



**EN**

**THIS ACTION IS FUNDED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION**

**ANNEX 2**

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 Türkiye for 2024-2025

**Action Document for “EU Civil Society Facility and Media Programme for the Republic of Albania 2024-2025”**

**MULTIANNUAL ACTION PLAN**

This document constitutes the multiannual work programme in the sense of Article 110(2) of the Financial Regulation, and annual and multiannual action plans and measures in the sense of Article 9 of IPA III Regulation and Article 23(2) of NDICI - Global Europe Regulation.

**1. SYNOPSIS**

**1.1. Action Summary Table**

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Title</b>                                 | <b>EU Civil Society Facility and Media Programme for the Republic of Albania 2024-2025</b><br>Multi-country multiannual action plan on an EU Civil Society Facility and Media Programme in favour of the Western Balkans and Türkiye for 2024-2025 |
| <b>OPSYS</b>                                 | OPSYS business reference: ACT-62280  |
| <b>ABAC</b>                                  | ABAC Commitment level 1 number:<br>JAD.1299145 (allocation 2024)<br>JAD.1299146 (allocation 2025)  |
| <b>Basic Act</b>                             | Financed under the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA III)   |
| <b>Economic and Investment Plan (EIP)</b>    | No   |
| <b>EIP Flagship</b>                          | No   |
| <b>Team Europe</b>                           | No   |
| <b>Beneficiary(y)/(ies) of the action</b>    | The action shall be carried out in Albania.  |
| <b>Programming document</b>                  | IPA III Programming Framework  |
| <b>PRIORITY AREAS AND SECTOR INFORMATION</b> |  |

|   |   |                          |                                     |                                     |
|---|---|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>Window and thematic priority</b>         | <p><b>Window 1: Rule of Law, Fundamental Rights and Democracy (40%)</b><br/> Thematic Priority 2: Fight against corruption<br/> Thematic Priority 5: Fundamental rights<br/> Thematic Priority 6: Democracy<br/> Thematic Priority 7: Civil Society</p> <p><b>Window 2: Good Governance EU acquis alignment, good neighbourly relations and strategic communication (30%)</b><br/> Thematic Priority 1: Good governance</p> <p><b>Window 3: Green agenda and sustainable connectivity (20%)</b><br/> Thematic Priority 1: Environment and climate change</p> <p><b>Window 4: Competitiveness and inclusive growth (10%)</b><br/> Thematic Priority 3: Agriculture and rural development</p> |                          |                                     |                                     |
| <b>Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)</b> | <p><b>Main SDG:</b> Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions</p> <p><b>Other significant SDGs:</b></p> <p>Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture</p> <p>Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.</p> <p>Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns</p> <p>Goal 15: Protect, restore, promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity.</p>   |                          |                                     |                                     |
| <b>DAC code(s)</b>                          | <p>Main DAC codes:</p> <p>15150 Democratic participation and civil society (40 %)</p> <p>41010 - Environmental policy and administrative management (20%)</p> <p>15153- Media (15%)</p> <p>16066 - Culture (15%)</p> <p>43073 - Food safety and quality (10%)</p>   |                          |                                     |                                     |
| <b>Main Delivery Channel</b>                | 23000 - Developing country-based NGO  |                          |                                     |                                     |
| <b>Targets</b>                              | <input type="checkbox"/> Climate<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gender<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Biodiversity  |                          |                                     |                                     |
| <b>Markers (from DAC form)</b>              | <b>General policy objective</b>   | <b>Not targeted</b>      | <b>Significant objective</b>        | <b>Principal objective</b>          |
|   | Participation development/good governance   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
|   | Aid to environment  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
|   | Gender equality and women's and girl's empowerment  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            |

**Internal markers  
and Tags**

|  |                                     |                                     |                            |
|--|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 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"/>   |
| <b>RIO Convention markers</b>  | <b>Not targeted</b>                 | <b>Significant objective</b>        | <b>Principal objective</b> |
| Biological diversity   | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" 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"/>   |
| <b>Policy objectives</b>   | <b>Not targeted</b>                 | <b>Significant objective</b>        | <b>Principal objective</b> |
| EIP  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/>   |
| EIP Flagship   | YES<br><input type="checkbox"/>     |                                     | NO<br>X                    |
| Tags:  | YES                                 |                                     | NO                         |
| Transport  | <input type="checkbox"/>            |                                     | <input type="checkbox"/>   |
| Energy   | <input type="checkbox"/>            |                                     | <input type="checkbox"/>   |
| Environment and climate resilience   | <input type="checkbox"/>            |                                     | <input type="checkbox"/>   |
| Digital  | <input type="checkbox"/>            |                                     | <input type="checkbox"/>   |
| Economic development (incl. private sector, trade and macroeconomic support) | <input type="checkbox"/>            |                                     | <input type="checkbox"/>   |
| Human Development (incl. human capital and youth)                            | <input type="checkbox"/>            |                                     | <input type="checkbox"/>   |
| Health resilience  | <input type="checkbox"/>            |                                     | <input type="checkbox"/>   |
| Migration and mobility   | <input type="checkbox"/>            |                                     | <input type="checkbox"/>   |
| Agriculture, food security and rural development                             | <input type="checkbox"/>            |                                     | <input type="checkbox"/>   |
| Rule of law, governance and Public Administration reform                     | <input type="checkbox"/>            |                                     | <input type="checkbox"/>   |
| Other  | <input type="checkbox"/>            |                                     | <input type="checkbox"/>   |

|                           |                                     |                          |                                     |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Digitalisation            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Tags                      | YES                                 |                          | NO                                  |
| digital connectivity      | <input type="checkbox"/>            |                          | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| digital governance        | <input type="checkbox"/>            |                          | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| digital entrepreneurship  | <input type="checkbox"/>            |                          | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| digital skills/literacy   | <input type="checkbox"/>            |                          | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| digital services          | <input type="checkbox"/>            |                          | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Connectivity              | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Tags                      | YES                                 |                          | NO                                  |
| digital connectivity      | <input type="checkbox"/>            |                          | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| energy                    | <input type="checkbox"/>            |                          | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| transport                 | <input type="checkbox"/>            |                          | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| health                    | <input type="checkbox"/>            |                          | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| education and research    | <input type="checkbox"/>            |                          | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Migration                 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Reduction of Inequalities | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| COVID-19                  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            |

#### BUDGET INFORMATION

|                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| <b>Amounts concerned</b> | <p>Budget line: 15.020101.01</p> <p>Total estimated cost: <b>EUR 6 720 000</b></p> <p>Total amount of EU budget contribution: <b>EUR 6 400 000</b></p> <p>The contribution is for an amount of <b>EUR 2 000 000</b> from the general budget of the European Union for financial year <b>2024</b> and for an amount of <b>EUR 4 400 000</b> from the general budget of the European Union for financial year <b>2025</b>, 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.</p> <p>This action is co-financed in joint co-financing by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Selected implementing partners (minimum 5% co-financing) for an indicative amount of <b>EUR 320.000</b>.</li> </ul> |
|--------------------------|--|

#### MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Implementation modalities (management mode and delivery methods)</b> | <p><b>Direct management</b> through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Grants</li> </ul>                 |
| <b>Final date for concluding grant contracts</b>                        | <p>For 2024 Budget: At the latest by 31 December 2025</p> <p>For 2025 Budget: At the latest by 31 December 2026</p> |
| <b>Indicative operational</b>   | For 2024 Budget: 72 months following the adoption of the Financing Decision   |

|                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| <b>implementation period</b> | For 2025 Budget: 84 months following the adoption of the Financing Decision |
|------------------------------|---|

## 1.2. Summary of the Action

The overall objective of the action is to enhance participatory democracy in Albania and support the EU integration process through the reinforcement of the role and capacities of civil society and media organisations. The action will support a more enabling environment for civil society in general and also focus on specific priority policy areas in which meaningful and systemic consultation with civil society is of primary importance in the EU integration process and in particular in the accession negotiations. The role of civil society and media organisations is especially necessary in the accession negotiations to increase transparency and integrity through monitoring and reporting, where the civil society involvement has been weak or absent or where such involvement can bring significant gains.

Six priority areas have been identified:

- i) Support to the National Resource Centre for CSOs (NRC)
- ii) Food Safety and Consumer Protection
- iii) Culture
- iv) Environment,
- v) Good Governance
- vi) Media.

The action will increase the role and capacities of civil society and media organisations to be effective, transparent, accountable and independent drivers of change able to influence, monitor, and advocate on food safety and consumer protection issues, cultural issues, environmental and conservation issues, good governance principles at central and local levels. The action will contribute to the accountability and active participation of media in democratic reforms and increase their capacities of media/journalists to contribute to public debate.

### 1.3 Beneficiar(y)/(ies) of the Action

The action shall be carried out in Albania.

## 2. RATIONALE

### 2.1. Context

In mid-2022 Albania entered a new phase in its path towards EU accession. Following the 2020 Council decision to open the accession negotiations and the first intergovernmental conference held on 19th July 2022, the screening of EU laws (*acquis*) had started and has been completed.

Civil society plays an important role in the EU negotiation process to ensure that citizens have sufficient influence on and ownership of the reforms leading to EU accession. Media play a key role in providing accurate, reliable information to foster people's understanding and ensure informed participation in public debate. In the accession context, the effectiveness of civil society is assessed as part of the political criteria under the “*Functioning of Democratic Institutions*”. Freedom of expression and media freedom are assessed under Cluster 1 “*Fundamentals*”, in particular under Chapter 23 “*Justice and Fundamental Rights*” and also under Chapter 10 “*Information Society and Media*”.

Civil society and media organisations in Albania already play an important role to promote democratic debate, to protect fundamental rights and equality, as well as to contribute to key sectoral reforms. Their engagement

already ensures the participation of citizens to the decision making process, through consultations and civic participation. However, their engagement needs to be further supported to be more effective, more inclusive and more transparent both at central and local level. Civil society needs to fully contribute with its expertise and knowledge to all processes and in all areas covered by the *acquis* from policy creation to monitoring. Media have to be able to operate freely and independently to contribute in a qualitative way to the public debate.

The main national strategic document for the civil society sector is the **Roadmap for the Albanian Government Policy towards a More Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development 2019-2023** (hereafter “the Roadmap”)<sup>1</sup>. The Roadmap translates the **Guidelines for EU Support to Civil Society in Enlargement countries 2014-2020**<sup>2</sup>. The implementation of the Roadmap has remained overall weak and its implementation largely dependent of donor support. The Government of Albania (GoA) plans to prepare a new Roadmap in line with the **revised DG NEAR Guidelines for EU Support to Civil Society in the Enlargement Region 2021-2027**<sup>3</sup>. The upcoming regulations (media freedom act, digital service act, anti-slapp directive, etc.) as well as the Commission reports are the guiding documents for the future policy dialogue and assistance in the media sector.

In terms of support to civil society in general, this action aims to address one of the strategic priorities of the Roadmap, a stronger engagement of CSOs in public policy processes through evidence-based advocacy and close monitoring of reforms. It is also in line with the **Albania IPA III Strategic Response**<sup>4</sup> under Window 1 - Rule of Law, Fundamental Rights and Democracy - Thematic Priority 7: Civil Society. In terms of support to specific sectors, this action will address strategic priorities across Windows 1-4. By focusing on these sectors, the action is in line with the **EU-Western Balkans Strategy**<sup>5</sup>. It is also in line with the **European Green Deal**<sup>6</sup> and will support the **Green Agenda for the Western Balkans**<sup>7</sup>. In addition, the action is aligned with the national policies and strategies in the identified areas of support<sup>8</sup>. While the action is not linked to the Economic Reform Program, by fostering civil society support, it could indirectly contribute to the implementation of Policy Guidance 6 (economic integration reform). Further direct contributions will depend on the lots of the calls and ultimately on which CSOs will be awarded grants.

In terms of complementarity with EU bilateral assistance, this action will complement the ongoing *IPA 2020 EU for Culture* aimed at the restoration and revitalisation of selected cultural heritage sites and *IPA 2020 EU for Municipalities* aimed at supporting the municipalities in their efforts towards EU integration, good governance and local economic development. It will complement the upcoming *IPA 2020 EU for Good Governance* aimed at supporting reforms in the good governance area (PAR/PFM/decentralisation/anti-corruption/digitalisation) and *IPA 21 EU for Nature* aimed at increasing the protection of biodiversity and conservation of nature in Protected Areas and *IPA 2021 EU for Circular Economy and Green Growth* aimed at steering Albania towards a circular economy. It will also complement the upcoming *IPA 2022 EU for*

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://amshc.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Udherrefyesi-2019-rishikuar.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> [https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/guidelines-eu-support-civil-society-enlargement-countries-2014-2020\\_en](https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/guidelines-eu-support-civil-society-enlargement-countries-2014-2020_en)

<sup>3</sup> <https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-10/EU-Guidelines-for-Support-to-Civil-Society-in-the-Enlargement-region-2021-2027.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> [https://konsultimipublik.gov.al/documents/RENJK\\_348\\_RENJK\\_348\\_IPA%20III%20DRAFT%20STRATEGIC%20RESPONSE%20ALBANIA\\_10%20May%202021.pdf](https://konsultimipublik.gov.al/documents/RENJK_348_RENJK_348_IPA%20III%20DRAFT%20STRATEGIC%20RESPONSE%20ALBANIA_10%20May%202021.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> COM (2018) 65 final. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS A credible enlargement perspective for and enhanced EU engagement with the Western Balkans, Strasbourg, 6.2.2018.

<sup>6</sup> COM (2019) 640 final. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS “The European Green Deal”, Brussels, 11.12.2019

<sup>7</sup> SWD (2020) 223 final. COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT “Guidelines for the Implementation of the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans Accompanying the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – An Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans”, Brussels, 6.10.2020

<sup>8</sup> In the field of good governance these are the Public Administration Reform (PAR) Strategy 2015-2020, the Public Finance Management (PFM) Strategy 2014-2020, the Inter-sectoral Strategy against Corruption 2015-2020, the National Cross-cutting Strategy for Decentralisation and Local Governance 2015-2020, and the Cross-cutting Strategy of Digital Agenda for Albania 2015-2020. In 2020 and 2021 these five strategies and their related action plans were extended until end 2022 and new strategies are being developed. The action is aligned with the Strategy for Culture 2019-2025, the Sectoral Strategy of Agriculture, Rural Development and Fisheries 2021-2027, the National Biodiversity Strategy and its Action Plan 2015- 2022 (awaiting update) and the National Strategy on Climate Change 2019-2030.

*Democracy* aimed at supporting democratic governance and *IPA 2024 EU for Anti-Corruption* aimed at enhancing the rule of law. It will also complement future EU financial support in the context of the new growth plan for the Western Balkans<sup>9</sup>. Eventually, the action will ensure the timely follow-up to the EU support to the Albanian National Resource Centre for Civil Society Organisations (NRC) and will address for the first time the areas of food safety and consumers' protection.

It will also complement EU regional programmes such as the *Regional Programme on Local Democracy in the Western Balkans (ReLOaD)* and the *Technical Assistance to Civil Society Organisations (TACSO)*. It will complement the work and the sub-granting of the Western Balkans Fund as well as of the regional CSO networks supported through the multi-country CSF-MP. In the field of media, the action will complement the numerous EU-funded on-going regional projects.

In terms of complementarity with other donors' assistance in the identified sectors of support, the action will complement the support of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to media and EU integration, the Norwegian regional civil society programme SMART Balkans (2021-2025), the Austrian Development Agency national and regional support in the areas of social inclusion, policy dialogue and environment, the support of Sweden to Culture Heritage without Borders 2020-2023 and its follow-up, environment, anti-corruption, social inclusion and democracy, increasingly in the form of core support to selected partners. The action will complement the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation's Leviz Albania project supporting civil society and democracy.

## **2.2. Problem Analysis**

### **Area of support # 1 Support to the National Resource Centre for CSOs (NRC)**

#### Short problem analysis

The first National Resource Centre (NRC) for civil society in Albania was created in 2018. As Albania has now entered a new phase in its path towards EU accession (screening process completed and upcoming opening of negotiations), the key role played by the NRC as a well-known, recognised and trustworthy information and training platform for civil society in Albania needs to be further supported and developed. The Commission Report 2023<sup>10</sup> stresses that there has been no progress in the implementation of the roadmap on an enabling environment for civil society and that the institutionalised cooperation between civil society and the Government still needs to be strengthened to ensure meaningful participation of CSOs in decision-making processes, including in the context of the EU accession negotiations. It further notes that the ability of the National Council for Civil Society (NCCS) to voice priorities of CSOs in policy-making processes remains weak and that public funding remains insufficient to sustain CSOs' activities, in particular in social services.

#### Identification of main stakeholders and corresponding institutional and/or organisational issues (mandates, potential roles, and capacities) to be covered by the action

The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) is the responsible institution for the monitoring the implementation of the Roadmap by the line ministries and the state agencies involved. This role should be exercised in cooperation with the National Council for Civil Society Support (NCCS), the advisory body to the Council of Ministers bringing together representatives of civil society and government institutions. The NCCS is chaired by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection and is composed of 27 members (13 members from the Government,

---

<sup>9</sup> COM (2023) 691 final. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS "New growth plan for the Western Balkans", Brussels, 8.11.2023

<sup>10</sup> SWD (2023) 690 final. COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT "Albania 2023 Report Accompanying the document Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions 2023 Communication on EU Enlargement policy", Brussels, 8.11.2023

13 from the CSOs and one from the Economic Council). The ability of the NCCS to voice priorities of CSOs in policy-making processes is very weak. The NCCS does not meet regularly and suffers from lack of trust by CSOs. The National Agency for the Support of Civil Society (NASCS) is the main public body providing financial support for civil society, but public funding remains insufficient. In this context, the NRC remains a reference point for many CSOs in the country to get relevant and updated information on a wide range of topics from EU integration to funding opportunities, to be involved and connected with other CSOs and to get valuable services from help desks to capacity-building.

## **Area of support # 2 Food Safety and Consumer Protection**

### Short problem analysis

According to the Report 2023, “*Preparations are at an early stage in the area of consumer and health protection. There was only limited progress*”. Currently Albania is working on the adoption of a coherent sector policy and developing its legislative framework (official controls, animal health and plant health laws) in line with the EU acquis. The sector of food safety in Albania, including consumers’ protection, suffers from a very weak and to some extent even lack of organisation and representation of the different stakeholders. In particular, food producers are not supported by effective producer organisations and agricultural and food industry suppliers do not have strong representation. The fragmentation of food value chains and public institutional mandates and the absence of effective consumer and food business operator representation have negative consequences such as weak evidence base for country-level incidence of foodborne hazards and diseases, including animal health hazards and diseases, the economic cost of unsafe food, and the efficacy of food safety interventions. There is therefore a crucial need to engage in the field of food safety and address its under-representation by CSOs and consumers’ associations and almost absence from the public debate while the topic of food safety and consumers’ protection represent a significant part of the EU acquis.

### Identification of main stakeholders and corresponding institutional and/or organisational issues (mandates, potential roles, and capacities) to be covered by the action

The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and the National Food Authority are the responsible institutions to engage with consumers and provide accurate information and targeted messages on food safety. The sector of food safety in Albania, including consumers’ protection, suffers from the very weak organisation and representation of the different stakeholders. The absence of effective consumer and food business operator representation is a major challenge which the action will intend to remedy.

## **Area of support # 3 Culture**

### Short problem analysis

Albania has exceptionally rich and varied resources but much of its built heritage needs conservation and better protection. Intangible heritage is also threatened by increasingly rapid change. The National Strategy on Culture 2019-2025 seeks to place cultural heritage at the heart of Albania’s public life and sustainable development but enhancing local and national stakeholders’ and communities’ understanding of the role that cultural heritage can play in supporting sustainable development is one of the barriers that this sector is facing. While there is strong political will to develop cultural investments, there is insufficient understanding of the contribution of independent cultural centres, incubators, hubs to the cultural performance and of their potential to retain/attract talents and contribute to entrepreneurship. Currently, the cultural sector is not organised enough to be able to significantly influence policy making and raise awareness on the transformative power of culture and art and its positive impact on the local economic development.

Identification of main stakeholders and corresponding institutional and/or organisational issues (mandates, potential roles, and capacities) to be covered by the action

The Ministry of Culture (MoC) is the responsible institution for cultural development. It supports around 30 cultural institutions of national importance, regulates the cultural sector and takes measures to protect cultural heritage. The cultural and creative sectors are largely composed of small and medium size enterprises and individual entrepreneurs whose activities are financed through various and often combined public, private (business and individual donations) and non-profit sectors but statistical information on cultural industries (publishing, music and audio-visual including games) or creative industries (design, fashion, architecture) and their contribution to the economy, as well as figures on employment, are missing in Albania. CSOs in the field of culture will be the main non-governmental stakeholders.

## **Area of support # 4 Environment**

### Short problem analysis

Albania is considered a biodiversity hotspot in Europe. At the same time, Albania is confronted with a fast development trajectory and the development of mass tourism, often at odds with the best environmental standards. The 2023 Commission Report recognised that alignment with the EU acquis in the field of nature protection is advanced, however Albania needs to achieve full alignment and implementation in most areas of environment and climate change. In terms of horizontal legislation, Albania still needs to step up efforts to achieve full alignment and implementation in most areas. Implementation of the EU Directive on protecting the environment through criminal law needs to be improved, although convictions for environmental crime increased to 79 in 2022 (from 65 in 2021). The legislation on strategic investment raises concerns for the protection of biodiversity, as it may lead to large tourism and industrial investments in protected areas. The implementation of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)<sup>11</sup> and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)<sup>12</sup> Directives needs to be significantly improved with regard to concrete projects before construction and operation; especially in the case of Vlora Airport, which is being built within the Pisha Poro-Narta 121 Protected Area (former Vjosa-Narta Protected Area). In September 2023, the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention recommended to Albania to suspend the construction of Vlora Airport until a new and sufficient Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) procedure is conducted. The EIA quality and processes have to improve. Recommendations from EIAs are rarely implemented, and should be enforced and monitored. Public participation and consultation in decision-making need to be improved, particularly at local level. In general, the legal provisions and institutions are in place, but enforcement is still weak and inspections are not effective. As implementation of regulations/directives under the nature sub-chapter requires close cooperation with academia/universities and civil society organisations, appropriate mechanisms should be developed to guarantee their involvement and scientific contribution for the implementation process.

Identification of main stakeholders and corresponding institutional and/or organisational issues (mandates, potential roles, and capacities) to be covered by the action

The main stakeholders from the government side are the Ministry of Tourism and Environment (in charge of policy development on environment, waste management and climate change), National Environment Agency (in charge of permitting, monitoring and inspection, and data collection), National Agency for Protected Areas (in charge of the administration and control of all protected areas), and National Territorial Inspectorate (in charge of inspection and fining). Due to the limited capacities, including financial, of the state institutions and that deal with environmental issues, the Albanian environmental CSOs have sometimes substituted the state

---

<sup>11</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32011L0092>

<sup>12</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32001L0042>

institutions. Environmental CSOs, academia, and international bodies are the other main non-governmental stakeholders.

## **Area of support # 5 Good Governance**

### Short problem analysis

Albania started ambitious reforms to improve good governance addressing a wide range of complex and inter-connected issues in public administration reform, public finance management, rule of law, the fight against corruption as well as decentralisation and digitalisation. The 2023 Commission Report noted that “*Albania remains moderately prepared in the area of public administration reform. It made limited progress*”. It called for “*further efforts to ensure equitable access to services for people with limited digital skills or limited access to IT equipment*”, following the move to almost exclusive online service delivery since 2022. Public participation in the preparation, implementation and monitoring of legislative drafts, government policies, strategies and budgets should be further improved both at central and local level; despite important steps to formalise and digitise consultation mechanisms undertaken in recent years. The 2023 Report notes that “*the Consultative Council continues to operate as the main forum for institutional dialogue and coordination between central and local governments. Further efforts are needed to engage LGUs and the associations of local government in the early phases of legislative initiatives, and to intensify cooperation and coordination between local and central government. Appropriate levels of representation needs to be ensured*”. Elements of Albania’s public finance management strategy 2019-2022 are targeted towards CSOs’ capacity in areas such as budget oversight, participatory budgeting and gender responsive budgeting. Reforms in these areas have been started but need further support, and a clear pull from civil society. Also, the high level of corruption results in a low level of public trust in the public administration and the judiciary, which needs to be further addressed.

### Identification of main stakeholders and corresponding institutional and/or organisational issues (mandates, potential roles, and capacities) to be covered by the action

In the field of good governance, weaknesses exist in the overall institutional set-up, highly complex legislative framework, available human resources and managerial accountability. The main institutional stakeholders include the Prime Minister’s Office, Ministry of Finance and Economy; the Ministry of Justice also in its capacity as National Coordinator Against Corruption; the new Ministry for Local Government as coordinator for the decentralisation agenda; High Judicial and High Prosecutorial Councils as guarantors of justice system independence; the Department of Public Administration and Albanian School of Public Administration; the Commissioner for the Oversight of the Civil Service; the Commissioner for the Right to Information and Data Protection; several agencies such as the National Agency for Information Society in charge of almost all government IT development, integration and maintenance as well as the coordination of the Digital Agenda strategy; the Public Procurement Agency; the Central Inspectorate; the Agency of Self-Government Support; the Supreme Audit Institution. However, one of the main stakeholders for this particular action will not be the central government institutions but the municipalities. The main non-state actors comprise CSOs as well as think tanks, academia, research institutes, young people, universities, the private sector and those with an interest and influence in the sector such as development partners and the media.

## **Area of support # 6 Freedom of Expression and Media**

### Short problem analysis

There is a critical need to support civil society and media organisations in enhancing freedom of expression and independence of media, in the context of the EU integration process. Dialogue needs to be improved to further strengthen freedom of the media. According to the 2023 Report, the country is in between some and

moderate level of preparation in the area of freedom of expression. Limited progress was made. The independence of media and the quality of journalism remain hampered by the intersection of business and political interests. Disinformation campaigns are recurrent especially in online media. The reporting period saw cases of threats, intimidation, and online smear campaigns against journalists reporting on rule of law, corruption and justice issues. Albania needs to take concrete measures to ensure that European standards of freedom of expression and media are upheld. More stringent criteria regarding transparency of ownership and media funding are to be put in place, and the requirements on public broadcaster's independence, professional standards and financial sustainability shall be strengthened.

One of the most pressing issues for daily journalistic work continues to be the lack of transparency and access to information. Direct and indirect political and economic pressure on the media are recurrent, including by threats and violence against journalists who tried to investigate crime and corruption. Tensions between political actors and journalists have increased. The reported attacks against journalists have not resulted in any final convictions. Albania should ensure implementation of the Labour Code and strengthen the protection of Albanian journalists' labour and social rights. The difficult environment in which journalists are operating affect the integrity in reporting. Professional ethics were a low priority for some of the news portals in Albania, raising concerns over the spread of false news stories that benefited specific financial, political, and criminal interests. In addition, journalists often practiced self-censorship to avoid violence and harassment. The reported attacks against journalists have not resulted in any final convictions. It is also necessary to support civil society and media actors to enhance journalists and media actors' conditions, ensure a policy of zero tolerance for intimidation and strengthen the protection of journalists, particularly when reporting on sensitive areas such as justice, corruption, environmental crime and others.

Identification of main stakeholders and corresponding institutional and/or organisational issues (mandates, potential roles, and capacities) to be covered by the action

The number of media outlets (traditional and new media) is high considering the market size of the country. The main stakeholders from the side of the government are: the Audio-visual Media Authority (AMA) the Radio Televizioni Shqiptar (RTSH) and the new Media and Information Agency (MIA). The office of the Prime Minister continues to use its own communication apparatus to distribute pre-packaged written and audio-visual content to the media.

### **2.3. Lessons Learned**

The choice of priority areas for this action was guided by the consultations (online consultations, February 2023) organised by the EU Delegation with local civil society actors, development partners and colleagues in the Delegation. The upcoming opening of accession negotiations which require CSOs to be effectively included, participating and contributing to the process has also highlighted the need to further support (or to start supporting) civil society in some important policy areas. In the field of environment, further support is needed in view of the significant acquis and key role played by civil society in the protection of environment. Cultural management is also an area where CSOs need support to play a more significant role. Further support to CSOs to promote good governance principles at central and local level is required notably in the framework of the new reforms launched by the GoA, inter alia the digitalisation of public services and the fight against corruption. Support to CSOs in the field of food safety and consumer protection will start as a pilot phase in this action as civil society is almost non-existing in this sector at the moment. Therefore support in this area will also include the establishment of new CSOs and networks / platforms.

Furthermore, a recent ROM report noted the importance of EU funding to small-scale/informal cultural initiatives which would not exist/sustain otherwise<sup>13</sup>. At the very local level, support to active citizenship was

---

<sup>13</sup> ROM Report C-421822 Artist Stafetë

positively assessed in a recent ROM report and will be renewed under this action as a way to promote transparency, accountability and local good governance<sup>14</sup>. Considering the limited capacity of state institutions to liaise and cooperate with civil society through the NCSS or the NASCS, the NRC has become the reference point for many CSOs in the country and as such the action will ensure the continuation and further development of its activities and services. Further support to media and freedom of expression remain needed in view of lack of progress in these areas crucial for EU accession.

The midterm review of the Civil Society and Media Facility 2016-2017 provided useful recommendations among which the recommendation to support middle-sized CSOs and strike a balance between financial support to small and large CSOs still holds true. For this reason and based on the successful sub-granting results of the recent CSF projects, this action will continue to encourage financial support to third parties (FSTP) in order to have a large outreach to grass-roots organisations as well as non-typical civil society actors such as individuals and informal groups, notably in the field of culture, consumer protection and local civic engagement.

Based on the findings in the recent consultation of civil society (online consultation, February 2023) and conclusions of the most recent regional seminar on FSTP (TACSO, December 2022, Belgrade), FSTP should be kept flexible as the idea behind FSTP is to take risks and genuinely reach out to actors who would otherwise not have the capacity to apply to donors' funding opportunities and match their requirements. Consequently, the focus of intermediary organisations in organising FSTP should be on what outputs/outcomes could potentially be achieved through a project rather than on the quality of the applications themselves. In this regard, capacity building, even before starting FSTP, was mentioned as a key element of success to try to help applicants develop their ideas. This action will integrate all lessons learnt in the field of FSTP.

### 3. DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION

#### 3.1. Intervention Logic

The *overall objective* of the Action is to enhance participatory democracy in Albania and support the EU integration process through the reinforcement of the role and capacities of civil society and media organisations.

The Specific Objectives (*Outcomes*) of this action are to:

1. The role of CSOs to influence national and local policies and their implementation in a gender sensitive manner is strengthened, in accordance with their mandate and their constituency needs
2. Fostered enabling environment for media freedom, pluralism and professionalism

The *Outputs* to be delivered by this action contributing to the corresponding Specific Objectives (Outcomes) are:

#### Contributing to Outcome 1:

**Output 1.1:** The capacities of the National Resource Centre for CSOs are further developed

**Output 1.2:** Increased capacities of CSOs to participate in the decision-making process, cooperate with the relevant stakeholders and monitor food safety and consumer protection policies and strategies

---

<sup>14</sup> ROM Report C-421809 Rural Albanian Youth [RURAL-YOU]

**Output 1.3:** Increased capacities of CSOs to participate in the decision-making process, cooperate with the relevant stakeholders and monitor cultural policies and strategies

**Output 1.4:** Increased capacities of CSOs to participate in the decision-making process, cooperate with the relevant stakeholders and monitor in the field of environment, climate change and conservation issues

**Output 1.5:** Increased capacities of CSOs to participate in the decision-making process at central and local level to promote good governance principles and monitor public budget spending and the quality of public service delivery

### Contributing to Outcome 2:

**Output 2.1:** Increased capacities of media actors to enable freedom of expression, independence of media and pluralism in cooperation with the relevant stakeholders, including to monitor and report on decision making processes, policies and strategies

The **underlying intervention logic** of this action is that *IF* the capacities of CSOs to participate in the decision-making process at central and local level, to cooperate with relevant stakeholders and to monitor the policies and strategies in the fields addressed by this action (consumer protection, culture, environment, good governance) are increased (outputs 1.1 to 1.5), *AND* a sufficient number of eligible and quality proposals are submitted by relevant applicants to the calls for proposals and NRC remains willing to continue its cooperation with the EU, *THEN* the role of CSOs to influence national and local policies and their implementation in a gender sensitive manner will be strengthened, in accordance with their mandate and their constituency needs (outcome 1).

*IF* the capacities of media actors to enable freedom of expression, independence of media and pluralism in cooperation with the relevant stakeholders, including to monitor and report on decision making processes, policies and strategies are increased (output 2.1), *AND* a sufficient number of eligible and quality proposals are submitted by relevant applicants to the calls for proposals *THEN* the enabling environment for media freedom, pluralism and professionalism will be fostered (outcome 2).

Ultimately, *IF* the role of CSOs to influence national and local policies and their implementation in a gender sensitive manner is strengthened, in accordance with their mandate and their constituency needs and the enabling environment for media freedom, pluralism and professionalism is fostered (outcomes 1 & 2), *AND* public institutions remain committed to EU integration reforms and cooperation and dialogue with CSOs, CSOs have sufficient interest to develop cooperation among themselves through sectoral networks and with other relevant stakeholders, including the government and the media environment develops in the direction of freedom of expression and pluralism *THEN* the participatory democracy in Albania and support to the EU integration process will be enhanced through the reinforcement of the role and capacities of civil society and media organisations (overall objective).

### **3.2. Indicative Activities**

Indicative list of activities equally contributing to all six (6) outputs as described under Section 3.1:

#### *Contributing to Outcomes 1 &2:*

Output 1.1 the capacities of the National Resource Centre for CSOs are further developed

Output 1.2 Increased capacities of CSOs to participate in the decision-making process, cooperate with the relevant stakeholders and monitor food safety and consumer protection policies and strategies

Output 1.3 Increased capacities of CSOs to participate in the decision-making process, cooperate with the relevant stakeholders and monitor cultural policies and strategies

Output 1.4: Increased capacities of CSOs to participate in the decision-making process, cooperate with the relevant stakeholders and monitor in the field of environment, climate change and conservation issues

Output 1.5: Increased capacities of CSOs to participate in the decision-making process at central and local level to promote good governance principles and monitor public budget spending and the quality of public service delivery

Output 2.1: Increased capacities of media actors to enable freedom of expression, independence of media and pluralism in cooperation with the relevant stakeholders, including to monitor and report on decision making processes, policies and strategies

Civil society and media organisations will be supported through grants (including financial support to third parties) to organise a variety of activities in a gender sensitive manner:

- capacity building and training
- exchange of experience
- establishment of new CSOs / networks / platforms / coalitions
- awareness raising activities

### **3.3. Mainstreaming**

#### **Environmental Protection, Climate Change and Biodiversity**

Besides addressing environment as one of the main priorities, the Action shall support environmental policies and environmentally friendly implementation activities (i.e. plastic free etc.), including in sub-granted projects. The Action should also contribute to instigate more environmentally friendly behaviours also in all public events, inviting participants and beneficiaries to apply behaviours which do no harm to the environment in all project-related and non-project-related activities. The action supports and empowers CSOs to further increase their action in the areas of environmental, biodiversity and climate protection. The action will have positive environmental impact, as its activities will strengthen the role and capacities of CSOs in implementing conservation measures and conserving valuable biodiversity elements thereby improving environmental conditions in the short- to long-term. The action will also directly address climate change issue, by implementing measures that will mitigate climate change effects.

#### **Gender equality and empowerment of women and girls**

As per OECD Gender DAC codes identified in section 1.1, this action is labelled as G1. This implies that the Action shall support gender equality and women's and girl's empowerment under all activities, thus allowing the professional development and participation of women in all the sectors addressed by this programme. These aspects shall be taken into account under all phases of the implementation and for this reason the guidelines for the calls for proposals resulting from this Action will have for every priority area a specific requirement on gender equality and women's and girl's empowerment (equal access to trainings and other activities for women, etc).

#### **Human Rights**

The Action will target freedom of expression under its media and democracy priority area and it will generally follow a human-rights based approach, taking into consideration special individual needs of different groups. The Action shall continuously seek rights based friendly implementation modalities under all activities and try to reach out, by involving them, vulnerable and marginalised groups. This shall be translated in ensuring

accessibility (physical and virtual) for people with different type of disabilities in all project related activities, involving systematically vulnerable groups (minorities, especially Roma, LGBTIQ and other) and women. The Action will contribute to improve the social inclusion of the above-mentioned disadvantaged groups and fight racism and all forms of discrimination, including antigypsyism.

### Disability

As per OECD Disability DAC codes identified in section 1.1, this action is labelled as D1. This implies that accessibility (physical and virtual) for people with different type of disabilities in all project related activities will be ensured.

### Democracy

The Action directly supports consolidation of democracy by supporting the principles of good governance, notably citizen participation, accountability, transparency and also freedom of expression and media.

## 3.4. Risks and Assumptions

| Category                    | Risks   | Likelihood (High/Medium/Low) | Impact (High/Medium/Low) | Mitigating measures  |
|-----------------------------|---|------------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| External environment        | <u>Risk 1</u> : the political climate (and/or elections results) generates instability and shrinking space for civil society.     | Low                          | High                     | The EUD will continuously monitor the situation and seek dialogue with the authorities with the aim to ensure continuous engagement of the civil society, particularly in the accession negotiations process.  |
| External environment        | <u>Risk 2</u> : the situation of freedom of expression and pluralistic and independent media further deteriorates                 | Medium                       | High                     | Continuous monitoring of the media environment and support to independent media will be essential, particularly in the accession negotiations process. When not possible, cooperation with the European Endowment for Democracy should be sought.  |
| People and the organisation | <u>Risk 3</u> : Further limitation in human resources capacity and/or shift in mandate and/or strategic orientation of the public | Medium                       | High                     | As regards human resources development, the EU accession process entails strengthening sector governance structures and processes. The EUD will continuously monitor the situation and seek dialogue with the authorities with the aim to ensure continuous strategic engagement in line with EU |

|                             |  |            |             |   |
|-----------------------------|--|------------|-------------|---|
|                             | stakeholders involved in the regulation and coordination of the priority areas addressed by this action.                                       |            |             | requirements in the priority areas addressed by the action.   |
| People and the organisation | <u>Risk 4:</u> Limited capacity of civil society to respond to calls for proposals launched under this action in the different priority areas. | <b>Low</b> | <b>High</b> | This action document is based on the results of consultations with civil society and lessons drawn from monitoring and evaluation. The guidelines will be drafted carefully so to ensure sufficient response from civil society without jeopardising less capacitated organisations (through FSTP). |

### External Assumptions

1. Public institutions remain committed to EU integration reforms and cooperation and dialogue with CSOs (outcomes 1&2)
2. CSOs have sufficient interest to develop cooperation among themselves through sectoral networks and with other relevant stakeholders, including the government (outcomes 1&2)
3. The media environment develops in the direction of freedom of expression and pluralism (outcome 2)
4. A sufficient number of eligible and quality proposals are submitted by relevant applicants to the calls for proposals. (all outputs except 1.1)
5. Willingness from NRC to continue cooperation with EU (output 1.1).

### 3.5. Indicative Logical Framework Matrix

| Results          | Results chain:<br>Main expected results   | Indicators   | Baselines<br>(values and years)  | Targets<br>(values and years)   | Sources of data   | Assumptions                          |
|------------------|---|--|--|---|---|--------------------------------------|
| <b>Impact</b>    | To enhance participatory democracy in Albania and support the EU integration process through the reinforcement of the role and capacities of civil society and media organisations. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Status of democratic institutions and fundamental rights in Albania (including freedom of expression and Media, freedom of assembly and freedom of association) - IPA III Ind. 1.5.1.</li> <li>V-Dem Civil Society Participation Index - IPA III Ind. 1.7.1.</li> <li>DG NEAR Guidelines Assessment Report: CSO participation in public policy index</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2024 Report (to be published by the end of 2024)</li> <li>2024 value of the V-Dem Civil Society Participation Index</li> <li>2021 baseline value from TACSO assessment</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>By 2029, the status of fundamental rights in Albania is showing constant progresses towards the alignment with EU standards.</li> <li>By 2029, the value of the V-Dem Civil Society Participation Index will reach 0.75.</li> <li>By 2029, the values have increased by 15%</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>European Commission Annual Reports</li> <li>The V-Dem Institute data</li> <li>DG NEAR Guidelines for EU Support to Civil Society in WBT Baseline Assessment report and Assessment report for subsequent years indicators 2.1a, 2.2.a and 2.3.f;</li> </ol> | <i>Not applicable</i>                |
| <b>Outcome 1</b> | The role of CSOs to influence national and local policies and their implementation in a   | 1.1 Number of public policies developed and/or revised with internal and external consultations  | 1.1 The value of the baseline (2024) is zero.  | 1.1 By 2029, at least five public policies are developed and/or   | 1.1 Intervention reports and documents;   | <i>Related to outcomes 1 &amp; 2</i> |

|                  |   |   |   |   |  |   |
|------------------|---|---|---|---|--|---|
|                  | gender sensitive manner is strengthened, in accordance with their mandate and their constituency needs. | <p>with EU support under this assistance scheme - IPA III Ind. 1.6.1.2.</p> <p>1.2 Number of central and/or local public authorities that (a) issue and/or (b) implement enabling policies and rules for community organisations and civic initiatives with EU support under this assistance scheme - IPA III Ind. 1.7.1.1</p> <p>1.3 Number of supported CSOs under this assistance scheme having established working partnerships with public authorities - IPA III Ind. 1.7.1.3.</p> | <p>1.2 The value of the baseline (2024) is zero.</p> <p>1.3 The value of the baseline (2024) is zero.</p> | <p>revised with internal and external consultations involving CSOs.</p> <p>1.2 By 2029, at least three national and/or local enabling policies and rules are issued and/or implemented for community organisations and civic initiatives.</p> <p>1.3 By 2029, at least 20 CSOs have established working partnerships with public authorities.</p> | <p>European Commission Annual Reports from 2024 to 2028.</p> <p>1.2 Intervention reports and documents; European Commission Annual Reports from 2024 to 2028.</p> <p>1.3 Intervention reports and documents; European Commission Annual Reports from 2024 to 2028.</p> | <p>Public institutions remain committed to EU integration reforms, cooperation, and dialogue with CSOs.</p> <p>CSOs have sufficient interest to develop cooperation among themselves through sectoral networks and with other relevant stakeholders, including the government.</p> <p>The media environment develops in the direction of freedom of expression and pluralism.</p> |
| <b>Outcome 2</b> | Fostered enabling environment for media freedom, pluralism and professionalism.                         | <p>2.1 MPM index of fundamental protection</p> <p>2.2 MPM index of Market Plurality</p> <p>2.3 MPM index of Political independence</p>  | <p>2.1 (2022) : AL 58</p> <p>2.2 (2022) : AL 87</p> <p>2.3 (2022) : AL 69</p>                             | <p>2.1 (2030) : at most 36% for AL</p> <p>2.2 (2030) : AL 82</p> <p>2.3 (2030) : at most 59% for AL</p>   | <p>2.1/2.2/2.3 Media Pluralism Monitor from the Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom at the Robert Schuman Centre (<a href="https://cmpf.eui.eu/mpm-2022-interactive/">https://cmpf.eui.eu/mpm-2022-interactive/</a>)</p>                                      |   |

|                                      |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| <b>Output 1 related to Outcome 1</b> | <p>1.1 The capacities of the National Resource Centre for CSOs are further developed.</p>   | <p>1.1.1 Number of CSOs supported by the National Resource Centre for CSOs, under this assistance scheme, having put in place an independent and effective governing body with clear terms of reference to oversee the organisation's strategic goals, impact, management, legal compliance, and accountability, [in line with Commitment 12 of the Global Standard] - IPA III Ind. 1.7.1.2</p> <p>1.1.2 Number of CSOs supported by the National Resource Centre for CSOs, under this assistance scheme, which monitor and evaluate the results and impact of their work - IPA III Ind. 1.7.1.4.</p> <p>1.1.3 Number of local civil society organisations benefitting from (or reached by) EU support, under this assistance scheme - IPA III Ind. 1.7.1.6</p> | <p>1.1.1 The value of the baseline (2024) is zero.</p> <p>1.1.2 The value of the baseline (2024) is zero.</p> <p>1.1.3 The value of the baseline (2024) is 200.</p> | <p>1.1.1 By 2029, the National Resource Centre for CSOs has supported at least 80 Albanian CSOs to comply with Commitment 12 of the Global Standard.</p> <p>1.1.2 By 2029, the National Resource Centre for CSOs has supported at least 30 Albanian CSOs to monitor and evaluate the results and impact of their work</p> <p>1.1.3 By 2029, the National Resource Centre for CSOs has supported at least 80 Albanian CSOs with their range of services.</p> | <p>1.1.1 Intervention reports and documents</p> <p>1.1.2 Intervention reports and documents</p> <p>1.1.3 Intervention reports and documents</p> | <p>Willingness from NRC to continue cooperation with EU.</p>  |
| <b>Output 2 related to Outcome 1</b> | <p>1.2 Increased capacities of CSOs to participate in the decision-making process, cooperate with the relevant stakeholders and monitor food safety and consumer protection policies and strategies</p> | <p>1.2.1 Level of cooperation among the stakeholders in the field of food safety and consumer protection.</p> <p>1.2.2 Number of public policy instruments implemented, under this assistance scheme, promoting compliance with Chapter 28 Acquis on Health (Consumer Protection and Health) a) developed/ revised, and/or b)</p>   | <p>1.2.1 An updated assessment will be provided at the beginning of the intervention/s</p> <p>1.2.2 The value of the baseline (2024) is zero.</p>                   | <p>1.2.1 By 2029, platform/s and mechanisms are in place in order to assure cooperation among the stakeholders.</p> <p>1.2.2 By 2029, CSOs and consumers' associations are able to contribute to at least one public policy instrument promoting compliance with</p>  | <p>1.2.1 Intervention reports and documents; EC Report.</p> <p>1.2.2 Intervention reports and documents; European</p>                           | <p>A sufficient number of eligible and quality proposals are submitted by relevant applicants to the calls for proposals.</p> |

|                                      |   |   |  |   |   |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|--|---|---|---|
|                                      |   | <p>under implementation, with EU support - IPA III Ind. 4.1.3.1</p> <p>1.2.3 Number of individuals (disaggregated by gender) from CSOs and other relevant stakeholders trained, under this assistance scheme, on monitoring consumer protection policies and strategies.</p> <p>1.2.4 Number of consumer protection actors benefitting from (or reached by) EU support, under this assistance scheme - IPA III Ind. 1.7.1.6</p> | <p>1.2.3 The value of the baseline (2024) is zero</p> <p>1.2.4 The value of the baseline (2024) is zero</p>                                      | <p>Chapter 28 Acquis on Health.</p> <p>1.2.3 By 2029:</p> <p>a. at least 50 individuals trained (at least 25 women);</p> <p>b. Mechanisms are in place to monitor consumer protection policies and strategies and produce relevant inputs to the competent institutions.</p> <p>1.2.4 By 2029, at least 5 CSOs have been supported through FSTP</p> | <p>Commission Annual Reports</p> <p>1.2.3 Intervention reports and documents; European Commission Annual Reports</p> <p>1.2.4 Intervention/s reports and documents.</p> |   |
| <b>Output 3 related to Outcome 1</b> | <p>1.3 Increased capacities of CSOs to participate in the decision-making process, cooperate with the relevant stakeholders and monitor cultural policies and strategies.</p> | <p>1.3.1 Level of cooperation among the stakeholder in the cultural sector.</p> <p>1.3.2 Number of individuals (disaggregated by gender) from CSOs and other relevant stakeholders trained, under this assistance scheme, on monitoring cultural policies and strategies</p>  | <p>1.3.1 An updated assessment will be provided at the beginning of the intervention/s</p> <p>1.3.2 The value of the baseline (2024) is zero</p> | <p>1.3.1 By 2029, platform/s and mechanisms are in place in order to assure cooperation among the target groups.</p> <p>1.3.2 By 2029:</p> <p>a. at least 50 individuals trained (at least 25 women);</p> <p>b. Mechanisms are in place to monitor cultural policies and strategies and produce relevant inputs to the</p>                          | <p>1.3.1 Intervention/s reports and documents.</p> <p>1.3.2 Intervention/s reports and documents.</p>   | <p>A sufficient number of eligible and quality proposals are submitted by relevant applicants to the calls for proposals.</p> |

|                                      |  |   |  |   |   |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|---|--|---|---|--|
|                                      |  | 1.3.3 Number of cultural actors benefitting from (or reached by) EU support, under this assistance scheme - IPA III Ind. 1.7.1.6  | 1.3.3 The value of the baseline (2024) is zero.  | competent authorities and institutions.<br>1.3.3 By 2029, at least 10 CSOs have been supported through FSTP   | 1.3.3 Intervention/s reports and documents.   |  |
| <b>Output 4 related to Outcome 1</b> | 1.4 Increased capacities of CSOs to participate in the decision-making process, cooperate with the relevant stakeholders and monitor in the field of environment, climate change and conservation issues.                      | 1.4.1 Level of cooperation among the stakeholder in the environment sector.<br><br>1.4.2 Number of individuals from CSOs trained, under this assistance scheme, who increased their knowledge and/or skills for preventing and countering environmental crime (disaggregated by gender) - IPA III Ind. 1.2.1.2. | 1.4.1 An updated assessment will be provided at the beginning of the intervention/s<br><br>1.4.2 The value of the baseline (2024) is zero. | 1.4.1 By 2029, platform/s and mechanisms are in place in order to assure cooperation among the target groups.<br><br>1.4.2 By 2029:<br>a. at least 50 individuals trained (at least 25 women);<br>b. Mechanisms are in place to monitor environmental protection and produce relevant inputs to the competent authorities and institutions. | 1.4.1 Intervention/s reports and documents<br><br>1.4.2 Intervention/s reports and documents. | A sufficient number of eligible and quality proposals are submitted by relevant applicants to the calls for proposals. |
| <b>Output 5 related to Outcome 1</b> | 1.5 Increased capacities of CSOs to participate in the decision-making process at central and local level to promote good governance principles and monitor public budget spending and the quality of public service delivery. | 1.5.1 Number of individuals (disaggregated by gender) from CSOs trained, under this assistance scheme, on:<br>c. Good governance principles;<br>d. Monitoring public budget spending;<br>e. Monitoring the quality-of-service delivery.   | 1.5.1 The value of the baseline (2024) is zero.  | 1.5.1 By 2029:<br>a. at least 50 individuals trained (at least 25 women);<br>b. Mechanisms are in place to promote good governance principles, monitor public budget spending and the quality-of-service delivery.  | 1.5.1 Intervention/s reports and documents.   | A sufficient number of eligible and quality proposals are submitted by relevant applicants to the calls for proposals. |

|                                      |   |   |   |   |  |  |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|--|--|
|                                      |   |   |   | c. Produce relevant inputs and communications for relevant institutions, authorities and communities. |  |  |
| <b>Output 1 related to Outcome 2</b> | 2.1 Increased capacities of media actors to enable freedom of expression, independence of media and pluralism in cooperation with the relevant stakeholders, including to monitor and report on decision making processes, policies and strategies. | 2.1.1 Number of media actors benefitting from (or reached by) EU support, under this assistance scheme - IPA III Ind. 1.7.1.6 | 2.1.1 The value of the baseline (2024) is zero. | 2.1.1 By 2029, at least 10 media actors have been supported through FSTP                              | 2.1.1 Intervention/s reports and documents | A sufficient number of eligible and quality proposals are submitted by relevant applicants to the calls for proposals. |

## 4. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

### 4.1. Financing Agreement

In order to implement this action, it is not envisaged to conclude a financing agreement with Albania.

### 4.2. Indicative Implementation Period

The indicative operational implementation period of this action, during which the activities described in section 3 will be carried out and the corresponding contracts and agreements implemented, is 72 months from the date of adoption by the Commission of this Financing Decision.

Extensions of the implementation period may be agreed by the Commission's responsible authorising officer in duly justified cases.

### 4.3. Implementation Modalities

The Commission will ensure that the EU appropriate rules and procedures for providing financing to third parties are respected, including review procedures, where appropriate, and compliance of the action with EU restrictive measures<sup>15</sup>.

#### 4.3.1. Direct Management (Grants)

##### 4.3.1.1. Grants

###### (a) Purpose of the grant(s)

The grants will contribute to achieving all the outcomes and outputs foreseen by the action. In particular, the grants will contribute to strengthening the role of CSOs to influence national and local policies and their implementation in a gender sensitive manner, in accordance with their mandate and their constituency needs (**outcome 1**) and fostering enabling environment for media freedom, pluralism and professionalism (**outcome 2**). The grants will also contribute to further developing the capacities of the National Resource Centre for CSOs (**output 1.1**), increasing the capacities of CSOs to participate in the decision-making process, cooperate with the relevant stakeholders and monitor food safety and consumer protection policies and strategies (**output 1.2**), increasing the capacities of CSOs to participate in the decision-making process, cooperate with the relevant stakeholders and monitor cultural policies and strategies (**output 1.3**), increasing the capacities of CSOs to participate in the decision-making process, cooperate with the relevant stakeholders and monitor in the field of environment, climate change and conservation issues (**output 1.4**), increasing the capacities of CSOs to participate in the decision-making process at central and local level to promote good governance principles and monitor public budget spending and the quality of public service delivery (**output 1.5**), and increasing the capacities of media actors to enable freedom of expression, independence of media and pluralism in cooperation with the relevant stakeholders, including to monitor and report on decision making processes, policies and strategies (**output 2.1**).

---

<sup>15</sup> [EU Sanctions Map](#). 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.

## (b) Type of applicants targeted

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

The part of the action under the budgetary envelope reserved for grants may, partially or totally and including where an entity is designated for receiving a grant without a call for proposals, be implemented in indirect management with an entity, which will be selected by the Commission's services using the following criteria:

- relevant extensive technical experience in working with CSOs/media organisations and in supporting the civil society and media sectors;
- demonstrated operational capacity to manage projects of similar size, and to ensure a proper implementation of FSTP schemes.

### 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, subject to the following provisions.

The Commission's authorising officer responsible may extend the geographical eligibility on the basis of urgency or of unavailability of services in the markets of the countries or territories concerned, or in other duly substantiated cases where application of the eligibility rules would make the realisation of this action impossible or exceedingly difficult (Article 28(10) NDICI-Global Europe Regulation).

### 4.5. Indicative Budget

| <b>Indicative Budget components</b>  | <b>EU contribution 2024<br/>(amount in EUR)</b> | <b>EU contribution 2025<br/>(amount in EUR)</b> | <b>Indicative third party contribution<br/>(amount in EUR)<sup>16</sup></b> |
|--|---|---|---|
| <b>Outcomes 1 &amp;2</b><br>composed of  |   |   |   |
| <i>Direct management<br/>(Grants) – cf section 4.3.1</i>   |   |   |   |
| <b>Grants – total envelope<br/>under section 4.3.1</b>   | 2 000 000                                       | 4 400 000                                       | 320 000   |
| <b>Evaluation – c.f. section 5.2</b><br><b>Audit – c.f. section 5.3</b><br><b>Strategic Communication – c.f. section 6</b> | N.A.  | To be covered by another Decision               | N.A.  |
| <b>Totals</b>  | <b>2 000 000</b>                                | <b>4 400 000</b>                                | <b>320 000</b>  |

<sup>16</sup> The indicative third-party contribution will be provided by the selected implementing partners (minimum 5% co-financing, i.e. EUR 320 000.00).

## **4.6. Organisational Set-up and Responsibilities**

The action will be managed by the EU Delegation under the control of the Civil Society Programme Officer. The grants will be managed by the relevant programme officers for each specific sector, including monitoring of grants' implementation. Site visits and on-the-spot checks will be organised in coordination with Finance, Contracts and Audit section of the EU Delegation.

The supported projects will be helped establish links with similar initiatives, as well as other relevant institutions and donors, if needed. In particular, coordination will be ensured by the sectoral programme officers and the civil society programme officer.

As part of its prerogative of budget implementation and to safeguard the financial interests of the Union, the Commission may participate in the above governance structures set up for governing the implementation of the action.

## **5. PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT**

### **5.1. Monitoring and Reporting**

The day-to-day technical and financial monitoring of the implementation of this action will be a continuous process, and part of the implementing partner's responsibilities. To this aim, the implementing partner shall establish a permanent internal, technical and financial monitoring system for the action and elaborate regular progress reports (not less than annual) and final reports. Every report shall provide an accurate account of implementation of the action, difficulties encountered, changes introduced, as well as the degree of achievement of its Outputs and contribution to the achievement of its Outcomes, and if possible at the time of reporting, contribution to the achievement of its Impacts, as measured by corresponding indicators, using as reference the logframe matrix.

The Commission may undertake additional project monitoring visits both through its own staff and through independent consultants recruited directly by the Commission for independent monitoring reviews (or recruited by the responsible agent contracted by the Commission for implementing such reviews).

Performance will be measured against the overall level of compliance with the European standards in the areas addressed by the action by the IPA beneficiary as well as 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, GAP III and IPA III indicators whenever relevant.

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 grants. In addition, the action might be subject to external monitoring such as Result-Oriented Monitoring (ROM).

The impact of the programme will be monitored against the sectoral policies, including the Albania roadmap for civil society environment 2019-2023, and also in the frame of donors coordination meetings.

Monitoring of sub-grant schemes for civil society organisations will be assisted with inputs from on-sites visits conducted by EUD staff or external consultants.

### **5.2. Evaluation**

Having regard to the importance of the action, an ex-post evaluation will be carried out for this action or its components contracted by the Commission.

It will be carried out for accountability and learning purposes at various levels (including for policy revision), taking into account in particular the fact that progress from Albania in the sectors supported in the action will improve its approximation process to the EU path.

The Commission shall form a Reference Group (RG) composed by representatives from the main stakeholders at both EU and national (representatives from the government, from civil society organisations (private sector, NGOs, etc.), etc.) levels. If deemed necessary, other donors will be invited to join.

The evaluation reports shall be shared with the Beneficiary and other key stakeholders following the best practice of evaluation dissemination. The implementing partner and the Commission shall analyse the conclusions and recommendations of the evaluations and, where appropriate, in agreement with the 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.

### **5.3. Audit and Verifications**

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 audit or verification assignments for one or several contracts or agreements.

## **6. STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND PUBLIC DIPLOMACY**

All entities implementing EU-funded external actions have the contractual obligation to inform the relevant audiences of the Union's support for their work by displaying the EU emblem and a short funding statement as appropriate on all communication materials related to the actions concerned. To that end they must comply with the instructions given in the 2022 guidance document [\*Communicating and raising EU visibility: Guidance for external actions\*](#) (or any successor document).

This obligation will apply equally, regardless of whether the actions concerned are implemented by the Commission, the Beneficiary, service providers, grant beneficiaries or entrusted or delegated entities such as UN agencies, international financial institutions and agencies of EU Member States. In each case, a reference to the relevant contractual obligations must be included in the respective financing agreement, procurement and grant contracts, and contribution agreements.

## **7. SUSTAINABILITY**

In order to achieve sustainability beyond the implementation period, the action is designed in synergy with the overall IPA III programming in the different sectors targeted by the action.

The sustainability of the programme's outputs will be ensured through capacity-building and the establishment of platforms/coalitions of CSOs/media organisations. The financial assistance will be delivered in the form of grants to civil society and media organisations to strengthen their capacities, networks (at all levels) and influence over the decision making process. CSOS awarded EU grants will, in most of the cases, redistribute funds through financial support to third parties. The financial support to these organisations, normally unable to benefit directly from EU funding opportunities, will help them increase their internal capacities and ability to manage funds and projects. This will allow organisations to revive their operations and become active players at local level in their specific sector of work.

## Appendix 1: IDENTIFICATION OF THE PRIMARY INTERVENTION LEVEL FOR REPORTING IN OPSYS

A Primary intervention (project/programme) is a coherent set of results structured in a logical framework aiming at delivering development change or progress. Identifying the level of the primary intervention will allow for:

- ✓ Differentiating these Actions or Contracts from those that do not produce direct reportable development results, defined as support entities (i.e. audits, evaluations);
- ✓ Articulating Actions and/or Contracts according to an expected common chain of results and therefore allowing them to ensure a more efficient and aggregated monitoring and reporting of performance;
- ✓ Having a complete and exhaustive mapping of all results-bearing Actions and Contracts.

The present Action identifies as

**Group of contracts level** (i.e: i) series of programme estimates, ii) cases in which an Action Document foresees many foreseen individual legal commitments (for instance four contracts and one of them being a Technical Assistance) and two of them, a technical assistance contract and a contribution agreement, aim at the same objectives and complement each other, iii) follow up contracts that share the same log frame of the original contract)

|                                     |                    |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Group of contracts |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------|