

ANNEX 2

to the Commission Implementing Decision on the financing of the multi-country multiannual action plan on an EU Civil Society Facility and Media Programme in favour of the Western Balkans and Turkey for 2021-2023

Action Document for “EU Civil Society Facility and Media Programme for the Republic of Albania 2021-2023”

1. SYNOPSIS

1.1. Action Summary Table

Title	EU Civil Society Facility and Media Programme for the Republic of Albania 2021-2023 Multi-country multiannual action plan on an EU Civil Society Facility and Media Programme in favour of the Western Balkans and Turkey for 2021-2023			
CRIS/OPSYS number	IPA III/2021/043-102/02			
Basic Act	Financed under the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA III)			
Team Europe Initiative	No			
Zone benefiting from the action	Albania			
Programming document	IPA III Programming Framework			
PRIORITY AREAS AND SECTOR INFORMATION				
Window and thematic priority	Window 1: Rule of Law, Fundamental Rights and Democracy Thematic Priority 5: Fundamental rights; Thematic Priority 7: Civil Society			
Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	Main SDG: Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions Other significant SDGs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. • Goal 10. Reduce Inequalities • Goal 15: Protect, restore, promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity. 			
DAC code(s)	Main DAC code 20 000 (100%)			
Main Delivery Channel	23000			
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 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 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 type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Combat desertification	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Climate change mitigation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Climate change adaptation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Internal markers	Policy objectives	Not targeted	Significant objective	Principal objective
	Digitalisation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Migration	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	COVID-19	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
BUDGET INFORMATION				
Amounts concerned	<p>Budget line: 15.020101.01</p> <p>Total estimated cost: EUR 9 975 000.00</p> <p>Total amount of EU budget contribution EUR 9 500 000.00</p> <p>The EU contribution is for an amount of EUR 3 500 000.00 from the general budget of the European Union for financial year 2021 and for an amount of EUR 4 000 000.00 from the general budget of the European Union for financial year 2022 and for an amount of EUR 2 000 000.00 from the general budget of the European Union for financial year 2023, 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</p>			
Relevant priorities and flagships from Economic and	<p>Priorities: Human Capital Development</p>			

Investment Plan for the Western Balkans	
Final date for concluding contribution / delegation agreements, procurement and grant contracts	For 2021 Budget: At the latest by 31 December 2022 For 2022 Budget: At the latest by 31 December 2023 For 2023 Budget: At the latest by 31 December 2024
Indicative operational implementation period	72 months following the adoption of the Financing Decision

1.2. Summary of the Action

The overall objective of the Action is to strengthen participatory democracy and the EU integration and approximation process in Albania, through a strengthened contribution by civil society and media. The action will strengthen the role and capacities of civil society and media professional organisations in Albania to participate to the decision making processes, both at local and central level, and to become reliable, professional, effective, accountable, independent actors and driver of change in sectors of vital importance, such as democracy, justice and rule of law, good governance, environment, fundamental rights, gender equality and media. Specific issues and themes will be identified through proper stakeholders consultation. The action will support civil society through a variety of activities, including capacity building and training, exchange of best practices, provision of services to vulnerable groups, policy monitoring and reporting, creation of nextworks, policy dialogue and with the use of financial support to third parties.

2. RATIONALE

2.1. Context Analysis

Civil society and media organisations in Albania play an important role in the EU accession process, promoting democratic debate, protecting the respect of fundamental rights and equality, as well as contributing to key sectoral reforms. Their engagement is essential to ensure strengthened participation of citizens to the decision making process, through effective consultations and civic participation, particularly at local level.

The main strategic document for the sector is the Roadmap for Albanian Government Policy towards a More Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development 2019-2023 (“the Roadmap”). The Roadmap aims at encouraging the development, independence, efficiency and sustainability of civil society activity. It focuses on four strategic directions; i) institutionalising the Government- civil society cooperation in policy making and EU integration; ii) improving legal environment and data governance; iii) improving fiscal and funding framework; iv) supporting the implementation of the law on public consultation through all policy dialogue processes. The implementation of the Road Map is overall weak. and its implementation is largely dependent of donor support.

This action aims to address one of the strategic priorities of the Roadmap, a stronger engagement of CSOs in public policy processes through evidence-based advocacy and close monitoring of reforms. It also complements the IPA III bilateral programme, in particular Thematic Priority 7 of Window 1 - Rule of Law, Fundamental Rights and Democracy – which addresses CSOs enabling environment, particularly from the institutional and legislative perspective. The IPA III Strategic response acknowledges that i) substantial efforts are still needed to ensure meaningful and systematic consultations of the Government with civil society and follow-up mechanisms, ii) financial sustainability of CSOs remains a major challenge and the legal and regulatory framework of the tax regime for CSOs is still an issue, and iii) public funding is still insufficient to sustain CSOs’ initiatives, in particular in the social sector.

Apart from the support to civil society in general and the implementation of the Roadmap in particular, this action will focus on policy areas in which meaningful and systemic consultation with civil society is of primary importance or where the civil society involvement has been weak or where such involvement can bring significant gains. These areas have been identified as follows: democracy, human rights, including gender equality and rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Non-binary, Intersex and Queer (LGBTIQ) people, media, good governance, rule of law and anti-corruption; environment.

2.2. Problem analysis by areas of support

The civil society struggles to find a stable and structured role in Albania's European Integration process. Initiatives undertaken by CSOs contribute to raising awareness, engaging the public in policy dialogue, contributing to the monitoring and implementation of action plans and strategies but also through service provision for vulnerable and marginalised groups and protection of human rights. Cooperation between local government and civil society is developing, mainly in areas of provision of social services and other models such as access to employment, vocational education etc. However, such cooperation is limited due to restricted financial resources, limited human capacities of local administration and a non-conducive legal framework. Financial sustainability and stability are problematic issues for the sector. Support from the private sector continues to be sporadic and limited and in-kind donations are more common than financial donations. While CSOs are allowed to engage in economic activity and generate income, the number of CSOs engaging in economic activity remains limited. The Agency for Support of Civil Society (ASCS) is the main source of government funding to the sector. ASCS funding levels have remained fairly stable over time, around EUR 800 000 per year. Regarding the capacity building of the Civil Society, there is continuous need to help the sector acquire skills and experience, particularly in relation to their engagement in the EU accession process, including monitoring of public policies and advocacy, but also in terms of networking and coalition building. The EU has been addressing this mainly through the EU-funded regional action "Technical Assistance to Civil Society Organisations (TACSO)" implemented in the Western Balkans and Turkey since August 2009 under the Civil Society Facility (CSF). While TACSO's mission is to increase and improve the capacity and actions of CSOs with a strong regional perspective, the National Resource Centre for the civil society in Albania has since 2019 helped build capacity of the sector and provided dedicated services, including support to networking, at different levels within Albania.

The Prime Minister's Office (PMO), is the responsible institution for the monitoring the implementation of the Roadmap by the line ministries and the state agencies involved. This role should be exercised in cooperation with the National Council for Civil Society Support (NCCS), , a collegial consultative body chaired by the Minister of Health and Social Protection and composed of 27 members (13 members from the Government, 13 from the CSOs and one from the Economic Council). The NCCS was set to guarantee institutional collaboration between the State and the CSOs, to advise the Council of Ministers on state policies related to the development of civil society and its inclusion in social and economic reforms, as well as on legislative matters that affect the development of the sector. However, the NCCS has so far not been efficient and its work has not produced results.

Area of support: Human Rights

Albania's legal framework is in line with international human rights instruments and with European standards but implementation needs to be strengthened in a number of areas, including freedom of expression and the press, access to justice, children rights and juvenile justice, conditions in prisons and detention centers. Equally, there is little progress in the situation of the people with disabilities and Roma who still face considerable challenges, particularly accessibility, both to services (health, employment, education etc) as well as physical accessibility (public transports, public buildings etc). Corruption worsens the situation.

Support to civil society in advocacy, monitoring and reporting on the human rights agenda is essential to strengthen their watchdog role and improve the policy and legal framework. Future efforts need to focus on reinforcing Non State Actors capacities, tools and mechanisms to assess and to report regularly on the efficiency on the institutional mechanisms for protecting children, victims of domestic violence, promoting the rights of persons with disabilities and providing minimum health and social services. Many children in Albania continue to live in adverse conditions and are vulnerable to a wide range of abuse and violence. There is high occurrence of children living and working on the street and child victims of trafficking. Some NGOs raised concerns about the transparency of the treatment of children who were under state residential care. Adequate facilities for pretrial detention of children are lacking. The constitution and laws prohibit discrimination against persons with disabilities. Nevertheless, people with disabilities continue face difficulties in access services, education and employment. The government sponsored social services agencies to protect the rights of persons with disabilities, but these agencies lacked funding to implement their programs adequately. Civil Society service provider organisations are often replacing public services, thanks to donor's financial support. Roma and Egyptians face multiple discriminations in access to housing, employment, health care, and education. Segregation at school is a persistent phenomenon as well as widespread anti-gypsism.

The civil society role in protection of rights is essential. CSO act as service providers for vulnerable groups, including children, people with disabilities, women subject to domestic violence, LGBTIQ and other groups. The Ombudsman is the main independent institution for promoting and enforcing human rights and can initiate an investigation based on complaints or on its own authority. The Commissioner for Protection Against Discrimination is an independent

institution which monitors the cases of discrimination, addresses individual cases including representing the victims of discrimination in court. The Ministry of Health and Social Protection is the lead government ministry for the implementation of the action plans related to social inclusion and protection, including children, people with disabilities, Roma, LGBTIQ and others.

Area of support: Gender and Rights of LGBTIQ persons

Albania has made significant improvements in advancing the normative framework for gender equality but is lacking behind in the area of rights of LGBTIQ persons. Women CSOs and human rights defenders continue to advocate for the gender agenda in line with the EU Strategy on Gender Equality and Gender Action Plan III and other international instruments. Regarding the Rights of LGBTIQ persons, the national action plan has not produced any evident result and is fully dependent on donor support. The recent Covid 19 pandemic has worsened the situation of women and the LGBTIQ community, making it more evident that support services (i.e. health, legal aid, education, employment) are weak and reinforcing them is an imperative. A review of the context in which Women and LGBTIQ CSOs work suggests that nationalism, populism, conservatism, homophobia and anti-gender movements contribute to shrinking space for women's rights, Rights of LGBTIQ persons activists and human rights CSOs. Violence against women is prevalent in Albania, with almost 60 per cent of women aged 15-49 having experienced at least one out of the five forms. Albania has to take a series of actions to meet requirements of ratified international conventions.

The Albania Strategy on Gender Equality for Albania 2021-2030 is the main policy document on gender equality. CSO networks, human rights informal groups and grassroot organisations are the key stakeholders. The Ministry of Health and Social Protection, in charge of issues related to gender equality, youth and Rights of LGBTIQ persons is a key institution of the national mechanism on gender equality. The General Directorate of Policies and Development of Health and Social Protection exercises duties related to policy development for gender equality, including issues of gender based violence, violence against women, and gender mainstreaming. The Ministry of Finance and Economy is another key stakeholder in particular in relation to gender responsive budgeting and funding and a key player in horizontal budgeting processes. Additional stakeholders of the National Gender Mechanism are the National Council for Gender Equality; Gender Equality Officers at central and LGU level; the Parliamentary Sub-Committee on Gender Equality; and the Alliance of Women MPs. The institutional set-up remains under resourced, both financially and in terms of human resources.

Area of support: Democracy and Media

Since the last local elections in June 2019, the political environment has been marked by intense polarisation. The dialogue needs to be improved, in particular on electoral reform and its implementation. On 5 June 2020, wide cross-party consensus in the Political Council led to a breakthrough agreement to gradually introduce a depoliticised electoral administration and an electoral process with higher integrity and transparency standards, in line with OSCE/ODIHR recommendations. Besides the political parties, Parliament and the Central Election Commission, the other relevant stakeholder are the CSOs working in the area of electoral reforms. There is a critical need to support civil society in promoting democratic elections, strengthening participation in elections monitoring and advocating on for voter education. Consultation and participation of civil society to policy-making and legislative processes in is essential to enhance transparency and democracy.

According to the 2021 Albania report published as part of the European Commission's annual enlargement package¹, Albania needs to take concrete measures to ensure that the European standards of freedom of expression and media are upheld. More stringent criteria regarding transparency of ownership and media funding are to be put in place, and the requirements on public broadcasters independence, professional standards and financial sustainability shall be strengthened. Direct and indirect political and economic pressure on the media are recurrent, including by threats and violence against journalists who tried to investigate crime and corruption. Tensions between political actors and journalists have increased during the COVID-19 crisis and in the context of the parliamentary elections. The reported attacks against journalists have not resulted in any final convictions. Albania should ensure implementation of the Labour Code and strengthen the protection of Albanian journalists' labour and social rights. Financial problems led some journalists to rely more heavily on outside sources of income, leading to questions of integrity in reporting. Professional ethics were a low priority for some of the news portals in Albania, raising concerns over the spread of false news stories that benefited specific financial, political, and criminal interests. In addition, journalists often practiced self-censorship to avoid violence and harassment. The reported attacks against journalists have not resulted in any final convictions. It is also necessary to support civil society and media actors to enhance journalists and media actors' conditions, ensure a policy of zero tolerance for intimidation and strengthen the protection of journalists, particularly when reporting on sensitive areas such as justice, corruption, environmental crime and others Civil society

¹ SWD(2021) 289 final; https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/albania-report-2021_en

and media actors must be involved in the potential review of the media legislation (ongoing amendment of the media law to be revised in line with Venice Commission opinion), especially regarding online media, and should work on strengthening the self-regulation mechanisms. Self-regulation in online media needs to be ensured. Steps to make the audio-visual regulatory authority fully operational need to be taken in a way that ensures its independence and legitimacy.

Area of support: Good governance and rule of law (including anti-corruption)

Good governance is linked to two of the priorities of the Enlargement Strategy for Albania: the reform of the public administration and the fight against corruption. Albania started ambitious reforms to improve good governance addressing a wide range of complex issues in the public administration reform, public finance management, rule of law, the fight against corruption as well as decentralisation and digitalisation. Reforms are needed to improve the quality and accountability of administration and transparency, professionalism and depoliticisation also in recruitment and dismissals, more transparent management of public finances, and better services for citizens. Weaknesses exist in the overall institutional set-up, highly complex legislative framework, available human resources and managerial accountability. The high level of corruption results in a low level of public trust in the public administration and the judiciary. Transparency and accountability in general and in justice system in particular are of primary importance. Public participation in the preparation, implementation and monitoring of legislative drafts, government strategies and budget should be further improved. Albania's Inter-sectoral Strategy against Corruption 2015-2023 focuses on prevention, repression and awareness raising. Elements of Albania's public finance management strategy 2019-2022 are targeted towards CSOs' capacity in the areas of interventions in the budget cycle, participatory budgeting, gender responsive budgeting.

Key public policy stakeholders for the overall coordinator for good governance is the Deputy Prime Minister. Main institutional stakeholders include the Department for Development and Good Governance in the Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Finance and Economy; the Ministry of Justice also in its capacity as National Coordinator Against Corruption; the Ministry of Interior as coordinator for the decentralisation agenda; High Judicial and High Prosecutorial Councils as guarantors of justice system independence; the Department of Public Administration and Albanian School of Public Administration; the Commissioner for the Oversight of the Civil Service; the Commissioner for the Right to Information and Data Protection; several agencies such as the National Agency for Information Society in charge of almost all government IT development, integration and maintenance as well as the coordination of the Digital Agenda strategy; the Public Procurement Agency; the Central Inspectorate; the Agency of Self-Government Support; and municipalities. The main non-state actors comprise of civil society organisations as well as think tanks, academia, research institutes, young people, universities, the private sector and those with an interest and influence in the sector such as development partners and the media.

Good governance policy is anchored in several sectoral and cross-sectoral strategies, the coordination and monitoring of which is with the IPMGs and its respective thematic working groups for good governance including PAR, PFM, Anti-Corruption, Justice, Local Government/Decentralisation, the Digital Agenda, Public Services, and Statistics.

Area of support: Environment

Albania is considered a biodiversity hotspot in Europe. At the same time, Albania is confronted with a fast development trajectory and the development of mass tourism, often at odds with the best environmental standards. The 2021 Albania report published as part of the European Commission's annual enlargement package recognised that alignment with the EU *acquis* in the field of nature protection is advanced, however Albania needs to achieve full alignment and implementation in most areas of environment and climate change. Implementation and enforcement of environmental crime legislation remains an issue as only a small fraction (5%) of those crimes reported end with conviction. Investments in hydropower should comply with Albanian and international environmental, nature protection and water management obligations, involve proper public participation and consultation, and are subject of EIA reports that include assessment on the cumulative impacts on nature and biodiversity. EIA reports are still lacking despite the high number of existing and planned hydropower installations in all river basins. Moreover, Albania's high dependence on hydropower means that its capacity is also vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Climate change will affect Albania's water resources, energy production, tourism, ecosystems, agriculture and coastal zone. If this is not properly considered and addressed it will undermine the development and poverty eradication progress.

The main strategies for the protection of environment and climate change are the National Biodiversity Strategy and its Action Plan 2015- 2022 and the National Strategy on Climate Change for 2019-2030. In general, the legal provisions and institutions are in place, but enforcement is still weak and inspections are not effective. As implementation of regulations/directives under the nature sub-chapter requires close cooperation with academia/universities and civil society organisations, appropriate mechanisms should be developed to guarantee their

involvement and scientific contribution for the implementation process. The role of CSOs is indispensable in nature protection and especially in reporting and opening court cases for environmental crimes and cases of deterioration of ecosystems by infrastructural investments. Due to the under funding of the state institutions that deal with environmental issues, the Albanian environmental CSOs have sometimes substituted the state institutions, especially in the area of nature conservation and species protection, and in opposing the destruction of large ecosystems by rampant development. There is very limited fund provided by the Ministry of Tourism and Environment for research work on the protection, management and use of naturally occurring wild species and habitats on the national territory. The bulk of funding for CSOs comes from external donors.

The main stakeholders from the government side are the Ministry of Tourism and Environment, National Environment Agency, National Agency for Protected Areas, and National Territorial Inspectorate. Environmental CSOs, academia, and international bodies are the other main non-governmental stakeholders.

2.3. Relevance and complementarity with strategies supported by key national stakeholders

The action addresses the main elements identified in the problem analysis, including building of the capacities of the CSOs to monitor central and local policies and participate in the law-making and decision-making processes, in particular on key areas of the EU integration, ensure financial support and reach out at grass root level through sub-grants, promote integration of CSO services with the state service providers through structured cooperation. The action is also in line with the IPA III Strategic response which acknowledges that i) substantial efforts are still needed to ensure meaningful and systematic consultations of the Government with civil society and follow up mechanisms, ii) financial sustainability of Civil Society Organisations remains a major challenge and the legal and regulatory framework of the tax regime for CSOs is still an issue iii) public funding is still insufficient to sustain CSOs' initiatives, in particular in the social sector. The sector approach is rather well-established in most of the proposed areas of support with the IPMG mechanism and its respective thematic working groups. The participation and contribution of civil society organisations, however needs to be strengthened. This is expected to contribute to the quality of the policy planning, monitoring and reporting.

In addition, the action is in alignment with the policies in the identified areas of support, namely: the strategy on Gender Equality 2021-2030 and the new plan of action on LGBTIQ 2021- 2025 and Albanian plan of action on Women, Peace and Security Agenda; the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (also known as Istanbul Convention); the human rights strategic framework, including the action plans on Roma inclusion, children rights, rights of people with disabilities, as well as efforts to the implementat and monitor the international human rights conventions; the electoral reform adopted in 2020; the anti-corruption strategy/policy; cross-sectoral Justice Strategy and the related action plans; the recommendations from the National Biodiversity Strategy's Midterm Review Report (2020), legislation and policies on media.

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

The Western Balkans Strategy calls for structured dialogue with an empowered civil society, and emphasises the need for an enabling environment for CSOs. EU support to civil society within the Enlargement policy focuses on enabling and stimulating participatory democracy and will aim at the following specific objectives: 1) a conducive environment for civil society (enabling legal, policy environment and enabling financial environment, which supports sustainability of CSOs, with adequate funding of the sector), ii) strengthened relations between CSOs and IPA beneficiary authorities/institutions (i.e. CSOs and public institutions working in partnership through dialogue and cooperation), iii) reinforced CSO resilience and capacity (i.e. capable, transparent and accountable CSOs etc). Such support, as well as the long terms objectives for the sector, are framed in the DG NEAR Guidelines and Strategic Directions for EU Support to Civil Society in the Enlargement Region 2021-2027 and the EU Guidelines for Support to Media Freedom and Integrity of Media in the enlargement region 2021-2027, currently under finalisation².

The action complements the IPA III national programme and addresses in particular the Thematic Priority 7 of Window 1 - Rule of Law, Fundamental Rights and Democracy – in addressing CSOs enabling environment, particularly from the institutional and legislative perspective. More specifically, the action is also aligned with the IPA III Action Document EU4Democracy, which plans to address electoral reform, the media sector as well as CSO environment, in particular the policy, legal and fiscal framework. In contribution to IPA III Window 2 - good governance, the action will address the weak monitoring framework of all sectoral strategies included under the good governance umbrella; the improvement of citizen's access to information; the transparency in planning, detailing,

² Guidelines for EU support to Civil Society and Media in the enlargement region were in place for the period 2014-2020, and are currently being updated for the period 2021-2027. The actions under the 2021 -2023 CSF are aligned with these documents

managing and auditing the budget funds; the articulation and adoption of anti-corruption policies at the local government level; engagement of civil society in conceiving and implementing anti-corruption measures as well as monitoring of implementing measures by the government. This Action is also in line with the objectives set in the IPA III Programming Framework identified in the Thematic Priority 1: Environment and Climate Change under IPA III Window 3 – Green Agenda and Sustainable Connectivity. The action is also in line with the objectives of the European Green Deal³ and with the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans⁴.

2.5. Lessons learned and links with previous financial assistance

The midterm review of the civil society and media facility 2016/2017 provided useful recommendations which still hold valid, among which the recommendations to a) support middle-sized CSOs and strike a balance between financial support to small and large CSOs, applying clear criteria; b) increase the visibility of the CSF support by introducing a clear visibility and communication plan for the CSF supported actions and their impact. It is important to ensure assistance to partner CSOs implementing financial support to third parties in order to harmonise procedures for the implementation of such schemes and to ensure consistent and coherent visibility to projects supported through the financial support to third parties. Furthermore, it is essential to put in place a database of all sub-grants being implemented in Albania, which should allow to extract information (location, subject, results etc), which can be used also for visibility purposes. Another lesson learnt is the need to improve and increase clarity in the Guidelines for applicants, should lead applicants to apply systematically right based approach, gender action plan, environmental approach etc.

Regarding the support to existing networks and facilitating new networks, including of women's organisations and organisations addressing human rights, there is need to improve their capacities on advocacy and the monitoring of the implementation of the commitment made by the Government, including by working on evidence based advocacy. In addition, there is need to promote sharing of power, but also resources, rather than creating competition among organisations fighting for the same purpose. This would include advocate jointly for improved services and policies, more transparency and promote active civic engagement. In the area of good governance, previous EU support mainly focused on the public administration at central government level through budget support as well as targeted technical assistance to sole sectoral strategies and joint donor programmes at local government level. Previous support under the CSF was complementary to other good governance and anti-corruption actions, in particular supporting grass root interventions. CSOs role as watchdogs, proved very important. Also in the area of environment, the CSO work against infringement of environmental laws, deviation from the EU acquis and ecosystem deterioration, has been of key importance. The civil society organisations have accumulated sound expertise in on-the-field conservation work, influencing policies, and raising awareness among the general public. In some cases, the environmental NGOs are the only actors which are tackling the different and numerous environmental and climate change issues. It is also important to encourage and strengthen creative synergies between civil society and media to ensure effective communication, particularly for youth regarding the EU perspective, gender equality, inter-cultural dialogue and green transition.

3. DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION

3.1. Planned results and intervention logic

If the relevant capacities of the civil society organisations, including small and grassroots groups, are built and they are provided with appropriate resources, and if the assumptions of the new government maintaining an open approach towards the cooperation with the civil society, promoting the implementation of the relevant sector policies (i.e. mainly the policies in the Roadmap and those related to public consultation) hold true, this action will lead to an improved participatory and inclusive democratic governance, including in the implementation of policies and enforcement of legislations in line with EU standards (particularly in the areas of environment, good governance, justice and rule of law, democracy, media and fundamental rights) at central and local level through effective monitoring and advocacy by CSOs and Media.

The expected **Outcome 1** is that human rights organisations, including grassroots based, are influential in advocating for and monitoring of commitments related to the human rights EU related agenda at central and local level. The corresponding **output** is the increased capacities and engagement of CSOs and human rights organisations to influence and monitor HR policies. CSOs will be able to play a watchdog role and to hold the government accountable

³ COM(2019) 640 final; https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:b828d165-1c22-11ea-8c1f-01aa75ed71a1.0002.02.DOC_1&format=PDF

⁴ SWD(2020) 223 final; https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/system/files/2020-10/green_agenda_for_the_western_balkans_en.pdf

to implementing commitments in regard to HR agenda. This may include: raising awareness about available services; improved outreach of the most vulnerable groups through supporting grassroots organisations and activists; enhanced evidence based advocacy work monitor commitment on the HR agenda and provision of better services for vulnerable groups.

The expected **Outcome 2** is that organisations representing Women and LGBTIQ persons's rights are influential in monitoring and advocating on commitments related to gender equality and non-discrimination and gender-based violence. The corresponding output is the increased capacities and engagement of WCSOs and human rights organisations in the area of gender based violence and rights of LGBTIQ persons. Women's rights organisations's and other LGBTIQ human rights organisations will carry out to evidence based advocacy and play a watchdog role to hold the government accountable to implementing commitments in regard to gender equality agenda.

The expected **outcome 3** is a greater transparency and active participation of media and civil society actors in democratic reforms and processes and increased capacities of media/journalists to contribute to democracy. The **outputs** are an increase in the capacities of the CSOs and media actors in advocating, promoting, and monitoring democratic reforms; improvement of the professional capacity of journalists to play their role in democracy and an increase in the networking of civil society and media with relevant stakeholders. This will include, indicatively and non-exclusively, opening of the space to citizens and engaging them in democratic reforms (outreach activities on democracy and human rights; voter education; increase understanding and access of youth to democratic processes) and increasing outreach to the public through media (information on parliamentary affairs, capacity of media to interact and report on Parliamentary activities), work on quality journalism, fact-checking and media literacy. The democratic participation will be improved, including better capacitated media actors, thus contributing to the fulfilment of Albania's obligations under the EU Albania Stabilisation and Association Agreement to create a more inclusive and transparent society respecting democratic values and human rights international standards.

The expected **outcome 4** is a reinforced group of CSOs able to address in a professional and sustainable way –in collaboration with other CSOs and the relevant governmental counterparts – good governance, justice and/or corruption issues. The **outputs** foreseen are an increased role of CSOs in the the promotion of good governance/justice/the fight against corruption, including indicatively and non-exclusively: a)enhance transparency and participation in planning, managing and auditing budget funds; b) improve the system and mechanisms of the public's complaints; c) adoption of anti-corruption policies at the local government level; d) encourage cooperation with civil society in conceiving and implementing and monitor anti-corruption and/or justice related measures; e) increase awareness of citizens on good governance/rule of law/anti-corruption mechanisms; f) enhance communication with civil society. The active participation of civil society in policy-making will be encouraged, contributing to the fulfilment of Albania's obligations under the EU Albania Stabilisation and Association Agreement to create a more open and transparent society respecting principles of good governance and rule of law.

The expected **outcome 5** is the strengthened role and capacities of CSOs to influence, monitor, advocate on environmental, climate change and conservation issues. The linked **output** is indicatively (and non-exclusively) the increased role and capacities of CSOs to fight environmental and climate degradation and environmental crime, strengthened cooperation among CSOs and other stakeholders, increased protection of environment and biodiversity and more actions against climate change, increased awareness on environmental and climate protection.

3.2. Indicative type of activities

To realise each of the proposed outcomes and outputs, civil society will be supported through grants to organise a variety of activities, including capacity building and training, exchange of best practices and networking, provision of services to vulnerable groups, policy monitoring and reporting, advocacy, policy influencing (including through public consultation mechanisms), nature and climate conservation measures, measures to fight environmental crime, policy dialogue and use of financial support to third parties, including media outlets.

3.3. Risks and assumptions

Risks	Risk level (H/M/L)	Mitigating measures

<u>Risk 1</u> : the result of elections or, more in general the future political climate, may generate instability and the risk of further shrinking space for the civil society in terms of restrictive legislation or slow implementation of strategic policies in place, as well as reducing the space for cooperation with the civil society.	M	The EUD will continuously monitor the situation and seek dialogue with the authorities with the aim to ensure continuous engagement of the civil society, particularly in the accession negotiations process. Furthermore, through IPA III, support to the implementation of the policy documents will be ensured.
<u>Risk 2</u> : the current impact of Covid crisis and the uncertainties about the future development of the pandemic situation, as well as the difficulty to predict the future impact on the CSOs and their respective target groups, may create difficulties in planning and implementing activities	M	Potential applicants will be instructed to foresee variable scenarios. Some flexibility will need to be introduced in order to facilitate the adaptation to a possible worsening situation or emerging needs.
<u>Risk 3</u> : the possible exacerbation of the political scene or the deterioration of the situation in regard to the existence of pluralistic media and freedom of expression may undermine / jeopardise the role of the civil society	M	Continuous monitoring of the media environment and support to independent media will be essential. When not possible, cooperation with European Endowment for Democracy should be sought
<u>Risk 4</u> - Limited human resources/mandate of Ministry of Health and Social Protection to lead and coordinate implementation of the Albanian gender equality policy across sectors, as well as other human rights related policies (i.e. LGBTIQ, Roma, Children, disabilities, etc)	M	The upcoming EU accession process entails strengthening sector governance structures and processes. Specific TA for embedding gender mainstreaming in structures and processes will be supported through parallel EU funds.
<u>Risk 5</u> : Further reduction of the state budget for environment and climate change, leading to a deterioration of capacities to draft and implement laws by the state administration.	M	The EU will address the issue of budget reduction in the policy dialogue with the Government of Albania.

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

Outcome 1 - The government maintains an open approach towards the cooperation with the civil society, promoting the implementation of the sector's relevant policies (ie. the Roadmap), relevant legislation and conducting effective consultation processes.

Outcome 2 - The political scene remains peaceful and the media environment develops in the direction of pluralism and freedom of expression, including in social media. Internet remains free and public authorities supports new, online and local media.

Outcome 3 - The parliament will be functioning and the electoral reform is pursued. The pluralist media environment does not deteriorate, and freedom of expression is not restricted or limited by laws or regulations.

Outcomes 4 and 5 - Public institutions and CSOs are committed and engaged in dialogue and cooperation. Government makes available relevant financial and human resources to implement the related policies involving civil society in reforms. The justice system functions efficiently.

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)?

How does this Action address Environment and Climate change?

How does this Action address the Rights Based Approach?

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

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

The action's primary focus and priority is to strengthen the role of civil society and its engagement in the political, economic and social life of Albania, particularly in the areas directly addressed by this action. Gender imbalances and limited participation of women in the economic, social and political life of Albanian society are still very high. In Albania, women face significant barriers in the access to education, employment, services as well as accessing justice. Besides addressing gender as one of the main priorities, the Action shall support gender equality and women's and girl's empowerment under all activities, thus allowing the professional development and participation of women in all the sectors addressed by this programme. These aspects shall be taken into account under all phases of the implementation and in particular, the action shall ensure equal access to trainings and other activities for women. Besides addressing environment as one of the main priorities, the Action shall support environmental policies and environmental friendly implementation activities (i.e. plastic free etc), including in sub-granted projects. The action should also contribute to instigate more environmental friendly behaviours also in all public events, inviting participants and beneficiaries to apply behaviours which do no harm to the environment in all project related and non project related activities. The action supports and empowers CSOs to further increase their action in the areas of environmental, biodiversity and climate protection. The action will have positive environmental impact, as its activities will strengthen the role and capacities of CSOs in implementing conservation measures and conserving valuable biodiversity elements thereby improving environmental conditions in the short- to long-term. The action will also directly address climate change issue, by implementing measures that will mitigate climate change effects. The Action follows also a human-rights based approach, taking into consideration special individual needs of different groups. Besides addressing human rights among the main priorities, the Action shall contiously seek rights based friendly implementation modalities under all activities and try to reach out, by involving them, vulnerable and marginalised groups. This shall be translated in ensuring accessibility (physical and virtual) for people with different type of disabilities in all project related activities, involving systematically vulnerable groups (minorities, especially Roma, LGBTIQ and other) and women.

3.5. Conditions for implementation

No specific conditions need to be in place for starting implementation.

3.6. Logical Framework

Results	Results chain: Main expected results (maximum 10)	Indicators (at least one indicator per expected result)	Baselines (2021)	Targets (year)	Sources of data (1 per indicator)	Assumptions
Impact	To strengthen participatory democracy and the EU integration and approximation process in Albania, through a strengthened contribution by civil society and media..	<p><i>Decreased backsliding/overall improvement in ranking for Albania according to Bertelsmann Transformation Index, Freedom of the World Report of Freedom House, Nations in Transition etc. index, Freedom House, Balkan Barometer.</i></p> <p><i>Extent to which laws/bylaws, strategies, other acts of public interest and policy reforms are effectively consulted with CSOs, measured in terms of:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>CSO access to information on draft policy/legal act from the beginning of its drafting until the end of the adoption procedure;</i> <i>sufficient time (min 15 days) for commenting prior the sending of draft/policy act into the procedure for adoption;</i> <i>timely publication of reports on results of public consultations, with elaboration of reasons for not accepting certain comments;</i> <p><i>Extent to which CSOs are not subject to stricter administrative and operational</i></p>	<p><i>Freedom of the World Report: 66</i></p> <p><i>Bertelsmann Transformation Index - Political and social Integration: 6/10</i></p> <p>0</p> <p>0</p> <p>0</p>	<p><i>Freedom of the World Report: min 70</i></p> <p><i>Bertelsmann Transformation Index - Political and social Integration: min 7/10</i></p> <p>+10</p> <p>Strategies/APs/laws (min 50% of recommendations retained)</p> <p>+100%</p> <p>+50%</p>	<p><i>Bertelsmann Transformation Index, Freedom House, Balkan Barometer CSOs and other donor's reports; Progress reports, implementation of GAP III, TACSO annual monitoring report; NRC Monitoring report; EU funded projects reports and surveys; government reports; other independent watchdogs;</i></p>	<i>Not applicable</i>

		<p>requirements than business entities, measured in terms of their access to public procurement competition on equal basis with the business entities (incl. (social) service contracting);</p> <p>Contribution of CSOs to public services measured in percentage of CSOs engaged in public services contracts such as social, educational, health, economic, environment etc.</p>	0	+10%		
			0	+10% of CSOs participation		
Main outcome	The capacity and resilience of CSOs to carry out their activities effectively is reinforced					
Outcome 1.1	Human rights CS organisations, including grassroots organisations, are influential in advocating for and monitoring of the human rights policies at central and local level.	<p>Percentage of HR related laws/bylaws and strategies, are effectively consulted with CSOs, measured in terms of:</p> <p>Percentage of recommendations on laws and policies made by HR organisations have been taken on board by central and local governments</p> <p>Number of monitoring reports issued by HR CS organisations</p>	0	+50%	European Commission Reports on Albania, EU funded projects reports and surveys; CoE Monitoring bodies, government reports; TACSO annual monitoring reports; other independent watchdogs;	The government maintains an open approach towards the cooperation with the civil society, promoting the implementation of the sector's relevant policies (ie. the Roadmap), relevant legislation and conducting effective consultation processes
Outcome 1.2	Women's rights organisations, LGBTIQ CSOs are influential in monitoring and advocating on commitment related to gender equality, gender-based violence and promoting equality.	<p>Share of laws and policies where recommendations made by women's rights/LGBTIQ organisations are taken on board by central and local governments</p> <p>Share of grassroots women/LGBTIQ CSOs benefiting from EU support</p>	1	5	European Commission Reports on Albania, GAP III, EU funded projects reports and surveys; government reports; TACSO annual monitoring reports; other independent	The political scene remains peaceful and the media environment develops in the direction of pluralism and freedom of expression, including in social media. Internet remains free and public
			3	+7		
			0	+2		

		<i>Share of supported networks of women's civil society organisations that monitor and report on the implementation of the Albanian strategy on Gender Equality, LGBTIQ PoA and WPS plan of actions.</i>			<i>watchdogs; GREVIO report; National Register on Public Consultations; IPMG/ Thematic Group meetings minutes of meeting</i>	<i>authorities supports new, online and local media.</i>
Outcome 1.3	<i>Greater transparency and active participation of media and civil society actors in all the democratic reforms and processes is achieved</i>	<i>Number of media reports on central institutions activities involved in democratisation (Parliament, CEC, Ombudsman office)</i> <i>N. of media literacy trainings/awareness raising organised by CSOs</i> <i>N. of CSOs and media actors participating to the revision of the relevant legislation</i>	<i>0</i> <i>0</i> <i>0</i>	<i>10</i> <i>5</i> <i>Min 10</i>	<i>European Commission Reports on Albania, EU funded projects reports and surveys; CoE and OSCE Monitoring bodies, government reports; TACSO annual monitoring reports; other independent watchdogs;</i>	<i>The parliament will be functioning and the electoral reform is pursued.</i> <i>The pluralist media environment does not deteriorate, and freedom of expression is not restricted or limited by laws or regulations.</i>
Outcome 1.4	<i>A reinforced group of CSOs able to address in a professional and sustainable way – in collaboration with other CSOs and the relevant governmental counterparts – good governance, justice and/or corruption issues</i>	<i>Number of laws and policies where recommendations made CSOs have been taken on board by central and local governments</i> <i>Number of grassroots CSOs benefiting from EU support on good governance and anti-corruption projects</i>	<i>0</i> <i>0</i>	<i>10</i> <i>Min +10</i>	<i>European Commission Reports on Albania, EU funded projects reports and surveys; CoE Monitoring bodies, government reports; TACSO annual monitoring reports; other independent watchdogs;</i>	<i>Public institutions + CSOs are committed and engaged in dialogue and cooperation. Government makes available relevant financial and human resources to implement the related policies involving civil society in reforms.</i> <i>The justice system functions efficiently.</i>
Outcome 1.5	<i>The role of CSOs to influence, monitor, advocate and raise awareness on environmental, climate change and conservation issues is strengthened.</i>	<i>Number of laws and policies where environmental CSOs have provided comments at central and local level</i> <i>Number of environmental crime cases reported and leading to conviction</i>	<i>0</i> <i>0 (0)</i> <i>0</i>	<i>min 15</i> <i>Min 10 (2)</i> <i>Min 15</i>	<i>European Commission Reports on Albania EU funded projects reports and surveys; evaluations, on-the-spot checks and missions, government reports; TACSO</i>	

		<i>Number of grassroots CSOs benefiting from EU support for environmental projects</i>			<i>annual monitoring reports; other independent watchdogs; social media statistics</i>	
Output 1 (outcome 1.1)	<i>Increased capacities and engagement of CSOs and human rights organisations to influence and monitor HR policies.</i>	<i>Number of coordinated actions by relevant civil society organisations to advocate jointly on HR</i>	2	+10 min	As above	as above
		<i>Number of individuals benefit from access to legal, health, social and employment services.</i>	0	+5%		
Output 2 (outcome 1.2)	<i>Capacities and engagement of Women CSOs and human rights organisations in the area of gender based violence and and Rights of LGBTIQ persons is enhanced</i>	<i>N. of coordinated actions by women's rights and LGBTIQ organisations, grassroots activist groups and relevant civil society organisations to advocate jointly on ending violence against women and girls and LGBTIQ community.</i>	4	12	As above	as above
		<i>N. of public consultation sessions with girls and boys beneficiaries on inclusive, gender-responsive outreach and services at LGU level</i>	0	30 (min 2 consultations/year in 5 Local Government units)		
		<i>N. of individuals in all their diversity benefit from access to legal, health, social and employment services.</i>	120	400		
		<i>N. of CSOs and government representatives supported in participating in networking, knowledge transfer, and exchange of good practice events on gender and LGBTIQ rights in the EU accession process</i>	10	50		

Output 3 (Outcome 1.3)	<i>Increased capacities of the CSOs and media actors in advocating, promoting, and monitoring democratic reforms; improvement of the professional capacity of journalists to play their role in democracy and increased networking of civil society and media with relevant stakeholders.</i>	<i>Number of CSOs and media actors (incl. journalists) trained in monitoring, reporting, ethical and professional standards (disaggregated by sex)</i> <i>Number of supported networks of civil society and media organisations engaged in democratic reforms</i> <i>Number of media literacy activities/campaigns at central and local level</i>	0 0 0	Min 30 3 5	<i>European Commission Reports on Albania; CoE reports; TACSO monitoring report; Independent I.O. and/or Media observatory monitoring reports; other technical report on media freedom; project reports;</i>	<i>The pluralistic media environment does not deteriorate, and freedom of expression is not restricted or limited by laws or regulations</i>
Output 4 (outcome 1.4)	<i>An increased role of CSOs in the the promotion of good governance/justice fight against corruption</i>	<i>increased use of complaints mechanisms by CSOs and citizens (%);</i> <i>Number of municipalities that have developed local AC and integrity plans in cooperation with the civil society</i> <i>Increased awareness of citizens on good governance mechanisms and ways to fight against corruption (%)</i>	0 6 49 % (data from 2018)	Min +20% Min 20 70%	<i>European Commission Reports on Albania, EU funded projects reports and surveys; evaluations, on-the-spot checks and missions, government reports; TACSO annual monitoring reports; other independent watchdogs; social media statistics</i>	<i>public institutions + CSOs are committed to engage in dialogue and cooperation. Government makes available relevant financial and human resources to implement the related policies involving civil society in reforms. The justice system functions efficiently.</i>
Output 5 (outcome 1.5)	<i>Increased role and capacities of CSOs to fight environmental and climate degradation, and promote increased protection of environment and biodiversity including awareness on environmental and climate protection.</i>	<i>Number of coordinated actions by relevant civil society organisations to advocate jointly on Environmental issues.</i> <i>Number of awareness raising campaigns on environmental issues</i> <i>Number of reports and papers influencing drafting of policies and legislation. at central and local level</i>	0 0 0	6 Min 5 10	<i>European Commission Reports on Albania, EU funded projects reports and surveys; evaluations, on-the-spot checks and missions, government reports; TACSO annual monitoring reports; other independent watchdogs; social media statistics</i>	

4. IMPLEMENTATION

4.1. Financing agreement

In order to implement this action, it is not foreseen to conclude a financing agreement with Albania

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 measures⁵.

4.2.1. Direct Management (Grants)

Grants: (direct management)

(a) Purpose of the grant(s)

The grants will contribute to achieving the following outputs:

1. Increased capacities and engagement of CSOs and human rights organisations to influence and monitor HR policies.
2. Capacities and engagement of Women CSOs and human rights organisations in the area of gender based violence and and Rights of LGBTIQ persons is enhanced.
3. Increase in the capacities of the CSOs and media actors in advocating, promoting, and monitoring democratic reforms; improvement of the professional capacity of journalists to play their role in democracy and an increase in the networking of civil society and media with relevant stakeholders.
4. An increased role of CSOs in the the promotion of good governance/justice fight against corruption
5. Increased role and capacities of CSOs to fight environmental and climate degradation, and promote increased protection of environment and biodiversity including awareness on environmental and climate protection.

(b) Type of applicants targeted

Applicants should be legal entities; and CSOs, or Local authorities (LAs), or Universities and other education institutions,.

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 provision:

- 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.

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

4.4. Indicative budget

	EU contribution 2021 (EUR)	EU contribution 2022 (EUR)	EU contribution 2023 (EUR)	Indicative third party contribution (amount in EUR)
Outcome 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4 and 1.5 composed of				
<i>Direct management (Grants) – cf section 4.2.1</i>				
Grants – total envelope under section 4.2.1 (3 500 000 in 2021; 4 000 000 in 2022; 2 000 000 in 2023)	3 500 000	4 000 000	2 000 000	475 000
Totals 9 500 000	3 500 000	4 000 000	2 000 000	475 000 (5%)

4.5. Organisational set-up and responsibilities

The action will be implemented on the basis of calls for proposals launched and fully managed by the EU Delegation under the control of the Civil Society Programme Officer. The grants resulted from the calls for proposals will be managed by the relevant programme officers for each specific sector, including monitoring of grants' implementation. Site visits and on-the-spot checks will be organised in coordination with Finance, Contracts and Audit section of the EU Delegation.

The supported projects will be helped establish links with similar initiative, as well as other relevant institutions and donors, if needed. In particular, coordination will be ensured by the sectoral programme officers and the civil society programme officer.

5. PERFORMANCE/RESULTS MONITORING AND REPORTING

5.1. Internal monitoring

Performance will be measured against the the overall level of compliance with the European standards in the area of funadamental fredoms and civil society by the IPA beneficiary as well as indicators set out in the log frame matrix and the specific indicators laid out in the *Guidelines for EU support to civil society in enlargement countries 2021-2027* and *Guidelines for EU support to media freedom and media integrity in enlargement countries 2014-2020*. Other sources of monitoring can also give a qualitative assessment of the progress made. Such sources include the enlargement package, Peer Reviews, reports from the contracts and grants. In addition, the Action might be subject to external monitoring in line with the European Commission rules and procedures set in the Financing Agreement.

The impact of the programme will be monitored against the sectoral policies, including the Albania roadmap for civil society environment 2019-2023, and also in the frame of donors coordination meetings.

Monitoring of sub-grant schemes for civil society organisations will be assisted with inputs from on-sites visits conducted by EUD staff or external consultants.

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

The action will be subject to monitoring from the EU Delegation in Albania at the level of individual contracts and programmes. At the sector level, the annual reporting from the regional project TACSO and the Monitoring Matrix on Enabling Environment in Albania prepared by the civil society will provide an overview of the developments in the sector.

5.3. Evaluation

Having regard to the importance of the action, a mid-term and final evaluation(s) will be carried out for this action or its components contracted by the Commission. The mid-term and final evaluations will be carried out for learning

purposes, in particular with respect to developments in the civil society sector, particularly in terms of capacity to participate to the decision making process both at global level but also in the specific sectors focus of this action. The final evaluation will be carried out for accountability and learning purposes at various levels (including for policy revision).

The Commission shall inform the implementing partner at least 3 months in advance of the dates foreseen for the evaluation missions. The implementing partner shall collaborate efficiently and effectively with the evaluation experts, and inter alia provide them with all necessary information and documentation, as well as access to the project premises and activities. The evaluation reports shall be shared with the partner country and other key stakeholders. The implementing partner and the Commission shall analyse the conclusions and recommendations of the evaluations and, where appropriate, in agreement with the partner country, jointly decide on the follow-up actions to be taken and any adjustments necessary, including, if indicated, the reorientation of the project.

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

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 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 Delegation. The European Commission and the EU Delegation 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.

The relevant programme managing entity shall be responsible for monitoring the visibility and communication activities. The European Commission and the EU Delegation should be fully informed of the planning and implementation of the specific visibility and communication activities.

8. SUSTAINABILITY

In order to achieve sustainability beyond the implementation period, the the action is designed in synergy with the pverall IPA III programming. While the CSF will support the increased capacity of the civil society, the IPA III bilateral envelope will support the legal and fiscal framework for CSOs. As result, the expected scenario following the implementation of the programme is a more solid and capacitated civil society which operates in a more conducive legal, fiscal and policy environment.

The design of the action takes account of the following factors. The financial assistance will be delivered in the form of action grants to civil society organisations to strengthen their capacity, networks (at all levels) and influence over the decision making process. CSOS awarded EU grants will, in most of the cases, redistribute funds through financial support to third parties to a variety of grassroots organisations, including non-traditional civil society actors such as informal groups of activists, individuals and others. The financial support to these organisations, normally unable to benefit directly from EU funding opportunities, will help them increase their internal capacities and ability to manage funds and project. This will allow organisations to revive their operations and become active players at local level in their specific sector of work.

The sustainability of the programme's output will be ensured also through the specific provisions of the calls for proposals which will promote: the creation of strengthened civil society and media coalitions with capacities to implement long-term advocacy actions based on shared goals and results; strengthened cooperation between media, civil society and other actors, such as academia and business to promote innovative and sustainable approaches to advocacy and participatory democracy; empowerment and more effective engagement of citizens including through communication, provision of services, volunteering and facilitated access to public information.