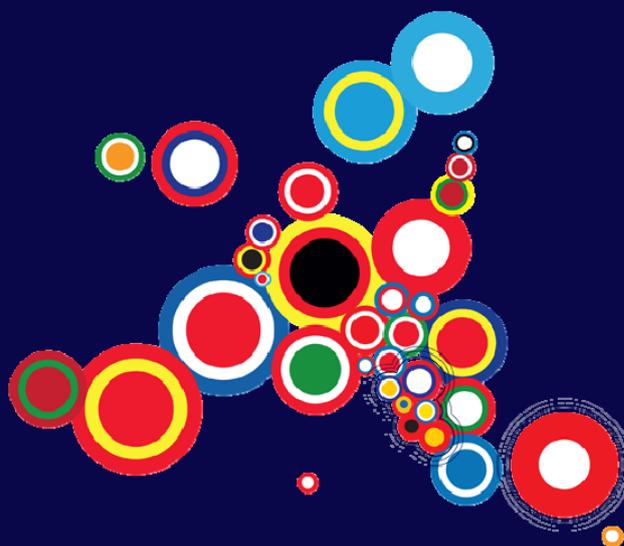# INSTRUMENT FOR PRE-ACCESSION ASSISTANCE (IPA II) 2014-2020

## MULTI-COUNTRY

# EU Regional Action for Roma Education

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### Action summary

The overall objective of the action is to reduce the gap between Roma and non-Roma in participation in and completion of quality education, to improve Roma transition between education and employment and to promote durable systemic change and desegregation of education systems in the Western Balkans and Turkey.

This will be achieved by supporting preschool education for Roma kids; awarding scholarships to Roma students; supporting the transition between education and employment of Roma; building capacities of relevant authorities and their understanding of the specific challenges faced by the Roma community; and by supporting regional networking and raising awareness on these issues.

The target group and final beneficiaries of the action will be central and local authorities (Ministries of Education, municipalities and school directorates) whose capacities will be strengthened through the action, Roma CSOs and community-based organisations, Roma students and youth.

| Action Identification | |
|---|---|
| **Action Programme Title** | IPA II Annual Multi-Country Action Programme 2017 |
| **Action Title** | EU Regional Action for Roma[1] Education |
| **Action ID** | IPA 2017/039-402.08/MC/Roma Education |
| **Sector Information** | |
| **IPA II Sector** | 9. Regional and territorial cooperation |
| **DAC Sector** | 15150 -democratic participation and civil society |
| **Budget** | |
| **Total cost** | EUR 3 750 000 |
| **EU contribution** | EUR 3 000 000 |
| **Budget line(s)** | 22.020401 – Multi-country programmes, regional integration and territorial cooperation |
| **Management and Implementation** | |
| **Management mode** | Direct management |
| *Direct management:* <br> **European Commission** | DG NEAR – Unit D.5 Western Balkans Regional Cooperation and Programmes |
| **Implementation responsibilities** | DG NEAR – Unit D.5 Western Balkans Regional Cooperation and Programmes |
| **Location** | |
| **Zone benefiting from the action** | Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo[*], Montenegro, Serbia) and Turkey |
| **Specific implementation area(s)** | N/A |
| **Timeline** | |
| **Final date for contracting including the conclusion of delegation agreements** | 31 December 2018 |
| **Final date for operational implementation** | 31 December 2021 |

| Policy objectives / Markers (DAC form) | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **General policy objective** | **Not targeted** | **Significant objective** | **Main objective** |
| Participation development/good governance | ☐ | ☐ | ☒ |
| Aid to environment | ☒ | ☐ | ☐ |

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[1] The term "Roma" is used as an umbrella term which also includes other groups of people who have more or less similar cultural characteristics, such as Sinti, Travellers, Kalé, Gens du voyage, etc., whether sedentary or not.

[*] 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 | Main objective |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gender equality (including Women In Development) | ☐ | ☒ | ☐ |
| Trade Development | ☒ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Reproductive, Maternal, New born and child health | ☒ | ☐ | ☐ |
| **RIO Convention markers** | **Not targeted** | **Significant objective** | **Main objective** |
| Biological diversity | ☒ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Combat desertification | ☒ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Climate change mitigation | ☒ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Climate change adaptation | ☒ | ☐ | ☐ |

# 1. RATIONALE

## PROBLEM AND STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

Roma is estimated to constitute nearly 4% of the whole population of the Western Balkans and Turkey. In the Western Balkans, alone, Roma people count for almost 1 million, representing 5.5% of the population of the region. Roma continue to experience extreme poverty, social exclusion and discrimination, lagging behind non-Roma in all socio-economic indicators. For Roma women, discrimination is multiplied by gender-based discrimination.

All IPA II beneficiaries face similar challenges in identifying and implementing viable solutions to ensure the integration of Roma women, men and children. Numerous efforts have been made by a variety of international actors over the past 20 years through international organisations, international and civil society organisations at beneficiary level, as well as bilateral donors. In particular, the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005 - 2015 initiative brought together governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations, as well as Roma civil society in a shared political commitment by participating governments and other participating actors to eliminate discrimination against Roma and close the unacceptable gaps between Roma and the rest of society[2].

While some progress has taken place, a lot still needs to be done to produce larger scale, tangible and durable benefits for the majority of Roma. Positive trends can be registered, such as legal invisibility of Roma being tackled with many Roma being registered; child mortality among Roma decreasing; more Roma children accessing primary education; and access to health care slowly improving. Big gaps however continue to exist between Roma and the rest of the majority populations concerning access to education, health, employment, adequate housing, civil registration as well as the involvement of Roma in public life through representation and participation.

In the area of education, the data published in the Commission Annual Report 2016 "Assessing the implementation of the EU Framework for "National Roma Integration Strategies" and the Council Recommendation on effective Roma Integration measures"[3] show how Roma completion rates remain extremely low in the Western Balkans[4]: secondary school completion average rates stay below 14%, while only one child out of two completes primary school. This has a clear impact not only on employment opportunities of Roma youth but in general on their present and future quality of life.

Relevant extracts of the European Commission Enlargement Package from 2016 regarding Roma situation in education are shown below:

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**Albania**

As Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results indicate, Albania is far below OECD and EU average in terms of basic skills of 15 year olds. More cooperation between education institutions and the business sector is needed to better prepare graduates for the evolving labour market. Enrolment rates for Roma and Egyptian children increased slightly during the academic year 2015/2016. Their enrolment in pre-school education increased by 4.9%, in elementary schools by 25%, in middle school and high school by 27% and in pre-university education by 22%. However, enrolment rates remain very low overall. Roma and Egyptians continued to face very difficult conditions and frequent discrimination, particularly on access to education, employment, housing, health and civil registration. The inclusion of Roma children in the education system continued improving, but remains the lowest in the region. School segregation is a matter of serious concern.

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[2] The Decade was formally closed in September 2015. More information on the Decade bodies and activities can be found http://www.romadecade.org/

[3] http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma-report-2016_en.pdf

[4] No data published for Turkey

The electronic data collection system *Romalb* is partially functional and in-service training is necessary to ensure that it is used by all local government units.

**Bosnia and Herzegovina**

The Roma remained the country's most vulnerable and disadvantaged minority. The lack of reliable data hampers effective policy-making on this issue. A more comprehensive and integrated approach needs to be adopted for the social inclusion of Roma. The number of school drop-outs and unemployed Roma remained very high and access to the labour market remained hampered. No progress was observed on measures to preserve and promote Romani language, culture and history. The Romani language was not offered as an elective subject in any school in the country, nor was any other alternative provided for learning the language. In March, the Joint Human Rights Committee of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Parliamentary Assembly adopted a conclusion proposing 8 April as Roma Day and 5 November as Romani language Day.

**Kosovo**

The authorities continued implementing measures to lower early school 'dropout' rates, particularly for children from the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities. More efforts are needed to provide access to quality education for children with disabilities, and more teachers and assistants need to be trained. The Ministry of Education and Science adopted an administrative instruction on measures and quotas for the enrolment of students from minority communities in public universities. After the first round of admissions, 96 minority students who have successfully completed the admission exams were enrolled in six public universities, which is higher than in the previous school year. Learning centres continue to play an important role in reducing the significantly high number of school dropouts and in allowing for the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities' further integration in the education system. The authorities continue to provide free textbooks in the Romani language. Active measures to include these communities are needed to combat exclusion in the labour market.

**The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**

Action to address the disproportionate number of Roma children placed in special needs schools is slowly being implemented and there was some improvement on general access to education, with more children enrolled at all levels. However, the dropout rates remain significant and the phenomena of child begging and child marriages persist. Although some support measures were introduced, children with disabilities and from Roma communities continue to face barriers to regular and quality education. Education remains a high risk sector for corruption and political influence, especially in higher education.

**Montenegro**

Roma remain the most vulnerable and discriminated-against community in various areas of life, with Roma women being subject to double discrimination. Roma continue to be underrepresented in politics and have difficulty accessing the labour market and healthcare services, while Roma children are still exposed to child labour. Participation by Roma students in education at all levels continued to improve, but remains low overall, including in primary compulsory education; the drop-out rate remains high. In September 2015, the first Montenegrin-Roma and Roma-Montenegrin dictionary was published. Measures should be taken to address the high dropout rate of Roma children at national level education. Increasing pre-school participation, especially from Roma and other vulnerable groups, would significantly improve their success and continued participation in later schooling. Participation in early childhood education and care is well below the EU target of 95 % by 2020.

**Serbia**

Anti-discrimination legislation and legislation to protect minorities is in place but needs to be consistently implemented. The new Roma social inclusion strategy 2016-2025 adopted in March covers education, health, housing and employment. Its action plan has yet to be adopted. Rules of procedure have been amended to detail the use of affirmative measures in education for Roma. The Office for Human and Minority Rights ran training courses for local authorities to monitor the use of the affirmative measures. School drop-out rates for Roma children remain high and they remain over-represented in care institutions.

> **Turkey**
>
> There has been some progress in the enrolment rate of children, particularly on pre-school education, which however still remains well below the EU average. In the 2015/2016 academic year, the schooling rate of children was 95% for primary education, 94% for lower secondary education and 80 % for upper secondary education. Enrolment of girls increased to 80%. Turkey needs to develop a system to closely monitor and reduce early school leaving. Progress is still needed to make education more inclusive, especially for Roma children and children with disabilities. In April the government adopted a 2016-2021 national strategy and 2016-2018 action plan for Roma which is a positive step forward. The strategy addresses key obstacles to the social inclusion of Roma and lays down measures in various fields, including housing, education, employment and health. Turkey needs to start implementing the strategy and set up a monitoring and evaluation mechanism. Absenteeism in school remained high, including in compulsory primary education, and child labour is a major problem in the Roma community.

The European Commission Annual Report 2016 "Assessing the implementation of the EU Framework for "National Roma Integration Strategies" and the Council Recommendation on effective Roma Integration measures"[5] confirmed the need to focus on reducing the gap between Roma and non-Roma in the five priority areas. It indicated that "The post-Decade phase should concentrate on achieving measurable results on the ground, clearly reducing the gap between Roma and non-Roma, and with special attention to priority areas (education, employment, health, housing and civil documentation) as well as in the cross-cutting fields related to gender and anti-Gypsyism."

The 2016 Report also confirmed that Roma communities in the Western Balkans and Turkey continue to suffer from discrimination, and that little progress was achieved on the ground in 2015. Large gaps persist between Roma and non-Roma in access to education, employment, healthcare and housing. Furthermore, limited progress was achieved in 2015 as regards citizens' registration.

The European Commission has set specific goals[6] for the priority area "education", among which: improving access to education by ensuring that all children complete at least primary school; ensuring the provision of quality education not subject to discrimination or segregation; widening access to quality early childhood education and care; reducing the number of early school leavers; and encouraging Roma participation in secondary and tertiary education with a view to securing access to employment.

It is broadly recognised[7] that residential and educational segregation represents a major bottleneck in fighting anti-Roma discrimination that is preventing access to equal education and therefore to future equal opportunities for Roma children and students. School segregation can be caused by geographical concentration resulting in the presence of a majority of Roma in a school; can be the result of enrolment of Roma children in special schools for children with disabilities; or can manifest itself as segregated classes within non-segregated schools. Segregated schools tend to offer significantly lower quality education and services, resulting in discouragement and de-motivation of students, and ultimately in waste of economic and social potential. In addition, segregation perpetuates and deepens inequalities, disadvantages and lack of mutual knowledge and understanding between Roma and non-Roma communities.

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[5]    http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma-report-2016_en.pdf

[6] Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the Europen Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on "An EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020" - http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52011DC0173

[7] European Commission Annual Report 2016 "Assessing the implementation of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies and the Council Recommendation on effective Roma Integration measures http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma-report-2016_en.pdf
"Making desegregation work! - A Desegregation Toolkit Developed by the Roma Education Fund – 2015" http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/sites/default/files/publications/desegregation_toolkit__2015_web.pdf

Moreover, building basic skills since early childhood is of paramount importance to prepare a successful learning story. Pre-school education is particularly important for marginalised children and children coming from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, since it prepares and equips them with basic cognitive and social skills to start formal schooling, contributing to equalise their chances of success that are initially not equal due to marginalisation and disadvantage. Priority should therefore be given to early childhood education, to set an equal basis for children to build upon along their learning life, and to attract children to school in a play-learn environment. Allowing children to perceive school in a positive, non-discriminatory way will increase retention and success chances in the future.

Most of the IPA II beneficiaries have engaged in comprehensive public administration reforms in line with the Principles of Public Administration[8] and have developed PAR strategic framework. Among other reform areas, they are undertaking horizontal reform in the policy development and coordination system.

## OUTLINE OF IPA II ASSISTANCE

The EU Regional Action for Roma Education complements the IPA II Multi-country programme 2014 (Roma Integration 2020 action), the IPA II Multi-country programme 2015 (Technical Assistance for Roma integration at Community level – TARO action), and the Joint Initiative to Empower Roma Civil Society on the Western Balkans and Turkey, funded under the Civil Society Facility and media Programme 2014-2015 and the Roma interventions at beneficiary level.

The **overall objective** of the action is to reduce the Roma/non-Roma gap in participation to and completion of quality education, to improve Roma transition between education and employment, and promote durable systemic change and de-segregation within education systems in the Western Balkans and Turkey.

The s**pecific objectives** of the action are:

- To promote equal **participation** in quality education for Roma at all levels (pre-school, primary, secondary, university and vocational education); and to improve **educational outcomes** (including preventing school drop-out) with a special focus on reducing the wide gap between male and female education levels.

- To improve Roma youth **employability** and a smooth transition for Roma between end of studies and employment market;

- To promote **desegregation** and **systemic durable change** for Roma in the education sector; by producing a change of attitude towards Roma and of Roma communities; by strengthening the capacities of relevant central and local institutions; and by using Roma role models as actors of change.

The above specific objectives will be achieved through the following **expected results**:

**Result 1:** Models tested and good practices identified for supporting early childhood development and education, improve educational outcomes and school performance, prevent school drop-out and offering a second chance to those who have already dropped out, and implement desegregation.

**Result 2:** Employability of Roma students increased via a) broader completion of secondary and tertiary education and vocational training; and b) additional skills for entering the labour market acquired through targeted services, tutoring coaching and internships etc.

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[8] http://www.sigmaweb.org/publications/principles-public-administration-eu-enlargement.htm

**Result 3:** Understanding of the specific challenges faced by the Roma community and capacity of policy makers (Ministries of Education, local authorities, school directorates) to ensure systemic and durable change for Roma in the education sector improved.

**Result 4**: Attitudes towards Roma and of Roma changed for the better through training school officials, Roma and non-Roma teachers and parents, and sharing experiences and success stories of role models.

**Results 5:** Regional cooperation and networking among relevant authorities and civil society working for Roma education enabled.

**Results 6:** Awareness raising and outreach on Roma education enhanced.

The final beneficiaries of the action will be the relevant central and local authorities (Ministries of Education, local authorities, municipalities, schools), Roma students, teachers, parents and youth, Roma CSOs and community-based organisations labour market players. The indirect beneficiaries will be the Roma and non-Roma communities at large, the whole population of IPA II beneficiaries that will benefit from advancements in the education systems and from a more inclusive socially and economically growing society.

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

Roma inclusion has become a high priority on the political agenda of the EU and of its Member States. Since 2011, a Framework[9] for "National Roma Integration Strategies" has been put in place at EU level. This comprehensive Roma policy framework is applied to both all EU member states and to IPA II beneficiaries. In 2013 the Council also adopted a Council Recommendation on effective Roma integration measures in the EU Member States, which is the first EU soft legal instrument in this field. Strong country specific recommendations related to Roma inclusion are increasingly issued to the EU Member States in the context of the Europe 2020 strategy. In coherence with the specific goals set for the education priority area in the EU Framework, the present action suggests putting a specific focus on desegregation and on early childhood education, that are tackled through engaging with both institutions at all levels, as well as with civil society and communities (activities foreseen under Results 1, 4 and 5 below).

Equally, Roma integration continues to be a key priority in the enlargement process, and is included in the negotiations of Chapter 23 "Judiciary and Fundamental Rights". The European Commission supports Roma Integration by efforts in five priority areas - education, employment, health, housing and access to civil documentation. The first four are also pursued within the EU, whilst the fifth has been added specifically for the enlargement region. Fighting against discrimination and poverty and addressing the gender dimension are cross-cutting issues in Roma policy.

In the enlargement context, moving rapidly forward towards closing the development gap between the Roma and non-Roma populations and addressing the problem of discrimination is seen as critical by the European Commission. Roma integration is monitored at various levels, under the Stabilisation and Association Agreements (SAA), and as part of the negotiations of chapter 23 "Judiciary and fundamental Rights" for Serbia and Montenegro. "National Roma Platforms" set up in the framework of the EU-funded Roma Integration 2020 project, and the biannual Roma Seminars in the individual IPA beneficiaries complement this. This action is intended to be implemented in coherence with the conclusions from Roma seminars related to education, and with the "national Roma Strategies and Action Plans".

The EU Enlargement Strategy adopted on 10 November 2015 indicates: "There is a need to better protect minorities, in particular Roma. Roma in the Western Balkans and in Turkey continue to be the victims of

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[9] *Ibidem*

racism, anti-discrimination and social exclusion and most Roma live in deep poverty, lacking sufficient access to healthcare, education and training, housing and employment… A more robust institutional work for the protection of fundamental rights is needed, especially to promote the work of Ombudsmen and to support the work of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and human rights defenders".

The need for stronger actions to address the Roma inclusion challenges in the Western Balkans has been underlined by the EU stakeholders since the adoption of the "National Roma Integration Strategies" in 2011.

Recognising the continuously existing economic and social gap between the majority communities and Roma communities in the IPA II beneficiaries, the European Commission has made Roma integration one of its key priorities in the area of fundamental rights. The Multi-Country Indicative Strategy Paper 2014-2020[10] (hereafter referred to as Strategy Paper) makes a particular reference to the challenging situations faced by Roma communities. It notes that "challenges in the area of democracy and the rule of law include the functioning and independence of institutions guaranteeing democracy, empowerment of civil society [...] as well as safeguarding fundamental rights such as freedom of expression and rights for persons belonging to minorities as well as vulnerable groups, notably Roma".

This action addresses one of the priorities of the Strategy Paper, by supporting regional networks and structures to promote quality education for Roma. Regional cooperation among beneficiaries facing a number of common problems allows for a more efficient response through peer review and sharing of good practices. This relates in particular to the priority of IPA II assistance to support the Western Balkans and Turkey in addressing the fundamentals first, and in this context to support education, employment and social policies; areas in which regional structures and networks are expected to make a major contribution.

The link between quality education and future employability in general is highlighted in the Strategy Paper. In its sections dedicated to regional networks in the field of education it is stated that: *"projects in the education sector should result in improved quality of higher education, enhanced relevance for the labour market, improved university administration, greater regional cooperation between universities, increased mobility of students resulting in enhanced skills for students and staff and better employability prospects for students and academic staff and enhanced intercultural understanding. [...] The Commission has established specific platforms for Employment and Education, in which the relevant ministers and senior decision makers in the enlargement countries convene to help steer and support the national reforms in these areas."*

The Strategy Paper further identifies regional education platforms and students and workers mobility as relevant ways to increase the level of employment or self-employment in particular of women and persons belonging to minorities. [...] Technical assistance and support is necessary to enable the governments to implement meaningful, comprehensive and sustainable policies for tackling the above challenges.

This action will be complementary to these platforms by providing further support for regional cooperation and dialogue between civil society and between institutions involved in Roma education in the Western Balkans and Turkey.

This action aligns with three of the five key targets set in the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, namely "(i) Reduce the rates of early school leavers to less than 10%, and (ii) increase the share of the population aged 30-34 having completed third level education to at least 40%, and (iii) 75% of the population aged 20-64 should be employed by 2020".

Based on recent empirical evidence, "The Economic Case for Education" Report issued by the European Expert Network on Economics of Education (EENEE) in 2014 with the support of the European Commission - Directorate General Education and Culture, shows the crucial role of education for

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[10] C(2014) 4293, 30.06.2014

individual and societal prosperity. There is a clear correlation between quality of education (i.e. student attainment and well-being) and growth of economies: education is a leading determinant of economic growth, employment and earnings. Therefore, ignoring the economic dimension of education for all groups of society would endanger the prosperity of future generations.

## LESSONS LEARNED AND LINK TO PREVIOUS FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

The European Commission is formulating its Roma support under IPA II, based on the results of a thematic independent evaluation on the IPA I support provided for Roma communities in the period 2007-2013 that was carried out in 2014[11]. In particular, the evaluation recommended engaging with local authorities and civil society to increase effectiveness of the EU-funded programmes for Roma integration. It also encouraged support to Roma integration to involve a variety of actions at central, local and community level. In particular, support should enable central policies be endorsed and implemented, while at the same time empowering Roma communities and civil society to increase their participation in society, and the chances of Roma youth to succeed in their learning and life project.

The evaluation concluded that working with local authorities is of critical importance for the effective implementation of policies and programmes for Roma inclusion, since the local level is where exclusion is most visible, and where practical steps for inclusion are needed. This is especially true for education and desegregation, for which local authorities, school directorates and schools themselves have a primary role and responsibility for ensuring that all children are provided equal access to the mandatory education system.

The thematic evaluation also underlined that, in addition to the necessary commitment by relevant central and local institutions, active involvement of communities is crucial for implementing Roma inclusion effectively.

In particular in the education sector, youth, parents, teachers and students can have a very important role in engaging themselves towards reducing the gaps between Roma and non Roma people, and in testing and spreading practices to enhance Roma integration.

As regards education, the evaluation also concluded that IPA I assistance has been most effective where a clear link was ensured between central policies and IPA I support, and recognises the role of the Roma Education Fund (REF) as a force for positive policy models and examples of good practice.

Strengthening advocacy capacities of civil society organizations is identified in the evaluation as a strategic priority in order to maintain the momentum of reform for improvement of institutions and society necessary for greater Roma inclusion and equal citizenship. A strategic approach to strengthen advocacy and policy capacities of civil society should be adopted, to feed back policy findings and recommendations to practitioners in government and civil society. In this regard, the evaluation states that the REF, together with Open Society Foundations, has led the way in solid initiatives to build capacities of Roma civil society organisations and provide innovative reforms in education.

Roma individuals and civil society organisations should therefore be involved as far as possible and collaborative links made between practitioners in civil society and government and between IPA beneficiaries. The evaluation identifies three priority areas in which the multi-country support for Roma integration should focus: i) Regional policy development and research; ii) Support for Roma civil society, networks and partnerships; and iii) Support for central statistical and monitoring systems.

The evaluation recommended to ensure more involvement of Roma themselves in IPA programming; to engage at local level rather than at central level; and to offer regional support in the area of exchange of good practices and data collection. Another evaluation had drawn a similar conclusion before: in 2012,

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[11] Independent thematic evaluation of IPA I (2007-2013) support to Roma communities, carried out in 2014

the "Making Most of EU Funds for Roma" - the Open Society Foundations' evaluation on the major results and gaps of the use of IPA resources for Roma inclusion in Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia - concluded that available funding opportunities were not sufficiently utilized at local level, since the local municipalities were not active enough in applying for IPA funds for Roma inclusion projects.

Acknowledging the fact that successful Roma integration can only take place at the municipal level and through community work, the Roma Summit held by the European Commission in April 2014 focussed on how to strengthen integration at the local level. Mainstreaming equality and non-discrimination (especially non-segregation) is necessary at local level as well, especially as local governments are key actors in provision of education, social, housing and health services.

The European Commission is currently supporting, through **IPA II funds**, several **Multi-country** actions to address the multiple dimensions of Roma exclusion in the Western Balkans and Turkey. These actions are aimed at:
1) supporting governments in the implementation and monitoring of their Roma strategies and include Roma integration in mainstream policies;
2) working with and empowering local authorities and Roma communities;
3) conducting a new round of the Roma Regional Survey already carried out in 2011 by the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) with EU support and producing evidence-based policy recommendations, including a specific look at the challenges that Roma returnees face in their (re)-integration process; and
4) supporting civil society organisation networks to increase their capacities and support effective government/civil society cooperation for Roma integration.

The European Commission is funding under the Multi-country Programme 2016 the ROMACTED action that will extend the ROMACT and ROMED methodologies to the whole IPA II region. The action will be implemented by the Council of Europe (CoE) that has implemented the ROMED and ROMACT projects in previous years. The ROMED programme has focused in the past years on local processes aimed at enhancing the participation of Roma in local decision making; it has stimulated the self-organisation of Roma communities into community action groups, and has supported structured dialogue and cooperation between the community action groups and local authorities, to identify community priorities and suggest initiatives for addressing them.

The external **evaluation** carried out in 2016 on the **ROMED1 and ROMED2** Joint Programmes of the CoE and European Commission - Directorate General for Education and Culture (DG EAC), also implemented in the Western Balkans, has considered education as an engine for the empowerment of communities and the development of long term municipal vision for sustained impact on Roma inclusion, and has identified in parents and others relevant agents of effectiveness of concrete initiatives. The same evaluation recommended *"developing strategic partnerships with actors with specific expertise in different approaches to improved Roma access to formal education, such as the Roma Education Fund (REF)."*

Under the same Multi-country Programme 2016, the EU is funding the development of robust statistical data and the related policy advice on the socio-economic status of marginalised Roma communities, including attention to the new challenge represented by the increased number of Roma returnees in the Western Balkans. In the framework of this action, to be implemented by UNDP and the World Bank, a new round of the Regional Roma Survey will be conducted to provide reliable data on progress towards Roma integration in the five key priority areas (including education and employment), and produce analysis and policy recommendations for better integration of Roma community and returnees.

Education and employment are key priorities for Roma integration and are tackled by the National Roma Integration Strategies designed by each participating government. The implementation and monitoring of the National strategies is being supported through the IPA-funded project "Roma Integration 2020" (RI2020), implemented by the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC). This action aims to assist central governments to integrate Roma specific policy measures into mainstream socio-economic policies, public service delivery, and budget planning processes. It will cover the policy areas of employment, health, education, infrastructure and civil registration, with the cross-cutting themes discrimination, poverty and

gender equality; and support the governments of the region in harmonising their approaches to Roma integration with the EU Framework (strategy development, indicators used, and reporting tools).

IPA is also supporting through the Civil Society Facility a network of CSOs that will produce shadow reports on the "National Roma Strategies" and their key priorities, in the framework of the project "Joint Initiative to Empower Roma Civil Society on the Western Balkans and Turkey".

**Education projects under IPA I** have focused on strengthening institutional capacities and support to VET reforms, developing the "National Qualifications Framework", development of standards of students' achievements for the primary and secondary (general) education, support to early inclusion of Roma children in the education system (by establishing Joint Mobile Units, introduction of Pedagogical Assistants and drop-out prevention programmes), establishment of a system of functional elementary education for adults, and improvement of the quality of higher education teaching and infrastructure. Under IPA II, regional support for Roma integration is being strengthened: regional actions can perform cost-effectiveness comparisons and provide better advice and recommendations to the relevant policy makers at central and local levels, for better policy making in relation to Roma inclusion.

The present action builds upon the lessons learned and the recommendations described above. Further lessons will be learned during implementation by synergising with other ongoing EU-funded initiatives tackling Roma integration at central and regional level through a joint Steering Committee gathering all implementing bodies of TARO, Roma Integration 2020 and the regional CSOs network.

As several relevant programmes are currently being implemented at bilateral level, the action will ensure close and structured coordination with them and the EU Delegations to ensure that specific activities to be implemented under this action in each IPA beneficiary build on and complement those implemented at bilateral level. This will ensure that synergies are built and overlaps avoided, but more than this, it will help to pull together the wealth of experience generated through these actions and to channel them towards the awareness raising, capacity building and policy dialogues foreseen under the action (example Result 5).

The activities to be implemented in each IPA beneficiary will be determined following the assessment of specific ongoing activities, and of the need for further resources and action in each specific area of intervention. It is therefore possible that not all activities presented will necessarily be implemented in all IPA beneficiaries concerned by the action.

Below an overview of key ongoing and planned activities at bilateral level:

- In **Albania**, the EU is supporting under IPA II 2014 the "Economic and Social Empowerment for Roma and Egyptians - a booster for social inclusion (ESERE)" project, implemented by UNDP and targeting 4 main cities in Albania. Amongst other focuses, the project is working on increasing employment and skill development opportunities accessed by Roma and Egyptians women and men, and on supporting models for inclusive education and disaggregation to promote better access of Roma and Egyptians to education services.

- In **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, the EU is supporting under the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights  the project "BRIGHT4ALL – Basic RIGHT to Education for ALL Children in Bosnia-Herzegovina", implemented by Save the Children Italy and which will target drop out of mainly Roma children from the school through developing a participative research methodology to identify root causes of school dropout and retention factors through case studies. In addition, some synergy could be sought with the programme "Effective Implementation on Anti-discrimination policy" that will be funded under IPA II 2017 and will encompass activities related to raising public awareness on the prevention and protection from discrimination of vulnerable groups and individuals.

- In **the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia,** the action will build on the results achieved under the IPA-funded ongoing projects "Improving Roma Employment through Education and Training" and "School Completion as Pathway towards Employment" aimed at increasing Roma people employability by improving their education completion chances and through skill development and training. Both projects will come to their end at the end of 2017. Furthermore, an Employment Education and Social

Policy action will be funded by the EU under IPA II 2017, encompassing a scholarship scheme for Roma. The scheme will expand and build upon a longstanding and good cooperation already established since 2005 between the Ministry of Education and Science and the REF on the provision of scholarships and tutoring/mentoring services in primary and secondary education. This type of activity will be expanded to target a wider range of Roma and also children with disabilities.

- In **Kosovo**, lessons learned could be drawn and synergies could be established with the IPA-funded project "EU Support for the Implementation of the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Strategy phase II – Education for Integration - EU-SIMRAES phase II", started in 2016 and that will be implemented until 2019 by the Kosovo Foundation for Open Society (KFOS). In the framework of this project, among other activities, the EU is supporting 10 community-based learning centres managed mostly by local Roma CSOs, and a scholarship system is being managed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. Mentoring and tutoring services are also offered under the action. In addition, through the Civil Society Facility 2015 the EU finances the project "Kosovo Education and Employment Network" that supported the Office for Good Governance within the Prime Minister Office in finalizing the Strategy for Inclusion of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities in Kosovo Society, 2017-2021 and the related Action Plan Budget. The project monitors the implementation of the strategy, and also supports municipalities in developing local action plans for the strategy implementation.

- In **Montenegro**, under the IPA-funded "Horizontal Facility" project implemented by the Council of Europe, an action on "Fostering a democratic school culture" will be implemented in the period 2016-2018. Under this action, pilot schools capacities will be enhanced to introduce measures to remove prejudices and discriminatory approaches toward vulnerable or marginalised students, including Roma and Egyptian children. In addition, activities related to fostering desegregation, decreasing drop-out, improving education results of Roma children throughout the educational cycle, providing pre-school education, that are already planned under the IPA-funded project "Promotion and protection of human rights of Roma, Egyptians and other vulnerable groups", that will be implemented for 18 months starting from December 2016, will have to be taken into account when designing the specific activities to be implemented under EU Regional Action for Roma Education for Montenegro. The REF is a co-beneficiary in this project and will therefore ensure that the two actions are complementing each other and that no overlap occurs.

In Montenegro, the REF is also managing a scholarship programme for Roma high school and university students, providing mentoring and tutoring to Roma secondary school students, and supporting Roma youth (aged 14-22) to enrol in school programmes for adults.

- In **Serbia**, this action will build on the results achieved by the actions for education funded under IPA 2014 – Action on "youth employability and active inclusion", whose activities related to result 2 will aim to enhancing the socio-economic conditions of Roma through improving 100 sub-standardized Roma settlements, raising capacities of central mechanisms for Roma inclusion at local level, and through scholarships for secondary education Roma students. Moreover, the action will be complementary to the Sector Reform Contract "Education Reform in Serbia – strengthening links with employment and social inclusion", funded under IPA 2016. The project is meant to assist the Government of Serbia in implementing the reform in the education sector, including a specific focus on education needs of minorities and Roma. The EU Regional Action for Roma Education will contribute to the achievement of the induced output indicators of the SRC related to the quality of minorities' education and to the dropout rates for Roma children.

- In **Turkey,** strong coordination and synergies will have to be established with the EU-funded project "Promoting Social Inclusion in Densely Roma Populated Areas - SIROMA" that also focuses on the improvement of institutional capacity of public institutions and service providers offering education, health, employment, social protection and social assistance services for Roma citizens; on improving Roma children's academic achievement through guaranteeing easier access to education; and on facilitating Roma access to and participation in the labour market by increasing the number of employment services of professional qualifications. Possible positive synergies could be established in particular as regards the scholarship scheme and the pre-school education campaigns.

A general lesson learned is that despite substantial technical assistance provided for policy and legislative development, the IPA II beneficiaries continue to suffer from poor implementation and enforcement record of laws and public policies. This is to a large extent due to the fact that support focuses on policy and legislative contents but does not pay sufficient attention to the quality of the legislative- and policy-making process, which largely defines whether new policies and laws can be implemented and enforced. The common problems are weak or non-existing (regulatory/fiscal) impact assessments of proposed laws and policies, poor inter-ministerial coordination and external (public) stakeholder consultations.

The EU Regional Action for Roma Education is designed to contribute to reducing the education gap between Roma and non-Roma, ensuring better access to quality education, and therefore higher employability, with the ultimate long-term goal to reduce poverty and social exclusion within Roma communities. To this end, the action will promote de-segregation policies and initiatives, by targeting both authorities at local and central level and communities, and directly involving parents, teachers, and school managers. The EU Regional Action for Roma Education will also encourage early childhood education as an effective way to prevent drop-out and improve education outcome for Roma students, and provide support to relevant authorities and to the establishment of regional networking mechanism to support the exchange of good practices and a wide outreach.

This regional action will therefore be an important complement to the projects and scholarship schemes implemented under the specific IPA  envelope for each beneficiary. It will respond to a need for more support in order to reduce the substantial gap still existing between Roma and non-Roma in the Western Balkans and Turkey. The regional dimension is important, as, in addition to strengthening similar projects being implemented bilaterally, it allows to reinforce the overall policy attention to these critical issues, through regional visibility and awareness raising actions, regional knowledge sharing and mutual learning as well as regional dialogue and even peer pressure. Results 3 and 5 are specifically focused on enhancing the political commitment to reduce the educational gap between Roma and non-Roma and to improve Roma youth chances to enter the labour market, and to promote regional networking and exchange of practices. These elements constitute the added value of the regional approach chosen to implement the activities foreseen for this action.

The activities with a lesser direct regional dimension will also feed into the regional dialogue and policy making through the identification of operational models and best practices tested on the ground with direct contact with the final beneficiaries if this action.

## 2. INTERVENTION LOGIC

## LOGICAL FRAMEWORK MATRIX

| OVERALL OBJECTIVE | OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS (*) | SOURCES OF VERIFICATION | |
|---|---|---|---|
| The overall objective of the action is to reduce the Roma/non-Roma gap in participation to and completion of quality education, to improve the Roma transition between education and employment, and to, promote durable systemic change and de-segregation within education systems in the Western Balkans and Turkey. | Gap in access to pre-school education and primary school attendance rate between Roma and non Roma in the targeted schools. <br> Gap in secondary school attendance rate between Roma and non Roma in the targeted schools. <br> Number of Roma completing vocational and university studies <br> Number of inclusive educational measures put in place (by central and local authorities, and by individual schools or communities) in the targeted areas as a consequence of this action. <br> Number and areas of study/employment of Roma students employed in the 6 months after completing their studies | Official data form schools, municipalities, ministries <br> Community assessment tool, baseline, midline and endline project data; | |

| SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE | OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS (*) | SOURCES OF VERIFICATION | ASSUMPTIONS |
|---|---|---|---|
| - To promote equal participation in quality education for Roma at all levels (pre-school, primary, secondary, university and vocational education); and to improve educational outcomes (including preventing school drop-out) with a special focus on reducing the wide gap between male and female education levels. <br> - To improve Roma youth employability and a smooth transition for Roma between end of studies and employment market; <br> - To promote desegregation and systemic durable change for Roma in the education sector; by producing a change of attitude towards Roma and of Roma communities; by strengthening the capacities of relevant central and local institutions; and by using Roma role models as actors of change. | Number of local integration actions implemented with the support of the project technical assistance <br><br> Number of minority citizens capable of work who have actually found a job as a result of EU support related activities <br><br> Extent to which policy making on minorities integration by local and central authorities is evidence-based | Texts, statistics, systems, NSAs at IPA beneficiary level <br><br> Texts, statistics, systems at IPA beneficiary level and from the EC. <br><br> Texts, statistics, systems, . NSAs at IPA beneficiary level | Interest, engagement and active participation of local and central authorities, schools, school teachers and parents in the project activities. <br> Openness of Roma and non-Roma communities to change their attitude. <br> Engagement of relevant authorities to implement decisions and plans and provide the necessary budget for them. |

| RESULTS | OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS (*) | SOURCES OF VERIFICATION | ASSUMPTIONS |
|---|---|---|---|
| Result 1: Models tested and good practices identified for supporting early childhood development and education, improve educational outcomes and school performance, prevent school drop-out and offering a second chance to those who have already dropped out, and implement desegregation. <br> Result 2: Employability of Roma students increased via a) broader completion of secondary and tertiary education and vocational training; and b) additional skills for entering the labour market acquired through targeted services, tutoring coaching and internships etc. <br> Result 3: Understanding of the specific challenges faced by the Roma community and capacity of policy makers (Ministries of Education, local authorities, school directorates) to ensure systemic and durable change for Roma in the education sector improved <br> Result 4: Attitudes towards Roma and of Roma changed for the better through training school officials, | R1 - Nr of beneficiaries targeted by the projects supported under the sub-granting scheme <br> R2 – Nr. of people benefitting from the scholarship schemes and from complementary services and opportunities (skill development, tutoring, coaching, internships) <br> R3 - Nr. of institutions and bodies (Ministries, local authorities, school directorates) benefitting from technical assistance on monitoring and policy making in the framework of this action <br> R4- Quality (openness, inclusiveness, self-confidence) of | Baseline, midline and end line data of the project; <br> Baseline, midline and end line data of the project; <br> Baseline, midline and end line data of the project; <br> Questionnaires submitted to different stakeholders in the targeted | Actual demand of students/children to be included in the action and in the projects funded under its sub-granting scheme. <br> Availability of relevant institutions at all level to use the services and tools identified or established by the project, also after its completion |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Roma and non-Roma teachers and parents, and sharing experiences and success stories of role models.<br><br>Results 5: Regional cooperation and networking among relevant authorities and civil society working for Roma education enabled.<br><br>Results 6: Awareness raising and outreach on Roma education enhanced | the attitude of Roma and non-Roma parents, teachers, students towards Roma, especially regarding education.<br><br>R5 - Nr. of meetings during the project implementation of the regional networks/platforms (at Ministerial and/or at educational institutions level) identified or created by the project.<br><br>R6 – Level of awareness of the targeted community and of education practitioners and relevant authorities about the challenges of Roma education and about the project results (including the recommendations and policy products delivered by the project). | communities (before and at the end of the action)<br><br>Reports and data from the project<br><br>Questionnaires submitted to different stakeholders in the targeted communities (before and at the end of the action) | |
| | | | |

**DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES**

Activities will be organised in six main clusters, aimed at achieving the six expected results described above, in the following way:

**Result 1: Models tested and good practices identified for supporting early childhood development and education, improve educational outcomes and school performance, prevent school drop-out and offering a second chance to those who have already dropped out, and implement desegregation (with a special attention to reducing the gap between male and female education levels).**

Type of activity A 1.1: Conduct in-depth needs assessment for selection of targeted localities, set up, management and monitoring of a grant scheme focussed on promoting early childhood development and education, improve educational outcomes and school performance, prevent school drop-out, and implement desegregation, through projects implemented by Roma CSOs and other community-based organisations working for Roma integration, human rights and/or youth. Examples of actions include initiatives to:

- involve parents in education; support to school equipment and transport etc. with the involvement of municipal authorities; carry out information campaigns; offer administrative assistance; increase parents literacy skills; increase motivation in students and teachers; offer pre- and after-school support activities; organise joint activities for Roma and non Roma children; offer mediation and mentoring services; carry out advocacy and campaigning; teachers training and student-family actions.

*The grant scheme will also contribute to improving capacities of beneficiary Roma civil society and community-based organisations, and to the achievement of result 3 by identifying good practices that will feed into the policy recommendation and advice activities foreseen under result 3. To promote the regional dimension and exchange, grants could also support regional networks.*

Type of activity A1.2: Communication and awareness raising activities to promote the grant scheme and the participation of the larger public and Roma communities, as well as of other relevant stakeholders (Local authorities, school directorates, schools) in the supported projects.

*Roma representation in the organisations submitting project proposals as well as co-funding will be taken into consideration in the evaluation of proposals received under the grant scheme.*

**Result 2: Employability of Roma students increased via a) broader completion of secondary and tertiary education and vocational training; and b) additional skills for entering the labour market acquired through targeted services, tutoring coaching and internships etc.**

Type of activity A 2.1: Set up, management and monitoring of a scholarship scheme for Roma students (including possibly a mobility scheme) to increase Roma access to quality secondary, tertiary and vocational education. In order to have a stronger impact on reducing the gap between Roma and non-Roma as well as between Roma men and women, a special focus should be put on applicants experiencing particularly difficult socio-economic conditions (for instance Roma living in rural or very disadvantaged areas, and Roma women and girls).

Type of activity A 2.2: The scholarship scheme will be complemented by teachers training to ensure inclusive education and support smooth transition to the labour market; it will also serve to contribute to the creation of job opportunities through traineeships, tutoring, mentoring, and career guidance measures to accompany beneficiaries of the scholarship scheme and facilitate their access to the labour market. These measures might include: academic after-school tutoring and mentoring services; soft skills and life Skills training sessions (Time management, financial literacy, foreign language, IT literacy, etc.); career guidance on job opportunities, support in the job search (contacting potential employers, creating CVs, motivation and cover letters, preparation for interviews, etc.); establishing a network of potential

employers in the civil, private and public sectors; an employment placement programme (internships, apprenticeships).

**Result 3: Understanding of the specific challenges faced by the Roma community and capacity of policy makers (Ministries of Education, local authorities, school directorates) to ensure systemic and durable change for Roma in the education sector improved**

Type of activity A 3.1: Technical assistance (including desk research and analysis), and advice on **monitoring** of educational gap reduction between Roma and non-Roma and between Roma men and Roma women. Building on the monitoring tools, data and indicators made available in the framework of other IPA-funded projects, and in close cooperation with the RCC Roma Integration 2020 Action team, UNDP, the World Bank and the Council of Europe, the action will support relevant institutions to monitor the achievements related to access of Roma to quality education, to their participation in pre-school education, to the drop-out rates of Roma and to segregation of schools and classes. The action could also further develop the available statistical data to provide evidence-based analysis and reports on the Roma-non-Roma education gap, including the gender dimension, in the region.

Type of activity A 3.2: Technical assistance and advice on development of **policy-making**. This can include support to policy analysis and design, drafting action plans and revising legislation, embedding best practices, models and needs identified through the grants scheme mentioned above and covering for example:

- In the area of equal participation in education and school performance of Roma students: curricula reform, Roma language teaching, training of teachers and school mediators to prevent drop-out and improving learning outcomes, after-school support to Roma children, development of performance quality standards for teachers and pedagogical assistants, establishing the related quality assurance system, the establishment of early warning systems to identify students at risk of school drop-out etc.).

- In the area of integration and desegregation measures: training of teachers and school managers to strengthen capacities to manage ethnically mixed classes; and support for children and teachers.

*For activities A 3.1 and A 3.2, the action will make use of all available reliable data, and build whenever possible synergies with other EU-funded projects at central or regional level such as the ones mentioned in section 1 "Rationale" of this Action Document. In particular, the activities should be implemented in close cooperation with the RCC Roma Integration 2020 Action team.*

**Result 4: Attitudes towards Roma and of Roma changed for the better through training school officials, Roma and non-Roma teachers and parents, and sharing experiences and success stories of role models.**

Type of activity A 4.1: As horizontal support to the other results, "*Back to School*" and "*Back to Community*" Programmes for Roma scholarship beneficiaries, Roma professionals/leaders and teachers to contribute to a change of attitude and perception towards Roma and of Roma, especially regarding education. The individuals identified to participate in these programmes will have the chance to meet with their communities and schools of origin in a dedicated setting, to share their success stories with Roma and non-Roma community members (including parents), with Roma and non-Roma school officials and staff, and with Roma and non-Roma students. Individual success stories and role models should serve to show and prove that opportunities exist, thus functioning as internal actors of change. More formal training of school officials, Roma and non-Roma teachers and parents could also be organised to promote a better knowledge of Roma history and culture and ensure an improved preparation of relevant school actors.

**Results 5: Regional cooperation and networking among relevant authorities and civil society working for Roma education enabled.**

Type of activity A 5.1: This will include support to regional exchanges in the area of Roma education, through one or two networks/platforms to be identified or created:

- A network of representatives of education ministries;

- A network of educational institutions.

**Results 6: Awareness raising and outreach on Roma education enhanced**

Type of activity A 6.1: A regional conference to communicate and disseminate the results will be foreseen.

Type of activity A 6.2: Communication and awareness raising activities addressed at the general public as well as specifically to communities and education practitioners and relevant authorities to promote use of recommendations and policy products.

The types of activities described above are indicative and could be adjusted during the contract negotiation. Further details and adjustments could be possible after the inception phase which will have a 3-to-6–month duration, when the relevance of the activities described above for individual IPA beneficiaries will be verified. It is possible that not all activities presented will necessarily be implemented in all IPA beneficiaries concerned by the Action. The selection of activities will be made based on an assessment of specific ongoing activities in a given IPA beneficiary.

## RISKS

The main risk associated to the action is the lack of willingness to actively participate in the action activities from the side of local and central authorities, schools, school teachers and parents. Closely linking the implementation of the action to the policy dialogue between the European Commission and the IPA II beneficiaries will mitigate this risk and facilitate the concerned actors' engagement. The level of involvement of the authorities under this and other EU support will be addressed at various EU policy dialogue instances and duly reflected in the EU's annual reports for each IPA II beneficiary.

## CONDITIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

There are no specific legal or policy conditions required for the implementation of the action. However, the action will only be successful if local and central authorities, schools, school teachers and parents demonstrate interest, engagement and active participation in the project activities. In particular, the engagement of relevant authorities to implement decisions and plans also providing the necessary budget for them, as well as to use the knowledge and tools produced or established by the project also after its completion, will ensure sustainability of the project results. Creating such ownership is embedded in the action. As for Result 4, a certain degree of openness of authorities and communities to change their attitude towards Roma will be needed.

## 3. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

### ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The key stakeholders to the action are central and local authorities and local Roma communities. Ministries of Education will be privileged beneficiaries of the action and specifically of activities pertaining to result 3.

A specific focus will be placed to strengthen the role of Roma local communities at the local level in order to empower them to actively contribute to shaping policies at the local level and to contribute to the process of implementing Roma integration measures. Local authorities, school directorates and school managers will be crucial actors for testing models at local level, which will feed into the advocacy activities and into the policy recommendations to line Ministries.

A Coordination Group consisting of the organisation implementing this action, the Roma Integration 2020 Action Team, the Council of Europe, UNDP, the World Bank, representatives of the regional network of (pro)-Roma CSOs supported under the CSF, as well as selected representatives of central and local authorities, and led by the European Commission will be established to coordinate the regional actions for Roma integration and to review the progress made.

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

The action will be implemented in direct management through the signature of a grant agreement. The grant will be awarded through a direct award to the Roma Education Fund (REF). The direct award is based on Article 190 (1)(f) of the Rules of Application, since a particular type of body on account of its technical competence and its high degree of specialisation is required. At least 60% of the total cost of the action will be re-distributed as financial support to third parties (for instance to award scholarships to individual students/scholars/trainees under result 2; or to award grants to CSOs and community-based organisations for testing models under Result 1, etc.)

The REF is an international NGO that was created in the framework of the Decade of Roma Inclusion in 2005. Its mission and ultimate goal is to close the gap in educational outcomes between Roma and non-Roma through supporting policies and programs which ensure quality education for Roma, including the desegregation of education systems. Through its activities, the REF promotes Roma inclusion in all aspects of the education systems of the IPA beneficiaries and other countries participating in the Decade of Roma Inclusion.

In the thematic independent evaluation carried out in 2014 on the IPA I support provided for Roma communities in the period 2007-2013, the role of the REF was recognised as a force for positive policy models and examples of good practice in education. The same evaluation concluded that the REF, together with Open Society Foundations, has led the way in solid initiatives to build capacities of Roma civil society organisations and provide innovative reforms in education.

In 2016, the external evaluation carried out on the ROMED1 and ROMED2 Joint Programmes of the CoE and European Commission - Directorate General for Education and Culture (DG EAC), also implemented in the Western Balkans, recommended to "develop strategic partnerships with actors with specific expertise in different approaches to improved Roma access to formal education, such as the Roma Education Fund (REF)."

REF can count on transnational implementation experience and solid previous records on re-granting. As a grant provider to local civil society organizations, REF has well-defined and written mechanisms in place for financial and program monitoring and evaluation of project partners and grantees.

REF has developed a highly efficient and effective mechanism for identifying good projects which can be speedily implemented, and for evaluating their outcomes. The combination of extensive grant-making, direct implementation, monitoring, evaluation and promotion of cross-beneficiary learning exchanges, provides a formidable basis to support Roma population and to assist governments and other stakeholders in the design and successful implementation of large-scale, quality interventions for Roma integration.

REF has been financing educational programs and projects of local civil society organizations since 2005 in 16 countries and, in particular, in the Western Balkan region. While establishing a privileged cooperation and gaining the trust of public institutions and international actors, the REF has been

embedded within the Roma community and has built trust among a large, vibrant grassroots network of Roma parents, community leaders and NGOs, as well as supportive group of partners among non-Roma educational organisations and mainstream education providers, such as schools colleges and departments for education.

REF's past experience demonstrated with valuable accomplishments that the limited access to Early Childhood Development services can be effectively targeted through well-designed and diverse home-based settings and community-based services based on the involvement of qualified professionals and para-professionals, as well as on the involvement of parents, wider communities, local governments, and institutions creating synergies between communities, services, and resources. The activities to be implemented in the framework of the EU Regional Action for Roma Education will be tailor-made and needs-based, reflecting the specific circumstances in each community. To this end, local authorities will be an essential part of the project, whose sustainability will be linked to their degree of involvement and participation. The extent of the strong working partnerships with educational institutions, municipalities and ministries, Romani NGOs, public and international organizations and institutions that the REF can count on is unmatched.

The REF will provide a co-financing of 20% of the total eligible costs of the action.


## 4. PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

### METHODOLOGY FOR MONITORING (AND EVALUATION)

A detailed project implementation plan will be developed by the REF to mitigate the risks linked to the relatively short implementation period. All activities will be carefully planned and scheduled with the involvement of the relevant stakeholders including ministries and the local authorities.

Monitoring of the quality of implementation will be ensured through a variety of means at different levels. Contract execution will be monitored through regular reports on progress to the Contracting Authority (inception, quarterly updates, annual report, final report), with clearly identified milestones linked to each result of the action. Regular communication, meetings/teleconferences/video conferences between the task manager and the implementing body will further ensure that results are achieved in due time.

In addition, REF will follow its operational routine on internal monitoring and evaluation. In this regard the project staff of REF will be in monthly contact with the local Roma NGOs as well as with the institutions involved in this project (kindergartens, schools, city halls, county school inspectorates, etc.)..

The European Commission will monitor the implementation of the action through on the spot visits, participation to events and capacity building activities, and meetings with the implementing body. The Coordination Group will steer and oversee the action implementation.

A Result-Oriented Monitoring (ROM) mission could be arranged during the implementation period to review the progress made towards achieving the action's objectives.

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 European 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 on linking planning/programming, monitoring and evaluation. In addition, the action might be subject to external monitoring in line with the European Commission rules and procedures.

**INDICATOR MEASUREMENT**

| Indicator | Baseline (2016) | Target 2020 | Final Target 2021 | Source of information |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| OO - Gap in access to pre-school education and primary school attendance rate between Roma and non Roma in the targeted schools. | Average gap in access to preschool education between Roma and Non Roma is 21% ; however 20% of Roma children are at average enrolled to ECD facilities in the Western Balkans | At least 2000 children will benefit from educational support and at least 932 Roma parents | At least 3000 children will benefit from educational support and at least 1400 Roma parents | FRA, UNDP<br><br>Official data form schools, municipalities, ministries<br><br>Community assessment tool, baseline, midline and endline project data; |
|  | Average gap in primary school attendance between Roma and Non Roma is 25% | At least 477 Roma children will enrol in primary school by year 2 | 954 Roma children will enrol in primary school by the end of the project |  |
| OO - Gap in secondary school attendance rate between Roma and non Roma in the targeted schools. | Average gap in secondary school attendance between Roma and Roma is 43%; while only 30% of Roma youth attend secondary schools | 344 Roma secondary school students attending secondary schools regularly | 100% Graduation rate of 344 Roma secondary school students | Baseline, midline and end line data of the project; |
| OO - Number of Roma completing vocational | 0 | 444 of Roma completing | 444 of Roma | Reports and data from the project |

| | | vocational and university studies | completing vocational and university studies | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| OO - Number of inclusive educational measures put in place (by central and local authorities, and by individual schools or communities) in the targeted areas as a consequence of this action. | 0 | 4 | 7 | Questionnaires submitted to different stakeholders in the targeted communities (before and at the end of the action) |
| OO - Number and areas of study/employment of Roma students employed in the 6 months after completing their studies | 0 | 0 | 35% of all graduates | Reports and data from the project |
| SO - Number of local integration actions implemented with the support of the project technical assistance | 0 | At least 14 actions | At least 14 actions | Baseline, midline and end line data of the project; |
| SO - Minority citizens capable of work who have actually found a job as a result of EU support related activities | 0 | 0 | 444 graduates of vocational and university studies | Reports and data from the project |
| SO - Extent to which policy making on minorities integration by local and central authorities is evidence-based | 0 | At least 25 Municipalities and 5 Ministries, | At least 47 Municipalities and 9 Ministries, | Questionnaires submitted to different stakeholders in the targeted communities (before and at the end of the action) |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| R1 Nr of beneficiaries targeted by the projects supported under the sub-granting scheme | 0 | 820 children in ECD; 946 parents, 477 primary school children | 1230 children in CD; 1419 parents; 954 primary school children | Reports and data from the project |
| R2 – Nr. of people benefitting from the scholarship schemes and from complementary services and opportunities (skill development, tutoring, coaching, internships) offered by the project | 0 | 873 students benefitting from the scholarship schemes and from complementary services and opportunities (skill development, tutoring, coaching, internships) | 1164 students benefitting from the scholarship schemes and from complementary services and opportunities (skill development, tutoring, coaching, internships) | Reports and data from the project |
| R3 - Nr. of institutions and bodies (Ministries, local authorities, school directorates) benefitting from technical assistance on monitoring and policy making in the framework of this action | 0 | 9 Ministries, 32 Municipalities 214 School directorates | 9 Ministries, 47 Municipalities 214 School directorates | Questionnaires submitted to sample of different stakeholders in the targeted communities (before and at the end of the action) |
| R4- Quality (openness, inclusiveness, self-confidence) of the attitude of Roma and non-Roma parents, teachers, students towards Roma, especially regarding education. | 0 | 2000 participants gain better quality (more open, inclusive, self-confident) of the assessed attitude | 3500 participants gain better quality (more open, inclusive, self-confident) of the assessed attitude | Questionnaires submitted to different stakeholders in the targeted communities (before and at the end of the action) |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| R5 - Nr. of meetings during the project implementation of the regional networks/platforms (at Ministerial and/or at educational institutions level) identified or created by the project. | 0 | 2 | 3<br><br>(1 meeting per year, at least 1 network identified/created) | Questionnaires submitted to different stakeholders in the targeted communities (before and at the end of the action) |
| R6 – Level of awareness of the targeted community and of education practitioners and relevant authorities about the challenges of Roma education and about project results (including the recommendations and policy products delivered by the project) | 0 | REF will issue at least 1 recommendation and policy event delivered by the end of the project, implemented gradually | Higher level of awareness of the interviewees about Roma education and the project results | Questionnaires submitted to different stakeholders in the targeted communities (before and at the end of the action) |

## 5. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

### GENDER MAINSTREAMING

Women and men are differently affected by exclusion and access to all human rights. Woman are, for example, at greater risk of harassment, sexual exploitation and lacking access to education, while men face greater likelihood of discrimination e.g. when seeking to access justice on parental rights. In the case of Roma women, it is statistically proven that they are at greater risk of discrimination and exclusion. As regards the specific sector of the Action, women and girls have less access to education, in particular when it relates to secondary and tertiary education, than their male counterparts. All programme components/results will take into account the different needs of Roma women/girls and men/boys. A gender based approach will be incorporated into materials produced in the framework of the action (Guidelines for grant-awarding procedures, scholarship selection criteria and procedures, training and awareness raising manuals, capacity building activities and materials, policy recommendation papers etc.).

### EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

The action is specifically aimed at improving quality education opportunities for Roma to reduce the educational gap between Roma and non-Roma. Special attention will have to be paid to cases of double-discrimination risks, for instance to Roma female students and Roma disabled students. In addition to mainstreaming gender (see above), specific training sessions and initiatives could be organised to improve local Roma communities', teachers', and local authorities' awareness and capacity to address the needs of groups experiencing multiple discrimination. Promoting equal opportunities for all could be included in the priorities of the grant-award selection procedure (Result 2).

### MINORITIES AND VULNERABLE GROUPS

The action is focused on improving access to and quality of education for Roma as one of the most marginalized minority group in the Western Balkans and Turkey. The term "Roma" is used as an umbrella term which also includes other groups of people who have more or less similar cultural characteristics, such as Sinti, Travellers, Kalé, Gens du voyage, etc., whether sedentary or not. The involvement of Roma people will be ensured at all levels and during all stages of the project as per usual REF practice. It is estimated that at least half of the professionals working in the Project Management Team and in the local implementation units will be Roma.

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

One of the results of the action and the related activities have a specific focus on supporting civil society and community-based organisations, which are among the final beneficiaries of the action. Capacity building, networking and sub-granting will target specifically Roma CSOs and community based organisations, to increase their involvement in policy making and to support specific projects to improve access and quality of education for Roma youth.

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

There is no direct or indirect link to the EU environmental *acquis*. However, the increased level of education spread within Roma communities as well as the capacity building activities addressed to local and central authorities could open the door to more responsible environmental-friendly management of settlements, and to a stronger attention to pollution, waste management and in general to an healthier living space within Roma communities.

## 6. SUSTAINABILITY

The action is designed to strengthen capacities, raise awareness and give quality education opportunities to stakeholders involved in Roma education (relevant central and local authorities, Roma civil society and communities, schools, parents and teachers, students).

In this context, the action will encourage and support policy change to ensure that Roma can have wide access to quality inclusive education. Through the projects supported through the grant scheme new models will be tested and good practices identified, to the benefit of Roma beneficiaries, but also of policy makers and local administrators.

It is expected that institutional stakeholder will take over and own in the future the scholarships and grants schemes put in place under this action. This has already happened in the region.

A fostered cooperation between official education institutions and Roma civil society and communities will ensure that the latter will be in the future in the position to more actively participate in policy making. At community level, the awareness raising activities, parents and teachers training, as well as the messages channelled by scholarship beneficiaries through the back-to-school and back-to-community activities will produce a long-lasting attitude change towards education and employment opportunities for Roma youth.

Regarding the development of new policies and legislation, in order to ensure sustainability assistance shall support beneficiaries with developing the analytical prerequisites for legislative drafting rather than focus solely on development of legal drafts. Actual legal drafting shall be mainly done by the beneficiary and not by project experts. Even if some drafting is done by experts, it shall be paired with capacity building (e.g. detailed explanation of proposed texts, comparison among international examples, etc.).

Finally, in order to be relevant and credible, new policies and laws shall be developed in an inclusive and evidence-based manner. In particular, the action will ensure that the new policies/laws a) are consulted internally to promote inter-institutional agreement on the objectives and legal provisions, thus avoiding administrative disputes during the implementation phase; b) are publically consulted with all those who are likely to be affected by changes in the legal framework; in this sense, assistance shall also ensure that the results of the public consultations are published and that all legislative proposals that are submitted to the government/parliament are accompanied with reports on outcomes of such consultations. In case legal changes promoted by the action require amendments to other laws and regulations, assistance shall facilitate amendments also to these as needed, rather than going ahead and leaving the Beneficiary with inconsistent approach.

## 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 funded from the amounts allocated to the action. In particular, result 6 is especially dedicated to awareness raising and outreach on Roma education. Under this result, communication and awareness raising activities addressed at the general public as well as specifically to communities and education practitioners and relevant authorities will be implemented.

The project outreach will be further improved by publishing the calls for both project grants and scholarships locally and in the Romani language in local media.

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.

Visibility and communication actions shall demonstrate how the intervention contributes to the agreed programme objectives and the accession process, as well as the benefits of the action for the general public. 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.