

to the Commission Implementing Decision on the financing of the multi-country multiannual action plan on an EU Civil Society Facility and Media Programme in favour of the Western Balkans and Turkey for 2021-2023

Action Document for “EU Civil Society Facility and Media Programme for Kosovo* 2021-2023”

1. SYNOPSIS

1.1. Action Summary Table

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| Title | EU Civil Society Facility and Media Programme 2021-2023 for Kosovo* 2021-2023 Multi-country multiannual action plan on an EU Civil Society Facility and Media Programme in favour of the Western Balkans and Turkey for 2021-2023 |
| CRIS/OPSYS number | IPA III/2021/043-102/04 |
| Basic Act | Financed under the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA III) |
| Team Europe Initiative | No |
| Zone benefiting from the action | Kosovo |
| Programming document | IPA III Programming Framework |
| PRIORITY AREAS AND SECTOR INFORMATION | |
| Window and thematic priority | Mainly Window 1. Rule of law, fundamental rights and democracy Thematic Priority 5: Fundamental rights (with reference to media - freedom of expression) Thematic Priority 7: Civil Society (Partially Windows 2 and 3) |
| Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) | Main SDG (1 only): SDG 16: Peace and Justice Strong Institutions Other significant SDGs (up to 9) and where appropriate, targets: SDG 01: No Poverty SDG 05: Gender Equality SDG 08: Decent Work and Economic Growth SDG 10: Reduce Inequalities SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities |
| DAC code(s) | 15150 Democratic participation and civil society – 50% 15153 Media and free flow of information – 50% |
| Main Delivery Channel | 20000 - Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society |

* 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.

| Markers (from DAC form) | General policy objective | Not targeted | Significant objective | Principal objective |
|--|---|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| | Participation development/good governance | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| | Aid to environment | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Gender equality and women's and girl's empowerment | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Trade development | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Reproductive, maternal, new-born and child health | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Disaster Risk Reduction | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Inclusion of persons with Disabilities | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Nutrition | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | RIO Convention markers | Not targeted | Significant objective | Principal objective |
| | Biological diversity | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Combat desertification | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Climate change mitigation | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Climate change adaptation | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Internal markers | Policy objectives | Not targeted | Significant objective | Principal objective |
| | Digitalisation | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Migration | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | COVID-19 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| BUDGET INFORMATION | | | | |
| Amounts concerned | Budget line: 15.020101.01 Total estimated cost: EUR 7 970 000.00 Total amount of EU budget contribution EUR 7 250 000.00 The EU contribution is for an amount of EUR 2 000 000.00 from the general budget of the European Union for financial year 2021 and for an amount of EUR 350 000.00 from the general budget of the European Union for financial year 2022 and for an amount of EUR 4 900 000.00 from the general budget of the European Union for financial year 2023 , subject to the availability of appropriations for the respective financial years following the adoption of the relevant annual budget, or as provided for in the system of provisional twelfths. | | | |
| MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION | | | | |
| Type of financing and method(s) of implementation | Project Modality Direct management through: - Grants - Procurement | | | |
| Relevant priorities and flagships from Economic and | Priorities: "Green Agenda", "Innovation Agenda", "Human Capital Development", "Governance, Rule of Law" | | | |

| | |
|--|--|
| Investment Plan for the Western Balkans | |
| Final date for concluding contribution / delegation agreements, procurement and grant contracts | For 2021 Budget: At the latest by 31 December 2022 For 2022 Budget: At the latest by 31 December 2023 For 2023 Budget: At the latest by 31 December 2024 |
| Indicative operational implementation period | 72 months following the adoption of the Financing Decision |

1.2. Summary of the Action

The overall objective of the Action is to strengthen participatory democracy and the EU integration and approximation process in Kosovo, through an enhanced contribution by civil society and media. The Programme will foster participatory democracy and inclusion of Kosovo civic actors in decision making through a mix of funding modalities (operating, action grants, small grant schemes). It will strengthen the capacities of civil society and media to play the role of independent watchdogs of democracy and institutions. The programme will equally support civil society participation in sector reforms, social development as well as cooperation with institutions for governance, economic development and recovery programmes. Furthermore, the programme will strengthen the resilience and sustainability of quality journalism and independent media actors.

2. RATIONALE

2.1. Context Analysis

Civil society and media organisations in Kosovo play an important role in the democratic debate, promoting fundamental rights, fostering equality, innovation and contributing to sectoral reforms which are necessary for the European path.

Civil society and media engagement in the dialogue between Kosovo and the European Union are essential to ensure that undertaken commitments are not just institutional, government-led exercises, but are accessible to ordinary citizens, based on meaningful consultations, and genuine civic participation. In this regard, the inclusion of civic actors is not adequately structured and requires more efforts particularly in local decision making.

The Stabilisation and Association Agreement between the European Union and Kosovo and the resulting National Programme for the Implementation of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (NPISAA) 2020–2024 determine the objectives, formal mechanisms and timeframes for the implementation of reforms aimed at progressively aligning Kosovo with the EU in all policy fields until they meet the EU standards. The European Reform Agenda (ERA), agreed between the EU and the Kosovo government, aims at guiding Kosovo's efforts under the SAA through short term priorities in key areas such as good governance, the rule of law, education and employment, competitiveness and investment climate. The economic and financial dialogue between the EU and the Western Balkans and Turkey supports beneficiaries' efforts towards fulfilling the Copenhagen criteria

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and its long-lasting impact on the economic and social spheres have contributed to increase the existing vulnerabilities of Kosovo society. While the institutional response to the crisis focused mainly on the health emergency and urgent economic needs, social inequalities have steadily increased leaving a large portion of society even more vulnerable (particularly women, persons with disabilities, from minority, and rural communities) with various socio-economic needs, and fewer opportunities for participation to strategic

decisions for the recovery and future policies. Cultural and creative multi-media sectors have been particularly hit by social distancing and the financial and organisational consequences of cancelling public events.

In this context, the EU partnerships with media and civil society in Kosovo are furthermore crucial to maintain social cohesion, and strengthen the policy dialogue for shaping Kosovo's socio-economic recovery towards a more equitable, gender responsive and environmental-friendly society.

The CSF and Media programme 2021-23 will support civil society and media actors that are committed to develop their own resilience and capacities to effectively deliver on their mandate. The Programme in Kosovo foresees engagement with diverse civic actors through an efficient mix of funding modalities (operating, action grants, small grant schemes). It will contribute to build capacities for independent oversight of institutions, support sector reforms, and social development. Furthermore, it will enhance the cooperation with institutions for better local governance, participation, and economic development. While specific issues or themes will be identified during the implementation through stakeholders consultations, the priorities of the assistance focuses on sectors which are not adequately supported by public institutions or other donors (e.g. journalism, anti-corruption, culture, social inclusion, green transition), where technical or organisational capacities are still developing, and/or that are not adequately represented in dialogue and consultation platforms (e.g. gender equality, labour law, health, economy or EU standards).

2.2. Problem analysis by areas of support

Civil society

The civic space in Kosovo has been gradually expanding over the last 10 years. As illustrated in the European Commission annual reports, civil society and media actors are largely free to exercise their rights to association, assembly and expression. They can voice their views, organise, engage in and, most importantly, participate in policy making processes on the basis of existing regulations and standards for public consultations. Although, consultations at central and local level are more systematic, effective participation and pluralism need to improve with simplified modalities to access public data and regular feedback from public authorities. Moreover, awareness actions to activate participation and organise collective inputs of different organisations, networks and individuals are crucial in order to broaden the engagement of CSOs and citizens.

In regards to financial resources, civil society relies substantially on donors, public subsidies and short-term, project based funding. Very few organisations run revenue-generating initiatives to support their non-profit making programmes. Social entrepreneurship and social economy represent opportunities for enabling financial environment in the long-run. The system of public funding to non-profit organisations improved in regards to transparency and standardised procedures, but organisations still face challenges in the implementation of tax deduction procedures due to the lack of a comprehensive legal framework and favourable tax regimes for individual and corporate philanthropy. The financial viability of civil society would also benefit from harmonised procedures for the procurement of public services as well as for regulating the use of public property and or confiscated assets by non-profit organisations.

Capacities of civil society organisations largely vary in relation to their size, sector, geographical outreach (regional, local, community based) and nature of activities (service provision, advocacy/campaigning, research/analysis, watchdog, etc.). In general, small-sized or community based actors, are not engaged in public debates or central level policy that are relevant to their thematic sector, because they lack resources and specialised expertise. When it comes to policy dialogue related to the European path of Kosovo, CSOs with technical knowledge and advocacy, advisory or watchdog experience are required to actively seek for genuine citizens' engagement in several sectors linked to EU standards (e.g. consumer protection, health and patients' rights, safety at work, social dialogue, education).

In order to deliver as actors of democracy and social progress, a large number of organisations in Kosovo are required to improve their autonomy, representativeness and accountability. A significant percentage of organisations do not properly implement internal standards including for decision making, transparency, financial management, evaluation

and communication. Moreover the majority of organisations lack a clear mandate and transparent relation with their constituencies¹.

Thematic coalitions are active in a number of areas such as women's rights and gender equality, democracy, rule of law, human rights. Civil society and media are required to join their efforts more systematically and advocate more collectively in areas where their specific expertise could complement and synergise efforts of other actors engaged in strategic sectors including businesses and academia, e.g.: economic governance, fight against organised crime and corruption, public administration, education, culture, employment and social policies, environment and green economy.

The present programme will complement the priorities related to a more favourable environment for civil society in Kosovo (which are embedded in the government Strategy for cooperation with Civil Society 2019-2023 and its action plan, see also section 2.3) with targeted support to achieve higher professional standards, resilience and effectiveness of civil society's role. The programme will equally contribute to strengthen cooperation with authorities for local governance and socio-economic development.

Media

Kosovo has a pluralistic and lively media environment, including broadcast, print and online media. The current legislative framework provides the main safeguards² and the essential rights to ensure that the principles of freedom of expression, media and information are implemented in line with the European standards³. However, the functioning and integrity of the media system is hampered by legal gaps and lack of information in relation to important transparency aspects, such as ownership, concentration and financing of media outlets.

The public broadcaster relies heavily on public budget for the financing of its programmes, and is exposed to political influence. Private media is more exposed to political and business interests also due to the lack of a reliable market for advertisements. Independent and/or non-mainstream media have access to limited sources of funding, for quality journalism and investigative reporting.

Online and social media, benefitting from the high internet penetration in Kosovo, are an important source of information especially for a population which is among the youngest of Europe. Besides being a positive development contributing to pluralism of opinions, online and social media are neither regulated, nor subject to any registration requirement and have little transparency of ownership.

Threats and attacks against journalists have intensified over the last 2 years. Kosovo authorities, media and civil society need to combine their efforts in order to adequately protect the victims, secure the offenders to justice and increase efficiency of state reactions to the offenses against journalists.

Many journalists and media professionals work either with no contracts or under poor contractual conditions. This situation encourages self-censorship and makes journalists vulnerable to pressure. Professional standards and ethics should be better promoted, monitored and respected by media professionals including through self-regulatory platforms.

¹ <http://tacso.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Regional-CS-NA-Annex-4-KOSOVO-brief-final.pdf>

² "Indicators on the level of media freedom and journalists' safety [Kosovo] 2018", published by the Western Balkans' Regional Platform for Advocating Media Freedom and Journalists' safety.

³ "Freedom of Expression, Media and Information in Kosovo. An Assessment Based on Council of Europe Indicators for Media in a Democracy", by Civil Rights Defenders.

2.3. Relevance and complementarity with strategies supported by other key stakeholders

Civil Society

The priorities for creating a more favourable environment for civil society in Kosovo are embedded in the government *Strategy for cooperation with Civil Society 2019-2023*⁴ and its action plan. The strategy's main objectives are as follows:

1. Increase civil society participation in policy-making;
2. Improvement of the regulatory and institutional framework for financing sustainability of programmes and projects of CSOs in public interest;
3. Develop practices and procedures of contracting of CSOs for the provision of public services; and
4. Increase volunteering in public benefit program

These objectives are complementary to the priorities set in the Guidelines for EU support to Civil Society in Enlargement Countries, 2014-2020⁵ (and the follow-up version). They are addressing comprehensive and interrelated policy reforms which can jointly contribute to improving the enabling environment. The government body responsible for monitoring and reporting on the strategic cooperation with civil society is the Office for Good Governance (OGG), within the Office of the Prime Minister. The Council for Government Cooperation with Civil Society is the main coordination mechanism of the strategy, and consists 14 representatives from institutions (including Ministries of Finance, the local government, Youth and the Treasury), and 15 representatives of civil society. Thematic working groups regularly monitor the implementation of different pillars of the cooperation strategy while the mechanism is co-chaired by the Secretary General at the Office of Prime Minister and by the Executive Director of Civikos platform, which is the largest network of civil society organisations in Kosovo. The EU supported the establishment and implementation of the strategic framework. Under the priorities of IPA III for Good Governance (Window 2 of the IPA III), further assistance is envisaged to strengthen local administration and institutional actors engaged in strategic cooperation with civil society.

The Civil Society Facility and Media programme 2021-2023 will strengthen the resilience, capacities and professional standards of civil society actors. The Programme will provide opportunities for organisations to improve the quality of their programmes, and ultimately to achieve a stronger impact in developing communities which are more inclusive and resilient. Beneficiary organisations will be encouraged to plan their activities more strategically; build on best practices and achievements; establish transparent communication and relations with their constituencies; increase quality of their daily operations, including through specialised services and fact-based advocacy; utilise their flexible structures to foster cooperation with media, businesses, academia and innovation networks.

The programme will also contribute to pursue the priorities of the government's strategy which focuses primarily on the conducive environment for civil society (financial, legal and policy) and cooperation with authorities. In this regard, the programme will expand civil society participation and oversight in relation to public policies, through continued support to long-term Framework Partnerships (FPAs), promotion of thematic coalitions and re-granting schemes to promote local democracy, social inclusion and cooperation with local administrations.

Media

⁴ http://www.civikos.net/repository/docs/Strategy_eng_291507.pdf

⁵ file:///C:/Users/bendari/AppData/Local/Temp/Guidelines_for_EU_support_to_civil_society_in_enlargement_countries_2014-2020.pdf Guidelines for EU support to Civil Society in the enlargement region were in place for the period 2014-2020, and are currently being updated for the period 2021-2027. The actions under the 2021 - 2023 CSF are aligned with both documents.

The most recent TAIEX peer review of the enabling environment for media freedom and pluralism shows that Kosovo enjoys a lively media environment and although the general principles of pluralism are generally respected⁶, the legal and regulatory framework is still developing. In fact, the media sector requires more determination by the responsible institutions to implement necessary reforms. These legislative and policy initiatives are expected to improve the governance, transparency and financial viability of the sector in line with the Audio-visual Media Services Directive⁷. Several laws and policies, including the Law on the public broadcaster (also known as RTK law), the law on the Independent Media Commission (the media regulator) and the government strategy for the digitisation of the broadcasting sector, need to be prioritised to improve the governance, the financing of the public service media and to create a level playing field by harmonising online and offline audio-visual media services. Moreover, a regulation of media ownership and concentration is much needed to ensure that both public and private media provide detailed data about their ownership structure and their revenues.

As regards the financial sustainability of printed and audio-visual media, several outlets struggle to remain active due to the small size of the audience and an unregulated market for the advertisements (in the absence of reliable system to measure the audience). Consequently, the access to sources of funding (from the advertisements and/or from the central or local government) is limited particularly for non-mainstream media, which are more free from political or corporate interests, represent minority and/or vulnerable groups and/or focus on investigative reporting, cultural, social and human rights issues.

The negative impact of the COVID-19 crisis has worsened the financial stability of media environment (including potential job losses), hitting hardest those professionals and outlets which were already under financial strain. This situation represents a threat to the pluralistic media landscape, exposing the sector to undue political or economic influence, undermining the independence of editorial lines.

The unfavourable economic conditions of the media landscape have a direct impact also on the overall quality of media productions and on labour standards of journalists and media professionals. A number of media outlets have less means to carry out their work professionally, produce/broadcast transparent and unbiased news and information. With few exceptions, journalists have no access to adequate contractual conditions. Moreover, their professional and ethical standards are undermined by threats to job security which in turn, creates conditions for the mushrooming of self-censorship. Associations of journalists and other civil society organisations promoting professional/ethical standards operate with very limited human and financial resources, but are active in condemning cases of violence against journalists or other forms of intimidation and pressure. Although the overall number of threats and attacks remains stable, there has been an increase in derogatory statements and smears made by politicians and aimed at the media, publicly undermining trust in journalistic reporting and the safety of journalists⁸⁹.

The Civil Society and Media programme 2021-2023 will strengthen the resilience and sustainability of independent media against external pressures. It will promote media freedom and content pluralism through targeted support to non-mainstream media outlets, particularly those representing minority groups and/or developing independent quality productions. The programme will furthermore support media professionals and journalists, including through initiatives to enhance their security, enforce adequate labour standards, promote professional and ethical standards and counter fake news.

⁶ The Independent Media Commission has a registry of the licenced operators, within which, as of 2021, the IMC enlists 202 audio-visual media services, 108 services distributed on terrestrial frequencies (19 TV channels and 89 radio channels) and 94 services distributed through cable. Data provided directly by the IMC and available on the website <http://www.kpm-ks.org/?faq=315&giuha=3>

41 cable operators (7 of which are IPTV operators and 6 are OTT).

⁷ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2010:095:0001:0024:EN:PDF>

⁸ SWD(2020) 356 final; https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/system/files/2020-10/kosovo_report_2020.pdf;

⁹ SWD(2021) 292 final/2; https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/kosovo-report-2021_en

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

The IPA Programming framework identifies civil society as a cross-cutting theme (such as climate change, gender, rights based approach, etc.), closely interlinked with and therefore relevant for more than one window. IPA assistance to civil society is a thematic priority under Window 1: *Rule of Law, Fundamental rights and democracy*. In this regard, civil society organisations have two main functions that require support. Firstly, as a democratic watchdog, CSOs and grass root organisations hold governments to account where fundamental rights, democratic principles and the rule of law are brought into question. Secondly, they contribute to the alignment with and implementation of the EU *acquis* by bringing innovative ideas to the table; by bridging the gap with real needs of citizens in the decision-making process and by monitoring implementation.

The media sector is also mentioned under the same IPA Window, namely as part of the thematic priority: 'Fundamental rights'. In particular, the EU support to freedom of expression and the independence of media aims at promoting and protecting democracy.

The *DG NEAR Guidelines for EU Support to Civil Society in the Western Balkans and Turkey* further explains how the EU will support civil society in the Western Balkans and Turkey in the context of the enlargement agenda. The civil society and media programme for Kosovo will focus on the objectives of the above mentioned Guidelines, in particular those related to professional standards, capacities and sustainability of organisations. The programme will contribute to achieve also the Guidelines' objectives related to the conducive environment for civil society (financial, legal and policy) and cooperation with authorities. In this regard, the programme will contribute to expand civil society inclusion, participation and oversight in relation to public policies and decisions (At all level of governance).

The Programme's support to Media in Kosovo is designed to address the priorities of the "*Guidelines for EU support to media freedom and media integrity in enlargement countries, 2014-2020*". This policy document, currently under revision, defines the objectives and results to be achieved in the Western Balkans and Turkey through developing assistance programmes. The Programme will contribute to improve the environment for media freedom and pluralism. It will focus on strengthening the resilience of non-mainstream media outlets against external, undue pressure; qualitative and trustworthy investigative journalism available to citizens; raising the professional, ethical and labour standards of media professionals.

The European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) will complement the CSF with support to projects implemented by activists and human rights watchdog organisations with the aim to protect vulnerable or discriminated groups, and promote public debates in the areas of fundamental rights and democracy.

IPA Annual Action programmes (AAP) 2019, 2020 and 2021 are designed on the assumption that the CSF and Media programme will promote bottom up initiatives and capacity building support for representative organisations in the area of Rule of Law, Education, Environment and Social Policies.

The EU Office in Kosovo regularly coordinates its assistance with EU Member States agencies and other international and bilateral donors supporting civil society in Kosovo (United States Agency for International Development, , the Swiss Cooperation Office, the British Embassy, the United Nations Development Programme, the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency, the Japan International Cooperation Agency)

Since 2016, the EU Office in Kosovo and the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida) have intensified the donor coordination through regular meetings, information sharing, and an on-line joint donor platform¹⁰ of projects in Kosovo which synergises donors' efforts, project planning and sector monitoring. This Action is the result of consultations with beneficiaries, stakeholders, including other donors. Complementarities and synergies with programmes of donor agencies are embedded in the Action and will be monitored during implementation through regular meetings and information available in the donor platform.

Donors participate actively in coordination meetings and consultations for joint programming, as well as for sector policies (i.e. Guidelines for Civil Society/Media freedom). The main priorities of their assistance are generally

¹⁰ <https://csdonorskosovo.com/#/>

converging toward the main objectives of the *DG NEAR Guidelines for EU Support to Civil Society in the Western Balkans and Turkey* .

The Programme will contribute to the implementation of the *Green Agenda in the Western Balkans*¹¹. EU support will focus on capacities for civil society engagement in a number of areas such as: decarbonisation, transport, circular economy, sustainable value/waste management, sustainable production and private sector development, protection of biodiversity, trade agreements and negotiations, labour rights, consumer protection, etc.

Civil society and media will be encouraged to play a watchdog role of the private sector and/or authorities to ensure the implementation of sustainable economic development commitments and compliance with international agreements and protocols. Similarly, the programme will support initiatives to inform and raise awareness of the public, promote innovation and pioneering new approaches (such as public-private partnerships to support sustainable value chains), cooperate with authorities (for example to develop waste management or green mobility plans), engage in research and evidence based advocacy.

2.5. Lessons learned and links with previous financial assistance

Experiences from the implementation of previous programmes in Kosovo (IPA CSF and Media, EIDHR), evaluations including and the mid-term evaluation of the Civil Society Facility 2014 -2020, can be summarised as follows:

Support to civil society actors requires an efficient mix of funding modalities based on real needs and absorption capacity of diverse beneficiary organisations, as well as of management resources to address those needs. The typical project intervention approach needs to be complemented with a more strategic relationship to engage civil actors in the long-term. Support programmes should also seek to facilitate the access to EU support for small, local organisations and activist groups and provide targeted assistance for thematic coalitions and networks.

The use of operating grants to support CS actors have proved to be a useful tool to strengthen and consolidate capacities of CSOs working in sectors/areas of strategic importance, but require a long term approach in order to achieve durable impact and results. this is particularly relevant for Kosovo, where a continuative cooperation with CS partners for a more structured dialogue with public authorities (both central and municipal level) and vis-à-vis the EU, is a precondition to advance the European perspective of Kosovo.

Based on this, in 2019 the EU Office in Kosovo established long term partnerships with CSOs through Framework Partnership Agreements (FPAs) and associated (operating) grants for implementation. FPAs and related strategic plans are ongoing and will be supported by the present programme.

It is important to encourage and strengthen creative synergies between civil society and media to ensure effective communication, particularly to young women and men regarding the European perspective, gender equality, intercultural dialogue and green transition.

In order to promote media pluralism and resilience against undue pressure, EU support may be envisaged for quality productions, documentaries, investigative reportages or other quality productions. To this end, eligibility to EU grants may include also private and profit-making media organisations that represent a large portion of the media landscape in Kosovo.

3. DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION

3.1. Planned results and intervention logic

The action will contribute to strengthening participatory democracy and the EU integration and approximation process in Kosovo, through an enhanced contribution by civil society and media (impact). It will enhance the enabling environment for civil society and media, strengthening capacities and effectiveness of civil society and media actors

¹¹ SWD(2020) 223 final; https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/green_agenda_for_the_western_balkans_en.pdf

(including grassroots organisation and non-mainstream media), as well as improving the cooperation between civil society and public authorities.

If the commitment of authorities and civil society to engage in dialogue is maintained in the next 3 years, and if adequate resources to engage civil society in policy reforms are made available, the action will substantially increase opportunities for cooperation between civil society and authorities (including for the cooperation strategy between Kosovo government and civil society), and will provide more resources and opportunities for citizens' participation in decision making at central and local level (output 1). In the long term, the action will contribute to the consolidation of the enabling legal, policy and financial environment for the sustainability of the civil society organisation (outcome 1).

Similarly, if capacities of the civil society organisations, including small and grassroots groups, are built (output 2 and output 3) and they are provided with appropriate resources, this action will lead to increased opportunities for regular civil society inclusion and participation in local democracy, more effective monitoring of the commitments related to the agenda for the European perspective, more influential civil society advocacy for the enforcement of legislations and/or implementation of policies and reforms, notably in areas related to gender equality, education, youth, green transition, anti-corruption, social rights (outcome 2).

If the pluralistic media environment does not deteriorate, and freedom of expression is not restricted or limited, then the action will lead to an increased access to qualitative and trustworthy information to all citizens; strengthened capacities, better labour standards and protection mechanisms for professional journalists; increased resilience of non-mainstream media outlets (output 4 and 5). In this regard, the action contributes to strengthen freedom of expression and improve the conditions for media actors to operate without interference (outcome 3). This is essential to maintain pluralism of opinions and stimulate a genuine democratic debate.

3.2. Indicative type of activities

Activities equally contributing to Output 1: Increased participation of civil society organisations in policy making and cooperation with authorities and Output 2: Strengthened capacities and opportunities of organisation for participation in decision-making

- Framework Partnership Agreements with associated operating grants. The Programme will continue supporting the strategic plans of civil society partners identified through a call for proposals for Framework Partnerships under the Civil society Facility Programme 2018-2019. The assistance in the form of operating grants will support organisations' annual work plans for the last year of implementation of the ongoing Framework Partnership Agreements (i.e. financial year 2023), contributing to enhance oversight and advocacy in various areas (education, transparency of institutions, environment protection, culture, child protection, consumers' rights, safety and health at the workplace). Operating grants will be awarded after the evaluation of relevance and quality of Partners' annual work plans. A mid-term evaluation of ongoing partnerships¹² will be conducted during the third year of implementation. A new call for Framework partnerships and associated grants for implementation will be launched in the first quarter of 2024 (specific sector/themes will be determined during the preparation of the call) Strategic plans of the selected framework partners will be supported by the current programme with annual operating grants to implement their strategic plans, i.e. financial year 2025.
- Civil society resilience and sustainability. A call for proposals will be launched to support the work of experienced local organisations in various sectors particularly those mostly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, and not adequately supported by public institutions or other donors (e.g. culture, social inclusion/protection or health). The assistance will contribute to the sustainability of civil society through innovative approaches and partnerships to promote participatory democracy (including through cooperation with business and academia).

¹² The mid-term evaluation of the FPAs was originally foreseen to be launched in 2021, i.e. during the second year of implementation. However, given the long-term duration of Framework Partnerships (4 years), it was considered more appropriate to conduct the evaluation of this project during its third year of implementation, i.e. in 2022.

- Support to local governance and activism. A call for proposals will support community based organisations and informal groups through small-grants matched with mentoring and a capacity building programme. The project will increase capacities and opportunities for civic engagement, youth activism, advocacy and participation in local democracy. It will furthermore contribute to enhance local governance and inclusion of civil society in local policy making. Indicative sectors/themes may include: gender equality, youth, green transition, anti-corruption, social rights.

Activities related to Output 3: Strengthened capacities, increased transparency and accountability of CSOs

- Civil society resource centre phase III. A call for proposal will be launched to select the Resource centre for civil society (phase III). The project will address the capacity building needs of the sector on the basis of based on periodic consultations and sectorial needs assessment. The resource centre will strengthen the effectiveness of civil society work through a mix of support services, capacity building, support to consultations and advocacy initiatives at central and local level. The Resource Centre will operate in synergy with the regional TACSO and other resource centres in the Western Balkans. The first resource centre was supported by the Civil society Facility in 2017, and a second phase started in 2021. The project will focus on regulatory (self)standards for internal procedures, transparency and accountability of organisations, including through effective feedback mechanisms for constituency/members.
- Support to thematic coalitions and networks. A call for proposals will be launched to support partnerships and networks of civil society and media organisations operating in Kosovo with the aim to unleash the potential and effectiveness of a more integrated and collective approach to advocacy. Specific sectors or themes targeted by this project will be identified through stakeholders consultations prior to the publication of the call, and/or through the support of the civil society resource centre or TACSO. Indicative sectors or themes may include: green economy, economic governance, fight against organised crime and corruption, women’s rights and gender equality, public administration, education, employment and social polices, environment, and other themes related to fundamental rights .
- Activities equally contributing to Output 4: Enhanced professional capacity of journalists and media actors; enhanced transparency of media ownership and finance , and to Output 5: Enhanced system for the protection and security of professional, non-professional and citizen journalists. Journalism: resources for ethical, professional and labour standards. A call for proposal (as part of a larger call or stand-alone) will be launched to support qualitative and trustworthy journalism available to citizens. The project will focus on the promotion of professional and ethical standards (including through self-regulatory codes); protection of journalists from any form of intimidation and attacks; promote better labour standards and working conditions of journalists and media professionals;
- Media resilience, access to information and pluralism; A call for proposals will support media resilience, pluralism, and improved access to public information particularly for vulnerable groups. This project aims to strengthen the sustainability of quality productions of non-mainstream media representing minority and/or vulnerable groups with a focus on investigative reporting, alternative culture, social, environmental and human rights issues. The assistance will encourage cooperation with civil society, media organisations (including public and private media outlets) with the aim to increase public oversight, transparency of administrations and access to information.

3.3. Risks and assumptions

| Risks | Risk level (H/M/L) | Mitigating measures |
|---|--------------------|--|
| changes in the political environment may have an negative impact on the independent work of civil society and media organisations, in which case the absorption of the allocation might be under pressure | L | Close monitoring of the political environment and project action plan prior to contracting |

| | | |
|--|----------|---|
| Operating grants and framework partnership agreements require proper implementation and understanding of grantees of the applicable rules | L | Info sessions prior to the call for proposals and induction meetings with grants to clearly explain the logic of FPAs/operating grants |
| Financial support to third parties may generate a fragmentation of the assistance into a large number of into small grants, thus increasing risks of mismanagement and overlapping | M | The technical support for the monitoring of operations will facilitate the oversight of programme implementation, including the sub-grants. Internal coordination, recording of sub-grants and donor coordination system will mitigate risk of overlapping. |

Assumptions (to be reflected in the Logical Framework Matrix above) – grouped by outputs and outcomes

The below assumptions are applicable to all outcomes and outputs related to civil society and media:

- The government has a genuine interest to engage in enhanced consultation with Civil Society, media and to consider input received.
- The government makes available relevant financial and human resources for implementations of Strategies related directly or involve indirectly civil society in policy reform.
- Consolidation of democratic institutions and processes continues and violent conflict is avoided.

The below assumptions is applicable to all outcomes and outputs related to media:

- The pluralistic media environment does not deteriorate, and freedom of expression is not restricted or limited by new restrictive measures/legal acts/ regulations.

3.4. Mainstreaming

How does this Action contribute to Gender Equality and Women’s and Girls’ Empowerment (in line with the EU gender equality strategy 2020-2025)?

Gender equality is cross-cutting to all the Programme’s activities. The EU support to civil society and media will enhance capacities of civic actors to engage diverse women and girls, enhance participation of women organisations in policy dialogue, and adopt a gender responsive approach throughout their activities. Besides ensuring mainstreaming of gender issues, specific projects will directly target gender aspects through gender analysis and use of a gender perspective in all activities and advocacy initiatives, for example in the areas of social rights of workers and labour law for the inclusion of maternity leave, or in the area of journalism for monitoring and reporting on gender based discrimination in employment, social policies or human rights. The diverse needs of women, girls will be prioritised and a reasonable distribution of resources will be sought accordingly. Financial support to third parties will have a special focus on skills development and women empowerment by activating young women not in employment, education or training.

The Programme will also contribute to the implementation of the EU Gender Action Plan III¹³ and all should include gender sensitive indicators to the extent possible. At least one specific objective and one indicator in each proposal should be aimed at gender equality. Further, the Programme will contribute to several Sustainable Development Goals¹⁴ related to gender equality and women’s empowerment, including SDG 1, SDG 5, and SDG 8.

How does this Action address Environment and Climate change?

The programme envisages activities directly targeting environment, climate change and transition to green and circular economy (see specifically framework partnerships, thematic coalitions and support to local activism). Activities will increase the public awareness on climate change, environmental issues and impact on the eco-system and public health such as soil, water and air pollution., all very relevant in the context of Kosovo. At the same time, the programme will promote civil society activism and participation in decision making in sectors directly linked to climate change such as energy, transport, mobility, employment and industrial policies. All programme’s activities will be environmental friendly and sensitive to specific challenges that communities face in terms of environment protection.

¹³ https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/system/files/swd_2020_284_en_final.pdf

¹⁴ <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/about-us/sustainable-development-goals-sdgs-and-disability.html>

How does this Action address the Rights Based Approach?

The programme will contribute to increase participatory democracy by enhancing capacities of civil society to represent and advocate for the rights, needs and positions of their constituencies within policy and decision making. In this regard, all civil society and media activities will put an emphasis on engaging, representing and reporting on the rights of most disadvantaged groups, including people living in poverty, vulnerable women, children, persons with mental and/or physical disabilities, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Non-binary, Intersex and Queer (LGBTIQ) people, Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities as well as other minority groups. At project level, the Rights Based Approach will be included in the design of the Guidelines for individual Calls, assessed during the evaluation of proposals, and implemented throughout the programme including through specific capacity building activities (e.g. in the framework of resource centre, support to local activism, TACSO).

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

The Programmes' design has been consulted (with support of TACSO) with civil society and media organisations and with other relevant stakeholders in Kosovo such as representatives of government, international organisations and the donor community. The programme encompasses several layers of engagement with civil society. At programme's level, regular consultations are organised by TACSO and the resource centre in order to assess the needs of civil society and media actors, and measure the impact of the EU assistance against the indicators of the EU Guidelines for support to civil society for the period 2021-2027. Thematic consultations with civil society and the EU are organised with the support of the resource centre on the basis of a publicly shared calendar of consultations events¹⁵. Framework partners and grant beneficiaries, as well as other civil society and media organisations, will be encouraged to strengthen the dialogue with the EU, particularly in relation the programming of IPA assistance, in preparation of the sub-committees meetings related to the Stabilisation and Association Agreement, as well as for the European Commission Kosovo report. Further consultations will take place during the implementation of the different programmes' activities in order to identify specific sectors, themes or issues to be targeted by call for proposals.

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

See above for the Rights based approach.

3.5. Conditions for implementation

The programme will be managed by the EU Office in Kosovo. Besides the adoption by the European Commission, there are no other conditions that need to be in place in order to implement the programme.

¹⁵ https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/kosovo/57455/consultations-civil-society-2019_en

3.6. Logical Framework

| Results | Results chain: Main expected results (maximum 10) | Indicators (at least one indicator per expected result) | Baselines (2020) | Targets (2025) | Sources of data (1 per indicator) | Assumptions |
|------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Impact | To strengthen participatory democracy and the EU integration and approximation process in Kosovo, through an enhanced contribution by civil society and media | <p>Kosovo score on the Freedom House Index on Freedom of the Net</p> <p>Voter turnout in latest Parliamentary elections</p> <p>Deliberative Democracy Index developed by V-Dem</p> | <p>Freedom House Index : 36/100</p> <p>Parliamentary election in 2021: 48,78%</p> <p>V-Dem Deliberative Democracy score: 0,416</p> | <p>Freedom House Index : 50/100</p> <p>Parliamentary election in 2025: 55%</p> <p>V-Dem Deliberative Democracy score: > 0.5</p> | Annual reports published by Freedom House International IDEA Voter Turnout Website; The V-Dem website includes data for individual indicators or countries; Regular Assessment of the Integrity Assessments available at transparency.org | <i>Not applicable</i> |
| Outcome 1 | A conducive environment for civil society to carry out its activities is implemented | <p>Status of enabling environment for Civil society, particularly with regard to small community/local organisations and civic initiatives</p> <p>Number of attacks on CSOs and their members (in forms of: threats, defamation, smear campaign, intimidation, harassment, hate speech on-line and off-line), and undertaken measures by the state institutions to protect;</p> <p>Status of the framework for public funding for CSOs</p> <p>Status of implementation of strategies for cooperation with CS, gender equality, youth, human rights.</p> | <p>Based on EU TACSO 3 Annual Monitoring Report 2020 (available in autumn 2021)</p> <p>No verbal attacks to journalists reported in 2020</p> <p>Approximately 16 physical and verbal attacks and cases of smear and intimidation (mainly to journalists). limited institutional response to protect activists and follow up cases</p> | <p>CSOs and civic initiatives are recognised by the law and can operate freely including without registering.</p> <p>Increased number of reported attacks/cases of intimidation; effective inter-institutional response</p> <p>Public institution support to CSOs is available and provided in a transparent, accountable, fair and</p> | <p>Commission reports, implementation of GAP III, TACSO annual monitoring report; CIVICUS Monitoring report</p> | <p>Commitment of public institutions, civil society to engage in dialogue and cooperation is maintained and further enhanced.</p> <p>The government has a genuine interest to engage in enhanced consultation with Civil Society and to consider input received.</p> <p>The government makes available relevant financial and human resources for implementations of Strategies related directly or involve indirectly civil society in policy reform.</p> <p>Consolidation of democratic institutions and processes continues and violent conflict is avoided.</p> |

| | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|--|---|---|--|--|---|
| | | | Little progress with the implementation of HR, GE and Youth. | non-discriminatory manner. Significant progress with the implementation of HR, GE and Youth strategy | | |
| Outcome 2 | The capacity and resilience of CSOs to carry out their activities effectively is reinforced | Number of government policies developed or revised with the civil society inputs participation, including through EU support Number of effective and institutionalised mechanisms for greater engagement by political and civic actors | Based on EU TACSO 3 Annual Monitoring Report 2020 (available in autumn 2021) | Increased number of policies developed through participation and inputs from CSOs Increased number of effective and institutionalised mechanisms at central and municipal level | Kosovo government report on public consultations; TACSO annual monitoring reports; other independent watchdogs; Public consultation meeting reports including Parliamentary Committee meetings or public hearings, meetings of political parties with CSOs or thematic roundtables with relevant line ministries to discuss draft laws and policies and Kosovo government actions plans. | Same as per outcome 1 |
| Outcome 3 | The enabling environment for free expression of media fostered | Status of media pluralism Public availability of data on media ownership | Ranking 2020 of reports without borders: 70/180 No data available on media ownership and concentration | Ranking 2020 of reports without borders:60/180 Publicly available data on media ownership and concentration | Reporters without Borders Annual Press Freedom Index; CoE reports on freedom of expression; other Experts' analysis | The pluralistic media environment does not deteriorate, and freedom of expression is not restricted or limited by laws or regulations |
| Output 1 (outcome 1) | Increased participation of civil society organisations in policy making and cooperation with authorities | Percentage of CSOs using participatory approaches in advocacy, actively cooperating with local and /or central level institutions Kosovo score according to the CIVICUS Monitor Progress with the implementation of the government-civil society cooperation strategy | Based on EU TACSO 3 Annual Monitoring Report 2020 (available in autumn 2021) CIVICUS 2020: narrowed | Increased percentage of CSOs using participatory approaches in advocacy, actively cooperating with local and /or central level institutions CIVICUS 2025: open | Annual CIVICUS Monitor; Commission reports and other expert report (e.g. TACSO Monitoring report) | Same as per outcome 1 and 2 |

| | | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|--|---|---|---|---|------------------------------------|
| <p>Output 2 (outcome 2)</p> | <p>Strengthened capacities and opportunities of organisations for participation in decision-making</p> | <p>Number of members of CSOs trained on analytical/ advocacy/negotiation skills); governance standards, transparency and accountability towards intended beneficiaries, constituencies, and social bases (disaggregated by gender);</p> <p>% of public institutions that include CSOs in decision and policy-making process and acknowledge the importance of CSOs in improving good governance</p> <p>Number of CSO representatives trained by this Action on gender equality and women's and girl's rights (disaggregated by gender)</p> | <p>Based on EU TACSO 3 Annual Monitoring Report 2020 (available in autumn 2021)</p> | <p>Increased number of CSOs' staff trained</p> <p>Increased % of public institutions including CSOs indecision and policy-making</p> <p>Increased number of CS representatives trained on Gender equality and women's rights, out of which % women</p> | <p>Reports from project implementation and related trainings; report on public consultations of Kosovo government; Commission reports; Monitoring reports of the EU CSGL 2021-27;</p> | <p>Same as per outcome 1 and 2</p> |
| <p>Output 3 (outcome 2)</p> | <p>Strengthened capacities, increased transparency and accountability of CSOs</p> | <p>Percentage of CSOs publishing their organisational structure and internal documents statutes, financial regulations, rulebooks, codes of conduct etc.), including gender and environmental policies;</p> <p>Status of sub-sector or sector-wide initiative for self-regulation in the area of transparency and accountability;</p> <p>Number of CSOs taking part in local, Kosovo wide, regional and international networks and cases of cross-sectorial partnership (academia, private sector)</p> <p>percentage of CSOs using stakeholder analysis and feedback mechanisms from constituency/members</p> | <p>Based on EU TACSO 3 Annual Monitoring Report 2020 (available in autumn 2021)</p> | <p>Increased percentage of CSOs publishing their organisational structure, internal regulations and policies</p> <p>At least 2 implemented codes of conduct or other self-regulatory transparency and accountability initiatives</p> <p>Increased number of CSOs members of local, regional and international networks and cross-sectorial partnerships</p> <p>Increases percentage of CSOs using stakeholder analysis and feedback</p> | <p>CSO monitoring reports; Civicus Civil Society Index; sector needs assessments;</p> | <p>Same as per outcome 1 and 2</p> |

| | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|--|---|--|--|---|---|
| | | | | mechanisms from constituency/members | | |
| Output 4 (Outcome 3) | Enhanced professional capacity of journalists and media actors; enhanced transparency of media ownership and finance | <p>Percentage of journalists trained on ethical and professional standards for investigative reporting</p> <p>Percentage of media outlets adhering to international, self-regulatory or other publicly available code of ethics and/or professional standards</p> <p>Share of media outlets that provide open access to key data about corporate governance and finances (e.g. ownership structure, income received from the Kosovo government, financing sources, balance sheets, market share, etc.</p> | Based on TACSO or other EU funded Media monitoring (available in 2021 or early 2022) | <p>50% Increased percentage of journalists trained on ethical and professional standards</p> <p>30% Increased percentage of media outlets adhering to code of ethics and/or professional standards</p> <p>50% of media outlets provide open access to key data about corporate governance and finances</p> | Commission reports; CoE reports;; TACSO monitoring report; Independent I.O. and/or Media observatory monitoring reports; other technical report on media freedom; project reports; IMC (regulator) reports. | The pluralistic media environment does not deteriorate, and freedom of expression is not restricted or limited by laws or regulations |
| Output 5 (Outcome 3) | Enhanced system for the protection and security of professional, non-professional and citizen journalists | Number of Human Rights Defenders (HRDs), professional, non-professional and citizen journalists receiving protection and/or assistance from projects under this Action (disaggregated by gender) | n/a | >2000 professional and non-professional journalists supported (disaggregated by gender) | Independent assessment by II.OO. and/or regional CSOs; Human Rights Defenders Mechanism; Commission reports | The pluralistic media environment does not deteriorate, and freedom of expression is not restricted or limited by laws or regulations |

4. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

4.1. Financing agreement

In order to implement this action, it is not foreseen to conclude a financing agreement with Kosovo government.

4.2. Implementation modalities

The Commission will ensure that the EU appropriate rules and procedures for providing financing to third parties are respected, including review procedures, where appropriate, and compliance of the action with EU restrictive measures¹⁶.

4.2.1. Direct Management (Grants)

Grants: (direct management)

1. Framework Partnership Agreements

(a) Purpose of the grant(s)

The purpose of the grants is to support the annual work programmes of the organisations that have signed the Framework Partnership Agreements (FPAs) in 2019 following a call for proposals (publication reference: EuropeAid/162866/DD/FPA/XK); as well as those that will result from a new call for Framework Partnerships and associated grants for implementation which will be launched in 2024. This activity will contribute to achieving *Output 1: Increased participation of civil society organisations in policy making and cooperation with authorities; and Output 2: Strengthened capacities and opportunities of organisations for participation in decision-making.*

(b) Type of applicants targeted

For the operating grants supporting the Framework partnership agreements signed in 2019 the applicants targeted are civil society organisation selected under the Call for Proposals for Framework Partnership Agreements and associated annual operating grants concluded in 2019 with publication reference: EuropeAid/162866/DD/FPA/XK

For the operating grants supporting the Framework partnership agreements that will result from the call for such agreements to be carried out in 2024, the applicants targeted are non-profit civil society organisation with legal personality.

2. Civil society resilience and sustainability.

(a) Purpose of the grant(s)

The purpose of the grant(s) is to support to the sustainability and resilience of civil society organisations (in various sectors) through innovative approaches to participatory democracy. These grant(s) contribute to achieving *Output 1: Increased participation of civil society organisations in policy making and cooperation with authorities and Output 2: Strengthened capacities and opportunities of organisation for participation in decision-making*

(b) Type of applicants targeted

The applicants targeted should have legal personality, are non-profit, and civil society organisations.

¹⁶ www.sanctionsmap.eu Please note that the sanctions map is an IT tool for identifying the sanctions regimes. The source of the sanctions stems from legal acts published in the Official Journal (OJ). In case of discrepancy between the published legal acts and the updates on the website it is the OJ version that prevails.

3. *Support to local governance and activism*

(a) Purpose of the grant(s)

The purpose of the grant(s) is to support to community based organisations and informal groups through small-grants matched with mentoring and a capacity building programme. These grant(s) contribute to achieving *Output 1: Increased participation of civil society organisations in policy making and cooperation with authorities* and *Output 2: Strengthened capacities and opportunities of organisation for participation in decision-making*

(b) Type of applicants targeted

The applicants targeted should have legal personality, are non-profit, and civil society organisations.

4. *Civil society resource centre phase III*

(a) Purpose of the grant(s)

The purpose of the grant is to strengthen the effectiveness of civil society's work through a mix of support services, capacity building, support to consultations and advocacy initiatives at central and local level. This grant contributes to achieving *Output 3: Strengthened capacities, increased transparency and accountability of CSOs*.

(b) Type of applicants targeted

The applicants targeted should have legal personality, are non-profit, and civil society organisations.

5. *Thematic Coalitions and networks*

(a) Purpose of the grant(s)

The purpose of the grants is to support partnerships and networks of civil society and media organisations operating in Kosovo with the aim to unleash the potential and effectiveness of a more integrated and collective approach to advocacy. This grant contributes to achieving *Output 3: Strengthened capacities, increased transparency and accountability of CSOs*

(b) Type of applicants targeted

The applicants targeted should have legal personality, are non-profit, and civil society and/or media organisations.

6. *Journalism: resources for ethical, professional and labour standards*

a) Purpose of the grant(s)

The purpose of the grant(s) is to promote professional, ethical and labour standards of media professionals and to protect journalists from any form of intimidation and attacks. This grant(s) equally contributes to achieving *Output 4: Enhanced professional capacity of journalists and media actors; enhanced transparency of media ownership and finance*, and to *Output 5: Enhanced system for the protection and security of professional, non-professional and citizen journalists*.

(b) Type of applicants targeted

The applicants targeted should have legal personality, are non-profit, and civil society and/or media organisations.

7. *Media resilience, access to information and pluralism*

a) Purpose of the grant(s)

The purpose of the grant(s) is to strengthen the resilience and sustainability of non-mainstream media representing minority and/or vulnerable groups with a focus on investigative reporting, access to public information, cultural, social, environmental and human rights issues. This grant(s) equally contributes to achieving *Output 4: Enhanced*

professional capacity of journalists and media actors; enhanced transparency of media ownership and finance, and to Output 5: Enhanced system for the protection and security of professional, non-professional and citizen journalists.

(b) Type of applicants targeted

The applicants targeted should have legal personality, are organisations operating in the media sector including civil society non-profit organisations, commercial media outlets and/or public media broadcasts.

4.2.2. Direct Management (Procurement)

The procurement will contribute to the achievement of outcome 1, 2 and 3.

4.4. Scope of geographical eligibility for procurement and grants

The geographical eligibility in terms of place of establishment for participating in procurement and grant award procedures and in terms of origin of supplies purchased as established in the basic act and set out in the relevant contractual documents shall apply.

The Commission’s authorising officer responsible may extend the geographical eligibility on the basis of urgency or of unavailability of services in the markets of the countries or territories concerned, or in other duly substantiated cases where application of the eligibility rules would make the realisation of this action impossible or exceedingly difficult.

4.5. Indicative budget

| | EU contribution 2021 (EUR) | EU contribution 2022 (EUR) | EU contribution 2023 (EUR) | Indicative third party contribution, (EUR) |
|---|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|--|
| Outputs 1: Increased participation of civil society organisations in policy making and cooperation with authorities and Output 2: Strengthened capacities and opportunities of organisation for participation in decision-making | | | | |
| <i>Direct management (Grants) – cf section 4.2.1 :</i> | | | | |
| - Framework Partnerships (300 000 from budget year 2022, and 400 000 from budget year 2023); | | 300 000 | 400 000 | 70 000 |
| - Civil society resilience and sustainability (EUR 1 000 000 from budget year 2021, and EUR 1 000 000 from budget year 2023); | 1 000 000 | | 1 000 000 | 200 000 |
| - Support to local governance and activism (EUR 1 000 000 from budget year 2023). | | | 1 000 000 | 100 000 |
| Output 3: Strengthened capacities, increased transparency and accountability of CSOs | | | | |
| <i>Direct management (Grants) – cf section 4.2.1 :</i> | | | | |
| - Civil society resource centre phase III (EUR 500 000 from budget year 2023); | | | 500 000 | 50 000 |

| | | | | |
|---|-----------|---------|-----------|---------|
| - Thematic Coalitions and networks (EUR 1 000 000 from budget year 2023) | | | 1 000 000 | 100 000 |
| Output 4: Enhanced professional capacity of journalists and media actors; enhanced transparency of media ownership and finance, and Output 5: Enhanced system for the protection and security of professional, non-professional and citizen journalists. | | | | |
| <i>Direct management (Grants) – cf section 4.2.1 :</i> | | | | |
| - Journalism: resources for ethical, professional and labour standards (EUR 1 000 000 from budget year 2021); | 1 000 000 | | | |
| - Media resilience, access to information and pluralism (EUR 1 000 000 from budget year 2023) | | | 1 000 000 | |
| <i>Direct management (Procurement) – cf. section 4.2.2 (EUR 50 000 from budget year 2022)</i> | | 50 000 | | |
| Grants – total envelope under section 4.2.1: 7 200 000 | 2 000 000 | 300 000 | 4 900 000 | 720 000 |
| Procurement – total envelope under section 4.2.2 50 000 | | 50 000 | | N.A. |
| Totals 7 250 000 | 2 000 000 | 350 000 | 4 900 000 | 720 000 |

4.6. Organisational set-up and responsibilities

The main institutional stakeholders involved in the management and implementation of this action are as follows:

EU Office in Kosovo

All contracts awarded under this action will be managed by the EU Office in Kosovo as Contracting Authority. Regular donor coordination meetings organised jointly by the EU Office in Kosovo and Sida will continue to function as a platform for exchange of information, feedbacks related to the activities of the programme and exchange good practices, this will contribute to further increase oversight of the assistance during implementation.

Civil society and media organisations

Civil society and media organisations will be the main beneficiaries of the financial assistance provided through this action. In addition, the EU Office in Kosovo maintains regular contact with CSOs throughout the year through a calendar of consultations with civil society published on the EUOK website. Consultations are held in preparation of the sub-committees in the framework of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement, to discuss and gather inputs for the Kosovo Annual Report and for the monitoring of the European Reform Programme. In addition the EUOK liaises regularly with the CS Resource Centre, TACSO as well as with the members of the Kosovo government-civil society Council.

Resources Centres and TACSO

The Technical Assistance to Civil Society Organisations in the Western Balkans and Turkey (TACSO) is a multi-country project that started in 2019 with the general objective to strengthen the overall capacity and accountability of CSOs within IPA beneficiaries and provide services for a sustainable role of CSOs in the democratic process. The

regional scope of TACSO is complemented by the civil society resource centres managed by local CSOs identified through calls for proposals. The resource Centre supports development of the sector in Kosovo and enhances cooperation between civil society organisations, donor community, Kosovo institutions and other relevant stakeholders.

Office of Good Governance/Prime Minister's Office

The programme contributes to the Kosovo Strategy for Cooperation with Civil Society 2019-2023. The government body responsible for coordinating, monitoring and reporting on the strategy is the Office for Good Governance (OGG), within the Office of Prime Minister. Technical assistance is currently provided through TACSO from the CSF 2018-2019 to the OGG as well as to the joint CS–Government Cooperation Council for the implementation of the strategy.

The Council for Government Cooperation with Civil Society

The Council for Government Cooperation with Civil Society is the main mechanism that coordinates the cooperation between government and civil society. The Council consists of 29 of which 14 representatives from institutions and 15 representatives from civil society. Thematic working groups regularly monitor the implementation of different pillars of the cooperation strategy while the mechanism is co-chaired by the Secretary General at the Office of Prime Minister by the Executive Director of Civikos platform, which is the largest network of civil society organisations in Kosovo. The mandate of the Council includes advisory and consultative functions in relations to draft legal acts, strategies and other documents affecting the work and development of CSOs, with the aim of creating more enabling environment for civil society in Kosovo all aspects of cooperation between government and civil society including. The Council also provides opinion on the annual reports of Kosovo government on distribution of public funds for supporting sustainability of CSOs programs and project. Council members as well as other CSOs will be invited to public consultations during the preparation of calls for proposals.

5. PERFORMANCE/RESULTS MONITORING AND REPORTING

5.1. Internal monitoring

Performance will be measured against the indicators set out in the log frame matrix and the specific indicators laid out in the *Guidelines for EU support to civil society in enlargement countries 2021-2027* and the *Guidelines for EU support to media freedom and media integrity in enlargement countries 2014-2020*.

The main means of measurement is the level of compliance with the European standards in the area of fundamental freedoms and civil society by the IPA beneficiary. Apart from the compliance level indicator, other sources of monitoring can also give a qualitative assessment of the progress made. Such sources include the enlargement package, Peer Reviews, reports from the contracts and grants.

In addition, the Action might be subject to external monitoring in line with the European Commission rules and procedures set in the Financing Agreement.

Other related technical assistance teams, if possible, could provide pre and post-grant implementation-related training to beneficiaries. TACSO and the Resource Center could also support the EU in monitoring the execution of the project by monitoring of the implementation of individual grants. Monitoring of sub-grant schemes for civil society organisations will be assisted with inputs from on-site visits conducted by external consultants, including monitoring services contracted under the programme 2018-2019. A mid-term evaluation of framework partnerships awarded in 2019 will be launched in 2022 in order to obtain feedback information for their continuation and and lessons for the next phase of support through FPAs.

The impact of the Programme will be monitored also against the indicators related to the implementation of the Kosovo government strategy for cooperation with civil society for the period 2019-2023. The Strategy and its action plan pursue enabling environment for CSOs, civic participation and engagement of civil society for better governance particularly at local level. The strategy is supported by a roadmap, a detailed budget and a performance measurement matrix.

5.2. Roles & responsibilities for data collection, analysis & reporting

The day-to-day technical and financial monitoring of the implementation of this EU financial contribution will be a continuous process and part of the grant beneficiary's responsibilities. To this aim, the implementing partner shall establish a permanent internal, technical and financial monitoring system and elaborate, within the framework of each successive grant, regular reporting, including progress (if considered relevant) and final reports. Every report shall provide an accurate account of implementation of the corresponding work programme, difficulties encountered, changes introduced, as well as the degree of achievement of its results (outputs and direct outcomes) as measured by indicators. The reports shall be laid out in such a way as to allow monitoring of the means envisaged and employed and of the budget details for the implementation of the successive work programmes. The final reports, narrative and financial, will cover the entire financial year of the corresponding work programme.

5.3. Evaluation

Having regard to the importance of the action, a mid-term evaluation will be carried out for this action or its components contracted by the Commission.

It will be carried out for problem solving and learning purposes, in particular with respect to the programming of next Civil Society Facility and Media Programmes on 2024 and onwards.

The Commission shall inform the implementing partner at least 1 month in advance of the dates foreseen for the evaluation missions. The implementing partner shall collaborate efficiently and effectively with the evaluation experts, and inter alia provide them with all necessary information and documentation, as well as access to the project premises and activities.

The evaluation reports shall be shared with the partner beneficiary and other key stakeholders. The implementing partner and the Commission shall analyse the conclusions and recommendations of the evaluations and, where appropriate, in agreement with the partner beneficiary, jointly decide on the follow-up actions to be taken and any adjustments necessary, including, if indicated, the reorientation of the project.

The financing of the evaluation shall be covered by another measure constituting a financing Decision.

6. AUDIT

Without prejudice to the obligations applicable to contracts concluded for the implementation of this action, the Commission may, on the basis of a risk assessment, contract independent audits or expenditure verification assignments for one or several contracts or agreements.

The financing of the audit shall be covered by another measure constituting a financing Decision.

7. COMMUNICATION AND VISIBILITY

Visibility of EU funding and communication about objectives and impact of Actions are a legal obligation for all Actions funded by the EU, as set out in the EU communication and visibility requirements in force.

In particular, the recipients of EU funding shall acknowledge the origin of the EU funding and ensure its proper visibility by:

- providing a statement highlighting the support received from the EU in a visible manner on all documents and communication material relating to the implementation of the funds, including on an official website and social media accounts, where these exist; and
- promoting the actions and their results by providing coherent, effective and proportionate targeted information to multiple audiences, including the media.

Visibility and communication measures shall be implemented, as relevant, by Kosovo administrations (for instance, concerning the reforms linked to EU budget support), entrusted entities, contractors and grant beneficiaries. Appropriate contractual obligations shall be included, respectively, in financing agreements, delegation agreements, and procurement and grant contracts.

The measures shall be based on a specific Communication and Visibility Plan, established and implemented in line with the EU communication and visibility requirements in force. The plan shall include, inter alia, a communication narrative and master messages for the Action, customised for the various target audiences (stakeholders, civil society, general public, etc.)

Visibility and communication measures specific to this Action shall be complementary to the broader communication activities implemented directly by the European Commission services and/or the EU Office. The European Commission and the EU Office should be fully informed of the planning and implementation of the specific visibility and communication activities, notably with respect to the communication narrative and master messages.

If the Action includes Union programmes, visibility and communication measures shall be implemented in accordance with the EU communication and visibility requirements in force and the specific rules of each Union programme. The relevant programme managing entity shall be responsible for monitoring the visibility and communication activities. The European Commission and the EU Delegation Office should be fully informed of the planning and implementation of the specific visibility and communication activities.

8. SUSTAINABILITY

In order to achieve sustainability beyond the implementation period, the design of the action will take into account the following:

The financial assistance will be delivered in an appropriate mix of funding instruments to respond to different types of civil society and media organisations in a flexible, transparent, cost-effective and results focused manner which takes into account the administrative capacity of the EU Office in Kosovo. This approach will entail action grants to civil society and media resilience through project type interventions; support to long-term partnerships based on mission and shared objectives; more efforts to reach out to and strengthen community based local organisations; non-traditional civil society actors such as informal groups of activists and individuals will be targeted through re-granting and/or flexible support mechanisms to respond to their immediate needs.

The sustainability of the programme's output will be achieved also through capacity building aiming to develop skills for long-term strategic planning and management, including fundraising strategies, partnerships with businesses and income generation; progress with the strategy for cooperation between civil society and Kosovo government will entail more favourable taxation for donations to NGOs and better and more transparent management of public funding available for civil society and media; strengthened civil society and media coalitions with capacities to implement long-term advocacy actions based on shared goals and results; cooperation between media, civil society and other actors, such as academia and business to promote innovative and sustainable approaches to advocacy and participatory democracy; capacities for more effective engagement of citizens including through communication, provision of services, volunteering and facilitated access to public information.