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COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING DECISION

of 16.12.2021

**on the financing of the multi-country multiannual action plan in favour of the Western
Balkans and Turkey for 2021-2022**

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

THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION,

Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,

Having regard to Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 July 2018 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union, amending Regulations (EU) No 1296/2013, (EU) No 1301/2013, (EU) No 1303/2013, (EU) No 1304/2013, (EU) No 1309/2013, (EU) No 1316/2013, (EU) No 223/2014, (EU) No 283/2014, and Decision No 541/2014/EU and repealing Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012¹, and in particular Article 110 thereof,

Having regard to Regulation (EU) 2021/1529 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 September 2021 establishing the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA III)², and in particular Article 9(1) and Article 5(8) thereof,

Whereas:

- (1) In order to ensure the implementation of the multi-country multiannual action plan in favour of the Western Balkans and Turkey for 2021-2022, it is necessary to adopt a multiannual financing decision, which constitutes the multiannual work programme, for 2021-2022. Article 110 of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046 establishes detailed rules on financing decisions.
- (2) The envisaged assistance is to comply with the conditions and procedures set out by the restrictive measures adopted pursuant to Article 215 TFEU³.
- (3) Some of the actions provided for in this Decision contribute to climate and biodiversity mainstreaming in line with the European Green Deal⁴ and the inter-institutional agreement.
- (4) The Commission has adopted an IPA III Programming Framework⁵ for the period 2021 – 2027, which identifies five thematic windows for the delivery of the specific objectives and thematic priorities of Regulation (EU) 2021/1529.
- (5) The objective pursued by the multiannual action plan is to provide assistance for actions addressing issues of regional nature, or when a regional approach will allow for greater efficiency in all the five thematic windows in line with the IPA III

¹ OJ L 193, 30.7.2018, p.1.

² OJ L 330, 20.9.2021, p.1.

³ www.sanctionsmap.eu Please note that the sanctions map is an IT tool for identifying the sanctions regimes. The source of the sanctions stems from legal acts published in the Official Journal (OJ). In case of discrepancy between the published legal acts and the updates on the website it is the OJ version that prevails.

⁴ COM(2019) 640 final

⁵ Commission Decision C(2021)8914 of 10.12.2021 on the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA III) Programming Framework for the period 2021-2027

Programming Framework: (1) Rule of law, fundamental rights and democracy; (2) Good governance, EU *acquis* alignment, good neighbourly relations and strategic communication; (3) Green agenda and sustainable connectivity; (4) Competitiveness and inclusive growth; and (5) Territorial and cross-border cooperation.

- (6) The objective of the action 1 entitled, *“EU4 Rule of Law: Supporting evidence-based policy-making on justice system performance in the Western Balkans and Turkey”* is to contribute to justice reforms in the IPA III beneficiaries through justice perception surveys complemented by in-depth analytical reports and awareness-raising. The objective of the action 2 entitled, *“EU Support to Regional Security in the Western Balkans”* 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. The objective of the action 3 entitled, *“EU regional support to protection-sensitive migration management systems in the Western Balkans - PHASE III”* is to contribute to a more effective and rights-based management of migrants and persons in need of international protection in the Western Balkans. The objective of the action 4 entitled, *“EU Support to fundamental rights of Roma in the Western Balkans and Turkey”* is to support the fundamental rights of Roma by combatting discrimination of Roma, supporting implementation of inclusion policies; and enhancing access to basic socio-economic rights. The objective of the action 5 entitled, *“Governance of public finances and economic reforms in the Western Balkans and Turkey”* is to contribute to just, sustainable and inclusive economic recovery and growth, building up economic resilience and to improve competitiveness for achieving the EU economic accession criteria. The objective of the action 6 entitled, *“Support to the Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA) for the Western Balkans”* is to assist the reforming of public administrations in the Western Balkans in line with the Principles of Public Administration and European integration, contributing, among others, to good governance. The objective of the action 7 entitled, *“Support for the participation of IPA III beneficiaries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia) in Union programmes”* is to improve knowledge of EU values and policies in different fields fostering alignment with EU *acquis* and the convergence to the EU standards. The objective of the action 8 entitled, *“EU Integration Facility, including EU support for the participation of IPA III beneficiaries in EU agencies and TAIEX support to Western Balkans and Turkey”* is to facilitate progress in key areas of needed reforms required by the Western Balkans and Turkey to comply with Union values. The objective of the action entitled, *“EU4 Youth: EU Scheme for Young Professionals in the Western Balkans”* is to contribute to reconciliation and good neighbourly relations as well as advancement of the EU integration process of the Western Balkans through improved regional cooperation of young people. The objective of the action 10 entitled, *“EU support to confidence-building in the Western Balkans”* is to contribute to foster mutual understanding and social cohesion through accountability and fact-based dialogues about crimes committed during the 1990s conflicts on the territory of the former Yugoslavia. The objective of the action 11 entitled, *“Civil Protection Support – Prevention, Preparedness and Response to Natural Disasters in Western Balkans and Turkey”* is to contribute to increased resilience in IPA III beneficiaries to in particular earthquakes and health emergencies. The objective of the action 12 entitled, *“Strengthening social protection, health and employment systems and policies in the Western Balkans with Socioux+”* is to achieve expanded and improved access to better employment opportunities and inclusive social protection systems in the Western Balkans. The objective of the action 13 entitled, *“EU4Youth: Participation of the Western Balkans in International Assessments”* is to contribute to

improvement of education systems in the Western Balkans by benchmarking educational provision in mathematics, science, computer and information literacy, and giving a voice to teachers and school leaders in the education policy debate. The objective of the action 14 entitled, “*EU support to Competitiveness and Sustainability in the Western Balkans and Turkey*” is to assist the Western Balkans and Turkey in reinforcing economic convergence and economic integration, while supporting economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. The objective of the action 15 entitled, “*EU support to the development of a Common Regional Market (CRM)*” is to increase socio-economic growth in the region thanks to increased trade and investment, to foster the implementation of the EU *acquis* pertaining to the EU Single Market in order to accelerate accession to the EU, and to enhance good neighbourly relations. The objective of the action 16 entitled, “*Capacity building of veterinary and plant health services in the Western Balkans*” is to contribute to improved animal and plant health in the Western Balkans by enhancing the capacity of the Veterinary and Plant health services and cooperation between them. The objective of the action 17 entitled, “*Regional technical assistance to cross-border cooperation activities in the Western Balkans - Cross-border Institution Building (CBIB+) Phase IV*” is to contribute to improve the impact, quality and visibility of IPA II and IPA III cross border cooperation programmes.

- (7) In accordance with Article 5(8) of Regulation (EU) 2021/1529, the action 15 entitled, “*EU support to the development of a Common Regional Market (CRM)*” is of a global, regional or cross-border nature, fostering regional cooperation with the Western Balkans. Due to the action’s nature and the importance to ensure complete regional coverage, the eligibility of the action extends exceptionally to Moldova, as its participation constitutes an important element to ensure the coherence and effectiveness of Union financing or to foster regional cooperation.
- (8) It is appropriate to authorise the award of grants without a call for proposals and to provide for the conditions for awarding those grants.
- (9) Pursuant to Article 9(1) of Regulation (EU) 2021/1529, indirect management is to be used for the implementation of the action plan.
- (10) The Commission is to ensure a level of protection of the financial interests of the Union with regards to entities and persons entrusted with the implementation of Union funds by indirect management as provided for in Article 154(3) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046.

To this end, such entities and persons are to be subject to an assessment of their systems and procedures in accordance with Article 154(4) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046 and, if necessary, to appropriate supervisory measures in accordance with Article 154(5) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046 before a contribution agreement can be signed.

- (11) It is necessary to allow for the payment of interest due for late payment on the basis of Article 116(5) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046.
- (12) In order to allow for flexibility in the implementation of the action plan, it is appropriate to allow changes which should not be considered substantial for the purposes of Article 110(5) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046.

- (13) The action plan provided for in this Decision is in accordance with the opinion of the IPA III Committee set up by Article 17 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1529⁶,

HAS DECIDED AS FOLLOWS:

Article 1
The action plan

The multiannual financing decision, constituting the multiannual work programme for the implementation of the multi-country multiannual action plan in favour of the Western Balkans and Turkey for 2021-2022, as set out in the Annexes, is adopted.

The action plan shall include the following actions:

- (a) EU4 Rule of Law: Supporting evidence-based policy-making on justice system performance in the Western Balkans and Turkey, as set out in Annex 1;
- (b) EU Support to Regional Security in the Western Balkans, as set out in Annex 2;
- (c) EU regional support to protection-sensitive migration management systems in the Western Balkans - PHASE III, as set out in Annex 3;
- (d) EU Support to fundamental rights of Roma in the Western Balkans and Turkey, as set out in Annex 4;
- (e) Governance of public finances and economic reforms in the Western Balkans and Turkey, as set out in Annex 5;
- (f) Support to the Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA) for the Western Balkans, as set out in Annex 6;
- (g) Support for the participation of IPA III beneficiaries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia) in Union programmes, as set out in Annex 7;
- (h) EU Integration Facility, including EU support for the participation of IPA III beneficiaries in EU agencies and TAIEX support to Western Balkans and Turkey, as set out in Annex 8;
- (i) EU4 Youth: EU Scheme for Young Professionals in the Western Balkans, as set out in Annex 9;
- (j) EU support to confidence-building in the Western Balkans, as set out in Annex 10;
- (k) Civil Protection Support – Prevention, Preparedness and Response to Natural Disasters in Western Balkans and Turkey, as set out in Annex 11;
- (l) Strengthening social protection, health and employment systems and policies in the Western Balkans with Socieux+, as set out in Annex 12;
- (m) EU4Youth: Participation of the Western Balkans in International Assessments, as set out in Annex 13;
- (n) EU support to Competitiveness and Sustainability in the Western Balkans and Turkey, as set out in Annex 14;

⁶ The Member States have declared, recalling the Council Conclusions of 18 February 2008, that the adoption of this action plan does not prejudice the position of each individual Member State on the status of Kosovo*, which will be decided in accordance with their national practice and international law.

* 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.

- (o) EU support to the development of a Common Regional Market (CRM), as set out in Annex 15;
- (p) Capacity building of veterinary and plant health services in the Western Balkans, as set out in Annex 16;
- (q) Regional technical assistance to cross-border cooperation activities in the Western Balkans - Cross-border Institution Building (CBIB+) Phase IV, as set out in Annex 17.

Article 2
Union contribution

The maximum Union contribution for the implementation of the action plan referred to in Article 1 is set at EUR 191 750 000 and shall be financed from the appropriations entered in the following lines of the general budget of the Union:

- (a) budget line 15 02 01 01.01: EUR 115 250 000 for year 2021, and EUR 19 700 000 for year 2022;
- (b) budget line 15 02 02 01.02: EUR 42 800 000 for year 2021; and EUR 12 000 000 for year 2022;
- (c) budget line 15 02 03: EUR 2 000 000 for year 2021.

The appropriations provided for in the first paragraph may also cover interest due for late payment.

The implementation of this Decision is subject to the availability of the appropriations provided for in the general budget of the Union for 2022 as adopted by the budgetary authority.

Article 3
Methods of implementation and entrusted entities or persons

The implementation of the actions carried out by way of indirect management, as set out in the Annexes, may be entrusted to the entities or persons referred to or selected in accordance with the criteria laid down in point 4.2.1 of Annexes 1, 3, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14; and 4.2.2 of Annexes 2, 5, 8, 13, 15.

Article 4
Flexibility clause

Increases⁷ or decreases of up to EUR 10 million not exceeding 20% of the contribution set in Article 2, first paragraph, considering each financial year separately, or cumulated reassignments of funds between actions contained in an action plan not exceeding 20% of that contribution, as well as extensions of the implementation and execution period shall not be considered substantial for the purposes of Article 110(5) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046, provided that they do not significantly affect the nature and objectives of the actions.

The authorising officer responsible may apply the changes referred to in the first paragraph. Those changes shall be applied in accordance with the principles of sound financial management and proportionality.

⁷ These changes can come from external assigned revenue made available after the adoption of the financing Decision.

Article 5

Grants

Grants may be awarded without a call for proposals in accordance with the conditions set out in the Annexes. Grants may be awarded to the bodies referred to in the Annexes selected in accordance with point 4.2.1 of Annexes 4, 5, 6, 7, 13, 15.

Done at Brussels, 16.12.2021

For the Commission

Olivér VÁRHELYI

Member of the Commission