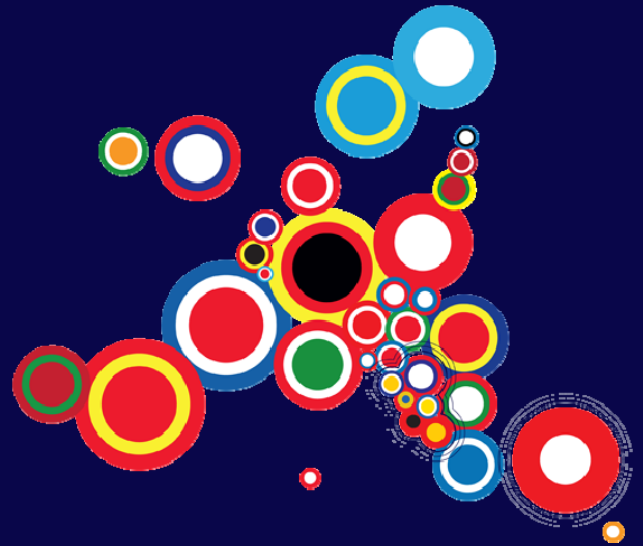




## INSTRUMENT FOR PRE-ACCESSION ASSISTANCE (IPA II) 2014-2020

### MULTI-COUNTRY

### Technical Assistance to Connectivity in the Western Balkans



#### **Action summary**

The Action is to support the development of a regional energy market and the extension of the electricity and gas networks as well as of the Trans-European Transport Core Network (TEN-T core network) in the Western Balkans region.

In this perspective, the Action will not only contribute to bringing high priority energy and transport infrastructure projects to maturity, but will also support the identification and enforcement of soft measures and technical standards.

This technical assistance will be instrumental in improving connectivity between the Western Balkans and between them and the European Union, a key driver for economic growth and jobs as well as for attracting new investments in the region.

<b>Action Identification</b>	
<b>Action Programme Title</b>	IPA II Multi-country Action Programme for Connectivity 2015
<b>Action Title</b>	Technical Assistance to Connectivity in the Western Balkans
<b>Action ID</b>	IPA 2015/038-055.02/MC/CONNECTA
<b>Sector Information</b>	
<b>IPA II Sector(s)</b>	9 Regional and territorial cooperation
<b>DAC Sector</b>	43010
<b>Budget</b>	
<b>Total cost</b>	EUR 10.354 million
<b>EU contribution</b>	EUR 10.354 million
<b>Management and Implementation</b>	
<b>Method of implementation</b>	Direct Management
<b>Implementation responsibilities</b>	DG NEAR/D.5
<b>Location</b>	
<b>Zone benefiting from the action</b>	Western Balkans
<b>Specific implementation area(s)</b>	Western Balkans
<b>Timeline</b>	
<b>Deadline for conclusion of the Financing Agreement</b>	N/A
<b>Contracting deadline</b>	31/12/2016
<b>End of operational implementation period</b>	31/12/2021

# 1. RATIONALE

## PROBLEM AND STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

### *Connectivity agenda in the Western Balkans*

Improving connectivity within the Western Balkans and with the European Union (EU) is a key factor for growth and jobs and will bring clear benefits for economies and citizens.

The Western Balkans Six (WB6) has made the connectivity agenda one of its highest priorities, with a special emphasis on the preparation and financing of concrete regional infrastructure investment projects, but also on the implementation of technical standards and accompanying reform measures such as unbundling, market opening, strengthening regulatory authorities, streamlining and reducing barriers to permitting and licensing for new energy infrastructure, environmental impact assessment procedures, regulatory measures for cross border energy infrastructure, road and rail maintenance schemes, rail reform, road safety or Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS).

#### *Transport sector*

The EU adopted, as of January 2014, a new transport infrastructure policy to put in place a powerful European transport network across the twenty eight Member States. These new guidelines refocus transport financing on a tightly defined new core network, the Trans-European Transport Core Network (TEN-T core network), which will form the backbone for transportation in Europe's single market. It will remove bottlenecks, upgrade infrastructure and streamline cross border transport operations for passengers and businesses throughout the EU.

Within the WB6 framework, the European Commission and the six Prime Ministers from the Western Balkans agreed, on 21 April 2015 in Brussels, on indicative extensions of the TEN-T core network in the Western Balkans region. In Riga, on 22 June 2015, the WB6 Transport Ministers identified the maps of the comprehensive and core networks extending the TEN-T network in the Western Balkans and introduced the corridor coordinators.

In close cooperation with the South East Europe Transport Observatory (SEETO) and with the support of their instruments, the coordinators will set up corridor platforms where national authorities will work with transport operators and infrastructure managers, International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and other interested parties to support implementation of infrastructure projects and soft actions confirmed at the Western Balkans 6 summit in Vienna 2015 (Annex- Connectivity). Beside political support in order to ensure required regulatory changes, operational measures and infrastructure investments, the most appropriate sources of financing to support the implementation of the transport corridor work plans will be identified. It will allow short term improvements while facilitating the preparation and implementation of major infrastructure works.

The regional core transport network, including road, railway, inland waterways as well as port infrastructure, shall be implemented through specific infrastructure projects as well as through soft measures implementing EU standards.

The soft measures will require limited funding but a strong political commitment. A study from the SEETO has analysed, amongst other measures, concrete border crossing and corridor management issues, which were used as an input for a list of short term soft measures presented in Connectivity Annex.

#### *Energy sector*

The EU is consuming and importing increasing quantities of energy. The acknowledgement of the advantages of coordinated action in such a strategic field has led to the adoption of common rules and strategies to pool Europe's efforts to secure the energy that it needs at an affordable price, while generating the least possible pollution. The EU thus adopted in February 2015 the Energy Union Strategy based on the three long-established objectives of EU energy policy: security of supply, sustainability and competitiveness. It is in the perspective of stronger security of supply and market integration that the EU set out in particular

the target of 10% power transmission interconnection capacity by 2020, which is the minimum necessary for the electricity to flow and be traded between Member States.

With the aim to extend the EU internal energy market to EU neighbouring countries in South East Europe and the Black Sea region, the Energy Community (EnC) was created in Athens in October 2005 and entered into force in July 2006. The EnC takes in particular measures to create a single energy market and support infrastructure, its legal framework relying on the adoption of EU energy *acquis* in its Contracting Parties.

Adopted in October 2013, the South East Europe Energy Strategy outlines the key objectives and actions needed to create a regional energy market, as well as the commitments on energy efficiency and renewable energy development.

A list of Projects of Energy Community Interest (PECI) was subsequently adopted by the Ministerial Council in October 2013, identifying in particular the electricity and gas interconnections as key areas that would contribute to the Western Balkans economic development and further EU integration.

The WB6 Ministerial meeting in Vienna on 2 July focused on the energy dimension of the connectivity agenda and will agree on the high priority deliverables in this sector. The 6 Western Balkans EnC Contracting Parties agreed to establish a regional electricity market, in particular by establishing power exchanged in each Party (or each Party should be serviced by one) and a regional system of power balancing and capacity allocation. In parallel, the EnC prepared a list of national reform measures and regional market integration targets to accompany these investments.

### ***Support to connectivity in the Western Balkans***

The Action will provide technical assistance specifically focused on connectivity, in both transport and energy sectors, in order to accelerate the implementation of these measures.

The Action will be divided into two components.

*Component 1* – A Connectivity Technical Assistance Facility (CONNECTA) will prepare priority connectivity infrastructure investments projects, ensuring their technical and economic viability, in order to bring them to maturity for investment co-financing, and flag the connectivity projects ready to be implemented in the short and medium terms for the next national or multi-country programming exercises. The Facility will also provide support for the preparation and implementation of short and medium terms regional reform measures in the transport sector (Soft Actions)

*Component 2* – The expertise of the EnC will support the development of the regional electricity market initiative, in particular with the establishment of a regional power balancing mechanism and in assisting the WB6 Contracting Parties to establish national power exchanges (or to be serviced by the power exchange of another Contracting Party).

Additional activities may be considered, should new needs be identified to stimulate further progress on the connectivity agenda.

## **RELEVANCE WITH THE IPA II MULTI-COUNTRY STRATEGY PAPER AND OTHER KEY REFERENCES**

The Multi-country Indicative Strategy Paper 2014-2020<sup>1</sup> (hereinafter referred to as the Strategy Paper), establishes support for economic, social and territorial development as one of its main objectives. In order to promote a comprehensive approach to the economic development of the region by stimulating key long-term drivers of growth, the Strategy Paper refers to the targets set by the regional strategy South East Europe 2020.

In that perspective, the Strategy Paper identifies in particular as a priority investing in improved transport and energy interconnections within the region and with the EU.

The action will be implemented in line with the priorities identified in the Strategy paper but also in line with relevant EU policies, such as the TEN-T guidelines and the European Energy Security Strategy, which

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<sup>1</sup> C(2014) 4293, 30.06.2014.

encourages the development of energy interconnections between candidate countries, potential candidates and the EU.

The action will also follow EU macro-regional strategies, such as the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) and the future EU Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian Region (EUSAIR) which both identify better connections within the Western Balkans and between this region and neighbouring Member States as key priorities.

The action is in line with the different national strategies and the Indicative Strategy Papers establishing the priorities for national IPA Programmes with the exception of Bosnia and Herzegovina where national strategies in the relevant sectors do not exist and whose Indicative Strategy Paper does not cover these sectors. Support to Bosnia and Herzegovina may however be provided under this action if considered beneficial for the development of country-wide strategies and priorities<sup>2</sup>.

## **LESSONS LEARNED AND LINK TO PREVIOUS FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE**

Several EU funded actions already exist to support the IPA II beneficiaries, but also the existing regional structures (SEETO and EnC), for the development of sector programmes, the set-up and implementation of accompanying reform measures as well as the preparation of infrastructure projects and eventually the full alignment with the EU *acquis*.

Amongst these actions, the Joint Assistance to Support Projects in European Regions (JASPERS) offers support to the IPA II beneficiaries to develop, manage and review the quality of their infrastructure projects, making them eligible for IPA funding. In the frame of the Western Balkans Investment Framework (WBIF), the Infrastructure Project Facilities (IPFs) complement JASPERS in supporting the beneficiaries in the preparation of project documentation (feasibility studies, preliminary and detailed design, environmental impact assessment, tender dossiers, etc.). If JASPERS also supports the elaboration of sector strategies, their activities and IPFs' services are nevertheless mostly focused on infrastructure development.

The action will however allow a shorter and more flexible mobilisation of the technical assistance. It shall result in a more rapid completion of the project documentation, increasing the number of projects mature for investment co-financing. The limited number of projects mature for investment co-financing to date confirms the need for a top-down approach to speed up their preparation.

The action is also aiming at a broader objective, including not only infrastructure development but larger, comprehensive sector development, also targeting the creation of a regional power market and the adoption of technical standards and regional reform measures. In the context of ambitious connectivity targets for both sectors of transport and energy, it is highly pertinent to mobilise and strengthen stakeholders' capacities.

When implementing the action, it will be guaranteed that there is no overlap, but complementarity with the existing instruments.

Given the fact that public funds are scarce, there is a clear need to concentrate policy and regulatory efforts as well as investments on key corridors and interconnectors. By injecting substantial additional funds and providing technical assistance, this action shall boost progress on these connectivity priorities.

The initiative of such an action naturally belongs to the European Commission due to its key role in advancing the EU integration of the Western Balkans, including the alignment with the EU *acquis*.

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<sup>2</sup> C(2014) 5770, 18.08.2014, Albania; C(2014) 9495, 15.12.2014, Bosnia and Herzegovina; C(2014) 5861, 19.08.2014, Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; C(2014) 5771, 18.08.2014, Montenegro; C(2014) 5772, 20.08.2014, Kosovo; C(2014) 5872, 19.08.2014, Serbia.

## 2. INTERVENTION LOGIC

### LOGICAL FRAMEWORK MATRIX

OVERALL OBJECTIVE	OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS (*)	SOURCES OF VERIFICATION	
To contribute to enhancing the socio-economic development and competitiveness of the Western Balkan	GDP growth Increase of trade in goods and services Human development index	European Commission Progress Reports National Statistics Institutes National Central Banks SEE 2020 implementation reports Government budget reports Public Finance statistics Eurostat	
SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE	OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS (*)	SOURCES OF VERIFICATION	ASSUMPTIONS
To provide support to the improvement of connectivity in the Western Balkans and between them and the EU	Number of transport and energy projects which have been brought to maturity by the action and subsequently received EU funds (infrastructure projects but also projects for the implementation of soft measures and technical standards) Total amount of IPA funds invested in the projects brought to maturity by the action	WB6 Ministerial meetings conclusions SEE 2020 implementation reports Reports from SEETO Reports from EnC	Political commitment from beneficiaries Sufficient administrative capacity in the beneficiaries Local ownership of Action outputs Financial sustainability for an efficient operation and maintenance of the infrastructure Continued government commitment towards EU integration process
RESULTS	OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS (*)	SOURCES OF VERIFICATION	ASSUMPTIONS
<p><b>Result 1:</b> Transport and energy priority infrastructure investments projects identified in the work programmes as key for the connectivity agenda brought to maturity for investment co-financing Implementation of short and medium terms Soft action as in the transport sector</p>	Number of transport and energy infrastructure projects which project documentation has been prepared by the Action Rail reform plans, EU best practices for the improvement of road safety introduced TEN-T, ITS deployment on the TEN-T core network in the region, maintenance programmes for the entire TEN-T core rail and road network in the region	European Commission progress reports Reports from SEETO Reports from EnC Action progress reports Number of projects identified in the Single Pipelines of Projects brought to maturity and selected for investment co-financing	Political commitment from beneficiaries Agreement of the beneficiaries on the priorities to address (e.g. highest priorities on the PECCI's list) and the methodology (e.g. applying the Union guidelines for the TEN-T) Sufficient administrative capacity in the beneficiaries
<p><b>Result 2:</b> Soft measures and technical standards for the establishment of a regional power market</p>	Spot market development: Start of operation of local organised spot electricity market Cross-border balancing: Inter Transmission System Operators (TSOs) Agreement involving all Western Balkans TSOs on a balancing integration path Allocation of capacities: Coordinated Capacity Calculator in place	European Commission progress reports Reports from EnC Action progress reports	Set up of National Investment Committees, or similar coordination mechanisms, establishing Single Pipelines of Projects Coordination of energy reform measure by ECS

ACTIVITIES	MEANS	OVERALL COST	ASSUMPTIONS
<p><b>Activities to achieve Result 1:</b></p> <p>Preparation of project documentation (pre-feasibility studies and general design, feasibility studies and preliminary design, environmental impact assessment, geophysical studies, detailed design, tender dossiers, etc.)</p> <p>Elaboration and update of the list of projects which could be implemented in the short and medium terms for the next national or multi-country programming exercises</p> <p>Framework for the implementation of EU freight corridors extended to the Western Balkans;  Certification of trainers for Road Safety Audit and Road Safety Inspection; Agreement on a protocol for the exchange of transport data in cooperation with CEFTA; Definition of strategic framework for the implementation of ITS; Adoption of maintenance plans for 2016-2020 for the entire core network</p>	<p>Procurement: service contract (international tender procedure)  – EUR 9 354 000</p>	<p>EUR 10 354 000</p>	<p>Beneficiaries capacity to absorb assistance</p>
<p><b>Activities to achieve Result 2:</b></p> <p>Assistance to national authorities for the implementation of soft measures and technical standards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- spot market development: support to abandon legal, contractual and regulatory barriers and to adopt action plans for phasing out price regulation, Cooperation Agreements with at least one European Partner Organisation</li> <li>- cross-border balancing: support to introduce comprehensive and fair balance responsibility and market based balancing, implementation of cross-border balancing reserve procurement with common dimensioning</li> <li>- regional capacity allocation: support for the allocation of capacities by the Coordinated Auction Office in South-East Europe (SECAO) on all borders in SEE and between all neighbouring Contracting Parties, agreement between all South-East Europe (SEE) Transmission System Operators (TSOs) to establish a Coordinated Capacity Calculator</li> </ul>	<p>Grant Agreement – EUR 1 million</p>		

### **3. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS**

#### **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

- ***European Commission/DG NEAR***

The action will be directly managed by DG NEAR/D.5, which will be responsible for the coordination of the action inside DG NEAR, with geographical desks and EU Delegations (EUDs), but also with other Directorates-General (DGs) and external partners. DG NEAR/D.5, in consultation with all partners, will decide on the direction to give to the action.

- ***European Commission/DG MOVE and DG ENER***

DG MOVE and DG ENER will support DG NEAR in the implementation of the Action for all activities related to the alignment with the EU *acquis*.

- ***National authorities***

The national authorities will be the key actors of the action. The main interlocutors will be the National IPA Coordinators (NIPACs), the transport and energy ministries but also the National Investment Committees (NICs), or similar coordination mechanisms. Bringing together the Ministry of Finance, the relevant line ministries, the European Commission, the IFIs and the main actors of the private sector, the NICs are responsible to draw up a list of the most relevant investment projects to be financed in IPA II beneficiaries over the medium term.

- ***Energy Community Secretariat (ECS)***

The ECS is the EnC institutional setting assisting the European Commission, Contracting Parties as well as the Ministerial Council and the Permanent High Level Group in guiding the process of creating an Energy Community and further developing its objectives. The Secretariat's tasks range from the review and enforcement of Treaty implementation process to the responsibility to ensure the EnC's budget is spent correctly in accordance with its Work Programme.

- ***South East Europe Transport Observatory (SEETO)***

SEETO is the regional transport co-operation platform, ensuring coordination amongst the regional partners and the European Commission. It defines and monitors the development of the Comprehensive transport Network for South East Europe. It functions as the indicative extension of the TEN-T into the Western Balkans region. SEETO co-ordinates further improvement and harmonisation of regional transport policies and technical standards in view of alignment with the EU *acquis*.

- ***Regional Transport Corridor Coordinators***

Corridor Coordinators' main role is to organise corridor platforms with all stakeholders and support the implementation of corridor work plans outlining all investments and technical standards required to make the core network fully operational by 2030.

- ***International Financial Institutions (IFIs)***

The financing of major infrastructure projects most often comprises a loan signed with an IFI. The IFI is then responsible for ensuring that all preparatory work (project documentation, co-financing, planning, permitting, utility connections, etc.) are completed by the beneficiary in a timely manner. The usual partner IFIs are the European Investment Bank (EIB), the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), the Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB), Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW) and the World Bank Group.

- ***The Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA)***



Political, operational and organizational support from the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) will be required for the implementation of transport Soft Measures targeting the Trade and Transport Facilitation in the Western Balkans.

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

The action will be managed directly by DG NEAR/D.5.

**Component 1** will be implemented through a service contract which should be signed during Q2 2016. The tender procedure, and subsequently the action, will follow the rules set by the Practical Guide for Procurement and Grants for European Union external actions (PRAG).

**Component 2** will be implemented through a direct Grant Agreement with the EnC. In application of Article 190 (1)(f) of the Rules of Application, the grant will exceptionally be awarded without a call for proposal since the specific characteristics of the activities of Component 2 require the EnC on account of its technical competence, its high degree of specialisation and its key coordination role at regional level.

For visibility reasons, the EU will finance 100% of the total cost of the action.

## **4. PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT**

### **METHODOLOGY FOR MONITORING (AND EVALUATION)**

The action will be run according to the PRAG which set the general standards for monitoring and reporting.

The day-to-day monitoring of the action will be carried out by the Task Manager in DG NEAR. In the perspective of this exercise, s/he will use the reports produced by the Consultant. S/he will also have regular contacts with DG NEAR geographical desks but also with EUDs and, when relevant, with the ECS, the SEETO and the national authorities in order to monitor the action as closely as possible to its implementation.

DG MOVE and DG ENER will be closely involved in the monitoring of the action for all activities related to the alignment with the EU *acquis*.

The European Commission may carry out a mid-term, a final or an ex-post evaluation for this action or its components via independent consultants, through a joint mission or via an implementing partner. In case a mid-term or final 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. The evaluations will be carried out as prescribed by the DG NEAR guidelines for evaluations. In addition, the action might be subject to external monitoring in line with the EC rules and procedures set in the Financing Agreement.

The Result Oriented Monitoring (ROM) mechanism will thus be used to support the monitoring of the action.

## INDICATOR MEASUREMENT

Indicator	Baseline (2014) (2)	Milestone 2017(4)	Target 2020 (5)	Final target (2022)	Source of information
<b>Outcome indicator a)</b> – Number of transport and energy projects which have been brought to maturity by the action and subsequently received EU funds (infrastructure projects but also projects for the implementation of soft measures and technical standards)	N/A	tbd	tbd	tbd	European Commission progress reports; Reports from SEETO; Reports from the Energy Community; Action progress reports
<b>Outcome indicator b)</b> – Total amount of IPA funds invested in the projects brought to maturity by the action	N/A	tbd	tbd	tbd	
<b>Output indicator 1 a)</b> – Number of transport and energy infrastructure projects which project documentation has been prepared by the action	N/A	tbd	tbd	tbd	European Commission progress reports; Reports from SEETO; Reports from the Energy Community; action progress reports
<b>Output indicator 1 b)</b> – Rail reform plans, EU best practices for the improvement of road safety introduced TEN-T, ITS deployment on the TEN-T core network in the region, maintenance programmes for the entire TEN-T core rail and road network in the region	N/A	Framework for the implementation of EU freight corridors extended to the Western Balkans; Certification of trainers for Road Safety Audit and Road Safety Inspection; Agreement on a protocol for the exchange of transport data in cooperation with CEFTA; Definition of strategic framework for the implementation of	N/A	N/A	European Commission progress reports; Reports from SEETO; action progress reports

		ITS; Adoption of maintenance plans for 2016-2020 for the entire core network			
<b>Output indicator 2 - Energy regional implementation measures</b>					European Commission progress reports; Reports from EnC; action progress reports
- Spot market development	N/A	Establishment of an organised wholesale electricity market, preferably through cooperation agreement(s) between existing regional organisations and/or European partner organisation(s)	Integration of the Western Balkans into the pan-European day-ahead market coupling	N/A	
- Cross-border balancing	N/A	Implementation of regional imbalance netting	Implementation of regional based on an Inter-TSO Agreement	N/A	
- Regional capacity allocation	Allocation of some long-term cross-border interconnection capacities between Western Balkans through the South East Europe Co-ordinated Auction Office (SEECAO)	Inclusion of all long-term cross-border interconnection capacities in SEECAO  Binding agreement between all system operators of the regional to establish a regionally coordinated capacity calculator	Coordinated Capacity Calculation and Allocation	N/A	

(1) This is the related indicator as included in the Indicative Strategy Paper (for reference only)

(2) The agreed baseline year is 2010 (to be inserted in brackets in the top row). If for the chosen indicator, there are no available data for 2010, it is advisable to refer to the following years – 2011, 2012. The year of reference may not be the same either for all indicators selected due to a lack of data availability; in this case, the

year should then be inserted in each cell in brackets. The baseline value may be "0" (i.e. no reference values are available as the action represents a novelty for the beneficiary) but cannot be left empty or include references such as "N/A" or "will be determined later".

(3) The milestone year CANNOT be modified: it refers to the mid-term review of IPA II.

(4) The target year CANNOT be modified.

(5) This will be a useful reference to continue measuring the outcome of IPA II support beyond the 2014-2020 multi-annual financial period. If the action is completed before 2020 (year for the performance reward), this value and that in the 2020 target column must be the same.

## **5. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES**

### **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND GENDER MAINSTREAMING**

It is acknowledged that transport and energy infrastructures are a key driver for economic growth and jobs. Transport in particular plays a crucial role in broadening access to health and education services, employment, improving the exchange of information, and promoting social cohesion. In this sense, the action will promote equal opportunities between women, men, people with disabilities, minority groups, who all have an interest in the development of transport and energy sectors.

As transport needs can differ between women and men, for example in access to private transport, in patterns of commuting and employment, in child-care and elder-care responsibilities, the development of transport infrastructures in the Western Balkans will have a particular impact on promoting gender equality.

Commissioning in the future an analysis of the impact of the WBIF support to infrastructure in the Western Balkans on equal opportunities and gender mainstreaming would allow to precise and measure the effects of its actions.

Equal opportunities and gender equality will be mainstreamed in all the relevant activities of the action. The development of the action will require professional qualifications and competences and will ensure equal opportunities for women and men to participate in its implementation and in the selection of experts.

### **ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE (AND IF RELEVANT DISASTER RESILIENCE)**

Environment, climate change and disaster resilience are systematically considered during the preparation and design of major infrastructure projects.

The Environmental Impact Assessment is thus essential during the project preparation process. It not only results in identifying and managing risks but is also the occasion to add value to the project. It allows to combine technical feasibility and environmental, social and stakeholder acceptability. A solid EIA may avoid delays or further costs for redesign and increased construction scope due to poorly appreciated construction constraints as well as later mitigation costs.

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

The preparation of investment projects is always accompanied by public consultation which requirements are set by national planning regulations and EU Directives, in particular the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive (2011/92/EU amended 2014/52/EU).

### **MINORITIES AND VULNERABLE GROUPS**

Participation in the implementation of the action will be guaranteed on the basis of equal access regardless racial issues or ethnic origin, religion and beliefs, age or sexual orientations.

Besides, investment projects provide benefits to the groups of population without distinction, including people belonging to minorities and vulnerable groups.

## **6. SUSTAINABILITY**

A key aspect in ensuring the sustainability of the action's results will be a strict focus on the projects imbedded in the national transport and energy sector strategies and sector work programmes.

The political commitment from the beneficiaries to keep developing and maintaining transport and energy networks connecting them between themselves but also to the EU as well as a strong

involvement of the existing structures, that is the EnC and the SEETO, will be decisive to attain and sustain the action's objective.

## **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 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 Commission (DG NEAR) will have to be followed.

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 and will promote transparency and accountability on the use of funds.

The Consultant and the ECS will have the responsibility of the communication and visibility activities during the implementation of the action. These activities shall be funded from the amounts allocated to the action and the European Commission shall be fully informed of their planning and implementation. It is their responsibility to keep the EU Delegation and the Commission fully informed of the planning and implementation of the specific visibility and communication activities.

Nevertheless, the action targets the early stages of the project cycle, before any visible construction activities, making communication and visibility activities challenging. It will therefore be essential to ensure that the EU contribution to the project is publicised throughout the rest of the project cycle (e.g. on boards on construction sites, at the inauguration, in press releases, etc.). This visibility shall be implemented by the final beneficiary, under the European Commission's (DG NEAR) monitoring. The continuation of EU's support to the investment projects through co-financing shall ease this monitoring.