



EN

THIS ACTION IS FUNDED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION

ANNEX I

of the Commission Implementing Decision on the financing of the annual action plan in favour of the Republic of Serbia for 2022

Action Document for EU support to Fundamental Rights

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 of NDICI - Global Europe Regulation.

1. SYNOPSIS

1.1. Action Summary Table

Title	EU support to Fundamental Rights Annual Action Plan in favour of the Republic of Serbia for 2022
OPSYS	ACT-60863
Basic Act	Financed under the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA III)
Team Europe Initiative	No
Zone benefiting from the action	The action shall be carried out in the Republic of Serbia
Programming document	IPA III Programming Framework
PRIORITY AREAS AND SECTOR INFORMATION	
Window and thematic priority	Window 1 - Rule of Law, fundamental rights and democracy Thematic priority 5 – Fundamental rights (share of the thematic priority 100%)
Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	Main SDG (1 only): Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions Other significant SDGs (up to 9) and where appropriate, targets: Goal 5: Gender equality Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth Goal 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure Goal 10: Reducing inequalities
DAC code(s)	15130
Main Delivery Channel @	Central government - 12001

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"/>
	Trade development	<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	Policy objectives	Not targeted	Significant objective	Principal objective
	Connectivity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Digitalisation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Migration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	COVID-19	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
BUDGET INFORMATION				
Amounts concerned	Budget line: 15.020101.01 JAD.998125 Total estimated cost: EUR 5 150 000 Total amount of EU budget contribution: EUR 5 000 000 This action is implemented in joint co-financing with Civil society organisations in the amount of EUR 150 000.			
MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION				
Implementation modalities (type of financing and management mode)	Project Modality Direct management through: - Grants - Procurement			

	Indirect management with International Organisation: OSCE for outputs 3 and 4. of the Action.
Relevant priorities and flagships from Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans	“Governance, Rule of Law, PAR”
Final Date for conclusion of Financing Agreement	At the latest by 31 December 2023
Final date for concluding contribution / delegation agreements, procurement and grant contracts	3 years following the date of conclusion of the Financing Agreement, with the exception of cases listed under Article 114(2) of the Financial Regulation
Indicative operational implementation period	72 months following the conclusion of the Financing Agreement
Final date for implementing the Financing Agreement	12 years following the conclusion of the Financing Agreement

1.2. Summary of the Action

The proposed action will specifically support enforcement of fundamental rights of vulnerable categories such as Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and returnees upon readmission agreements by provision of legal aid and information relevant for their access to justice as well as by economic strengthening of IDPs opting for return. Strengthened capacities of border agencies and ensured IDPs and returnees’ better access to justice, will enhance the overall internal security as well as ensure better enforcement of human rights.

In addition, the Action will support the Serbian institutions to strengthen freedom of expression and media in line with EU requirements. The objective will be achieved by providing targeted and flexible assistance for alignment of legislation with the EU *acquis* and standards in the freedom of expression and media area, application of best practices, implementation of the legislation and building capacities of targeted institutions. The proposed Action is in line with the IPA III Programming Framework¹, window 1 that relates to strengthening of the rule of law and fundamental rights and specifically to the Thematic priority 5 – Fundamental rights. Due to the support for fundamental rights through institutional support and capacity building, it will contribute to the SDG 16, on Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions. The Action will also secure the support to the priority needs listed in the specific national strategic documents and strategic action framework enshrined in the revised Action plan for Chapter 23.

¹ C(2021) 8914

2. RATIONALE

2.1. Context

The IPA III Programming Framework indicates that reforms in rule of law, fundamental rights, democracy and security remains one of the most pressing issues for the Western Balkans. These are fundamental values on which the EU is founded and are at the heart of the accession process, as reflected in the importance of chapters 23 (Judiciary and fundamental rights) and 24 (Justice, freedom, and security). Strengthening the rule of law is not only an institutional issue, but also requires profound and sustainable societal transformation. Furthermore, respect of fundamental rights is one of the core EU values enshrined in the EU Treaties and an essential element in the accession process. Fundamental rights are largely enshrined in the legislation of the beneficiaries but more needs to be done also to ensure they are fully implemented in practice. Strong and independent institutions are needed to ensure the effective application of these rights and freedoms.

The main objectives of relevant national policies and strategies are to strengthen the rule of law, democracy, the respect of human rights and international law, civil society, security as well as to improve migration and border management. Addressing reforms in rule of law, fundamental rights and democracy as well as ensuring proper migration and border management remain the key priorities defined in the Action Plan for chapters 23 and 24. Moreover, the beneficiary objectives entirely correspond to the Thematic Priority 4 – Migration and Border Management as well as Thematic Priority 5 – Fundamental Rights, indicating the need to reducing irregular migration, cooperation in the region and with EU Member States to fight trafficking in human beings and migrants smuggling as well as to establish appropriate legal and institutional frameworks in line with the evolving EU migration *acquis*, policy and international standards.

The Government of Serbia policy document "Partnership for Development – Priorities for International Assistance up to 2025", indicates that one of the overall objectives is to ensure independent, impartial, accountable and transparent judicial system that ensures an effective fight against corruption and the protection of human rights and freedoms. Under this objective, Priority no 2 envisages improvement protection of human and minority rights and freedoms. More specifically, as concerns the Home Affairs Sector specific objective - Ensuring migration management, strengthening asylum mechanisms and support to protection of rights of IDPs, refugees and returnees with measure – it envisages enhancing capacities to support protection of right of IDPs, refugees and returnees that will foster inclusion of IDPs, refugees and returnees in local communities in terms of adequate housing, strengthening economic self-reliance and improve psycho-social status and quality of life. Moreover, it will also support protection of the interests of internally displaced persons in access and exercise of rights at the place of origin (legal aid).

The National Plan for the Adoption of the Acquis 2018-2021 (NPAA) outlines that Serbia will align its national legislation in line with the EU in accordance with respective chapters, particularly chapter 23 and 24. Furthermore, the action addresses and supports the Commission 2018 Communication on “*A credible enlargement perspective and enhanced EU Engagement with the Western Balkans*”², (Commission Communication henceforth) pointing out fundamental rights. The proposed action is also relevant to the implementation of the specific policy instruments and strategic documents related to the enlargement process, including the Commission Report on Serbia for 2021.

The focal point of the proposed action is the enhancement of institutional and human capacities in pursuing the rule of law reforms, fulfilment of requirements spelled out in the Action plans for Chapters 23 and 24 and enforcement of the obligations stemming from the Stabilisation and Association Agreement and other sectoral agreements which will support preparations for meeting the requirements of EU membership.

The proposed Action is in the line with IPA III Programming Framework and overall objective under window 1 that relates to strengthening the rule of law and fundamental rights, as reflected in chapter 23. In addition, the Action corresponds to the Thematic priority 5: Fundamental rights. The reform of public information system is focusing on promoting and protecting freedom of expression and the independence of media as a

² https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/communication-credible-enlargement-perspective-western-balkans_en.pdf

Thematic priority 5 of IPA III. In relation to the freedom of expression and media, the action will contribute to further developing the legislative framework, strengthening relevant institutions and capacities and establishing concrete results in the area. In addition, the action will tackle issues of media ownership and sustainability of independent media.

The proposed Action will address findings of the European Commission's 2021 Report on Serbia, which states that Serbia has some level of preparation concerning freedom of expression. In particular, the Action will address a need to create enabling environment in which freedom of expression can be exercised without hindrance, as well as challenges in implementation of media laws and independence of the Regulatory Body for Electronic Media. The proposed interventions will address recommendations of the European Commission's 2021 Report on Serbian relation to timely implementation of Media strategy, improvement of the overall environment for freedom of expression, efficient follow up of threats and cases of violence against journalists, strengthening media pluralism, strengthening of REM, increased transparency of media ownership and transparent and equitable co-funding for media content serving the public interest.

There are several issues highlighted in the Commission Communication that will be addressed through this Action, including full implementation in practice of fundamental rights legislation.

The proposed intervention is in line with the priorities defined within flagship initiatives of the Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans³, specifically digital infrastructure. The proposed interventions cover development of the digital skills of the employees in the media and capacities to identify threats and safety risks in online environment, they are relevant for the Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans, concerning the investment in a digital future.

The Action is designed to address problems identified in relation to support the rule of law and strengthen it to meet priorities set in Action plan for Chapter 23 and the National Plan for the Adoption of the Acquis (NPAA). The proposed Action will support the Government of Serbia in further implementation of the National Plan for the Adoption of the Acquis 2018-2021 (NPAA) and relevant sector and sub-sector specific strategies in development of the legal framework for promotion of human and protection of minorities. The Action will contribute to the improvement of media legislation and its alignment with EU *acquis* and standards.

The interventions under this Action have been selected based on their relevance and contribution to implementation of national sector strategies as well as their link to the accession negotiations. The interventions are addressing the objectives defined with the Strategy for development of public information system 2020-2025 and accompanying Action plan. The Action is addressing issues of independence of media and legislative landscape, as well as professionalism of journalists as Chapter 23 priorities. The Action will address the specific objectives related to the freedom of media and contribute to the achievement of improved public information system through aligned legal framework that guarantees freedom of expression, freedom of media, journalist security, media pluralism, developed media market, strengthen journalist profession, increased media literacy of citizens and institutions competent to apply legislation.

2.2. Problem Analysis

AREA OF SUPPORT:

Internally Displaced Persons

³https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2020-10/communication_on_wb_economic_and_investment_plan_october_2020_en.pdf

In 2020, Serbia hosted over 6,000 new asylum-seekers, but there are still around 26,000 refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia. In Serbia, there are more than 196,000 IDPs of which over 16,000 households or around 68,000 individual IDPs remain vulnerable and with displacement-related needs.⁴

IDPs in Serbia received this status mainly through the collaboration with the United Nations High Commissariat for Refugees (UNHCR) since March 2000 for the registration of internally displaced persons from Kosovo*, when 187.129 people were registered. In the period between 2000 and 2005, there were more than 20.000 persons additionally registered. The IDP population is therefore composed mainly of adult persons. While the Action is designed in such a manner that it targets specifically persons who have the IDP status in the realisation of their property rights and/or support to return, and will not target directly internally displaced children, the impact of the Action is expected in the improvement of the conditions for the families of the IDPs, including their children.

According to the EU's 2021 annual report, low levels of quality and inadequate access to justice are one of the major challenges, with financial access to justice and access to information, as the most obvious issues. According to the Judicial Function Review, lack of affordability is the most serious barrier to access to justice services in Serbia and this also pertains returnees and IDPs. Though the legislative and institutional framework for upholding fundamental rights is broadly in place, its consistent and efficient implementation still needs to be ensured. Although Serbian Law on Free Legal Aid is in place and envisages IDPs as its potential users (Article 4, no.7), this project helps IDPs to access their rights in the place of origin where mentioned Law has no jurisdiction. More specifically, representing IDPs in front of the courts in the place of origin is a long-lasting, logistically and financially demanding for IDPs as the most vulnerable population. In addition to this, returnees face the lack of personal documents and thus highly dependent on legal and social assistance in attempt to exercise their rights. Enforcement of human rights thus need to be strengthened and their independence guaranteed. Furthermore, the Law on Permanent and Temporary Residence needs to be consistently applied to allow Roma IDPs living in informal settlements to obtain registered residence and access to basic socio-economic rights. Roma IDPs remains the most marginalised and vulnerable in Serbia. The main stakeholder of the action will be the Office for Kosovo and Metohija of the Government of the Republic of Serbia as beneficiary institution. However, the project will closely cooperate with all relevant institutions: Commissariat for Refugees and Migration and their local trustees, municipalities, Ministry of Interior (MoI), relevant services in Kosovo, Ministry for Communities and Return, the Kosovo Property Comparison and Agency (KPCVA), EU Special representative (EUSR), EU Rule of Law Mission (EULEX), Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), International organisation for Migration (IOM) and other actors that will assist or contribute to the realisation and improvement of IDPs' and returnees' rights and facilitation of return process. The final beneficiaries of the action will be IDPs and returnees upon readmission agreement.

AREA OF SUPPORT: Strengthening freedom of expression and media

Respect of fundamental rights is one of the core EU values enshrined in the EU Treaties and an essential element in the accession process. Particular focus is needed to safeguard freedom of expression and independence of media as the pillars of democracy. According to the European Commission's 2021 Report on Serbia, there is a need to prevent intimidation of journalists, strengthen capacities of the Regulatory body for electronic media (REM), ensure transparency of media ownership and of allocation of budget funds, especially at local level. Serbia adopted the Strategy for development of public information system of the Republic of Serbia for period 2020-2025 in January 2020 and accompanying Action plan in December 2020 with the aim to contribute to strengthening freedom of expression and media, that will be supported through this intervention. The designed Action is expected to strengthen freedom of expression and media, in accordance with the priorities indicated in the Action 3 and the Strategy for development of public information

⁴ <http://www.kirs.gov.rs/docs/izvestaji/Stanje%20i%20potrebe%20IRL%202018%20-%20EN.pdf>

* 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.

system in the Republic of Serbia. The Action will contribute to the priority areas such as supporting the creation of an enabling environment for freedom of expression and reforming the media landscape. The designed action will cooperate closely with the EU/COE Horizontal Facility on the rule of law, in particular in relation to the freedom of expression and media.

The European Commission noted that there is an increasingly hostile environment for civil society, freedom of expression and freedom of the media, and attempts to exercise undue influence and political interference on the judiciary.⁵ Constraints referring to freedom of expression were noted in the European Commission's 2021 Report on Serbia, resulting in the limited progress to overall environment for freedom of expression.

The new **Strategy for development of public information system of the Republic of Serbia** was adopted in January 2020. It identified the main challenges for media freedom in Serbia. These include, inter alia, threats, intimidation and violence against journalists. The Strategy notes that investigations and final convictions for many such cases are still pending. Despite actions taken by the state authorities in 2020 there was an increase in the number of attacks against journalist compared to 2019. The Ombudsman signed in May 2020 an agreement with the representatives of seven media associations and the three journalists' trade unions in order to establish a platform for registering cases of pressure on journalists and other media actors and endangering their safety. A working group on the safety of journalists was established by the Government, in March 2021. A 24-hour SOS phone line for reporting attacks and pressure on journalists was also set up. In December 2020 the Republic Public Prosecutor issued a mandatory instruction, according to which cases of threats and attacks against journalist should be treated as urgent cases. Information security violations are often happening in Serbia and vary from attacks on information and communication infrastructure to anonymous treats to journalists. From 2014 to 2021 there were 699 such attacks.⁶

The independence of the REM needs to be strengthened to enable it to efficiently safeguard media pluralism. Relevant measures are foreseen by the media strategy to be implemented by 2022.

Political and economic influence over the media continues to be a source of concern. Serbia's media strategy foresees measures, including amendments to the media laws, to be implemented by the end of 2021 and in 2022 to address issues of transparency in ownership structures and fairness in financing media content and advertising from state resources. Legislation on media pluralism and rules on mergers in media sector have to be improved, since current registers do not collect all relevant information and criteria for assessing ownership over media in different sectors are not sufficiently comprehensive.⁷

The institutional framework in public information and media is comprised of: the Ministry of Culture and Information, the Provincial Secretariat for Culture, Public Information and Relations with Religious Communities, Regulatory body for electronic media (REM), Public Media institution, "Radio television of Serbia" (RTS) and the Public Media institution, "Radio television of Vojvodina" (RTV) and Media Register under the auspices of Business Register Agency.

The Ministry of Culture and Information is responsible for adopting the draft strategies for the development and improvement of the public information system; proposing laws and monitoring compliance; adopting bylaws; carrying out the procedure of co-financing projects for achieving the public interest in public information; maintaining records about foreign correspondents and foreign bureaus; issuing journalist IDs; improving international bilateral and multilateral cooperation; working on EU integration, drafting and monitoring the implementation of the projects funded from international funds.

3. DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION

3.1. Intervention Logic

The **Overall Objective** of this action is to increase human rights and media freedom in line with the objectives related to the *acquis* Chapter 23.

⁵ 2022 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy, Brussels, 12.10.2022, COM(2022) 528 final

⁶ Share Foundation <https://monitoring.labs.rs>

⁷ Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom, 2018, https://cmpf.eu.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Serbia_MPM2017_country-report.pdf

The **Outcome 1** of this action is to increase support to Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

The **Outcome 2** of this action is to support the creation of an enabling environment for freedom of expression.

The **Outputs** to be delivered by this action contributing to the corresponding Specific Outcomes are;

Contributing to Outcome 1:

Output 1 - Ensuring better access to justice to IDPs and returnees

Output 2 - Provision of better support to IDPs and returnees in return process

Contributing to outcome 2:

Output 3 - Enabling environment for professionalism and media market

Output 4 - Pluralism and diversity of media content and digital literacy enhanced

The underlying intervention logic for this action for the outcome 1, is that if the envisaged activities (legal advice, enforced legal remedies, in-court representations) are provided to IDPs and returnees, this will lead to better and increased social protection, enhanced provisions of temporary and durable solutions, elimination of barriers for access to rights, increased resolution of housing, land and assets claims of IDPs and returnees.

If these outputs are realised and assumptions hold true, then the intervention will contribute to reduced poverty and inequality and IDPs and returnees who will become equal members of their host/resident societies. From the judicial point of view, if legal aid scheme for people without financial means and in vulnerable situation is developed, this will lead to promoted access to legal information and better access to justice and the intervention will contribute to the promotion of rule of law and respect of justice.

Furthermore, if the envisaged activities (preparation activities in return process of IDPs – delivered trainings, economic grants and assistance kits with transportation) are further provided to IDPs and assumptions hold true, then this will lead to better and increased social protection, enhanced provisions of temporary and durable solutions, elimination of barriers for access to rights and to enhanced economic situation of IDPs as one of the most vulnerable population group in the region.

If this output is realised and assumption of continued international support to durable solutions hold true, then the intervention will contribute to reduced poverty and inequality of IDPs who will become equal members of their host/resident societies.

Moreover, if the envisaged preparation activities in return process are delivered, will lead to sustainable return of IDPs who are considering return to their homes of origin which is granted by numerous human rights instruments, national and international, and the intervention will contribute to the promotion of rule of law, social inclusion, and improvement of economic perspective.

Finally, if this outcome is realised assumptions hold true, then the intervention will contribute to increased security, particularly as regards better detection of irregular migration, fight cross-border crime and by increased level of enforcement of human rights.

In relation to outcome two, the underlying intervention logic for this action is that if enabling environment for professionalism and media market strengthened and pluralism and diversity of media content and digital literacy enhanced and there is continued political commitment for implementation of Strategy for development of public information system of the Republic of Serbia and revised Action plan for Chapter 23, then the enhanced system of public information will be achieved, as well as strengthen freedom of expression and media, the security of journalist, functional and sustainable media market, and diversity of media and media literacy.

If both outcomes are achieved, there will be an increase of protection and promotion of human rights and media freedoms, leading to the better conditions for achieving the objectives related to the *acquis* Chapter 23.

3.2 Indicative Activities:

Activities related to Output 1. - Better access to justice to IDPs and returnees

(Legal aid assistance to IDPs and returnees under readmission agreements provided)

- 1.1 Establish network of legal aid offices
- 1.2 Takeover of previous projects' caseload
- 1.3 Selection of Non-Key experts and creation of pool of lawyers
- 1.4 Updating and maintaining legal database, regular case follow-up and reporting
- 1.5 Organise mobile team visits for vulnerable clients to ensure participation of remote and isolated communities
- 1.6 Preparing written submissions to the relevant institutions
- 1.7 Representation before the relevant institutions in the place of previous residence
- 1.8 Representation before the competent institutions in Republic of Serbia for collecting of documents and other administrative procedures.
- 1.9 Delivering Thematic reports regarding distinguished issues related to final beneficiaries
- 1.10 Exit strategy with Sustainability study

(Information relevant for exercising rights of IDPs and returnees under readmission agreements is disseminated in an accurate and timely manner)

- 2.1 Takeover and maintain of established call centre and web site
- 2.2 Establish cooperation with Community facilitators, Associations of citizens that are final beneficiaries of the project and NGOs dealing with IDPs and returnees
- 2.3. Participating/organising open doors events, round tables and panel discussions aimed to inform and reach final beneficiaries as well as broader community
- 2.4 Promo campaign, dissemination of information and distribution of informational material (TV and radio commercial, media appearances to promote and inform public about project, video and documentary materials etc.)
- 2.5 Active engagement with major stakeholders in the current and previous place of residents for the purpose of addressing systematic obstacles and mitigating the assumed risks;

Activities related to Output 2. –Provision of better support to IDPs in the return process

(Reduced poverty and inequality of IDPs and returnees to Kosovo)

- 1.1. Information/outreach campaign implemented by providing reliable and updated information to IDP population in Serbia on the return possibilities and available support (establishing cooperation with IDPs' Associations, organisation of round tables, public presentations, field visits etc.);
- 1.2 Identification and needs assessment of IDPs opting for return.
- 1.3 Provision of technical and administrative assistance to potential returnees.
- 1.4 Strengthening economic sustainability of IDPs opting for return through the provision of vocational and educational trainings.
- 1.5 Strengthening economic sustainability of IDPs opting for return through the provision of economic (income generation) grants accompanied by short term business training and mentoring.
- 1.6 Provision of assistance kits
- 1.7 Transportation of personal belongings of IDPs to the place of return (transportation must be done by the company from Serbia, all payments must be conducted in Serbia and ToR for transportation Serbia based company must include all expenses derived from this activity such as forwarding, loading/unloading of truck, renting of forklift etc.)

Activities related to Output 3.: Enabling environment for professionalism and media market strengthened

Activity 3.1: Ensured professionalism of journalist and media market -the activity within this area will contribute to strengthening the capacity of journalists, media professionals and judicial professionals to deal with and respond to security treats in online space and violation of information security. The activities will contribute to improved gender balance representation among editors and in management positions in the media. The Action will provide technical assistance, by conducting relevant studies for assessing the media market and media legal framework in order to provide recommendations for amendments of relevant laws, and prepare trainings on relevant issues, including but not limited to security treats, free access to information, copyright law, etc. The activities within this area will contribute to a level playing field for all media actors and for better economic sustainability of media.

Specifically, the Action will contribute to the more efficient implementation of activities that are related to the Strategy for development of public information system of the Republic of Serbia and accompanying second Action plan for period 2023-2025 that is in the process of drafting, including the following indicative list:

1. Within the specific objective 1 of the Strategy – improved safety, socio-economic and professional conditions for work of journalist, including indicative activities listed in the Strategy such as developing incentive mechanisms for new jobs in the media sector or for hiring young journalists based on defined precise criteria, creating conditions for greater representation of women (journalists) among editors and in deciding positions, as well as working conditions that enable the reconciling business and private obligations; considering the possibility of creating mechanisms for providing legal assistance to journalists and media workers in connection with conducting a journalistic vocation;
2. Within the specific objective 2 of the Strategy – established functional, sustainable and fair media market protected from political influences, including indicative activities listed in the Strategy, such as amendments to the Law on public procurement, Law on donations and humanitarian aid with the aim to regulate media sector, technically improve the environment and search of the register as well as the connection with other public registers (maintained by the Regulatory Body for Electronic Media, Public Procurement Directorate, State Aid Control Commission, Central Register of beneficial owners, etc.), through automatic download
3. Within the specific objective 3 of the Strategy – Functional, competent, professional and open institutions have mechanism for protection against external influences and consistently apply public policies and regulations, including indicative activities listed in the Strategy, such as increase of presence of civil society, training of journalist, media workers and civil servants in the area of access to information of public importance and personal data protection.

Activities related to Output 4:

Activity 4.1: Created pluralism and diversity of media content and digital literacy - the activities within this area will contribute to strengthen quality, pluralism and diversity of media content with the aim to create the capacity to satisfy needs for information of diverse social groups. The Action will provide technical assistance by conducting relevant studies of media content and its accessibility to specific groups (such as national minorities, persons with disabilities, diaspora). It will analyse media literacy in Serbia, offer trainings of journalists on issues including reporting related to vulnerable groups, trainings on digital literacy. It will conduct analysis of legislation and offer recommendations for amendments to laws in topics including CSOs media as non-profit media. The activities within this area will support the Judicial Academy to increase the capacity to conduct trainings, and in this manner improve the competence of judges and prosecutors to deliver quality of justice in this specific issues. In addition, the activities will focus on improvement of professional knowledge and development of digital literacy of citizens, institutions, media, journalists and media workers.

Specifically, the Action will contribute to the more efficient implementation of activities that are related to the Action plan of the Strategy for development of public information system of the Republic of Serbia for period 2020-2025, including:

1. Within the specific objective 4 of the Strategy – High quality, plural and diversity media content satisfy the needs for information of different social groups, including indicative activities listed in the Strategy, such as support for projects of continuous capacity building of journalists and media workers

engaged in media that produce media content in the languages of national minorities, amendments to the Law on electronic media to incentivized development of civil society media, ensure support of journalist in the area of reporting on vulnerable social groups.

2. Within the specific objective 5 of the Strategy – enhanced professional knowledge and developed digital skills of citizens, institutions, media, journalist and media professionals, including indicative activities listed in the Strategy, such as implementation of public awareness campaign on media literacy, development of inter-sectoral program of development of media and IT literacy in media environment, support for introduction of new subjects focused on digital media competences.

3.3 Mainstreaming

Environmental Protection, Climate Change and Biodiversity

The proposed actions will indirectly impact on the environmental change by better management of IDPs and returnees’ lands and properties as the environmental and climate changes and challenges will included in the action’s raising awareness activities (e.g., booklets, leaflets, website, etc.) All activities related to this Action will be implemented ensuring the minimisation of negative environmental impacts.

Gender equality and empowerment of women and girls

Per OECD Gender DAC codes identified in section 1.1, this action is labelled as G1. The proposed action will address and contribute to the accomplishment of UN Goal 5 - Gender Equality and Women’s and Girls’ as well as to the implementation EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 through a systematic collection of gender disaggregated data, provision of specific raising awareness events related to women and gender empowerment of women IDPs and returnees, facilitating their access to administrative and judicial authorities, labour market, promoting women’s entrepreneurships and women-led start-ups, presence of women in decision-making processes in society (e.g. local communities), mainstreaming gender issues in the action implementation, etc.

Human Rights

The proposed actions will support the enforcement of IDPs and returnees’ human rights, specifically social protection, promotion of equality, increased access to free legal aid, legal information and legal empowerment.

In addition, the proposed action specifically contributes to freedom of expression, media freedom, including media diversity, media literacy and security of journalist.

Conflict sensitivity, peace and resilience

The actions will also contribute to resilience and mitigation of conflict sensitivity through better social inclusion and integration of IDPs and returnees in local communities. Furthermore, a special emphasis will be given on to particularly vulnerable people among IDPs and returnees such as Roma people, minorities, and other ethical groups.

3.4. Risks and Lessons Learned

Category	Risks	Likelihood (High/Medium/Low)	Impact (High/Medium/Low)	Mitigating measures
Risk 1:	Lack of political commitment and willingness to support the action, including due to possible changes in the Governmental structures and lack	M	M	The role of Ministry of European Integration and the negotiating structures and the policy dialogue in the context of EU accession should be used to mitigate this risk.

	of constant coordination and cooperation between the beneficiaries			
Risk 2:	Beneficiary's lack of capacities for the preparation of relevant documents such as tendering documentation for the supply of equipment, technical specifications, and implementation of the procurement procedure.	M	M	Selected implementing partner (consortium), its agency or an international organisation included in the consortium will support the beneficiary
Risk 3:	Inappropriate sequencing of different projects supporting return of IDPs (for Action 2)	M	M	Plan and coordinate implementation of return activities along developments through Skopje initiative and maintain regular communication with complementary projects and relevant stakeholders.
Risk 4:	The COVID-19 pandemic and enforced health protection might jeopardize envisaged activities (both Actions)	M	M	The project team will apply alternative solutions such as virtual or phone communication where possible and adjust activities to health measures in force.
Risk 5:	Risk 3: Lack of willingness in ministries and independent institutions to support the actions and pursuing reforms in sensitive areas (media, fundamental rights)	M	H	The implementation of Media strategy is one of the interim benchmarks of Chapter 23. Achievement of the benchmark is overseen and supported by the EU so it is a mitigation factor for this risk.
Risk 6:	Risk 4: Lack of political commitment and willingness to support the actions and	M	H	The context of EU accession should be used to mitigate this risk and new enlargement methodology will support that. Proper coordination of the institutions involved and timely and

	pursuing of the reforms; including the risk of changes in the Governmental structures and lack of constant coordination and cooperation between main beneficiary institutions.			comprehensive reporting on the Media strategy implementation.
Risk 7:	Risk 5: Inadequate staffing and high turnover rates in the beneficiary influences the absorption capacities	M	M	Strong commitment of the Government towards implementation of the Media strategy. The required positions will be filled with properly educated and trained staff.

Lessons Learned:

A. Internally Displaced Persons and Returnees and support for the creation of an enabling environment for freedom of expression

The EU has been the biggest donor of assistance for refugees, IDPs and returnees in Serbia. Since 2001, the EU has donated more than EUR 90 million to support economic independence, decent housing, and legal rights of refugees, IDPs and returnees in Serbia.

Legal aid: Legal aid projects were continuously funded by the EU through IPA programmes. Previous Legal Aid Project funded from the National Programme IPA 2013 made substantial results by receiving 8,544 phone calls on the Free Toll Call Centre and providing 606 verbal legal advice, conducting 5,942 meetings with clients, visiting 485 vulnerable clients, making 2,193 written submissions to courts, representing clients on 759 court hearings, opening 3,000 new cases and closing 1,860 cases. Project collected 619 documents for returnees upon readmission agreements, held 18 training and 14 visibility events, 9 thematic working group events and conducted 2 surveys (initial and final) about awareness of final beneficiaries of their rights. Furthermore, the cost-benefit analyses at the end of IPA 2013 LAP showed that project provided services for a total value of EUR 15 M, that final beneficiaries would never have been able to afford if engaging private lawyers. Project recovered 28 properties for a value of EUR 6,3 M and expect to recover soon another 65 properties for an additional value of EUR 6,6 M. In terms of a cost/benefit analysis, project have had a 416% return on the initial investment. Project provided services (revision of files and documentation, legal advice, preparation of submissions, legal representation in front of the courts, transportation costs, taxes) for a total value of 990.000 EUR – that IDPs and returnees would never have been able to afford, if they had to ask for the services of private lawyers. In conclusion, if the Legal Aid project would not have existed, around 70% of final beneficiaries would not have exercised their rights. The current Legal Aid Project from National Program IPA 2016 stated in the 5th Interim Report submitted in June 2021, a sum of 9,283 cases in the Project database for 6,196 clients, out of which 3,925 were closed. During the current project alone, by the time of writing the Report, 1666 new cases were processed, 2,663 written submissions were delivered, 185 documents for Returnees were obtained, there were 1029 representations in court hearings and 190 vulnerable beneficiaries were reached through mobile teams' visits, despite COVID-19 pandemic. All mentioned is a clear indicator of need for further support to IDPs and Returnees in legal aid.

Support to preparatory activities for return process of IDPs: Support to return process of IDPs was implemented through IPA 2014, 2012 and 2009. The last return related grant scheme under action "Provision to the improvement to the living conditions of IDPs and returnees from readmission process in Serbia and

support to the sustainable return to Kosovo" ended in the second half of 2020. Despite COVID-19 pandemic in the last period of project duration, through this grant scheme were provided 96 assistant kits and transports, 294 grants for income generation activities, 162 vocational educational trainings and 340 short term trainings for IDPs. The 13 grant projects were part of wider programme EU support for the sustainable solutions for internally displaced persons and returnees supporting the improvement of the living conditions of IDPs and returnees under Readmission Agreement in Serbia and the sustainable return of IDPs to Kosovo. The EU funded these projects with EUR 5,6 M while the Serbian national budget co-funded with 350.000 EUR. The projects have been implemented in partnership with the local self-governments and international and national civil society organisations, in cooperation with the Office for Kosovo and Metohija and the Commissariat or Refugees and Migrations as main beneficiary institutions. Monitoring of the activities of this grant projects has been carried out through a Technical Assistance Project, which assisted the EU Delegation and two national beneficiary institutions during the duration of the grants. The technical assistance was implemented by a consortium led by KMOP.

In its Recommendations and lessons learnt Report prepared by the Technical Assistance Project and submitted in June 2020, it is clearly stated that it must be avoided to leave IDPs without right to choose between return and integration. Regional coordination of return process is described as desirable mechanism aimed to contribute to durable solutions, especially through Skopje initiative and compliance with other return related projects funded by the EU. Moreover, it is emphasised that the experts should be allowed to travel to the places of return in order to assess, consult or assist in any necessary way. Also, it is recommended that it should be clearly stated that IDPs in the last phase of the return process should be supported with transportation of their personal belongings to the place of return, with the note that expenditures must be incurred in Serbia. This means that Terms of Reference for the Serbia based transportation company must include all expenditures that may derive from this action and all payments must be in Serbia. Since the return of IDPs to their homes is a long lasting and complicated process that is ongoing both in the place of residence and the place of original, there is a need that returning family gets all support available: returning package for the home that is built or reconstructed in the place of return (through other complementary project), transport of personal belongings to the place of return, training and grant that support economic strengths and sustainability of returnees. By providing this type of support limitations set within the individual projects could be avoided and IDPs willing to return could become fully economically strengthened and encouraged.

The proposed action builds on previous EU assistance in the area of media reforms. The action will use lessons learned from previous IPA Support to Media Reforms (2018-2020 through its Component II – Media literacy) that contributed to increase of media literacy through preparation of the Handbook on Media Literacy for Pre-University Education, intended for educators, teachers and professional associates. Handbooks and established inter-sectoral cooperation are the good approach for achieving results and increasing media literacy. Any future media literacy activities should involve other relevant ministries and institutions (i.e. Ministry of Education and Science).

In addition, the action will use tools developed within the Horizontal Facility II – Jufrex programme (2019-2022), specifically in the area of protection of journalist, promotion of freedom of expression and strengthen skills of the stakeholders who are responsible to apply standards as part of their daily work. The action will use good practice in development of capacity building activities for enforcement law agencies, prosecutors and judges. Specifically, it is emphasised that focus of capacity building should be on future judges and prosecutors, who are currently judicial and prosecutorial assistants as well as participants of the initial training at the Judicial Academy. In addition, it is recommended to focus on youngest, especially children since they are surrounded by the media from their birth – media and communication platforms and content are part of their environment. Making children media literate means having future society of aware and responsible individuals.

Furthermore, IPA Project Strengthening media freedom 2013-2016 supported the Ministry of Culture and Media as well as implementation of Media Strategy 2011-2016 that resulted in good practice of harmonisation of three major media laws with EU *acquis* - Law on Public Information and Media, Law on Electronic Media, Law on Public Service broadcasting, ensured full harmonisation of AVMSD as precondition for Serbia joining European MEDIA subprogram of Creative Europe Program whose fund disposes of over EUR 800 million to

audio-visual sector, strengthen freedom of expression and professionalism of journalism through assisting the implementation of the Media Fund project and built capacities of key stakeholders.

3.5. Indicative Logical Framework Matrix

[PROJECT MODALITY (3 levels of results / indicators / Source of Data / Assumptions - no activities)]

Results	Results chain: Main expected results (maximum 10)	Indicators (at least one indicator per expected result)	Baselines (year) 2021	Targets (year) 2026	Sources of data (1 per indicator)	Assumptions
Impact	Increased security, enforcement of human rights and media freedom				Commission Report on Serbia	<i>Not applicable</i>
Outcome 1	1. To increase support to Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)	1. Progress made toward meeting accession criteria contained in Chapter 23	Commission report on Serbia for 2021		Commission report on Serbia	
Outcome 2	2. To support the creation of an enabling environment for freedom of expression					
Output 1.	1 Ensured better access to justice to IDPs and returnees	2.1 Increased ratio of overall solved and overall received number of legal cases (solved/received*100=_%)	2.1 42%	2.1 55%	Project reports	Continued international support to durable solutions for displaced persons and returnees under readmission agreements.
Output 2	2. Provided better support to (IDPs) in return processes.	2.2.1 150 IDP families received Assistance kits 2.2.2 150 IDPs finished vocational - educational trainings (VET) 2.2.3 150 IDPs received economic grants accompanied with 150 short-term business trainings	2021: 0 IDPs families	2026: at least 150 IDPs families supported	Project reports	Continued international support to durable solutions for displaced persons and returnees under readmission agreements
Output 3	3 Enabled environment for professionalism and media market strengthened	Progress made toward meeting accession criteria contained in Chapter 23 related to freedom of expression	Commission report on Serbia-Limited progress	Some progress	Commission report on Serbia	

Output 4.	4 Enhanced pluralism and diversity of media content and digital literacy	Progress made toward meeting accession criteria contained in Chapter 10 related to information society and media.	Commission report on Serbia- No progress	Some progress	Commission report on Serbia	
------------------	--	---	---	---------------	--------------------------------	--

4. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

4.1. Financing Agreement

In order to implement this action, it is envisaged to conclude a financing agreement with the Government of the Republic of Serbia.

4.2. Indicative Implementation Period

The indicative operational implementation period of this action, during which the activities described in section 3.1 will be carried out and the corresponding contracts and agreements implemented, is 72 months from the date of entry into force of the financing agreement.

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 of the Budget Support Component

N/A

4.4 Methods of implementation

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.

4.4.1. Direct Management (Grants)

(a) Purpose of the grant(s)

Part of this action – Output 2 – Provision of better support to IDPs and returnees in return process, will contribute to accomplishment of Outcome 1 and will be delivered through a grant scheme. The grant scheme to Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) aims to contribute to return process of IDPs and reduction of poverty and inequality of IDPs who will become equal members of their host/resident societies.

(b) Type of applicants targeted

Type of applicants targeted for the grants scheme are CSOs, NGOs, Associations of Citizens, International humanitarian organisations, all with relevant experience in dealing with IDPs issues.

4.4.2. Direct Management (Prize(s))

N/A

4.4.3. Direct Management (Procurement)

The part of this Action will be implemented under direct management by the EU Delegation in Republic of Serbia.

The procurement will contribute to achieving Output 1. - Better access to justice to IDPs and returnees and Output 2 - Protection of rights of IDPs and Returnees.

⁸ 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

4.4.4. Indirect Management with an international organisation

A part of this action may be implemented in indirect management with the Organisation for Security and Co-Operation in Europe (OSCE). The OSCE has been selected to implement a portion of the action related to the Outputs 3 (Enabled environment for professionalism and media market strengthened) and Output 4 (Enhanced pluralism and diversity of media content and digital literacy). The envisaged entity has been selected using the following criteria: previous experience with similar actions, operational capacity and value added.

The OSCE has been selected in view of its institutional mandate and relevant experience in the subject matter, which allows it to provide optimal support to Serbian institutions based on lessons learned accumulated through years of implementation of similar policies in both Serbia and the region. OSCE monitors media developments in its participating States for violations of free expression. Among other aspects, the Representative on Freedom of the Media, an independent OSCE Institution, has a unique mandate to protect and promote media freedom in all 57 OSCE participating States. The Representative's activities include observing media developments as part of an early warning function and helping participating States abide by their commitments to freedom of expression and free media. Many of the OSCE's field operations, including the one in Serbia, pursue activities dedicated to media freedom and development. In terms of operational capacity, the Mission to Serbia is an OSCE field operation based in Belgrade, with an office in Bujanovac in southern Serbia and a training centre in Novi Pazar in south-western Serbia. It has a staff of 23 international and 104 local personnel. The Mission is mandated to assist the authorities and civil society with democratic development and human rights protection, with the aim to promote democratisation, tolerance, the rule of law, and adherence to OSCE standards and commitments. Due to its role and long-term mandate in this area, it is uniquely positioned to provide support in this specific field, which no other organisation with a field mission in Serbia can offer.

If negotiations with the above-mentioned entity fail, that part of this action may be implemented in direct management in accordance with the implementation modalities identified in section 4.4.3.

4.4.5. Indirect Management with an IPA III beneficiary

N/A

4.4.6. Contribution to Regional Investment Platform

N/A

4.4.7. EFSD+ operations covered by budgetary guarantees

N/A

4.4.8. Changes from indirect to direct management (and vice versa) mode due to exceptional circumstances (one alternative second option)

If negotiations with the OSCE in accordance with the stipulations under the section 4.4.4. fail, that part of this action may be implemented in direct management in accordance with the implementation modalities identified in section 4.4.3.

4.5. 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).

4.6. Indicative Budget

Indicative Budget components	EU contribution (amount in EUR)	Indicative third-party contribution, in currency identified
Output 1. and 2. - To increase support to Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) composed of:	3 500 000	150 000
Procurement (direct management) – cf. section 4.4.3	N.A.	
Grants (direct management) – cf. section 4.4.1	N.A.	
Output 3. and 4. To support the creation of an enabling environment for freedom of expression composed of:	1 500 000	N.A.
Indirect management with the OSCE – cf. section 4.4.4.	1 500 000	N.A.
Indirect management with an International organisation – total envelope under section cf. 4.4.4.	1 500 000	N.A.
Grants – total envelope under section cf. 4.4.1	1 500 000	150 000
Procurement – total envelope under section cf. 4.4.3	2 000 000	N.A.
Evaluation – cf. section 5.2 Audit – cf. section 5.3	will be covered by another Decision	N.A.
Communication and visibility – cf. section 6	will be covered by another Decision	N.A.
Contingencies	N.A.	N.A.
Totals	5 000 000	150 000

4.7. Organisational Set-up and Responsibilities

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.

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 results (Outputs and direct Outcomes) as measured by corresponding indicators, using as reference the logframe matrix (for project modality) and the partner's strategy, policy or reform action plan list (for budget support). 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).

Roles and responsibilities for data collection, analysis and monitoring:

At the programme level:

The performance and result monitoring arrangements will be finalised once the IPA III Implementing Regulation is adopted and the FFPA between the Republic of Serbia and the European Commission is signed.

In case the arrangements remain the same as during the IPA II period, the overall progress will be monitored through participation of various stakeholders, such as EC/EUD, NIPAC, NIPAC TS/ BCPME, NAO, NAO SO, NF, Contracting Authority- CFCU, Final Beneficiaries, AA, and other institutions and civil society organisations. More precisely, monitoring will be done through:

- Result Orientated Monitoring (ROM) system (led by DG NEAR): This will provide, as necessary and required, an independent assessment of the on-going or ex-post performance of the Action.
- IPA Beneficiary's own monitoring: IPA monitoring process is organised and led by the NIPAC, NIPAC is the main interlocutor between the Serbian government and the European Commission regarding strategic planning, co-ordination of programming, monitoring of implementation, evaluation and reporting on the overall IPA assistance. NIPAC monitors the process of programming, preparation and implementation, as well as the sustainability and effects of programmes, aiming to improve these processes, ensure timely identification, remedying and alleviation of potential issues in the process of programming and implementation of Actions. The NIPAC prepares regular monitoring reports for the Government and the EC based on the reports drawn up by the institutions responsible for implementation. It reports on the formulation of Action, the fulfilment of preconditions for the initiation of public procurement procedures, the implementation of Action, its sustainability and effects, and organises the process of evaluation.
- Self-monitoring performed by the EU Delegation: This is part of the annual assurance strategy process and is done based on the ex-ante risk assessment of actions/contracts that are considered riskier.
- Joint monitoring by DG NEAR and the IPA Beneficiary: the compliance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and coordination in implementation of financial assistance will be regularly (at least once a year) monitored by the IPA Monitoring Committee. It will be supported by Sectoral Monitoring Committees which will ensure monitoring process at sector level. The results of monitoring will be used in the policy-making process to propose programme adjustments and corrective actions<To be filled in>

At the Action level:

Output 1 - “Protection of rights of IDPs and Returnees upon Readmission Agreements through legal aid and provision of information relevant for their access to justice” – this action will have its own managing and reporting structure in which junior experts will report to senior experts in charge for project offices, who further report to the Team Leader. Further monitoring will be conducted through Project Steering Comities consisting out of contracting authority (EUD) representatives, beneficiary institution (OKM) representatives, Ministry for European Integration representatives and representatives of the Commissariat for Refugees and Migrations. Finally, project will deliver inception, interim and final reports to the PSC members and monthly reports to the beneficiary institution and contracting authority. Also, project database presents and will continue to present verifiable source of clients and cases related data.

Output 2 – “Support to preparation activities in return process of IDPs” – Grant beneficiaries that will be national or international NGOs have their own internal management, monitoring and reporting mechanisms. For management, monitoring and evaluation of the grant scheme, contracting authority (EUD) may engage Technical Assistance that will organise monitoring visits, provide technical support to the GBs as well as to BI and provide regular (inception, interim, final) reports as well as GBs implementation progress reports to the Project Steering Committee members.

5.2. Evaluation

Having regard to the importance of the action, a final, mid-term or ex-post evaluation(s) will be carried out for this action or areas of support via independent consultants, through joint missions, contracted by the Commission or via an implementing partner.

The mid-term evaluation will be carried out for learning purposes, in particular with respect that it includes numerous components concerning the accession process.

The final or ex-post evaluation will be carried out for accountability and learning purposes at various levels (including for policy revision), taking into account in particular the fact that it includes numerous components concerning the accession process.

The Commission shall inform the implementing partner at least 6 months in advance of the dates envisaged for the evaluation missions. The implementing partner shall collaborate efficiently and effectively with the evaluation experts, and inter alia provide them with all necessary information and documentation, as well as access to the project premises and activities.

The evaluation reports shall be shared with the partner country and other key stakeholders following the best practice of evaluation dissemination. The implementing partner and the Commission shall analyse the conclusions and recommendations of the evaluations and, where appropriate, in agreement with the partner country, jointly decide on the follow-up actions to be taken and any adjustments necessary, including, if indicated, the reorientation of the project.

Finally, the evaluations envelope will generate systemic recommendations and inputs relevant for future programming.

The financing of the evaluation shall be covered by another measure constituting a Financing Decision.

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. COMMUNICATION AND VISIBILITY

Visibility of EU funding and communication about objectives and impact of Actions are a legal obligation for all Actions funded by the EU, as set out in the EU communication and visibility requirements in force.

In particular, the recipients of EU funding shall acknowledge the origin of the EU funding and ensure its proper visibility by:

- providing a statement highlighting the support received from the EU in a visible manner on all documents and communication material relating to the implementation of the funds, including on an official website and social media accounts, where these exist; and
- promoting the actions and their results by providing coherent, effective and proportionate targeted information to multiple audiences, including the media.

Visibility and communication measures shall be implemented, as relevant, by the national administrations (for instance, concerning the reforms linked to EU budget support), entrusted entities, contractors and grant beneficiaries. Appropriate contractual obligations shall be included, respectively, in financing agreements, delegation agreements, and procurement and grant contracts.

The measures shall be based on a specific Communication and Visibility Plan, established and implemented in line with the EU communication and visibility requirements in force. The plan shall include, inter alia, a communication narrative and master messages for the Action, customised for the various target audiences (stakeholders, civil society, general public, etc.)

Visibility and communication measures specific to this Action shall be complementary to the broader communication activities implemented directly by the European Commission services and/or the EU

Delegations and Offices. The European Commission and the EU Delegations and Offices should be fully informed of the planning and implementation of the specific visibility and communication activities, notably with respect to the communication narrative and master messages.

7. SUSTAINABILITY

In view of sustainability, the end recipients are obliged to ensure the use of the outputs, resulting from the action, for the purpose they are procured for, in line with the action document, the contract or equivalent. The end recipients are obliged to allocate enough budget for the functioning and maintenance of the assets and cover the costs of their operation and maintenance. The end recipients should recover the assets to their initial condition in case of their damage or replace the assets with those of minimum equal quality and functionality in case of their destruction.

The action will produce sustainable achievements after the end of the action. Increased skills delivered through the train of trainers' modality will increase institutional capacity and improve working modalities. Furthermore, procured border management equipment will ensure durable and long-lasting border surveillance, enabling better detection of irregular migrants. The proposed action will provide results aimed to contribute sustainable return of IDPs to their homes. By providing support to preparation activities in return process, IDPs opting for return will be economically strengthened and more sustainable which contributes and complement other durable solutions for displaced persons by which this long lasting and complicated return process will be enhanced.

The increase capacities of journalist and media professionals through capacity building activities will produce sustainable results. Furthermore, increase media literacy of citizens will produce sustainable achievements. Planned amendments to legislation will contribute to establishment of revised legal framework and enabling environment for media freedom.