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ANNEX IV

to 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 “Support for the participation of the Western Balkans in Union programmes - 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 9 of IPA III Regulation and Article 23 of NDICI - Global Europe Regulation.

1. SYNOPSIS

1.1. Action Summary Table

Title	Support for the participation of the Western Balkans in Union programmes - 2022 Multi-country annual action plan in favour of the Western Balkans and Türkiye for 2022
OPSYS	OPSYS Action: ACT-60696 ABAC commitment level 1: JAD.974291
Basic Act	Financed under the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA III)
Team Europe Initiative	No
Zone benefiting from the action	Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia)
Programming document	IPA III Programming Framework
PRIORITY AREAS AND SECTOR INFORMATION	
Window and thematic Priority	Window 2: Good Governance, <i>acquis</i> alignment, good neighbourly relations and strategic communication Thematic Priority 2: Administrative capacity and <i>acquis</i> alignment -100%
Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	Main SDG: 17- Partnerships to achieve the Goal Other significant SDG 16: Peace and Justice Strong Institutions

* 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.

DAC code(s)	43010 (multisectorial)			
Main Delivery Channel@	12000 – Recipient Government			
Markers (from DAC form)	General policy objective @	Not targeted	Significant objective	Principal objective
	Participation development/good governance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Aid to environment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Gender equality and women's and girl's empowerment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input 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"/>
	RIO Convention markers @	Not targeted	Significant objective	Principal objective
	Biological diversity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Combat desertification	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Climate change mitigation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Climate change adaptation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Internal markers	Policy objectives	Not targeted	Significant objective	Principal objective
	Connectivity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Digitalisation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Migration	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	COVID-19	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
BUDGET INFORMATION				
Amounts concerned	Budget line: 15.020101.01 Total estimated cost: EUR 21 000 000 Total amount of EU budget contribution: EUR 21 000 000			
MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION				
Type of financing and method(s) of implementation	Project Modality Direct management through grants			
Relevant priorities and flagships from Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans	Priorities: "Transport", "Energy", "Green Agenda", "Digital Transition", "Innovation Agenda", "Private Sector Support", "Human Capital Development", "Common Regional Market and Economic Integration", "Governance, Rule of Law, PAR"			

Final date for concluding contribution / delegation agreements, procurement and grant contracts	At the latest by 31 December 2023
Indicative operational implementation period	72 months following the adoption of the Financing Decision

1.2. Summary of the Action

The Union programmes are a series of integrated measures promoted by the European Union, aimed at strengthening the cooperation among the Member States regarding EU policies for a period of time. Union programmes are financed from the general budget of the European Union covering different areas inter alia: environmental protection, research and innovation, energy and transport to the development of entrepreneurship and competitiveness.

The participation of IPA beneficiaries in Union programmes has the objective of preparing them for full membership upon accession, ensuring a closer integration of the partners with the EU, accelerating integration and ‘phasing-in’ as part of the accession process. It enables citizens, institutions, civil society and the private sector to become acquainted and benefit from different European Union policies such as research, competitiveness and innovation, media, education, health, youth, culture, environment, customs policy, fight against poverty, fight against youth unemployment, and others.

This Action focuses on fostering the participation of the Western Balkans in the new generation of Union programmes for the 2021-2027 period, contributing to the payment of the cost of participation in those programmes – i.e. a financial contribution (entry tickets).

2. RATIONALE

2.1. Context

The EU has established European Union programmes in order to promote cooperation, primarily among Member States, in fields related to different EU policies (i.e. research, competitiveness and innovation, media, education, health, youth, culture, environment, customs policy, fight against poverty, fight against youth unemployment etc.).

The endorsement at the European Council in June 2003 of the Thessaloniki Agenda for Western Balkans integration in the European Union¹, opened the possibility for the candidate and potential candidates of the Western Balkans to participate in Union programmes on the basis of Framework Agreements². Since then, all the IPA beneficiaries have concluded their respective Framework Agreements and have progressively participated in an increasingly number of Union programmes.

¹ COM(2003) 748 final

² The Thessaloniki Agenda for the Western Balkans: Moving towards European Integration, endorsed at the European Council on 20 June 2003, indicates that the: “Union programmes will be opened to SAP countries along the lines established for the participation of candidate countries”

The IPA III Programming Framework envisages the promotion, when relevant, of beneficiaries' participation in Agencies, Facilities and Union programmes. This action will contribute in particular to thematic priority 2: Administrative capacity and *acquis* alignment of Window 2 of the Programming Framework.

The Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans³ indicates that the participation of IPA beneficiaries in EU programmes (and agencies) aims at preparing them for full membership upon accession, ensuring a closer integration of the partners with the EU, accelerating integration and 'phasing-in' as part of the accession process.

The association of IPA beneficiaries to Union programmes fosters the implementation of concrete reforms and offers the citizens clear benefits, as well as a bottom-up boost to the EU integration process. Encompassing most Community policies, these Union programmes are a major pre-accession instrument that help candidate and potential candidates and their citizens familiarising themselves with the European Union policies and working methods. Participation in the Union programmes encourages the active involvement of public and private institutions, NGOs, civil society institutions and universities to benefit from the EU accession process.

The Action aims to ensure and increase the participation of candidate and potential candidates in the different 2021-2027 Union programmes. Participation in selected Union programmes allows IPA beneficiaries to strengthen the capacities to align with EU standards in various sectors by learning directly from Member States.

Participation in Union programmes contributes to the implementation of strategies adopted in the IPA beneficiaries for the respective sectors targeted by individual programmes, to capacity building of institutions and sectorial progress in the European integration process, and in meeting the accession criteria.

The new generation of Union programmes for the new financial perspective 2021-2027 are under preparation⁴. The specific terms and conditions for participation in each programme, including the financial contribution, will be determined by agreements between the respective Commission service and the relevant governments in the form of an Agreement or Memorandum of Understanding for each programme.

2.2. Problem analysis

The purpose of Union programmes is to promote the values of the European Union and support the implementation of the EU policies by mobilising various stakeholders and segments of society. The Union programmes cover a large spectrum of policies including research and innovation, competitiveness, culture, media, education and youth, health, fight against poverty, employment and social policy, protection of environment, justice, fiscal and customs policy, gender equality and human rights.

For the enlargement region, the Union programmes provide the opportunity for different players to engage in fruitful partnerships with European counterparts, and, through direct involvement in joint activities, to fully comprehend EU policies and working methods. Therefore the Union programmes are a powerful tool to support the accession process of candidates and potential candidates.

The European path of IPA beneficiaries calls for a closer cooperation with EU Member States and for an enhanced transfer of know-how. The administration, civil society, youth and academia, the business community of candidates and potential candidates can largely benefit of the EU experience and expertise to advance socio-economic development, deliver on sector reforms, and ensure the needed enforcement, administrative capacities and societal support to implement EU legislation and policies. The Union

³ An Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans COM (2020)641 "In line with the revised Enlargement methodology, if a government implements reform priorities agreed with the EU, this should lead to a closer integration of that country with the European Union, accelerated integration and "phasing-in" to individual EU policies, the EU market and EU programmes as part of the accession process".

⁴ In the 2021-2027 financial perspective, some of the Union programmes in place in 2014-2020 continue, while others have been merged with the aim of simplification. There are also several brand-new Programmes such as Space, Digital Europe or the EU Anti-Fraud Programme.

programmes are therefore an important opportunity for the various stakeholders in the IPA beneficiaries to support the process, alignment with the EU *acquis* and the convergence to EU standards.

During the previous financial perspectives IPA beneficiaries have had access to participate in a wide variety of programmes including: Erasmus+, Horizon 2020, Competitiveness of Enterprises and Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises Programme (COSME), Creative Europe (Culture sub-programme and MEDIA sub-programme), Customs 2020, Fiscalis 2020, Europe for Citizens, EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI), Health for growth 2014-2020, Civil Protection Mechanism (CPM), the Solidarity Corps, Interoperability solutions for public administrations, businesses and citizens (ISA), Justice, and Rights, Equality and Citizenship programme (REC).

The allocation of IPA funds to finance parts of the IPA beneficiaries' entry tickets during the two previous Multiannual Financial Frameworks (MFFs) intended to encourage greater participation in the EU programmes, compensating for the 'eventual' losses incurred by them during their implementation. In the MFF 2021-2027 it would be important to continue providing this support to continue fostering participation.

3. DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION

3.1. Intervention logic

IPA beneficiaries have to contribute to the costs of the Union programmes in which they participate through the payment of an annual fee – a financial contribution ('entry ticket') differentiated for each specific Union programme. The size of these contributions is regulated in the specific Association Agreement for each Union programme which establishes all the arrangements and conditions for participation, including the amount of the annual entry ticket.

This Action is aimed to foster the participation of IPA beneficiaries in Union programmes by contributing to the costs of the entry-ticket⁵ of all the Union programmes where the IPA beneficiary participates. Where relevant this action document can also contribute to the payment of the relevant cost for participating in the Fundamentals Rights Agency.

Overall Objective:

- To improve knowledge of EU values and policies in different fields fostering alignment with EU *acquis* and the convergence to EU standards.

Specific Objective(s)/Outcomes:

- Enhanced participation of Albania in Union programmes by contributing to the payment of the entry-tickets of the programmes as set out in the respective specific association agreements governing the participation to Union programmes.
- Enhanced participation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Union programmes by contributing to the payment of the entry-tickets of the programmes as set out in the respective specific association agreements governing the participation to Union programmes.
- Enhanced participation of Kosovo in Union programmes by contributing to the payment of the entry-tickets of the programmes as set out in the respective specific association agreements governing the participation to Union programmes.
- Enhanced participation of Montenegro in Union programmes by contributing to the payment of the entry-tickets of the programmes as set out in the respective specific association agreements governing the participation to Union programmes.
- Enhanced participation of North Macedonia in Union programmes by contributing to the payment of the entry-tickets of the programmes as set out in the respective specific association agreements governing the participation to Union programmes.

⁵ This Action will cover the co-financing of the entry tickets bearing in mind that the International Agreements will be signed as soon as the regulatory framework for all the programmes is finalised, to avoid any delays with the payment and reimbursement procedures.

- Enhanced participation of Serbia in Union programmes by contributing to the payment of the entry-tickets of the programmes as set out in the respective specific association agreements governing the participation to Union programmes.

Outputs:

- Entry tickets for each Union Programme that Albania participates in are paid.
- Entry tickets for each Union Programme that Bosnia and Herzegovina participates in are paid.
- Entry tickets for each Union Programme that Kosovo participates in are paid.
- Entry tickets for each Union Programme that Montenegro participates in are paid.
- Entry tickets for each Union Programme that North Macedonia participates in are paid.
- Entry tickets for each Union Programme that Serbia participates in are paid.

Indicators:

- Number of Union programmes Albania participates in during 2021-2027
- Number of Union programmes Bosnia and Herzegovina participates in during 2021-2027
- Number of Union programmes Kosovo participates in during 2021-2027
- Number of Union programmes Montenegro participates in during 2021-2027
- Number of Union programmes North Macedonia participates in during 2021-2027
- Number of Union programmes Serbia participates in during 2021-2027

3.2. Indicative Activities

The participation of IPA beneficiaries in Union programmes follows a two-level approach. First, the EU and the third country must sign a Framework Agreement for their participation to EU programmes. This has already been done with all the IPA beneficiaries. Second, specific association agreements must be signed for the participation to each EU programme for a given multiannual financial framework. Once this is done this action comprises the following activities:

- Payment of the full amount of all the entry tickets (for a given year) by the relevant institution(s) of each IPA beneficiary to the European Commission/relevant programme.
- Request to the European Commission/EU Delegation/Office the transfer of the IPA contribution on the basis of the debit notes and the proof of payments of the entry tickets.

The indicative list of Union programmes where the beneficiaries can participate includes (but it is not limited to): Erasmus+⁶, Horizon Europe, Single Market Programme, Creative Europe, Customs, Fiscalis, EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI), Health for Growth, Civil Protection Mechanism, Rights, Equality and Citizenship, Justice, European Solidarity Corps, LIFE, EU Anti-fraud programme, Digital Europe Programme.

3.3. Mainstreaming

The precise contribution to mainstreaming is defined in the specific Union programme. Some examples:

Environmental Protection, Climate Change and Biodiversity

- The Action promotes the implementation of the Green Deal⁷ including protection of the environment and the climate change response through supporting the participation in Horizon 2020. This Programme is increasingly focused on implementing the Green Deal priorities including fighting climate change, ensuring clean, affordable and secure energy, supporting the industrial shift to a clean and circular economy, energy and resource efficient buildings, promoting sustainable and smart mobility, investing in

⁶ Serbia is an associated third country to Erasmus+ and pays an entry ticket, while Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina have the status as non-associated third countries with access to the international dimension of Erasmus+ and do not pay an entry ticket. The association of the IPA beneficiaries currently not associated to Erasmus+ is not expected to be completed during the period 2021-2022.

⁷ COM (2019)640 final, 11.12.2019

‘Farm to fork’ concept, biodiversity and ecosystems, zero-pollution and toxic-free environments and increasing resilience to the impacts of climate change and natural events. The Participation to the Civil Protection Mechanism programme can also contribute to the achievement of priorities defined in the environment sector.

Gender equality and empowerment of women and girls/ Human Rights

- The Action promotes the fundamental EU values and policies including human rights, gender equality, and equal opportunities for all, reduction of poverty and social inclusion through supporting the participation in the Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI)⁸ which for the period 2021-2027, becomes an strand under the European Social Fund Plus⁹ and the Erasmus +¹⁰, which includes for example a master programme in human rights.
- Civil society organisations can participate in a large number of Union programmes. By participating in international projects they will benefit from acquiring new knowledge and experience on a large variety of subjects, from building partnerships with EU organisations and could implement their objectives and contribute to addressing the expectations of the communities and citizens.

3.4. Risks and Lessons Learned

Category	Risks	Likelihood (High/Medium/Low)	Impact (High/Medium/Low)	Mitigating measures
2-Planning processes and systems – operational processes and financial systems of the external partners/ Beneficiaries	Delayed conclusion of the International/Association Agreements on participation of the IPA beneficiaries in individual Union programmes	High	Low	Close contact with line DGs would be maintained and all preparatory activities conducted in advance to facilitate as fast as possible conclusion of the Agreements
2-Planning processes and systems – operational processes and financial systems of the external partners/ Beneficiaries	Request to participate in less programmes than under the 2014-2020 Multi-annual Financial Framework (MFF), due to the increased amounts of the entry tickets	Low	Low	Liaise with line DGs to ensure that the benefits of participation on the EU programmes are clearly communicated and promoted

⁸ <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1081&langId=en>

⁹ <https://ec.europa.eu/european-social-fund-plus/en>

¹⁰ <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/>

Lessons Learned/Summary:

Albania

Previous IPA financial assistance fostered Albania participation in the following 9 Union programmes: Fiscalis 2020, Customs 2020, Competitiveness of Enterprises and Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises Programme (COSME), Erasmus +, Creative Europe (Culture sub-programme and MEDIA sub-programme), Europe for Citizens, Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI), Horizon 2020, and Justice Programme.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Previous IPA financial assistance (from 2009 onwards) fostered Bosnia and Herzegovina participation in the following 8 Union programmes: Fiscalis 2020, Customs 2020, Competitiveness of Enterprises and Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises Programme (COSME), Erasmus+, Creative Europe, Europe for Citizens, Horizon 2020 and Health Programme 2014-2020. In addition, IPA financed several smaller scale projects of support to participation in EU programmes, aimed at enhancing capacity of institutions and potential applicants with respect to EU programmes, and at a greater participation in the targeted programmes.

Kosovo

Previous IPA financial assistance fostered Kosovo participation in the following 6 Union programmes: Fiscalis 2020, Customs 2020, Competitiveness of Enterprises and Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises Programme (COSME), Erasmus, Creative Europe and Europe for Citizens.

Montenegro

Previous IPA financial assistance fostered Montenegro participation in the following 11 Union programmes: Fiscalis 2020, Customs 2020, Competitiveness of Enterprises and Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises Programme (COSME), Erasmus+, Creative Europe (Culture sub-programme and MEDIA sub-programme), Europe for Citizens, Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI), Horizon2020, Civil Protection Mechanism (CPM) (*no IPA requested*), Interoperability solutions for public administrations, businesses and citizens (ISA²) and Justice Programme (*no IPA requested*).

North Macedonia

Previous IPA financial assistance fostered North Macedonia participation in the following 11 Union programmes: Fiscalis 2020, Customs 2020, Competitiveness of Enterprises and Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises Programme (COSME), Erasmus+, Creative Europe (Culture sub-programme and MEDIA sub-programme), Europe for Citizens, EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI), Horizon 2020, Civil Protection Mechanism (CPM) and Solidarity Corps (but no IPA funding requested). In April 2020 the country joint the Interoperability solutions for public administrations, businesses and citizens (ISA²), however no IPA support was provided.

Serbia

Previous IPA financial assistance fostered Serbia participation in the following 11 Union programmes: Fiscalis 2020, Customs 2020, Competitiveness of Enterprises and Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises Programme (COSME), Erasmus+, Creative Europe programme (Culture sub-programme and MEDIA sub-programme), Europe for Citizens, EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI), Horizon 2020, Health for growth 2014-2020, Civil Protection Mechanism (CPM), and Rights, Equality and Citizenship programme (REC).

3.5. Indicative Logical Framework Matrix

Results	Results chain: Main expected results (maximum 10)	Indicators (at least one indicator per expected result)	Baselines (year)	Targets (2027)	Sources of data	Assumptions
Impact	To improve knowledge of EU values and policies in different fields fostering alignment with EU <i>acquis</i> and the convergence to the EU standards.	Number of EU policy areas targeted by the Union Programmes Albania/Bosnia and Herzegovina/ Kosovo/ Montenegro/North Macedonia/ Serbia participates in, for the 2021-2027 period.	12 EU policy areas (2014-2020)	At least 12 EU policy areas (2021-2027)	Ratification of the Agreements between the EU and Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia for each Union Programme.	<i>Not applicable</i>
Outcomes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced participation of Albania in Union programmes, by contributing to the payment of the entry-tickets of the programmes as set out in the respective specific association agreements governing the participation to Union programmes. Enhanced participation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Union programmes, by contributing to the payment of the entry-tickets of the programmes as set out in the respective specific association agreements governing the participation to Union programmes. Enhanced participation of Kosovo in Union programmes, by contributing to the payment of the entry-tickets of the programmes as set out in the respective specific association agreements governing the participation to Union programmes. Enhanced participation of Montenegro in Union programmes, by contributing to the payment of the entry-tickets of the programmes as set out in the respective specific association agreements governing the participation to Union programmes. Enhanced participation of North Macedonia in Union programmes, by contributing to the payment of the entry-tickets of the programmes as set out in the respective specific association agreements governing the participation to Union programmes. Enhanced participation of Serbia in Union programmes, by contributing to the payment of the entry-tickets of the programmes as set out in the respective specific 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Number of Union programmes Albania participates in during 2021-2027 Number of Union programmes Bosnia and Herzegovina participates in during 2021-2027 Number of Union programmes Kosovo participates in during 2021-2027 Number of Union programmes Montenegro participates in during 2021-2027 Number of Union programmes North Macedonia participates in during 2021-2027 Number of Union programmes Serbia participates in during 2021-2027 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9 Union programmes (2014-2020) 8 Union programmes (2014-2020) 6 Union programmes (2014-2020) 11 Union programmes (2014-2020) 11 Union programmes (2014-2020) 11 Union programmes (2014-2020) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10 Union programmes (2021-2027) 10 Union programmes (2021-2027) 7 Union programmes (2021-2027) 11 Union programmes (2021-2027) 13 Union programmes (2021-2027) 12 Union programmes (2021-2027) <p>These targets need to be reconfirmed</p>	<p>Reports by line Ministries / National Contact Points to Sectoral Monitoring Committees and IPA Monitoring Committee.</p>	<p>The Albanian authorities join successor and newly established Union programmes</p> <p>The Bosnia and Herzegovina authorities join successor and newly established Union programmes</p> <p>The Kosovo authorities join successor and newly established Union programmes</p> <p>The Montenegro authorities join successor and newly established Union programmes</p> <p>The authorities of North Macedonia join successor and newly established Union programmes</p> <p>The Serbian authorities join successor and newly</p>

Results	Results chain: Main expected results (maximum 10)	Indicators (at least one indicator per expected result)	Baselines (year)	Targets (2027)	Sources of data	Assumptions
	association agreements governing the participation to Union programmes.					established Union programmes.
Outputs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Entry tickets for each Union Programme that Albania participates in are paid. 2. Entry tickets for each Union Programme that Bosnia and Herzegovina participates in are paid. 3. Entry tickets for each Union Programme that Kosovo participates in are paid. 4. Entry tickets for each Union Programme that Montenegro participates in are paid. 5. Entry tickets for each Union Programme that North Macedonia participates in are paid. 6. Entry tickets for each Union Programme that Serbia participates in are paid. 	Annual payments of entry tickets by the national authorities for Union programmes.	Yearly entry-tickets for each Union Programme where Albania/ Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia/ Serbia have participated regularly paid (2014-2020).	Yearly entry-tickets for each participated Union Programme (2021-2027) regularly paid the relevant authorities Albania/ Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia/ Serbia	Line Ministries and Ministry of Finance/National Fund records. NIPAC reports.	The relevant institutions ensure the timely payment of the total entry ticket, as well as timely and documented requests for reimbursement from the MoFE/National Fund or relevant institutions in charge.

4. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

4.1. Financing agreement

In order to implement this action, it is not envisaged to conclude financing agreements with targeted 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 72 months from the date of the 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 measures¹¹.

4.3.1 Direct Management (Grants)

(a) Purpose of the grant(s)

This action will be implemented under direct management through a grant agreement signed between each relevant EU Delegation and each relevant IPA III beneficiary. The grant will contribute to the achievement of the specific objective of enhancing the participation of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia in Union programmes, as set out in the respective specific association agreements governing the participation to Union programme.

The grant will be used to contribute to the entry tickets already paid by the national authorities, after the entry tickets have been paid and the relevant evidence provided.

(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 national authorities in the targeted IPA III beneficiaries selected using the following criteria: authorities in charge of the coordination/monitoring/reporting/paying of the IPA III beneficiary's participation in the Union programmes.

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 these bodies have a de facto monopoly in either coordinating/monitoring/reporting/paying the IPA III beneficiary's participation in the Union programmes. Grants may be awarded without a call for proposals to bodies with a de facto monopoly based on Article 195 (c) of the Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046.

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.

¹¹ 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.

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

4.5. Indicative budget

Indicative Budget components	EU contribution (amount in EUR) 2022	Indicative third party contribution (amount in EUR) 2022
Budget line: 15.020101.01		
Outcome 1: Enhanced participation of Albania in EU Programmes <i>Direct management (Grants) – cf section 4.3.1</i>	1 300 000	N/A
Outcome 2: Enhanced participation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in EU Programmes <i>Direct management (Grants) – cf section 4.3.1</i>	1 200 000	N/A
Outcome 3: Enhanced participation of Kosovo in EU Programmes <i>Direct management (Grants) – cf section 4.3.1</i>	550 000	N/A
Outcome 4: Enhanced participation of Montenegro in EU Programmes <i>Direct management (Grants) – cf section 4.3.1</i>	650 000	N/A
Outcome 5: Enhanced participation of North Macedonia in EU Programmes <i>Direct management (Grants) – cf section 4.3.1</i>	2 600 000	N/A
Outcome 6: Enhanced participation of Serbia in EU Programmes <i>Direct management (Grants) – cf section 4.3.1</i>	14 700 000	N/A
Grants - total envelope under section 4.3.1	21 000 000	N/A
Evaluation – cf. section 5.2 Audit – cf. section 5.3	will be covered by another Decision	N/A
Communication and visibility – cf. section 6	N/A	N/A
Totals	21 000 000	N/A

4.6. Organisational Set-up and Responsibilities

The participation in Union programmes shall follow the specific terms and conditions set out for each programme in the relevant Association Agreement.

The National IPA Coordinator (NIPAC) is responsible for the overall coordination, monitoring and reporting on the participation in the Union programmes, as well as for the promotion of the Union programmes in the relevant IPA beneficiary, in cooperation with the line ministries.

The contact points and units established in the line ministries to coordinate the IPA beneficiary’s participation in the specific Union programmes shall be responsible for informing the society in general and the relevant actors in the country on the opportunities provided by Union programmes. The contact points and units shall support the potential applicants and participants in project preparation, implementation and reporting, shall monitor and report on the supported activities, and shall analyse the participation in the Union programmes and provide recommendations to the NIPAC.

The identified Lead Institution that signs the Agreement for each Union programme shall be responsible for ensuring the timely payment of the entry ticket to the European Commission and communicating the payment to the National Fund or responsible institution. The National fund or responsible institution shall compile the information concerning the payment of all the entry tickets for their submission to the EU Delegations which will be responsible for the payment.

4.7. Pre-conditions

The participation of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia in Union programmes, including payment by the country of the necessary annual entry tickets, shall follow the specific terms and conditions set out in the relevant Association Agreements. The implementation of this Action is subject to the following conditions:

- Specific Association Agreements between European Commission and Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia for their participation in each Union programme for the multiannual financial framework are signed.
- All the entry tickets of the Union programmes where the country participates for a given year need to be fully paid before IPA III contribution can be provided. Upon the payment of the entry tickets by each IPA beneficiary, documentation of proof will be provided to the European Commission in order to proceed with the reimbursement.

IPA beneficiary will ensure that the IPA financial contribution is transferred to the relevant line ministries dealing with the respective Union programme.

5. PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

5.1. Monitoring and Reporting

The identified Lead Institution that signs the Agreement for each Union Programme shall be responsible for ensuring the timely payment of the entry ticket to the Commission and communicating the payment to the National Fund or responsible institution.

The monitoring of the participation of the country in the Union programmes and Agencies will be a responsibility of the NIPAC and his/her office. The EU Delegation will review the implementation of the action on annual basis and will advise the IPA beneficiary on possible improvements.

The NIPAC offices will regularly monitor the activities and results achieved in the context of the implementation of this action, and in coordination with the relevant national parties, will submit an annual report to the European Commission, following the template and dynamics of IPA Annual report of Implementation.

5.2. Evaluation

Having regard to the nature of the Action, a final (or ex post) evaluation will be carried out for the whole IPA III support for participation in the Union programmes (2021-2027) via independent consultants.

The final evaluation will be carried out for accountability and learning purposes at various levels (including for policy revision), taking into account the fact that the participation of the Union programmes is a complementary tool for supporting the accession process of the IPA beneficiaries.

The European 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 Action premises and activities.

The evaluation reports shall be shared with the relevant IPA beneficiaries and other key stakeholders. The implementing partner and the European Commission shall analyse the conclusions and recommendations of the evaluations and, where appropriate, in agreement with the relevant IPA beneficiaries, 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.

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 and communication measures shall be implemented in accordance with the EU communication and visibility requirements in force and the specific rules of each Union programme. The relevant programme managing entity shall be responsible for monitoring the visibility and communication activities. 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.

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.

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

7. SUSTAINABILITY

The sustainability of the Action depends directly on the ownership, commitment, institutional management capacities and resources provided by the beneficiaries.

Ultimately, the institutions/beneficiaries should plan the cost of entry tickets in their medium term budget and the cost of entry tickets reimbursed by IPA programmes should be phased out over the period.

The participation in Union programmes will strengthen the national capacities to support, promote, develop, participate in, implement, and report on international projects. The improved capacities are the main vector of sustainability of the EU funding.

The transfer of know-how from the EU Member States to the IPA beneficiaries will improve their performance, will enhance their powers and engagement. They will gain experience and knowledge, which will allow them to support, directly or indirectly, the sector reforms, the socio-economic development of the IPA beneficiary and the EU accession.

In addition, the participation in the Union programmes requires that the IPA beneficiaries invest in the capacities of the institutions, managing the national participation in the Union programmes. As a result, it is expected that these institutions become self-sufficient and able to operate smoothly at the standards of their counterparts from the EU Member States.