

**to the Commission Implementing Decision on the financing of the
multiannual support measure for communication in favour of the IPA III beneficiaries for 2021-2023**

ACTION DOCUMENT

1. SYNOPSIS

1.1. Action summary table

IDENTIFICATION				
Title	Strategic communication about the European Union and the EU accession process Multi-country multiannual support measure in favour of the IPA III beneficiaries for 2021-2023			
OPSYS/CRIS number	2021/042-556, 2022/042-987, 2023/043-382			
Basic Act	Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA III)			
Team Europe initiative	No			
Zone benefiting from the action	The IPA III beneficiaries			
Programming document	IPA III Programming Framework			
PRIORITY AREAS AND SECTOR INFORMATION				
Window and thematic priority	Window 2: Good governance, acquis alignment, good neighbourly relations and strategic communication Thematic priority 4: Strategic communication			
Sustainable Development Goals	SDG 17 - Partnerships to achieve the Goal			
DAC code(s)	22010 Communications policy and administrative management – 100%			
Main delivery channel	60000 – private sector institution 61000 – private sector in provider country			
Markers (from DAC form)	General policy objective	Not targeted	Significant objective	Principal objective
	Participation development/good governance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input 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
	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: 15.02.01.01.02 Total estimated cost: EUR 45 000 000 Total amount of EU budget contribution: EUR 45 000 000 The breakdown of the total EU contribution is EUR 15 000 000 from the general budget of the European Union for 2021, EUR 15 000 000 from the general budget of the European Union for 2022 and EUR 15 000 000 from the general budget of the European Union for 2023, provided appropriations for the respective financial years are available following the adoption of the relevant annual budget, or as provided for in the system of provisional twelfths.			
MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION				
Type of financing and method(s) of implementation	Project modality Direct management through procurement			
Relevant priorities and flagships from the Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans	The communication activities implemented under this action will cover, as relevant, all priorities and flagships from the Economic and Investment Plan. 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’ Flagships: ‘I Connect East-West’, ‘II Connect North-South’, ‘III Connect Coastal Regions’, ‘IV Renewable Energy’, ‘V Coal Transition’, ‘VI Renovation Wave’, ‘VII Waste and Waste Water’, ‘VIII Digital Infrastructure’, ‘IX Support Competitiveness’, ‘X Youth Guarantee’			
Final date for concluding procurement contracts	At the latest by 31 December 2022 (Budget 2021) At the latest by 31 December 2023 (Budget 2022) At the latest by 31 December 2024 (Budget 2023)			
Indicative operational implementation period	60 months following the adoption of the Financing Decision (Budget 2021) 72 months following the adoption of the Financing Decision (Budget 2022) 84 months following the adoption of the Financing Decision (Budget 2023)			

1.2. Summary of the action

The objective of the action is to raise public awareness and contribute to public support for the European Union and its actions and the EU accession process.

The action provides funding for the European Commission, the EU delegations in the Western Balkans and Turkey and the EU Office in Kosovo* to continue effective, strategic communication based on clear objectives, a common and compelling EU narrative and thematic communication on key priorities.

The action will comprise, among others: (i) EU image-building (‘EU-branding’) campaigns to position the EU as the main political and economic partner and the biggest financial donor, and as a major engine of positive change, through investments and reforms that benefit society and are firmly attached to EU values;

(ii) thematic campaigns on priority areas of cooperation (e.g. green agenda, digital agenda, connectivity, economy, human capital, fair society); (iii) a network of information centres and information points; (iv) web and social media presence; (v) direct outreach to the targeted audiences (events, festivals, TV and radio programmes, student debates, etc.); (vi) media relations; (vii) opinion polls and surveys.

The communication activities implemented by the European Commission and the EU delegations and office are complementary to the communication efforts of the national authorities and civil society.

*This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/99 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

2. RATIONALE

2.1. Context analysis

The current enlargement agenda covers the Western Balkans (the Republic of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, the Republic of North Macedonia, the Republic of Serbia) and the Republic of Turkey. The accession process is rigorous, built on strict but fair conditionality, established criteria and the principle of own merit. This is crucial for the credibility of enlargement policy, for providing incentives to enlargement countries to pursue far-reaching reforms and for ensuring support for European integration

The EU's enlargement policy contributes to peace, security and prosperity in Europe, which are all of mutual benefit. It makes the EU stronger politically and economically and has a powerful transformative effect on the countries concerned. A well-prepared accession process ensures enlargement is not at the expense of the EU's effectiveness.

Over the past years, the Commission has given greater credibility to its enlargement policy and improved its transformative power by focusing more on fundamental reforms early in the enlargement process, including rule of law, economic governance and public administration reforms. These strands are interlinked, and progress in these areas will be key to determining when countries are ready to join the EU. In February 2020, the Commission adopted proposals to improve the accession process¹, which were subsequently endorsed by the EU Council. At the EU-Western Balkans Summit in Slovenia in October 2021², the EU reaffirmed its unequivocal support for the European perspective of the Western Balkans and reconfirmed its commitment to the enlargement process and its decisions taken thereon, based upon credible reforms by partners, fair and rigorous conditionality and the principle of own merits.

In 2021 and in the following years, the EU's main communication emphasis will be on the long-term nature of EU support and its impact on people's life, for instance in terms of health and environmental standards, stable democracy and fundamental freedoms as well as on the Economic and Investment Plan³ to spur long-term recovery, accelerate a green and digital transition, and foster regional cooperation and convergence with the EU.

2.2. Problem analysis by areas of support

Communication environment

¹ European Commission Communication from February 2020, COM(2020) 57 final, on 'Enhancing the accession process – A credible EU perspective for the Western Balkans'.

² Brdo Declaration of the EU-Western Balkans summit on 6 October 2021: https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/10/06/brdo-declaration-6-october-2021/?utm_source=dsms-auto&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Brdo+Declaration%2c+6+October+2021

³ Economic and Investment Plan, Brussels, 6.10.2020 COM(2020) 641 final.

Public support for the EU and the EU accession process in the enlargement region has remained relatively steady over the past years. At the end of 2020, on average 74% of the population in the Western Balkans were in favour of EU membership, and 53% in Turkey⁴.

However, when it comes to recognising the EU's role as the main donor, trade and investment partner in the region, people are not always aware of this fact and rank other players like Russia and increasingly China disproportionately high. Only 38% of the population in the Western Balkans, and 34% in Turkey, consider themselves well informed about the EU funding.

Polls in the region also show that segments of the population are sceptical about EU accession. They also feel the EU is setting stricter conditions than in previous EU enlargements.

As for the media landscape, local media in the region tend to report on the EU mostly when prompted by local political developments. EU-funded projects or EU-backed reforms and their benefits for the public rarely make it into the news. Moreover, the media landscape in the region is polarised, with political interference in and control of the media, struggling independent media, and attempts of third-party influence.

A particular challenge when communicating about the enlargement process is its technical and abstract nature, the unpopular reforms this sometimes requires and its long-term prospect, knowing that progress depends on the efforts of individual candidate countries and potential candidates. In this context, the EU is partly perceived as a distant bureaucratic institution that demands many short-term efforts while offering only a vague long-term reward. This is linked to the misperception that the progress on the EU path depends on the EU and not on the efforts by their national government.

Strategic communication framework

Effective communication on how the EU and the EU accession process work and its implications for peoples' lives both in the candidate countries and potential candidates, as well as in the EU Member States, remains essential to ensure public support. Public understanding of the benefits of the accession process and EU membership is instrumental in pursuing the necessary reforms effectively and in countering opposing narratives of other actors in the region.

The General Affairs Council Conclusions of December 2015 stressed the need for the EU to step up its efforts and actions, along with the continued engagement of EU Member States and strategic partners in this area, and to enhance through improved strategic communication the public understanding of the benefits and obligations of EU membership.

In response to that, the European Commission services and the European External Action Service (EEAS) have jointly developed a strategic communication framework for the Western Balkans and Turkey, which is based on clear objectives, a common and compelling EU narrative and thematic communication on key priorities. This framework is implemented through the following measures:

- further professionalisation of strategic communications work through a better use of media opportunities during high-level visits and events, more variety in messaging and in the platforms used, the creation of tailored content and story-telling backed up by better knowledge of audiences and evaluation of concrete results and impact;
- development of a set of key messages for each candidate country and potential candidate and for EU audiences in order to support clearer and more coherent communication by all EU actors, including the EU Members States, making best strategic use of EU Info Centres to disseminate the narrative and the key messages to a wider public and advocating to national authorities in the region to ensure closer alignment with this narrative and these messages;

⁴ Source: public opinion polls conducted by the EU delegations in the region and the EU Office in Kosovo in November-December 2020.

- setting up a Western Balkans StratCom Task Force to coordinate efforts and shape media messaging and proactive campaigning and to respond to and help build resilience against disinformation activities by external actors;
- consolidation of the strategic communication network by bringing together European Commission services and EEAS staff from headquarters and delegations in order to improve the coherence and complementarity of activities and make best use of experience and skills,
- closer cooperation with EU Member States in planning and coordinating communication activities, in particular, aligning messages, sharing information and organising joint events;
- closer coordination with the European Parliament, international organisation and financial institutions, think tanks and civil society;
- targeted use of modern digital channels and tools to reach out to various audiences, with a special focus on social media (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, etc.)

Communication and information programmes financed under IPA II and their continuation as IPA III actions for ‘Strategic Communication about the European Union and the EU accession process’ have served as a primary funding tool to support these measures’ implementation by the EU delegations in the region and the EU Office in Kosovo and by European Commission headquarters.

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

Fulfilment of the strategic communication objective set out in the IPA III Programming Framework, while complemented by the communication activities implemented by the EU institutions and services, depends predominantly on credible efforts by the national authorities.

To this end, in line with the IPA III Financial Framework Partnership Agreement, the national authorities are in charge of developing and implementing comprehensive communication strategies to ensure public support for EU values and policies, and for the reforms inherent in the accession process by explaining: (i) how the EU and the EU accession process work, and (ii) what the benefits and implications of the process are for citizens.

The communication efforts should cover several complementary layers of information about the EU, and in particular: (a) EU values, policies and programmes and their impact on people's everyday life; (b) the EU accession process with the accompanying socio-economic transformation and its long-term benefits and opportunities for citizens and economies, with a focus on human stories/success stories; (c) the EU funding provided in the IPA III region and its correlation with EU values and policy objectives, with a focus on the tangible positive impact of EU-funded projects on citizens and economies.

The national authorities are responsible for coordinating their communication efforts with the European Commission and the EU delegations in the region and the EU Office in Kosovo.

The European Commission will assess the implementation of these measures in the annual reports it issues as part of the EU accession process.

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

The action complements and strengthens the European Commission's corporate communication actions. It helps to communicate the European Commission’s corporate priorities (‘the European Green Deal’, ‘a Europe fit for the digital age’, ‘an economy that works for people’, ‘a stronger Europe in the world’, ‘promoting our European way of life’, and ‘a new push for European democracy’)⁵. Special attention will be paid to seeking synergies with the corporate communication campaign Next Generation EU, as appropriate in the local context.

⁵Commission Work Programme 2021 ‘A Union of vitality in a world of fragility’ of 19 October 2020: [2021 Commission work programme – key documents | European Commission \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ipr_20_1910)

The Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations will ensure coordination with other Commission departments, including the Directorate-General for Communication and the European Commission Representations, as well as the European External Actions Service, and will liaise accordingly with the EU delegations in the region and the EU Office in Kosovo.

The Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, the EU delegations in the region and the EU Office in Kosovo will coordinate their communication activities with other Commission services implementing the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance, notably the Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development and the Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy.

Where feasible and appropriate, the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, the EU delegations in the region and the EU Office in Kosovo will follow the Team Europe approach in its strategic communication and public diplomacy initiatives.

2.5. Lessons learned and links with previous financial assistance

Based on findings and conclusions from closed and ongoing actions, as well as findings and recommendations from previous evaluations (cf. Section 5.3 below), the communication approach in recent years has moved towards effective, strategic communication based on clear objectives, a common and compelling EU narrative and thematic communication on key priorities.

The key elements of this approach are: (i) moving away from project-based communication towards thematic-based communication to avoid fragmentation of messages and support stronger narratives per theme; (ii) generating communication narratives which present the benefits and impact of EU action to the wider public through a combination of human stories and facts; (iii) unifying EU branding by reducing the number of slogans for individual initiatives; (iv) promoting the use of large communication contracts for campaign-led actions implemented by professional communication agencies.

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 objective of the action is to raise public awareness of and contribute to public support for the European Union and its actions and the EU accession process.

The expected results are a public informed about:

- EU values, policies and programmes and their impact on their everyday life;
- the EU accession process with the accompanying socio-economic transformation and its long term benefits and opportunities for citizens and economies;
- EU funding in the enlargement region and its correlation with EU values and policy objectives, with a focus on the tangible positive impact of EU-funded projects on citizens and economies.

This action provides funding for the EU delegations in the Western Balkans and Turkey and the EU Office in Kosovo to continue effective, strategic communication based on clear objectives, a common and compelling EU narrative and thematic communication on key priorities. It complements the communication efforts of the national authorities and civil society.

The funding will be used for procurement contracts to purchase specialised communication services for the ongoing communication work being done at national level by the EU delegations and the EU Office in Kosovo.

The action will therefore fund, among others: (i) EU image-building ('EU-branding') campaigns to position the EU as the main political and economic partner and the biggest financial donor, and as a major engine of positive change, through investments and reforms that benefit society and are firmly attached to EU values; (ii) thematic campaigns on priority areas of cooperation (e.g. green agenda, digital agenda, connectivity, economy, human capital, fair society); (iii) a network of information centres and information points; (iv)

web and social media presence; (v) direct outreach to the targeted audiences (through events, festivals, TV and radio programmes, student debates, etc.); (vi) media relations; (vii) opinion polls and surveys.

The action will also provide funding to continue the EU regional communication programme *WeBalkans.eu*. This will ensure a greater EU presence in the communication space in the Western Balkan region in line with EU political priorities and complement communication efforts being done at national level by the EU delegations in the region and the EU Office in Kosovo. This regional programme, *WeBalkans.eu*, offers a coordinated, region-wide approach and consists of three interlinked components: (i) a series of large-scale image-building communication campaigns; (ii) an online portal and social media accounts WeBalkans.eu, which serve as a ‘one-stop-shop’ for news, funding opportunities and success stories about EU projects, and explainers on the main areas of EU support; (iii) a network of Young European Ambassadors acting as ‘communicators’ of the EU in the region, in particular among young audiences.

The communication activities target audiences in the candidate countries and potential candidates, and, as relevant, audiences in the EU Member States.

3.2. Indicative type of activities

The following range of activities can be financed as part of the action, taking into account the target audience and the communication context, in particular, the stage of progress towards EU integration in the individual candidate countries and potential candidates:

- management of EU information centres and info points in the region;
- image-building communication campaigns to increase EU visibility and public support for the EU;
- thematic communication campaigns linked to the political and policy priorities of individual candidate countries and potential candidates, showcasing EU support in the relevant areas;
- outreach and networking (e.g. organisation of visibility events, seminars, conferences, fairs, study visits, workshops and training, including events for specific target groups, e.g. media, business, youth, think-tanks and digital influencers);
- cultural diplomacy (e.g. film festivals, book fairs, youth and sports events, video and writing competitions);
- media relations and media rebuttal (e.g. media monitoring, production of media materials, press events, training for journalists, press and media trips);
- online and social media activities (websites, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, etc.);
- production of different information tools and products (publications, audiovisual materials, EU-branded promotional materials);
- opinion polling and surveys on awareness of and support for the EU accession process and EU membership, as well as EU values, policies and programmes;
- monitoring and evaluation of communication actions (e.g. survey-based evaluations, focus groups and studies).

3.3. Risks and assumptions

Risks	Risk level (H/M/L)	Mitigating measures
Risk 1: The EU accession process is hampered by major domestic or international political developments.	M	Communication activities explaining the complex and long-term nature of the EU accession process and stressing the tangible advantages of EU membership at the end of the path.
Risk 2: Misinformation and hostile communication on EU policies, objectives and actions	M	Proactive communications on EU policies, objectives and actions. Awareness-raising activities to expose disinformation patterns,

		improve media literacy among the public, and outreach to civil society organisations and media.
Risk 3: Activities requiring physical presence cannot take place due to continued COVID-19 pandemic restrictions	M	Continuation of the digital leap to implement activities online or in a hybrid form.

Assumptions

The EU accession process remains a political priority for the national authorities in the candidate countries and potential candidates, and in the EU Member States, with commitment and willingness of all stakeholders to stimulate the debate on EU-related issues.

The public and media remain interested in EU-related information.

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 for 2020-2025)?

The communication activities will be designed and implemented with due attention to gender equality and girls' empowerment. In particular, when selecting project success stories and human feature stories, preference will be given to female candidates when feasible and relevant.

The action will also include awareness raising and advocacy activities to promote gender equality and girls' empowerment.

How does this action address environment and climate change?

The communication activities will be designed and implemented in line with the green public procurement principles, with due regard to the overall communication objectives. In particular, digital content will be privileged over printed material, and preference will be given to promotional material produced in an environmentally friendly manner. Similarly, online and hybrid events will be considered when this is considered relevant and feasible.

The action will also include awareness raising and advocacy activities on the environment and climate change policy.

How does this action address the rights-based approach?

Participation in the communication activities will be based on equal access regardless of sex, ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age, etc. The activities will be designed with due attention to cultural, ethnic and religious diversity, as well as gender equality.

The action will also include awareness raising and advocacy activities to promote inclusiveness and respect of fundamental and human rights.

How does this action promote systematic engagement with civil society?

Civil society organisations play a very important role in public awareness raising and advocacy actions. Cooperation with them is an inherent element of communication activities, in particular in the context of outreach at the local level.

Others (such as resilience and conflict sensitivity, Roma, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups)

Communication activities will be designed to ensure equal access for people with disabilities and other marginalised and vulnerable groups, in particular the Roma community.

The action will also include awareness raising and advocacy activities to promote inclusiveness and equal rights.

3.5. Conditions for implementation

Not applicable

3.6. Logical framework (3 levels of results / indicators / baselines / targets / source of data / assumptions - no activities)

Results	Results chain: Main expected results	Indicators	Baselines (year 2020)	Targets (year 2027)	Sources of data	Assumptions
Impact	To raise public awareness of and contribute to public support for the European Union and its actions, and the EU accession process.	Percentage of population with a positive general attitude towards the EU	WB: 71.6% Turkey: 53%	WB: $\geq 67.5\%$ ⁶ Turkey: $\geq 50\%$ ⁷	Public opinion polls	Not applicable
Outcome 1	The public is informed about EU values, policies and programmes and their impact on their everyday life.	Percentage of population who consider themselves well informed about the EU and its policies and institutions	WB: 35% Turkey: 48%	WB: $\geq 40\%$ Turkey: $\geq 40\%$	Public opinion polls	The EU accession process remains a political priority for the national authorities in the candidate countries and potential candidates, and in the Member States, with commitment and willingness of all stakeholders to stimulate the debate on EU-related issues.
Outcome 2	The public is informed about the EU accession process with the accompanying socio-economic transformation and its long-term benefits and opportunities for citizens and economies.	Percentage of population who consider themselves well informed about the EU integration process	WB: 34% Turkey: 23%	WB: $\geq 40\%$ Turkey: $\geq 40\%$	Public opinion polls	
Outcome 3	The public is informed about EU funding in the enlargement region and its correlation with EU values and policy objectives, with a focus on the tangible positive impact of EU-funded projects on citizens and economies.	Percentage of population who consider themselves well informed about the EU funding	WB: 38% Turkey: 34%	WB: $\geq 40\%$ Turkey: $\geq 35\%$	Public opinion polls	
Output 1 (related to outcome 1, 2 and 3)	Image-building and thematic communication campaigns have been successfully implemented.	Number of people reached during the campaigns (de-duplicated reach) (per year)	WB: 59 000 000 Turkey: 60 000 000	WB: $\geq 65 000 000$ Turkey: $\geq 78 000 000$	Audience analytics	The public and media remain interested in EU-related information.
Output 2 (related to outcome 1, 2 and 3)	Outreach and networking events and activities have been successfully organised (including online).	Number of participants (per year)	WB: 140 000 Turkey: 12 400	WB: $\geq 240 000$ Turkey: $\geq 18 600$	Desk analysis	
Output 3 (related to outcome 1, 2 and 3)	Web and social media presence has been successfully ensured (owned media).	Number of web visits (per year)	WB: 920 000 Turkey: 950 000	WB: $\geq 1 350 000$ Turkey: $\geq 1 200 000$	Web analytics	
		Number of followers/subscribers on social media (total)	WB: 275 000 Turkey: 150 000	WB: $\geq 600 000$ Turkey: $\geq 195 000$	Social media metrics	
		Number of impressions on social media (per year)	WB: 106 000 000 Turkey: 10 100 000	WB: $\geq 135 000 000$ Turkey: $\geq 13 000 000$	Social media metrics	
Output 3 (related to outcome 1, 2 and 3)	Coverage of EU-related issues in the media has been successfully ensured (earned and paid media).	Number of media items (articles, interviews, op-eds, TV and radio broadcasts, etc.) (per year)	WB: 149 000 Turkey: 74 000	WB: $\geq 200 000$ Turkey: $\geq 96 000$	Desk analysis	

⁶ Currently, there is an exceptionally high positive attitude in the public of some beneficiaries and therefore a very high baseline – to keep more than a two-thirds majority with a positive attitude across all beneficiaries over time would be an achievement.

⁷ Turkey continued to move further away from the European Union and Turkey's accession negotiations have therefore effectively come to a standstill. EU funding has been reduced. This might have an impact on the public perception and is therefore reflected in the related indicators.

4. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

4.1. Financing agreement

This action does not entail the conclusion of a financing agreement.

4.2. Implementation modalities

The Commission will ensure that the EU rules and procedures for providing financing to third parties are respected, including review procedures, where appropriate, and compliance of the action with EU restrictive measures⁸.

4.3. Direct management (procurement)

The procurement will help to achieve all outcomes and outputs, as listed in Section 3.

4.4. Scope of geographical eligibility for procurement and grants

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, will apply.

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

4.5. Indicative budget - EU contribution (amounts in EUR)

There are no third party contributions to the action. The action will be entirely implemented through procurement contracts under direct management.

	2021 budget	2022 budget	2023 budget	Total
Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations	0	0	4 500 000	4 500 000
EU Delegation to Albania	1 500 000	1 700 000	1 700 000	4 900 000
EU Delegation to Bosnia and Herzegovina	150 000	2 700 000	1 050 000	3 900 000
EU Office in Kosovo	0	2 500 000	0	2 500 000
EU Delegation to Montenegro	1 400 000	0	1 450 000	2 850 000
EU Delegation to North Macedonia	5 380 000	480 000	0	5 860 000
EU Delegation to Serbia	4 070 000	1 620 000	3 800 000	9 490 000
EU Delegation to Turkey	2 500 000	6 000 000	2 500 000	11 000 000
Total	15 000 000	15 000 000	15 000 000	45 000 000

⁸ www.sanctionsmap.eu 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, the OJ version prevails.

4.6. Organisational set-up and responsibilities

The EU delegations in the region and the EU Office in Kosovo are responsible for planning, contracting and implementing their respective communication activities. The same applies to the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations for its part of the funding.

The Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, jointly with the EEAS Task Force for Strategic Communication in the Western Balkans, provides a strategic steer to the EU delegations in the region and the EU Office in Kosovo through: (i) the communication priorities and global objectives that it sets; (ii) the feedback on communication strategies, annual communication plans and annual reports that it provides; (iii) the forum that it offers for sharing information and best practices (in the form of bi-annual regional seminars, monthly video conferences, and ad-hoc video calls on ongoing communication campaigns and packages.)

While planning their communication activities, the EU delegations in the region and the EU Office in Kosovo seek synergies with the communication efforts of the national authorities and civil society, as well as the Commission services in charge of the specific components of the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance, notably the Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development and the Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy.

5. PERFORMANCE/RESULTS MONITORING AND REPORTING

5.1. Internal monitoring

The internal monitoring of communication activities is carried out by the respective implementing entities, i.e. the EU delegations in the region and the EU Office in Kosovo, and the communication unit of the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations.

Local communication priorities, target audiences, specific activities and performance indicators are set by the EU delegations in the region and the EU Office in Kosovo in the annual communication plans. The Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations reviews these plans jointly with the EEAS Task Force for Strategic Communication in the Western Balkans. At the end of each year, the EU delegations and the EU Office prepare an annual report with an overview of the activities carried out, together with an analysis of the challenges faced and lessons learnt during the year. The reports present the performance levels achieved in comparison with the targets set at the beginning of the year.

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

Performance in terms of impact and outcome is measured through annual or bi-annual public opinion polls carried out individually by each EU delegation in the region and the EU Office in Kosovo. The polling questionnaires include a set of core questions, which makes it possible to compare results at regional level.

Performance in terms of outputs is assessed through desk study, web analytics, social media metrics and tailor-made surveys for individual integrated campaigns.

Any indicators to measure the outputs, results and impact of activities, complementary to those set out in the logical framework, will be determined taking into account the European Commission's communication network indicators matrix, summarised below ⁽⁹⁾:

ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS	RESULTS	IMPACT
NETWORKS	Number of contacts: visitors, event participants, calls, emails, etc. [counting]	Overall usefulness of the contact [survey]	Number of people having a more positive opinion of the EU as a result of the contact [Eurobarometer, survey]
EVENTS	Number of attendees: physical and online [counting]	Overall usefulness of the event for attendees [survey]	Percentage of attendees having a more positive opinion of the EU as a result of

⁽⁹⁾ <https://myintracomm.ec.europa.eu/corp/comm/Evaluation/Pages/Do-You-Need-Methodological-Guidance.aspx>

ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS	RESULTS	IMPACT
			the event [survey]
PUBLICATIONS	Number of readers / listeners of the publication [web analytics, Office of Publications orders]	Overall usefulness of publication for readers [survey]	Number of readers having a more positive opinion of the EU as a result of a publication [survey]
MEDIA RELATIONS	Number of online views of media releases [web analytics]	Percentage of media items published in tier(s) 1-6 in a sample of EU-related media coverage [media monitoring]	Percentage of citizens that have the perception that they are well informed about the EU's political priorities [Eurobarometer, survey]
VIDEOS / PHOTOS	Number of views, embeds and downloads [Audiovisual Portal, web analytics, social media metrics, global counting]	Overall usefulness of the video for the viewer [survey]	Number of viewers having a more positive opinion of the EU as a result of the video [survey]
SOCIAL MEDIA	Number of impressions [social media metrics]	Number of engagements: shares, likes, clickthroughs, comments [social media metrics]	Percentage of people reached having a more positive opinion of the EU as a result of engaging with EU social media content [survey, for corporate campaigns]
WEBSITES	Number of visits [web analytics]	Conversion rate: downloads, registrations, form completed, etc. [web analytics]	Number of visitors having a more positive opinion of the EU as a result of the web visit [survey, rating widget]
INTEGRATED COMMUNICATION CAMPAIGNS	Reach: Number of contacts made during the campaign [audited circulation and audience analytics]	Recall: Number of people who can recall a campaign message [survey]	Change of opinion: Percentage of people having a more positive opinion of the EU as a result of the campaign [Eurobarometer, survey]

5.3. Evaluation

The most recent external evaluation of the IPA information and communication programmes implemented by the EU delegations in the region and the EU Office in Kosovo was completed in 2016. This was followed by a more targeted strategic evaluation of the performance of EU Information Centres in the Enlargement and Neighbourhood regions (2011-2017), which was concluded at the beginning of 2020.

With a view to the importance and nature of the action, an *ex post* evaluation is expected to be carried out by independent consultants contracted by the Commission. As appropriate, it should cover this action, as well as the subsequent actions for strategic communication for the remainder of the IPA III Instrument, i.e. starting from IPA 2021 and ending with IPA 2027.

The evaluation will be carried out for accountability and learning purposes at various levels.

The Commission will analyse the conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation and, where appropriate, decide on what follow-up actions to take and any adjustments necessary, including, if indicated, the reorientation of future actions.

The evaluation will be financed through another measure constituting a financing decision.

6. AUDIT

Without prejudice to the obligations applicable to contracts concluded for this action's implementation, 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 audit will be financed through another measure constituting a financing decision.

For the part of the action incorporating a form of financing not linked to costs but on the achievement of results, the verification mechanisms will focus on the results and performance indicators previously agreed.

7. COMMUNICATION AND VISIBILITY

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

8. SUSTAINABILITY

The action's sustainability, i.e. if and to what extent the benefits/results (outputs and outcomes) achieved are likely to continue beyond the action's implementation period, will be ensured, provided the EU delegations in the region and the EU Office in Kosovo continue their operations and continue to implement communication activities to maintain public awareness of EU actions among the target audiences.