

ANNEX 2 REPLACING ANNEX 8

to the Commission Implementing Decision amending “Implementing Decision C(2021) 9716 final adopting a financing of the multi-country multiannual action plan in favour of the Western Balkans and Turkey for 2021-2022”

Action Document for “EU Integration Facility, including EU support for the participation of IPA III beneficiaries in EU Agencies and Technical Assistance and Information Exchange (TAIEX)”

1. SYNOPSIS

1.1. Action Summary Table

Title	EU Integration Facility, including EU support for the participation of IPA III beneficiaries in EU Agencies and Technical Assistance and Information Exchange (TAIEX) “Multi-country multiannual action plan in favour of the Western Balkans and Turkey for 2021-2022”
CRIS/OPSYS number	IPA III/2021/043-643/08, IPA III/2022/NEAR>EACEA.08, IPA III/2022/NEAR-REGIO.08 OPSYS Action: ACT-60525 ABAC commitment level 1: SCR.DEC043643.01 (allocation 2021) ABAC commitment level 1: JAD.973007 (allocation 2022)
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) and Republic of Türkiye
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 2 - Administrative capacity and <i>acquis</i> alignment Thematic priority 3 - Good neighbourly relations and reconciliation
Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	Main SDG 17: Partnership for the Goals All 17 SDGs - cross-cutting
DAC code(s)	43010 – Multisector aid – 100%

* 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.

Main Delivery Channel@	Multilateral organisation (EU Agencies) - 40000			
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 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 type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Migration	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	COVID-19	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
BUDGET INFORMATION				
Amounts concerned	<p>Budget line: 15 02 01 01.01</p> <p>Total estimated cost: EUR 23 200 000</p> <p>Total amount of European Union (EU) budget contribution: EUR 22 400 000</p> <p>The EU contribution is for an amount of EUR 4 000 000 from the general budget of the European Union for financial year 2021 and for an amount of EUR 18 400 000 from the general budget of the European Union for financial year 2022, subject to the availability of appropriations for the respective financial years following the adoption of the relevant annual budget or as provided for in the system of provisional twelfths.</p>			
MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION				
Type of financing and method(s) of implementation	<p>Project Modality</p> <p>Direct management through Grants, Procurement, Prizes</p> <p>Part of the action will be co-delegated to the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA)</p> <p>Part of the action will be cross-subdelegated to the Directorate-General of Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO)</p>			

	<p>Indirect management with the entities to be selected in accordance with the criteria set out in section 4.2.4</p> <p>Indirect management with Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB)</p> <p>Indirect management with the World Bank</p>
Relevant priorities and flagships from Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans	Not relevant
Final date for concluding contribution / delegation agreements, procurement and grant contracts	<p>Allocation 2021 - At the latest by 31 December 2022</p> <p>Allocation 2022 - At the latest by 31 December 2023</p>
Indicative operational implementation period	<p>Allocation 2021: 72 months following the adoption of the Financing Decision</p> <p>Allocation 2022: 84 months following the adoption of the Financing Decision</p>

1.2. Summary of the Action

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

The action includes three main areas of support:

1) EU Integration Facility:

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

It will support small interventions such as provision of technical assistance, preparatory, pilot or start up/bridging or follow up actions. It may also cover relevant studies, networking, visibility, evaluation activities, as well as training or capacity-building activities. Support to the smooth finalisation of the Regional Housing Programme (RHP) is foreseen as one such priority. Contribution to initiatives such as the European Universities alliances and the New European Bauhaus facilitate the participation of the relevant IPA beneficiaries in relevant EU networks.

2) Participation in EU agencies:

The specific objective is to ensure that IPA III beneficiaries are able to participate effectively in the activities of EU agencies by supporting the approximation to and adoption of the EU *acquis* in areas such as fundamental rights, transport, competitiveness, environment and climate change, chemicals management, health, food and medicines safety, inter alia.

It supports EU agencies by allowing them to carry out preparatory measures with the IPA III beneficiaries and stakeholders in view of their future participation in those EU agencies upon membership or earlier. It will also support the development of reporting standards in the Beneficiaries in line with the Sofia Declaration on the Green Agenda¹

¹<https://www.rcc.int/download/docs/Leaders%20Declaration%20on%20the%20Green%20Agenda%20for%20the%20WB.pdf/196c92cf0534f629d43c460079809b20.pdf>

and the Decarbonisation Roadmap² adopted by the Contracting Parties of the Energy Community Ministerial Council in 2021.

The support aims as well at knowledge transfer and capacity building in the area of expertise of those EU agencies.

3) TAIEX:

The Technical Assistance and Information Exchange instrument (TAIEX) aims to provide peer-to-peer technical assistance and capacity building by supporting the IPA III beneficiaries in the alignment with, and implementation of the EU *acquis*, according to the demands of beneficiaries and the strategic priorities of the EU.

TAIEX supports short and medium term, demand-driven and strategically oriented assistance and is complementary to, and works alongside other instruments and programmes to help the IPA III beneficiaries move towards their goal of EU accession. In addition, TAIEX supports top-down requests based on jointly agreed priorities between the EU and the IPA III beneficiaries, in areas such as green and digital transition or COVID-19 recovery.

The assistance is mainly provided by EU public sector experts sharing their knowledge and experience through workshops, expert missions and study visits. TAIEX assistance supports beneficiaries to align progressively with the EU *acquis* and to improve their working methods in line with EU standards, as monitored and verified by the European Commission's specific screening and / or annual progress reports, as well as through peer review missions.

In specific circumstances, when expertise from beneficiaries is of particular significance to other beneficiaries and it provides an added value, experts from beneficiaries can take part in the activities to provide expertise in the approximation to EU legislation, standards and practices (e.g. adoption of green transition measures. This participation comes as an effective complement to the knowledge provided by the EU Member States' experts, which remains the core of the activities of TAIEX, while developing a multi-stakeholder approach enriching the instrument with regional cooperation.

TAIEX has a longstanding and successful track record deploying EU Member States public expertise since 1996.

2. RATIONALE

2.1. Context Analysis

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

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

To address these various aspects of administrative capacity at sector level, an EU Integration Facility could be set up should it not be feasible to integrate such activities in broader sector reform interventions. The facility could also be strategically used to address the broader mechanisms that foster institutional learning and capacity building.

One example of such support is technical assistance and operating support to the IPA beneficiary Lead Institutions in charge of the implementation of Country Housing Projects under the RHP.

An EU Agency is a body governed by European public law. It is distinct from the EU Institutions (Council, Parliament, Commission, etc.) and has its own legal personality. It is set up by an act of secondary legislation in order to accomplish a very specific technical, scientific or managerial task, in the framework of the European Union's duties derived from the comprehensive implementation of the EU *acquis*. Preparation for full participation in EU agencies is a fundamental step towards familiarising IPA beneficiaries with the EU *acquis*. As in the case of EU programmes, it would serve the interests of both the Union and the IPA III beneficiaries to get acquainted with the EU *acquis* early on. Participation in the work of EU agencies by IPA III beneficiaries will support their alignment and implementation

² https://www.energy-community.org/dam/jcr:c28b58eb-22db-4ad5-9ed1-4e93b5b613b7/19thMC_Decarbonisation_Roadmap_301121.pdf

of the EU *acquis* in a variety of areas. Such participation is in line with aim of 2020 February communication on enlargement calling for closer integration with the European Union, included accelerated integration and “phasing-in” to individual EU policies, the EU market and EU programmes, while ensuring a level playing field³.

TAIEX actions may provide the complementary short and medium-term assistance. TAIEX supports IPA III beneficiaries by providing peer-to-peer capacity building with regard to the alignment, application and enforcement of EU legislation as well as advice about EU best practices. The instrument provides demand-driven activities and strategically oriented initiatives and facilitates the delivery of appropriate tailor-made public sector expertise to address issues at short notice. Technical assistance through the TAIEX instrument comes in different formats and across all areas of the EU *acquis*. Partner administrations can benefit from TAIEX’s flexibility to help meet wider training needs in EU legislation through the organisation of workshops and seminars (face-to-face, online or hybrid), which can reach a significant number of officials. Narrower, more specialised needs can be met through the expert mission format. Study visits to EU Member States are a complementary institution-building tool, which allows IPA III beneficiaries to see first-hand best-practice models of EU *acquis* implementation. More in depth requests can be treated by written input of TAIEX experts in the form of work from home.

The outburst of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 forced TAIEX activities to adapt and look for innovative solutions in order to continue the implementation of the instrument. By now, TAIEX has successfully undertaken a digital leap which includes new ways of working and implementing activities. Even after lifting all pandemic restrictions, a digital component (e.g. fully online or hybrid events) will continue to enrich the instrument, organising activities with the same high-quality features which will complement the in-person activities.

The innovation brought by the digital leap proves the flexibility and resilience of TAIEX and brings new advantages such as wider accessibility to the activities and an enhanced greening of the instrument.

2.2. Problem analysis by areas of support

AREA OF SUPPORT #1: EU Integration Facility:

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

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

There is also the need for the IPA III beneficiaries to strengthen their economic governance and improving competitiveness in order to meet economic criteria. Structural reforms need to be prioritised and competitiveness enhanced, in order to support fiscal consolidation, to tackle high external imbalances as well as high unemployment. Both using the benefits of modern technology for efficiency and supporting the digital economy to enhance overall competitiveness. The region’s labour markets face a dual burden that is seriously affecting their performance: rapid aging and high inactivity and unemployment rates that exclude many people from the labour market. The lack of services in support of aged and young people offers a window to explore how a health-care economy can be developed with focus on constraints imposed by the lack of care.

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

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

Therefore, having in mind the state of play of the accession negotiation process, it is necessary to have a flexible instrument within IPA III, in order to provide timely assistance to the emerging/bridging needs in the accession process as well as for preparatory activities for programming and/or follow up interventions or monitoring of

³ COM(2020) 57 of 05.02.2020 “Enhancing the accession process - A credible EU perspective for the Western Balkans”

implementation of IPA, thus increasing impact of the EU financial assistance. The potential use of the EU Integration Facility would be highly beneficial in order to materialise actions relevant for the Green and Digital Agendas for the Western Balkans⁴ and help the region in its reforms in these areas.

The New European Bauhaus is an initiative launched by President von der Leyen in her address on the State of the Union on 16 September 2020. The initiative has the ambition to make the Green Deal a cultural, human-centred and positive, tangible experience and accelerate a sustainable greening of the built environment. Similarly, the European University Initiative's aim to trigger unprecedented levels of institutionalised cooperation making it systemic, structural and sustainable and to increase quality, performance and international competitiveness of European higher education institutions. 'European Universities' will be key drivers to boost the quality of higher education and where possible to strengthen its link to the research and innovation landscape in Europe and its outreach towards the society and economy. It is essential that relevant IPA beneficiaries can be associated to those key of European initiatives.

Finally, in the current evolving context, such as the one related to the COVID-19 pandemic it is necessary to allocate funding and facilitate interventions which can materialise in different forms of immediate support.

AREA OF SUPPORT #2: Participation in EU agencies:

The IPA III beneficiaries have also to adopt the *acquis* in the areas covered by the mandate of sectoral EU decentralised agencies. The current degree of compliance varies considerably from Beneficiary to Beneficiary as well as across the various sectors covered by the agencies. The action focuses on some identified priorities such as the fundamental rights, transport, competitiveness, environment, climate change, health, food and medicine safety. Other priority areas could be further identified, with particular attention to those contributing to the implementation of the Economic and Investment Plan (EIP)⁵ and the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans embedded into it.

In all the above areas the Beneficiaries need to integrate themselves into European structures and have to adopt the relevant *acquis*. The degree of compliance varies but in all cases the work is still in progress. The structures are not yet build up and the know-how has not been completely transferred because co-operation is highly technical and complex. A phasing out would entail serious negative consequences upon accession as assistance needs to be granted on a sustainable basis.

The key stakeholders in the process are the EU specialised agencies and the final beneficiaries, which are either line-ministries or dedicated services such as transport safety - accident investigation - regulatory authorities or data collection and transmission hubs. Potential obstacles to smooth operation are shortage of staff, lack of political support or inadequate technical capacities. In this context, competency development of the final stakeholders, by means of knowledge increase and knowledge transfer (such as training, peer to peer and on-site support) is a key element for the sustainability of the preparatory actions.

AREA OF SUPPORT #3: TAIEX:

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

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

The request for public sector expertise from partners may be low due to a lack of proper awareness raising as regards of the Institution Building Instruments (including TAIEX and Twinning). In this regard, operational complementarity

⁴ SWD(2020)223 final, 6.10.2020.

⁵ COM(2020) 641, 6.10.2020.

and synergies among instruments will contribute to a more effective capacity building strategy.

The priorities and objectives targeted by TAIEX have a strong international dimension and take part in overarching EU key priorities with strategic repercussions like the Green Deal⁶, building resilient and sustainable economies and influencing post-pandemic policies. In all of them, a proper and efficient functioning of strong and reliable public institutions is critical and the public expertise brought by TAIEX activities, essential.

The digital leap undertaken by TAIEX needs to be supported by increased on-line capacities and digital ways of working which require constant adaptation.

2.3. Relevance and complementarity with strategies supported by key stakeholders

All components under the action may complement the implementation of jointly agreed priorities between the EU and the IPA III beneficiaries, in areas such as green and digital transition, good neighbourly relations or COVID-19 recovery.

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

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

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

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

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

In line with the policy-first approach, this action contributes to achieving the objectives and areas identified as priorities in the IPA III Programming Framework, and is in line with the recommendations derived from the specific instruments of the enlargement process, such as the annual Enlargement Package⁷ providing a detailed assessment of both the level of preparedness and the degree of progress achieved over the preceding reporting period for each of the Beneficiaries. It also supports the main priorities laid down in the European Commission Communication for "*A credible enlargement perspective for and enhanced EU engagement with the Western Balkans*"⁸, the 2020 Communication "*Enhancing the accession process – a credible EU perspective for the Western Balkans*"⁹, and the "*Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans*"¹⁵, accompanied by the Commission Staff Working document with the "*Guidelines for the implementation of the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans*"¹⁰, inter alia.

The interventions for the participation of the IPA III beneficiaries in the EU Agencies are in full complementarity with EU policies in the areas of work of the EU agencies. With the support, the EU agencies contribute by fostering better informed policy making through the results of the research and analysis.

TAIEX provides assistance across all chapters of the EU *acquis* and is a well-established instrument designed to support IPA III beneficiaries' efforts to take on the obligations of membership. It complements bilateral IPA III action

⁶ COM(2019) 640 final

⁷ COM(2021) 644, 19.10.2021.

⁸ COM(2018) 65, 6.02.2018.

⁹ COM(2020) 57, 5.02.2020.

¹⁰ SWD(2020) 223, 6.10.2020.

programmes and other institution building instruments. Attention is given to the assessment of each incoming requests for assistance in terms of purpose and fit with strategies and priorities in ongoing policy and technical cooperation.

2.5. Lessons learned and links with previous financial assistance

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

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

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

An "Evaluation of the EU support actions for the participation of beneficiaries in EU agencies funded under IPA" has recently concluded in July 2019, and some of its conclusions have served for programming part of the further support under this action. Up to 12 EU agencies have received funding under IPA I and IPA II regularly since 2007 in two-year cycles with the aim of furthering participation of IPA beneficiaries in the work of the respective agency. While the evaluation concluded that IPA assistance has been instrumental in increasing the understanding of IPA beneficiaries of the work of EU agencies and improved skills broadly, it also highlights that capacity strengthening has been limited by the resources available for this work. Under IPA III, assistance needs to be more targeted to the political objectives, which might entails a degree of selection according to the portfolio of the agencies.

TAIEX was set up in 1996 as a follow-up to the European Commission's White Paper on the preparation of the associated beneficiaries for integration into the internal market. Its mission has since been broadened to provide short and medium term institution building assistance in all areas of the EU *acquis*, to support the alignment, application, and enforcement of the EU *acquis*. Moreover, since 2006 the TAIEX instrument is available to the European Neighbourhood partner beneficiaries and complementary financing of this assistance is provided through the Instrument for the European Neighbourhood (ENI). Since 2015, the instrument is available to EU Member States under various programmes. As of 2016, it is also available to the beneficiaries covered by the Partnership Instrument, whereas since 2019, the beneficiaries and territories concerned by the EU development policy are also covered. Each strand is being financed accordingly by the corresponding programmes.

For beneficiaries where the demand is generally low, measures have been and will continue to be envisaged, together with respective TAIEX National Contact Points and EU Delegations, in order to increase awareness of potential beneficiary institutions about the possibilities that TAIEX can offer.

TAIEX is well received and perceived, as past evaluations¹¹ and the feed-back provided by the participants¹² show. At the same time, continuous efforts are made to adapt and improve the way TAIEX assistance is implemented. The IPA Multi Beneficiary Programmes' evaluation¹³, carried out from December 2012 to May 2013, promotes TAIEX as an

¹¹ E.g. external evaluations by Ramboll Management "Evaluation of the TAIEX instrument and development of an evaluation tool" (December 2009/January 2010) and by SACO Consortium "Evaluation of EU support for *acquis* alignment and preparation implemented and funded through the TAIEX instrument for the benefit of the Turkish Cypriot community" (from September 2013 to March 2014) as well as the Evaluation of TAIEX Instrument from 2015 implemented by AETS Consortium.

¹² See Section 3.6 on performance measurement for further details.

¹³ "Interim evaluation and meta-evaluation of IPA assistance", implemented by Ecorys and funded by the European Commission, DG Enlargement, unit A3. http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/financial_assistance/phare/evaluation/2013/23914_rep_mbp.pdf

institution-building instrument. Furthermore, a specific evaluation on the TAIEX Instrument was published in August 2015¹⁴. The conclusions of this evaluation were overall positive and its recommendations have been useful for the continuous improvement of the assistance provided. Improvement in the medium term shall include, but not be limited to, adopting an environmentally friendly approach to TAIEX assistance, wherever appropriate¹⁵ and improved knowledge management. In this regard, the successful experience of the digital leap in the context of COVID-19 pandemic and its effects on travel and face-to-face events has confirmed the ability of TAIEX to offer assistance via digital means. This feature shall be pursued also after the end of the pandemic with a view to offer different alternatives to the partners and thus, reduce furthermore the carbon—footprint of TAIEX by promoting a digital alternative to the face-to-face activities when this is considered relevant and possible. With regards to face-to-face events, the external service provider (logistic support to organise TAIEX activities) has been instructed to increase the efforts in the use of sustainable suppliers and supplies when possible/available, eco-friendly hotels, catering and furniture and the reduction of printing, etc.

After the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, TAIEX instrument adapted to the new reality and enforced new working methods and digital solutions which will continue to enrich the activities offered even after the pandemic restrictions will be lifted. This digital leap will contribute to a more effective assistance complementing in-person activities with other digital means (such as online and hybrid activities). It will result in a wider accessibility to the activities implemented and greening the instrument while maintaining the same high-quality features.

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

3. DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION

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

AREA OF SUPPORT #1: EU Integration Facility

If a number of preparatory, pilot and start-up actions/ urgent/bridging support for important regional initiatives and organisations, and TA, studies, assessments, monitoring missions, evaluations are produced/carried out, AND there is timely identification of the needs, which need to be addressed by the EU Integration Facility, as well as the political commitment from the IPA II beneficiaries, including technical, financial and adequate human resources to be allocated to the implementation of the activities, THEN these outputs will lead to assure continuity in the European perspective and herewith related issues through the flexible actions supported. (outputs 1 and 2 related to outcome 1)

AREA OF SUPPORT #2: EU agencies

If an enhanced participation of the IPA III beneficiaries in the activities of the relevant EU agencies is ensured, AND there is full and active commitment of all involved parties; the IPA III beneficiaries have necessary professional resources; there is availability of all required statistical data; there is availability of staff that will participate in action activities from the beginning to action completion, THEN these outputs in relation to the particular areas of work of each of the relevant EU agencies will lead to reach a progressive alignment of IPA III beneficiaries with EU legislation and improvement of working methods in line with EU standards. (output 1 related to outcome 2)

AREA OF SUPPORT #3: TAIEX

If EU-relevant IPA III beneficiary political and policy dialogue is enriched; coordination of institutions strengthened; cooperation with a view to improve regulatory convergence and/or legislative approximation towards higher standard intensified; and EU rules and standards promoted effectively, AND the requests for assistance are submitted by IPA III beneficiary as well as the adequate public expertise from EU Member States is identified, THEN these outputs will lead to reach a progressive alignment of IPA III beneficiaries with EU legislation and improvement of working methods in line with EU standards. (output 2 related to outcome 2)

If those flexible, preparatory/pilot actions addressing urgent and/or unforeseen needs that merit to be addressed are

¹⁴ "Evaluation of TAIEX Instrument"(2014/346665/1) implemented by AETS Consortium.

¹⁵ The mobilisation of experts from different EU Member States to beneficiary– the instrument’s core task - has a notable carbon foot print, particularly if the travel is by air.

supported as well as progressive alignment of IPA III beneficiaries with EU legislation and improvement of working methods in line with EU standards is reached, AND assuming that there is continuing commitment of IPA III beneficiaries to an inclusive process of deepening regional cooperation; the results achieved in the respective sectors of EU agencies' intervention in the IPA III beneficiaries in the recent years is maintained; the political commitment for further development, harmonisation and interaction with other stakeholders as well as the EU in related fields is continued; the enlargement pace progresses, paving the way for the use of TAIEX instrument to share public expertise; and a conducive environment in the IPA III beneficiary exists to allow these reform to happen, THEN the overall action will contribute to facilitate progress in key areas of needed reforms required by the Western Balkans and Türkiye to comply with Union values. (outcomes 1 and 2 contributing to impact)

3.2. Indicative type of activities

AREA OF SUPPORT #1: EU Integration Facility

The EU Integration Facility will enhance technical and administrative capacity for *acquis* chapters through institution building (training or technical assistance, grants, etc.) and support for the relevant EU networks. Under this Facility, a number of small actions will be implemented in order to meet specific and urgent needs in the region, including interventions in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The support can be provided in cases where an initial proposal is considered to be a priority for IPA III financial assistance (justified in terms of short or medium term priorities; and relevant strategic documents), but where further efforts are needed to design and appraise mature actions, ready for implementation under the upcoming IPA financial assistance action programme.

At this stage, the following intervention has already been identified:

Technical assistance and operating support for the effective implementation of the Country Housing Projects under the RHP have been identified as a priority, to enable coping with delays caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Other interventions may include:

- Pilot actions to test new initiatives which may then be replicated on a wider scale, such as the European Universities initiative or prizes to support the New European Bauhaus;
- Other preparatory, start-up actions, and urgent bridging support;
- Provision of short-term technical expert assistance, such as for drafting tender documents and/or terms of reference and technical specifications for the implementation of IPA III funded actions;
- Feasibility studies, assessments, such as a regional diagnostic study on labour market inclusion;
- Visibility for multi- beneficiaries activities;
- Provision of training support to relevant authorities;
- Monitoring and evaluation of multi- beneficiaries actions during or following the implementation;
- Support to regional networks by and, amongst others, organisation of regional meetings, workshops, study visits in strategically important areas;
- Support to translation of existing tools for the benefit of the IPA III beneficiaries.

AREA OF SUPPORT #2: EU agencies

Activities related to the support to the participation of IPA II beneficiaries in EU agencies include interactive working sessions, trainings and workshops, aiming at capacity building, transfer of knowledge and development of skills that should lead to the creation of the necessary administrative structures, compliance of internal legislation with the EU *acquis*, application of the standardised methodologies (including improved reporting tools) in the field of expertise of respective agencies or establishment of effective networks.

AREA OF SUPPORT #3: TAIEX

TAIEX offers technical assistance to IPA III beneficiaries. TAIEX mobilises mainly public expertise from EU Member States to share expertise with their peers in IPA III beneficiaries through the following types of **activities** (face-to-face, online or hybrid): Seminars/workshops, expert missions, study visits, peer reviews/assessments and work from home missions.

During these events public sector experts from EU Member States institutions are brought in close contact during

several days with their peers in the relevant Beneficiaries. The EU experts prepare an agenda for the meeting, in cooperation with the Beneficiary and the Commission. After the meeting, the EU experts prepare a report with recommendations on follow up.

Mobilising sectoral experts, mainly from EU Member States, and if relevant regional experts, to give the beneficiaries' public officials the possibility to learn from their peers. The experts mobilised belong to the public administration (or assimilated institutions, such as mandated bodies) of EU Member States, and in specific circumstances of beneficiaries. Besides, senior experts having experience with the direct technical or political steer of public administrations and their reforms may also be invited to contribute, as can officials of EU institutions, agencies or international organisations.

TAIEX experts share their knowledge and experience with beneficiaries through seminars, workshops, expert missions, including peer-based assessment missions, study visits, and work from home; according to the needs of the beneficiary and the scope and nature of the intervention. Assistance will continue to be delivered in-person when appropriate and possible, but the instrument will be enriched with digital activities building from the experience gained during the COVID-19 pandemic and benefitting from the digital leap undertaken. Therefore, in-person, digital and hybrid activities will be considered and combined to provide effective assistance and to better contribute to the aims of the instrument.

Moreover, the involvement of private sector experts specialised on assessing public administration needs could support partner countries in their participation in the Institution Building Instruments (notably TAIEX and Twinning) and how such instruments could foster their reform agendas, as part of longer term assignments.

TAIEX targets officials and public servants of IPA partners' institutions. It intervenes at the request of the IPA beneficiary and is also mobilised at the initiative of the European Commission and the European External Action Service to support strategic objectives. For that purpose, all relevant services in the European Commission headquarters, EU Delegations, as well as the European External Action Service are involved in the identification and formulation of TAIEX activities.

3.3. Risks and assumptions

Risks	Risk level (H/M/L)	Mitigating measures
Risk 1: With regards to support to EU agencies, risks include: - lack of political support and commitment to the reform process - inability of sector authorities to perform reforms without the necessary government support - insufficient human resources and technical expertise required for the attendance to activities	M	EU agencies, depending on their competence, internal organisation and planned scope of activities in the IPA III beneficiaries, mitigate these risks by using the already developed plans, or develop and adjust them during the action implementation. Competency development of the final stakeholders, by means of knowledge increase and knowledge transfer is key for sustainability and to mitigate obstacles related to shortage of staff, lack of political support or inadequate technical capacities.
Risk 2: Beneficiaries do not submit requests for TAIEX assistance	L	Awareness raising to the IPA III beneficiaries through DG NEAR geo units and EU Delegations
Risk 3: Experts in the existing database of TAIEX do not match the required needs for assistance	L	Outreach to the National Contacts Points for TAIEX in the EU Member States to identify to adequate expertise
Risk 4: Activities for all components cannot happen face-to-face due to continued COVID-19 pandemic restrictions to travels	M	Continuation of the digital leap: activities are implemented via online means.
Risk 5: COVID-19 or the international security situation cause delays to, or increased costs for, the implementation of housing projects	M	The activities to be financed are themselves a mitigation measure to help manage those risks
Assumptions (to be reflected in the Logical Framework Matrix above) – grouped by outputs and outcomes		

The main assumption for AREA OF SUPPORT #1: EU Integration Facility on which the success of the programme depends, is the continuous commitment of the administrations in the IPA III beneficiaries to the establishment of harmonised international or regional processes in the supported sectors, and to effective management of resources provided.

The main assumptions for AREA OF SUPPORT #2: EU Agencies are that the results achieved in the respective sectors of EU agencies' intervention in the IPA III beneficiaries in the recent years will be maintained and that the political commitment for further development, harmonisation and interaction with other stakeholders as well as the EU in related fields will be continued.

The main assumptions for AREA OF SUPPORT #3: are: the enlargement pace progresses, paving the way for the use of TAIEX instrument to share public expertise; a conducive environment in the IPA III beneficiary exists to allow these reform to happen; critical number and quality requests for technical assistance are submitted by the IPA III beneficiaries to the TAIEX instrument; relevant public experts from the EU Member States are identified and available to support IPA III beneficiary institutions in the field of their requests for assistance; the database of EU Member States' public experts is kept updated with new experts registering themselves.

3.4. 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)?

All components will strive to promote gender equality as well to take measures to achieve equal opportunities for male and female in all aspects regarding the implementation of the action.

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

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

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

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

How does this Action address Environment and Climate change?

The action being cross-cutting, it should ensure environmental and climate considerations are mainstreamed into all activities. This will contribute to the sustainability of the action. The mainstreaming should be based on the identification and mitigation of environmental and climate risks as well as the potential inclusion of environment in the scope of the activities. Technical assistance will help identify and implement climate-relevant building solutions. Part of the support to EU Agencies will directly contribute to the decarbonisation objectives through financing of activities aiming at developing and improving reporting standards in the area of climate change and in line with the relevant EU legislation. TAIEX has taken stock of the successful experience during the COVID-19 pandemic, where all interventions were implemented through online means. TAIEX will continue to offer this digital alternative to the IPA III beneficiaries after the pandemic when this is considered relevant and possible, to reduce its carbon footprint. When face-to-face activities are planned, the external service provider will be instructed to consider opting for eco-friendly suppliers and supplies, as well as using other means of reducing carbon footprint e.g. use of trains instead of planes, no printing, using tap water etc. More specifically, the external service provider will be instructed to comply with the Green Public Procurement principles understood as a process whereby public authorities seek to procure goods, services and works with a reduced environmental impact throughout their life cycle when compared to goods, services and works with the same primary function that would otherwise be procured.

How does this Action address the Rights Based Approach?

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

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

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

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

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

Additionally, TAIEX is primarily targeting officials and public servants in IPA III beneficiary institutions. Being mainly a demand-driven instrument intervening at the request of the IPA III beneficiaries, it supports their reform processes to align and approximate their legislation and regulation with the EU *acquis*. In this regard, the TAIEX instrument aims at promoting and sharing expertise and practices from EU Member States that are applying already the EU standards. The **EU standards and policies are therefore applicable horizontally across** the TAIEX activities, according to the area and field of each intervention/activity. TAIEX can also be mobilised at the request of the European Commission and the EEAS to support strategic objectives such as environment and digitalisation.

3.5. Conditions for implementation

It is assumed that all relevant IPA III beneficiaries stay committed to completing the Sarajevo Process and provide sufficient resources to run an efficient mechanism to steer, supervise and control the implementation of their country housing programmes.

It is also assumed that the IPA III beneficiaries stay committed to the Sofia Declaration on the Green Agenda¹⁶ and reaching its climate neutrality target and to the Decarbonisation Roadmap¹⁷ adopted by the Contracting Parties of the Energy Community Ministerial Council in 2021.

TAIEX is both a demand-driven instrument, mobilising expertise when a request is expressed by IPA III beneficiaries; and a strategically oriented assistance, with initiatives being promoted by the relevant Commission services and the EEAS. In this regard, TAIEX can achieve its objective provided that the beneficiary institutions express such requests and the correct priorities are fostered. The enlargement pace of each IPA III beneficiary determines also the extent to which an institutional acceptance of the beneficiaries to align to the EU *acquis* is in place. A conducive environment for the reforms to happen in the relevant IPA III beneficiary, transposing and applying the measures and practices suggested by the mobilised experts, is key for the successful implementation of TAIEX at long term. TAIEX also relies on the expertise available in the EU Member States. In this regard, the identification and availability of relevant experts is also conditional to the achievement of the instrument's objectives, as they lie at the heart of the instrument.

¹⁶<https://www.rcc.int/download/docs/Leaders%20Declaration%20on%20the%20Green%20Agenda%20for%20the%20WB.pdf/196c92cf0534f629d43c460079809b20.pdf>

¹⁷ https://www.energy-community.org/dam/jcr:c28b58eb-22db-4ad5-9ed1-4e93b5b613b7/19thMC_Decarbonisation_Roadmap_301121.pdf

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	<i>To facilitate progress in key areas of needed reforms required by the Western Balkans and Türkiye to comply with Union values</i>	<i>Progress made on political and economic criteria as well as in the respective areas as indicated in the annual communications on EU Enlargement Policy</i> <i>Recognition of ongoing reform process in various internationally recognised composite indicators (World Bank report, IMF reports) and the level of economic integration with the EU, measured by % of exports and imports going to/coming from the EU</i>			<i>Commission Annual Reports</i> <i>World Bank, IMF, ESTAT</i>	<i>Not applicable</i>
Outcome 1	<i>Flexible, preparatory/pilot actions addressing urgent and/or unforeseen needs that merit to be addressed rapidly in order to assure continuity in the European perspective and herewith related issues supported</i>	<i>Degree of timely implementation of multi-beneficiary action programmes – number of contracts under implementation</i>	<i>0(2021)</i>	<i>3(2026)</i>	<i>Financial assistance implementation reports</i> <i>Commission Annual Reports</i>	<i>The continuing commitment of IPA III beneficiaries to an inclusive process of deepening regional cooperation.</i>
Outcome 2	<i>Progressive alignment of IPA III beneficiaries with EU legislation and improvement of working methods in line with EU standards reached</i>	<i>Degree of compliance with the acquis in the respective co-operation areas of all components under the action</i>	<i>Relevant IPA III beneficiaries have made some progress with the implementation of the EU acquis.</i>	<i>Relevant IPA III beneficiaries are well advanced in implementing the EU acquis.</i>	<i>Commission Annual Reports</i>	<i>The results achieved in the respective sectors of EU agencies' intervention in the IPA III beneficiaries in the recent years is maintained.</i> <i>The political commitment for further development.</i>

						<p><i>harmonisation and interaction with other stakeholders as well as the EU in related fields is continued..</i></p> <p><i>The enlargement pace progresses, paving the way for the use of TAIEX instrument to share public expertise.</i></p> <p><i>A conducive environment in the IPA III beneficiary exists to allow these reform to happen.</i></p>
Output 1 related to outcome 1	<i>Implementation of a number of preparatory, pilot and start-up actions/ urgent/bridging support for important regional initiatives and organisations ensured</i>	<i>Number of preparatory, pilot and start-up actions implemented / regional initiatives supported (including sex-disaggregated data)</i>	0 (2021)	3-4 (2026)	<p><i>Implementation reports</i></p> <p><i>Studies</i></p> <p><i>Activity reports, progress reports, monitoring mission reports; publications; agenda and preparation for workshops</i></p>	<p><i>Timely identification of the needs, which need to be addressed by the EU Integration Facility.</i></p> <p><i>Political commitment from the IPA III beneficiaries, including technical, financial and adequate human resources allocated to the implementation of the activities.</i></p>
Output 2 related to outcome 1	<i>TA provided, studies, assessments, monitoring missions, evaluations carried out</i>	<i>Number of outputs, such as Terms of Reference, technical specifications, feasibility studies and other documents, monitoring missions, evaluations (including sex-disaggregated data)</i>	0 (2021)	3-4 (2026)	<p><i>Implementation reports</i></p> <p><i>Studies</i></p> <p><i>Activity reports, progress reports, monitoring mission reports; publications; agenda and preparation for workshops</i></p>	<i>Timely identification of the needs, which need to be addressed by the EU Integration Facility</i>
Output 1 related to outcome 2	<i>Enhanced participation of the IPA III beneficiaries in the activities of the relevant EU agencies ensured</i>	<i>Number of IPA III beneficiaries participating in the activities of the relevant EU agencies</i>	(2021)	(2026)	<p><i>Activity reports, progress reports for each of the relevant contracts / reports produced by the relevant EU agencies</i></p>	<p><i>Full and active commitment of all involved parties</i></p> <p><i>IPA III beneficiaries have necessary professional resources</i></p>

						<p>Availability of all required statistical data</p> <p>Availability of staff that will participate in action activities from the beginning to action completion</p>
<p>Output 2 related outcome 2</p>	<p>to</p> <p>Enriched EU-relevant IPA III beneficiary political and policy dialogue Strengthened coordination of institutions Intensified cooperation with a view to improve regulatory convergence and/or legislative approximation towards higher standards. Promoted effectively EU rules and standards</p>	<p>IPA III beneficiaries' overall professional satisfaction on quality of TAIEX workshops, expert missions and study visits</p>	<p>Western Balkans: Fully/partially satisfactory: 95%</p> <p>Türkiye: Fully/partially satisfactory: 95%</p>	<p>Σ (fully, partially satisfactory): 95%</p> <p>Maintain high level of satisfaction</p>	<p>Replies to feedback questionnaires automatically sent to TAIEX participants following event conclusion, as gathered in TMS, the TAIEX Management System</p>	<p>i/ Requests for assistance are submitted by IPA III beneficiary</p> <p>ii/ adequate public expertise from EU Member States is identified</p>

4. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

4.1. Financing agreement

In order to implement this action, it is not foreseen to conclude financing agreements with the 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 measures¹⁸.

4.2.1. Direct Management (Grants)

a) Purpose of the grant(s)

The European University alliances intend to promote common EU values and a strengthened European identity, reach a substantial leap in quality, performance, attractiveness and competitiveness of European higher education institutions. The grants will contribute to the achievement of specific objective 1 (outcome 1) and the related output 1 allowing the implementation of pilot actions in order to assure continuity in the European perspective in the field of education.

b) Type of applicants targeted

The (potential beneficiaries and their affiliated entities if any) must be: Higher Education Institutions holding a valid Erasmus Charter for Higher Education (ECHE) and entities affiliated to them. Applicants must be established in a Western Balkans third country not associated to the programme.

The following entities may participate as associated partners: any higher education institution holding a valid Erasmus Charter for Higher Education (ECHE) established in an EU Member State or a third country associated to the Programme or in a Western Balkans third country not associated to the programme; any public/private organisation from an EU Member State or third country associated to the programme or a Western Balkans third country not associated to the programme active in the field of education and training, research and innovation or in the world of work; higher education institutions in third countries not associated to the Programme that are part of the European Higher Education Area (Bologna Process).

4.2.2. Direct Management (Prizes)

a) Purpose of the prizes

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

The prizes are organised by DG REGIO, which manages the call and promotes the event for the awarding of the prizes. DG NEAR will contribute with knowledge, technical capacity and a monetary amount of EUR 310 000. This amount will be transferred to and managed by DG REGIO. It will cover both organisational and prizes costs, accordingly to the following specification: EUR 75 000 for prizes to be attributed to winner applications from the Western Balkans; and EUR 235 000 for organisation costs with the participation of the Western Balkans.

¹⁸ 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.

b) The type of participants targeted

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

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

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

4.2.3. Direct Management (Procurement)

The procurement will contribute to achieving the specific objectives (outcomes) and related outputs of the action, for AREA OF SUPPORT #1: EU Integration Facility (outcome 1 / outputs 1 and 2) and AREA OF SUPPORT #3: TAIEX (outcome 2 / output 2), as indicated in section 3.6.

4.2.4. Indirect management with EU specialised (traditional/regulatory) agencies and an International organisation

A part of this action under the AREA OF SUPPORT #1: EU Integration Facility may be implemented in indirect management with the Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB) using the following criteria: expertise and mandate in relation to the nature/sector of the intervention; good track record on implementing assistance, and in liaising and networking with their counterparts in the relevant IPA beneficiaries; and financial and operational capacity. This implementation by this entity entails providing technical assistance and operating support for the effective implementation of the RHP Country Housing Projects and contributes to the achievement of specific objective 1 (outcome 1) and the related output 1.

A part of this action under the AREA OF SUPPORT #1: EU Integration Facility may be implemented in indirect management with the World Bank using the following criteria: i) in-depth knowledge on the region human capital development and its socio-economic consequences; ii) well established offices and relations with governments and main stakeholders in the region, allowing for establishing a dialogue on prioritisation of needed reforms and financial resources; iii) pillar assessed entity that eventually can contribute through the Western Balkans Investment Framework to identify access to finance schemes for micro, small businesses in support of the development of healthcare services and women labour market inclusion. This implementation by this entity entails undertaking a regional analysis of labour market exclusion; deep-dive on home care and child-care services in some of the Western Balkans; and dissemination on main challenges and recommendations. These activities would contribute to the achievement of specific objective 1 (outcome 1) and the related output 1.

A part of this action (AREA OF SUPPORT #2: EU agencies) may be implemented in indirect management with entities which will be selected by the Commission's services using the following criteria: expertise and mandate of the EU agencies in relation to the nature/sector of the intervention; EU agencies having a good track record on implementing assistance, and in liaising and networking with their counterparts in the beneficiaries; and financial and operational capacity of the entities. This implementation by these entities entails contributing to the achievement of specific objective (outcome 2) and the related output 1. The EU agencies will carry out preparatory measures with IPA III beneficiaries in view of their future participation in these EU agencies upon membership or earlier. The support will aim as well at knowledge transfer and capacity building (including improved reporting standards in the field of decarbonisation) in the respective area of expertise of the EU agencies.

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	EU contribution (amount in EUR) 2022	Indicative third party contribution, in currency identified 2021 and 2022
Outcome 1/output 1 and 2 (EU Integration Facility) and Outcome 2 /output 2 (TAIEX) composed of	4 000 000	8 400 000	N/A
Grants (direct management) – cf. section 4.2.1	0	3 200 000	N/A
Prizes (direct management) – cf. section 4.2.2	0	310 000	N/A
Direct management (Procurement) – cf. section 4.2.3	1 700 000	3 190 000	N/A
Indirect management with the Council of Europe Development Bank– cf. section 4.2.4	2 300 000	0	N/A
Indirect management with the World Bank – cf. section 4.2.4	0	1 700 000	N/A
Outcome 2/output 1 (EU agencies) composed of	0	10 000 000	N/A
Indirect management with EU agencies - cf. section 4.2.4	0	10 000 000	N/A
Contingencies	N.A	N.A	N/A
Totals	4 000 000	18 400 000	N/A
Total	22 400 000		

4.5. Organisational set-up and responsibilities

AREA OF SUPPORT #1: EU Integration Facility and AREA OF SUPPORT #2: EU agencies

The European Commission will be the contracting authority. This action will be implemented partly in direct management, with Unit D.5 being responsible for the contracts' implementation and monitoring; and partly in indirect management with the World Bank and the CEB. For the latter, the CEB will provide technical assistance and operating support for the effective implementation of the RHP Country Housing Projects. Regular coordination meetings with the European Commission (DG NEAR) and other stakeholders will ensure continuous monitoring of those activities. DG REGIO and ECEA will be responsible for the parts of the actions in cross-subdelegation and co-delegation, respectively.

The EU agencies will be in charge of drafting the relevant description of the action. In addition, they will be in charge of the management of the action and of the corresponding budget. Co-ordination meetings are foreseen on yearly basis. Additional ad hoc bilateral meetings are organised, if necessary.

AREA OF SUPPORT #3: TAIEX

The European Commission will be the contracting authority. The Unit C3 in charge of TAIEX within the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations is responsible for both the analysis and assessment of requests and for the content of TAIEX short and medium term assistance, including the identification of experts from EU Member States' public administrations willing to engage in this type of peer-to-peer assistance. Throughout the implementation of TAIEX assistance excellent cooperation and coordination with all actors involved is key to the success of the instrument.

Requests for TAIEX actions are primarily generated by beneficiaries. Incoming requests are reviewed on a continuous basis and decided upon following consultation with relevant European Commission and EEAS services, including EU

Delegations, in order to ensure complementarity with programmes and other technical assistance instruments and to safeguard that TAIEX activities are in line with the priorities set in progress reports and plans for the adoption of the EU *acquis*.

Upon confirmation of the incoming requests, the Unit C3 is in charge of identifying the relevant public experts from EU Member to address the needs of the requests. This is done through the existing database of public experts of TAIEX. When the pool of registered experts is not providing the appropriate expertise, the established network of National Contact Points (NCPs) in the EU Member States is mobilised to identify the appropriate experts.

For the provision of the logistical means needed for TAIEX events, the European Commission concludes a contract with an external service provider. This service provider organises all logistical arrangements - including travel, accommodation, conference and meeting organisation, including online meeting platforms – and related payment services that are required for the implementation of the action programme. This implementation approach has proved to be efficient and effective. In particular, it allows for a swift and effective response to incoming requests and evolving needs, whilst ensuring financial transparency, accountability and efficient management.

5. PERFORMANCE/RESULTS MONITORING AND REPORTING

5.1. Internal monitoring

AREA OF SUPPORT #1: EU Integration Facility and AREA OF SUPPORT #2: EU agencies

The monitoring process is to be organised and led by Unit D.5. The monitoring process is aimed to improve programming, implementation and sustainability as well as timely identification, remedying and alleviation of potential issues in the process of programming and implementation of the interventions. The contracting authority will focus on the management of the contracts.

Internal monitoring will be implemented through project steering committees' meetings, on-the-spot checks, meetings with beneficiaries and consultant companies/implementing partners, while for the external monitoring of the results the European Commission may use external monitoring schemes, such as Results Oriented Monitoring (ROM).

The data will be monitored annually on the basis of progress and activity reports.

As regards the RHP, activities will be monitored primarily through participation in the monitoring and decision making bodies of the RHP, namely the Regional Coordination Forum, the Technical Committee, the Assembly of Donors and the Steering Committee. These fora monitor the implementation of the RHP, discuss challenges and problems and examine the proposals for improvements and mitigating measures.

DG REGIO and ECEA will be responsible for the internal monitoring for the parts of the actions in line with the cross-subdelegation and co-delegation agreement, respectively.

AREA OF SUPPORT #3: TAIEX

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

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

AREA OF SUPPORT #1: EU Integration Facility and AREA OF SUPPORT #2: EU agencies

The different implementing partners, and in particular the CEB and the relevant EU agencies are responsible for the collecting, analysing and reporting data with reference to the activities to be implemented under the action and indicative expected results identified under section 3.6-logframe.

DG REGIO and ECEA will be responsible for the data collection, analysis and reporting for the parts of the actions in line with the cross-subdelegation and co-delegation agreement, respectively.

AREA OF SUPPORT #3: TAIEX

Under the direct management of this action, the collection of data and analysis is carried out by the European Commission. To this effect, the necessary technical arrangements are in place to collect and aggregate data from

participants of the beneficiary entities and the experts of the EU Member States as described in 5.1 above.

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

5.3. Evaluation

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

However, the European Commission may, during implementation, decide to undertake such an evaluation for duly justified reasons either on its own decision or on the initiative of the partner. The evaluations should be carried out following the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations guidelines on linking planning/programming, monitoring and evaluation.

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

An “Evaluation of the EU support actions for the participation of beneficiaries in EU agencies funded under IPA” was recently concluded in July 2019, and some of its conclusions served for programming part of the further support under this action.

Since 1996, the TAIEX instrument has been evaluated twice, in 2007 and in 2015. In 2021, a new evaluation process by independent consultants was launched as part of the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations multi-annual strategic evaluation work programme 2020-2024. This latest evaluation is expected to assess the TAIEX instrument during the period 2015-2020.

For the RHP, an evaluation is planned from other resources, and will be launched in the course of late 2022/early 2023.

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 and Türkiye.

As regards the RHP, communication and visibility will build further on the already very substantial activities carried out under the previous phase of the RHP.

8. SUSTAINABILITY

AREA OF SUPPORT #1: EU Integration Facility and AREA OF SUPPORT #2: EU agencies

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

AREA OF SUPPORT #3: TAIEX

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

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

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

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