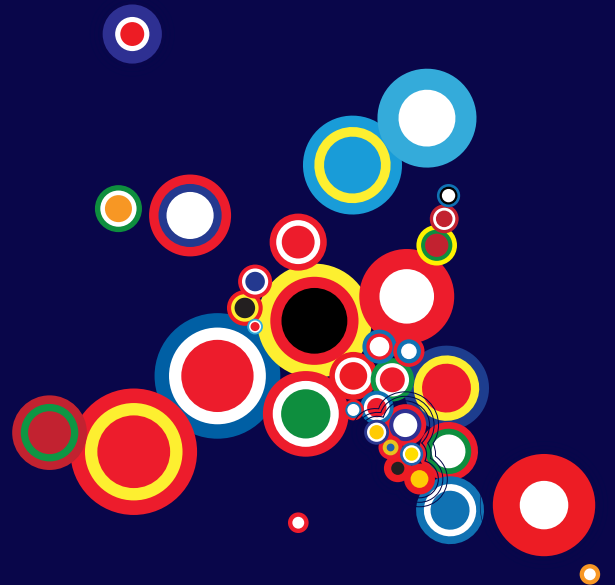




INSTRUMENT FOR PRE-ACCESSION ASSISTANCE (IPA II) 2014-2020

Multi-country European Integration Facility



Action Summary

The objective of the EU Integration Facility is to assist the IPA II beneficiaries in the overall development towards EU accession, by supporting the civil and public administration and helping them to efficiently manage the pre-accession funds and effectively manage the process of EU integration.

The action contains a number of smaller interventions such as provision of technical assistance, preparatory or follow up actions, which are not yet mature enough to be presented as stand-alone actions. It also covers relevant networking and visibility activities, as well as training.

Action Identification	
Action Programme Title	IPA II Annual Multi-country Action Programme 2015
Action Title	European Integration Facility
Action ID	IPA 2015/031-609.05/MC/EIF
Sector Information	
IPA II Sector(s)	9. Regional and territorial cooperation
DAC Sector	43010
Budget	
Total cost (VAT excluded) ¹	EUR 2 million
EU contribution	EUR 2 million
Management and Implementation	
Method of implementation	Direct management
<i>Direct management</i> NEAR unit in charge	Unit D.5. - Western Balkans Regional Cooperation and Programmes
Implementation responsibilities	Jung Morten, Head of Unit NEAR D.5
Location	
Zone benefiting from the action	Western Balkans and Turkey
Specific implementation area(s)	Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey.
Timeline	
Deadline for conclusion of the Financing Agreement	N/A
Contracting deadline	31/12/2016
End of operational implementation period	31/12/2019

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.

* 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.

1. RATIONALE

PROBLEM AND STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

The Western Balkans and Turkey face important common challenges, which are reflected in the EU enlargement strategy. The challenges in the area of democracy and the rule of law include the functioning and independence of institutions, empowerment of civil society, fighting organised crime and corruption, ensuring independent, impartial, efficient and accountable judicial systems, as well as safeguarding fundamental rights such as freedom of expression and rights of persons belonging to minorities as well as vulnerable groups, notably Roma.

The economic crisis has underlined the need for all the IPA II beneficiaries to strengthen their governance, in particular economic governance and improving competitiveness in order to meet economic accession criteria. None of the Western Balkans enjoys the status of a functioning market economy, public financial management systems need strengthening, structural reforms need to be prioritised and competitiveness enhanced, in order to support fiscal consolidation, to tackle high external imbalances as well as high unemployment.

Regional cooperation remains a catalyst for the enlargement process. The IPA II beneficiaries face a number of common problems which they could more efficiently address through peer review and sharing of good practices.

Regional cooperation is a key enabling factor for comprehensive reforms and the return to sustainable economic growth. All IPA II beneficiaries preparing for accession need to align their national legislation to the *acquis* and to gradually adapt to the Union standards and practices. This task is facilitated by regional organisations or bodies set up by the IPA II beneficiaries in many sectors.

RELEVANCE WITH THE IPA II STRATEGY PAPER AND OTHER KEY REFERENCES

Financial assistance will be granted in line with, and in support of, the enlargement strategy for the Western Balkans and Turkey. It will be shaped to be consistent with other EU policies in the same area, in particular with the Europe 2020 strategy and the applicable EU macro-regional strategies, with the flagship initiatives of the EU to boost growth and jobs and with the climate policy objectives of the EU. Furthermore, the objectives agreed under the South East Europe 2020 Strategy represent important benchmarks for the reform efforts of the IPA II beneficiaries and the financial assistance under IPA II will be used to support meeting these targets.

Support will be mobilised in response to unforeseen priority needs relevant to the accession process as well as to promote the visibility of the multi-country action programme.

LESSONS LEARNED AND LINK TO PREVIOUS FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

A European Integration facility was included in the previous programmes under IPA I. It helped strengthen the link between the policy agenda and financial assistance by allowing a faster response to a limited number of unforeseen priority needs and to help mature projects which were not yet ready for implementation. The preparatory study on parliamentary cooperation is one example of a successful use of the EU integration facility which allowed the Commission to gather a more solid information basis before deciding on the way forward.

Another lessons learned from previous assistance is the difficulty to prove the impact of our interventions, as appears from several evaluations. This difficulty is a consequence of the practice of not conducting project/programme evaluations to identify findings also by means of appropriate quantitative and qualitative methodologies. In this respect, and in line with the DG NEAR evaluation policy it has been found necessary to dedicate an appropriate budget during the programming stage for carrying out sector/project evaluations.

2. INTERVENTION LOGIC

OVERALL OBJECTIVE	OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS	SOURCES OF VERIFICATION		
Contribute to the progress of the enlargement process and increasing the effectiveness and impact of accession oriented actions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Progress made on political and economic criteria 	Progress Reports & Enlargement strategy		
SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE	OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS	SOURCES OF VERIFICATION	ASSUMPTIONS	
Efficient and effective programming, management and implementation and follow up of the pre-accession assistance;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Timely implementation of Multi-country action programmes -- number of contracts under implementation 	Financial assistance implementation reports		
RESULTS	OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS	SOURCES OF VERIFICATION	ASSUMPTIONS	
To meet specific and urgent needs in the region; Ensured implementation of a number of accession related preparatory and start-up actions; Urgent/bridging support for important regional initiatives and organisations; TA provided, studies carried out; Training provided; Monitoring and evaluation missions/studies; Visibility material produced.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of preparatory and start-up actions implemented; ▪ Quantity and quality of communication material ▪ Number of outputs, such as Terms of Reference, technical specifications, feasibility studies and other documents ▪ Number of trained persons. ▪ Number of monitoring/evaluation missions 	Implementation reports Studies		
ACTIVITIES		MEANS	OVERALL COST	ASSUMPTIONS
Provide short term technical assistance, such as drafting tender documents and/or terms of reference and technical specifications for the implementation of IPA II funded actions, Feasibility studies, other preparatory and start-up actions .Support to regional networks by, amongst others, organisation of regional meetings, workshops, study visits in strategically important areas. Develop and disseminate relevant information and communication material for the Multi-country IPA II action programmes, provide training and monitor/evaluate programmes.		Various contracts (mostly FWC)	EUR 2 million	

ADDITIONAL DESCRIPTION

The activities and the tasks listed under this result, will serve the purpose of supporting *acquis* chapters through creation of an EU Integration Facility for the unspecified institution building needs (training, technical assistance, grants, etc.) and support for the relevant EU networks.

The support will be provided in cases where an initial proposal is considered to correspond to a priority for IPA II financial assistance, (justified in terms of short or medium term priorities; and relevant strategic documents), but where further efforts are needed to design and appraise mature actions, ready for implementation under the upcoming IPA II financial assistance action programme.

At this stage the following intervention is identified:

- Visibility for multi-country activities, in particular by identifying and preparing 'success stories'.

Other activities not yet identified could include:

- Provide short term technical expert assistance, such as drafting the tender documents and/or terms of reference and technical specifications for the implementation of IPA II funded actions;
- Feasibility studies, other preparatory and start-up actions;
- Support to regional networks by and, amongst others, organisation of regional meetings, workshops, study visits in strategically important areas;
- Provide training to relevant authorities;
- Monitor and if applicable evaluate multi-country actions during or following the implementation.

MAIN ASSUMPTIONS AND PRECONDITIONS:

The **main assumptions** that should be considered on the level of the whole Action include:

- The continuing commitment of IPA II beneficiaries to an inclusive process of deepening regional cooperation.
- Timely identification of the needs, which need to be addressed by this facility.

3. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

This Action will be implemented in the modality of direct management, with Unit D.5 being responsible for the contract implementation and monitoring.

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

Activities will be implemented through a number of service contracts (4 - 6 contracts), mostly specific contracts under framework contracts and other types of contract implementation under the PRAG and the 2012 Financial Regulation rules.

4. PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

METHODOLOGY FOR MONITORING (AND EVALUATION)

IPA II monitoring process is organised and led by Unit D.5. The monitoring process is aimed to improve programming, implementation and sustainability as well as timely identification, remedying and alleviation of potential issues in the process of programming and implementation of Actions. This action includes provisions for monitoring and mid-term or final evaluations of actions financed under the same or other action programmes.

INDICATOR MEASUREMENT

Indicator	Baseline 2015	Milestone 2017	Target 2020	Final target 2020	Source of information
<i>Specific objective - Timely implementation of Multi-country action programmes – number of contracts under implementation</i>	1 - 2	4 - 6	4 - 6	4 - 6	<i>Financial assistance implementation reports</i>
<i>Results - Number of preparatory and start-up actions implemented</i>	-	1 - 2	2 - 3	2 - 3	<i>Implementation reports</i>
<i>Results - Quantity and quality of communication material</i>	-	2 - 4	4 - 6	4 - 6	<i>Publications</i>
<i>Results - Number of outputs, such as Terms of Reference, technical specifications, feasibility studies and other documents</i>	-	1 - 2	2 - 3	2 - 3	<i>Studies</i>
<i>Results - Number of trained persons (men/woman)</i>	-	20 (10 – 10)	30 (15 – 15)	30 (15 – 15)	<i>Implementation reports</i>
<i>Results - Number of monitoring/evaluation missions</i>	-	1 - 2	1 - 2	1 - 2	<i>Reports</i>

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 the domestic system.

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE (AND IF RELEVANT DISASTER RESILIENCE)

By their nature, the majority of activities envisaged under this Action Document do not imply direct and major impact to environmental issues, but will however be implemented in a manner which is environmentally friendly.

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

In complementarity with this facility, the Civil Society Facility helps to ensure an inclusive and transparent dialogue, consultation and communication with all relevant stakeholders in the respective sectors. This serves as a platform that enables exchange of information and contribution of CSOs in relation to planning development assistance, particularly programming and monitoring of the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA).

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND GENDER MAINSTREAMING

Equal participation of women and men will be secured through appropriate information and publicity material, in the design of actions and accessibility to the opportunities they offer. An appropriate men/women balance will be sought on all the managing bodies and activities of the Action. All contractors shall be requested to provide monitoring data recording the participation of men and women in terms of expert inputs, as a proof of equal participation of men and women in the different phase. Enforcement of those principles is likewise ensured through specific administrative procedures applied in accordance with the Law on non-discrimination. In the implementation of activities under this Action, the same principles shall apply, so that participation in the envisaged activities will be guaranteed on the basis of equal access regardless of sex, ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age, etc. Gender equality incentives will be incorporated particularly in the activities concerning capacity building.

MINORITIES AND VULNERABLE GROUPS

The action will in no way harm the rights of any individuals, including minorities and vulnerable groups. Since one part of the action will be implemented through EU Integration Facility there is possibility to support actions that directly deal with minorities and vulnerable groups

6. SUSTAINABILITY

Action will produce sustainable results in the short run since the entire beneficiary institutions/structures are already in place, and the Action does not envisage establishment or financing of the new organisational units and their running costs. Sustainability is also given in the fact that the support for legislative alignment results eventually in adoption of the laws, by-laws, plans, etc., by the Parliament, Government or governmental bodies.

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 contractors, and shall be funded from the amounts allocated to the Action.

All necessary measures will be taken to publicise the fact that the Action has received funding from the EU in line with the Communication and Visibility Manual for EU External Actions. Additional Visibility Guidelines developed by the European Commission (DG NEAR) will have to be followed.

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

Visibility and communication actions shall demonstrate how the intervention contributes to the agreed programme 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.

The European Commission shall be fully informed of the planning and implementation of the specific visibility and communication activities.