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ANNEX 2

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

Action Document for “EU Support to Regional Security in the Western Balkans”

1. SYNOPSIS

1.1. Action Summary Table

Title	EU Support to Regional Security in the Western Balkans Multi-country multiannual action plan in favour of the Western Balkans and Turkey for 2021-2022			
CRIS/OPSYS number	IPA III/2021/043-643/02			
Basic Act	Financed under the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA III)			
Team Europe Initiative	No			
Zone benefiting from the action	Western Balkans (Republic of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, Republic of North Macedonia, and Republic of Serbia)			
Programming document	IPA III Programming Framework			
PRIORITY AREAS AND SECTOR INFORMATION				
Window and thematic priority	Window 1 - Rule of Law, Fundamental Rights and Democracy Thematic priority: 3 - Fight against organised crime / security and 4 - Migration and border management.			
Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	Main SDG(s) on the basis of section 3: SDG 16 – Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions			
DAC code(s)	15210 - Security system management and reform – 100%			
Main Delivery Channel@	Other multilateral institution - 47000 Third Country Government (Delegated co-operation) - 13000 Private sector institution - 60000			
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	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

	Empowerment			
	Trade Development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Reproductive, Maternal, New born and child health	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Disaster Risk Reduction	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Inclusion of persons with disabilities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Nutrition	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	RIO Convention markers @	Not targeted	Significant objective	Principal objective
	Biological diversity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Combat desertification	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Climate change mitigation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Climate change adaptation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Internal markers	Policy objectives	Not targeted	Significant objective	Principal objective
	Digitalisation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Migration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	COVID-19	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

BUDGET INFORMATION

Amounts concerned	<p>Budget line: 15 02 01 01.01</p> <p>Total estimated cost: EUR 20 000 000</p> <p>Total amount of EU budget contribution: EUR 20 000 000</p> <p>The EU contribution is for an amount of EUR 18 500 000 from the general budget of the European Union for financial year 2021 and for an amount of EUR 1 500 000 from the general budget of the European Union for financial year 2022, subject to the availability of appropriations for the respective financial years following the adoption of the relevant annual budget or as provided for in the system of provisional twelfths.</p>
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MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

Type of financing and method(s) of implementation	<p>Project Modality</p> <p>Direct management through Procurement</p> <p>Indirect management with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) - Eurojust - European Border and Coast Guard Agency (EBCGA)/Frontex - The entrusted entity to be selected in accordance with the criteria set out in section 4.2.2.3
Relevant priorities and flagships from Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans	<p>AREA OF SUPPORT #1: Support to the fight against Organised Crime - Priority 8: Governance, Rule of Law, Public Administration Reform - not in financial terms</p>
Final date for concluding contribution / delegation agreements,	<p>Allocation 2021 - At the latest by 31 December 2022</p> <p>Allocation 2022 - At the latest by 31 December 2023</p>

procurement and grant contracts	
Indicative operational implementation period	Allocation 2021: 72 months following the adoption of the Financing Decision Allocation 2022: 84 months following the adoption of the Financing Decision

1.2. Summary of the Action

An efficient response to organised crime and terrorism, and the establishment of integrated border management structures fully in line with EU standards are key to upholding the rule of law which is at the heart of EU enlargement. Providing a robust level of security, including through better equipping the IPA III beneficiaries to manage migration, is also a priority given the inter-connected nature of challenges facing the Western Balkans and the EU.

To respond to these challenges, the action aims to increase the engagement of **EU Justice and Home Affairs Agencies Eurojust, EMCDDA and EBCGA/Frontex** (hereafter Frontex) in the fight against organised crime and terrorism as well as on border management in Western Balkans in line with their respective mandates and expertise. In addition, it brings in **specific EU expertise** to support the region in making further progress in preventing and countering violent extremism as well as in establishing stronger protection against terrorist threats. By increasing the uptake of the Western Balkans of EU best practices and approaches, and supporting strategic and operational cooperation within the region and with the EU, capacities are strengthened, ultimately contributing to enhance the rule of law.

The action is developed in support of the Enlargement strategy¹. It is also directly relevant to the “New Pact on Migration and Asylum”² and implements relevant parts of the 2018 Joint Action Plan on Counter-Terrorism signed between the European Commission and the Western Balkans³ and the corresponding Bilateral Implementing Arrangements.

2. RATIONALE

2.1. Context Analysis

The Western Balkans continue to face important challenges in the area of **Rule of Law** and are increasingly requested to deliver concrete and sustained results in the fundamental areas covered by chapters 23 and 24 of the enlargement process⁴. Reforms which strengthen a human-rights compliant fight against organised crime and terrorism, and the management of external borders are at the forefront of upholding the rule of law and require dedicated support and attention.

This action is designed to support a regional approach to enhanced security and border management in the Western Balkans under **Window 1 of the IPA III Programming Framework- Rule of Law, Fundamental Rights and Democracy**. The action covers IPA III Thematic Priorities 3 - Fight against organised crime / security and 4 - Migration and border management as it relates to borders. The action aims to propose a set of actions in two specific areas of security, namely organised crime, and terrorism and violent extremism. Border security is included as a third area of intervention as there is a clear link between reaction capacities at external borders and the effective fight against cross-border crime.

¹ COM(2020) 641 final, 6.10.2020 - An Economic And Investment Plan For The Western Balkans

² COM(2020) 609 final, 23.9.2020

³ https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/system/files_en?file=2018-10/20181005_joint-action-plan-counter-terrorism-western-balkans.pdf

⁴ COM(2021) 644 final, of 19.10.2021 - 2021 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy

A **regional approach to enhanced security and border management** in the Western Balkans is called for due to the cross-border nature of the challenges, which are shared also with the EU. An effective response requires increased coherence and collective action within the region, and between the region and the EU, including at the operational level. As such, it is key to increase the uptake of EU coherent security approaches by the Western Balkans region and to deepen cooperation mechanisms, including with the EU. In this context, the involvement of relevant EU Justice and Home Affairs agencies and EU Member States is seen as a long-term, sustainable approach for building the capacity of IPA III Western Balkans beneficiaries. While the Western Balkans' operational cooperation with EU Member States and relevant EU Justice and Home Affairs agencies has continued to improve and intensify, there is scope to further increase this cooperation.

Reinforcing the engagement of the EU on security and migration in the Western Balkans, including on border management is emphasised as a priority in the **Enlargement strategy**² and the **Council conclusions on enhancing cooperation with Western Balkans partners in the field of migration and security of 5 June 2020**⁵. The action is also aligned to the spirit of the **Security Union Strategy**⁶ which makes a strong link between the internal and external security nexus and prioritises security cooperation with the immediate neighbours of the Union and the enlargement region in particular. The proposed EU Agenda⁷ against organised crime as well as the Counter Terrorism Agenda⁸ both underline inter alia the crucial role of EU Justice and Home Affairs agencies in working at operational level with the Western Balkans. Moreover, the action, with regards to border security, is fully in line with the objectives of the **New Pact on Migration and Asylum**³, adopted by the European Commission on 23 September 2020, which identifies the strengthening of border management capacities of partners as a key objective for the EU.

2.2. Problem analysis by areas of support

The action will cover **three main areas of support (corresponding to three pillars of the action)**: 1) Support to the fight against Organised Crime, 2) Support to the fight against terrorism and violent extremism and 3) Support to Border Security.

AREA OF SUPPORT #1: Support to the fight against Organised Crime

- Short problem analysis:

The Western Balkans continue to face **important challenges in the fight against organised crime**. Organised crime's foothold in the region remains strong, important smuggling routes run through the Western Balkans and criminal networks with an international reach operate from and via the region. Police and judicial cooperation in criminal justice need to be further stepped up both among the beneficiaries and with the EU. Proactiveness of authorities in identifying and addressing organised crime and in dismantling their economic bases including through using the instruments and tools provided by the EU Justice and Home Agencies is needed.⁹

In particular in the **area of drugs**, important challenges which pose inter-linked security and health threats for the Western Balkans as well as for the EU and its citizens and residents remain.

The Western Balkans region is situated on what continues to be the main trafficking route for heroin and related precursors as well as for production, trafficking and distribution of cannabis. Emerging evidence suggest that organised crime groups active in the region may be important players in the wholesale trafficking of cocaine into the EU. Recent evidence suggests that the increased methamphetamine production in Afghanistan may lead to an increase in trafficking of this drug into Europe using the well-established Balkan route channels. Although the Western Balkans has traditionally served as a transit area, internal drug markets are also expanding with subsequent increases in adverse health consequences. The estimates of people who inject drugs (PWID) vary between Western Balkan beneficiaries but are significant and linked to hepatitis C infections.

While it is clear that the drug market is a source of revenue for organised crime which produces adverse health and security threats including broader rule of law challenges, there is currently insufficient available data and evidence to understand the impact of the security and health-related threats in the region and how to address them. There is

⁵ 8622/20 - Council conclusions on enhancing cooperation with Western Balkans partners in the field of migration and security – 5 June 2020

⁶ COM(2020) 605 final, 24.7.2020 - EU Security Union Strategy

⁷ idem

⁸ COM(2020) 795 final, 9.12.2020 - A Counter-Terrorism Agenda for the EU: Anticipate, Prevent, Protect, Respond

⁹ Window 1 – Programming Framework

therefore a need to focus drug market analysis on the whole drug supply chain (from production to trafficking, to distribution and use), on the associated criminal activities and actors, and on the policy, strategic and operational responses.

In addition, despite past efforts and investments, institutional and technical gaps remain for enabling full participation of IPA III beneficiaries in the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA), activities and in the Reitox network of “national” focal points. Further alignment with EU work and integration of information systems through closer participation in EMCDDA would support the uptake of capacities to tackle drug-related challenges in a coherent manner with the EU. In this context, the action will enable EMCDDA to provide the necessary assistance and training activities to support IPA III beneficiaries in aligning and integrating their drug information systems within the EMCDDA / Reitox network model.

In the area of **cross-border judicial cooperation**, although the Western Balkans authorities have improved their awareness and technical knowledge in using international tools of judicial cooperation for serious and organised crime cases over the past years, it is clear that, operationally, many investigations are still not using all available cooperation means and not to their full extent. This is in particular true as regards the use of Mutual Legal Assistance (MLA) tools and Joint Investigation Teams (JITs) where cases of incomplete requests, important delays in cases and sometimes unintentional loss of evidence has been reported. The most common tools in use are traditional bilateral tools such as MLA request via diplomatic channels used to exchange information and obtain evidence.

In order to effectively combat organised crime, the use of modern cooperation tools and instruments, such as coordinated and joint investigations and prosecutions, is paramount. Taking into account the European path of the region and the inter-connected security challenges, it is particularly important to strengthen Western Balkans use of EU judicial cooperation instruments open to jurisdictions outside the EU such as Joint Investigation Teams (JITs). The full use of such tools requires adequate legislation in place which in some cases already exists; other tools, such as coordination meetings and centres, do not require a legal basis. Nevertheless, in practice these instruments and tools are hardly used. This is due to factors such as the lack of specialised capacities for international legal cooperation but also and most importantly, a lack of high level of trust exchanging evidence and information with other law enforcement and judicial authorities. As efficient and effective as they may be, a certain familiarity with their functioning is required for jurisdictions to make full use of judicial cooperation tools.

Within the EU, Eurojust provides operational support and assistance to combat a wide range of serious and complex cross-border crimes involving two or more beneficiaries, focusing on support to judicial cooperation. Increasing the engagement of the region with Eurojust would strengthen the cooperation on organised crime within the region and with the EU. At present, while the Western Balkans have good cooperation with Eurojust through the recent posting of Liaison Prosecutors from Serbia, Montenegro and North Macedonia in The Hague, participation in Eurojust supported criminal justice activities remain low. There is scope to increase and deepen this cooperation and as such, to tackle some of the current challenges relating to judicial cooperation.

- Description of main stakeholders:

The action will mainly target relevant policy – and decision-makers, law enforcement, judicial, prosecutorial and other authorities, “national” drug observatories, authorities operating “national” early warning systems (drug-relevant), “national” drug correspondents, liaison prosecutors from the Western Balkans to Eurojust, contact points for Eurojust and representatives to networks, JITs “National Experts”, key local experts and potential data contributing institutions and bodies, including non-governmental organisations and other civil society representatives. Work will be coordinated with EU Justice and Home Affairs Agencies. The ultimate beneficiaries of the action are the general public.

- Complementarity with beneficiary strategies:

The action will support beneficiary implementation of strategies underpinning their European path.

AREA OF SUPPORT #2: Support to the fight against terrorism and violent extremism

- Short problem analysis:

The fight against terrorism and a robust and well-coordinated response in preventing and countering all forms of radicalisation and violent extremism require continued attention in the Western Balkans. In terms of terrorism, emerging threats require increased attention on protection of critical infrastructure, the protection of public spaces, chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) related threats and new and emerging threats such as unmanned aircraft systems (“drones”). In addition, there is scope to increase work on preventing and countering of

violent extremism in line with EU best practice. The action supports specific areas requiring support in terms of the effective implementation of relevant parts of the 2018 Joint Action Plan on Counter-Terrorism (hereafter “Joint Action Plan”) as well as the bilateral implementation arrangements.

In the **area of protection against terrorist attacks**, progress towards implementing Objective 5 of the Joint Action Plan which aims to strengthen the protection of citizens and infrastructures, has been slow and overall insufficient to close important regulatory and policy implementation gaps. Overall, Western Balkans partners have requested increased EU support to address this emerging area of counter-terrorism.

Public spaces are by definition highly vulnerable to terrorism, due to their open and accessible nature, and critical infrastructures are similarly an attractive target for terrorists due to the economic disruption that typically follows an attack. The Western Balkans, similarly to EU Member States, face threats mainly from right wing terrorism and Islamic terrorism, including from returning Islamic State fighters. The risk of terrorist attacks involving firearms, home-made explosives and bladed weapons is high, especially in public spaces such as transport facilities, shopping malls, places of worship, entertainment venues, and during mass gathering, such as sporting events. In terms of critical infrastructures, the threat posed by insiders with authorised access must be addressed as a matter of urgency. The Western Balkans are, in addition, closely linked to EU Member States through tourism, transport, education, trade, and other sectors and industries, all of which rely heavily on the security of public spaces and critical infrastructures.

In this context, it is key that Western Balkans step up efforts to strengthen in line with EU best practices the protection of citizens and infrastructures, take measures to effectively address the misuse of explosives and precursors towards home-made explosives, and develop preparedness and capacity to deal with chemical, biological radiological and nuclear risks. There is a need for more and better sharing of good practices within the region and with the EU among policy makers, law enforcement practitioners, and private operators, including at the local level, and for increased operational capacity, at regional level, to detect, investigate and respond to terrorist incidents.

In the area of **prevention of radicalisation** leading to violent extremism and terrorism, progress is required by the region within the framework of the accession process and the implementation of the Joint Action Plan. There has been some progress in implementation of Joint Action Plan Objective 2 relating to Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE), with some partner recently adopting CVE strategies and most having adopted plans or having taken measures relating to the reintegration, rehabilitation and resocialisation of returning Foreign Terrorist Fighters from conflict zones or other forms of violent extremism such as right-wing extremism and football hooliganism. To be effective in P/CVE, however, it is crucial to address the challenge from different perspectives including supporting front-line practitioners, policy makers, conducting research, and providing support on strategic communication on P/CVE. Indeed, while the Western Balkans front-line practitioners are already benefitting from support from the Radicalisation Awareness Network, it is assessed that additional support is required at the policy-makers level to support further progress in this area. The action will therefore focus on three cross-cutting priorities, which have not been covered to a sufficient level yet namely supporting policy makers on general prevent issues, on strategic communications as well as strengthening the evidence base for future policy development and the design of concrete approaches. The support will be provided using the same expertise mechanism put in place for EU internal security to ensure coherent approaches and enable cooperation between the region and the EU.

- Description of main stakeholders:

The action will mainly target relevant policy- and decision-makers including at local level, law enforcement, public and private operators with responsibility over the security of public spaces and critical infrastructures, including communities of faith, and the supply chain handling, storing and/or making available chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear substances of concern, local P/CVE Centres, “national P/CVE Coordinators”, practitioners dealing with P/CVE activities in their daily work, CSOs, academics and experts on P/CVE. The ultimate beneficiaries of the action are the general public.

- Complementarity with beneficiary strategies:

The action will boost beneficiary efforts to implement their respective CT/P/CVE strategies and Action Plans. At the same time, the action will stimulate and support the region in conducting activities in areas that - although not covered by the existing strategic frameworks - need to be addressed.

AREA OF SUPPORT #3: Support to border security

- Short problem analysis:

Surrounded by EU Member States, the Western Balkans capacity to implement EU aligned **border security measures** is of direct relevance to the EU and to the rule of law in the region. While support including through the EU's Board and Coast Guard Agency (EBCGA/Frontex) has been considerably enhanced in the past years with the conclusion of working arrangements and the posting of Frontex Liaison Officers, and significant progress has been achieved particularly as regards the adoption of legal frameworks, more needs to be done to better equip the IPA III beneficiaries to manage migration and fight migrant smuggling, including through efforts to align with the institutional and legal setup of border management in the EU, while respecting fundamental rights. This is key in a context where migratory movements require sustained and institutionalised border management capacities.

At present, the Western Balkans do not operate together under a common policy or management framework on migration. While bilateral cooperation between Western Balkan partners at borders has been developed, true regional cooperation along the migratory routes covering other aspects of migration management, remains limited. Moreover, until EU accession, IPA III beneficiaries do not have at their disposal the full set of EU policy tools designed to underpin regional migration management (e.g. Eurodac, Dublin Regulation, EU readmission agreements/arrangements with countries of origin).

Building upon past and present positive work with Western Balkans partners and in support of the European perspective and regional cooperation, support by Frontex is required and relevant to allow for gradual alignment of Integrated Border Management (IBM) standards in the Western Balkans to those in the EU, in compliance with EU *acquis*. This will allow for more coherent approaches within the region and between the region and the EU to emerge which will support better migration management as well as combat cross-border crime. In order to implement effectively European IBM standards, it is also highly necessary that information exchange among Western Balkans authorities and technical capacities for future interoperability with EU information systems be strengthened. In this respect, technical assistance to the Western Balkans in the establishment of National Coordination Centres (NCCs), as a key element of the EUROSUR framework, is essential. The Status Agreements negotiated between the EU and five Western Balkans on actions carried out by Frontex is an important milestone in the development of a joint operational response in the region. As the Agency plans to deploy EBCG teams as soon as the respective Status Agreements are in force, it is important to strengthen the hosting and cooperation capacity of the five Western Balkans partners.

- Description of main stakeholders:

The action will mainly target relevant law enforcement agencies in the Western Balkan region, primarily border police agencies. The ultimate beneficiaries of the action are the general public.

- Complementarity with beneficiary strategies:

The action will support beneficiary implementation of strategies underpinning their European perspective.

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

The action aims to enhance the fight against organised crime, terrorism and preventing and countering violent extremism as well improving border security by supporting the uptake of EU best practices and approaches and enhancing strategic and operational cooperation within the region and between the region and the EU. All the targeted activities contribute to boost beneficiary capacity to make concrete progress on Rule of Law in an European perspective and are thus in line with beneficiary strategies as well as EU policy.

The main emphasis is on the capacity of the beneficiaries and relevant actors (including judicial authorities, law enforcement, prosecutors, border authorities) to conduct international cooperation to fight cross-border crime, contribute to the better management of migration through the establishment of integrated border management structures fully in line with EU IBM standards and exchange information and analysis, including with the EU. Authorities responsible for the protection against terrorist attacks will also be provided specific support. An important component of the action will work with authorities and practitioners to share experiences and best practices in view of increasing the understanding of the nature and causes of radicalisation and supporting responses that prevent and counter violent extremism including in strategic communication.

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

The action will seek to implement the IPA III Programming Framework- Window 1 – Rule of law, fundamental rights and democracy – **Thematic Priority 3: Fight against organised crime / Security**, and **Thematic Priority 4: Migration**

and border management. In addition, the action is designed to support a number of **EU strategic policies** such as the EU enlargement policy and the revised enlargement methodology, the **Security Union Strategy** and specific sectorial frameworks, such as the EU Drug Strategy and Action Plan 2021-2025. As regards the pillar on terrorism and violent extremism, the 2018 Joint Action Plan on Counter-terrorism with the Western Balkans and its implementing arrangements provide a framework for the action.

While the revised accession methodology (**Enhancing the accession process - A credible EU perspective for the Western Balkans**) underlined the need for the Western Balkans leaders to deliver more credibly on their commitment to implement the fundamental reforms required, whether on **rule of law**, fighting corruption, the economy or ensuring the proper functioning of democratic institutions and public administration, the **2021 Communication on EU enlargement policy** highlighted that the rule of law remains a key condition within the enlargement process and that addressing reforms in the area of rule of law, fundamental rights and democracy and ensuring proper management of migration are thus key priorities in the enlargement process. This action is designed to contribute to the implementation of these key strategies.

In addition, the action will seek to implement relevant parts of the 2018 **Joint Action Plan on Counter-Terrorism with the Western Balkans⁴ and its implementing bilateral arrangements**. This plan provided a common and concrete level of ambition for Western Balkan partners and signals the strong support of the EU to tackle counter-terrorism jointly with the region around 5 objectives. The proposed action aims to provide regional support to the implementation of the Plan in complementarity to on-going or planned bilateral actions on Counter-Terrorism and P/CVE. In particular, the action will support Objective 2 on Preventing and Countering Violent extremism and Radicalisation and Objective 5 of the Joint Action Plan dedicated to protection of citizens and infrastructures against terrorist threats. The action allows for creating synergies at regional level which will bring forward implementation of the Joint Action Plan, as also stressed in the EU Counter Terrorism Agenda. The **EU Counter-Terrorism agenda** published by the European Commission on 9 December 2020 indicates the Western Balkans as a priority area of international cooperation both for prevention and addressing the terrorist threats, including police and judicial cooperation, protection of critical infrastructures and fight against illicit arms trafficking.

In the area of drugs, the proposed action aligns to **the EU Drugs Strategy and Action plan 2021-2025** as well as the new EU Strategy to tackle Organised crime and the relevant EMPACT priorities, which guide EU action in priority regions such as the Western Balkans as regards drug production, trafficking and distribution.

The **New Pact on Migration and Asylum³** re-emphasised the importance of the Western Balkans for the EU's migration and asylum system by stating that "the Western Balkans require a tailor-made approach, both due to their geographical location and to their future as an integral part of the EU", and underlined that "coordination can help to ensure they are well equipped as future Member States to respond constructively to shared challenges, developing their capacities and border procedures to bring them closer to the EU given their enlargement perspective." The New Pact specifically stressed the important role EU JHA Agencies should continue to play as part of the EU's migration relationships with partner beneficiaries. It also stressed that "the EU should use all the tools at its disposal to bring operational support to the new partnerships, including through a much deeper involvement of EU agencies" and underlined that "Frontex's enhanced scope of action should now be used to make cooperation with partners operational." The New Pact specifically mentioned the importance of Frontex's cooperation with the Western Balkans, including through EU status agreements with the Western Balkan partners. The entry into force of the Eurosur Implementing Act will provide for the legal basis to provide technical assistance to the Western Balkans in establishing Eurosur-compliant National Coordination Centres (NCCs).

The action will also seek to implement a number of agreements signed between the Western Balkans and Justice and Home Affairs Agencies. Eurojust has concluded **cooperation agreements** which allows for the systematic exchange of operational, including personal, data, with four beneficiaries (Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia) while the European Commission can open negotiations for an international agreement on cooperation between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Eurojust in the near future. The **Status Agreements** negotiated between the EU and five Western Balkans on actions carried out by the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (EBCGA/Frontex) is an important milestone in the development of a joint operational response in the region. As the Agency plans to deploy EBCG teams as soon as the respective Status Agreements are in force (as it is already the case in Albania, Montenegro and Serbia), the action will seek to increase their full implementation by strengthen the hosting and cooperation capacity of the five Western Balkan partners. Throughout its implementation, the action will seek cooperation with both CEPOL and Europol as relevant.

2.5. Lessons learned and links with previous financial assistance

The proposed action builds upon lessons learnt from previous and on-going IPA Multi-country Programmes, particularly as regards previous actions implemented with the EMCDDA as well as with Frontex. The main lessons learnt which are reflected in the design of the action or its specific pillars include:

- In view of the direct policy relevance of the action, implementation will require high institutional commitment from the beneficiaries. This will require that the action is accompanied by policy dialogue and engagement from the European Commission towards the region. Accordingly, a strong steer and engagement of the relevant European Commission line DGs (including DGs NEAR and HOME) across all activities is necessary throughout the action.
- Previous actions have shown the need to adopt a flexible approach to project implementation particularly also in the current COVID-19 context. While activity plans are to be agreed at the level of Steering Committees, adaptations should be possible throughout the programme.
- Need to focus on the organised crime element in law enforcement cooperation as opposed to focusing on the underlying specific crime. This necessitates a stronger focus on the profit element of the crime. As such, “follow the money” approaches should be mainstreamed to the extent possible (relevant to pillar 1).
- Need for continuous coordination to ensure complementarity with bilateral support programmes, particularly those funded under the IPA instrument.

3. DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION

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

The **Overall Objective** (Impact) of this action is to contribute to strengthening of the rule of law in the Western Balkans through enhancing the fight against organised crime, terrorism as well as border security.

Given the context of the accession process and the European perspective of the region, it is essential that each beneficiary closely aligns and is integrated into EU cooperation tools, practices and mechanisms relevant to security and engages in regional cooperation.

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

- 1) Uptake by Western Balkans of EU best practices and approaches on organised crime and terrorism;
- 2) Strengthened strategic and operational cooperation within the Western Balkans and between the region and the EU on organised crime and terrorism using EU tools;
- 3) Increased implementation by the Western Balkans of EU compliant border security measures.

The specific objectives are interlinked and mutually reinforcing and outputs and information generated from one specific objective will directly influence interventions in another.

The **main expected outputs** (list is not exhaustive) are:

- 1) Organised crime: The Western Balkans are better informed of drug-related health and security threats in the region and capacitated to formulate adequate responses, contributing to outcomes 1 and 2.

The action will assist the beneficiaries to co-produce with the EMCDDA sound strategic analysis and threat assessment of the drug trafficking and drug production market in the Western Balkan region and its links with high-risk criminal networks. It will develop beneficiary capacity to formulate responses thereto, adopting a synergetic approach between health and security issues in line with EMCDDA work.

- 2) Organised crime: The Western Balkans are better equipped to progress on setting up NDO and NEWS aligned to the EU, contributing to outcomes 1 and 2.

The action will provide technical expertise and support through the EMCDDA on the adoption and implementation of EU *acquis* in the area of drug information, particularly as it relates to the setting-up of functional “National Drug Observatories” (NDO) and “National Early Warning Systems” (NEWS). It will enable scientific cooperation related to drug data collection, analysis and interpretation. Progress in setting up drug information systems including NDO and NEWS is key to allow for the exchange of drug information with the EU and other partners.

- 3) Organised crime: The Western Balkans are better equipped to use modern judicial cooperation tools for investigating and prosecuting organised cross-border crime, contributing to outcomes 1 and 2

The action will equip the Western Balkans by providing expertise and enabling in practice, including through the creation of a protected communication environment, the use of modern judicial cooperation tools and instruments supported by Eurojust, such as Joint Investigation Teams (JITs). The Western Balkans will also be supported to increase engagement with Eurojust and interested practitioners’ networks supported by Eurojust, such as the JITs Network, the European Judicial Network, the Genocide Network, the “National” Correspondents for Terrorism Matters network, the Focus Group on Migrant Smuggling and the European Judicial Cybercrime Network.

- 4) Terrorism: The Western Balkans are strengthened in detecting, investigating and responding to terrorist threats on public places and critical infrastructures, contributing to outcomes 1 and 2

The action will develop and implement approaches and regional cooperation on the protection of public places and critical infrastructures against terrorist attacks, in support of the implementation of the Joint Action Plan on Counter-Terrorism. It will utilise a mix of expertise, capacity building, provision of assessments and exchange of practice to address beneficiary-specific and regional knowledge and response gaps. Policy makers, law enforcement and the public and private operators of public spaces and critical infrastructures, including at the local level, will be targeted.

- 5) Terrorism: The Western Balkans are strengthened in developing and implementing P/CVE policies and approaches including in the area of strategic communications, contributing to outcomes 1 and 2

The action will roll out cooperation, expertise and support to policy makers on effectively tackling radicalisation and increasing their knowledge in preventing and countering violent extremism, including in the area of strategic communications, in support of the implementation of the Joint Action Plan on Counter-Terrorism. It will use the same expertise available to EU Member States in this area of work, therefore increasing alignment of approaches and cooperation with the EU.

- 6) Border security: The Western Balkans are capacitated to operationalise and implement EBCG Status Agreements, contributing to outcome 3

The action will focus on capacitating relevant law enforcement authorities to allow for the operationalisation and implementation of EBCG Status Agreements that have entered into force. This includes implementation of training and capacity building activities supporting joint operations. In addition, Frontex will put its expertise on combatting illicit trafficking of goods and people at the disposal of the Western Balkans. As relevant, the action will provide for additional aspects of training on border security beyond Status Agreement operationalisation.

- 7) Border security: The Western Balkans have improved knowledge and are better equipped to align their Integrated Border Management (IBM) strategies with EU IBM standards, contributing to outcome 3

The action will enable Frontex to engage in regular dialogue and support alignment of Western Balkans policies and actions with the European IBM. It foresees the setting-up of (a) network(s) of IBM stakeholders in the region. In addition to technical expertise and peer-to-peer exchanges, the action envisages to establish an online platform, as a forum for remote real-time exchange as well as a repository of information.

- 8) Border security: The Western Balkans have increased expertise in setting up fully operational National Coordination Centres (NCCs), interoperable with the EUROSUR framework, contributing to outcome 3

The action will provide technical advice through Frontex on the establishment of harmonised, fully operational

National Coordination Centres (NCCs) interoperable with the EUROSUR framework. While this action will not directly assist the Western Balkans in setting up NCCs, it will enable specialised technical expertise, advice and sharing of experience on setting up harmonised NCCs in line with EUROSUR standards. This will also contribute to the eventual establishment of a regional Western Balkans network of NCCs, which the action can support when relevant.

Given the high policy relevance of the foreseen outcomes and outputs, the action will at all stages dovetail and support the overall policy engagement of the EU with the IPA III Western Balkans.

3.2. Indicative type of activities

The action will indicatively include the following main activities structured under three pillars (corresponding to areas of support explained under point 2.2 above):

Drug information - EMCDDA (Outputs 1 and 2)

- Providing technical assistance, advice and expertise and training;
- Conducting assessments and analysis;
- Transfer of knowledge and exchange of best practice;
- Implementing co-production/co-ownership activities based on EU/EMCDDA standards;
- Providing support for attendance to EMCDDA expert meetings.

Judicial cooperation - Eurojust (Output 3)

- Providing technical assistance (expert advice/transfer of knowledge and financial support) including for coordination meetings, coordination centres and Joint Investigation Teams;
- IT assistance;
- Providing support for attendance to meetings/events organised by Eurojust supported networks.

Cooperation on protection against terrorist attacks (Output 4)

- Transfer of knowledge and sharing of good practices;
- Trainings, joint exercises and operational exchanges;
- Organising advisory missions and regional workshops;
- Providing expert advice including legal advice on developing/aligning domestic legislation to the EU's *acquis*.

Addressing threats related to radicalisation and violent extremism (Output 5)

- Providing technical assistance;
- Transfer of knowledge and exchange of expertise including through study visits;
- Development of guidance and counselling and of training programmes;
- Provision of dedicated support to policy development, with the design of concrete approaches and interventions by pooling and streamlining research findings, increasing their accessibility and fostering exchanges among and with researchers.

Support for the implementation of the EBCG Status Agreements in the Western Balkans (Output 6)

- Providing technical assistance, advice and expertise;
- Transfer of knowledge and sharing of good practices;
- Providing capacity building and training including specialised and horizontal training

IBM policy and standards (Output 7)

- Organising regular dialogue and peer-to-peer exchanges including with EU Member States;
- Providing technical assistance, advice and expertise;

- Translations and publication of materials;
- Peer-to-peer monitoring of implementation of IBM strategies;
- Creation of an IBM online platform.

NCCs harmonisation and EUROSUR support (Output 8)

- Providing technical assistance, advice and expertise including on the technical and institutional policy aspects of establishing NCCs and their alignment with EUROSUR standards. The Action will not fund the set-up of NCC in IPA III beneficiaries;
- Conducting assessment of state of play of NCCs in the Western Balkans.

All outputs foresee the organisation of events/workshops for policy dialogue, capacity strengthening and/or networking.

3.3. Risks and assumptions

Risks	Risk level (H/M/L)	Mitigating measures
Risk 1 Limited interest, trust, and/or stakeholders' buy-in into the foreseen activities.	L	Lack of interest, trust and/or buy-in will be addressed through the demonstration of concrete results that can be derived from the cooperation. While specific activities will be planned and consulted with the Western Balkans, including at the technical and strategic level, specific work plans can be adjusted should there be limited interest. Awareness-raising and regional capacity-building activities are also expected to contribute to strengthened networking and trust-building, creating favorable conditions at the technical/operational level to counterbalance possible negative developments at the political level. Regular dialogue and coordination with DG NEAR, DG HOME and EU Delegations/EU Office is foreseen to ensure beneficiary buy-in.
Risk 2 Political instability/tensions, and/or complex institutional and jurisdictional set-ups may disrupt or delay activities.	M	The action will adopt a flexible approach in planning and implementation of its activities. The action might be redirected to focus on specific beneficiaries if cooperation is disrupted in one beneficiary. A strong link between the action delivery and the policy engagement between the EU and the region is seen as a mitigation strategy.
Risk 3 Limited absorption capacity in Western Balkans namely due to other (inter)nationally supported activities and/or limited availability of counterparts/experts.	M	Implementing partners will be responsible to ensure coordination with EU Delegations/EU Office as well as with other donors in the region with a view to better streamline the various activities. Coordination is expected to be supported by the Integrative Internal Security governance platform.
Risk 4 Lack of sharing by Western Balkans authorities of relevant operational information which is a pre-requisite for identification of connected cases (Eurojust component)	L	The action will engage with Western Balkans authorities in the design of the specific activities of the project from early on. The engagement will include general prosecution offices and other relevant authorities to ensure adequate representation in the project. The action will also provide training and

		other opportunities to highlights the benefits of full participation, including through Liaison Prosecutors based at Eurojust and Contact Points in the region.
Risk 5 COVID-19 pandemic continues	M	The action will be planned to ensure from its onset virtual or hybrid interaction between participants if relevant.
Assumptions (to be reflected in the Logical Framework Matrix above) – grouped by outputs and outcomes		
<p>Outcome level: No further deterioration of the security situation. Interest and commitment of the stakeholders is maintained, adapted and developed throughout the evolution of the context. Ownership of beneficiaries is respected in implementation.</p> <p>Output 1: Necessary political will to act on analysis produced.</p> <p>Output 2: Necessary political will to align to and implement EU <i>acquis</i> including through committing necessary staff and other resources for setting up NDO and NEWS.</p> <p>Output 3: Necessary political will to increase judicial cooperation within the region and with the EU.</p> <p>Output 4: Necessary political will to prioritise work on protection of public spaces and critical infrastructure; Willingness to cooperate and adopt EU tools and practices including through committing necessary staff and other resources and working regionally.</p> <p>Output 5: Willingness to engage in tackling radicalisation in line with EU best practice, in particular in the area of strategic communications; Adequate staff dedicated to work on topic at policy level.</p> <p>Output 6: Necessary political will to operationalise and implement the EBCGA status agreements; Resources committed to adequately resource border police.</p> <p>Output 7: Necessary political will to cooperate and adopt EU IBM standards.</p> <p>Output 8: Necessary political will to cooperate and adopt EU tools and practices. Resources committed for NCC set-up.</p>		

3.4. Mainstreaming

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

The action will ensure the equal participation of women and integrate gender perspectives into its activities as a cross-cutting priority. Furthermore, the action will work with partners to ensure a balanced representation of women and men among action beneficiaries to the greatest extent possible (e.g. the action will not propose or accept single-gender workshops, panels, etc.). At the specific project level, gender aggregated indicators will be developed. As regards the work taken forward by Frontex, the specific gender-based needs of those on the move shall be promptly identified and addressed.

How does this Action address Environment and Climate change?

There is no direct link to environment and climate change, as the action is centered on rule of law within the Western Balkans. However, caution will be taken to reduce any associated environmental impact where possible. As regards the work taken forward by Eurojust and Frontex, the capacity strengthening will focus on the fight against organised crime which can include cross-border environmental crimes.

How does this Action address the Rights Based Approach?

The action is fully directed towards contributing to a strengthened Rule of Law in the Western Balkans region. As such, all activities are specifically designed to enhance a rule of law and human rights compliant law enforcement and justice response to organised crime, terrorism and enhanced border security. EU Agencies Eurojust, EMCDDA and Frontex attaches great importance to the respect of fundamental rights and adheres to them in all its operations. In the case of Frontex, the compliance with fundamental rights is constantly monitored by Frontex Fundamental Rights Office, which is an independent body reporting directly to Frontex Management Board. To this end, the new Frontex Fundamental Rights Strategy was adopted in February 2021 and all activities carried out by Frontex under this action will be compliant with it.

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

This action is primarily targeting policy- and decision makers and authorities and focuses on uptake of EU best practice and strengthened strategic and operational security cooperation in which civil society is not a key player. However, civil society will have a role to play particularly in the activities linked to drug information implemented by EMCDDA. In general, EU agencies such as Frontex regularly engages with key civil society organisations through its Consultative Forum.

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

The action will strive to take into account specifically needs of vulnerable groups including Roma in the activities relating to border security. This will further reinforce the mainstreaming of fundamental rights including rights of minorities across project activities.

3.5. Conditions for implementation

The following conditions apply:

Prior to the start of implementation of activities under output 3 with Eurojust, Eurojust supported networks will need to agree to expand and strengthen their cooperation with the Western Balkans. The fulfilment of this condition will be assessed by the Commission during contract negotiations with Eurojust. The Commission reserves the right to take appropriate measures, including by re-directing activities in consultation with Eurojust, if it assesses that the condition is not fulfilled.

Prior to the start of implementation of activities under outputs 4 and 5, the joint commitment by the Western Balkans region and the Commission to implement the Joint Action Plan on Counter-Terrorism at least for the duration of such activities, needs to be confirmed. The fulfilment of this condition will be assessed during contract negotiations. The Commission reserves the right to take appropriate measures in consultation with beneficiaries, including by re-directing activities to support the implementation of other joint commitments, if it assesses that the condition is not fulfilled.

Prior to the start of implementation of activities relating to the participation of a specific beneficiary in joint operations (part of output 6), the Status Agreement (SA) between the relevant beneficiary and Frontex must be in force and implemented. This is the case already with Albania (May 2019), Montenegro (July 2020) and Serbia (May 2021). The signature, ratification and entry into force of SAs with Bosnia and Herzegovina and North Macedonia respectively will enable the action to extend activities in support of joint operations to these beneficiaries. The fulfilment of this condition will be assessed by the Commission in the course of implementation. The Commission reserves the right to take appropriate measures, including by re-directing activities in consultation with Frontex, if it assesses that the condition is not fulfilled.

In addition to the above conditions, it should also be noted that effective capacity strengthening requires high-level support by the beneficiaries and a concrete commitment to allocate relevant staff and resources to beneficiary institutions. Access to information and counterparts by implementing partners is also required. The Commission reserves the right to take appropriate measures, including by re-directing activities in consultation with implementing partners, if it assesses that such necessary accompanying measures by beneficiaries are not in place. The assessment of the Commission will rely on reporting by implementing partners, monitoring of the action and dialogue with beneficiaries.

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

Results	Results chain: Main expected results (maximum 10)	Indicators (at least one indicator per expected result)	Baselines	Targets	Sources of data (1 per indicator)	Assumptions
Impact	To contribute to strengthening of the rule of law in the Western Balkans through enhancing the fight against organised crime, terrorism as well as border security	Composite indicator on the readiness of enlargement beneficiaries on fundamental areas of the political accession criteria (including democracy, rule of law, judiciary, fight against corruption and fight against organised crime and human rights)	Western Balkans (49,50)	10% increase, Western Balkans (55)	European Commission	<i>Not applicable</i>
Outcome 1 – Pillar 1 (fight against Organised Crime) and Pillar 2 (fight against terrorism and violent extremism)	<i>Uptake by Western Balkans of EU best practices and approaches on organised crime and terrorism</i>	A) Extent to which the level of data on collection and reporting on drugs is comparable to the EU in each beneficiary (Y/N) B) Number of Western Balkans who report an increase in their capacity to develop P/CVE policies C) Improved quality of Western Balkans P/CVE policies	A) No in all beneficiaries (2021) B) 0 (2021) C) NA (2021)	A) Yes in at least 2 beneficiaries (2026) B) 5 (2026) C) Quality improved in 6 beneficiaries (2026)	EU and Commission reports/assessments Implementing partner reporting	No further deterioration of the security situation. Interest and commitment of the stakeholders is maintained, adapted and developed throughout the evolution of the context. Ownership of beneficiaries is respected in implementation.
Outcome 2 – Pillar 1 (fight against Organised Crime) and Pillar 2 (fight against terrorism and violent	<i>Strengthened strategic and operational cooperation within the Western Balkans and between the region and the EU on organised crime and terrorism using EU tools</i>	A) Number of Joint Investigation Teams with Western Balkans participation B) % of implementation by Western Balkans of Joint Action Plan objectives	A) 9 (2021) B) 20 % (2021)	A) 28 (2026) B) 60 % (2026)	EU and Commission reports/assessments Implementing	No further deterioration of the security situation.

<p>extremism)</p>		<p>2 and 5</p>			<p>partner reporting</p>	<p>Interest and commitment of the stakeholders is maintained, adapted and developed throughout the evolution of the context. Ownership of beneficiaries is respected in implementation.</p>
<p>Outcome 3 – Pillar 3 (border security)</p>	<p><i>Increased implementation by Western Balkans of EU compliant border security measures</i></p>	<p>% of implementation of Frontex Status agreements</p>	<p>0% (2021)</p>	<p>40% (2026)</p>	<p>EU and Commission reports/assessments Implementing partner reporting</p>	<p>No further deterioration of the security situation. Interest and commitment of the stakeholders is maintained, adapted and developed throughout the evolution of the context. Ownership of beneficiaries is respected in implementation.</p>

Output 1 related to outcomes 1 and 2	<p><i>EMCDDA</i></p> <p>The Western Balkans are better informed of drug-related health and security threats in the region and capacitated to formulate adequate responses</p>	<p>A) Number of studies on cross-border drug-related health and security threats in Western Balkans produced</p> <p>B)Number of briefings produced per beneficiary</p>	<p>A) 0 (2021)</p> <p>B)(2021) 0</p>	<p>A) 2 (2026)</p> <p>B) Minimum 2/beneficiary (2026)</p>	<p>Implementing partner reporting</p> <p>Studies, beneficiaries briefings</p> <p>EMCDDA Roadmaps</p>	<p>Necessary political will to act on analysis produced.</p>
Output 2 related to outcomes 1 and 2	<p><i>EMCDDA</i></p> <p>The Western Balkans are better equipped to progress on setting up NDO and NEWS aligned to the EU</p>	<p>A) Number of expert exchanges per beneficiary with National Drug Observatories/national correspondents</p> <p>B) Number of expert exchanges/alerts per beneficiary on national early warning systems on new psychoactive substances</p>	<p>A) 3/beneficiary (2021)</p> <p>B) 2/beneficiary (2022)</p>	<p>A) 10/beneficiary (2026)</p> <p>B) 5/beneficiary (2026)</p>	<p>Implementing partner reporting</p> <p>EMCDDA Roadmaps</p>	<p>Necessary political will to align to and implement EU acquis including through committing necessary staff and other resources for setting up NDO and NEWS.</p>
Output 3 related to outcomes 1 and 2	<p><i>EUROJUST</i></p> <p>The Western Balkans are better equipped to use modern judicial cooperation tools for investigating and prosecuting organised cross-border crime</p>	<p>A)Number of Coordination Centres</p> <p>B)Number of network events attended by Western Balkans practitioners</p>	<p>A)0 (2021)</p> <p>B)0 (2021)</p>	<p>A)28 (2026)</p> <p>B)12 (2026)</p>	<p>Implementing partner reporting</p>	<p>Necessary political will to increase judicial cooperation within the region and with the EU.</p>

<p>Output 4 related to outcomes 1 and 2</p>	<p>The Western Balkans are strengthened in detecting, investigating and responding to terrorist threats on public places and critical infrastructures</p>	<p>A) Extent to which a regional forum and/or network on protection of public spaces and critical infrastructures against terrorist attacks bringing together relevant stakeholders exists</p> <p>B) Number of advisory missions or other expert exchanges on vulnerability and/or risk assessments</p>	<p>A) No forum or network exists (2021) B) 0 (2021)</p>	<p>A) A forum or network exists at regional level (2026) B) 4/beneficiaries (2026)</p>	<p>Implementing partner reporting</p> <p>Joint Action Plan reports</p>	<p>Necessary political will to prioritise work on protection of public spaces and critical infrastructure.</p> <p>Willingness to cooperate and adopt EU tools and practices including through committing necessary staff and other resources and working regionally.</p>
<p>Output 5 related to outcomes 1 and 2</p>	<p>The Western Balkans are strengthened in developing and implementing P/CVE policies and approaches including in the area of strategic communications</p>	<p>A) Number of exchanges of expertise among policy makers on P/CVE</p> <p>B) Extent to which guidance for policy-makers on strategic communication in P/CVE is developed in each beneficiary (Y/N)</p>	<p>A) 0 (2021) B) None (2021)</p>	<p>A) 10 (2025) B) Yes (2025)</p>	<p>Implementing partner reporting</p> <p>Joint Action Plan reports</p>	<p>Willingness to engage in tackling radicalisation in line with EU best practice, in particular in the area of strategic communications.</p> <p>Adequate staff dedicated to work on topic at policy level.</p>
<p>Output 6 related to outcome 3</p>	<p><i>Frontex</i></p> <p>The Western Balkans are capacitated to operationalise and implement EBCG Status Agreements</p>	<p>% of border police officers and other staff trained in: a) Border checks; b) Border surveillance; and c) CIRAM</p>	<p>0 (2021)</p>	<p>At least 10% of border police officers taking part in joint operations</p>	<p>Implementing partner reporting</p>	<p>Necessary political will operationalise and implement</p>

				trained in all three areas (2026)		the EBCG status agreements. Resources committed to adequately resource border police.
Output 7 related to outcome 3	<i>Frontex</i> The Western Balkans have improved knowledge and are better equipped to align their Integrated Border Management (IBM) strategies with EU IBM standards	A) Extent to which a Regional IBM Platform is established and operational (Y/N) B) Number of workshops on IBM policies and best practices conducted	A) 0 (2021) B) 0 (2021)	A) Platform with online component operational (2026) B) At least 12 (2026)	Implementing partner reporting	Necessary political will to cooperate and adopt EU IBM standards.
Output 8 related to outcome 3	<i>Frontex</i> The Western Balkans have increased expertise in setting up fully operational National Coordination Centres (NCCs), interoperable with the EUROSUR framework	1) Number of trainings/ workshops held on technical and policy aspects of NCC	0 (2021)	At least 12 (2026)	Implementing partner reporting	Necessary political will to cooperate and adopt EU tools and practices. Resources committed for NCC set-up

4. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

4.1. Financing agreement

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

4.2. Implementation modalities

The Commission will ensure that the EU appropriate rules and procedures for providing financing to third parties are respected, including review procedures, where appropriate, and compliance of the action with EU restrictive measures¹⁰.

4.2.1. Direct Management (Procurement)

Procurement shall be undertaken to contribute to achieve outcomes 1 and 2 and output 5 of the action.

The **global** budgetary envelope reserved for procurement: EUR 1 500 000.

4.2.2. Indirect management with Member State Organisations and EU specialised (traditional/regulatory) agencies

4.2.2.1. EMCDDA

A part of this action may be implemented in indirect management with **EMCDDA**. This implementation entails undertaking all necessary actions, including through direct implementation of activities and conducting budget implementation tasks (procurement and grants award procedures as relevant), to achieve the expected outcomes and output 1 and 2 of the action. Tasks may include inter alia: technical assistance, capacity building, carrying out analysis and assessments, workshops/training/events and development of tools. The envisaged entity has been selected using the following criteria: core mandate, operational and financial capacity, and experience in the region. As an EU decentralised agency, EMCDDA has the specific mandate to provide the EU and its Member States with a factual overview of European drug problems and a solid evidence base to support the drugs debate, as well as offering policymakers the required data for drawing up informed drug laws and strategies, which makes it uniquely placed to conduct similar activities for the targeted IPA III beneficiaries in view of ensuring the necessary alignment of approaches. EMCDDA has valuable previous expertise in the Western Balkans region in terms of the provision of assessment, advice and trainings and engaging with authorities. EMCDDA possesses a high degree of competence and degree of specialisation necessary to implement and add value to the proposed action and has the necessary operational capacity to undertake this action.

4.2.2.2. EUROJUST

A part of this action may be implemented in indirect management with **Eurojust**. This implementation entails undertaking all necessary actions, including through direct implementation of activities and conducting budget implementation tasks (procurement and grants award procedures as relevant), to achieve the expected outcomes and output 3 of the action. Tasks may include inter alia: technical assistance, capacity building, carrying out analysis and assessments, workshops/training/events and development of tools. The envisaged entity has been selected using the following criteria: core mandate, operational and financial capacity, and experience in the region. As an EU agency, EUROJUST has the specific mandate to work with national EU authorities to combat a wide range of serious and complex cross-border crimes involving two or more beneficiaries and is leading the judicial response to growing threats in Europe, mainly focusing on organised crime groups, which makes it uniquely placed to conduct similar activities for the targeted IPA III beneficiaries in view of ensuring the necessary alignment of approaches. EUROJUST has previous expertise in the Western Balkans region in terms of the provision of assessment, advice and training and engaging with authorities. Eurojust possesses a high degree of competence and degree of specialisation necessary to implement and add value to the proposed action and has the necessary operational capacity to undertake this action.

4.2.2.3. Member States

A part of this action on the protection of **public spaces and protection of critical infrastructures** (outcomes 1 and 2

¹⁰ 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.

and output 4), may be implemented in indirect management with an entity/ies which will be selected by the Commission services using the specific criteria, as listed below. The implementation by this entity entails undertaking all necessary actions, including through direct implementation of activities and conducting budget implementation tasks (procurement and grants award procedures as relevant), to achieve the expected outcome 1 and 2 and the output 4 of the action.

Selection criteria:

- **Member State pillar-assessed organisation or a consortia thereof**
- Expression of support from counter terrorism relevant authority/authorities in the EU
- Specific technical expertise on protection against public spaces and/or Critical Infrastructures
- Management capacity demonstrated through implementation of previous activities in the security sector
- Track record of engagement with the Western Balkans
- Cooperation involving more than one Member State will be considered an asset

The Member State organisation(s) can partner with other entities in the delivery of the activities. The above-mentioned criteria will be used given the sensitive nature of protection of public spaces and critical infrastructures, the specific and limited availability of expertise and the need to ensure that the targeted IPA III beneficiaries adopt legislative and institutional frameworks and implement EU compliant measures. They will be applied to the organisation and its potential partners.

4.2.2.4. Frontex

A part of this action may be implemented in indirect management with **Frontex**. This implementation entails undertaking all necessary actions, including through direct implementation of activities and conducting budget implementation tasks (procurement and grants award procedures as relevant), to achieve the expected outcomes and outputs 6, 7 and 8 of the action. Tasks may include inter alia: technical assistance, capacity building, carrying out analysis and assessments, workshops/training/events and development of tools. The envisaged entity has been selected using the following criteria: core mandate, operational and financial capacity, and experience in the region. As an EU agency, Frontex has the specific mandate to promote, coordinate and develop European border management in line with the EU fundamental rights charter, which makes it uniquely placed to conduct similar activities for the targeted IPA III beneficiaries in view of ensuring the necessary alignment of approaches. Frontex has valuable previous expertise in the Western Balkans region in terms of the provision of assessment, advice and trainings and engaging with authorities. Frontex possesses a high degree of competence and degree of specialisation necessary to implement and add value to the proposed action and has the necessary operational capacity to undertake this action.

If negotiations with the above-mentioned entity(-ies) under 4.2.2.3 fail, that part of this action may be implemented in direct management in accordance with the implementation modalities identified in section 4.2.3.

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

If negotiations with the entrusted entity(ies) under 4.2.2.3 fail, that part of the support may be implemented in direct management through grants in accordance with the implementation modalities identified as follows:

Under the responsibility of the Commission's authorising officer responsible, the grant may be awarded without a call for proposals to EU Member States organisation for output 4, selected using the following criteria: expression of support from counter terrorism relevant authority/authorities in the EU; specific technical expertise on protection against public spaces and/or Critical Infrastructures; management capacity demonstrated through implementation of previous activities in the security sector; track record of engagement with the Western Balkans; cooperation involving more than one Member State will be considered an asset. Under the responsibility of the Commission's authorising officer responsible, the recourse to an award of a grant without a call for proposals is justified based on Article 195 (f) since a particular type of body on account of its technical competence and its high degree of specialisation is required, given the sensitive nature of protection of public spaces and critical infrastructures, the specific and limited availability of expertise and the need to ensure that the targeted IPA III beneficiaries adopt legislative and institutional frameworks and implement EU compliant measures.

4.4. Scope of geographical eligibility for procurement and grants

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

The Commission's authorising officer responsible may extend the geographical eligibility on the basis of urgency or of unavailability of services in the markets of the countries or territories concerned, or in other duly substantiated cases where application of the eligibility rules would make the realisation of this action impossible or exceedingly difficult.

4.5. Indicative budget

	EU contribution (amount in EUR) 2021	EU contribution (amount in EUR) 2022	Indicative third party contribution, in currency identified 2021 and 2022
Organised Crime- Outcome 1 and 2 - outputs 1, 2 and 3 composed of	6 000 000	1 500 000	N/A
Indirect management with EMCDDA (outputs 1,2)		1 500 000	N/A
Indirect management with Eurojust (output 3)	6 000 000		N/A
Counter-terrorism and P/CVE – Outcome 1 and 2 - Outputs 4 and 5 composed of	5 500 000		N/A
Procurement (Direct management)	1 500 000		N/A
Indirect management with Member State Organisation(s)	4 000 000		N/A
Border Security – Outcome 3 - Outputs 6, 7 and 8 composed of	7 000 000		N/A
Indirect management with EBCGA/Frontex	7 000 000		N/A
Totals	18 500 000	1 500 000	N/A
Total	20 000 000		

4.6. Organisational set-up and responsibilities

The action will be implemented through up to 5 (five) projects. Each of the project will be steered through a Steering Committee, meeting at least once a year. The Steering Committees will be chaired by the European Commission.

Each project will participate in relevant beneficiary-level coordination mechanisms as well as any IPA coordination meetings organised by the EU Delegation/Office.

In addition, in the framework of the Joint Action Plan on Counter-Terrorism, activities undertaken under the relevant Action components will be reported on by each beneficiary and the Commission as part of the monitoring of the implementation of the Joint Action Plan.

5. PERFORMANCE/RESULTS MONITORING AND REPORTING

5.1. Internal monitoring

The steering committees set up under each project will detail the internal monitoring process.

The day-to-day technical and financial monitoring of the implementation of this action will be a continuous process and part of the implementing partner's responsibilities. In addition, the action might be subject to external monitoring in line with the European Commission rules and procedures.

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

The implementing partners will continuously capture, record and track key statistical information on the implementation of activities. Particular emphasis will be placed on systematic collection of data required to track progress on indicators identified in the logical framework. The monitoring methods and sources will include the following as relevant: action records showing details about events held and actions taken; website and social media analysis showing viewership, reach, and engagement of target audiences; visibility and impact of social media campaigns; number of mainstream media stories published using material provided through the action; and feedback from participants through questionnaires designed for the action.

5.3. Evaluation

Having regard to the importance of the action, a mid-term evaluation(s) will be carried out for this action or its components via an implementing partner.

It will be carried out for learning purposes, in particular with respect to the pilot nature of some of the activities.

The evaluation reports shall be shared with the partner beneficiary 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 beneficiary, jointly decide on the follow-up actions to be taken and any adjustments necessary, including, if indicated, the reorientation of the project.

6. AUDIT

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

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

7. COMMUNICATION AND VISIBILITY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Communication on this Action should also take into consideration the risks from misinformation and disinformation,

and the ways of countering these in order to avoid undermining the Union's efforts and image in the Western Balkans.

8. SUSTAINABILITY

The action is expected to be sustainable beyond its implementation period as it will focus on increasing sustainable capacities of IPA III beneficiaries in a priority area of enlargement.

The action will foster the cooperation between the Western Balkans and the EU Justice and Home Affairs agencies such as EUROJUST, EMCDDA and Frontex but also with EU Member States which will remain invested in the region and in the EU's security cooperation. The activities will allow for a change in mindset which will be maintained beyond action implementation. Implementers of the various activities will stress the importance that trained officials and contact points remain at these positions for a significant amount of time or that a proper internal handover is ensured so that the competencies acquired will remain in the institutions and not attached to the person itself. They will also stress the need for a sufficient allocation of specific budget to ensure that the cooperation initiated under this action continues beyond its duration.