team Europe	No
Beneficiar(y)/(ies) of the action	The action shall be carried out in the Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia) and Türkiye
Programming document	IPA III Programming Framework

* 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.

PRIORITY AREAS AND SECTOR INFORMATION				
Window and thematic priority	<p>Window 2: Good governance, <i>acquis</i> alignment, good neighbourly relations and strategic communication.</p> <p>Thematic Priority 2: Administrative capacity and <i>acquis</i> alignment (64 %)</p> <p>Thematic Priority 3: Good neighbourly relations and reconciliation (27.4 %)</p> <p>Window 3: Green agenda and sustainable connectivity</p> <p>Thematic Priority 1: Environment and climate change (2.5 %)</p> <p>Window 4: Competitiveness and inclusive growth</p> <p>Thematic Priority 2: Private sector development, trade, research and innovation (6.1 %)</p>			
Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	<p>Main SDG 17: Partnership for the Goals</p> <p>All 17 SDGs - cross-cutting</p>			
DAC code(s)	43010 – Multisector aid – 100%			
Main Delivery Channel	Private sector institution - 60000			
Targets	<input type="checkbox"/> Climate <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gender <input type="checkbox"/> Biodiversity			
Markers (from DAC form)	General policy objective	Not targeted	Significant objective	Principal objective
	Participation development/good governance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Aid to environment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Gender equality and women's and girl's empowerment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Reproductive, maternal, new-born and child health	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Disaster Risk Reduction	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Inclusion of persons with Disabilities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Nutrition	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	RIO Convention markers	Not targeted	Significant objective	Principal objective
	Biological diversity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Combat desertification	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Climate change mitigation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Climate change adaptation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Internal markers and Tags	Policy objectives	Not targeted	Significant objective

EIP	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
EIP Flagship	YES <input type="checkbox"/>		NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Tags:	YES		NO
Transport	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Energy	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Environment and climate resilience	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Digital	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Economic development (incl. private sector, trade and macroeconomic support)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Human Development (incl. human capital and youth)	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Health resilience	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Migration and mobility	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Agriculture, food security and rural development	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Rule of law, governance and Public Administration reform	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Digitalisation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tags	YES		NO
digital connectivity	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
digital governance	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
digital entrepreneurship	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
digital skills/literacy	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
digital services	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Connectivity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tags	YES		NO
digital connectivity	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
energy	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
transport	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
health	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
education and research	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Migration	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduction of Inequalities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
COVID-19	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

BUDGET INFORMATION	
Amounts concerned	<p>TOTAL amount of EU budget contribution EUR 9 850 000</p> <p>Budget line: 15 02 01 01.01 Total estimated cost: EUR 9 000 000 Total amount of EU budget contribution EUR 9 000 000</p> <p>Budget line: 15 02 02 01 Total estimated cost: EUR 850 000 Total amount of EU budget contribution EUR 850 000 of which EUR 250 000 will be co-delegated to the Directorate-General of Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO)</p>
MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION	
Implementation modalities (management mode and delivery methods)	<p>Direct management through: Procurement, Prizes Part of the action (prizes) will be co-delegated to DG REGIO</p> <p>Indirect management with the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT)</p>
Final date for concluding contribution / delegation agreements, procurement and grant contracts	At the latest by 31 December 2025
Indicative operational implementation period	72 months following the adoption of the Financing Decision

1.2. Summary of the Action

The action aims to facilitate progress in key areas of needed reforms required by the Western Balkans and Türkiye to comply with Union's values, and their alignment with the Union's rules, standards and practices in the relevant areas. The action includes two main areas of support:

1) EU Integration Facility:

The specific objective is to support flexible, preparatory/pilot actions that address specific priority and urgent/unforeseen needs in the region, including interventions in the context of the COVID-19 recovery or crisis situations that merit to be addressed rapidly in order to assure continuity in the European perspective and herewith related issues.

It will support small interventions such as provision of technical assistance, preparatory, pilot or start up/bridging or follow up actions that could facilitate the participation of the relevant IPA beneficiaries in relevant EU networks, regional initiatives, or similar. It may also cover relevant studies, networking, visibility, evaluation activities, as well as training or capacity-building activities. Contribution to initiatives such as the New European Bauhaus or the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) Jumpstarter Initiative¹ facilitate the participation of the relevant IPA beneficiaries in relevant EU networks.

¹ <https://eitjumpstarter.eu/>

2) TAIEX:

Technical Assistance and Information Exchange instrument (TAIEX) supports the IPA III beneficiaries by providing peer-to-peer capacity building with regard to the alignment, application and enforcement of EU legislation and sustainable policy reform as well as advice on EU best practices in EU policy related fields. As a result, the instrument contributes to strengthening inclusive societies and good governance in IPA III beneficiaries and supports the uptake and implementation of the EU *acquis*.

The action is relevant to SDG 17 as it is contributing to strengthening the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development. However, the action will also contribute to other SDGs in a cross-cutting manner, depending on the concrete activities/sector supported under both facilities to be determined at a later stage.

1.3. Beneficiar(y)/(ies) of the Action

The action shall be carried out in the Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia) and Türkiye.

2. RATIONALE

2.1. Context

In accordance to the IPA III Programming Framework, the specific objective in the area of *administrative capacity and acquis alignment* is to bring beneficiaries' policies and legislation in line with EU policies and the EU *acquis*, and to build administrative capacity to fully and effectively implement sector policies and the adopted legislation, building the ability of beneficiaries to take on the obligations of membership. This objective constitutes a crosscutting priority and complements administrative capacity building under other windows in line with the sector approach.

Effective administrative and institutional capacity does not only require legal expertise for EU *acquis* alignment, setting up specific sector institutions required by the EU *acquis*, and ensuring staff to implement new policies and legislation. It also requires that sector institutions operate under the same standards, rules and procedures that the governments have either already adopted or are committed to adopt under ongoing public administration reform efforts.

To address these various aspects of administrative capacity at sector level, an EU Integration Facility can be helpful especially if such activities cannot be integrated in broader sector reform interventions. The facility could also be strategically used to address the broader mechanisms that foster institutional learning and capacity building.

Regional cooperation, good neighbourly relations and reconciliation are essential parts of the Stabilisation and Association Process and key for progress on the respective European paths.

TAIEX provides short and medium-term technical assistance and peer-to-peer capacity building concerning the alignment, application and enforcement of EU legislation as well as advice about EU best practices. The instrument provides demand-driven activities and strategically oriented initiatives and facilitates the delivery of appropriate tailor-made public sector expertise to address issues at short notice and meet the EU objectives. TAIEX activities are complementary with other implementation tools to support impact, such as Twinning, budget support, procurement for infrastructure, grants or guarantees. TAIEX is flexible and builds on complementary peer learning methods involving, in specific circumstances and when most suitable, experts from Beneficiaries to encourage triangulation and fostering a multi-stakeholder approach.

2.2. Problem Analysis

AREA OF SUPPORT #1: EU Integration Facility

Short problem analysis

The EU process is built on strict but fair conditionality with progress towards membership dependent on the steps taken to meet the established criteria. Each partner is assessed on the basis of its own merits so as to provide incentives to pursue far-reaching reforms.

Addressing reforms in the area of rule of law, fundamental rights and democracy are among the very first priorities of this process. The IPA III beneficiaries still face a number of common challenges in these areas.

There is also the need for the IPA III beneficiaries to strengthen their economic governance and improving competitiveness in order to meet economic criteria. Structural reforms need to be prioritised and competitiveness enhanced, in order to support fiscal consolidation, to tackle high external imbalances as well as high unemployment. Both using the benefits of modern technology for efficiency and supporting the digital economy to enhance overall competitiveness.

Regional cooperation remains essential for ensuring lasting stability in the region and thus for the enlargement process. It is a key enabling factor for comprehensive reforms and the return to sustainable economic growth. All IPA III beneficiaries, in their European perspective need to align their legislation to the *acquis* and to gradually adapt to the Union standards and practices. This task is facilitated with the support of regional organisations or bodies set up by the IPA III beneficiaries in many sectors. In addition, the IPA III beneficiaries face a number of common problems, which they could more efficiently address through peer review and sharing of good practices at regional level.

This is all the more valid in the field of environment and climate change for which EU *acquis* is ambitious and regional cooperation is key to address transboundary issues and ease potential tensions.

Therefore, having in mind the state of play of the accession negotiation process, it is necessary to have a flexible instrument within IPA III, in order to provide timely assistance to the emerging/bridging needs in the accession process as well as for preparatory activities for programming and/or follow up interventions or monitoring of implementation of IPA, thus increasing impact of the EU financial assistance. The potential use of the EU Integration Facility would be highly beneficial in order to materialise actions relevant for the Green and Digital Agendas for the Western Balkans², the Western Balkans Agenda on Innovation, Research, Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, or facilitate measures contributing to the implementation of the Economic Reform Programmes, and help the region in its reforms in these areas.

The New European Bauhaus (NEB) is an initiative launched by President von der Leyen in her address on the State of the Union on 16 September 2020. The initiative has the ambition to make the Green Deal a cultural, human-centred and positive, tangible experience and accelerate a sustainable greening of the built environment. The New European Bauhaus contributes to the implementation of the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans, and the Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans³. Support was provided for the 2023 NEB Prizes edition⁴, where, for the first time, the Western Balkans participated at the same conditions as EU Member States.

The EIT implements the Jumpstarter⁵ initiative, a Cross-KIC (Knowledge and Innovation Community) pre-accelerator programme, set-up in 2017, which supports innovators from less innovative European economies to turn their research results into commercially viable products and services and start their deeptech

² SWD(2020)223 final, 6.10.2020.

³ COM(2020) 641 final, 6.10.2020.

⁴ The 2023 edition was implemented by DG REGIO. Out of the 1458 applications submitted, 107 were from the Western Balkans. The applications from the Western Balkans were distributed as follows: 26 applications from Albania, 17 from Bosnia and Herzegovina, 12 from Kosovo, 12 from Montenegro, 17 from North Macedonia, and 23 from Serbia. <https://prizes.new-european-bauhaus.eu/>

⁵ <https://eitjumpstarter.eu/>

ventures. Ventures are offered tailored trainings and mentoring which help them to validate their business model and prepare them for the next steps in their entrepreneurial journey. At the end of the programme, there is a Grand Final, in the form of a pitch contest with the winners receiving a EUR 10 000 prize. According to the feedback of the participants, one major benefit of the EIT Jumpstarter is the cross-sectoral and pan-European nature of the program, where idea-holders receive feedback from their peers and mentors and gain an understanding of how markets work outside of their home base. While participants from the Western Balkans participate in the EIT Jumpstarter, often with success⁶, the level of participation and success in the programme remains below potential.

It is essential that relevant IPA beneficiaries continue to be associated to key of European initiatives.

Finally, in the current evolving context, such as the one related to the COVID-19 post-pandemic as well as the energy crisis generated by Russian war of aggression against Ukraine or other eventual crisis situations, it is necessary to allocate funding and facilitate interventions which can materialise in different forms of immediate support.

Identification of main stakeholders and corresponding institutional and/or organisational issues (mandates, potential roles, and capacities) to be covered by the action

The nature of the facility makes a wide set of stakeholders being involved depending on the particular area that would require support. In general, the activities to be supported require the involvement of regional or international organisations, as well as relevant national bodies who are directly or indirectly involved in the EU process or are benefiting from the process itself, line ministries, regional or local administrations, cultural institutions, civil society and other stakeholders, media community etc.

AREA OF SUPPORT #2: TAIEX:

Short problem analysis

The enlargement process for each IPA III beneficiary is unique and progresses according to individual needs, and on a sector-by-sector basis. TAIEX assistance helps the IPA III beneficiaries' public sector institutions to identify and analyse the gaps with the EU *acquis*, and supports them as they reform to align with EU standards. Assistance is both, demand driven – IPA III beneficiaries identify their priority needs and accordingly request specific and targeted assistance, as well as strategically oriented. Therefore, assistance may also be deployed upon request of the European Commission services and the European External Action Service (EEAS) as they see it fit, but the success of TAIEX events ultimately depends on the IPA III beneficiary's will to undertake all the necessary reforms to achieve their objectives for EU integration.

In all these cases, as well as for wider public administration reforms, mobilisation of added value public sector expertise is needed with a clear benefit for beneficiaries to also exchange among themselves. Therefore, in exceptional circumstances and when relevant, participation of experts from beneficiaries will complement the core of TAIEX activities implemented by EU public sector experts, fostering regional cooperation and contributing to a more effective assistance. New forms of peer exchange will build on a multi-stakeholder approach and provide meaningful experience in tackling similar challenges and implementing similar agreements.

The priorities and objectives targeted by TAIEX have a strong international dimension and take part in overarching EU key priorities with strategic repercussions like the Green Deal⁷, building resilient, sustainable and inclusive economies and influencing post-pandemic policies. In all of them, a proper and efficient functioning of strong and reliable public institutions is critical and the public expertise brought by TAIEX activities, essential.

⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/EITJumpstarter/photos/a.113145397232708/141903477690233/>

⁷ COM(2019) 640 final

Identification of main stakeholders and corresponding institutional and/or organisational issues (mandates, potential roles, and capacities) to be covered by the action

In the particular case of TAIEX, the instrument mobilises public expertise mainly from EU Member States upon submission of requests for technical assistance from the IPA III beneficiaries or fostered by the relevant Commission services. The use of TAIEX is linked to the enlargement process of each IPA III beneficiary and the corresponding plan for the adoption of the EU *acquis*.

TAIEX assistance is provided mainly by EU Member States' public sector experts who share their knowledge and experience with beneficiaries through workshops, expert missions and study visits. These activities target national administrations, the judiciary, parliaments, regional and local administrations, public and semi-public entities as well as representatives of trade unions and employers' associations and civil society organisations, in the event that they play a role in the transposition, implementation and enforcement of specific EU legislation. When needed and in specific cases, experts from beneficiaries will take part in TAIEX activities, contributing to a multi-stakeholder approach in the peer sharing and providing added value in relation to the implementation of certain agreements and adaptation to particular policies.

TAIEX instrument interventions are closely coordinated with EU Delegations and the relevant regional units in Commission Headquarters and the EEAS. Attention is given to the assessment of each incoming assistance request in terms of purpose and fit with bilateral and regional strategies and priorities in ongoing policy and technical cooperation.

To ensure high quality expertise, a network of National Contact Points (NCPs) in EU Member States and beneficiaries assist in the implementation and takes part in the vibrant institutional building community to ensure the strategic implementation of TAIEX.

2.3. Lessons Learned

An EU Integration Facility was included in the previous programmes under IPA I and II. It helped to strengthen the link between the policy agenda and financial assistance by allowing a faster response to a limited number of unforeseen priority needs and to carry out pilot projects, or to gather more solid information before deciding on the way forward.

A further lesson is that there has to be a better link between EU assistance to public administration reform (PAR) and assistance to different sectors and/or negotiation Chapters. While PAR actions support coordinating institutions such as Ministries of Public Administration, Ministries of Finance, General Secretariats and Ministries of European Integration with preparation of new legislation, methodological guidance and quality control functions, they do not generally support line institutions with actual implementation of the new requirements. The EU assistance for different sectors will therefore need to ensure that PAR legislation and guidance are systematically respected during preparation of strategies and laws, creation of new agencies, supporting human resources development and training activities, setting up IT systems, etc. Especially, any new policies/strategies and legislation need to be prepared in an inclusive and evidence-based process (on the basis of administrative data, impact assessments for laws, inter-ministerial and public consultations) and any new institutions need to be created in a rational manner, respecting accountability requirements between parent and sub-ordinated institutions.

An EU Integration Facility is also programmed at bilateral level. Though the scope differs from the one planned at regional level, complementary will be ensured in order to look for opportunities to have synergies among the programmes, also in terms of implementation methods.

In the 2023 New European Bauhaus Prizes edition, one project from Montenegro was awarded as winner. Lessons learned will be shared in due time and will serve as basis for the design of the upcoming 2024 and 2025 prizes.

Operating since 1996, TAIEX has a proven track-record in mobilising Member States expertise. Continuous efforts are made to adapt and improve the way TAIEX assistance is implemented. Improvements in the medium-term shall include, but not be limited to, increasing an environmentally-friendly approach to TAIEX assistance, wherever appropriate, and improved knowledge management.

In those Beneficiaries where the demand is generally low, measures can be envisaged, together with respective TAIEX NCPs and EU Delegations, in order to increase awareness of potential beneficiary institutions about the possibilities that TAIEX can offer.

In those Beneficiaries where the demand is particularly high, efforts have been done to work with the EU Delegations and NCPs to select the proposals that are most likely to have an impact. Those with more anticipated impact will get priority in terms of implementation. Synergies will be sought in organising multi-country events for beneficiaries with similar interest, often through opening up digital channels for participation.

The network of NCPs will be systematically enhanced throughout the programme.

Efforts have already been done and will continue to be done to seek synergies with other programmes with the aim to focus TAIEX on those cases where the instrument is most appropriate and the impact is greatest.

The latest evaluation of the TAIEX instrument was published in May 2022 and covered the implementation period of 2015-2020. Among the key conclusions, TAIEX has proven to be an effective, gap-filling tool for supporting reforms in relevant Beneficiaries and strengthening administrative capacities, which is increasing its geographical scope benefitting more than 100 countries and thus expanding the EU's external relations toolbox across the world.

After the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, TAIEX instrument adapted to the new reality and enforced new working methods and digital solutions which continue to enrich the activities offered even after the pandemic restrictions had been lifted. In this regard, the successful experience of the digital leap in the context of COVID-19 pandemic and its effects on travel and face-to-face events has confirmed the ability of TAIEX to offer assistance via digital means. This digital leap will contribute to a more effective assistance complementing in-person activities with other digital means (such as online and hybrid activities). It results in a wider accessibility to the activities implemented and greening the instrument while maintaining the same high-quality features.

At the same time, the participation in certain circumstances of experts from Beneficiaries will provide a new multi-stakeholder approach to TAIEX activities, while expertise from EU Member States remains the core of the assistance. Regional cooperation will complement and enrich regional peer learning among Beneficiaries who face similar challenges and processes.

3. DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION

3.1. Intervention Logic

The Overall Objective/(Impact) of this action is to facilitate progress in key areas of needed reforms required by the Western Balkans and Türkiye to comply with Union values.

The Specific Objectives (Outcomes) of this action are to:

1. Support flexible, preparatory/pilot actions addressing urgent and/or unforeseen needs that merit to be addressed rapidly in order to assure continuity in the European perspective and herewith related issues.
2. Reach progressive alignment of IPA III beneficiaries with EU legislation and improvement of working methods in line with EU standards.

The Outputs to be delivered by this action contributing to the corresponding Specific Objectives (Outcomes) are:

- Output 1.1 contributing to Outcome 1 (or Specific Objective 1): a number of preparatory, pilot and start-up actions are implemented / urgent/bridging/follow up support for important regional initiatives and organisations is ensured.
- Output 1.2 contributing to Outcome 1 (or Specific Objective 1): TA provided, studies, assessments, monitoring missions, evaluations are carried out.

- Output 2.1 contributing to Outcome 2 (or Specific Objective 2): EU-relevant IPA III beneficiary political and policy dialogue is enriched; coordination of institutions strengthened; cooperation with a view to improve regulatory convergence and/or legislative approximation towards higher standard intensified; and EU rules and standards promoted effectively

The underlying intervention logic for this action is that:

IF a number of preparatory, pilot and start-up actions / urgent/bridging support for important regional initiatives and organisations, and TA, studies, assessments, monitoring missions, evaluations are produced/carried out, AND there is timely identification of the needs, which need to be addressed by the EU Integration Facility, as well as the political commitment from the IPA III beneficiaries, including technical, financial and adequate human resources to be allocated to the implementation of the activities, THEN these outputs will lead to assure continuity in the European perspective and herewith related issues through the flexible actions supported.

IF EU-relevant IPA III beneficiary political and policy dialogue is enriched; coordination of institutions strengthened; cooperation with a view to improve regulatory convergence and/or legislative approximation towards higher standard intensified; and EU rules and standards promoted effectively, AND the requests for assistance are submitted by IPA III beneficiary as well as the adequate public expertise from EU Member States is identified, THEN these outputs will lead to reach a progressive alignment of IPA III beneficiaries with EU legislation and improvement of working methods in line with EU standards.

IF those flexible, preparatory/pilot actions addressing urgent and/or unforeseen needs that merit to be addressed are supported as well as progressive alignment of IPA III beneficiaries with EU legislation and improvement of working methods in line with EU standards is reached, AND assuming that there is continuing commitment of IPA III beneficiaries to an inclusive process of deepening regional cooperation; the political commitment for further development, harmonisation and interaction with other stakeholders as well as the EU in related fields is continued; the enlargement pace progresses, paving the way for the use of TAIEX instrument to share public expertise; and a conducive environment in the IPA III beneficiary exists to allow these reform to happen, THEN the overall action will contribute to facilitate progress in key areas of needed reforms required by the Western Balkans and Türkiye to comply with Union values.

3.2. Indicative Activities

Activities related to Output 1.1

Under the EU Integration Facility, a number of activities will be implemented in order to meet specific and urgent needs in the region. It will support interventions such as provision of technical assistance, preparatory, pilot or start up/bridging or follow up actions that could facilitate the participation of the relevant IPA beneficiaries in relevant EU networks, regional initiatives, or similar. The support can be provided in cases where an initial proposal is considered to be a priority for IPA III financial assistance (justified in terms of short or medium term priorities; and relevant strategic documents), but where further efforts are needed to design and appraise mature actions, ready for implementation under the upcoming IPA financial assistance action programme.

Interventions may include (non-exhaustive list):

- Pilot actions to test new initiatives which may then be replicated on a wider scale such as the EIT Jumpstarter Initiative for the Western Balkans;
- Other preparatory, start-up actions, urgent / bridging support or follow up actions, such as prizes to support the New European Bauhaus in the Western Balkans;
- Support to regional networks by and, amongst others, organisation of regional meetings, workshops, study visits in strategically important areas.

Activities related to Output 1.2

The EU Integration Facility may also cover interventions such as (non-exhaustive list):

- Provision of short-term technical expert assistance, such as for drafting tender documents and/or terms of reference and technical specifications for the implementation of IPA III funded actions;
- Feasibility studies, assessments;
- Visibility for multi-beneficiary's activities;
- Provision of training support to relevant authorities;
- Monitoring and evaluation of multi-beneficiary actions during or following the implementation;
- Support to translation of existing tools for the benefit of the IPA III beneficiaries.

Activities related to Output 2.1

Mobilising sectoral experts, mainly from EU Member States, and if relevant also regional experts, to give the Beneficiaries' public officials the possibility to learn from their peers. The experts mobilised belong to the public administration (or assimilated institutions, such as mandated bodies) of EU Member States, and in specific circumstances of beneficiaries. In exceptional cases, when required specific expertise is not available from Member States public institutions, it can be mobilised from Member States private sector, international organisations and EU institutions. TAIEX support is delivered through workshops, expert missions, including peer-based assessment missions, study visits, and short background research and assessments (work from home); according to the needs of the Beneficiary and the scope and nature of the intervention. Assistance can be delivered in online, hybrid or in-person format. Events can take place at bilateral and regional level.

During these events public sector experts from EU Member States institutions are brought in close contact during several days with their peers in the relevant Beneficiaries. The EU experts prepare an agenda for the meeting, in cooperation with the Beneficiary and the Commission. After the meeting, the EU experts prepare a report with recommendations on follow up.

The support services to roll out the instrument are procured. The implementation is done under the project modality and involves two types of procurement. The first one is for the management of the IT platform of TAIEX (TMS); and the second one is for the logistics of TAIEX activities that will be implemented by a service provider which has to further procure all good and services needed for events according to the relevant procedures laid down for external aid of the Commission.

3.3. Mainstreaming

Environmental Protection, Climate Change and Biodiversity

The action being cross-cutting, it should ensure environmental and climate considerations are mainstreamed into all activities. This will contribute to the sustainability of the action. The mainstreaming should be based on the identification and mitigation of environmental and climate risks as well as the potential inclusion of environment in the scope of the activities.

As this action is a collection of technical assistance/preparatory/pilots projects on a variety of topics, many of which are not fully developed yet, environmental and climate risk assessments will be conducted during the development of the specific assignment ToRs when relevant.

TAIEX will continue to offer this digital alternative to the IPA III beneficiaries after the pandemic when this is considered relevant and possible, to reduce its carbon footprint. When face-to-face activities are planned, the external service provider will be instructed to consider opting for eco-friendly suppliers and supplies, as well as using other means of reducing carbon footprint e.g. use of trains instead of planes, no printing, using tap water etc. More specifically, the external service provider will be instructed to comply with the Green Public Procurement principles understood as a process whereby public authorities seek to procure goods, services and works with a reduced environmental impact throughout their life cycle when compared to goods, services and works with the same primary function that would otherwise be procured.

Gender equality and empowerment of women and girls

As per OECD Gender DAC codes identified in section 1.1, this action is labelled as G1. This implies that all components will strive to promote gender equality as well to take measures to achieve equal opportunities for male and female in all aspects regarding the implementation of the action.

This action will be implemented through an approach that promotes gender equality. This will be achieved by ensuring gender balance and active participation of women and girls into the activities planned under this action. Gender equality incentives will be incorporated particularly in the activities concerning capacity building. Where possible, the action will provide for sex-disaggregated data.

When relevant for a particular intervention due consideration should be given to the multiple discrimination faced by women from vulnerable groups, and including Roma.

TAIEX instrument comprises a gender perspective and gender issues remain high in TAIEX activities' agenda. TAIEX will continue to effectively promote equality, inclusion and combat discrimination as well as to take measures to achieve gender equal opportunities in all aspects of its activities.

In addition to the specific interventions on gender-related issues that will keep addressing issues of discrimination and fostering the adoption of legislation in line with European standards (with activities related to anti-discrimination policies, legislation and institutions) the implementation of the TAIEX activities will remain sensitive in ensuring gender balance in the mobilisation of experts sharing their expertise through TAIEX activities.

Human Rights

Due attention will also be given to the respect of human rights and integration of human rights principles within the undertaken interventions. Enforcement of those principles is likewise ensured through specific administrative procedures applied in accordance with the legislation on anti-discrimination. In the implementation of activities under this action, the same principles shall apply, so that participation in the envisaged activities will be guaranteed on the basis of equal access regardless of sex, ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age, etc.

Disability

As per OECD Disability DAC codes identified in section 1.1, this action is labelled as D0. This implies that disability is not a directly targeted issue although the organisation of all TAIEX activities takes due regard to accessibility and the inclusion of participants and experts as needed. In addition, the content of the activities, when relevant for the Beneficiaries, supports the beneficiary institutions by sharing good practices and knowledge in this area.

Democracy

TAIEX activities fully align with a strong support to EU fundamental values, especially democracy, in line with the regional priority of supporting accountable institutions, the rule of law and security. It contributes to the capacity building of the beneficiary institutions regarding participation and pluralism, taking into account the specific needs of each Beneficiary and their progress. Similarly, interventions under the EU Integration need to conform to EU fundamental values, including democracy.

Conflict sensitivity, peace and resilience

TAIEX activities adapt to the specific context and needs of each Beneficiary, both on the content of the activities as well as concerning organisational issues, taking due regard of regional and/or local specificities. At the same time, TAIEX has a track record of bringing public administrations together, building in a common project and cooperation with Beneficiaries.

Other considerations

In complementarity with this action, the Civil Society Facility helps to ensure an inclusive and transparent dialogue, consultation and communication with all relevant stakeholders in the respective sectors as also including CSOs representing vulnerable groups. This serves as a platform that enables exchange of information and contribution of CSOs in relation to planning development assistance, particularly programming and monitoring of the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA).

When relevant for a particular intervention due consideration should be given to the multiple discrimination faced by women from vulnerable groups, and including Roma. Besides, Roma inclusion will remain one element of mainstreaming in possible areas of intervention by the action where Roma are negatively and disproportionately affected.

3.4. Risks and Assumptions

Category	Risks	Likelihood (High/Medium/Low)	Impact (High/Medium/Low)	Mitigating measures
1-External environment: Related to capacities of external partners	Lack of or reduced commitment of IPA II beneficiaries to an inclusive process of deepening regional cooperation	M	H	Continuous commitment to raise awareness on importance of the participation of the relevant stakeholders from the IPA III beneficiaries in the different activities,
1-External environment:	Ecosystem not inclined to innovation	M	H	Reference to Western Balkans political commitments, and lobby through the main stakeholders (such as the Regional Cooperation Council and other intergovernmental associations).
1-External environment	Beneficiaries may not submit enough/high quality requests in line with EU policies for TAIEX	M	L	Awareness raising to the IPA III beneficiaries through DG NEAR geographical units and EU Delegations. In addition to the consultation process in Headquarters, the relevant EU Delegation is asked to agree on each TAIEX request prior to its final approval.
1-External environment	Activities for both components disrupted and/or delayed due to COVID-19 or other travel restrictions.	L	L	Online format for activities is possible in the Beneficiaries. The flexibility of TAIEX allows to postpone events as well as to organise alternative activities prior to physical events.
2-Planning, processes and systems	Insufficient timely identification of the needs to be addressed by the EU Integration Facility	L	H	Close monitoring and follow up of the resources dedicated to the facility.
3-People and the organisation	Experts in the existing database of TAIEX do not match the required needs for assistance	M	M	Outreach to the NCPs for TAIEX in the EU Member States to identify adequate expertise. More targeted outreach towards experts in highly-demanded and/or niche areas will be organised.

External Assumptions

The main assumption for AREA OF SUPPORT #1: EU Integration Facility on which the success of the programme depends, is the continuous commitment of the administrations in the IPA III beneficiaries to an inclusive process of deepening regional cooperation, the reference to the Western Balkans political commitments, and lobby through the main stakeholders, the establishment of harmonised international or regional processes in the supported sectors, and to effective management of resources provided.

The main assumptions for AREA OF SUPPORT #2 TAIEX are: the enlargement pace progresses, paving the way for the use of TAIEX instrument to share public expertise; a conducive environment in the IPA III beneficiary exists to allow these reform to happen; critical number and quality requests for technical assistance are submitted by the IPA III beneficiaries to the TAIEX instrument; relevant public experts from the EU Member States are identified and available to support IPA III beneficiary institutions in the field of their requests for assistance; the database of EU Member States' public experts is kept updated with new experts registering themselves.

3.5. Indicative Logical Framework Matrix

Results	Results chain: Main expected results	Indicators	Baselines (values and years)	Targets (values and years)	Sources of data	Assumptions
Impact	To facilitate progress in key areas of needed reforms required by the Western Balkans and Türkiye to comply with Union values	<p>1 Progress made on political and economic criteria as well as in the respective areas as indicated in the annual communications on EU Enlargement Policy</p> <p>2 Recognition of ongoing reform process in various internationally recognised composite indicators (World Bank report, IMF reports) and the level of economic integration with the EU, measured by % of exports and imports going to/coming from the EU</p>			<p><i>Commission Annual Reports</i></p> <p><i>World Bank, IMF, ESTAT</i></p>	<i>Not applicable</i>
Outcome 1	Flexible, preparatory/pilot actions addressing urgent and/or unforeseen needs that merit to be addressed rapidly in order to assure continuity in the European perspective and herewith related issues supported	Degree of timely implementation of multi-beneficiary action programmes – number of contracts under implementation	0 (2024)	6 (2028)	Financial assistance implementation reports Commission Annual Reports	<p>The continuing commitment of IPA III beneficiaries to an inclusive process of deepening regional cooperation.</p> <p>Reference to the Western Balkans political commitments, and lobby through the main stakeholders.</p>
Outcome 2	Progressive alignment of IPA III beneficiaries with EU legislation and improvement of working methods in line with EU standards reached	Degree of compliance with the <i>acquis</i> in the respective co-operation areas of all components under the action	Relevant IPA III beneficiaries have made some progress with the implementation of the EU <i>acquis</i> .	Relevant IPA III beneficiaries are well advanced in implementing the EU <i>acquis</i> .	Commission Annual Reports	<p>The enlargement pace progresses, paving the way for the use of TAIEX instrument to share public expertise.</p> <p>A conducive environment in the IPA III beneficiary exists to allow these reforms to happen.</p>

Output 1.1 related Outcome 1	to Implementation of a number of preparatory, pilot and start-up actions / urgent/bridging/follow up support for important regional initiatives and organisations ensured	Number of preparatory, pilot and start-up actions implemented / regional initiatives supported (including sex-disaggregated data)	0 (2024)	3 (2028)	Implementation reports Studies Activity reports, progress reports, monitoring mission reports; publications; agenda and preparation for workshops	Timely identification of the needs, which need to be addressed by the EU Integration Facility. Political commitment from the IPA III beneficiaries, including technical, financial and adequate human resources allocated to the implementation of the activities.
Output 1.2 related Outcome 1	to TA provided, studies, assessments, monitoring missions, evaluations carried out	Number of outputs, such as Terms of Reference, technical specifications, feasibility studies and other documents, monitoring missions, evaluations (including sex-disaggregated data)	0 (2024)	3 (2028)	Implementation reports Studies Activity reports, progress reports, monitoring mission reports; publications; agenda and preparation for workshops	Timely identification of the needs, which need to be addressed by the EU Integration Facility
Output 2.1 related Outcome 2	to Enriched EU-relevant IPA III beneficiary political and policy dialogue; Strengthened coordination of institutions; Intensified cooperation with a view to improve regulatory convergence and/or legislative approximation towards higher standards; Effectively promoted EU rules and standards.	IPA III beneficiaries' overall professional satisfaction on quality of TAIEX workshops, expert missions and study visits	Western Balkans: Fully/partially satisfactory: 95% Türkiye: Fully/partially satisfactory: 95%	Σ (fully, partially satisfactory): 95% Maintain high level of satisfaction	Replies to feedback questionnaires automatically sent to TAIEX participants following event conclusion, as gathered in TMS, the TAIEX Management System	i/ Requests for assistance are submitted by IPA III beneficiary ii/ adequate public expertise from EU Member States is identified

4. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

4.1. Financing Agreement

In order to implement this action, it is not envisaged to conclude financing agreements with the relevant IPA III beneficiaries.

4.2. Indicative Implementation Period

The indicative operational implementation period of this action, during which the activities described in section 3 will be carried out and the corresponding contracts and agreements implemented, is 72 months from the date of adoption by the Commission of this Financing Decision.

Extensions of the implementation period may be agreed by the Commission's responsible authorising officer by amending this Financing Decision and the relevant contracts and agreements.

4.3. Implementation Modalities

The Commission will ensure that the EU appropriate rules and procedures for providing financing to third parties are respected, including review procedures, where appropriate, and compliance of the action with EU restrictive measures⁸.

4.3.1. Direct Management (Prizes)

a) Purpose of the prizes

The New European Bauhaus prizes will give visibility to examples of projects, concepts and initiatives that illustrate how the triangle of sustainability, aesthetics and inclusion of the New European Bauhaus is being translated in territories and communities. The calls will contribute to the achievement of specific objective 1 (outcome 1) and the related output 1 allowing the implementation of a follow up action related to the Green Deal EU priority.

The prizes are organised by DG REGIO, which manages the call and promotes the event for the awarding of the prizes. DG NEAR will contribute with knowledge, technical capacity and a monetary amount of EUR 250 000 for the upcoming 2025 prizes edition. This amount will be transferred to and managed by DG REGIO. It will cover both organisational and prizes costs. Prizes will be attributed to winner applications from the Western Balkans. Organisation costs will cover the participation of the Western Balkans.

b) The type of participants targeted

Natural persons, private and public organisations established in the Western Balkans with inspirational examples or ideas/concepts for the New European Bauhaus that represent the concretisation of the triangle of sustainability, aesthetics and inclusion (accessibility, affordability).

The applications shall demonstrate how the core values of sustainability, aesthetics and inclusion may be combined in relation to the specific category (exemplary character), the innovative dimension, results achieved, citizens' engagement and involvement, potential for transferability to different contexts, based on clear documentation and communication of methodology and principles.

⁸ [EU Sanctions Map](#). 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.

- c) Specific reference to prizes with a unit value of EUR 1 million or more: Not applicable.

4.3.2. Direct Management (Procurement)

The procurement will contribute to achieving the specific objectives (outcomes) and related outputs of the action, for AREA OF SUPPORT #1: EU Integration Facility (outcome 1 / outputs 1.1 and 1.2) and AREA OF SUPPORT #2: TAIEX (outcome 2 / output 2.1), as indicated in section 3.5.

4.3.3. Indirect Management with a pillar-assessed entity

A part of this action may be implemented in indirect management with the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT). This implementation entails the organisation of the EIT Jumpstarter Initiative for the Western Balkans which intends to improve the business environment, innovation ecosystem and investment climate of the beneficiaries, promoting integration with EU industrial value chains, in view of supporting the socio-economic recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic and increasing the competitiveness of the Western Balkans. The support will contribute to the achievement of specific objective 1 (outcome 1) and the related output 1 allowing the implementation of pilot actions in order to assure continuity in the European perspective in the field of innovation.

The envisaged entity has been selected using the following criteria: 1) independent EU body, leader in innovation, which aims to increase Europe's ability to innovate by nurturing entrepreneurial talent and supporting new ideas; 2) Pioneering role in increasing European sustainable growth and creating jobs by reinforcing Europe's innovation capacity; and 3) capacity to pull together leading organisations from business, education and research, the so-called 'knowledge triangle', to form dynamic cross-border partnerships - EIT Innovation Communities.

4.3.4. Changes from indirect to direct management (and vice versa) mode due to exceptional circumstances

If the implementation modality under direct management as defined in section '4.3.2 (procurements)' cannot be implemented due to circumstances beyond the control of the Commission, the modality of implementation by indirect management with (a) pillar-assessed entity/ies would be used. The entity/ies will be selected by the Commission's services using the following criteria: expertise and mandate of the entity/ies in relation to the nature/sector of the intervention, financial and operational capacity, proven experience in implementing similar regional interventions and ability to mobilise partners in the relevant IPA III beneficiaries. The implementation entails contributing to achieving the specific objectives (outcomes) and related outputs of the action, for AREA OF SUPPORT #1: EU Integration Facility (outcome 1 / outputs 1.1 and 1.2).

4.4. Scope of geographical eligibility for procurement and grants

The geographical eligibility in terms of place of establishment for participating in procurement and grant award procedures and in terms of origin of supplies purchased as established in the basic act and set out in the relevant contractual documents shall apply, subject to the following provisions.

The Commission's authorising officer responsible may extend the geographical eligibility on the basis of urgency or of unavailability of services in the markets of the countries or territories concerned, or in other duly substantiated cases where application of the eligibility rules would make the realisation of this action impossible or exceedingly difficult (Article 28(10) NDICI-Global Europe Regulation).

Regarding procurements for TAIEX instrument (service contracts for the IT platform and for the logistics of the activities), the geographical eligibility is global.

TAIEX activities involve EU Member States public experts and potentially relevant regional, local experts if deemed necessary: they receive a financial compensation, a grant, for their participation to TAIEX activities.

In this regard, the geographical eligibility for this compensation is the EU Member States. In exceptional cases, experts from relevant Beneficiaries can be invited as well. They are compensated as EU experts. Private experts, when participating, are subject to compensation and selection based on procurement rules.

4.5. Indicative Budget

Indicative Budget components	EU contribution (amount in EUR)	Indicative third-party contribution, in currency identified
Methods of implementation – cf. section 4.3		
All outcomes and outputs (EU Integration Facility and TAIEX) composed of	9 850 000	
Output 1.1 – Prizes (direct management) – cf. section 4.3.1	250 000	N.A
Outputs 1.1, 1.2 and 2.1 – Procurement (direct management) – cf. section 4.3.2	9 000 000	N.A
Output 1.1 – Indirect Management with EIT – cf. section 4.3.3	600 000	N.A
Procurement – total envelope under section 4.3.2	9 000 000	N.A
Evaluation – cf. section 5.2 Audit – cf. section 5.3	may be covered by another Decision	N.A.
Strategic Communication and Public Diplomacy – cf. section 6	will be covered by another Decision	N.A.
Totals	9 850 000	N/A

4.6. Organisational Set-up and Responsibilities

AREA OF SUPPORT #1: EU Integration Facility

The European Commission will be the contracting authority. This action will be implemented partly in direct management by the relevant Units in the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, being responsible for the contracts' implementation and monitoring, and partly in indirect management with EIT. Regular coordination meetings with the European Commission (Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations), and other stakeholders will ensure continuous monitoring of those activities. DG REGIO will be responsible for the part of the action in co-delegation. For each of the contracts, co-ordination meetings / steering committees are to be planned on yearly basis. Additional ad hoc bilateral meetings may be organised, if necessary.

As part of its prerogative of budget implementation and to safeguard the financial interests of the Union, the Commission may participate in the above governance structures set up for governing the implementation of the action/activity.

AREA OF SUPPORT #2: TAIEX

The European Commission will be the contracting authority. The Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations is responsible for both the analysis and assessment of requests and for the content of TAIEX short and medium term assistance, including the identification of experts from EU Member States'

public administrations willing to engage in this type of peer-to-peer assistance. Throughout the implementation of TAIEX assistance excellent cooperation and coordination with all actors involved is key to the success of the instrument.

Requests for TAIEX actions are primarily generated by beneficiaries. Incoming requests are reviewed on a continuous basis and decided upon following consultation with relevant European Commission and EEAS services, including EU Delegations, in order to ensure complementarity with programmes and other technical assistance instruments and to safeguard that TAIEX activities are in line with the priorities set in progress reports and plans for the adoption of the EU *acquis*.

Upon confirmation of the incoming requests, the Commission is in charge of identifying the relevant public experts from EU Member to address the needs of the requests. This is done through the existing database of public experts of TAIEX. When the pool of registered experts is not providing the appropriate expertise, the established network of NCPs in the EU Member States is mobilised to identify the appropriate experts.

As part of its prerogative of budget implementation and to safeguard the financial interests of the Union, the Commission may participate in the above governance structures set up for governing the implementation of the action/activity.

5. PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

5.1. Monitoring and Reporting

The day-to-day technical and financial monitoring of the implementation of this action will be a continuous process, and part of the implementing partner's responsibilities. To this aim, the implementing partner shall establish a permanent internal, technical and financial monitoring system for the action and elaborate regular progress reports (not less than annual) and final reports. Every report shall provide an accurate account of implementation of the action, difficulties encountered, changes introduced, as well as the degree of achievement of its Outputs and contribution to the achievement of its Outcomes, and if possible at the time of reporting, contribution to the achievement of its Impacts, as measured by corresponding indicators, using as reference the logframe matrix.

The Commission may undertake additional project monitoring visits both through its own staff and through independent consultants recruited directly by the Commission for independent monitoring reviews (or recruited by the responsible agent contracted by the Commission for implementing such reviews).

Arrangements for monitoring and reporting, including roles and responsibilities for data collection, analysis and monitoring:

AREA OF SUPPORT #1: EU Integration Facility

The monitoring process is to be organised and led by the relevant Units in the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations in charge of the relevant contracts. The monitoring process is aimed to improve programming, implementation and sustainability as well as timely identification, remedying and alleviation of potential issues in the process of programming and implementation of the interventions. The contracting authority will focus on the management of the contracts.

Internal monitoring will be implemented through project steering committees' meetings, on-the-spot checks, meetings with beneficiaries and consultant companies/implementing partners, while for the external monitoring of the results the European Commission may use external monitoring schemes, such as Results Oriented Monitoring (ROM). The data will be monitored annually on the basis of progress and activity reports for each of the individual interventions. DG REGIO will be responsible for the internal monitoring for the part of the action in line with the co-delegation agreement.

The different contractors/implementing partners are responsible for the collecting, analysing and reporting data with reference to the activities to be implemented under the action and indicative expected results to be identified at contract level.

AREA OF SUPPORT #2: TAIEX

Monitoring is understood as a permanent ongoing process by way of receiving direct feedback from participants and experts. Following each event, participants and experts receive an automatic feedback questionnaire in order to assess their overall impression of the assistance provided and of the logistics of the event. Furthermore, following expert missions EU Member State officials are requested to submit short mission reports summarising the objective of their intervention and express recommendations. The beneficiary institution also receives an evaluation form 6 months after the end of the TAIEX activity to comment on the impact of the TAIEX intervention.

Under the direct management of this action, the collection of data and analysis is carried out by the European Commission. To this effect, the necessary technical arrangements are in place to collect and aggregate data from participants of the beneficiary entities and the experts of the EU Member States as described above.

On an annual basis, the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations is publishing an annual report that is made public through its website and it sharing flash report with statistics on a bi-annual basis to the network of NCPs for TAIEX in EU Member States.

5.2. Evaluation

Having regard to the nature of the action, an evaluation will not be carried out for this action or its components contracted by the Commission.

However, the 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.

When appropriate, the financing of such evaluation shall be covered by another measure constituting a financing Decision.

When relevant, the evaluations should be carried out following the guidelines of the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations on linking planning/programming, monitoring and evaluation. The evaluation reports may be shared with the Beneficiaries and other key stakeholders following the best practice of evaluation dissemination. The implementing partners and the Commission shall analyse the conclusions and recommendations of the evaluations and, where appropriate, in agreement with the Beneficiaries, jointly decide on the follow-up actions to be taken and any adjustments necessary, including, if indicated, the reorientation of the action/component.

The evaluation will assess to what extent the action is taking into account the human rights-based approach as well as how it contributes to gender equality and women's empowerment, whenever it is deemed relevant with regards to the nature and topics covered by the evaluated action/component. Expertise on human rights and gender equality will be ensured in the evaluation teams.

Since 1996, the TAIEX instrument has been evaluated three times, in 2007, in 2015 and in 2021. The latest evaluation assessed the TAIEX instrument during the period 2015-2020 with satisfactory results, highlighting its flexibility, increasing geographical and topical scope as well as its adaptability. In 2021, a new evaluation process by independent consultants was launched as part of the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations multi-annual strategic evaluation work programme 2020-2024.

5.3. Audit and Verifications

Without prejudice to the obligations applicable to contracts concluded for the implementation of this action, the Commission may, on the basis of a risk assessment, contract independent audit or verification assignments for one or several contracts or agreements.

6. STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

All entities implementing EU-funded external actions have the contractual obligation to inform the relevant audiences of the Union's support for their work by displaying the EU emblem and a short funding statement as appropriate on all communication materials related to the actions concerned. To that end they must comply with the instructions given in the 2022 guidance document [*Communicating and raising EU visibility: Guidance for external actions*](#) (or any successor document).

This obligation will apply equally, regardless of whether the actions concerned are implemented by the Commission, the IPA III beneficiary, service providers, grant beneficiaries or entrusted or delegated entities such as UN agencies, international financial institutions and agencies of EU Member States. In each case, a reference to the relevant contractual obligations must be included in the respective, procurement and grant contracts, and contribution agreements.

7. SUSTAINABILITY

AREA OF SUPPORT #1: EU Integration Facility

The action will produce sustainable results since the activities target existing beneficiary institutions/structures, seeking to make them more efficient in carrying their tasks. Sustainability is also given in the fact that the support for legislative alignment results eventually in adoption of the laws, by-laws, plans, etc., by the Parliament, Government or governmental bodies. Finally, the integration of the key principles of public administration and the 'Better Regulation' approach into envisaged assistance will also contribute to sustainability of results. In particular, any support on *acquis* alignment will be done in an inclusive and evidence-based manner; any training, capacity-building and human resources development activities will be coordinated with the institution that is centrally responsible for human resources management and professional development of civil servants; finally, any activity supporting the development of IT tools will ensure consistency with the interoperability standards in each beneficiary and, where these don't exist, they will promote consultations with the Ministries in charge of information society related matters.

AREA OF SUPPORT #2: TAIEX

In providing support to the process of transposition, implementation and enforcement of the EU *acquis* in IPA III beneficiaries, TAIEX assistance aims to improve beneficiary officials' capacity and EU technical knowledge.

Through the mobilisation of EU sectoral experts from the Member States, and when relevant from beneficiaries, TAIEX gives the beneficiary's public officials the possibility to learn from their peers, many of which will have been through the EU accession process themselves, and then apply the acquired knowledge and expertise in their particular contexts. Sustainability and ownership are at the heart of the TAIEX assistance model.

The fact that TAIEX is partially demand-driven means that the assistance is requested at the right timing for the IPA III beneficiaries in their European path. The instrument's flexibility also means that the assistance can be adapted and tailored to the beneficiary's specific needs – whether they require one-off expertise on a very precise area of the *acquis*, or a series of assistance events in order to support them to achieve a broader goal (e.g. drafting a piece of EU-*acquis* compliant legislation).

TAIEX thus contributes to improved capacity of IPA III beneficiaries' public administrations, which should be seen in the overall context of moving closer to the EU in their European path.

Appendix 1: IDENTIFICATION OF THE PRIMARY INTERVENTION LEVEL FOR REPORTING IN OPSYS

A Primary intervention (project/programme) is a coherent set of results structured in a logical framework aiming at delivering development change or progress. Identifying the level of the primary intervention will allow for:

- ✓ Differentiating these Actions or Contracts from those that do not produce direct reportable development results, defined as support entities (i.e. audits, evaluations);
- ✓ Articulating Actions and/or Contracts according to an expected common chain of results and therefore allowing them to ensure a more efficient and aggregated monitoring and reporting of performance;
- ✓ Having a complete and exhaustive mapping of all results-bearing Actions and Contracts.

The present Action identifies as:

Contract level (i.e. Grants, Contribution Agreements, any case in which foreseen individual legal commitments identified in the budget will have different log frames, even if part of the same Action Document)		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Single Contract 1	several separate procurement/prizes/contribution agreement for EU Integration Facility
<input type="checkbox"/>	Single Contract 2	several separate procurement for TAIEX