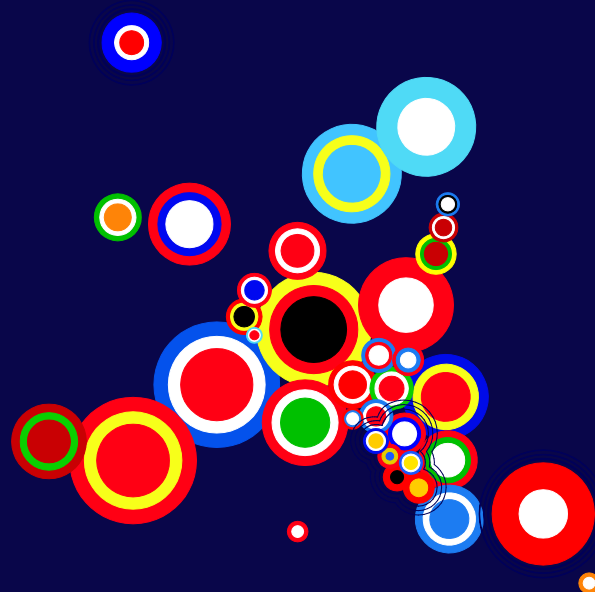




INSTRUMENT FOR PRE-ACCESSION ASSISTANCE (IPA II) 2014-2020

SERBIA

Preparatory measures for full participation in Erasmus+



Action Summary

This action will facilitate the Serbia's harmonisation with the EU regulation on the Erasmus+ programme through the preparatory measures for the participation in the programme actions to be managed by a designated National Agency. Before it starts, the relevant ministries will propose to the Government either the establishment of the new agency that will manage these funds or the nomination of an existing organization as a national agency for the Erasmus+ programme. The preparatory measures include the capacity building of the structure designated to become the future National Agency, information campaigns for the potential programme beneficiaries and implementation of some pilot activities in line with the Erasmus+ rules and procedures.

As the Erasmus+ is the only EU programme whose management is delegated by the Commission to a National Agency in each participating country, these preparatory measures are necessary for strengthening the capacities of the Beneficiary to manage the programme and for enabling Serbia to fully implement the relevant EU regulation.

Action Identification	
Programme Title	Annual Action Programme for Serbia (2014)
Action Title	Preparatory measures for the full participation in the Erasmus+ programme
Action Reference	2014/ 037-773 .09/Serbia/ Preparatory measures for the full participation in the Erasmus+ programme
Sector Information	
ELARG Sectors	Education, Employment and social policies
DAC Sector	11110
Budget	
Total cost (VAT excluded) ¹	EUR 4 500 000
EU contribution	EUR 3 500 000
Management and Implementation	
Method of implementation	Direct management
<i>Direct management:</i> DG EAC <i>Indirect management:</i> Responsible Unit or National Authority/Implementing Agency	The action will be sub delegated/cross-delegated to DG Education, and Culture (DG EAC), which is responsible for the implementation of the Erasmus+ programme.
Implementation responsibilities	The body designated to become the future National Agency will be responsible for the implementation of the action, under the supervision of DG EAC and the relevant ministries (Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development and Ministry of Youth and Sports) Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development and the Ministry of Youth and Sports will ensure co-financing.
Location	
Zone benefiting from the action	Republic of Serbia
Specific implementation area(s)	n/a
Timeline	
Deadline for conclusion of the Financing Agreement	31 December 2015

¹ The total action cost should be net of VAT and/or of other taxes. Should this not be the case, clearly indicate the amount of VAT and the reasons why it is considered eligible.

Contracting deadline	3 years after the signature of the Financing Agreement
End of operational implementation period	6 years after the signature of the Financing Agreement

1. RATIONALE

PROBLEM AND STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

The Republic of Serbia has benefitted from different EU education and training cooperation programmes for more than 10 years as a partner country. Results achieved in Tempus, Youth in Action, Erasmus Mundus and in centralized actions of the Lifelong Learning Programme are encouraging: more than half Tempus IV projects are coordinated by Serbian higher education institutions; the number of applications for the Erasmus Mundus scholarships and Youth in Action projects are the highest in the region; the number of applications and selected Life Long Learning projects with participation of Serbia demonstrate that national institutions and organizations are able to compete with other programme countries.

The Foundation Tempus and the NGO Group “Let’s...” have been acting as the focal points for these programmes, in charge of informing and training potential beneficiaries. The Foundation Tempus contributed also to programme implementation by monitoring and following the implementation of projects and providing support and guidance to project coordinators.

As a candidate country however, Serbia has the possibility to participate in all Union programmes on the same footing as the Member States. Such participation is an essential element of the pre-accession strategy. It aims at familiarising the candidate countries to the Union policies and working methods. For the Republic of Serbia participation in Union Programmes represents an opportunity to make acquaintance with the European institutions, legislation and their application in practice, with EU policies as well as with the system of values and mechanisms on which the EU is based.

In the period 2007 – 2013 the Republic of Serbia participated in 12 EU programmes: the Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development (FP7), Progress, Culture, CIP, CIP EIP, Fiscalis, Customs, Safer Internet, Lifelong Learning Programme and Europe for Citizens. The new 7-years Financial Perspective brings about the opportunity for the Republic of Serbia to participate in new EU Programmes for period 2014-2020, with new modalities, administration and dynamic.

In 2014, Serbia signed an agreement with the Commission to participate in the new EU programme – Erasmus+ in the fields of education, training, youth and sport. Its participation however is currently limited to some programme actions only. This is due to the fact that, according to the Regulation (EU) No 1288/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 establishing "Erasmus+": the Union programme for education, training, youth and sport (Celex: 32013R1288), certain pre-conditions need to be fulfilled to allow for full participation of the country as a "programme country".

Indeed, most of the activities of the programme are managed by national structures established by the participating countries, to which the Commission delegates wide implementation tasks, including selection, contracting, payment, monitoring of projects. Full participation in Erasmus+ as a programme country is therefore conditional to the fulfilment of requirements concerning the capacity of a national structure (called the "national agency"), to ensure sound financial management of the programme.

In order to become a programme country Serbia needs to establish a National Agency, ie to establish a new body or give the mandate to one of the existing institutions or organizations to become the future National Agency. It is necessary that such a structure becomes accredited and operational before the closure of the negotiating Chapter 26: Education and Culture. Bearing in mind the importance of thorough preparations for the implementation of the preparatory measures, the national authorities are planning to conduct a feasibility study on the existing resources in the country. The main objective of this study is to analyse the existing capacities for decentralized management of the Erasmus+ programme at the national level and to designate or to establish a national agency.

Therefore the nomination of the national agency will be evidence based which is even more important at the time of the fiscal consolidation and would support the decision of the line ministries at the national level and contribute to the sustainability of the national agency designation. The results of the feasibility study should be available in the second quarter of 2015.

The above mentioned requirements make necessary that the body designated to become the future National Agency implements preparatory measures with the assistance of the Commission Directorate General Education and Culture (DG EAC), which is in charge of this Union programme. According to the information presented by the representatives of the European Commission at the Explanation screening for the chapter 26, it takes at least two years to implement the preparatory measures for the full participation in the programme.

During the two preparatory years the body designated to become the future National Agency shall conduct all activities necessary for building its functionality and operations in order to fulfil all requirements concerning its capacity to ensure sound financial management of the E+ programme, and the responsible ministries (Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development and Ministry of Youth and Sports) shall support and monitor the process and adopt the institutional arrangements for the supervision of the National Agency.

RELEVANCE WITH THE IPA STRATEGY PAPER AND OTHER KEY REFERENCES

As stated several times in various *conclusions of the European Council*, participation of the candidate countries in Union programmes on the same footing as the Member States is an essential element of the pre-accession strategy. It aims at familiarising the candidate countries to the Union policies and working methods.

The *Framework Agreement on participation in the EU Programmes*, signed with Serbia on November 22nd, 2005, which came into force on July 27th, 2005, establishes the general principles of participation of Serbia in all Union programmes on the same footing as the Union Member States.

The continuation of participation of the Republic of Serbia in Union EU Programmes is reflected and supported by the *Indicative Strategy Paper 2014-2020 (the Strategy Paper)* through continuation of IPA support “to co-financing Serbia's contribution for its participation in the EU programmes, subject to the national prioritisation process among the different programmes”. Setting down the priorities of the IPA support, the Strategy Paper defines results / targets that are expected to be achieved during defined period, in order to enable Serbia in fulfilling accession agenda. In this regard, since each Union Programme is reflecting the Strategy Paper Serbia's participation in specific Union Programmes will additionally support Serbia's efforts in accession criteria. Therefore, participation in the Erasmus + programme is in line with priorities defined in HRSD sector.

The EC Progress Report 2013 acknowledges that Serbia participates in a number of EU programmes

This Action shall contribute to all sectors of *the “Priorities for International Assistance in period 2014-2017 with 2020 projections” (NAD)*, by facilitating the preparation of Serbia's accession to the EU, as well as by preparing the country for the sound management of EU decentralised funds and the implementation of projects efficiency.

The *NPAA 2014-2018* also recognize the importance of Serbia's participation in Union EU Programmes, particularly reflected in the in numerous Sections through identification of measures and priorities for preparations for inclusion in the new EU programmes 2014-2020 – COSME, and HORIZON 2020, Copernicus, Erasmus +, etc.

Furthermore the Action is in line with *Enlargement Strategy* in a way that proposed activities will contribute to the achievement of full compliance with all membership criteria.

LESSONS LEARNED AND LINK TO PREVIOUS FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Participation of Serbia in the Union Programmes is of primary importance to Serbia's European efforts. This participation was therefore, encouraged by providing EU funds under National IPA

Programmes for 2007 (EUR 2 000 000), 2008 (EUR 5 000 000), 2011 (EUR 6 000 000) and 2013 (EUR 6 500 000).

The recently conducted “Evaluation of participation of the Republic of Serbia in the EU Programmes in the period from 2007-2012”, showed that existing capacities for both management and application to Union Programmes shall be additionally strengthened in order to maximise the benefits that Serbia can draw from programmes in which it participates.

Until now however, the programmes in which Serbia has been participating were managed by the Commission or the Commission Executive Agencies. Full participation in Erasmus+ on the same footing as EU Member States is a different challenge, as this implies that the Commission delegates programme management to a National Agency. Experience shows that thorough preparation is needed before full participation in the programmes, for the National Agency to fulfil the requirements for sound financial management, for participation to take place in good conditions, and to avoid problems in the management of the programmes. Such preparatory measures have been implemented with the other candidate countries before their accession to the programmes

2. INTERVENTION LOGIC

LOGICAL FRAMEWORK MATRIX

OVERALL OBJECTIVE	OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS (OVI)	SOURCES OF VERIFICATION	
Sound, efficient and successful implementation and absorption of the Erasmus + programme funds ensured .	Progress made towards meeting accession criteria (EC) in line with Screening report for chapter 26	DG EAC supervisory and monitoring visits DG EAC acceptance of ex-ante Compliance Assessment	
SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE	OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS (OVI)	SOURCES OF VERIFICATION	ASSUMPTIONS
To improve and monitor the effectiveness of Serbia's preparations for meeting the all requirements for full participation in the Erasmus + programme	Planning and administrative basis for sound, efficient and successful implementation and absorption of the Erasmus + programme funds ensured .National Agency for management of Erasmus + operational	Intermediary and final activity reports of the NA DG EAC supervisory and monitoring visits Minutes of meetings Publications Workshop outputs Media sources	Timely submission by the national authorities of the ex-ante compliance assessment Government supports the conclusion of an agreement for full participation in Erasmus+ The responsible line ministries ensure the timely payment of the entry ticket and the necessary co-funding of the national agency
RESULTS	OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS (OVI)	SOURCES OF VERIFICATION	ASSUMPTIONS
Result 1: Administrative structures, appropriate infrastructure, adequate and well trained staff and management systems being in place and satisfying the requirements for sound financial management of Erasmus +	Manual of procedures in place in accordance with EU rules on E+, Job descriptions, segregation of duties	DG EAC supervisory and monitoring visits National agency reports submitted to the EC Evaluation reports of the EC Minutes of the meetings, Mission reports, Workshop outputs	Retention policy for the national agency staff Identification and removal of potential obstacles for the programme implementation

<p>Result 2: Increased awareness of Serbia's public about the possibilities offered by Erasmus+ and readiness of the educational institutions, (universities, schools, faculties and colleges of applied studies) , organisations active in the youth field and sport associations to apply</p>	<p>Share of education and youth organizations, universities and other potential applicants informed regarding funding possibilities and calls for proposals</p>	<p>Publications, leaflets, Press articles, other media sources Number of submitted applications to NA and contracted projects</p>	
<p>Result 3: Capacity of the National Agency to manage the programmes in a satisfactory way tested on a sufficient scale before Serbia's full participation in the Erasmus + programme</p>	<p>Share of pilot project implemented according to he program rules</p>	<p>NA reports (intermediary and final; financial reports) Ministry of education and science reports DGEAC monitoring visits reports</p>	
<p>ACTIVITIES</p>	<p>MEANS</p>	<p>OVERALL COST</p>	<p>ASSUMPTIONS</p>
<p>Activities to achieve Result 1: 1.1 Training of staff and experts; travel and other costs related to participation in meetings organised by the Commission, study visits to the European Commission, Executive Agency and other National Agencies, training courses in general skills (e.g. languages, project management, accounting, presentation skills), training seminars for experts; 1.2 Equipping the national agency (equipment, software, setting up compatible network links and databases) and adapting the office space 1.3 Providing support to the daily activities of the national agency: personnel, premises, general office expenditure, data processing 1.4 Drafting of bylaws and procedures; Translation of the contracts models and their adaptation to the local needs 1.5 Twinning with the selected national agencies</p>	<p>Direct grant without call for proposals (de facto monopoly in accordance with article 190 (c) of the Commission regulation on the rules of application of the Financial Regulation) - direct management through DG EAC</p>	<p>Total cost for the entire Action: EUR 4 500 000 IPA II contribution: EUR 3 500 000</p>	<p>Continuous political and financial support from the government The responsible line ministries ensure the necessary co-funding of the national agency The body which will sign the preparatory measures grant agreement with the Commission will become the National Agency after completion of the preparatory measures</p>

<p>Activities to achieve Result 2: 2.1 Organization of an information and promotion campaign; 2.2. Preparation of tools that should facilitate the access to the programme information (publications, guides, on line applications); 2.3 Organization of information days and training seminars for potential programme applicants.</p>			
<p>Activities to achieve Result 3: 3.1 Piloting the calls for proposals in line with the Erasmus+ rules and procedures 3.2 Full project cycle management of pilot projects, which will allow to test at a sufficient scale the capacity of the National Agency to manage the programmes and give stakeholders the possibility to participate in some projects according to the programme rules (by applying to the National Agency). 3.3 Fine tuning of the national agency rules and procedures in line with EC recommendations</p>			

Preconditions:

- **The relevant ministries (Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development and Ministry of Youth and Sports) shall designate a contact person to monitor the project**
- **Before the start of discussions with DG EAC on a work plan, the national authorities shall decide either to designate an existing body to become the future National Agency or to establish a new agency**
- **Before the signature of the grant agreement, the national authorities shall amend or adopt the relevant legislation establishing this body, as necessary.**
- **If the national authorities opt for a new body, its core staff should be in place before the start of discussions with DG EAC on a work plan.**

ADDITIONAL DESCRIPTION

The preparatory measures will consist of a range of activities which will be implemented according to a work plan to be agreed between the body designated by the Serbian authorities to become the future National Agency and the Commission Directorate General responsible for this programme (DG EAC), including support and capacity building of this structure, information campaigns for the potential beneficiaries and participation in some pilot activities to test on a small scale the capacity of the future National Agency to manage the programme.

Activities to be implemented will include:

- Equipping the structure and development of the information system;
- Adaptation of the office space allocated to the future national agency
- Recruitment and training of the staff
- Training of experts who will participate in the selection of the projects submitted under the Erasmus+ calls of proposals;
- Study visits and job shadowing in the other programme countries;:
- Organization of information and promotion activities for the participation in decentralized actions;
- Training of potential applicants
- Drafting of bylaws and other documents and procedures relevant for the work of the national agency;
- Translation of the models of grant agreements and guidelines for the external experts who will participate in the selection process;
- Development of the software that should facilitate the follow up of the project cycle management;
- Organization of pilot calls of proposals and management of pilot projects that will ensure the piloting of the procedures established for the management of the decentralized part of the Erasmus+.

Project cycle management will be monitored by the national authorities and the European Commission

The following issues have been identified as relevant **assumptions**:

- At the end of the preparatory measures period, the responsible line ministries confirm the designation of the National Agency by sending to the Commission the ex-ante compliance assessment as required by the programme rules
- The relevant authorities then approve and sign the international agreement establishing Serbia's full participation in Erasmus+
- Every following year, the responsible line ministries ensure the timely payment of the entry ticket and continuous co-funding of the designated National Agency

The following issues have been identified as relevant **preconditions**:

- The relevant ministries (Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development and Ministry of Youth and Sports) shall designate two contact persons in each Ministry to monitor the project
- Before the start of discussions with DG EAC on a work plan, the national authorities shall decide either to designate an existing body to become the future National Agency or to establish a new agency
- Before the signature of the grant agreement, the national authorities shall amend or adopt the relevant legislation establishing this body, as necessary.
- If the national authorities opt for a new body, its core staff should be in place before the start of discussions with DG EAC on a work plan.

3. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The national authorities responsible for Erasmus + are - Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development and Ministry of Youth and Sports

Prior to the beginning of the action the national authorities will designate or establish the body which will become the future National Agency. Having in mind the nature of the indirect management of the Erasmus+ programme, the long term perspective of Serbia's participation in EU programmes and the existing capacities, the relevant ministries will propose to the Government either the establishment of the new agency that will manage these funds or the nomination of an existing organization as a national agency for the Erasmus+ programme.

The Ministry in charge of education and the Ministry in charge of youth will be responsible for the timely designation of the body to become the future National Agency and for ensuring its co-financing. The responsible line ministries will supervise the work of this body according to the EC guidelines and best practices from EU member states.

The body designated as the future national agency will prepare a detailed work plan and budget in consultation with the Commission Directorate General in charge of the Erasmus + programme (DG EAC). Once finalised and agreed, the work plan will be co-signed by the future National Agency and national authorities, and attached to the grant agreement to be signed by the Commission (DG EAC) with the future National Agency.

The body designated as the future national agency will be responsible for the implementation of the work plan, in particular for raising awareness of the relevant public in Serbia about the possibilities offered by the programme and implementation of the pilot projects to the E+ programme.

Taking into account the fact that implementation modalities include direct management, monitoring arrangements including Steering Committee(s) shall be established in accordance with the relevant provisions of the applicable legal acts regulating IPA II. Steering Committees will be organised in line with detailed provisions of the respective procedures under indirect and direct management of IPA II.

IMPLEMENTATION METHOD(S) AND TYPE(S) OF FINANCING

This action will be carried out under direct management by DG EAC. It will be implemented through a direct grant without call for proposals (the body designated by the national authorities to become the future National Agency has a de facto monopoly in the area of intervention (article 190 (c) of the COMMISSION DELEGATED REGULATION (EU) No 1268/2012 of 29 October 2012 on the rules of application of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union).

4. PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

METHODOLOGY FOR MONITORING (AND EVALUATION)

The EC (DG EAC) and the national authorities are responsible for the monitoring of the national agency. The EC will organize supervisory visits to the national agency and national authority in order to check whether the Erasmus+ rules and the procedures are implemented correctly.

IPA II monitoring process is organized and lead by the NIPAC/NIPAC TS. National IPA Coordinator (NIPAC) is the main interlocutor between the Serbian government and the EC regarding strategic planning, co-ordination of programming, monitoring of implementation, evaluation and reporting of the overall IPA assistance and is responsible for ensuring the linkage of IPA assistance to the EU accession process. NIPAC monitors the process of programming, preparation and implementation as well as the sustainability and effects of Actions aiming to improve these processes, timely identification, remedying and alleviation of potential issues in the process of programming and implementation of Action Documents.

INDICATOR MEASUREMENT

Indicator	Description	Baseline 2014	Last 2013	Milestone 2017	Target 2020	Source of information
Progress made towards meeting accession criteria (EC) in line with Screening report for chapter 26	Serbia meet the requirement for closing the Negotiation Chapter 26 (establishment of the National Agency for indirect management of Erasmus + Programme)	No ²	No	Yes	Yes (NA fully operational and implements Erasmus+ programme)	EC progress reports
Planning and administrative basis for sound, efficient and successful implementation and absorption of the Erasmus + programme funds ensured	specific tasks identified in the Work Plan agreed with the European Commission completed	No ³	No	Yes	100%	NA interim and final reports
National Agency for management of Erasmus + operational	NA established necessary administrative and staff capacities established and secured and all stages of the pilot projects lifecycle managed by the NA according to the programme rules	No	No	Yes	100%	EAC supervisory and monitoring visits Ex-ante compliance assessment on the NA by the national authorities
Manual of procedures in place in accordance with EU rules on E+	Rules and procedures relevant for the work of the national agency and management of Erasmus+ in place	No	No	Yes	yes	EAC supervisory and monitoring visits Ex-ante compliance assessment on the NA by

² At the moment decentralized management of Erasmus+funds does not exist, therefore baseline value presented should be considered in general context

³ Same as previous

Indicator	Description	Baseline 2014	Last 2013	Milestone 2017	Target 2020	Source of information
						the national authorities
Share of education and youth organizations, universities and other potential applicants informed regarding funding possibilities and calls for proposals	Relevant documentation on the programme translated and published, seminars, info days, promotional events held. Information provided to the target groups from the perspective of Serbia being a partner country	0%	0%	70%	100%	NA interim and final reports
Share of pilot project implemented according to the programme rules	Pilot of agreed number of Calls for proposals implemented successfully in accordance with the programme rules and procedures defined.	0%	0%	100%	0% ⁴	NA reports (intermediary and final; financial reports) Ministry of education and science reports DGEAC monitoring visits reports

⁴ Target for the year 2020 cannot be expressed in terms of pilot project, as piloting will be completed by the end of this Action (before 2020)..

5. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

Cross-cutting issues will be addressed throughout the Action, so to ensure that those horizontal issues are appropriately mainstreamed whenever applicable in the envisaged activities. For the reference, best practices and EU standards would be used, but also the national legislation reflecting such standards and requirements as incorporated into domestic system.

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE (AND IF RELEVANT DISASTER RESILIENCE)

The action will have no negative environmental effects.

ENGAGEMENT WITH CIVIL SOCIETY (AND IF RELEVANT OTHER NON-STATE STAKEHOLDERS)

Civil society organizations will take part in the implementation phase of the Action Document as final beneficiaries of some activities under E + Programme.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND GENDER MAINSTREAMING

Based on the fundamental principles of promoting equality and combating discrimination, participation in the project activities will be guaranteed on the basis of equal access regardless of racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, sex or sexual orientation.

MINORITIES AND VULNERABLE GROUPS

The Action Document will in no way harm the rights of any individuals, including minorities and vulnerable groups. Involvement of minorities through the participation in the E+ will be encouraged.

6. SUSTAINABILITY

The structure designated as the national agency will continue to implement the decentralized actions of the Erasmus+ and other future EU education and youth programmes. It will be funded by the EC and national authorities.

Considering the problems faced by national agencies in the neighbouring countries, a retention policy will be adopted.

7. COMMUNICATION AND VISIBILITY

Communication and visibility will be given high importance during the implementation of the Action.

The implementation of the communication activities shall be the responsibility of the beneficiary, and shall be funded from the amounts allocated to the Action.

All communication and visibility actions and tools will be fully aligned with the EU visibility guidelines (“Communication and Visibility Manual for EU External Actions”). In regard to visibility following actions and tools should be carried out: definition of visual identity standards; preparation of written materials (factsheets, training compendia, manuals, etc.); production of branded material (panels, folders, promotional material); website; events (trainings, retreats, workshops, round tables, initial and closing events).

Visibility and communication actions shall demonstrate how the intervention contributes to the agreed Action objectives and the accession process. Actions shall be aimed at strengthening general public awareness and support of interventions financed and the objectives pursued. The actions shall aim at highlighting to the relevant target audiences the added value and impact of the EU's interventions. Visibility actions should also promote transparency and accountability on the use of funds.

Communication and visibility will be ensured through information and promotion campaign that will be implemented from the very beginning of the action.

Visibility actions will be undertaken to underscore the ‘additionally’ benefits of national and EU funding working in union, to realise Serbian and EU strategic development objectives and to present the results achieved through Action implementation.

It is the responsibility of the beneficiary to keep the EU Delegation fully informed of the planning and implementation of the specific visibility and communication activities. The beneficiary shall report on

its visibility and communication actions in the report submitted to the IPA monitoring committee and the sectorial monitoring committees.

As the guides for the final beneficiaries will be used through the whole duration of the Erasmus+ programme, the visibility of the action will be sustained.