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**THIS ACTION IS FUNDED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION**

**ANNEX II**

of the Commission Implementing Decision on the financing of the multi-country annual action plan in favour of the Western Balkans and Türkiye for 2022

**Action Document for “EU support to statistics in the Western Balkans and Türkiye - 2022”**

**ANNUAL ACTION PLAN**

This document constitutes the annual work programme in the sense of Article 110(2) of the Financial Regulation, and annual and multiannual action plans and measures in the sense of Article 8 of IPA III Regulation and Article 23 of NDICI - Global Europe Regulation.

**1. SYNOPSIS**

**1.1. Action Summary Table**

<b>Title</b>	<b>EU support to statistics in the Western Balkans and Türkiye - 2022</b> Multi-country annual action plan in favour of the Western Balkans and Türkiye for 2022
<b>OPSYS</b>	IPA III/2022/NEAR>ESTAT/02
<b>Basic Act</b>	Financed under the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA III)
<b>Team Europe Initiative</b>	No
<b>Zone benefiting from the action</b>	Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia) and Türkiye
<b>Programming document</b>	IPA III Programming Framework
<b>PRIORITY AREAS AND SECTOR INFORMATION</b>	
<b>Window and thematic priority</b>	Window 2: Good governance, EU <i>acquis</i> alignment, good neighbourly relations and strategic communication Thematic priority 1: Good governance and Thematic Priority 2: Administrative capacity and <i>acquis</i> alignment
<b>Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)</b>	Main SDG : 8 - Decent work and economic growth Other significant SDGs: 5 - Gender Equality, 10 - Reduced Inequality, 12 – Responsible consumption and Production, and 13 – Climate Action, in a cross-cutting manner, depending on the exact focus of the statistical actions
<b>DAC code(s)</b>	16062 – Statistical capacity building – 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.

<b>Main Delivery Channel @</b>	The main delivery channel to IPA III beneficiaries is the national statistical office in each recipient country - 12004			
<b>Markers (from DAC form)</b>	<b>General policy objective @</b>	<b>Not targeted</b>	<b>Significant objective</b>	<b>Principal objective</b>
	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 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"/>
	<b>RIO Convention markers @</b>	<b>Not targeted</b>	<b>Significant objective</b>	<b>Principal objective</b>
	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"/>
<b>Internal markers</b>	<b>Policy objectives</b>	<b>Not targeted</b>	<b>Significant objective</b>	<b>Principal objective</b>
	Connectivity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	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"/>
<b>BUDGET INFORMATION</b>				
<b>Amounts concerned</b>	Budget line: 15.020101.01 Total estimated cost: EUR 15 394 736 Total amount of EU budget contribution EUR 15 000 000			
<b>MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION</b>				
<b>Implementation modalities (type of financing and management mode)</b>	Project Modality <b>Direct management</b> through: - Grants - Procurement The action will be co-delegated to Eurostat			

<b>Relevant priorities and flagships from Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans</b>	Priorities: “Green Agenda”, “Human Capital Development”, “Common Regional Market and Economic Integration”, “Governance, Rule of Law, PAR”
<b>Final date for concluding procurement and grant contracts</b>	At the latest by 31 December 2023
<b>Indicative operational implementation period</b>	84 months following the adoption of the Financing Decision

## 1.2. Summary of the Action

The IPA III beneficiaries need to align with EU legislation on statistics to be able to close the Chapter 18 of the accession negotiation process, and to monitor the progress achieved in other negotiation chapters.

The action has the objective of increasing the availability of good quality data from the IPA III beneficiaries and making these data available to policy makers by including them in Eurostat’s public database together with European statistics data. Indicators needed for the current main EU policies such as the Green Deal and the Digital agenda will be developed.

In order to fulfil this objective, the action aims to support the IPA III beneficiaries in the process of harmonisation of statistics with EU standards by aligning their present methodologies and output with the EU *acquis* in statistics and gradually integrating National Statistical Systems (NSS) into the European Statistical System (ESS).

Activities in the intervention should lead to increased knowledge and capacity to produce high-quality statistical data by the National Statistical Institutes (NSIs) or other statistical producers, to transmit the data to Eurostat, who should validate and disseminate the data if quality criteria are met. When data from beneficiaries are validated and disseminated by Eurostat along data from Member States, trust in the indicators should increase.

The action has an emphasis on innovative developments in official statistics, such as using administrative registers and other non-traditional data (‘big data’) as data sources, employing new techniques. Communication of statistics to citizens and policy makers should be improved.

Under the action a great deal of SDG indicators can be developed insofar as they coincide with the EU *acquis* in statistics. The SDG indicator 8 ‘Decent work and economic growth’ will be directly addressed through different actions related to macroeconomic statistics. However, it is important to note that the action will also contribute to other SDGs (such as 5, 10, 12, 13 and several others) in a cross-cutting manner depending on the exact focus of the statistical actions.

## 2. RATIONALE

### 2.1. Context

This action supports the IPA III beneficiaries on their European path. The action is part of the IPA III programming framework - Window 2: Good governance, EU *acquis* alignment, good neighbourly relations

and strategic communication, Thematic priority 1: Good governance and Thematic Priority 2: Administrative capacity and *acquis* alignment.

To some extent, Official Statistics also contribute to the Thematic priority 4 (Strategic communication, monitoring, evaluation and communication activities) in the same window, mainly by producing indicators that support monitoring and evaluation across the public administrations in the IPA III beneficiaries.

Statistics is a cross-theme activity that is integrated into several priorities, such as proper functioning of institutions, reform of public administration, economic governance, alignment to EU and international standards. EU-harmonised statistics is needed for many policy areas during the EU accession process. In the long term, data from IPA beneficiaries should adhere to the same validation procedures and quality standards as statistics from Member States. This is in line with Eurostat's IPA strategy for 2021-2027 as developed by Eurostat and the beneficiaries.<sup>1</sup> Statistical indicators underpin sustainable development.

The European Commission increasingly needs reliable statistical data covering the IPA III beneficiaries to monitor the Economic and Reform Programmes and also to implement the Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans<sup>2</sup>. Additionally, the IPA beneficiaries will also develop statistics that are needed for measuring the impact of the European Green Deal<sup>3</sup> and the Digital age.

To produce high-quality official statistics is costly but the costs can be reduced by modernising the methods and by using sources that are available in the public administration. A good public financial management is to streamline statistical production and thus be able to produce more statistics more often with use of less resources.

Other donors are active in the field of statistics in several IPA beneficiaries and there are also bilateral IPA programmes for support to statistics. Eurostat has long experience of coordination with other donors and with bilateral IPA programmes and all NSIs in IPA beneficiaries are doing their utmost to avoid overlapping support.

Among other activities to ensure the coordination, Eurostat is organising the Management Group for Statistical Cooperation (MGSC) expert group meeting every year in which the different statistical cooperation activities are presented and discussed with Member States, EFTA countries and beneficiaries. There is a donor survey organised by Eurostat, which provides a good picture of the different actors in the Western Balkans. In addition, for IPA bilateral programmes, Eurostat is coordinating at the programming stage with the different EU Delegations/EU Office in the region to avoid any potential overlapping, and organising annual meetings with the different EU Delegations/EU Office in the region to debrief them on the progress made under the multi-country programmes and activities carried out by Eurostat.

## 2.2. Problem Analysis

### Short problem analysis

The statistics of the beneficiaries are not yet fully in line with the EU *acquis*. This is an issue of both quantity of statistical data (a large number of EU Regulations in statistics on the one hand, small statistical offices on the other hand; as well as changing/new EU regulations) and quality of statistics (it will be necessary to modernise and streamline statistical production if all statistics are to be produced with potentially available resources in the beneficiaries).

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<sup>1</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/45004/0/Strategy\\_Statistical\\_Cooperation\\_2014-2020+final.pdf/d98a153b-d075-417b-9f42-d897aed1d0c8](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/45004/0/Strategy_Statistical_Cooperation_2014-2020+final.pdf/d98a153b-d075-417b-9f42-d897aed1d0c8)

<sup>2</sup> COM(2020) 641 of 6.10.2020

<sup>3</sup> COM(2019) 641 of 11.12.2019

Moreover, the demand for official statistical data is constantly increasing and the role of the NSIs as coordinators of the NSSs is a key one in this sense.

Specific challenges for the NSIs are to have sufficient human and economic resources, the lack of which might jeopardise the absorption capacity. NSIs are facing important difficulties to hire qualified staff and to retain the staff; as the salaries are not competitive with the private sector, the recruitment mechanisms are not flexible enough, and there is a high turnover of staff, meaning that additional resources are bound for training. In addition, the NSI is the natural coordinator of the NSS and has to work with the other statistical producers (Ministry of Finance and Central Banks among others, which might have leverage over the NSI). Occasionally the cooperation between the institutions that constitute the NSS can be an additional challenge.

Considering that, the increasing demand for official statistical data puts additional pressure on the NSIs, who require support to be able to follow all the developments in the statistical world and try to get aligned with the EU *acquis*.

Finally, in a world of fake news, it is important to enhance the level of statistical literacy of the users and to help the NSS to be perceived as the source of official statistics, trustable and independent.

It is essential to have a strong NSS which will follow the principles of the European Statistics Code of Practice, and will be able to avoid any political interference in its work.

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

The action primarily targets the national statistical offices, as the coordinators of the NSSs and as the main producers of official statistics in the IPA beneficiaries. However, in certain statistical areas other statistical producers can also be involved in the action.

Therefore, the main stakeholders in each IPA beneficiary are the national statistical offices and other statistical producers (common examples are the Central Bank and the Ministry of Finance). Additional stakeholders are providers of data that can be used to rationalise statistical production, such as holders of administrative registers. These holders should make their registers available to the statistical producers.

Users of statistical data are stakeholders in a wide spectrum: policy makers, businesses, media, universities, the general public, at both bilateral level and internationally, including the EU institutions.

The EU added value is the increased availability of harmonised statistical data from the IPA beneficiaries. The quality of data has to be adequate for programming in the EU context.

### **3. DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION**

#### **3.1. Intervention Logic**

The underlying intervention logic for this action is that the activities in the intervention will lead to increased knowledge and capacity to produce high-quality statistical data by the NSIs or other statistical producers, to transmit the data to Eurostat, who will validate and disseminate the data if quality criteria are met.

Increasing amounts of harmonised high-quality data will lead to the outcomes of additional indicators available for policy making and to increased compliance with the EU *acquis*. Furthermore, when data from beneficiaries are validated and disseminated by Eurostat along data from Member States, trust in the indicators will increase.

If these outcomes are realised, and the assumptions hold true, the intervention will contribute to improve the capacity of the NSIs in the relevant IPA III beneficiaries to provide high quality data for evidence-based policy making and monitoring, including EU programming in the future.

The IPA beneficiaries will increasingly adapt to new cost-effective methods by, among other things, exploiting information already available in administrative databases and registers and increasingly also make use of privately held data ('big data') for use in official statistics.

The beneficiaries will be informed of the latest statistical developments under discussion within the ESS, and of the data requirements connected to the EU priorities.

The Overall Objective (Impact) of this action is to improve the capacity of the NSIs in the relevant IPA III beneficiaries to provide high quality data for evidence-based policy making and monitoring and to underpin policies with relevant high-quality statistical data.

The Specific(s) Objective(s) (Outcomes) of this action are to:

1. Improve the availability, quality and comparability of statistical data in statistical areas of relevance for the Western Balkans strategy of the EU<sup>4</sup> and for Türkiye, also for policy-making and monitoring by the European Commission.
2. Ensure the professional independence of the NSIs, a strengthened governance role of NSIs as coordinators of the official statistical system and increased trust and confidence in statistics expressed by policy makers.
3. Have NSIs increasingly use modern, cost-effective methods for statistical production.

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

- 1.1 contributing to Outcome 1 (or Specific Objective 1) Increased availability of validated statistical data available in Eurostat's public dissemination database.
- 2.1 contributing to Outcome 2 (or Specific Objective 2) Reports of Peer reviews conducted.
- 3.1 contributing to Outcome 3 (or Specific Objective 3) Administrative registers and databases are adapted to and used for statistical production.

### **3.2. Indicative Activities**

Activities related to Output 1.1 – Increased availability of validated statistical data available in Eurostat's public dissemination database and improved availability of indicators for policy-making and monitoring by the European Commission.

- The statistical projects will cover several of the following statistical areas: macro-economics, business statistics, social statistics, agricultural, climate and environment statistics, multi-domain statistics and statistical infrastructure. They will focus on increasing data availability in beneficiaries, namely on transmission of data that are compliant with EU requirements and will be published by Eurostat. The statistical projects will focus also on new techniques and methods for statistical production, exploit new sources for statistics such as big data, administrative registers and privately held data. International experts will provide advice to statistical offices and other statistical producers on how to develop statistics.
- Additionally, there will be also activities dedicated to communication aspects of official statistics, as well as to increasing statistical literacy.

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<sup>4</sup> [Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, Strasbourg, 6.2.2018 COM\(2018\) 65 final](#) and its [annex](#) with an action plan

- Training events contribute to improving the statistical knowledge and other horizontal knowledge (e.g. governance of NSS, management of resources, etc.) of staff from the beneficiaries. Training courses facilitate the passing of European standards on to all IPA III beneficiaries thereby ensuring that all of them know and apply consistently the same standards. The authorities in charge of training for civil servants and public employees will be kept informed and, where relevant, they will be involved in the organisation of planned training sessions.
- Participation of IPA III beneficiaries in ESS expert group meetings together with EU Member States is an efficient tool for learning in a practical way, by getting informed on the practice, development and functioning of the NSIs of each Member State and the ESS as a whole. Their involvement in the ESS has taken place regularly for more than a decade and needs to continue without interruption.
- In the context of traineeships, employees from beneficiary NSIs are seconded to Eurostat or to an NSI in a Member State or an EFTA country to study more thoroughly the functioning of the ESS. A traineeship usually lasts for around 3 months.
- Consultancy missions and study visits between the EU/EFTA countries and IPA III beneficiaries facilitate the integration of the beneficiaries into the ESS and the set-up of bilateral partnerships with EU Member States. These activities make it easier for statisticians from the IPA beneficiaries to stay in contact with Eurostat and EU/EFTA countries, to increase their awareness and information about the ESS, and to be more involved in the ESS. In addition, consultancies and study visits allow the beneficiaries to become familiar with new techniques and acquainted with requirements of the EU *acquis* in statistics. It is expected that the activities will be within the scope of Eurostat's IPA Strategy 2021-2027.

#### Activities related to Output 2.1 - Reports of Peer reviews conducted.

- Reviews of the entire statistical systems of the IPA III beneficiaries as well as of various statistical sectors will present recommendations for improvements of the system and/or the sectors to the beneficiaries together with policy options on how to address such recommendations. These reviews, conducted by peers from the international statistical community, enable beneficiaries to focus efforts on those areas where improvement is needed and also to better plan their assistance needs. After a round of peer reviews of statistical systems in the ESS in 2021-2023, the lessons learnt will be taken on board in the IPA beneficiaries. It is planned to start conducting peer reviews in some IPA beneficiaries with financing from IPA 2019 Multi-Beneficiary Programme. In the IPA 2022 programme, the remaining IPA beneficiaries will be offered support to conduct a peer review of their statistical systems.

#### Activities related to Output 3.1 - Administrative registers and databases are adapted to and used for statistical production.

- Some of the statistical projects covering the various statistical areas, will also deal with increasing use of administrative registers and database in the production of statistical data for that specific area.
- Certain training events might be about administrative data and databases and how to make best use of them.
- Participation of IPA III beneficiaries in ESS expert group meetings will also be helpful, as the beneficiaries will learn from the expert groups about the latest developments on the use of administrative registers data, and other data sources.
- Consultancy missions and study visits between the EU/EFTA countries and IPA III beneficiaries can also be useful in tackling specific issues connected to increasing the use of administrative sources and databases in the production of statistical data in the IPA beneficiaries.

### 3.3. Mainstreaming

#### Environmental Protection, Climate Change and Biodiversity

Statistical data on environment and climate change, as well as other data connected to the Green Deal, will be further developed in the IPA beneficiaries. The European Green Deal breaks silos and has a holistic approach covering many and diverse initiatives. High quality European statistics and new statistical products are needed to monitor progress. Statistics are not the only European Green Deal data source, so there is a need to cooperate with other data providers, which is an opportunity for innovation and new working methods. Some examples of cross-cutting topics are: climate change, circular economy, environmental protection, industrial policies, farm-to-fork (agricultural, environmental and food health), as well as financing the transition.

#### Gender equality and empowerment of women and girls

As per OECD Gender DAC codes identified in section 1.1, this action is labelled as G1. Statistical data on persons will be disaggregated by gender to provide information to policy makers.

#### Democracy

Production of quality data is essential for policy-making, and the availability and public dissemination of data are important contributors to the democratic setting. The development of statistical literacy in society, which contributes to the democratic process, involves also the civil society.

Official statistics differ from other sources of data collection because of the structured approach, the detailed fact checking and validation that are involved in the process of producing official statistics.

### 3.4. Risks and Lessons Learned

Category	Risks	Likelihood (High/Medium/Low)	Impact (High/Medium/Low)	Mitigating measures
1-External environment	COVID-19 impact delays production and developments of statistics	Low	Medium	Activities are done virtually when possible, and beneficiaries take measures to mitigate the impact of COVID-19-related delays, as they have already started doing since the beginning of the pandemic.
2-Planning, processes and systems	Absorption capacity of support in the National Statistical Institutes and other bodies involved receiving support	High	High	Beneficiaries make an analysis of how much support they can absorb and communicate that adequately.
3-People and the organisation	High staff turnover in NSIs.	High	High	The NSI to secure funds to maintain the staff. In addition, the NSI to prepare a training programme attractive for the staff, and facilitate their participation in international trainings. Furthermore to approach universities to make the

				career at the NSI attractive for young statisticians. The international aspects of the work in the NSI are to some extent a non-monetary benefit that may help to keep staff.
3-People and the organisation	Governments and relevant authorities do not support statistical production with sufficient human and financial resources	<b>Medium</b>	<b>High</b>	Peer review recommendations. Binding memoranda with providers of data. Commitment from the governments of the IPA beneficiaries to allocate sufficient human and financial resources.
3- People and the organisation	Lack of autonomy of NSIs to reorganise the NSI including staff recruitment	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Medium</b>	EU to provide advice on statistical law and help NSI to advocate for autonomy.
3-People and the organisation	Professional independence of the NSIs is harmed by outside factors, such as politicisation	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Medium</b>	EU gives messages at high political level that statistical work should not be politicised and remain independent.

### Lessons Learned:

Previous financial assistance to statistical offices has led to a steady improvement of statistics in beneficiaries. One statistical domain after another has been improved and more and more statistical data have been transmitted by NSIs, validated by Eurostat and eventually disseminated in the online database with European statistics, alongside data from Member States.

Development of the NSSs and of official statistics is a long process that takes years to obtain tangible results. It has been found that support to statistics should be continuous in order to maintain momentum in the alignment to EU standards. In several large statistical domains, the support in previous assistance has led to improvements, but not full compliance. Therefore the different IPA programmes build on each other and this programme will build on IPA 2019 Multi-Beneficiary Programme statistics where that programme is leading to intermediate results.

Statistical methods and sources are developing rapidly which makes it difficult for IPA beneficiaries to catch up with a moving target. The support from IPA grants and procurements has helped beneficiaries to become informed about and trained in modern statistical methods. A difficult aspect is keeping a balance between the need to further develop the statistical methods in the IPA beneficiaries and the absorption capacity in the NSIs.

The regional aspect has proven to be very important as the beneficiaries exchange information between themselves about state of the art and latest developments. There is strong peer support and regional cooperation, surpassing any political issues that IPA beneficiaries might have otherwise.

### 3.5. Indicative Logical Framework Matrix

Results	Results chain: Main expected results	Indicators	Baselines	Target	Sources of data	Assumptions
<b>Impact</b>	To improve the capacity of the National Statistical Institutes in the relevant IPA III beneficiaries to provide high quality data for evidence-based policy making and monitoring and to underpin policies with relevant high-quality statistical data.	The assessment of alignment of beneficiaries' statistical areas with the EU <i>acquis</i> .	The baselines of the various statistical areas covered by the project will be the assessments from year 2022.	Increase in the alignment with EU <i>acquis</i> across most statistical areas covered by the project for each IPA beneficiary.	Eurostat analysis of the ESS Metadata Handler.	<i>Not applicable</i>
<b>Outcome 1</b>	1 Improved availability, quality and comparability of statistical data in statistical areas of relevance for the Western Balkans strategy and for Türkiye.	1.1 Number of data points available in Eurostat's online database (Eurobase).	1.1 Baseline as of January 2021 (number of data points in Eurobase): Albania - 2 989 437 Bosnia and Herzegovina – 1 756 928 Kosovo - 1 861 605 Montenegro - 4 758 051 North Macedonia - 10 644 808 Serbia - 10 689 820 Türkiye - 14 765 909	1.1 Until January 2028, the relative increase is higher than for the average of EU Member States.	1.1 Eurostat analysis of Eurobase.	Data is sent to Eurostat and not kept under embargo by the IPA beneficiary, but disseminated in Eurostat database.
<b>Outcome 2</b>	2 The professional independence of the NSI is ensured, a strengthened governance role of NSIs as coordinators of the official statistical system and increased trust and confidence in statistics expressed by policy makers.	2.1 Level of implementation of the European Statistics Code of Practice (source Eurostat).	2.1 Percentage of recommendations from new wave of peer reviews implemented by end 2023 (indicatively 0% for all Beneficiaries).	2.1 50% of all recommendations implemented by final target date of the respective recommendation and 70% of recommendations depending exclusively on the National Statistical Institutes implemented by final target date of the respective	2.1 Annual monitoring reports of peer review recommendations implementation.	The statistical offices will have adequate resources to deal with the recommendations.

				recommendation. Target dates are specific for each recommendation as indicated in the peer review reports.		
<b>Outcome 3</b>	3 Modern, cost-effective methods for statistical production are increasingly used by NSIs.	3.1 Number of statistical areas where administrative sources/or other sources are used.	3.1 The baseline year will be 2023.	3.1 Increased number of statistical areas that use administrative sources/other data sources in the IPA III beneficiaries.	Information from the NSIs	There are agreements in place with institutions and agencies that need to share their registers with NSIs, or where that is not the case, there is a readiness to sign such agreements.
<b>Output 1 related to Outcome 1</b>	1.1 Increased availability of validated statistical data available in Eurostat's public dissemination database.	1.1.1 – Number of validated statistical data available in Eurobase, related to the concrete statistical fields cover by the activities of the project.	1.1.1 The baseline year will be 2023.	1.1.1 Increased number of validated statistical data available in Eurobase, related to the concrete statistical fields cover by the activities of the project for each beneficiary.	1.1.1 Eurostat analysis of Eurobase.	Data is sent to Eurostat and not kept under embargo by the beneficiary, but disseminated in Eurostat database.
<b>Output 1 related to Outcome 2</b>	2.1 Reports of conducted Peer reviews.	2.1.1 Number of new peer review reports published on Eurostat's website.	2.1.1 Number of peer review reports published by end 2023.	2.1.1 At least 6 peer review reports published by 2028.	2.1.1 Eurostat website.	Conditions will be in place to conduct peer reviews in the IPA beneficiaries.
<b>Output 1 related to Outcome 3</b>	3.1 Administrative registers and databases adapted to and used for statistical production.	3.1.1. Number of Memoranda of Understanding signed by NSIs with other ministries and agencies to access administrative registers.	3.1.1. Number of Memoranda of Understanding signed by end 2023.	3.1.1. Increased number of Memoranda of Understanding signed by each IPA beneficiary government by 2028.	3.1.1. Information from NSIs.	The signed Memoranda of Understanding will indeed be respected and implemented.

## **4. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS**

### **4.1. Financing Agreement**

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

### **4.2. Indicative Implementation Period**

The indicative operational implementation period of this action, during which the activities described in section 3 will be carried out and the corresponding contracts and agreements implemented, is 84 months from the date of adoption by the Commission of this Financing Decision.

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

### **4.3. Methods of implementation**

The Commission will ensure that the EU appropriate rules and procedures for providing financing to third parties are respected, including review procedures, where appropriate, and compliance of the action with EU restrictive measures<sup>5</sup>.

#### **4.3.1. Direct Management (Grants)**

##### **(a) Purpose of the grant(s)**

The grants have the purpose of increasing the availability of good quality data from the IPA III beneficiaries and making these data available to policy makers.

In order to fulfil this objective, the grants aim to support the IPA III beneficiaries in the process of harmonisation of statistics with EU standards by aligning their present methodologies and output with the EU *acquis* in statistics and gradually integrating NSSs into the ESSs.

Specifically, the grants will contribute to all three outcomes:

- Improved availability, quality and comparability of statistical data in statistical areas of relevance for the Western Balkans strategy and for Türkiye.
- The professional independence of the NSI is ensured, a strengthened governance role of NSIs as coordinators of the official statistical system and increased trust and confidence in statistics expressed by policy makers.
- Modern, cost-effective methods for statistical production are increasingly used by NSIs.

They will also contribute to two of the three outputs:

- Increased availability of validated statistical data available in Eurostat's public dissemination database.
- Administrative registers and databases adapted to and used for statistical production.

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<sup>5</sup> [www.sanctionsmap.eu](http://www.sanctionsmap.eu) Please note that the sanctions map is an IT tool for identifying the sanctions regimes. The source of the sanctions stems from legal acts published in the Official Journal (OJ). In case of discrepancy between the published legal acts and the updates on the website it is the OJ version that prevails.

## **(b) Justification of a direct grant**

Under the responsibility of the Commission's authorising officer responsible, the grants may be awarded without a call for proposals to the NSIs of Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Türkiye.

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 because they have a *de-jure* monopoly to carry out the statistical activities included in this action, in line with Article 195 (c) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union. They are, according to Beneficiaries' statistical laws, the institutions inside the public administration of IPA III beneficiaries responsible for collecting, producing and disseminating official statistics. The NSIs may be supported in this undertaking by other services of the public administration but the final responsibility for disseminating official statistics lies with the NSIs.

### **4.3.2. Direct Management (Procurement)**

Specifically, through procurement the goal will be to contribute to all three outcomes:

- Improved availability, quality and comparability of statistical data in statistical areas of relevance for the Western Balkans strategy and for Türkiye.
- The professional independence of the NSI is ensured, a strengthened governance role of NSIs as coordinators of the official statistical system and increased trust and confidence in statistics expressed by policy makers.
- Modern, cost-effective methods for statistical production are increasingly used by NSIs.

Additionally, procurement will help to contribute to all three outputs:

- Increased availability of validated statistical data available in Eurostat's public dissemination database.
- Reports of conducted Peer reviews (as the Peer reviews will be done under the service contract to be signed through public procurement).
- Administrative registers and databases adapted to and used for statistical production.

## **4.4. Scope of geographical eligibility for procurement and grants**

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

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

#### 4.5. Indicative Budget

<b>Indicative Budget components</b>	<b>EU contribution (amount in EUR)</b>	<b>Indicative third-party contribution (amount EUR)</b>
Budget line: 15.020101.01		
<b>Methods of implementation</b> – cf. section 4.3		
<b>All outcomes 1, 2, and 3</b> composed of:	15 000 000	394 736
Grants (direct management) – cf. section 4.3.1	N.A.	
Procurement (direct management) – cf. section 4.4.3	N.A.	
<b>Grants</b> – total envelope under section 4.3.1	7 500 000	394 736 co-financing with up to 5%
<b>Procurement</b> – total envelope under section 4.3.2	7 500 000	N.A.
<b>Evaluation</b> – cf. section 5.2	N.A.	N.A.
<b>Audit</b> – cf. section 5.3		
<b>Communication and visibility</b> – cf. section 6	N.A.	N.A.
<b>Totals</b>	<b>15 000 000</b>	<b>394 736</b>

#### 4.6. Organisational Set-up and Responsibilities

The action will be implemented by Eurostat. The NSI in each of the IPA III beneficiaries is coordinating the production of official statistics at IPA III beneficiary level and Eurostat has close contacts with the NSIs. Coordination workshops will be organised, counting on the attendance of representative of the seven NSIs of the IPA III beneficiaries, Eurostat and the contractor. In The IPA III beneficiaries that receive support from bilateral IPA programmes, exchange of information between the NSI and Eurostat will take place regularly.

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

### 5. PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

#### 5.1. Monitoring and Reporting

The day-to-day technical and financial monitoring of the implementation of this action will be a continuous process, and part of the implementing partner's responsibilities. To this aim, the implementing partner shall establish a permanent internal, technical and financial monitoring system for the action and elaborate regular progress reports (not less than annual) and final reports. Every report shall provide an accurate account of implementation of the action, difficulties encountered, changes introduced, as well as the degree of achievement of its results (Outputs and direct Outcomes) as measured by corresponding indicators, using as reference the logframe matrix (for project modality) and the partner's strategy, policy or reform action plan list (for budget support). The Commission may undertake additional project monitoring visits both through its own staff and through independent consultants recruited directly by the Commission for independent

monitoring reviews (or recruited by the responsible agent contracted by the Commission for implementing such reviews).

Roles and responsibilities for data collection, analysis and monitoring:

The implementation of the action will be monitored by Eurostat continuously. All reports will be sent to Eurostat. For specific statistical domains, Eurostat will make use of the staff working in those specific domains in the various production units of Eurostat.

## **5.2. Evaluation**

Having regard to the importance of the action, a final evaluation is expected to be carried out for this action or areas of support via independent consultants and financed from other funding sources than IPA.

## **5.3. Audit and Verifications.**

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

## **6. COMMUNICATION AND VISIBILITY**

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

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

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

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

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

Visibility and communication measures specific to this Action shall be complementary to the broader communication activities implemented directly by the European Commission services and/or the EU Delegations and Offices. The European Commission and the EU Delegations and Offices should be fully informed of the planning and implementation of the specific visibility and communication activities, notably with respect to the communication narrative and master messages. 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.

The Communication and Visibility Plan should be produced by the contractor and approved by Eurostat. It should include proactive communication actions of the project itself, as well as to be complementary with the wider activities of statistical literacy in the project if any.

## **7. SUSTAINABILITY**

The IPA beneficiaries will continue to finance the production of statistics developed through the assistance from this programme. It is in the interest of the IPA beneficiaries to take ownership of the new or changed statistical products, since they need to provide harmonised statistical data in order to become members of EU. Where the action supports statistical pilot surveys, this will be done conditioned to the fact that the NSIs will ensure the continuity of the survey in the future. Therefore, the results are likely to continue beyond the implementation of this action.