

to the Commission Implementing Decision on the financing of the multi-country multiannual action plan in favour of the Western Balkans and Turkey for 2021-2022

Action Document for “EU4Youth: EU Scheme for Young Professionals in the Western Balkans”

1. SYNOPSIS

1.1. Action Summary Table

Title	EU4Youth: EU Scheme for Young Professionals in the Western Balkans Multi-country multiannual action plan in favour of the Western Balkans and Turkey for 2021-2022			
CRIS/OPSYS number	IPA III/2021/043-643/09			
Basic Act	Financed under the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA III)			
Team Europe Initiative	No			
Zone benefiting from the action	Western Balkans (Republic of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, Republic of North Macedonia, and Republic of Serbia)			
Programming document	IPA III Programming Framework			
PRIORITY AREAS AND SECTOR INFORMATION				
Window and thematic priority	Window 2 - Good governance, <i>acquis</i> alignment, good neighbourly relations and strategic communication Thematic Priority 1 - Good governance; and Thematic Priority 3 - Good neighbourly relations and reconciliations			
Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	Main SDG: 4 – Quality Education			
DAC code(s)	15110 - Public sector policy and administrative management			
Main Delivery Channel @	Donor Government - 10000			
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 type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Gender equality and women’s and	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

	girl's empowerment			
	Trade development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input 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
	Digitalisation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Migration	<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	Budget line: 15 02 01 01.01 Total estimated cost: EUR 4 000 000 Total amount of EU budget contribution: EUR 4 000 000 – year 2021			
MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION				
Type of financing and method(s) of implementation	Project Modality Indirect management with the entity(ies) to be selected in accordance with the criteria set out in section 4.2.1			
Relevant priorities and flagships from Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans	Priorities: Governance, Rule of Law, PAR			
Final date for concluding contribution / delegation agreements, procurement and grant contracts	At the latest by 31 December 2022			

Indicative operational implementation period	72 months following the adoption of the Financing Decision
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1.2. Summary of the Action

The action will contribute to reconciliation and good neighbourly relations in the Western Balkans by increasing people-to-people contacts and regional cooperation opportunities for young professionals, notably young civil servants. It will further promote good governance and support administrative capacity of the IPA beneficiaries in the Western Balkans to take on the obligations of the EU membership in particular public administration reform (PAR) at all levels of government by improving the knowledge of young civil servants of the European enlargement process. Overall, this coordinated approach will contribute to enabling environment for an improved future for young people in the region.

Concretely, the action will support development of expertise of targeted young civil servants in key sectors in the Western Balkans in close consultations with the relevant public administrations including central and local levels, which will ensure dedicated involvement and clear ownership of the action by the targeted public administrations. The action will develop and strengthen capacities, knowledge, and skills of young civil servants and contribute to the improvement of service delivery and enhancement of public administration reform. The action will consist of the following components: executive training; study visit in the EU; intraregional exchange and study visits; and cross-cutting activities comprised of networking, mentoring and support measures.

2. RATIONALE

2.1. Context Analysis

In the context of ensuring lasting stability and socio-economic development of the Western Balkans, an important emphasis needs to be placed on reconciliation and good neighbourly relations, and promotion of good governance. Supporting cooperation and potential of young people in the Western Balkans is crucial for region's further development and a prerequisite for good neighbourly relations, reconciliation and stability. Public administration reform is one of the fundamentals of the enlargement policy and it will continue to be a priority. An accountable, transparent and well-functioning public administration is not only a democratic right of citizens but also guarantor of delivery of quality services and the key driver of economic growth and competitiveness. The overall objective of the EU's assistance under Window 2 of IPA III Programming Framework is to promote good governance including PAR, which is one of the fundamental pillars of the enlargement process and a basis for effective implementation of EU policies and legislation. A well-functioning and de-politicised public administration is necessary for democratic governance. Under Window 2 of IPA III Programming Framework, developing people-to-people exchanges in various areas is a priority aiming to contribute to societal cohesion and strengthening regional cooperation, in particular cooperation among the young generations.

Under Window 4 of IPA III Programming Framework, in line with the Economic and Investment Plan (EIP)¹ for the Western Balkans and the Western Balkans Agenda on Innovation, Research, Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, IPA III will support the development of human capital by increasing assistance in areas such as training and skills. This will further contribute to skilled and resilient workforce.

This intervention will promote good governance to enhance administrative capacity of the Western Balkans to take on the obligations of the EU membership in particular PAR at all levels of government by improving the knowledge of young civil servants of the European enlargement process. The action will promote people-to-people exchanges strengthening regional cooperation and reconciliation. Moreover, it will create opportunities for young professionals to further expand their expertise and knowledge. Overall, this coordinated approach will contribute to enabling environment for an improved future for young people in the region.

2.2. Problem analysis by areas of support

The action will address challenges facing the Western Balkans in two areas: prospects for young people and public administration reform.

AREA OF SUPPORT #1: Prospects for young women and men

¹ COM(2020) 641, 6.10.2020.

- *Short problem analysis:*
Young people are an important resource for the future of the Western Balkans. They are more likely to favour EU membership and see its benefits in terms of the freedom to travel, study and work. The EU is often perceived as a source of higher employment opportunities and a better future. This perception is reinforced as youth is confronted with various challenges, including difficult economic context, high levels of youth unemployment and outdated education systems that do not respond to the needs of the present-day labour markets and promote gender stereotyping. The contribution of young people to the economic growth and other pressing concerns of the region such as environmental concerns remains under-exploited, while “brain drain” becomes a real issue.

Regional cooperation and people-to-people contacts, in particular cooperation among the young generations, are important for the promotion of mutual understanding as well as social, cultural and economic development. Regional cooperation remains a catalyst for the enlargement process and a key enabling factor for comprehensive reforms and the return to sustainable economic growth in the Western Balkans. In the past two decades, intra-regional youth cooperation in the Western Balkans has been encouraged by the EU. The EU has also been supporting dialogue on the future of youth in the region through a number of projects and initiatives, including the Erasmus+ Programme. In recent years, focus on youth gained impetus in the Berlin Process. The establishment of the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO) in 2016 was a tangible positive step towards promoting dialogue, involving young people in joint activities and changing the regional narrative. However, further work is needed to ensure sustainable youth involvement across the region, in particular through strengthening youth councils.

- *Description of main stakeholders:*
Under this area of support, the action will target young professionals in public administrations, who are 35 years old or younger – the next generation of public administrators and policy makers in the Western Balkans who will be in charge of the accession process and drive and lead future change in their societies.

AREA OF SUPPORT #2: PAR

- *Short problem analysis:*
PAR remains among the focal areas of EU's assistance for the Western Balkans beneficiaries that face common challenges. European Commission Reports and the EU/OECD SIGMA assessment reports show that PAR challenges in the Western Balkans include but are not limited to enhancement of policy and legislative development, coordination capacities including European Integration planning and implementation, accountability, professionalisation and de-politicisation of the civil service, and human resource development and management. The common PAR problems faced by the Western Balkan IPA beneficiaries could be more efficiently addressed through peer reviews and sharing of good practices across the region as regional cooperation in this field also contributes to the development of effective and efficient administrations in the Western Balkans.
- *Description of main stakeholders:*
Under this area of support, the action will target public administrations in the Western Balkans.

The action will support the Western Balkans in implementing strategies reinforcing their European perspective.

2.3. Relevance and complementarity with strategies supported by key stakeholders

The action aims to promote good governance and support administrative capacity of the region to take on the obligations of the EU membership in particular PAR at all levels of government.

2.4. Relevance and complementarity with EU policy and EU and other donors' assistance

The action is anchored in the IPA III Programming Framework: Window 2: Good governance, *acquis* alignment, good neighbourly relations and strategic communication, in particular Thematic Priority 1: Good governance and Thematic Priority 3: Good neighbourly relations and reconciliations; as well as Window 4: Competitiveness and inclusive growth, in particular Thematic Priority 1: Education, employment, social protection and inclusion policies, and health.

The action supports the implementation of the EIP, which specifies that building a high quality public administration is a foundation for a well-functioning body. Such a public administration is essential for an efficient and effective civil service that delivers quality services to citizens and businesses. In terms of investment management, the entity needs strong capacity in order to identify, prioritise, develop and manage future oriented infrastructure and other strategic investment projects, in close consultation with citizens and other stakeholders. A professional civil service plays a key role in contributing to the prevention of corruption, including through increased transparency and use of e-governance. These reforms will also strengthen safeguards against any misuse of EU funds. Respect for the rule of law is also necessary to protect EU funds, and to ensure that they are used to support the development of the region.

In addition, the action is designed to support a number of EU strategic policies such as the European enlargement policy and the revised enlargement methodology. While the Communication “Enhancing the accession process - A credible EU perspective for the Western Balkans”² underlined the need for the Western Balkan leaders to deliver more credibly on their commitment to implement the fundamental reforms, the 2020 “Communication on EU enlargement policy”³ highlighted the need to bring young people of the region closer together, and to place an even stronger focus on reforms in the fundamental areas such as the functioning of democratic institutions, public administration and the green economy, as well as quality and relevance of the training systems. This is also in line with the objectives of the newly launched Western Balkans Agenda for Innovation, Research, Education, Culture, Youth and Sport which will be fostering people-to-people exchanges in youth within the region and with the EU, and emphasises the importance of offering young people the possibility of civic participation.

In addition, the action will seek to implement relevant parts of the New European Skills Agenda, by encouraging participants to improve their skills and to strengthen their abilities to contribute to sustainable competitiveness in their IPA beneficiary. The action will also put into practice, the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights in particular access to education, training and life-long learning for everybody.

Supporting cooperation and potential of young people in the Western Balkans is crucial for region's further development and a prerequisite for good neighbourly relations and reconciliation. This has also been highlighted in the Zagreb Declaration of 6 May 2020. An enhanced regional cooperation in the Western Balkans is one of the priorities of the EIP, which further stresses that building high quality, efficient and effective public administration that delivers quality services to citizens and businesses is a foundation for a well-functioning body.

2.5. Lessons learned and links with previous financial assistance

The proposed action builds upon previous interventions targeting young civil servants, and it has been adapted based on lessons learned. The proposed action has been developed to better respond to the current needs of the administrations including through a stronger link with relevant IPA beneficiaries. The Scheme for Young Professionals was a regional action implemented with the British Council in the period of four years between 2016 and 2020. The EU Scheme for Young Professionals gathered young civil servants from the Western Balkans IPA beneficiaries for an executive training and an intra-regional exchange programme. This pilot (IPA II Multi-country Programme 2016) and a subsequent action (IPA II Multi-country Programme 2017) has positively contributed to the PAR and regional cooperation in the Western Balkans. In general, feedback from civil servants has been very positive, with the regional exchange part of the action having been identified as one of the main highlights of the programme. Nevertheless, some key challenges appeared in recent year, such as:

- effectiveness of dissemination of the call for expression of interest for participants in different Western Balkans IPA beneficiaries, and
- low number of applications followed by low success rates.

Moreover, previous actions under IPA II have shown the need to adopt a flexible approach to project implementation particularly in the context of COVID-19 pandemic.

3. DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION

3.1. Planned results and intervention logic (describing causal links between impact, outcome(s) and output(s) and including assumptions)

If (outcome 1) **improved knowledge and experience of the EU accession process is acquired by the next generation of public administrators and policy makers in the Western Balkans, who will be in charge of the process and drive and lead future change in their societies** and if (outcome 2) **stronger professional network between them is enhanced**, and if all assumptions hold true, then the intervention will (impact) contribute to reconciliation and good neighbourly relations, as well as advancement of the EU integration process of the Western Balkans through improved regional cooperation of young people. The outcomes are interlinked and mutually reinforcing and outputs and information generated from one outcome will directly influence interventions in another.

Output 1 related to outcome 1: If regional activities are successfully completed for each cohort with active involvement of public administrations, then the professional network between young civil servants in the region and

² COM (2020) 57, 5.2.2020.

³ COM(2020) 660, 6.10.2020.

between administrations will be enhanced.

Output 2 related to outcome 2: If participants and alumni are successfully mentored, supported, and have successfully networked with each other, then the professional network between young civil servants in the region and between administrations will be enhanced.

Output 1 related to outcome 2: If targeted executive trainings are successfully completed by each cohort, then the next generation of public administrators and policy makers in the Western Balkans will improve their knowledge and experience of the EU accession process.

Output 2 related to outcome 2: If study visits in the EU are successfully completed for each cohort with active involvement of public administrations then the next generation of public administrators and policy makers in the the Western Balkans will have improved knowledge and experience of the EU accession process.

3.2. Indicative type of activities

Non-exhaustive, indicative list of activities supported is the following:

- Prioritisation of annual key areas of focus for developing public administrations in close cooperation with the public administrations across the region taking into account strategic priorities of relevant IPA beneficiaries;
- Development of selection procedures for participation in the programme; organisation and management of pre-selection and selection processes of young civil servants from administration units, local authorities, and independent institutions;
- Selection and management of training providers and development of tailor-made training programmes for target groups in close cooperation with selected training institutions; Implementation of executive trainings;
- Continuous skills development and mentoring to improve efficiency and effectiveness of targeted young civil servants in relevant IPA beneficiaries in close consultations with the related public administrations including central and local levels; promotion of continuous and enriching spill overs onto relevant peers and management;
- Delivering executive training programmes, on-the-job training, study visits and exchanges for the target groups, in the region and in the EU Member States;
- Provision of technical assistance;
- Continuous networking and organisation of study-visits in relevant EU Member State public administrations; implementation of exchange programmes;
- Continuous networking, organisation and implementation of study-visits, exchanges and peer-learning intraregional activities;
- Visibility and communication activities such as information sharing, round tables, public events and meetings; designing and printing of training materials, visibility materials, and other products of the action;
- Continuous mentoring, capacity building and networking activities for the alumni of the programme, including alumni of the EU Scheme for Young Professionals in the Western Balkans, and close coordination with the Western Balkan Alumni Association;
- Activities that promote mechanisms for following-up, monitoring, evaluation and assessment;
- Activities that promote and support relevant public administrations to continuously coordinate, retain and motivate young civil servants.

Under Output 1 related to Outcome 1

Joint regional activities with active involvement of public administrations successfully completed for each cohort: a core element of the programme is an intraregional exchange. Participants will meet in six regional capitals to expand their perspectives on their work and on the region. They will examine ways in which they can collaborate and build on their experiences with active involvement of involved public administrations.

Under Output 2 related to Outcome 1

Participants and alumni successfully mentored, supported, and networked: at the beginning of each cohort, participants will agree on the final result/s that the group will jointly implement for the duration of the programme. Relevant administrations will be associated to guide and review the work, while also ensuring adequate dissemination of the products. Additionally, active involvement of alumni will aim to preserve developed capital and provide a good platform for networking among participants, strengthen cooperation and initiate a regional pool of expertise aiming to establish “soft connectivity”. The action will have a strong steering mechanism, which will support implementation of the action. To support knowledge transfer and networking, the action will provide for mentoring and support to its participants including through the virtual exchange platform.

Under Output 1 related to Outcome 2

Targeted executive trainings successfully completed by each cohort of young civil servants: the project will partner with at least one or two training institutions in the EU to offer a tailor-made short executive training to participants.

The training will introduce them to the skills and perspectives, including on the EU, that are needed throughout the programme, enable sharing of approaches to common issues, and initiate relationships among the participants.

Under Output 2 related to Outcome 2

Study visits in the EU successfully completed for each cohort with active involvement of public administrations: young civil servants will be exposed to the administration of at least one EU Member State. This component is envisaged as a study visit to an institution related to the field of work of the participant. It is organised in view of exposing participants to the structures, policies and work of an EU Member State administration with a view of strengthening thematic policy knowledge but also of enlargement requirements. The study visit should include exposure to civil society and private sector actors when relevant.

3.3. Risks and assumptions

Risks	Risk level (H/M/L)	Mitigating measures
Public administrations in the Western Balkans are reluctant to motivate their young civil servants to participate in the Scheme	L	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Public administrations will apply to the programme which will directly feed into their work; - Public administrations will be able to identify required professional profiles of young civil servants and be made further aware of the benefits of retaining up-skilled beneficiary staff; - Introduction of training orientations; - Proactive and inclusive outreach campaigns and involvement of the HRD/M departments of the IPA beneficiary administrations in the process from the outset;
Public administrations in the EU Member States or in the Western Balkans are not committed	L	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A robust communication strategy will be designed; - Engagement of public administrations in every phase of the action. Such partnership will support the ownership and long-term sustainability of this regional initiative; - Request of written commitment/agreement;
Lack of or reduced commitment of relevant IPA beneficiaries to an inclusive process of deepening regional cooperation	L	Awareness raising measures.
Face to face activities are cancelled due to the pandemic situation/border closure	M	Development of digital strategy for delivery of the activities via online means.

Assumptions (to be reflected in the Logical Framework Matrix above) – grouped by outputs and outcomes

- Young people motivated to improve regional cooperation;
- Political situation allows for regional cooperation;
- Interest, engagement and active participation of all relevant stakeholders including central and local authorities, schools, and civil society organisations;
- Participation of EU Member States administrations secured;
- Availability of relevant institutions and civil society organisations.

3.4. Mainstreaming

How does this Action contribute to Gender Equality and Women’s and Girls’ Empowerment (in line with the EU gender equality strategy 2020-2025)?

The action will strive to ensure for gender balance among the participants in all of the activities carried out. Indicators will be disaggregated by gender whenever possible. Action reports will include a specific section on the progress and results of gender mainstreaming. As women’s participation in the civil service is vital for their economic empowerment, as well as for mirroring the fabric of society in a country’s public institutions, participation of women in the scheme will be encouraged.

How does this Action address Environment and Climate change?

By their nature, activities envisaged under this action do not imply direct and major impact to environmental issues. The action will be implemented in a manner which is environmentally friendly and could encourage executive training and cooperation among young civil servants responsible for Environment and Climate change. The measures for reducing the carbon footprint of the intervention will be established, by inter-alia prioritising low-carbon emission

means of travel and CO2 compensation, as well as by complementing in-person activities with virtual events/training whenever possible/relevant.

How does this Action address the Rights Based Approach?

Due attention will be given to the respect of human rights and integration of human rights principles within the undertaken interventions. Enforcement of those principles will be ensured through specific administrative procedures applied in accordance with the legislation on anti-discrimination. The action will contribute to encouraging public administrations to adhere to legal standards of transparency, accountability, citizen participation, financial and human resource management as well as to provide qualitative services in response to priorities and needs treating all inhabitants in an equal manner.

How does this Action promote the systematic engagement with Civil Society?

The action will include a particular focus on involvement of civil society. The results of the actions will be shared broadly with civil society actors so as to ensure wide dissemination and use for the reflection.

Others (such as Resilience and Conflict Sensitivity, Roma, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups)

The action will not discriminate in any activity it may involve with any person for the reasons of originating from minorities and/or vulnerable groups. The action will put in the best use the knowledge, skills and competences accumulated through the implementation of previous actions to ensure inclusion of minorities and other vulnerable groups.

3.5. Conditions for implementation

There are no specific legal or policy conditions required for the implementation of the action. However, given that the action proposes that relevant public administrations in the Western Balkans identify professional profiles of young civil servants to apply and benefit from the action, as well as to co-apply to the programme, successful implementation of the action will require that the Western Balkans IPA beneficiaries commit to actively support the implementation of the action.

3.6. Logical Framework for PROJECT MODALITY (3 levels of results / indicators / Baselines / Targets / Source of Data / Assumptions - no activities)

Results	Results chain: Main expected results (maximum 10)	Indicators (at least one indicator per expected result)	Baselines (year)	Targets (year)	Sources of data (1 per indicator)	Assumptions
Impact	To contribute to reconciliation and good neighbourly relations; as well as advancement of the EU integration process of the Western Balkans through improved regional cooperation of young people.	Continuous progress in opening and closing of Negotiations Chapters Regional collaboration further strengthened in the context of concrete regional projects and initiatives (European Connectivity Agenda, etc.)			European Commission Reports	<i>Not applicable</i>
Outcome 1	Enhanced stronger professional network between young civil servants and between administrations	Number of young civil servants (sex dissagregated) from the region engaged in regional cooperation programme	90 (2020)	250 (2025)	Project reports and statistics	-Necessary political will to implement further reforms; - Political situation allows for regional cooperation; -Young people motivated to improve regional cooperation; -Interest, engagement and active participation of all relevant stakeholders including central and local authorities, schools, and civil society organisations; -Participation of EU Member States administrations secured; -Availability or relevant institutions and civil society organisations. - Western Balkans IPA beneficiaries actively support the implementation of the action
Outcome 2	Improved knowledge and experience of the EU accession process acquired by the next generation of public administrators and policy makers in the Western Balkans, who will be in charge of the process and drive and lead future change in their societies.	Number of policy papers developed	18 (2020)	42 (2025)	Project reports and statistics	
Output 1 related to Outcome 1	Joint regional activities with active involvement of public administrations successfully completed for each cohort	Number of intraregional activities completed	3 (2020)	7 (2020)	Project reports and statistics	
Output 2 related to Outcome 1	Participants and alumni successfully mentored, supported, and networked	% of young civil servants (male/female) who report satisfaction with the project and acknowledge that the project has strengthened their network		80% (2025)	Satisfaction survey and project reports and statistics	
Output 1 related to Outcome 2	Targeted executive trainings successfully completed by each cohort of young civil servants	Number of cohorts who successfully completed executive trainings	3 (2020)	7 (2025)	Project reports and statistics	
Output 2 related to Outcome 2	Study visits in the EU successfully completed for each cohort with active involvement of public administrations	Number of cohorts that successfully completed study visits in the EU	0 (2021)	4 (2025)	Project reports and statistics	

4. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

4.1. Financing agreement

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

4.2. 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 measures⁴.

4.2.1. Indirect management with an entrusted entity[ies] Member State Organisation

This action may be implemented in indirect management with an entity which will be selected by the Commission's services using the following criteria: pillar-assessed EU Member State's agency or a consortium thereof, demonstrating financial and operational capacity, proven experience in implementing similar regional actions and ability to mobilise partners in the Western Balkans and in the EU Member States. The implementation by this entity entails managing and implementing all aspects of the Scheme for Young Professionals with the aim to improve knowledge and experience of the EU accession process by the next generations of public administrators and policy makers in the Western Balkans and enhance stronger professional network between them. A call for proposals may be implemented as integral part of the action.

Such implementation is justified, as the scope of the scheme requires the involvement of a body, which can develop exchanges with public administrations in the EU and in the Western Balkans.

If negotiations with the identified entity(ies) fail, or a pillar assessment cannot be ensured, this action may be implemented in direct management through grants in accordance with the implementation modalities identified in 4.2.2.

4.2.2. Changes from indirect to direct management mode due to exceptional circumstances (one alternative second option)

If negotiations with the entrusted entity(ies) under 4.2.1 fail, or a pillar assessment cannot be ensured, the support may be implemented in direct management through grants in accordance with the implementation modalities identified as follows:

a) Purpose of the grants: The grant(s) will contribute to the achievement of the specific objectives (outcome 1 and 2) and the related outputs.

b) Justification of a direct grant:

Under the responsibility of the Commission's authorising officer responsible, the grant may be awarded without a call for proposals to EU Member State's agency selected using the following criteria: financial and operational capacity, proven experience in implementing similar regional actions and ability to mobilise partners in the Western Balkans and in the EU Member States.

Under the responsibility of the Commission's authorising officer responsible, the recourse to an award of a grant without a call for proposals is justified based on Article 195 (f) for activities with specific characteristics that require a particular type of body on account of its technical competence, its high degree of specialisation or its administrative powers, on condition that the activities concerned do not fall within the scope of a call for proposals; The scope of the scheme requires the involvement of a body that can develop exchanges with public administrations in the EU and in the Western Balkans.

⁴ 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.

4.3. 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.

4.4. Indicative budget

	EU contribution (amount in EUR) 2021	Indicative third party contribution, in currency identified 2021
All outcomes and outputs		
Indirect management with a Member State's Organisation - <i>cf. section 4.2.1</i>	4 000 000	N/A
Totals	4 000 000	N/A

4.5. Organisational set-up and responsibilities

The main stakeholders targeted by this action are public administrations and young civil servants. The action will seek to target other actors, such as civil society organisations, to ensure a wide dissemination of the final products and recommendations of the action.

An EU Member State agency or a consortium thereof will implement the action. Whenever relevant, the contractor will ensure coordination with relevant regional and international organisations, bilateral partners and non-governmental organisations. A Steering Committee will be established in order to provide a strategic guidance and oversight during the project implementation.

As necessary, the action will seek complementarities with ReSPA (Regional School for Public Administration) and SIGMA (Programme for Support for Improvement in Governance and Management).

5. PERFORMANCE/RESULTS MONITORING AND REPORTING

5.1. Internal monitoring

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. In addition, the action might be subject to external monitoring in line with the European Commission rules and procedures.

The action Logical Framework Matrix indicators will set out the measurable criteria against which the quality assurance of the action will be monitored, assessed and evaluated, linked to quality of the deliverables and of the impacts foreseen. The action will detail the review methodology through which this assessment will take place, and will triangulate this methodology with the project management and evaluation activities.

A Steering Committee will be established, offering an internal monitoring process.

5.2. Roles & responsibilities for data collection, analysis & reporting

The implementing partner will continuously collect, record and track key data on the implementation of activities. Particular emphasis will be placed on systematic monitoring of progress and assessment against the qualitative and quantitative indicators identified in the logical framework.

In the reporting process, a strong emphasis will be placed on feedback from end users. Where feasible monitoring frameworks will ensure that reports and collected data capture the tangible impact of the action on men and women and on different categories of vulnerable groups etc.

5.3. Evaluation

Having regard to the importance of the action, a mid-term evaluation will be carried out for this action via independent consultants hired by the implementing partner.

It will be carried out for learning purposes, in particular with respect to multi-disciplinary approach of the action.

The evaluation reports shall be shared with the relevant IPA beneficiaries and other key stakeholders. The implementing partner and the Commission shall analyse the conclusions and recommendations of the evaluations and, where appropriate, in agreement with the Steering Committee and the relevant IPA beneficiaries, jointly decide on the follow-up actions to be taken and any adjustments necessary.

Moreover, the on-going and continuous monitoring, evaluation and assessment of quality assurance will also form a central function of evaluation through the action reporting intervals as per contractual obligations. In this way, quality assurance is embedded in the action from the outset and throughout its operation.

6. AUDIT

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 audits or expenditure verification assignments for one or several contracts or agreements.

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

7. 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 public 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. It is the responsibility of the implementing partner(s) to keep the EU Delegations/Office and the European Commission fully informed of the planning and implementation of the specific visibility and communication activities.

Communication on this Action should also take into consideration the risks from misinformation and disinformation, and the ways of countering these in order to avoid undermining the Union's efforts and image in the Western Balkans.

8. SUSTAINABILITY

The following elements will contribute to the sustainability of this action:

- Public administrations in the Western Balkans will apply to the programme and the work conducted by the participants will feed into their regular tasks, thus ensuring the commitment and added value that the programme will have to the targeted administrations;
- In short to medium term, institutional sustainability will be promoted via: (i) capacity building activities such as the intensive and tailor-made executive programmes; (ii) the enhanced knowledge and up-skilling of the participants which in the longer term will act as a consolidation factor for the beneficiary institutions contributing to institutional memory and enhanced institutional reform capacity public administrations; (iii) the continued employment of, combined with possible career growth incentives for, beneficiary civil servants and (iv) the institutionalisation of the young professionals within the Western Balkans Alumni Association;
- The action does not envisage the establishment or financing of new organisational units or their running costs, thus contributing to the sustainability of the action;
- Environmental sustainability will be promoted by applying all possible best practice in office recycling (e.g., printing both sides, using electronic documents over printed papers, etc.) and the limited production of only necessary hard copy documents and materials. The action may also have an indirect positive impact on environmental situation in the region by supporting selected young civil servants who will be trained on EU standards/best practice in this field.