ANNEX 17

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 "Regional technical assistance to cross-border cooperation activities in the Western Balkans - Cross-border Institution Building (CBIB+) Phase IV"

1. SYNOPSIS

1.1. Action Summary Table

Title	Regional technical assistance to cross-border cooperation activities in the Western Balkans - Cross-border Institution Building (CBIB+) Phase IV
	Multi-country multiannual action plan in favour of the Western Balkans and Turkey for 2021-2022
CRIS/OPSYS number	IPA III/2021/043-643/17
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 5 - Territorial and cross-border cooperation
Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	SDG 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development
DAC code(s)	15110 - Public sector policy and administrative management
Main Delivery Channel @	Private sector institution - 60000

Markers **(from DAC form)**	**General policy objective @**	**Not targeted**	**Significant objective**	**Principal objective**
	Participation development/good governance	☐	☒	☐
	Aid to environment	☒	☐	☐
	Gender equality and women's and girl's empowerment	☒	☐	☐
	Trade Development	☒	☐	☐

---

*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

		Not targeted	Significant objective	Principal objective
	Reproductive, maternal, eew born and child health	☒	☐	☐
	Disaster Risk Reduction	☒	☐	☐
	Inclusion of persons with disabilities	☒	☐	☐
	Nutrition	☒	☐	☐
	RIO Convention markers @	**Not targeted**	**Significant objective**	**Principal objective**
	Biological diversity	☒	☐	☐
	Combat desertification	☒	☐	☐
	Climate change mitigation	☒	☐	☐
	Climate change adaptation	☒	☐	☐
Internal markers	**Policy objectives**	**Not targeted**	**Significant objective**	**Principal objective**
	Digitalisation	☒	☐	☐
	Migration	☒	☐	☐
	COVID-19	☒	☐	☐

BUDGET INFORMATION	
Amounts concerned	Budget line: 15 02 03 Total estimated cost: EUR 2 000 000 Total amount of EU budget contribution: **EUR 2 000 000 – year 2021**

MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION	
Type of financing and method(s) of implementation	Project Modality **Direct management** through Procurement
Relevant priorities and flagships from Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans	Priority: "Human Capital Development"
Final date for concluding contribution / delegation agreements, procurement and grant contracts	At the latest by 31 December 2022
Indicative operational implementation period	72 months following the adoption of the Financing Decision

1.2. Summary of the Action

This Action, programmed under Window 5 of the IPA III Programming Framework, aims to provide regional technical assistance to cross-border cooperation (CBC) programmes between IPA beneficiaries. The regional technical assistance, aiming at supporting regional coordination, harmonisation, monitoring and communication of CBC programmes, is an integral part of the architecture of CBC delivery.

In the Western Balkans, intra-regional CBC programmes aim to enhance socio-economic development of border areas, promote good neighbourly relations between those areas and foster European integration by preparing for the future management of European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) programmes in the Western Balkans. As such, CBC supports in a cross-cutting way delivery on the ambition of the **Commission Communication on an Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans[1].**

The role of local authorities in implementing CBC will receive specific attention under this fourth phase of regional technical assistance.

2. RATIONALE

2.1. Context Analysis

As highlighted in the **Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA III) Programming Framework for the period 2021-2027,** the EU actively promotes territorial cohesion to reduce disparities between regions and backwardness of the least favoured territories in line with ETC**.** The ETC provides the necessary framework for implementation of joint actions and policy exchanges between national, regional and local actors across Europe, external borders and outermost regions.

Cross-Border Cooperation (CBC) forms part of the ETC. CBC aims to foster sustainable local socio-economic development and increase the prosperity of people and communities in remote and rural border areas, which are often lagging behind economically. In the context of the Western Balkans it also promotes good neighbourly relations. As emphasised in the 2007-2013 intra-region Western Balkans (hereafter IPA-IPA CBC) CBC evaluation[2] (published in 2017) and in the first conclusions of the 2014-2020 IPA-IPA CBC mid-term evaluation report (February 2021), CBC programmes at intra-Western Balkans level have contributed to building strong ties between communities over borders and are very well perceived by local communities as an instrument to cooperate and reinforce mutual trust. In addition, IPA-IPA CBC programmes contribute to support the accession process of the targeted IPA III beneficiaries by preparing them for the management of future ETC programmes. Overall, IPA-IPA CBC priorities are aligned with those of the **European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).**

Under IPA II funding, nine IPA-IPA CBC programmes are currently on-going and the new generation of nine IPA-IPA CBC programmes is prepared in parallel to this Action. As identified in the IPA III Programming Framework, horizontal technical assistance for IPA-IPA CBC is necessary to generate and share knowledge among stakeholders for the improvement of procedures and tools to achieve a high level of quality in programme implementation, including in view of supporting relevant local authorities to strengthen their capacities as key local development partners.

This Action enables continued regional horizontal technical assistance as an integral part of the set up of IPA-IPA CBC (N.B.: cross-border cooperation between IPA III beneficiaries and EU Member States is not covered). Building upon previous CBC technical assistance support and following the IPA III Programming Framework Window 5 priorities, this Action includes a stronger emphasis on support to local authorities to strengthen their capacities to take part in CBC in view of enhancing local development. Increased emphasis is also place on performance management and communication. The Action maintains a flexible approach to provide demand-driven assistance.

By supporting the overall implementation of intra-Western Balkans CBC, the Action contributes to the implementation of the **Commission Communication on an Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans**[1].

2.2. Problem analysis by areas of support

Despite progress achieved in strengthening IPA-IPA CBC implementation, managing and coordinating CBC

---

[1] COM(2020) 641, 6.10.2020.

[2] DG NEAR (2017), FINAL REPORT - Evaluation of IPA Cross Border Cooperation Programmes 2007-2013, Contract N°2015/366156/1, https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/final_approved_evaluation_report__0.pdf.

programmes remains complex. In particular, the sustainability and quality of results, the robustness of monitoring and reporting, and the communication and visibility potential of the programmes require continued attention. In addition, management capacities of CBC stakeholders need strengthening also to address delays in implementation and to enable progress of relevant IPA III beneficiaries to be entrusted the indirect management of EU funds for CBC. Of particular concern is the uneven and at times weak or limited participation of local authorities in the cooperation which needs to be boosted to ensure sustainable and locally owned approaches, integration of CBC with broader development plans as well as to allow for local governance capacity to increase.

At present, IPA II CBC implementation is progressing. Most programmes have seen the closure of the first round of calls for proposals, and are implementing projects stemming from the second round of calls for proposals while launching the third and final round of calls. It is observed that the quality of IPA-IPA CBC programme implementation, including the design of call for proposals, information campaigns, evaluation, contracting and project implementation (particularly monitoring), varies widely across the region as a direct consequence of the different levels of technical, administrative competence and available human ressources of programme management structures. However, the cross-border nature of CBC programmes require stakeholders to act in a **coordinated, consistent and harmonised way**.

In this context, the Action will support **regional coordination, harmonisation, monitoring and communication**, thus contributing to improve the impact, quality and visibility of IPA II and IPA III CBC programmes. Support provided will to the extent relevant be differentiated depending on the direct or indirect management mode of the CBC programme.

The main stakeholders and beneficiaries of the Action include the Operating Structures, the Contracting Authorities (Central Finance and Contract Units) in Montenegro and Serbia, the Joint Technical Secretariats (JTS) and Joint Monitoring Committees (JMC) of all IPA-IPA CBC programmes and relevant local authorities. The assistance also supports DG NEAR and the EU Delegations/EU Office in the Western Balkans.

2.3. Relevance and complementarity with strategies supported by key stakeholders

The Action is designed to support the implementation of IPA II and IPA III CBC programmes by all relevant stakeholders in an efficient, effective, harmonised, co-ordinated and results-based way.

The main response strategy of the Action to the needs identified can be summarised as per below:

Needs identified	Response strategy
The advancement of a culture of quality and impact	The improvement of programme performance monitoring and implementation of quality tools
The reinforcement of technical and administrative capacity of programme management structures and other stakeholders, including local authorities	The provision of technical assistance
The strengthening of coordination, networking, consistency and harmonisation	The enhancement of a community of good practice, based on regional cooperation, better capitalisation and dissemination of lessons learnt
The effectiveness of communication and promotion	The appropriate creation, publicity and targeting of communication and visibility products and narratives

While previous IPA-funded regional technical assistance actions have focused on providing capacity building to CBC stakeholders through the provision of training and other support, this Action will move away from continuous training of CBC management structures and focus more on emerging needs such as support to the development of local government capacities to participate in CBC. This focus will support integration of CBC with local development strategies and contribute to boost the sustainability of CBC results.

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

This Action contributes to implement Window 5 – Territorial and Cross-Border Cooperation - of the IPA III Programming Framework. The IPA III Programming Framework emphasises the EU's continued support for the participation of the targeted IPA III beneficiaries in IPA-IPA CBC territorial cooperation programmes, in accordance with the proposed ETC draft Regulation. The regional technical assistance provided by the present Action forms an integral part of these programmes, providing necessary horizontal technical assistance support to IPA-IPA CBC.

This Action as part of CBC also supports the implementation of the ambition of the Economic and Investment Plan to spur the long-term recovery of the Western Balkans and takes inspiration from the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans[3].

The Action will ensure regular communication, cooperation and exchange with Interreg-IPA CBC and ERDF transnational and interregional cooperation programmes to ensure coherent approaches. It will ensure complementarity and synergy with work carried out in the context of the Western Balkans Common Regional Market in areas such as tourism.

2.5. Lessons learned and links with previous financial assistance

The Action will build upon lessons learnt from previous IPA funded regional technical assistance for IPA-IPA CBC, including the findings of the 2007-2013 IPA CBC evaluation (published in 2017) and the first conclusions of the 2014-2020 IPA-IPA CBC mid-term evaluation report (February 2021).

Key recommendations stemming from the 2007-2013 evaluation regarding the regional technical assistance in particular included the need to strengthen support at regional level on improving synergies between CBC and policies/programmes developed by beneficiaries; improving the performance framework: and improving dissemination and capitalisation. All three aspects have been taken into account in the design of the current Action which includes specific outputs in response to these continuing needs identified.

In addition, the first conclusions of the 2014-2020 IPA-IPA CBC mid-term evaluation report note the very large number of capacity building outputs that have been delivered by the regional technical assistance. It emphasises that if effectively utilised, the outputs will build capacity in both the public administrations managing the IPA CBC programmes and in implementing partners delivering operations. However, it also notes that capacity building efforts are negatively impacted by staff turnover in IPA CBC management structures across the region.

In this context, the Action will target its capacity building activities on the provision of sustainable tools and strengthen networking and exchange of best practice. It will move away from providing a high number of specific training to individual staff in CBC management and implementation structures which experience staff turnover.

Overall, the evaluations have demonstrated the continued high relevance of a regional technical assistance facility in view of ensuring harmonised approaches and procedures across the CBC programmes and capitalisation of lessons learnt. Similar horizontal support exists also in the context of other ETC support where INTERACT is a permanent horizontal assistance programme.

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)

IF the four outputs below are produced AND assumptions hold true, then they will lead to enhanced regional coordination, harmonisation, monitoring and communication of cross-border cooperation in the Western Balkans. The four main expected outputs of the action are as follows:

Output 1. *CBC performance monitoring and quality tools at all levels supported and improved.* The monitoring

---

[3] SWD(2020)223 final

system, built up under previous phases of the regional technical assistance CBIB, has proven to be robust and widely accepted by the CBC authorities in the region. The support will entail continuous implementation and improvement of the tools, also in view of building the conditions for a future hand-over to the respective beneficiary authorities.

Output 2. *Capacity building assistance, including for strengthening the participation of local authorities and for communication, provided.* Capacity building assistance will build upon the lessons learnt from previous phases of regional technical assistance and focus on putting in place tools and mechanisms for sustainable knowledge transfer. Traditional training for operating structures will be limited. Increased attention will be placed on capacity building specific to strengthening the participation of local authorities in IPA-IPA CBC as well as on communication.

Output 3. *Networking and cross-border management capabilities as well as best practice and sharing of experiences (capitalisation and dissemination) between CBC stakeholders in the Western Balkans supported and enhanced.* The intensive exchange between CBC stakeholders will boost the effectiveness of the programmes and ensure an harmonised approach throughout the region. While full effectiveness can only be achieved if the situation with the COVID-19 pandemic allows for physical meetings to be organised, the Action foresees the possibility to organise virtual networking opportunities.

Output 4. *Communication/visibility products/narratives based on story telling tailor-made to different audiences developed and made available.* The Action will focus the communication strategy on the identification and development of stories for different media, increasing and improving the communication and visibility of CBC actions.

The Action contributes in the long-term to the achievement of improved impact, quality and visibility of IPA II and IPA III CBC programmes, assuming that the political situation in the region does not impede good neighbourly relations between targeted IPA III beneficiaries.

3.2. Indicative type of activities

The Action will indicatively include the following main activities:

Output 1: CBC performance monitoring and quality tools at all levels supported and improved
- Maintenance and improvement/upgrade of the monitoring system;
- Organisation of capacity building events on monitoring;
- Providing recommendations for each CBC programme on compliance and quality;
- Assessing and testing the feasibility of the transfer of the monitoring system to the CBC operating structures.

Output 2: Capacity building assistance, including for strengthening the participation of local authorities and for communication, provided
- Providing capacity building activities for local authorities;
- Providing capacity building activities, including for JTS, on communication;
- Providing capacity building tools, events and demand driven expertise for CBC programme structures with emphasis on sharing knowledge at regional level and with INTERREG;
- Implementing study visits/job shadowing/exchanges of staff of CBC authorities.

Output 3: Networking and cross-border management capabilities as well as best practice and sharing of experiences (capitalisation and dissemination) between CBC stakeholders in the Western Balkans supported and enhanced
- Preparation of harmonised procedures, manuals and other tools that foster generation of knowledge, exchange of experience or putting into practice efficient procedures;
- Supporting technical working groups and networks, especially between the programme management structures;
- Organisation of regional CBC consultative fora to maintain a CBC community of practice;
- Promoting and supporting best practice exchanges and knowledge capitalisation where appropriate, in coordination with DG REGIO and INTERACT.

Output 4: Communication/visibility products/narratives based on story telling tailor-made to different audiences developed and made available
- Developing a communication strategy focusing on the identification and development of stories for different media;
- Producing and distributing printed or on-line communication materials;
- Maintenance of a website and other social media pages, including in cooperation with DG REGIO and

INTERACT;

Organisation of events promoting IPA-IPA CBC programmes and/or supporting organisation of events.

3.3. Risks and assumptions

Risks	Risk level (H/M/L)	Mitigating measures
Risk 1: Relations between the IPA II and III beneficiaries deteriorate	L	The Action has no direct means to diminish the effect of this risk, even though it would have a high impact on the implementation of activities. However, CBC is seen as one of the tools to strengthen good neighbourly relations in the Western Balkans region and as such, the Action is relevant in view of contributing to limit the probability of this risk occurring.
Risk 2: Lack of interest or commitment of IPA II and III CBC authorities to implement harmonised procedures (including tools and mechanisms) and to coordinate	L	Lack of interest or commitment will be addressed through the demonstration of concrete results that can be derived from the cooperation. The Action will also be implemented in direct response to specific systemic and capacity gaps in the implementation of CBC which is likely to foster ownership of the Action.
Risk 3: Lack of interest of CBC management structures in strengthening the participation of local authorities in CBC programmes	L	Considering that strengthening the capacities and participation of local authorities in CBC programmes is one of the thematic priorities incorporated in all IPA III CBC programmes, this risk is not considered likely to occur. The Action will however promote awareness of how local authority involvement is important for CBC programmes and for reaching their objectives including as part of capacity building activities.
Risk 4: High turnover of staff in the CBC bodies	M	The Action will mitigate the potential impact of possible high staff turnover by focusing on developing sustainable tools and mechanisms for capacity building. This approach will build upon lessons learnt in previous phases of the regional technical assistance.
Risk 5: The COVID-19 pandemic does not allow for a sufficient level of networking activities to be implemented in the region	M	The Action will adopt a flexible approach to implementation which includes the use of different tools to enable online networking activities. These are not as efficient as the those during physical meetings but could replace them in case of need.
Risk 6: CBC projects do not collect and share sufficient relevant monitoring data in line with monitoring tool to allow for monitoring	L	The Action will proactively reach out to CBC projects to guide them in the collection and submission of relevant data.
Risk 7: JTS does not sufficiently support the development of CBC communication	L	The Action will organise specific event for JTS to strengthen the understanding of the importance of communication including by using more updated approaches.
Assumptions (to be reflected in the Logical Framework Matrix above) – grouped by outputs and outcomes		
Outcome 1: • Political situation in the region does not impede good neighbourly relations between targeted IPA III beneficiaries.		
Output 1: • CBC authorities are interested in and maintain a pro-active attitude in accessing relevant capacity building for using the performance monitoring and quality tools.		

Output 2:
- CBC authorities maintain a pro-active attitude towards their needs for capacity building and are interested in increasing the capacities.
- CBC authorities are interested in strengthening the participation of local authorities in CBC programmes.

Output 3:
- The turn-over of staff within CBC authorities is at an acceptable level.

Output 4:
- CBC authorities are interested in increasing and modernising communication on CBC including by using further project products/narrative.

3.4. Mainstreaming

All of the IPA-IPA CBC programmes which this Action is designed to support, mainstream gender equality, environment and climate change, minorities, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups, as well as civil society and governance, planning and administrative capacity building of local and regional authorities in their intervention strategy. The Action will support the CBC programmes in effectively carrying out mainstreaming and provide capacity building to programme management structures to allow them to support grant applicants in this regard. The Action will also give visibility to CBC projects that have created positive change including in the themes mainstreamed across projects.

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 support the design of CBC calls for proposals that include evaluation criteria specific to Gender Equality and Women's and Girls' Empowerment. It will support beneficiaries to systematically disaggregate project data according to gender and encourage analysis on social and economic impact of CBC projects on women and girls.

How does this Action address Environment and Climate change?

As the implementation of IPA-IPA CBC overall will take into account the Western Balkans Green Agenda to the extent possible, technical assistance provided under this Action will also be provided in such as manner as to support achievement of environment and climate change priorities. The Action will support the design of CBC calls for proposals that include evaluation criteria specific to environment and climate change.

How does this Action address the Rights Based Approach?

The Action will promote the integration into CBC programmes of approaches that support the achievement of fundamental rights. This includes raising awareness of the need to systematically integrate fundamental rights into all interventions funded by the CBC programmes.

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

While supporting the implementation of CBC programmes, the Action will effectively promote engagement with Civil Society. Civil society organisations are a critical actor in the implementation of CBC programmes, particularly in targeted areas which lack strong local authorities. The Action will provide capacity building on engagement with civil society for CBC programme management structures that engage with grant applicants.

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

Governance, planning and administrative capacity building of local and regional authorities will be mainstreamed across all IPA-IPA CBC programmes. The Action will specifically focus on building capacity to strengthen the participation of local authorities in CBC programmes. In addition, particular attention will be paid to ensure that beneficiaries systematically disaggregate project data according to vulnerable groups. This will enable beneficiaries to carry out analysis of the social and economic impact of CBC projects on vulnerable groups.

3.5. Conditions for implementation

The sustainability of capacity building activities and common tools delivered under the Action requires a commitment from CBC authorities to ensure as far as possible the necessary resources including staff relevant to managing the

CBC cooperation. Particular attention should be paid to create conditions necessary for continuity of staff in key functions.

3.6. Logical Framework for ACTION 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 (year)	Targets (year)	Sources of data (1 per indicator)	Assumptions
Impact	To contribute to improve the impact, quality and visibility of IPA II and IPA III CBC programmes	Rate of achievement of CBC programme indicators	TBD	90% (2024)	Regional monitoring system database	*Not applicable*
		Level of visibility of CBC programmes	Low (2021)	Increased (2024)	Communication survey	
Outcome 1	Regional coordination, harmonisation, monitoring and communication of cross-border cooperation in the Western Balkans enhanced	Number of recommendations and action plans to improve quality implemented by at least 75% of the CBC programmes in the region	0 (2021)	3 (2024)	Action reports	Political situation in the region does not impede good neighbourly relations between targeted IPA III beneficiaries
Output 1 related to outcome 1	CBC performance monitoring and quality tools at all levels supported and improved	Number of recommendations provided and action plans in place to improve quality	0 (2021)	5 (2024)	Action reports	CBC authorities are interested in and maintain a pro-active attitude in accessing relevant capacity building for using the performance monitoring and quality tools.
		Percentage of all CBC projects implemented in the region that upload the monitoring data into the regional monitoring system in line with the standards applicable	90% (2021)	95% (2024)	Regional monitoring system database	
Output 2 related to outcome 1	Capacity building assistance, including for strengthening the participation of local authorities and for communication, provided	Percentage of staff recruited over the past 4 years in operating structures who report an increase in capacity	0% (2021)	75% (2024)	Pre and post tests	CBC authorities maintain a pro-active attitude towards their needs for capacity building and are interested in increasing the capacities.
		Study of specific constraints and needs of local authorities when participating in CBC programmes realised	0	1	Study, Action reports	CBC authorities are interested in strengthening the participation of local authorities in CBC programmes.

Output 3 related to outcome 1	Networking and cross-border management capabilities as well as best practice and sharing of experiences (capitalisation and dissemination) between CBC stakeholders in the Western Balkans supported and enhanced	Level of satisfaction of participants of CBC events/fora with networking opportunities provided, regarding capitalisation and dissemination	0	75% (2024)	Questionnaire to CBC event participants Action reports	The turn-over of staff within CBC authorities is at an acceptable level
Output 4 related to outcome 1	Communication/visibility products/narratives based on story telling tailor-made to different audiences developed and made available	Number of CBC stories with a minimum of 1000 shares in social media	0	20 stories (2024)	Social media extracts Action reports	CBC authorities are interested in increasing and modernising communication on CBC including by using further project products/narrative

4. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

4.1. Financing agreement

In order to implement this action, it is not foreseen to conclude financing agreements with the relevant 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 measures[4].

4.2.1. Direct Management (Procurement)

The procurement will contribute to achieving the impact and outcome outlined above in section 3.1. It will directly implement outputs 1 to 4.

4.3. 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.

4.4. Indicative budget

	EU contribution (amount in EUR) 2021	Indicative third party contribution, in currency identified 2021
All outcomes and outputs	2 000 000	N/A
Direct management (Procurement) – total envelope under section 4.2.1	2 000 000	N/A
Totals	**2 000 000**	**N/A**

4.5. Organisational set-up and responsibilities

A Steering Committee will ensure a tight coordination and oversee the timely and proper implementation of the action. The Steering Committee will be made up of representatives of the DG NEAR (Chair), of the relevant EU Delegations/EU Office and the representatives of Operating Structures from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia. The Steering Committee will meet at least twice a year to discuss project progress, decide upon the work plan related to the implementation of the contract.

The regional technical assistance will be based in the region and report to DG NEAR. The experts will be in direct contact with the different stakeholders in the implementation of IPA IPA CBC. Coordination with the relevant EU Delegations/EU Office as well as with DG REGIO and INTERACT will be ensured.

---

[4] 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.

5. PERFORMANCE/RESULTS MONITORING AND REPORTING

5.1. Internal monitoring

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 partner 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 nature of the action, an evaluation will not be carried out for this action or its components contracted by the European Commission.

In case an evaluation is not foreseen, the Commission may, during implementation, decide to undertake such an evaluation for duly justified reasons either on its own decision or on the initiative of the partner/s.

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

When appropriate, the financing of the evaluation shall be covered by another measure constituting a financing Decision.

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 national 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.

In addition to standard visibility and communication activities (maintenance of the project website and social media accounts, preparation of promotion and visibility materials, organisation of events, etc.) the Action will act as a hub for collecting and taking advantage of the visibility potential of CBC projects, knowledge generated and lessons learned. A big emphasis will be put on story telling. This potential should be used for further promotion of EU funded IPA IPA CBC programmes and their impact on the lives of the people living in local communities of the eligible areas.

The Action will closely coordinate with DG REGIO and INTERACT on visibility and communication issues.

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 aims to bring forward sustainable tools and approaches to strengthen IPA-IPA CBC management across the Western Balkans. Regional technical assistance in this area has shown that tools created under CBIB continue to be used, demonstrating the sustainability of the approach. As regards the monitoring tool developed, this Action will specifically test the feasibility of handing over the tool to beneficiary authorities in view of further strengthening Action sustainability.

A specific condition for the implementation of the Action relates to the need to have sufficient and stable counterpart staff in beneficiary administrations to ensure full effectiveness of the knowledge transfer. CBC authorities in the region have indicated their commitment to address this issue which would underpin successful Action implementation.