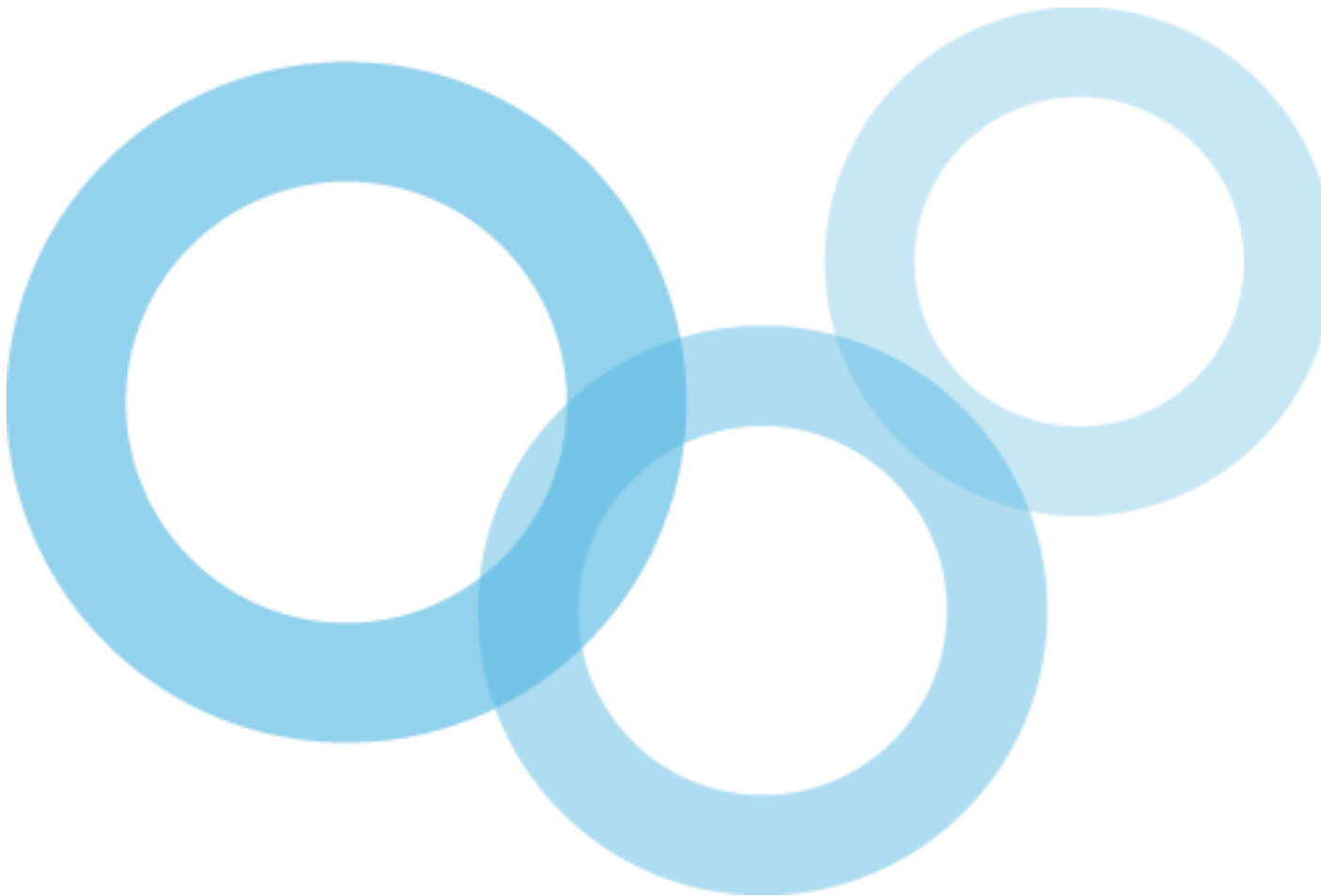




**IPA MULTI-COUNTRY PROGRAMMES
ACTIVITY REPORT
JULY - DECEMBER 2018**



D.5 WESTERN BALKANS REGIONAL COOPERATION AND PROGRAMMES

*Neighbourhood and
Enlargement
Negotiations*

CONTENTS

List of acronyms	4-11
CHAPTER 1: PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM (PAR)	12
1.1 Public financial management	12
1.2 Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA)	19
1.3 Statistical Cooperation	21
1.4 Support for economic development in rural areas	25
1.5 Support for Regional Investment Policy and Promotion in the Western Balkans	27
CHAPTER 2: RULE OF LAW AND FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS	30
2.1 Fight against organised crime and corruption	30
2.2 Roma integration	48
2.3 Regional Housing Programme	56
2.4 Migration	58
2.5 Horizontal Facility	64
2.6 Support to the follow-up of Electoral recommendation in the Western Balkans	72
2.7 Security	75
2.8 Participation of Western Balkans Judicial Professionals in EJTJ training activities	80
2.9 Financial investigation	82
2.10 Prevention and countering violent extremism	84
CHAPTER 3: PRIVATE SECTOR DEVELOPMENT	89
3.1 Platform for sme Financing and Support in the Western Balkans	89
3.2 European Fund For South East Europe (EFSE)	92
3.3 Crisis Response Package	95
3.4 OECD Support to Economic Competitiveness in South East Europe	99
3.5 TRADE - Support to facilitation of trade between CEFTA parties	101

3.6	Competitiveness	110
CHAPTER 4: INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT		116
4.1	Western Balkans Investment Framework (WBIF)	116
4.2	WBIF Connectivity Investment Grants	118
4.3	Horizontal support to IFI Coordination (IFICO)	121
4.4	WBIF Infrastructure Projects Facilities (IPF)	123
4.5	Technical Assistance to Connectivity in the Western Balkans (CONNECTA)	126
4.6	Joint Assistance to Support Projects in European Regions (JASPERS)	131
4.7	Green fo Growth Fund (GGF)	133
4.8	Regional Energy Efficiency Programme for the Western Balkans (REEP)	135
CHAPTER 5: ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE		144
5.1	Environment Partnership Programme for Accession (EPPA)	144
5.2	Disaster Risk Management	145
CHAPTER 6: CIVIL SOCIETY AND MEDIA		149
6.1	Action Grants	150
6.2	Operating Grants	152
6.3	Long-term grants	156
6.4	Reload	164
6.5	Media	167
6.5	Children with disabilities and Protection of children	182
6.6	Ending violence against women in the WB Countries and Turkey	185
CHAPTER 7: SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT		191
7.1	Tempus and Capacity building in Higher Education (CBHE)	191
7.2	Erasmus Mundus	192
7.3	Erasmus+ Capacity building in the field of youth	194
7.4	Employment and social affairs	195
7.5	Trends on Mathematics and Science Study TIMSS	197
7.6	EU Scheme For Young Professionals	200

7.7	Pilot VET Mobility Scheme For the Enlargement Countries	202
7.8	Regional CSO Activism for Regional Reconciliation Former Yugoslavia - In support of RECOM	203
CHAPTER 8: OTHER HORIZONTAL ACTIONS		207
8.1	EU Agencies	207
8.2	Animal disease eradication in the Western Balkans	223
8.3	Regional Cooperation Council	224
8.4	Cross-border Institution Building CBIB+ Phase II	228

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For any additional information on specific projects, contact us via the same address and your e-mail will be forwarded to the relevant Task Manager in DG NEAR unit D.5 – Western Balkans Regional Cooperation and Programmes.

- LINK

http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/instruments/multi-beneficiary-programme/index_en.htm

LIST OF ACRONYMS

AEI	Agency for European Integration
ATA	Administrative and Technical Assistance Facility
BAS	Business Advisory Services
BIRN	Balkan Investigative Reporting Network
BKA	Bundeskriminalamt/Federal Criminal Police Office Germany
BPR	Biocidal Products Regulation
CAB	Conformity Assessment Bodies
CAN	Capacity Needs Assessment
CBC	Cross-Border Cooperation
CBIB	Cross-border Institution Building
CC	Climate Change
CCW	Climate Change Window
CEB	Council of Europe Development Bank
CEECIS	Central and Eastern Europe and Commonwealth of Independent states
CEFTA	Central European Free Trade Agreement
CEN	Comité Européen de Normalisation
CFR	Country Feasibility Report
CHP	Country Housing Projects
CHU	Central Harmonisation Unit
CIRCA	Communication & Information Resource Centre Administrator
CLP	Classification, labelling and packaging
CN	Contract
CO	Coordination Office
CoE	Council of Europe
CoP	Community of Practice
CSF	Civil Society Facility
CSF	Classical Swine Fever
CSO	Civil Society Organisation

CSP	Country strategy paper
CSR	Country Strategy Report
CVO	Chief Veterinary Officers
DG	Directorate General
DRR	Disaster risk reduction
EACEA	Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency
EAMLA	European Accreditation multilateral agreement
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EBU	European Broadcasting Union
EC	European Commission
ECAS	European Citizen Action Service
ECENA	Environmental Compliance and Enforcement Network for Accession
ECS	Energy Community Secretariat
ECT(S)	European credit transfer (System)
EDIF	Enterprise Development and Innovation Facility
EE(FF)	Energy Efficiency Finance Facility
EEA	European Economic Area
EESC	European Economic and Social Committee
EETF	Energy Efficiency Task Force
EFSE	European Fund for Southeast Europe
EGP	Enterprise Growth Programme
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EIB	European Investment Bank
EIDHR	European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights
EIF	European Investment Fund
EJN	European Judicial Network
EMMA	European Multi-services Meteorological Awareness
ENEF	Enterprise Expansion Fund
ENER	Energy
ENIF	Enterprise Innovation Fund
ENIF	Enterprise Innovation Fund
EPPA	Environmental Partnership Programme for Accession

ETF	European training Foundation
EU	European Union
EUBEC	EU Platform for Blending in External Cooperation
EUD	European Union Delegation
EUI	European University Institute
EUMETNET	European National Meteorological network
EURAMET	European Association of National Metrology Institutes
FAD	Fiscal Affairs Department
FPA	Framework Partnership Agreement
GB	Governing board
GF	Guarantee Facility
GGF	Green for Growth Fund
GHG	Green House Gases
GIS	Geo Information System
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HEREs	Higher Education Reform Experts
HFA	Hyogo Framework for Action
HLC	Humanitarian Law Centre
HOT	Hands-on training
HRM	Human resource Management
IACS	Integrated Administration and Control System
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IBM	Integrated Border Management
IC	Investment Committee
ICJ	International Court of Justice
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
ICTY	International Criminal Tribunal of the former Yugoslavia
IFC	International Finance Cooperation
IFI	International Financial Institution
IFICO	International Financial Institution Coordination Office
ILECU	International Law Enforcement Coordination Units
IMO	International Maritime Organisation
IOM	International Organisation for Migration

IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance
IPF	Infrastructure Projects Facility
IPSAS	International Public Sector Accounting Standards
ISCED	International standard classification of education
IT	Information technology
ITC-ILO	International Training Centre of the International Labour Organization
JCM	Joint committee meetings
JIT	Joint Investigation Teams
KfW	Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau – banking group
KLA	Kosovo Liberation Army
LLEL	Life Long Entrepreneurial Learning
LLL	Life Long Learning
LPIS	Land Parcel Identification System
LSEE	Research unit established within the London School of Economics and Political Science's European Institute
MB	Multi-beneficiary
MCSP	Multi-country strategy paper
MDAS	Market development activities
MFF	Multi-annual financial framework
MIDWEB	Migration for Development in the Western Balkans
MIPD	Multi-Annual Indicative Planning Document
MMF	Multilateral monitoring framework
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MSC	Migrant Service Centres
MSME	Micro and small enterprise
MWh	Megawatt hours
NATURA EU	Nature & biodiversity policy
NCTS	National computerized transit system
NEEAP	National Energy Efficiency Action Plan
NEAR	Directorate General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations
NICO	Northern Ireland Cooperation Overseas
NIPAC	National IPA Coordinator

NSI	National Statistics Institute
NTB	Non-Tariff Barriers
NTOs	National Tempus Offices
ODIHR	Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
OTP	Office of the Prosecutor
P2P	People to People
PADOR	Potential Applicant Data Online Registration
PAG	Platform Advisory Group
PAR	Public Administration Reform
PB	Partner bank
PC	Partner country
PCA	Post clearance audit
PEFA	Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability
PEM	Pan-Euro-Mediterranean
PEMPAL	Public Expenditure Management Peer Assisted Learning
PFG	Project Financiers Group
PFI	Participating Financial Institution
PFM	Public Financial Management
PGSC	Policy Group for Statistical Cooperation
PIFC	Public Internal Financial Control
PIU	Project Implementation Unit
PMU	Project Management Unit
PoW	Programme of Work
PP	Public Procurement
PPA	Public Procurement Authority
PPF	Project Preparation Facility
PPP	Public-private partnership
PSSF	Private Sector Support Facility
PV	Photovoltaic
QA	Qualitative Assurance
R&D	Research and Development

RCC	Regional Cooperation Council
RCI	Regional Competitiveness Initiative
RE	Renewable energy
RECOM	Regional Coalition for the establishment of a Regional Commission for Establishing the Facts about War Crimes and Other Gross Violations of Human Rights Committed on the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia
REEP	Regional Energy Efficiency Programme
REG	Regional
REACH	Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals
RENA	Regional Environmental Network for Accession
ReSPA	Regional school of public administration
RHP	Regional Housing Programme
RIPA	Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act
SAA	Stabilisation and Association Agreement
SAI	Supreme Audit Institution
SBA	Small Business Act
SBS	Small Business Support Programme
SC	Steering Committee
SEE	South East Europe
SEECCL	South East European Centre for Entrepreneurial Learning
SEED	Systematic Electronic Exchange of Data
SEEIC	Southeast Europe Investment Committee
SEETO	South East Europe Transport Observatory
SEI	Strengthening European Integration
SELEC	Southeast European Law Enforcement Centre
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SIGMA	Support for Improvement in Governance and Management
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprise
SMECSF SME	Competitiveness Support Window
SPS	Sanitary and phyto-sanitary issues
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats
SWP	Strategic work programme

TA	Technical Assistance
TAC	Travel, accommodation and conference facility
TACSO	Technical Assistance to Civil Society Organisations
TADAT	Tax Administration Diagnostic Assessment Tool
TAXUD	Directorate General Taxation and Customs Union
TBC	To be confirmed
TBT	Technical Barriers to Trade
T-CY	Cybercrime Convention Committee
TFCS	Task Force for Culture and Society
TGNA	Turkish Grand National Assembly
TNA	Training needs assessment
TOR	Terms of Reference
ToT	Training of trainers
TVR	Temporary and Virtual Return
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNISDR	United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction
UNMIK	United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UNPROFOR	United Nations Protection Force
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
USKOK	Office for the Prevention of Corruption and Organized Crime
VAC	Violence against Children
VAT	Value Added Tax
VIND	Vinca Institute Nuclear Decommissioning
WB	Western Balkan
WBG	World Bank Group
WBIF	Western Balkans Investment Framework
WeBSEDF	Western Balkans Sustainable Energy Direct Financing Facility
WeBSEFF	Western Balkans Sustainable Energy Financing Facility
WELMEC	European cooperation in the field of legal metrology
WG	Working group

WINPRO Witness Protection in the Fight against Serious Crime and
 Terrorism

WMO World Meteorological Organization

WPU Witness Protection Unit

WSSD World Summit on Sustainable Development

CHAPTER 1: PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM

1.1 PUBLIC FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Strengthening Accountability and the Fiduciary Environment (SAFE TF)

Programme reference:	Multi-beneficiary Programme, IPA 2010/022-028 and IPA 2015/031-609
Project title:	Strengthening Accountability and the Fiduciary Environment (SAFE), EU Single-Donor Trust Fund
EU contribution:	EUR 3 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Administration Agreement with the World Bank
Contract reference:	IPA 2015/031-609
Duration of activities:	up to 20/04/2020
Links:	www.worldbank.org
Contact:	Javier Casasnovas, Javier.Casasnovas-Bernad@ec.europa.eu

- PURPOSE

The overall objective of this Trust Fund is to improve the status of public financial management (PFM) in participating beneficiary countries in a systematic way through: a) improving understanding of PFM status in target beneficiaries; b) supporting design, implementation and management of PFM, taking account of governments' and donors' PFM objectives and the intended mid- to long-term impact; and c) developing knowledge and experience on PFM reform to strengthen reform effectiveness and focus on development partner support.

- ACTIVITIES (JULY – DECEMBER 2018)

Albania - Public Financial Management Technical Assistance: Public Private Partnership (PPP) Fiscal Risk Assessment Model (PFRAM) workshop on the assessment of fiscal risks from PPPs; practical technical assistance on implementing a local government solvency framework (including launching of pilots in two municipalities); technical assistance setting up an State Own Enterprises (SOE) monitoring framework.

Kosovo - Strengthening Cash Planning and Execution: A project implementation team within Treasury was mobilized. External support was contracted. The team is finalizing terms of reference for an international expert to assess the current practices applied in Kosovo for cash and allocations management.

Kosovo - Strengthening Office of the Auditor General capacities in procurement audits: The activities related to the performance/value for money audit of procurement have commenced. Changes in activities were agreed with counterparts to optimize donor and partner support to implementation of the NAO Strategic Plan for 2018-2021. An activity on compliance audits of the procurement process was replaced with other activities focused on training and capacity building of IT audits and on improving quality of audit recommendations.

former Yugoslav Republic Macedonia - Enhancing the Implementation of Public Procurement: Closing workshop took place on December 12, 2018. Attended by about 50 representatives of contracting authorities, international organizations, and staff of Public Procurement Bureau and Ministry of Finance. Project activities concluded in December 2018.

Montenegro PEFA 2019: Approval of concept note. The activity begun with the establishment of an assessment team and an oversight team.

Serbia - Supporting implementation of Public Investment Management reforms: a mission took place in November 2018. The Mission included discussion and validation with the dedicated team from the Ministry of Finance in Serbia as well as some discussions with other stakeholders (Ministry of Transport and Construction, Ministry of European Integration, and other international partners).

Turkey - Deepening the Implementation of Public Sector Internal Audit Reforms: a learning event was organized for 60 internal auditors. The Ministry of Treasury and Finance prepared new guidelines for risk management in public administrations. Translations of the regulatory texts were completed. A closing event took place in Ankara on December 18, 2018. More than 270 officials attended from across the public sector including the Auditor General of the Turkish Court of Auditors. Project activities concluded in December 2018.

Turkey - Enhancing the Impact of the Turkish Court of Auditors on Good Public Governance: Planning of two learning events was completed. These events are i) a training to selected Turkish Court of Accounts auditors on the audit of PPP contracts, which will be held in Ankara from February 18-22, 2019 and ii) a study visit to the UK to meet with the National Audit Office and the UK Treasury Department on specialized topics.

Regional - Internal Audit Training of Trainers Program: Completion of two Good Practice Notes with input from members of the Community of Practice. Project activities concluded in December 2018.

Regional - Strengthening Financial Management Functions of Line Ministries: Completed activities including visiting the remaining beneficiary countries to reflect on the usefulness and relevance of the project; capturing the final voices-of-the region stories and made

additional efforts to populate the Line Ministries portal with quality content and increase the web traffic. Project activities concluded in December 2018.

Regional - Strengthening Legislative Scrutiny of Internal Audits in Western Balkans Countries: Received endorsement of the Network of Parliamentary Committees on Economy, Finance, and European Integration of West Balkans Board on planned activities. Activities aim to strengthen comprehensive financial accountability by empowering parliamentary oversight committees to conduct hearings on audit findings and make recommendations. A series of Value Creation Stories were produced, capturing how regional knowledge has begun to translate into country-level action. Consultations with partners (WFD and OECD/ SIGMA) were also held.

- **OUTPUTS (JULY – DECEMBER 2018)**

Albania - Public Financial Management Technical Assistance (TA): TA report on setting up a PPP monitoring framework; draft instructions for local government solvency framework.

former Yugoslav Republic Macedonia - Enhancing the Implementation of Public Procurement: Development of public procurement performance and red flag (anti-corruption) indicators, including the specification for implementation of the relevant module in the Public Procurement System (PPS). Implementation of three new functionalities in the PPS: e-archives, e-appeals, and public performance indicators. Currently, nine red flags indicators are implemented and functioning. A short informative video clip was produced and is available on Public Procurement Bureau's (PPB) and the Ministry of Finance's websites.

Serbia - Supporting implementation of Public Investment Management reforms: Completed drafts of methodologies for i) identification, appraisal and selection of public investment projects and ii) public investment portfolio monitoring, review and rationalization have been shared with the Ministry of Finance.

Turkey - Deepening the Implementation of Public Sector Internal Audit Reforms: The closing conference was delivered, and results of project activities were presented. The national internal audit regulations were translated into English.

Turkey - Enhancing the Impact of the Turkish Court of Auditors on Good Public Governance: The organization of the learning events and preparation of materials is ongoing.

Regional - Internal Audit Training of Trainers Program: a Good Practice Note was developed with Focus on Public Sector Fraud. Another Good Practice Note on Performance Indicators for Public Sector Internal Audit was completed.

Regional - Strengthening Financial Management Functions of Line Ministries: Regional and inter-sectorial and Line Ministries-Ministry of Finance cooperation strengthened. Increased number of Line Ministries finance officials with the capacity to train and share good practices within their institutions and regionally. Enhanced knowledge and capacity to contribute to

the design and implementation of PFM reforms through increased exchange between Line Ministries finance officials.

Regional - Strengthening Legislative Scrutiny of Internal Audits in Western Balkans Countries: Collaborating with the SIGMA initiative of the OECD and the EU, on a series of activities related to State Audit Institutions (SAI). A Discussion Note will be prepared on the SAIs-Parliaments relationship in the Western Balkans to help identify a roadmap for strengthening the relationship between National Parliament Committees (NPC) and their corresponding SAIs. The Note will provide a framework for the discussions in the first regional meeting of the NPC and SAI Heads.

- **ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER**

Albania - Public Financial Management Technical Assistance (TA): TA report on setting up State Owned Enterprises monitoring framework; workshop on assessing, monitoring and renegotiating PPPs; completion of local government solvency pilots in two municipalities.

Kosovo - Strengthening Cash Planning and Execution: The team and an international expert will support the Kosovo Treasury/Ministry of Finance through (i) an initial assessment of current practice applied in Kosovo for cash and allocations management including a review of current legal framework and IT infrastructure used; (ii) identification of countries that have similar budget cycle and infrastructure and proven records of sound practices in cash and allocation management; (iii) development of new legal and regulatory framework and technical specification for the IT solution to be used; and (iv) delivery of several trainings from consultants and trainers from Treasury to all 120 budget organizations on the new regulatory framework.

Kosovo - Strengthening Office of the Auditor General capacities in procurement audits: Activities on the performance/value for money audit of procurement to continue, including the completion of 4 mentored audits. Activities on the improving the quality of the audit recommendation to continue. Training of IT auditors and staff on IT audit and security related subjects. A local consultant will be hired to advise the National Audit Office on the audit/post review of procurement activities based on the donor procurement regulations.

Montenegro PEFA 2019: A mission will be conducted in March 2019, starting by delivering the training in PEFA methodology to the government and followed by the main data collection mission. First draft of the report in June 2019.

Serbia - Supporting implementation of Public Investment Management reforms: Ministry of Finance will form a Working Group for public investment management reform, which will include relevant stakeholders by February 2019. There will be an inception workshop to present methodology conducted by Ministry of Finance with support from the World Bank. Finalize capacity assessment and support to the Public Investment Management Information System.

Turkey - Enhancing the Impact of the Turkish Court of Auditors on Good Public Governance: February 2019 - PPP Audit Training in Ankara; April 2019 - Study visit to the

National Audit Office and the Treasury Department in the UK to learn about their approach on the audit of debt management systems as well as the audit of consolidated government financial statements.

Regional - Strengthening Legislative Scrutiny of Internal Audits in Western Balkans Countries:

- Regional Conference on the SAI – Parliament Relationship in the Western Balkans (28 February – 1 March 2019), between SAIs and the parliamentary oversight committees responsible for scrutinizing the audit report to brainstorm and collectively develop clearer regional expectations as to the institutional working relationship between these external audit actors.
- Regional Seminar on Operationalizing Enhanced SAI-Parliamentary Cooperation in the Western Balkans (May 2019) to review the outputs from the Technical Working Group, strengthen consensus on how to operationalize stronger SAI-Parliamentary relations, and develop jurisdiction level action plans aimed at translating regional principles into concrete country level reforms.

Strengthening Economic Governance and Public Financial Management

Programme reference:	Multi-beneficiary Programme, IPA 2014 / 031-603
Project title:	Strengthening Economic Governance and Public Financial Management
EU contribution:	EUR 8 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	PAGODA with the International Monetary Fund (IMF)
Contract reference:	CN 2015/358-797
Duration of activities:	up to 09/12/2019
Links:	www.imf.org
Contact:	Javier Casanovas, Javier.Casanovas-Bernad@ec.europa.eu

• PURPOSE

The purpose of this IMF-led project is to support the implementation of the relevant parts of the partners' Economic Reform Programmes and the preparation and implementation of their national public financial management (PFM) reform programmes.

- ACTIVITIES (JULY – DECEMBER 2018)

Albania –A mission to Albania focussed on further strengthening institutional arrangements for the PPP and PIM planning process. At the request of the Deputy Minister, detailed comments and recommendations were made on the draft mid-term review of the PFM reform strategy and further work will be required in finalizing the new extended strategy. Revenue Administration (RA) Capacity Development efforts focused on improving the effectiveness of the Large Taxpayers Office and providing training on doing risk assessments and developing risk mitigation strategies. A HQ mission reviewing the progress of the reform program was also undertaken.

Bosnia and Herzegovina – There has been no sign of further work on the Republika of Srpska PFM strategy which had been signalled at the 2018 Public Administration Reform Dialogue. No comments were received on the March 2018 report, and the IMF program has been off-track in light of the elections. A Tax Administration Diagnostic Assessment Tool (TADAT) for Indirect Taxation Authority was undertaken. Capacity Development efforts were also delivered to support improvements to information technology, reviewing tax procedure legislation and developing e-audit capability.

Kosovo –Public Investment Management strengthening remains a focus, with staff changes during the period weakening the function and diluting the institutional memory. Reviews and recommendations were provided on the draft administrative instructions for defining capital investment projects, which is expected to be passed in early 2019, as well as assessments of the draft law on public sector employees, and the draft law on public sector salaries. RA Capacity Development efforts focused on strengthening compliance risk management and audit functions and improving the VAT refund process.

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia – Capacity Development focused on the PFM reform strategy implementation. Comments and suggestions on the report were provided by the PFM advisor. Further revision of the Budget Organic Law is ongoing. The Fiscal Transparency Evaluation (FTE) was published. RA Capacity Development efforts focused on improvements to the audit, compliance risk management, arrears collection and taxpayer registration functions. Transfer pricing rules were also reviewed.

Montenegro – Comments and recommendations were provided on the PFM strategy progress report and the project was represented at the PFM dialogue. Extensive comments were provided on the draft law on accounting. RA Capacity Development efforts focused on developing compliance risk management capability in the newly established HQ unit.

Serbia – A PFM mission worked closely with the Ministry of Finance, in assessed the existing government public investment systems and made recommendations for ensuring that all PIM projects can be recorded and tracked within the system (including PPP). RA Capacity Development efforts focused on strengthening Compliance Risk Management, audit and taxpayer services functions. A workshop on IT reform was also facilitated.

• OUTPUTS (JULY – DECEMBER 2018)

Albania – A fiscal risk statement has been published in the budget documents. Recommendations for reorganization of PIM functions were provided.

Bosnia and Herzegovina – A Public Investment Management Assessment (PIMA) report was finalized and recommendations for arrears prevention in the Federation developed. A TADAT assessment report was finalized.

Kosovo – Draft Administrative Instructions for defining capital spending produced and streamlining of reallocation procedures. For RA, a multi-year reform program was drafted.

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia – A Fiscal Transparency Evaluation (FTE) report has been published and implementation of the action plan has commenced.

Montenegro – Draft procedures manual for cash and debt management functions have been developed and a law on accounting drafted. For RA, a compliance risk-register and Improvement Plan was developed.

Serbia – Recommendations for integrating public investment projects into the Budget preparation and treasury systems were developed.

Regional – Training delivered on medium term budgeting, spending reviews and management of non-financial assets (at CEF) and public financial management reform (at JVI).

• ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

Albania – PFM Capacity Development will continue to concentrate developing the fiscal risks oversight function and further developing the fiscal risk statement, with a particular focus on PPPs and SOEs. Further work will focus on finalizing the Mid-term review of the PFM strategy and streamlining the institutional framework for PIM and PPPs. RA Capacity Development delivery will focus on strengthening risk management capability, improving the quality of compliance audits and consolidating arrears collection activities into fewer sites.

Bosnia and Herzegovina – The programme will support the country-wide PFM reform strategies, subject to completion of the draft Republika of Srpska strategy. Addressing the weaknesses in budget processes identified during the PIMA mission, fiscal risks from arrears and their prevention will remain a focus, as well as risks from the SOE sector. For RA, Capacity Development efforts will focus on customs risk analysis, compliance risk management and finalizing tax procedure legislation.

Kosovo – The priorities remain enhancing the effectiveness of the medium term budgetary framework, public investment management and oversight of fiscal risks from publicly owned enterprises. For RA, Capacity Development efforts will continue to focus on improving the compliance risk management and audit functions and consolidating arrears collection activities.

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia – Continue supporting the PFM work programme and addressing the weaknesses identified during the FTE mission. RA Capacity

Development delivery will focus on audit, compliance risk management, arrears collection and reviewing the organizational structure.

Montenegro – PFM Capacity Development will focus on setting up a PPP framework, public investment management and fiscal reporting. RA Capacity Development efforts will focus on strengthening reform governance, the Large Taxpayers Office. A HQ mission will review the progress of tax administration reform.

Serbia - PFM Capacity Development will focus on fiscal risks and budgeting for public investments. RA Capacity Development delivery will focus on strengthening the Large Taxpayers Office and developing key performance measures. Support will also be provided to the Tax Administration as they implement the separation of core and non-core activities

1.2 REGIONAL SCHOOL OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION (RESPA)

Programme reference:	Multi-beneficiary Programme, IPA II 2015/031-609
Project title:	Support to the Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA) in its efforts to contribute to the Public Administration Reform under the EU integration process in the Western Balkans
EU contribution:	EUR 3.5 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Grant contract
Contract reference:	CN 2016/373-854
Duration of activities:	01/07/2016 – 10/12/2018
Links:	http://www.respaweb.eu
Contact :	Inma Perez-Rocha, perez-rocha.maria-inmaculada@ec.europa.eu

• PURPOSE

The main aim is to support ReSPA with improving regional cooperation among the Western Balkan public administrations according to the pillars of European Integration, Public Administration Reform and Governance for Growth; to strengthen administrative capacities as required by the European integration process; and to develop human resource capacities.

• ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

During the reporting period, ReSPA organised 28 activities (534 participants). A summary of the most relevant actions carried out is presented below:

- Five-day Summer School on Accession Negotiations with the EU, with a special focus on Chapters 23 (Judiciary and Fundamental Rights), and 24 (Justice, Freedom, and Security) organised in July (Budva).
- Six workshops to allow for public discussions on the draft ReSPA Strategy 2019-2024 carried out in September in each of the ReSPA members.
- Regional Conference on EU Budget Support, and Regional Workshop on Programming and Implementation of IPA II – Lessons Learned for the Next Multi-Annual Financial organised in cooperation with GIZ, in October (Brussels).
- Ministerial Conference on Regional Co-operation for Public Administration Reforms in the Western Balkans, in November 2018 in Brussels. At the conference, ReSPA presented the main outcomes of the current ReSPA grant implementation.
- ReSPA panel on PAR organised at the Open Government Partnership Summit in Georgia in July.
- Mobility schemes organised with representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina and North Macedonia who visited institutions in Serbia; Deputy Prime minister of Albania visited Montenegro;
- Through support mechanisms ReSPA supported the following activities:
 - **In Albania:** Development of a Video on Functioning of Public Administration in Albania; Aproxvement of the legal framework for the trusted services, including electronic signature used in many electronic government systems in National Authority on Electronic Certification and Cyber Security in Albania; *THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTION-PLAN FOR THE RESTRUCTURING OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN ALBANIA THROUGH PILOTING ACTIVITIES IN AREA OF HEALTH AND EDUCATION.*
 - **IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA:** Development of the Information Technology application for e-recruitment in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
 - **In Kosovo:** Improvement of job descriptions in Public Administrations in Kosovo; Development and implementation of the new Procedure for Development and Validation of Training Curricula for and to train Kosovo Institute of Public Administration (KIPA);
 - **In Montenegro:** *REVISION OF CONCESSION DOCUMENT FOR THE INTRODUCTION OF OUTSOURCING SERVICES AT THE CLINICAL CENTRE OF MONTENEGRO;* Organisation of three seminars on Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) in Montenegro;
 - **In Serbia:** *ANALYSIS OF TRAINING PROGRAMMES OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMY FOR PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION (NAPA), SERBIA;* Development of

Training Management Information System (TMIS) in the National Academy of Public Administration (Serbia); Upgrading the Website of the Public Policy Secretariat of the Republic of Serbia.

- **OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)**

- New ReSPA strategy 2019-2024 adopted by all the ministers responsible for Public Administration in Western Balkan countries;
- Regional study on Public Service Delivery published;
- Update of the Study on Improving the Implementation of Merit Recruitment Procedure developed;
- Baseline Analysis on Performance Appraisal in the Western Balkans developed.

- **ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER**

Implementation of the EC grant finalised on 10 December 2018.

1.3 STATISTICAL COOPERATION

Support for Improvement in Statistics

Programme reference:	Multi-country Programme, IPA 2014/032-064
Project title:	Statistical cooperation with the Western Balkans and Turkey
EU contribution:	EUR 8 million (of which 7.8 million contracted)
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Service contract and grants to 4 national statistical offices
Contract reference:	Service contract with GOPA Consultants, EUR 5.3 m Grant to Statistical Office of Montenegro (MONSTAT), EUR 0.54 m Grant to State Statistical Office (SSO) of North Macedonia, EUR 0.64 m Grant to Statistical Office of Serbia, EUR 0.75 m Grant to Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat), EUR 0.56 m
Duration of activities:	Service contract 01/11/2015 – 31/12/2017 (extended) Grants 01/10/2015 – 31/08/2017

Links:	http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/about/our-partners/cooperation
Contact :	Torbioern Carlquist, Torbioern.Carlquist@ec.europa.eu Andreas Papadopoulos, Andreas.Papadopoulos@ec.europa.eu
Programme reference:	Multi-country Programme, IPA 2015/031-898
Project title:	Statistical cooperation with the Western Balkans and Turkey
EU contribution:	EUR 16 million (of which 15.8 million contracted)
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Service contract and grants to 4 national statistical offices
Contract reference:	Service contract with GOPA Consultants, EUR 9.8 m Grant to Statistical Office of Montenegro (MONSTAT), EUR 1.34 m Grant to State Statistical Office (SSO) of North Macedonia, EUR 1.73 m Grant to Statistical Office of Serbia, EUR 1.50 m Grant to Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat), EUR 1.38 m
Duration of activities:	Service contract 01/04/2017 – 31/10/2019 Grants to 4 statistical offices 01/07/2017 – 31/10/2019
Links:	http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/about/our-partners/cooperation
Contact :	Torbioern Carlquist, Torbioern.Carlquist@ec.europa.eu Andreas Papadopoulos, Andreas.Papadopoulos@ec.europa.eu
Programme reference:	Multi-country Programme, IPA 2017/039-873
Project title:	Statistical cooperation with the Western Balkans and Turkey
EU contribution:	EUR 14 million (of which 13.4 million contracted)
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Service contract and grants to 4 national statistical offices
Contract reference:	Service contract with GOPA Consultants, EUR 7.5 m Grant to Statistical Office of Montenegro (MONSTAT), EUR 1.32 m Grant to State Statistical Office (SSO) of North Macedonia, EUR 1.55 m

	Grant to Statistical Office of Serbia, EUR 1.48 m
	Grant to Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat), EUR 1.29 m
	Grant to IMF, EUR 0.20 m
Duration of activities:	Service contract 01/01/2019 – 31/12/2021
	Grants to 4 statistical offices 01/05/2019 – 31/10/2021
	Grant to IMF 03/12/2018 – 02/06/2021
Links:	http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/about/our-partners/cooperation
Contact :	Torbioern Carlquist, Torbioern.Carlquist@ec.europa.eu
	Andreas Papadopoulos, Andreas.Papadopoulos@ec.europa.eu

- PURPOSE

The overall objective is to prepare the statistical authorities in the partner countries for future EU membership by aligning their present statistical methodologies and practices with the EU acquis in statistics and integrating them into the European Statistical System (ESS).

- ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

The final deliverables from the IPA 2014 service contract were approved and the final payment was made.

Regular activities were financed from the service contract under IPA 2015 such as participation in working group meetings, expert missions to the partner countries, study visits to EU MS, training events. The draft version of the first narrative report was submitted in February 2018 and the financial report was submitted in July 2018. The final version of the narrative report was submitted in August 2018 and approved in October 2018. The draft version of the second narrative report was submitted in August 2018. An updated version was submitted in December 2018.

Twenty-five traineeships were financed from IPA 2015 (service contract and grants) from September to December 2018.

The four grant countries have been implementing activities under their respective IPA 2015 grants during the period. These activities are implementation of the statistical projects, participation in working group meetings, study visits to EU MS, training events, etc.

A peer review of the statistical system in Montenegro was carried out in November 2018.

During the 4th quarter of 2018, Eurostat signed grant agreements with North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey as well as IMF under the IPA 2017 MBP statistical cooperation programme. Under the same programme, IPA 2017 MBP, a service contract was signed.

• OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

Mission reports of experts show that statisticians in the partner countries continue to learn more about the EU standards in statistics.

Activity reports from participants representing the 3 statistical systems supported under the service contract (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo) who participated in working group meetings at Eurostat, in pilot project workshops, training courses and study visits organised by the contractor. The participants from the countries (Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Turkey), which are benefitting from a grant, also took part in these activities and described their experiences in mission reports.

Documentation of statistical sources and methods continued.

Data delivery compatible with common standards has continued from partner countries to Eurostat.

A peer review report for Montenegro with recommendations and improvement actions was published on the web site of Eurostat.

• ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

Regular activities to support the statistical offices in the candidate countries and potential candidates are financed from the IPA 2015 service contract and grants.

Many types of activities will take place: participation in Eurostat working groups and workshops, training events, expert missions to the national statistical offices, study visits, beneficiaries' work in different areas of statistics under 31 different pilot projects.

A total of 17 statisticians from partner countries are planned to participate in traineeships at Eurostat and in statistical offices in selected EU Member States from January to June 2019.

Under the IPA 2017 MBP service contract, the inception phase will be carried out from January to April 2019 with kick-off meetings in 25 statistical projects. The inception report is due by the end of May 2019.

IMF will organise a workshop on external sector statistics in the frame of the IPA 2017 grant. Central banks and statistical offices of the regions are invited to attend the workshop.

1.4 SUPPORT TO SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL AREAS

Programme reference:	IPA Multi-country programme 2016/037-900
Project title:	Regional cooperation and networking in the field of agriculture, rural and economic development of cross-border areas
EU contribution:	EUR 500,000.00
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Grant Agreement with Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group
Contract reference:	CN 2017/390-538
Duration of activities:	14/12/2017 – 14/12/2018
Links:	www.seerural.org
Contact :	laurent.guirkinge@ec.europa.eu

• PURPOSE

The project is implemented on behalf of the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group (SWG RRD) in South-East Europe. The principal aim of the action is to foster regional cooperation among institutions and stakeholders in the field of agricultural and rural development along with facilitation of the process of a balanced territorial development of the Western Balkan countries on the path towards EU integration.

• ACTIVITIES (JULY- DECEMBER 2018)

- Seven (7) Stakeholder meetings (SHG) meetings were organized (one (1) meeting per cross-border region). Approximately 200 stakeholders from public and private sector, as well as civil society participated during the SHG meetings;
- Implementation of selected People-2-People activities in the targeted cross border regions. This networking tool served as an excellent exercise model for creation of sustainable partnerships and business opportunities in the cross-border regions. In the reporting period, thirty-one (31) P2P events were supported.
- In the course of September and October 2018 seven (7) study tours were organized from the targeted regions, focusing on positive practices and examples in tourism and agro-food (including beekeeping and apple production) value chains and networking of local businesses within the regions.

- SWG RDD developed a short promo video on the actions implemented locally as a visibility indicator. The video can be found on the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SlqFGySArx8>;
- Two (2) regional policy dialogue platforms were organized to support the process of evidence-based policies during the EU approximation. The Agricultural Policy Forum 2018 was organized in October, 2018 in Jahornia, Bosnia and Herzegovina where the Jahorina Agenda was derived. The Annual meeting of the Ministers of Agriculture from SEE was held on the 16th of November 2018 in Struga, Macedonia where the Ministers agreed on future steps for regional cooperation, stated in the Struga Declaration 2018.
- SWG and PMUs assisted local stakeholders in the preparation of project proposals for different calls (EU programs, UN programs and other grants).

• OUTPUTS (JULY- DECEMBER 2018)

- Fourteen (14) selected stakeholders, who take active part in selected local value chains (four (4) selected sectors – tourism, apple production, agro-food production & processing and beekeeping) and business environment, gained skills and knowledge transfers on value chain and cluster development via custom made developed regional study tours;
- Seventeen (17) project proposals developed and submitted for funding under various grant schemes (e.g. IPA CBC, regional development grant schemes, IPARD) with the TA of SWG regional structures – PMUs;
- Two (2) high level meetings involving line Ministries, local organisations/institutions and other regional/international donors organised per year;
- Two (2) Ministries of Agriculture's joint political statements and policy documents prepared and disseminated by the SWG;
- Two (2) measures created as a prop to agriculture and rural development policy frameworks of the WB countries set in line with the EU acquis and IPA instruments;
- Enhanced opportunities for development of the economic and social context in the rural and cross-border areas through continuous technical support and dialogue among the stakeholders via People-2-People tools;
- Increased visibility of the achievements. Activities and outputs of the Action promoted and disseminated via SWG communication tools (press conferences, audio video materials, social media and etc.)

• ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- N/A

1.5 SUPPORT FOR REGIONAL INVESTMENT POLICY AND PROMOTION IN THE W.B.

Programme reference:	2016 / 037-900 Multi-country Action Programme for 2016
Project title:	Administration Agreement between the European Commission and the International Finance Corporation concerning the Western Balkans Regional Investment Policy and Promotion
EU contribution:	EUR 2.5 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Single Trust Fund with the World Bank
Contract reference:	CN-2016/379-787
Duration of activities:	18/04/2017 – 18/04/2020
Contact :	Gabriel Blanc, gabriel.blanc@ec.europa.eu

• PURPOSE

The overall objective is to, as part of the overall Western Balkans Regional Investment Policy and Promotion (WBIPP Program) and the Regional Economic Area (REA), contribute to greater convergence of regional investment policies in the Western Balkans and greater alignment with the relevant EU and international standards. This will improve the attractiveness of the region for foreign investors (extra- and intra-regional) and ultimately lead to increased investment.

• ACTIVITIES (JULY – DECEMBER 2018)

During the current reporting period the project's main focus was on translating the broad reform objectives outlined by the regional investment reform agenda (RIRA) into concrete economy level reform action plans for each of the WB6. Representing the main output of the project's work during the current supervision period, six economy level investment reform action plans (IRAPs) have been prepared in close consultations with the governments of the WB6. These action plans are due to be adopted by the governments of the region as their main roadmaps for implementing reform commitments from RIRA in the next reporting period.

In parallel, the project has ramped up its activities for investment promotion. The preparations for targeted investment outreach activities for the WB6 economies have been

initiated through a series of individual technical level meetings with the IPAs of the region, and the consultations on the establishment of a joint investment promotion initiative (JIPI) for the region are progressing as planned.

• OUTPUTS (JULY – DECEMBER 2018)

The specific outputs delivered as a result of the activities outlined above include:

- The project led the development and formulation of six economy level investment reform action plans (IRAPs) representing the main roadmaps for the WB6 to implement the reform commitments outlined in the regional investment reform agenda (RIRA). The documents lay out specific reform actions that will be implemented by the WB6 economies going forward, including specific timelines, responsibilities and expected outcomes. IRAPs are expected to be adopted by the six economies of the region during the next reporting period and reported to the Berlin process.
- The project developed a monitoring and reporting framework that will enable the economies of the region to track and report progress with RIRA implementation. This will facilitate their reporting to the Berlin process as well as other relevant stakeholders and outside audiences.
- The project initiated a comprehensive assessment of the WB6 current legal base for investment. The findings of this assessment will inform the formulation and implementation of concrete policy reform actions in subsequent reporting periods.
- The project conducted a series of in-depth consultations and technical level workshops with the investment promotion agencies (IPAs) of the region to facilitate the establishment of a Joint Investment Promotion Initiative (JIPI). The consultations helped specify the scope and scale of the proposed cooperation in the context of JIPI.
- The project initiated the targeted investment outreach activities for the WB6 economies through a series of individual meetings with the IPAs of the region to define the modalities of cooperation, identify target sectors, scope and scale of the proposed outreach activities, and timelines.

• ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

Activities in the next reporting period will be geared towards the support of the economies in implementing the economy level Investment Reform Action Plans (IRAP) and in enhancing the regions investment attractiveness through tailored investment promotion and outreach activities. These will entail:

- Finalize the monitoring and reporting framework to track progress with RIRA implementation on regional level and collect data on initial results achieved during CY 2019 (June 2019).
- Complete the draft assessment report of the WB6 current legal base for investment, including IIAs, to help inform the formulation of concrete policy reform actions (June 2019).
- Provide technical assistance to the WB6 economies with the implementation of investment policy reforms as per the workplan and timeline outlined by the respective IRAPs (June 2019).
- Implement a joint training event on core promotion and facilitation capabilities for IPA staff from the region as part of the Joint Investment Promotion Initiative (JIPI) (May 2019).
- Implement a rapid institutional needs assessment for the six IPAs of the region to identify and fix critical capacity gaps to effectively perform the planned economy level outreach activities, assess the proposed value propositions for the outreach campaigns, and provide support with the development of required marketing materials (June 2019).

CHAPTER 2: RULE OF LAW AND FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS

2.1 FIGHT AGAINST ORGANISED CRIME AND CORRUPTION

Programme reference:	Multi-country Action Programme, IPA/2018/041-591
Project title:	Joint EU – MICT Training project for National Prosecutors and Young Professionals from the Former Yugoslavia
EU contribution:	EUR 0.2 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Grant agreement for Pillar Assessed Organisations
Contract reference:	CN 2018/404-574
Duration of activities:	01/01/2018 – 31/12/2019
Links:	http://www.irmct.org/en
Contact:	Catherine Denis, Catherine.DENIS@ec.europa.eu

• PURPOSE

The objective is to strengthen the capacity of Western Balkans judicial authorities to effectively investigate and prosecute war crimes. National prosecutors for domestic war crimes cases and young professionals with a legal or other relevant background participate into the Action.

• ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

Visiting National Prosecutors

- Visiting National Prosecutor from Serbia continued activities.
- The Office of the Prosecutor provided support to Serbian Visiting National Prosecutors during searches for investigative material. This material was used in the investigation and prosecution of war crimes in Serbia.
- The Office of the Prosecutor handled requests for assistance from Bosnia and Herzegovina in connection with war crimes cases.

Visiting Young Professionals component

- This component of the Project was inactive in this period.

• OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

Visiting National Prosecutors component

- 65 Requests for Assistance completed. 680 documents (13,528 pages) provided to the national prosecuting authorities.

• ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- It is expected that Visiting National Prosecutors from Bosnia and Herzegovina will arrive and start their activities with the Office of the Prosecutor on 1 February 2019.
- 3 Visiting Young Professionals will start the job training with the Office of the Prosecutor in March/April 2019.
- By 30 June 2019, one Visiting National Prosecutor from Serbia will complete his professional visit at the Office of the Prosecutor.

• Programme reference:	IPA Multi-Country Programme 2014/031-603
• Project title:	Measuring and assessing organized crime in the Western Balkans: Supporting evidence-based policy making (MACRO)
• EU contribution:	EUR 2 million
• Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
• Type of contract:	Grant agreement for a pillar assessed organisation United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Research and Trends Analysis Branch
• Contract reference:	CN 2015/358-127
• Duration of activities:	01/04/2016 – 31/12/2019
• Contact :	olivia.debaveye@ec.europa.eu

• PURPOSE

- The Action aims to develop and implement a statistical framework for quantifying and analysing organised crime in the Western Balkans, to establish mechanisms to monitor it and to produce an evidence-based analytical report on Organised Crime (OC) in the Western Balkans. The statistical framework on OC will include various

components, such as criminal activities perpetrated by OC groups, the response by the criminal justice system and on ways of operating.

• ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

- The MACRO online data platform (<https://macro-wb.un.org>) was launched in August 2018 whereby more than 50 participants from 32 different institutions started entering the statistical data of relevance for analysis of organized crime, after UNODC provided them with online training on data entry and support to the users from national institutions.
- In July 2018, MACRO project held an interview training in preparation for the qualitative data collection output, which prepares local interviewers in each beneficiary to implement in-depth semi-structured interviews with four target populations: victims of trafficking in persons, smuggled migrants, those serving prison sentences for crimes most often associated with organized crime, and expert practitioners. In September 2018, UNODC and local partners in Albania and Montenegro, began to undertake pilot interviews to test the sampling methodology and the interview tool. After the results of the pilot were gathered and analyzed and the appropriate adjustments were made, full deployment of the qualitative data collection was initiated in December 2018.
- From 24-27 September 2018, over 70 experts from the six project jurisdictions participated in a regional training workshop in Bečići, Montenegro. Participants represented a spectrum of criminal justice institutions involved in collecting, analysing and reporting data on crime. The training served as an opportunity for regional coordination and cooperation by way of sharing of good practices to collect, store, analyse and disseminate criminal justice data and, in particular, data relevant to organized crime. The training also provided hands-on exercises and direct training for the implementation and use of the International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes (ICCS), which was unanimously requested by the MACRO beneficiaries during the data assessment phase of the project.

• OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

- As of December 2018, 38% of indicators assessed as being available had been entered into the data platform. While this is an encouraging first push for the data collection, it has signalled the need to redouble efforts to reach out to focal points and actively support the data collection process.
- Regarding the pilot surveys in Albania and Montenegro, UNODC and local partners conducted 15 interviews total with 6 migrants (Kuwait, 2 Iraq, 3 Syria), 2 victims of

trafficking in persons, and 7 prisoners (2 convicted for human trafficking, 4 for drug trafficking, 1 for racketeering). The migrants gave specific and illustrative information about their routes and prices for services, including how they get in touch with smugglers. Interviews with victims of trafficking showed that all of them were minors when they were recruited. They also supplied information about recruitment and control methods used by traffickers. Interviews with prisoners elicited fascinating information about group structure, modus operandi and financial arrangements. The results of the pilot also helped to refine the sampling methodology and interview tool.

- The results of the regional training were also quite positive with many participants showing high levels of satisfaction with the topics covered. The training in ICCS has already resulted in the formation of national implementation groups in Macedonia and Albania to start the process of harmonization.

• ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Currently, a process of data assessment and validation is ongoing and a second, more targeted push for missing data will be initiated in February which will extend until end of March. From January through June, we will be using all the information we are gathering in order to draft a series of publications that will explain the methodology and usefulness behind our work as well as the ultimate results. First, we will be undertaking a deeper analysis of the data availability assessment on organised crime - how the indicators were decided on, how the assessments were carried out, what they can reveal about the criminal justice response to organised crime and what can be done to increase the availability of organised crime data. In addition, we are aiming to publish a Manual on the entire framework. The purpose of the manual will be to explain the thinking behind the framework so that other interested countries or regions might be able to replicate it. Finally, we will produce the regional report on measuring and assessing organised crime in the Western Balkans, which will describe the trends and patterns observed through the quantitative and qualitative data as well as provide evidence based policy advice to support developments in the rule of law and the accession process in the beneficiary countries and territories.

Programme reference:	Europe Aid/154870/DH/ACT/Multi
Project title:	Balkans Act Now (BAN - phase III)
EU contribution:	EUR 965'117,64
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey

Type of contract:	Grant agreement
Contract reference:	2017/394348
Duration of activities:	01/01/2018 – 31/12/2021
Links:	http://www.astra.rs
Contact :	Lucia Santuccione; Lucia.Santuccione@ext.ec.europa.eu

- PURPOSE

Western Balkan region in its EU accession negotiation processes needs to respond to the judicial reform and fight against organized crime, specifically human trafficking. This needs to be done as well by enhancing and strengthening regional cooperation, improving capacities and influence of the civil society organisations (CSO) in debating and monitoring on human rights and rule of law. Phase 3 of BAN project builds on the successes of the phases 1 and 2 (established strong regional network of CSO co-applicants; designed Balkans Declaration on the suppression of trafficking and exploitation of human beings; designed and tested regional Monitoring tool; proposal of compensation mechanism for victims' developed (a feasibility study on State Compensation Fund, a model of the Law on Compensation Fund). This phase focuses primarily on strengthening of the cooperation and capacities of the institutions in the region and on the adoption and implementation of the Monitoring tool. This will allow: transparent and accountable monitoring of quality services provided to victims; regional data and services comparison and it will set preconditions for establishment of the future National Rapporteur's offices.

- ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

- All co-applicants have held numerous (over 50 in total) national level working meetings with institutions/partners to promote the monitoring tool
- Comparative analysis into EU monitoring has been completed in December 2019
- Co-applicants have started with preparatory activities on the first CSO national report writing. Collecting data should be finalised during January/February 2019 and used as basis to prepare national reports on THB 2018 situation, due September 2019.
- CSO transparency and accountability charter is finalised to be ready for signing by co-applicants in February 2019
- Regional Network Action Plan 2019-2021 Workshop and Co-applicants meeting have been held in Sarajevo, from September 29th to November 2nd, 2018, for 15 participants, representatives of co-applicants CSOs. During Workshop, BAN III Annual

Plan 2019 -2021 has been developed, detailed Regional joint activities and national activities are discussed and elaborated for 2019 and 2020; BAN III Steering Committee has been established, had its first meeting and agreed on the next steps.

• OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

- Co-applicants have managed to introduce, advocate for and prepare national authorities to develop national Monitoring tools and use them as referral monitoring instrument of national situation in combat against trafficking of human beings. This will provide better cooperation between police, prosecutor's office and the court and enhance establishment and support to the National Rapporteur mechanism.
- Co-applicants have finalised and adopted a joint Accountability Charter document, first of its kind in the Western Balkans. The charter describes the values of transparency, accountability and integrity that participating CSOs are subscribed to. This will strengthen capacity and capability of CSOs to further actively engage in evidence-based policy monitoring and advocacy while improving their internal transparency and accountability.
- A Comparative Research and Analysis of the National Rapporteur Mechanism is produced. The analysis is contributing to the establishment and effective functioning of National Rapporteurs with a prime responsibility in monitoring of implementation of anti-trafficking policies. In Serbia for instance, National Rapporteur is introduced in the National Anti-Trafficking Strategy and its Action Plan, with planned realisation in 2021.
- A compensation for victims, is still highly political issue. Additional advocacy is needed, but all the products necessary for the advocacy have been produced.
- Co-applicants have updated a knowledge on the project implementation administrative and financial requirements, visibility and communication. All co-applicants had intensified research activities, on collecting and analysing data regarding victims of THB for 2018, with the aim to provide basis for monitoring report production in 2019.

• ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Launching tender for local grass root civil society organisations' granting.
- Capacity building trainings for THB monitoring of the local grass root organisations in partners' counties will be finalised.
- Monitoring tool working groups are established and prepared for monitoring tool' national indicators development. Meeting of Monitoring tool working groups coordinators with the editor of the national reports is held in April 2019.

Western Balkans Pulse for Police Integrity and Trust (POINTPULSE)

Programme reference:	IPA Multi-Country Programme 2016/038-960
Project title:	Western Balkans Pulse for Police Integrity and Trust
EU contribution:	EUR 87.238,00
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Grant Contract
Contract reference:	2017/391-807
Duration of activities:	01/01/2018 – 31/12/2018
Links:	http://pointpulse.net/
Contact:	Eleonora Sconci Eleonora.SCONCI@ec.europa.eu

• PURPOSE

The project seeks to contribute to increased trust and confidence in the police services in the Western Balkans by fighting corruption and promoting police integrity, through activities of the regional civilian oversight network: POINTPULSE. It builds on previous IPA funded actions implemented by the POINTPULSE network.

• ACTIVITIES (JULY – DECEMBER 2018)

POINTPULSE organized 18 public events in the second half of 2018 focusing on different police integrity issues and the citizens' opinions concerning safety, police, and corruption in the Western Balkans. Researchers from the POINTPULSE advocated for the improvement of police accountability and published 11 insights on on-going issues relevant for the police reform in the Western Balkans. The Network published a policy paper with possible solutions to overcome the current challenges in communication between the police and the media in the Western Balkans and legal analysis on whistleblowing in the police service. The website is continuously updating its information and in the observed period it had 85,191 visits and 27,552 visitors.

• OUTPUTS (JULY – DECEMBER 2018)

POINTPULSE continued a public discussion on police integrity vision for the next decade in the Western Balkans. More than 250 participants from national institutions, civil society organizations and the international community in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Kosovo attended [12 consultations](#) on internal control and accountability, human resources and financial management in the police.

In addition, POINTPULSE simultaneously [presented](#) a public opinion research on police, safety and corruption in the Western Balkans in all capitals across the region. More than 100 media outlets reported about the research findings, most in [Bosnia and Herzegovina](#) (39), then in [Serbia](#) (35), North [Macedonia](#) (22), and [Montenegro](#) (11). Partners in [Albania](#) and [Kosovo](#) organized closed meetings with beneficiary authorities without media presence, which is in line with their advocacy goals. Researchers from the POINTPULSE offered answers to the following questions during the presentations of a public opinion survey: do citizens feel safe? how much do citizens trust the police? what do citizens think about the police as an institution? to what extent do citizens think that the police is corrupt?

POINTPULSE continued to inform policy community and citizens in the Western Balkans and Europe on police integrity developments in the region. The Network [published](#) a policy paper that identifies the problems of communication between the police and the media in the Western Balkans and advocates for the establishment of sound communication between the media and the police in the region. Moreover, POINTPULSE [published](#) a legal analysis of the protection of whistle-blowers in the police services in the Western Balkans. The Network published 11 different policy outputs and insights on the [Magazine](#) section of the website. The most read concern [illegal weapons](#) in the Western Balkans and Kosovo's [application](#) for membership in INTERPOL. Two newsletters were distributed in the reporting period to more than 2.000 e-mail addresses.

POINTPULSE's website amassed 498,924 all-time total visits and 144,360 all-time total visitors since its creation. In the reporting period, the website had 85,191 visits and 27,552 visitors; POINTPULSE created 39 Facebook posts viewed by 1,192 people, who interacted with the content 301 times (likes, shares, all clicks on post) in total; 634 people currently follow POINTPULSE Facebook page; POINTPULSE Twitter, followed by 689 people, had 72 original tweets that made 64.756 impressions.

• ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

Until the end of March 2019, POINTPULSE will finish the following technical and administrative tasks:

- Design and layout of research reports on the citizens' opinions concerning safety, police, and corruption in the Western Balkans. Publishing on the website.
- Design and layout of publications regarding police complaints system and disciplinary responsibility of police officers. Publishing on the website.
- Proofreading and translating police integrity vision publication. Publishing on the website.
- Preparing financial and report for the European Commission.

Civil Society for Good Governance and Anticorruption in Southeast Europe: Capacity Building for Monitoring, Advocacy and Awareness Raising (SELDI)

Programme reference:	IPA Multi-Country Programme 2017-038-931
Project title:	Civil Society for Good Governance and Anticorruption in Southeast Europe: Capacity Building for Monitoring, Advocacy and Awareness Raising (SELDI)
EU contribution:	EUR 1.135.257
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Grant Contract with the Macedonian Center for International Cooperation
Contract reference:	2018/394-123 EuropeAid/154870/DH/ACT/Multi
Duration of activities:	10.05.2018-09.05.2022
Links:	http://seldi.net/home/ , www.mcic.mk
Contact:	Eleonora Sconci, Eleonora.Sconci@ec.europa.eu

• PURPOSE

The action aims at enhancing the impact of civil society in public decision-making and reform processes in the Western Balkans in the area of good governance and anti-corruption through evidence-based advocacy, watchdog and policy monitoring, and dialogue with the Governments.

• ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

In the reporting period July- December 2018, the following activities took place:

- The Macedonian Center for International Cooperation (MCIC), in coordination with its partners prepared the draft Communication and Visibility Plan, the Monitoring and Evaluation Plan and the Advocacy and Engagement Plan;
- MCIC organised the first meeting of the Project Steering Committee on 05.09.2018 and the first Annual Coordinative Partners' meeting on 06.09.2018 in Skopje;
- MCIC on behalf of Southeast Europe Leadership for Development and Integrity (SELDI) has signed a Memorandum for Understanding with Balkan Tender Watch on 13 December 2018;

- All core partners conducted preparatory activities for implementing the Corruption Monitoring System (population survey) and initiated the procedure for the selection of survey agency;
- All core partners prepared questionnaires in local languages, identified public institutions and drafted a list of economic sectors relevant for their countries, as preparatory stage for the implementation of MACPI State Capture survey;
- The Centers for Civic Initiatives (CCI) with the support of the Centre for the Study of Democracy (CSD) and MCIC prepared the Application Package for the Small Grants Programme;
- Institute Alternativa and ZastoNE, with the support of all other partner organisations prepared the first Thematic Policy Brief, that covers the establishment and functioning of the anticorruption agencies in the region;
- SELDI partners prepared and distributed the 41st edition of SELDI Newsletter;
- MCIC submitted Request for Addendum to the Grant Contract to the European Commission (EC).

• OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

- Draft Communication and Visibility Plan, as well as Monitoring and Evaluation Plan, and Advocacy and Engagement Plan;
- Draft Thematic Policy Brief Institutional Setup and Efficiency of the Anti-Corruption Agencies in the Western Balkans .

• ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Publishing first Thematic Policy Brief (by end of February 2019) and preparation of the second Thematic Policy Brief;
- Implementation of first round of Corruption Monitoring System as well as MACPI State Capture;
- Launching Call for Proposals for Small Grants Programme and signature of 5-12 small grant contracts;
- Preparing and distributing SELDI newsletters as well as interim report to the EC;
- Three-days Methodological and Practical Training in Sarajevo (14-16 May 2019);
- First meeting of the Project General Assembly (in Sarajevo);
- Dissemination activities for increased communication and visibility.

Strengthening National Integrity Systems in the Western Balkans and Turkey and tracking developments of anti-corruption efforts – bridging grant // Ending Impunity for Grand Corruption in the Western Balkans and Turkey

Programme reference:	Multi-beneficiary Programme IPA 2017/039-402 and IPA/2018/040-113
Project title:	Strengthening National Integrity Systems in the Western Balkans and Turkey and tracking developments of anti-corruption efforts – bridging grant // Ending impunity for grand corruption in the Western Balkans and Turkey
EU contribution:	EUR 400.000 // EUR 1.111.109
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Grant Agreements with Transparency International (TI)
Contract reference:	CN 2017/390-068 // CN 2018/401-061
Duration of activities:	30/11/2017 – 29/10/2018 // 01/11/2018 – 31/12/2020
Contact :	Eleonora Sconci, Eleonora.SCONCI@ec.europa.eu

- PURPOSE

Two projects have been implemented in the reporting period, both being strongly interlinked. The first one on **Strengthening National Integrity Systems in the Western Balkans and Turkey and tracking developments of anticorruption efforts**. The implementing partner finalised institutional ‘health checks’ in the Western Balkans and Turkey on their readiness to address corruption threats, the so-called National Integrity Systems (NIS) assessments. Project partners applied a monitoring mechanism to track developments in each country in their fight against corruption and conducted hot-spot risk assessments of state capture.

The implementing partner will then focus on tackling state capture by analysing how grand corruption cases are being processed in the judicial systems and identifying tailor-made laws, as part of the other project on **Ending impunity for grand corruption in the Western Balkans and Turkey**. Based on the research findings, project partners will identify illustrative case studies and launch innovative advocacy initiatives. This on-going work builds on a previous IPA funded action.

• ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

For the project on **Strengthening National Integrity Systems in the Western Balkans and Turkey and tracking developments of anticorruption efforts**, the list of activities is below.

- **State capture publications:**

Project partners published their findings from the state capture hot spot risk assessments.

- Kosovo: [Trading public health for private gain](#); [The political economy of gravel](#)
- North Macedonia: [State Capture – illustration through “Skopje 2014” project](#)
- Serbia: [Elements of State Capture in Serbia – case studies](#)
- Turkey: [Obstacles to good governance](#)

- **Tracking reports:**

All project partners (except for TI Turkey) drafted short reports tracking anti-corruption efforts and progress during the last 3 years and in particular against selected NIS recommendations.

- **End of project meeting in Istanbul:**

On 09 – 11 October 2018, TI brought together all project partners for a regional project evaluation meeting to discuss successes, which strategies worked and why as well as challenges and lessons learnt from over 4 years of project implementation.

For the project on **Ending impunity for grand corruption in the Western Balkans and Turkey**, some initial work was undertaken:

- **Definition for grand corruption:**

In preparation for the kick-off meeting, the project partners conducted background research on defining criteria for a common definition of grand corruption and tailor-made laws.

• OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

- During the implementation of the final stage of the project on **Strengthening National Integrity Systems in the Western Balkans and Turkey and tracking developments of anticorruption efforts**, TI has provided the research results of its work to the EC. Part of this information was used as input into the Progress Reports 2018 and direct references to state capture are present in the reports on Kosovo and North Macedonia.

- The tracking mechanism, monitoring progress toward the implementation of the NIS recommendations, also part of the project above, has brought important insights on progress (or regress) over time. Each project partner selected a number of recommendations from the NIS assessment to monitor and present the level of achievement on a scale from 1 – 5 (1 being “achieved” and 5 being “regress”).
- The signature of the contract on **ending impunity for grand corruption** in November 2018 set the basis for starting the implementation of the work plan as of early 2019, also based on the results of the closing project.

• ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- In January 2019, TI will send the final report of the project on **Strengthening National Integrity Systems in the Western Balkans and Turkey and tracking developments of anticorruption efforts**.
- In January 2019, TI will organise a regional kick-off meeting and finance training for the “**ending impunity for grand corruption in the Western Balkans and Turkey**”-project. TI will develop a database for the collection of grand corruption cases. After the project partners have agreed on the categories to be included in the database, TI will search for open source software and design a database that can generate interesting visualisations.
- TI Project partners will collect data on grand corruption cases and tailor-made laws. Additionally, project partners will develop monitoring and evaluation frameworks, do advocacy planning and draft a communications strategy (national as well as regional).

Programme reference:	Multi-beneficiary Programme, IPA 2015/031-609
Project title:	Cooperation in Criminal Justice: Strengthening Witness Protection in the Fight against Organised Crime, Terrorism and Corruption (WINPRO III)
EU contribution:	EUR 5,00 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Delegation agreement with Northern Ireland Co-operation Overseas (NI-CO)
Contract reference:	CN 2015/370-989
Duration of activities:	24/12/2015 – 23/04/2019
Links:	http://www.nico.org.uk
Contact :	Eleonora Sconci, Eleonora.Sconci@europa.eu

• PURPOSE

The purpose of the project is to increase the number of witnesses of crime coming forward to denounce and report criminal acts and to collaborate with justice to get the perpetrators convicted. These witnesses (and also victims) need to be assured that their lives and livelihood are duly protected and secured throughout the region and abroad.

• ACTIVITIES (JULY - DECEMBER 2018)

In this reporting period, the following key activities were carried out:

- The WINPRO III Operating Model has been completed and has been shared with the Beneficiary Units. Its focus was on legacy issues beyond the end of 2018, when WINPRO III stops operating in the Western Balkans.
- Another meeting of the Balkan Network was held in Novi Sad at the end of October 2018. All Witness Protection (WP) Units from the region attended as well as invited guests from Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, Croatia and the International Criminal Court (ICC).
- A work exchange programme between BCs' units and 3 EU MSs (Bulgaria, Poland and Romania) has been completed successfully, with a very positive feedback from all units involved both on the EU MS and the BCs side.
- A regional cross-border exercise for all the WP Units was completed successfully in October 2018.
- Many training courses for WP staff and stakeholders have been organised to enhance the professional capabilities of the units as well as to raise awareness of WP issues amongst the stakeholders. To date, 1035 participants attended all the courses (672 individuals) under WINPRO III.
- The Final Conference was organised at the end of November 2018 in Podgorica. All WP units and relevant senior stakeholders from judiciary, prosecution and prison services from the region attended as along with invited guests, including Europol, the Integrative Internal Security Governance (IISG), ICC and the Mechanism for International Criminal Tribunals (MICT).

• OUTPUTS (JULY - DECEMBER 2018)

- Professional operational capacity of the Witness Protection Units strengthened across the region.
- International relations within the region and between BCs Witness Protection Units and EU Member States strengthened, including better co-operation with Europol and International Criminal Court.
- Improved understanding of Witness Protection programmes amongst the stakeholders across the region, in particular by prosecutors through relevant training courses, seminars and direct project interventions.

- ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Although the project is closing its operations in the region, there are still few activities planned in the remaining implementation period. Specifically, the last activities aim at completing some minor adjustments and residual issues related to the closure of WINPRO activities in the region (e.g. finalisation of equipment donations) as well as monitoring the sustainability of project results and ownership takeover by the WP Units.

Targeting crime proceeds on the internet in South Eastern Europe and Turkey (iPROCEEDS)

Programme reference:	Multi-country Programme, IPA 2014/031-603
Project title:	Project iPROCEEDS - Cooperation on Cybercrime under the Instrument of Pre-accession (IPA): Project on targeting crime proceeds on the Internet in South-eastern Europe and Turkey
EU contribution:	EUR 5 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Grant agreement for a pillar assessed organisation with the Council of Europe
Contract reference:	CN 2015/367-971
Duration of activities:	01 January 2016 – 30 June 2019
Links:	https://www.coe.int/en/web/cybercrime/iproceeds
Contact :	Olivia.DEBAVEYE@ec.europa.eu

- PURPOSE

The Action aims to assure that the beneficiaries will comply with relevant standards regarding cybercrime and crime proceeds including the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime (CETS 185)* and the Convention on Laundering, Search, Seizure and Confiscation of the Proceeds from Crime and on the Financing of Terrorism (CETS 198)[†] of the Council of Europe (CoE). Both treaties and the related assessment or monitoring mechanisms are most

* Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, North Macedonia and Turkey are Parties. The Cybercrime Convention Committee (T-CY) assesses implementation of this treaty (www.coe.int/tcy).

[†] Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and NorthMacedonia and Turkey are Parties. These States are monitored by MONEYVAL (www.coe.int/moneyval).

relevant for countries covered by this Action. In fact, the beneficiaries are expected to comply with the *EU acquis* and relevant Council of Europe conventions and standards.

• ACTIVITIES (JULY – DECEMBER 2018)

In the reporting period, the following key activities were carried out:

- Three training courses on cybercrime, electronic evidence and online crime proceeds for judges and prosecutors in Serbia (12-15 June 2018), in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1-4 October 2018) and in Turkey (21-24 November 2018).
- Underground Economy Conference - UE2018 - a prominent international information security (closed) event (3-7 September, Strasbourg, France), which brought together around 400 representatives from the law enforcement agencies, cyber security community, private industry and academia from across the globe.
- Two Meetings on public-private cooperation for fighting cybercrime and online crime proceeds were organised between relevant state authorities and representatives of the private sector (Internet Service Providers and banks) in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Brcko District on 11 September 2018 and Banja Luka on 12 September 2018).
- Regional Forum on Online Fraud was organised under the Croatian Chairmanship of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers in cooperation with the Regional Centre for judicial training on Cybercrime of the Judicial Academy of Croatia on 4-5 October 2018 in Zagreb, Croatia. The event was attended by the criminal justice authorities from the South-Eastern Europe and Turkey, representatives of the private sector, Council of Europe, Europol, FBI, Ministry of Justice of Estonia, Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU)-Luxembourg, and City of London Police.
- The project supported the delivery of specialised trainings: Malware Investigations (Ankara, Turkey, 15-19 October 2018) and training course on Cryptocurrencies, organised in collaboration with the International College of Financial Investigation – International Training Centre (Budapest, Hungary 5-7 November 2018).
- Regional case simulation exercise on cybercrime and financial investigations was organised in Bucharest, Romania (12 – 15 November 2018), the exercise integrated important learning subject-matters related to investigation on the Darknet, virtual currencies and cooperation in the framework of joint investigation teams (JITs). The activity engaged prosecutors, cybercrime and financial investigators, FIUs and forensic digital specialists.
- Support of six law enforcement officers in participation in the Winter Examination of the long-distance Master programme in Cybercrime and Digital Forensics, offered by the University College Dublin (10-14 December, 2018). On 4 December, 2018, two students from Turkey and Bosnia and Herzegovina graduated the Master Programme on Forensic Computing and Cybercrime Investigation with outstanding results.
- Support participation at international events such as the T-CY plenary session and Protocol Drafting Group meeting (27-29 November 2018 in Strasbourg France) and

the 6th INTEREPOL-Europol Cybercrime Conference - Globalised Efforts to Tackle Cybercrime (8-20 September 2018, Singapore).

- Update of the online platform/tools in the Octopus Community, namely Country Wiki Profiles, Legal Profiles, Online Tool on Public/Private Cooperation and Online Tool on International Cooperation.

• OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

- Increased knowledge and understanding of investigators, prosecutors and FIUs on the latest cybercrime trends and threats, tools and investigative techniques to fight cybercrime as well as improved detection and mitigation techniques.
- Improved interagency and international cooperation between investigators, digital forensic experts, prosecutors and FIUs through simulation exercise that required exchange of information, close coordination and cooperation in investigation of cybercrime and criminal proceeds, application of digital forensics skills, detection and handling suspicious financial transactions and money laundering, and recovering data through international cooperation channels.
- Sustainable Judicial Training programmes on cybercrime, electronic evidence and online crime proceeds through integration of the new modules in the curricula of training institutions and piloting the trainings in project countries/areas.
- Building partnerships with counterparts in the region, other countries and international organisations.

• ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Meeting to support existing public/private initiatives or establish such mechanisms at domestic level (29 January 2019 in Albania).
- European Cybercrime Training and Education Group (ECTEG) regional training on Network Investigations in cooperation with the Romanian Police Academy (11-15 February 2019 in Romania).
- Criminal Justice in Cyberspace Conference under Romanian Presidency of the Council of the EU with the Council of Europe (25-27 February 2019 in Romania).
- Advice to public authorities and law reform working group to bring legal framework in line with EU and Council of Europe standards- assessment of legislation: advisory mission and desk review (4-5 March 2019 in Serbia)
- Meetings of the working groups to elaborate/improve guidelines and indicators for financial sector entities to prevent money laundering in the online environment in each project country/area (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia).

- Two trainings/meetings on the application of the guidelines for financial sector entities to prevent money laundering in the online environment (Montenegro and Kosovo).
- Kick-off meeting of EMPACT Operational Action Plan 2019 - update of the ECTEG Dark Web and Virtual Currencies Training in cooperation with Southeast European Law Enforcement Centre (SELEC) (11-13 March 2019 in Romania).
- Three case simulation exercise on cybercrime and financial investigations (4-7 March 2019 in Albania; 8-11 April 2019 in Serbia and 6-9 May 2019 in Turkey).
- Training of trainers on delivery of the basic training module on cybercrime, electronic evidence and online crime proceeds for judges and prosecutors (18-21 March 2019 in North Macedonia).
- Workshop on online financial fraud and credit card fraud (4-5 April 2019 in Turkey).
- Domestic meeting of 24/7 Contact Point with judges and prosecutors (15-16 April 2019 in Turkey).
- Workshop on Mutual Legal Assistance in cybercrime cases in cooperation with the INTERPOL (at the INTERPOL Global Complex for Innovation) (25-27 June 2019 in Singapore).
- Six introductory trainings courses on cybercrime, electronic evidence and online crime proceeds for judges and prosecutors (February-June 2019 in Kosovo, Montenegro, Albania, Serbia, Turkey and Bosnia and Herzegovina).
- Support in participation in long-distance master programme at University College Dublin (winter examination in Ireland).
- Support participation at international events.

2.2 ROMA INTEGRATION

Programme reference:	Multi-country Action Programme IPA 2016/037-900
Project title:	ROMACTED – Promoting good governance and Roma Empowerment at local level
EU contribution:	EUR 3 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Grant Agreement with the Council of Europe

Contract reference:	CN 2017/384-651
Duration of activities:	01/05/2017 – 30/04/2020
Contact:	Kristina Vujic, kristina.vujic@ec.europa.eu

- **PURPOSE**

To build up political will and sustained policy engagement of local authorities to enhance democratic local governance, build up capacity and stimulate the empowerment of local Roma communities; contribute to the design, implementation and monitoring of plans and projects concerning them. The project targets 50 municipalities (local administrations, elected representatives and officials) and Roma communities in the Western Balkans and Turkey.

- **ACTIVITIES (JULY– DECEMBER 2018)**

The main activities held between June and December 2018 were the following:

- Launching Meeting and Local Workshop, Pristina, Kosovo, 31 May -1 June 2018
- Regional Coordination Meeting of National Teams, Tirana, Albania, 11 June 2018
- ROMACTED Steering Committee Meeting, Tirana, Albania, 12 June 2018
- Launching Meeting and National Workshop, Podgorica, Montenegro, 17 and 18 July 2018
- Stakeholders Coordination meeting, Skopje, North Macedonia, 25 October 2018
- Training for Roma representatives and municipal officials, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 25 October 2018
- First ROMACTED National Advisory Group Meeting, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 26 October 2018
- First ROMACTED National Advisory Group Meeting, Tirana, Albania, 13 November 2018
- 3 ROM Monitoring Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro between 13 to 30 November 2018
- ROMACTED Launching Meeting and National Workshop, Ankara, Turkey, 10-13 December 2018
- Regional ROMACTED Staff meeting, Strasbourg, 17 and 18 December 2018

- **OUTPUTS (JULY– DECEMBER 2018)**

The main outputs of this period were:

- The conclusion of the launching process of ROMACTED in all the 7 beneficiaries (including Turkey in November 2018) with the signatures of the Memoranda of

Understanding (MoU) and the appointment of municipal contact points in all the participating municipalities.

- The establishment of Institutional Working groups in a large number of the municipalities and the on-going mobilisation of Roma into Community Action Groups.
- Local interventions with the communities and with the local administrations running at good pace in most of the beneficiaries leading to identification of priorities and their negotiation with the local authorities together with the assessment of the needs for additional facilitation, expertise and resources at local level. Several municipalities started the adoption and/or revision of Local Action plans.
- 61 municipal contact points for ROMACTED were appointed by mayors;
- 61 MoU were signed with municipalities and, in most of the beneficiaries, also with the ministry responsible for the implementation of the respective Roma integration strategy;
- Over 1 500 Roma citizens have been directly involved in CAG meetings or other local meetings;
- Overall, the results achieved so far are satisfactory and give good perspective for the upcoming implementation. Since the teams and the local institutional framework are established and operational at this point, it is expected that developments will happen in a more accelerated pace. The general feedback received from the different Central Governments is also positive

• ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

For the period January to July 2019:

- Monitoring Missions to North Macedonia and Serbia. 3 to 8 February
- Meetings of National Advisory Groups in North Macedonia, Serbia, Kosovo and Montenegro
- CAG Meetings and training sessions in the participating municipalities together with continuous community mobilisation throughout the semester;
- Meetings of the municipal Institutional Working Groups/Task Forces in participating localities throughout the semester;
- Capacity-building and provision of technical advice/support to local authority and municipal staff throughout the semester;
- Meetings of local support teams;
- Coordination meetings with national stakeholders and projects in relevant related fields;

- Launching of the Small Grant Scheme
- Activities of commemoration of the International Roma Day at the level of the beneficiaries and participating municipalities;
- Meeting of Focal Points and Project officers, Brussels;
- Second Regional Steering Committee Meeting.

Programme reference: Multi-country Action Programme, IPA 2014/ 031-603

Project title: Roma Integration 2020

EU contribution:	EUR 0,8 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Grant Agreement with RCC
Contract reference:	CN 2014/369-226
Duration of activities:	01/01/2016 – 31/12/2018
Links:	www.rcc.int/romaintegration2020/home
Contact :	Kristina Vujic, kristina.vujic@ec.europa.eu

- PURPOSE

The Roma Integration 2020 (RI2020) project contributes to reducing the socio-economic gap between the Roma and non-Roma population in the Western Balkans and Turkey and to strengthening the institutional obligations of governments to incorporate and deliver specific Roma integration goals in mainstream policy developments. In line with this, the RI2020 aims to assist governments to integrate Roma specific policy measures into: (1) mainstream socio-economic policies and public service delivery; (2) national budget planning and service delivery processes.

- ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

The RI2020 supported the preparation of the budget for the new Roma Integration Action Plan of Serbia and the preparation of the Government Report of Bosnia and Herzegovina on Roma Integration for 2017.

The RI2020 organised three **Public Dialogue Forums** in Sarajevo, Pristina, and Skopje. These forums provided for presentations of the 2017 monitoring reports of the governments, budget proposals and prioritization of measures for 2019, as well as consultation on relevant mainstream socio-economic policies to be used for advancing Roma integration.

The RI2020 organized the Regional Conference **Economic (In)Dependence of Romani Women: Challenges and Early Causes** together with the Care International Balkans, hosted by the Serbian Government. The Conference presented the precarious situation of Roma women and multiple factors that contribute to their dependency and unemployment. The conference also discussed promising practices for employing Romani women.

The RI2020 Action Team organized the Regional Workshop **Innovative Approaches to Employment of Roma** jointly with the RCC's ESAP project and the Roma Education Fund. The Conference assessed possibilities to better promote Roma employment considering the low employment rates of Roma; predominant part of Roma youth (18-24) not in education, employment, or training; and low success rate of employment policies. Specific attention was given to possibilities to formalise undeclared work, improve transfer from education to employment, and to increase the employment rate of Roma.

The Action Team organized the final meeting of the **Working Group for Roma Responsible Budgeting** that agreed on the final draft of Guidelines for Roma Responsive Budgeting.

The **Task Force of RI2020 project** met in December in Skopje. The Task Force adopted the monitoring and reporting template for the 2018 reports, agreed on activities of the Phase II of the project, and agreed to pilot Guidelines for Roma Responsive Budgeting in the 2020 public budget preparations.

The RI2020 continued to support the NRCPs to further their cooperation with their colleagues from the EU Member States and to provide input to the EU Roma integration policies by supporting their participation in the events **European Platform for Roma Inclusion "Reintegration into the Western Balkans: Returnees' Perspective with Special Attention to Roma Community"** and the Austrian Presidency of the **Council of European Union Expert conference on anti-Gypsyism**.

• OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

- Three policy recommendation papers based on the discussions in the National Platforms in Skopje, Sarajevo, and Pristina. The papers summarized discussions on the implementation of the Roma Integration Action Plans in 2017, with proposals for measures to be prioritized and budgeted in 2019.
- Regional analysis 'Targeting Roma in Housing Policies of The Western Balkans - A Legal Overview' and brochure 'Recommendations on Improving Roma Targeting in the Housing Policies of The Western Balkans' based on comparative legal analysis and main recommendations from the regional conference on holistic approach to housing.
- Regional analysis 'Potentials for Roma Employment in the Enlargement Region' - based on analysis of employment policies and discussions from the regional employment workshop.
- Report from the Regional Conference Economic (In)Dependence of Romani Women: Challenges and Early Causes.
- Monograph summarising the implementation and the achievement of the RI2020 Phase I project.
- 'Guidelines for Roma Responsive Budgeting' - prepared as a final output of the inter-governmental Working Group, and adopted at the Task Force.
- Third issue of the Roma Integration 2020 newsletter.

• ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

The project ended on 31 December 2018. The Phase II of the project starts on January 2019 without any implementation gap.

Programme reference:	Multi-country Action Programme, IPA 2016/ 037-900
Project title:	Supporting the Effective Reintegration of Roma Returnees in the Western Balkans
EU contribution:	EUR 1.25 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Grant Agreement with the World Bank
Contract reference:	CN 2017/384-989
Duration of activities:	01/04/2017 - 01/07/2019
Contact:	Kristina Vujic, kristina.vujic@ec.europa.eu

- PURPOSE

While migration from the Western Balkans to member states of the European Union remains substantial, several European states have decided to return migrants to their countries of origin. Data estimates suggest a substantial number of return migrants belong to the Roma minority. The World Bank is developing identify evidence based relevant policy responses and implementation pathways for the effective reintegration of returnees in the Western Balkans – with a focus on Roma returnees - based on their reintegration experiences.

- ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

The project undertook research surveys in each of the following: Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia: (i) Institutional mapping studies; (ii) Stakeholder mapping; and (iii) Vulnerabilities mapping. In addition, a Legislative mapping study was undertaken in North Macedonia.

Institutional mapping studies provided an assessment of the availability, readiness, costs, and governance challenges of targeted and nontargeted services relevant to the reintegration of returnees. Stakeholder mapping studies offered a description of governmental and nongovernmental initiatives related to the reintegration of returnees. Vulnerabilities mapping studies provided a description and analysis of returnees' vulnerabilities and how they are tied to or exacerbated by the positioning of the individual along axes of (in)equality: sex, ethnicity, age, level of formal education, and place of current residence. Legislative mapping study analysed all legislative frameworks that directly and indirectly apply to rights and entitlements of returnees in North Macedonia. A further four studies, were undertaken in Austria, Belgium, France and Germany, that explored the repatriation process as it relates to returnees being sent back to their countries of origin. In

addition, two academic papers on barriers to reintegration and Effective Data Collection were commissioned during this period.

- **OUTPUTS ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)**

A total of 27 reports were completed. These were related to the above research, plus Synthesis Report on the reinsertion and reintegration process of returnees in the Western Balkans and a Synthesis Report on the return Process from the four EU States.

The two academic papers completed: (i) Vathi, Z, (2018) Barriers to (Re)integration: The Roma Return to the Western Balkans. World Bank, Washington, DC. (ii) Kuschminder, K., and M. Siegel, (2018) Effective Data Collection in Return Migration Management: The EU and the Western Balkans. World Bank: Washington, DC.

As a result of these reports, relevant Ministries in the Western Balkan States could consider future technical assistance related to the returnee agenda.

- **ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER**

There are currently 12 Technical Assistance projects and 2 further studies being undertaken in the Western Balkans.

Relevant Ministries in Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Serbia are being assisted to update **Returnee Strategies and Action Plans** that are outdated. In Albania, returnees are catered for in a larger Migration strategy that covers both the diaspora and third-party nationals in the country. This exercise was completed in Kosovo in 2017.

In Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Montenegro, the software architecture is being developed for case file data **Management Information System** linked to all government departments (national and municipal) and which would enable them to collect data on returnees with the aim of facilitating their access to information and services.

In addition, three **livelihood pilot projects** are being developed along cooperative social enterprise lines to enhance livelihood and income generating opportunities for returnees and other vulnerable community members. These pilots, developed aim to address some of the immediate challenges of reintegration, improving economic conditions and social cohesion in the short to medium term. A long term-objective would be strengthening livelihoods and community cohesion between Roma, ethnic minorities and mainstream inhabitants. It is intended that this will limit the 'push' factors that encourage out-migration/re-migration. These three pilots are:

- North Macedonia, Municipality of Suto Orizari: piloting a women-led social enterprise livelihood pilot project, which would involve returnees, Roma and other ethnic minorities.
- Montenegro, Municipality of Bijelo Polje: piloting a dairy enterprise project, consisting of Roma, ethnic minorities and mainstream community members, that would deliver milk to the dairy cooperative.
- Serbia, Municipality of Palilula: piloting a Roma youth led project that would manufacture components (door and window frames, gates, etc.) for the construction industry.

Programme reference:	IPA II Annual Multi-Country Action Programme 2017
Project title:	Increased education opportunities for Roma students and Roma youth in Western Balkans and Turkey
EU contribution:	EUR 3 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Grant agreement with Roma Education Fund (REF)
Contract reference:	CN 2018/396-125
Duration of activities:	10/04/2018 – 09/07/2021
Links:	https://www.romaeducationfund.org/news/ref/news-and-events/ref-and-eu-dg-near-partner-roma-education-western-balkans-and-turkey
Contact :	Kristina Vujic, kristina.vujic@ec.europa.eu

• PURPOSE

The EU Regional Action for Roma Education: Increased Education Opportunities for Roma Students and Roma Youth in the Western Balkans and Turkey seeks to reduce the gap between Roma and non-Roma in participation and completion of quality education through gender-sensitive programming, to improve Roma students' transition between education and employment and to promote durable systemic change and desegregation of education systems.

• ACTIVITIES (JULY – DECEMBER 2018)

Project preparatory phase: Recruitment of the project team, including engagement of country facilitators, completed in November 2018. Community needs assessments conducted in all beneficiaries to identify and build on the current needs of Roma. Gender analysis of the project conducted to provide recommendations for more effective gender-mainstreaming into project intervention.

Project management: Regular project team meetings, including quarterly coordination with REF management and DG NEAR. Networking event, organised in November 2018, gathered all implementing partner organisations (IPOs) to discuss project specific components, financial rules and procedures, visibility, gender-mainstreaming and advocacy. Communication and Visibility Plan and project’s visibility materials designed, printed and distributed to IPOs.

Financial support to IPOs: REF’s Project Management Committee (PMC) evaluated 23 project applications for implementing partners, out of which PMC selected 18 projects that will be implemented by 14 IPOs. Contracts with IPOs were signed after REF Governing Board approved the selection and EU Delegations provided no objection letters.

Expanding access to quality education early childhood education (ECD): A Consultant was engaged to create a parental training package. Regional training of trainers on parenting skills and International Development & Early Learning Assessment (IDELA) took place in December 2018.

Increasing performance and employability of Roma secondary and tertiary students: Application Guidelines for the Scholarship Programme developed and shared with IPOs following REF previous agreement with the respective ministries of education.

Contributing to policy development and regional knowledge exchange and communication: Twenty-six introductory and advocacy meetings were conducted with key stakeholders relevant for the project implementation in all beneficiaries. Regional Conference “Innovative approaches to employment of Roma” was jointly organized by REF and Regional Cooperation Council Roma Integration 2020 in December 2018 focusing on employability modalities for Roma in the region.

• OUTPUTS (JULY – DECEMBER 2018)

- Contracts with IPOs signed and effective as of 1st October 2018;
- Gender-mainstreaming report with recommendations finalised and sent to IPOs;
- Community needs reports, including recommendations prepared by each of the beneficiaries;
- The Memorandum of Understanding among the selected IPOs signed;
- Relevant state authorities, international organizations, including Roma CSOs acquainted with the project and agreed to pledge their support;
- Training material on parenting skills drafted, country facilitators and IPOs representatives trained on parenting skills and IDELA.

• ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Project Management: Monitoring visits to the IPOs; Compiling regional community needs assessment report; Implementation of recommendations from the gender-mainstreaming report?

- ECD: Enrolment in kindergarten, community motivation events, toy libraries, empowerment of parents, training of teachers, country trainings on parenting skills and IDELA;
- Secondary/tertiary education: Call for Scholarships, mentoring and tutoring, support to enrol into secondary / tertiary education, trainings on soft skills, info sessions for students and with companies, visits to the partnering employers, and facilitating internship opportunities;

Policy development/regional knowledge exchange: Advocacy and employment meetings; National policy round tables and regional conference on the current educational and employability issues.

2.3 REGIONAL HOUSING PROGRAMME (RHP)

Programme reference:	Multi-beneficiary Programmes: IPA 2018/040-113, IPA 2017/039-402 , IPA 2014/031-603, IPA 2014/024-133, IPA 2014/024-134, IPA 2012/023-537
Project title:	<i>Regional Housing Programme (RHP)</i>
EU contribution:	EUR 234 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Contribution and Delegation Agreements with Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB) and UNHCR, grant contract with Igman Initiative
Contract reference:	CN 2018/402-988, CN 2017/394-290, CN 2017/394-876, CN 2017/394-875, CN 2015/369-230, CN2013/325-470, CN2013/325-468, CN 2013/314-991, CN 2012/297-405, CN 2012/307-562, CN 2012/305-516
Duration of activities:	14/12/2012 - 31/12/2021
Links:	www.regionalhousingprogramme.org
Contact :	Daniel Hurtado Dominguez daniel.hurtado-dominguez@ec.europa.eu

• PURPOSE

The Regional Housing Programme (RHP) addresses in a regional framework the housing needs of the most vulnerable refugees and internally displaced persons (IDP) from the armed conflictS in the 1990s in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia. The European Union is the biggest donor to this multi-donor financed programme (over

80%), having committed EUR 234 million that should benefit an estimated 11 400 most vulnerable refugee or IDP families.

• **ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)**

Continuation of beneficiary selection, construction/purchase and handing-over of housing solutions (apartments, houses, residences for the elderly, building materials), capacity building, communication and visibility.

• **OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)**

RHP figures as at end 2018 (cumulative):

- 12 000 people rehoused.
- 3 940 housing solutions handed over.
- Over 200 municipalities involved in the implementation, in all four Partner Countries.
- Over 100 Personnel involved in RHP implementation benefit from continuous on-the job training.
- 1 800 central and local government staff received formal training.
- Over 120 local companies engaged for provision of services, supplies and works.
- Intensive Cooperation between the four Partner Countries and improved neighbourly relations.

• **ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER**

Over 1 500 additional housing solutions will be delivered during the semester.

There will also be a strong focus on monitoring, reinforcing sustainability, as well as visibility.

2.4 MIGRATION

Programme reference:	Multi-country Action Programme, IPA 2014/031-603
Project title:	Regional support to Protection-sensitive migration management in the Western Balkans and Turkey (component 1)
EU contribution:	EUR 5.5 million

Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Grant agreement with the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex)
Contract reference:	CN 2015/369-697
Duration of activities:	01/01/2016 – 30/06/2019
Contact :	Jean-Baptiste Kastel, jean-baptiste.kastel@ext.ec.europa.eu

- PURPOSE

The main aim of the IPA II Project led by Frontex in partnership with EASO, IOM and UNHCR, is to support the beneficiaries in developing a protection-sensitive response to mixed migration flows, by strengthening their systems for identification, registration, and referral, as well as asylum procedures and return mechanisms, aligning them with EU policies. The project consists of five interventions.

- ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

The project is being implemented according to the objectives set at its beginning. A number of **steering and coordinating meetings** took place during the second half of 2018. The Project Partners met with stakeholders in the Western Balkan region during the third round of National Steering Committees.

Within the framework of **Intervention 1**, Frontex finalised the rollout of the first trainings in the area of combating THB. The training sessions were based on a standardized multiplier concept and took place in the presence of EU experts as mentors. Other observers were also involved in those trainings. Putting emphasis on enhancing the skills required for performing protection-sensitive migration management in full respect of fundamental rights, a *European Course for Fundamental Rights Trainers* was organized for the Western Balkan beneficiaries with three in-person training sessions. The workshops and trainings within the Frontex-led activities were supported logistically by IOM.

Throughout the second half of 2018, under **Intervention 2**, Frontex met on different occasions with the authorities of the beneficiaries to discuss the implementation details of the Regional and Sub-Action Plans on Registration, including the activities to be implemented during the Project's Phase II. The details of the projected Feasibility Study on the *assessment of the IT and communication infrastructure to support the Identification and Registration process of mixed migration flows* have been presented and subsequent stages defined in consultation with the relevant national stakeholders.

Frontex finalised the implementation of regular activities of **Intervention 5**. After completion of the capacity building activities in the area of non-voluntary return at the national level,

the regional Evaluation and Transposition Meeting on the Return Escorts Training took place in July in Belgrade. This consultation enabled all beneficiaries to take stock of achievement under the current project and to reflect on the continuation of IPA II support in the framework of future activities under Phase II.

• **OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)**

Project activities implemented in the reporting period contributed to the following outputs:

- Improved skills and resources delivered to assist government officers in the more efficient identification of irregular migrants and asylum seekers;
- National Action Plans and one Regional Action Plan in the area of registration of mixed migration flows discussed with Beneficiaries, including further implementation modalities;
- The implementation of the training activities concerning combating THB was finalised, an evaluation meeting was organized, and a transposition process was launched by the Beneficiaries;
- Necessary knowledge gained and skills acquired to successfully operationalize joint non-voluntary return operations, the process of national training rollout evaluated.

• **ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER**

The project will be extended for additional six months. A **feasibility study** on the assessment of IT and communication infrastructure to support the Identification and Registration process of mixed migration flows in the IPA II Western Balkan beneficiaries will be conducted under Intervention 2 until June 2019 as the key element of Frontex involvement in this part of the project. The Feasibility Study will identify the elements needed for the creation of a system in the Western Balkan region corresponding to the technical and procedural requirements of the Eurodac system.

The closing conference for Phase I of the regional programme will be organized in May in Belgrade. This event will provide an interactive platform for all relevant partners and stakeholders to take stock of the achievements of the project between 2016 – 2019 and the lessons learnt. The Closing Conference will be followed by the launch of Phase II of the project, which will start immediately after the no-cost extension of Phase I.

Programme reference:	IPA 2014/031-603.08/MC/migration CN 2015/369-495
Project title:	Regional support to Protection-sensitive migration management in the Western Balkans and Turkey component 2 (International Organization for Migration-IOM)
EU contribution:	2,500,000 EUR

Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Grant Agreement
Contract reference:	CN 2016/369495
Duration of activities:	36 months
Contact :	Alberto Costa, alberto.costa@ec.europa.eu

- **PURPOSE**

The overall objective of the action is to develop and operationalize a comprehensive migration management system in IPA beneficiaries, namely Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey, in line with EU standards. The specific objectives aim to facilitate and strengthen some of the key areas of a migration management system, focusing on enhancing the exchange of non-personal information in the region, and contribute to establishment of assisted local voluntary mechanism.

- **ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)**

During the second half of 2018, the focus of IOM's activities under the IPA II project consisted of the following:

- On the regional level, IOM developed the "Regional Platform for Migration Data Exchange in the Western Balkans (WB-MIDEX)", to be hosted by Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative (MARRI) Regional Centre and used as the mechanism through which the regionally compatible migration data will be shared and analysed. This initiative has been endorsed by the authorities of the Western Balkans.
- Assessment of country of origin capacities of asylum authorities has been conducted in all Western Balkan beneficiaries and endorsed by representatives of the Asylum departments in the Western Balkans.
- IOM continued to strengthen the implementation of Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) by furthering the developments of national standard operating procedures (SoP), which have been adopted in Montenegro and Kosovo, are in the adoption phase in North Macedonia, Albania, Serbia and in the finalization phase in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- In order to improve cooperation with consular and diplomatic missions of the countries of origin in the process of voluntary return of migrants to their countries of origin, the second regional meeting was held with national authorities of the Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Foreign Affairs from Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia and

Herzegovina, with the representatives of embassies of top countries of origin of migrants.

- IOM supported the MARRI Regional Centre to develop and establish the Western Balkan Regional Remote Interpretation Service (MARRI RRIS), consisting of a pool of extra-regional language interpreters and an online interpreter-scheduling platform. To ensure effective use of this service IOM procured laptop computers, and additional mobile PC equipment, for the asylum departments of the Western Balkan beneficiaries.
- The creation of a regional curriculum for Cultural Mediation between migrants and service providers has been finalized, the roll out on national levels has begun.

• OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

- Conducting and validating the assessment of Country of Origin capacities of asylum authorities in the Western Balkans allowed for asylum departments in the Western Balkans to familiarize themselves with common practices, examples of good practices, experiences and overlapping problems encountered by asylum authorities. This would eventually contribute to strengthening regional cooperation and strengthening the provision of country of origin information and profiles, essential for asylum officials during the asylum determination process and well as during the return process.
- Adoption of the national AVRR SoPs provides a common minimum standard assistance in accordance with international law principles and human rights standards, while ensuring operational consistency of AVRR, and harmonizing procedures on a regional level.
- Initiating regional roundtables with representatives of national authorities and consular and diplomatic missions of relevant countries of origin facilitates cooperation between national authorities and countries of origin, eventually resulting in more efficient mechanisms for voluntary and non-voluntary return, identification and readmission processes.
- Establishing a pool of rare extra-regional language interpreters ensures the provision of qualified, trusted and reliable interpretation/translation services. Combined with the engagement of cultural mediators, this approach ensures correct communication between migrants, case workers and migration management authorities, thus ensuring culturally sensitive approaches to migration management.

- ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

Activities in the first half of 2019 will be focused on the following:

- Finalizing the process of purchasing requisite equipment for the sharing of non-personal data. The final version of the Platform will be launched and presented to the authorities at a regional meeting in April 2019. On the national level, the necessary equipment and software for the data exchange for each beneficiary will be procured, upgraded or expanded in order to ensure compatibility with the Regional Migration Data Exchange Platform. Finally, authorities will be trained on data collection and use of templates on migration statistics.
- Supporting the finalization and adoption of the remaining national AVRR SOPs, and will organize one final regional consultative meeting in April 2019. The project will also continue to support migrants interested to return home through the AVRR programme.
- Finalizing the national roll out in selected beneficiaries of the curriculum for cultural mediation, and developing and ensuring national roll out for the mobile interpretation app to be used by the border police and service providers.

Civil Society Facility and Media Programme 2016-2017 - Iris networking – CSOs for protection sensitive migration management

Programme reference:	EuropeAid/154870/DH/ACT/Multi-5 Consolidating Regional Thematic Networks of Civil Society Organisations
Project title:	IRIS NETWORKing - CSOs for protection sensitive migration management
EU contribution:	EUR 16.5 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Grant Contract
Contract reference:	CN 2017/394311
Duration of activities:	20/12/2017 – 20/04/2021
Links:	
Contact :	emma.asciutti@ec.europa.eu

• PURPOSE

IRIS NETWORKing – CSOs for protection sensitive migration management is a regional initiative developed by the IDC (Serbia) and its partners from ASB (Germany), SOS Podgorica (Montenegro), LIR CD (Bosnia and Herzegovina), La Strada (North Macedonia) and Initiative ARSIS (Albania). The Project aims to contribute to the improvement of service delivery and policy framework related to the migration in the Western Balkans.

• ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

- The Guide on referral system/social service delivery for migrants a multipliable model for efficient provision of social services to the migrants in order to support establishment of protection sensitive migration management system in the target countries, has been prepared and distributed to national and regional relevant stakeholders. The Guide will assist the migrants who approach an organization within the IRIS Network, and ensure that the assistance in service provision is provided in a timely and professional manner. Based on the Findings of the research two publications have been produced for different stakeholders. Guide on each of IPA beneficiaries / National Guide and a Regional Guide providing a regional overview. The National Guides are published in Macedonian, Serbian, Bosnian, Montenegrin, Albanian and English and the Regional Overview in English. The Guides were presented at a Round Table organized in Brussels on December 18, 2018, International Migrants Day, in order to introduce social realities related to migration in the Western Balkan region to EU based stakeholders. The event gathered representatives from EU Commission, embassies from countries participating in the project and relevant Brussels based CSOs engaged in social and migrant management issues. In addition, the Guide was and will be presented at conferences, meeting and other relevant events in the Western Balkan region.
- Regional cooperation concerning migration issues is visibly lacking. Due to non-existing channels for know-how exchange, the countries in the Western Balkans are creating isolated migration management systems which are communicating only the security concerns. In order to overcome this obstacle, applicants will establish a regular channel for a dialog in a form of Regional Social Academy. The first Academy was organized in Belgrade (Serbia) between November 26 – 29, 2018. In total 19 participants have been selected from 5 countries in the region to participate in the Academy, representatives of IRIS Network members and government or local institutions engaged in migration management. The Academy offered to the participants a unique opportunity to benefit from a diversified training package, exploring migration policy and governance in the region, linkages between migration and social service delivery, and instruments and mechanisms for protecting migrants' rights. Participants attended a 4-day tailor-made training consisting of different learning methodologies including lectures, workshops, discussions and field visits. The Academy program enabled further improvements and optimization to the needs, interests and constraints of the participants and their institutional and organizational environments.

- IRIS Network has continued to expand its membership. The foreseen number of new members is up to 20 CSOs throughout the project implementation. However, the number of new members has almost been achieved in Year 1 of the Action. IRIS Network Serbia has 11 new members, North Macedonia – 4, Albania – 2 and Bosnia and Herzegovina – 2 members. Majority of new members are involved in providing services to migrant population.

• OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

- 5 Guides on referral system/social services developed. IRIS Network members equipped with sufficient knowledge on provision of social services to migrants in the Western Balkns;
- 19 participants (out of 70) trained on 1st (out of 4) Annual Academy. Participants from IRIS Network, CSOs and national institutions engaged in social issues and migrant management increased their knowledge and exchanged best practices on the issue;
- 1 (out of 3) EU Parliament events organised.

• ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Planned activities supporting capacity building, policy influencing and raising awareness: EU based Traineeship Program; Mentoring; Shadow Reports; GAP Assessment; Small Grants Scheme.

2.5 HORIZONTAL FACILITY

European Union/Council of Europe Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Turkey

Programme reference:	Multi-beneficiary Programme, IPA 2015/031-60
Project title:	European Union/Council of Europe Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Turkey
EU contribution:	EUR 20 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Grant agreement with the Council of Europe
Contract reference:	CN 2016/374-543
Duration of activities:	24/05/2016 - 23/05/2019
Links:	https://pip-eu.coe.int/en/web/horizontal-facility/home?desktop=true

PURPOSE

The Horizontal Facility (HF) aims to support the beneficiary-tailored reform processes in the areas of rule of law, democracy and human rights with the aim of advancing compliance with European standards in the South-East Europe (SEE) region. It provides programmatic support to beneficiaries in addressing the recommendations of Council of Europe monitoring bodies in the areas of justice, fight against corruption, organised crime and economic crime, anti-discrimination and protection of the rights of vulnerable groups, linked with relevant EU accession priorities.

- ACTIVITIES (JULY – DECEMBER 2019)

In the second half of 2018, 250 activities were implemented within the technical co-operation component of the HF and three requests were received under the Expertise Co-ordination Mechanism (ECM).

The implementation of the Actions completed in this reporting period, namely the Actions to strengthen human rights protection in prisons in Kosovo and Albania, the Action on democratic school culture in Montenegro, the action to strengthen the Human Rights Ombudsman to fight discrimination in Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as two Actions supporting the education system in Kosovo.

Under theme I – Ensuring Justice, a total of 156 activities were implemented in the sectors of Human Rights (25 activities), Justice (19 activities), Prisons and Police (78 activities) and Legal Co-operation (34 activities). Some of the key activities are highlighted below:

- Human Rights: In **Albania**, an assessment on effectiveness of national remedies in respect of lengthy proceedings was finalised. In **Montenegro**, a series of trainings were organised for legal professionals and staff from the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Social Welfare, focusing on reasonable time guarantees. In **Serbia**, the Practicum on the standards related to a trial within reasonable time was finalised and standards were disseminated among the judicial community.
- Justice: the Action in **Albania** focused on evaluating the justice system and proposed a new scheme for the evaluation of judges in light of the new law on the status of judges and prosecutors. In **Kosovo** a second evaluation of the judicial system was conducted, leading to the assessment of the implementation of the recommendations from the first evaluation and formulation of further recommendations to address shortcomings.
- Prisons and Police: In the final stages of the implementation of the Action in **Albania**, a Manual on rehabilitation programmes for prisoners was developed and a series of

trainings were organised for prison staff to develop good interviewing skills in applying the risk assessment tool. In **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, a survey to identify the needs for the IT modernisation of prisons was conducted. In **Kosovo**, the Administrative Instruction/Guidelines on internal mechanism of prisoners' complaints were adopted. A treatment module for violent offenders was piloted in Idrizovo prison in **North Macedonia**. The contributions of the Action in Kosovo to the development of a dynamic security concept, rehabilitation programmes for inmates and the working methodology of the prison inspectorate were presented at a closing conference in Pristina. In **Montenegro**, a draft Code of Ethics and a draft Rulebook on House Rules for prison staff were submitted to the Ministry of Justice for adoption. In **Serbia**, the work on training material for the police on the prevention of ill-treatment continued, as well as improving the quality of the training programme in line with European and international standards on policing. A **regional conference** was held in Skopje on 3 and 4 October 2018 which gathered prison authorities and prison practitioners from the Western Balkans to discuss strategies on combatting radicalisation. Joint conclusions adopted at the closing of the conference serve as a basis for the development of future regional co-operation on this issue.

- Legal Co-operation: the Action in **Montenegro** continued to support the Judicial Council in developing a uniform system of the evaluation of judges' performance and strengthening the Council's institutional capacities. A Conference on Judicial Independence gathering more than 100 stakeholders from **Serbia** was organised in partnership with OSCE Mission to Serbia. In **North Macedonia** 15 trainers were trained on adult learning techniques, dealing with vulnerable groups, practical skills of providing preliminary legal aid, and novelties in the new draft law regulating legal aid.

Under theme II – Fighting Corruption, Organized Crime and Economic Crime – a total of 31 activities have been implemented in the sectors of Economic Crime (14 activities) and Corruption in Education (17 activities). Some key activities are highlighted below:

- Economic Crime: in **Albania** new comments were provided on selected draft amendments to the electoral legislation, in particular related to the use of state resources and vote buying. The Action in **North Macedonia**, worked with the authorities on developing a Roadmap for the establishment of an Asset Recovery Office and updating the National Risk Assessment to better combat money-laundering and terrorism financing. In **Montenegro**, the process to review the National Risk Assessment was launched in November 2018, involving 90 participants from 37 reporting entities and supervisory authorities, who discussed money laundering and terrorism financing threats, vulnerabilities, and mitigation measures. A **regional dimension** was added through an international conference that was held in Tirana in October 2018 with representatives from South-East Europe (SEE) and Turkey and Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries devoted to the transparency of beneficiary ownership.

- Corruption in Education: over 50 representatives from the Ministries of Education, rectors and academic staff of the six HF Beneficiaries benefited from a regional exchange of experience on integrity in higher education on the occasion of a high level round table, organised in Skopje in September 2018.

Under theme III – Promoting discrimination and the protection of the rights of vulnerable groups, a total of 62 activities were implemented in the sectors of Education (38 activities), Trafficking in Human Beings (3 activities), National Minorities, Human Rights/Ombudspersons (21 activities). Some key activities are highlighted below:

- Ombudsman: in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the **regional conference** “Advocacy for human rights and non-discrimination by national human rights institutions in the Western Balkans” was organised in November (in Sarajevo), bringing together representatives of Ombudsman and equality bodies from Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia and North Macedonia.
- Bullying and Extremism in Education: in **Albania** the process of drafting the roadmap for policy-makers based on the experience of the pilot schools was successfully finalised.
- Democratic School Culture: Towards the end of the Action in **Kosovo**, work on the roadmap and recommendations for policy makers on how to improve social inclusion and democratic school culture was completed and the roadmap was presented to the major stakeholders during the final conference in October 2018. In **Bosnia and Herzegovina** an additional qualitative research in focus groups was conducted targeting teachers and school directors from nine pilot schools and representatives from pedagogical institutes. In **Montenegro** an agreement was made with the National TV Broadcaster to air TV documentaries on inclusive education in South-East Europe during one year period.
- Trafficking in Human Beings: In **North Macedonia** a training for diplomatic and consular personnel was organised (in Skopje) in accordance with the needs expressed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and a leaflet on the role of diplomatic-consular personnel was developed, while an additional activity on child trafficking was organised to prepare a brochure on identifying potential trafficking in human beings victims among school children. In **Serbia**, practical workshops were organised involving the expertise of the civil society organisations’ (CSOs) partners (ASTRA in Serbia) and European counterparts.
- National Minorities: In **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, three meetings of the Minority Coordination Group (MCG) were organised, and a special training on the MCG visibility was provided for MCG members to improve reporting and media/web presentation of specialised institutions. In **Serbia**, the review of the implementation of the Action plan for the realisation of rights of national minorities was finalised and recommendations for

the preparation of a new Action Plan were developed and submitted to the Office for Human and Minority rights for comments.

• OUTPUTS (JULY – DECEMBER 2019)

1. Under the three thematic areas of the Horizontal Facility the highlights of the reporting period are:

Theme I - Ensuring Justice

- In the prisons and police sector, legislative frameworks have been strengthened: In the **North Macedonia** changes to laws on the Public Prosecution and on the Courts delivered the framework for an independent external oversight mechanism (EOM) over police work. In **Serbia**, following comments from a Council of Europe expert, the government proposed changes to the Law on Enforcement of Criminal sanctions. New tools have been provided to enforcement agencies, including in **Albania** with the development of a Manual on Rehabilitation Programmes for Prisoners, a Manual on Mental Health Care in Prison and a Suicide Prevention Strategy, all developed as a follow-up to recommendations from the Committee for the Prevention of Torture. A New draft Mental Health Strategy and accompanying Action Plan were developed in **Serbia**, while in **North Macedonia** and in **Kosovo** there were advances in the establishment of special operative procedures, related operational guidelines, staff protocols and Administrative Instruction/Guidelines on internal mechanism of prisoners.
- In the field of human rights and the judiciary, there are concrete examples of courts using the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) to prevent or redress violations. In **Albania** as a result of intensive co-operation between the authorities and the Council of Europe, the Committee of Ministers closed the examination of the relevant judgments (*Manushaqe Puto and others* group) because it considered that the required measures had been taken to offer compensation for property and to enforce final domestic judicial and administrative decisions recognising the right to compensation. In **Montenegro** the High Court in Podgorica confirmed the ruling of a lower court that recognised state responsibility for an ineffective investigation and awarded compensation to the complainant. Additionally, the Constitutional Court found a violation of the right to freedom of peaceful assembly guaranteed by Article 11 of the ECHR due to the prohibition of the Pride Parade in Niksic in 2015. In Serbia a Practicum on standards related to a trial within reasonable time was finalised and distributed as well as guidelines for judges.
- The process to strengthen the functioning of the justice system has continued with improved application of European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ) tools. In **Albania**, the review of the justice system identified areas for further improvements including an IT strategy for the judicial system, as well as a report to clarify new roles of

judiciary staff members. In **Kosovo there was a** wide dissemination of users' survey results that had been carried in three Basic Courts, while the court coaching project with the Basic Court of Pristina was extended to all courts in Kosovo.

- In the field of legal co-operation, for the first time **Montenegro** has a strategic document in the area of judicial and prosecutorial training with the adoption of the Strategy of the Judicial Training Centre for 2019-2022 and related Action Plan. Furthermore, recommendations from HF actions contributed to the Amendments to the Law on the Judicial Council and Judges and a new Code of Ethics for Prosecutors adopted during the reporting period. In **North Macedonia**, training curricula and materials were delivered to staff of regional offices. In **Serbia**, capacities of the judiciary were strengthened to detect and counter risks of undue pressure and to address risks of undue influence.

Theme II - Fight against corruption, organised crime and economic crime.

- Within the sector on fighting economic crime, legislation on international restrictive measures was adopted following support provided through HF action in **Montenegro**. In **Albania** support was given to financial inspectors to implement the Asset Declaration Law adopted in 2017. Guidelines on money laundering were developed in **North Macedonia** and in Montenegro, whilst in Montenegro further guidelines were produced on conflict of interests, on use of state resources by political entities and on financial reporting on electoral campaigns expenses.
- To strengthen integrity and combating corruption in higher education, in **Montenegro** the draft Law on Academic Integrity was adopted by the Government in July 2018 and submitted to the Parliament. In **Kosovo**, codes of conduct were reviewed for three categories of actors (university management, academic staff and students) with over 70 professionals participating in the review. In **Serbia** resource packs/courses on academic integrity are now available, following their elaboration and testing.

Theme III – Anti-discrimination and the Protection of the Rights of Vulnerable

- To combat discrimination in schools, roadmaps have are available to guide policy-makers in **Albania** and **Kosovo** outlining a scaling up process. The Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth and the Ministry of Economy and Finance in Albania issued a joint decision instructing the pilot schools to implement anti-bullying action plans during the 2018/2019 school year. In **Montenegro** and **Serbia**, the first drafts of the roadmaps are under review by stakeholders.
- Through actions to prevent and combat trafficking in human beings a total of 70 professionals in **North Macedonia** and in **Serbia** have improved their knowledge on this issue, while in **North Macedonia** more than 90% of the labour inspectors working on labour relations have strengthened their skills to prevent and counter trafficking in human beings through participation in at least one training.

- Results of Actions to enhance protection of national minorities include making available the newly adopted framework law on the protection of national minorities in **Albania** in seven minority languages, while in **Serbia** laws on the protection of rights and freedoms of national minorities and on the official use of languages were made available to the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government in minority languages in October 2018. In **Bosnia and Herzegovina** the first radio programme on national minorities covering the whole territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina was broadcast in October 2018.

2. Through the the Expertise Coordination Mechanism (ECM) three new official requests have been received, while work has been ongoing especially though support provided by the Venice Commission:

a. New requests:

- In August, a request was received from the Speaker of Parliament of **Albania** asking for the Venice Commission Opinion on the Law on the Legislative Initiatives of the Citizens. The draft law has been prepared constituting the legal basis for the citizens to submit or undertake legislative initiatives to be considered by Parliament.
- Legislative expertise and assistance of the Council of Europe was requested by the Ministry of Justice of **North Macedonia** in September 2018 in revising the Criminal Code with regards to the definition of torture and the removal of the statute of limitation for the prosecution of the acts of torture.
- In November 2018 a request was received from the Minister of Culture of **Montenegro** for legal expertise on the Law on electronic media.

b. Support provided during the reporting period:

- During the reporting period, support was provided to **North Macedonia** through legal expertise and policy advice to key judiciary institutions (the Judicial Council, the Council of Public Prosecutors and the Supreme Court) on the practical implementation of the National Strategy for Reform of the Judicial Sector (2017 -2022).
- In October 2018 the Venice Commission held its plenary session and adopted two opinions which had been supported through the ECM:
 - For **Albania**, the Opinion on the draft Law on the Legislative Initiative of Citizens in Albania and the Opinion on the Law amending the Law on the Judicial Council were adopted;
 - The Opinion on the Law amending the Law on Courts of **North Macedonia** was also adopted.

3. Transversal issues:

Efforts continued to improve incorporation of the gender perspective in the implementation of the HF:

- In **Montenegro** recent findings of the Council of Europe Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO), released in October 2018, were presented to the relevant stakeholders and a review initiated of the existing legislative framework concerning gender-based violence, ensuring involvement of the non-governmental sector; In **Serbia** collaboration took place with the media to explore ways to ethically communicate cases involving gender-based domestic violence, while efforts were made to ensure that tools and criteria on admissibility of applications for free legal aid are gender-sensitive; The updating of in-service police training in **Kosovo** with a focus on human rights, police ethics and prevention of ill-treatment has included aspects of gender equality and non-discrimination in the training curricula.
- In November 2018 the **Council of Europe gender mainstreaming toolkit for co-operation projects** became available, providing additional guidance and support to HF staff to incorporate the gender perspective in the development, implementation and reporting of HF actions.

Participation of civil society organisations in HF implementation continues to be an integral part of actions:

- Civil Society representatives in **Kosovo** were among stakeholders trained on the implementation of the Suicide Prevention Strategy and CSOs took part in reviewing codes of conduct to strengthen integrity in education; in **Montenegro** civil society organisations were selected to develop a plan and timetable for psychosocial support under the supervision of the Institute for the execution of criminal sanctions, and CSOs were also engaged in an assessment of internal rules and working methods of the Prosecutorial and Judicial Councils. Actions on trafficking in human beings in **Serbia** and in **North Macedonia** included CSOs in multidisciplinary trainings aiming at strengthening co-operation among key anti-trafficking stakeholders.

• ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

Key activities foreseen for the next semester:

- Under *Theme I – Ensuring Justice*: a seminar to present and discuss the CEPEJ report on the new system of individual evaluation of judges in **Albania** established by the Law on the Status of Judges and Prosecutors; training for court police and prison staff in **Bosnia and Herzegovina** to share good custodial practices with the Slovenian Prison Administration; expert mission to support the development and implementation of the Case Management Information System for courts and prosecution offices in **Kosovo**; organisation of a **regional** conference on the obligation to execute decisions of the

European Court of Human Rights in Montenegro; presentations of the External Oversight Mechanism over the police work in **North Macedonia**.

- Under *Theme II – Fight against corruption, organised crime and economic crime*: finalisation of the resource packs/ courses on academic integrity, ethics and transparency in higher education in **Serbia**; training on asset tracing and identification for purpose of seizure and confiscation in a criminal case for the public authorities in **Albania**; a **regional** workshop for authorities on risk assessments for terrorist financing in the non-profit sector in February in Tivat, Montenegro.
- Under *Theme III – Promoting discrimination and the protection of the rights of vulnerable groups*: supporting the organisation of the Day of National Minorities in Tuzla and Day of National Minority languages in **Bosnia and Herzegovina** (in Sarajevo); monitoring of the implementation of activities within the granting scheme regarding the official use of languages and scripts of national minorities, and education in the languages of national minorities in **Serbia**; multi-disciplinary training for labour inspectors on detection, identification and assistance to victims of trafficking in human beings for labour exploitation in **North Macedonia**.
- A Regional closing conference is being planned for the beginning of April in Tirana, Albania, to present and give visibility to results and outcomes of the Horizontal Facility, demonstrating its contribution to advancing reforms in Beneficiaries, as well as to provide a space to exchange good practices and lessons learned.

2.6 SUPPORT TO THE FOLLOW-UP OF ELECTORAL RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE WB / BRANDING “SUPPORT TO ELECTIONS IN THE WESTERN BALKANS”

Programme reference:	IPA II Annual Multi-Country Action Programme 2016
Project title:	Support to the follow-up of electoral recommendations in the Western Balkans (Support to Elections in the Western Balkans)
EU contribution:	EUR 1 600 000
Beneficiary region:	five OSCE participating States in the Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia), as well as Kosovo
Type of contract:	
Contract reference:	CN 2017/386276
Duration of activities:	26.06.2017 – 26.06.2020
Links:	www.osce.org/odihr/support-to-elections-in-western-balkans
Contact :	Raul Muresan, Project Co-ordinator; raul.muresan@odihr.pl

• PURPOSE

The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) is implementing the project to support institutions and civil society in their efforts to follow up on election observation recommendations in areas related to election management, voter registration and the role and work of the media during election campaigns.

• ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

- During the reporting period, the project activities include eight in-depth visits (out of 28 to date), and participating in 9 workshops (out of 21).
- Topical workshops were organized in Albania (on election administration and the role and work of media during elections) and Serbia (regional conference “Political and Electoral Participation of Persons with Disabilities”).
- Launched the recommendation database, including 680 recommendations from the final reports of 26 election observation missions. See: www.paragraph25.odihhr.pl.
- Five ODIHR handbooks (on the Follow-up of Electoral Recommendations, for Reviewing a Legal Framework for Elections, for the Observation of Voter Registration, on Media Monitoring for Election Observation Missions, and Guidelines on Population Registration) were translated in six languages, printed and distributed.
- The project cooperated or interacted so far 46 civil society organizations, 31 ministries, 50 local institutions, 6 parliaments, 12 embassies, 50 election management bodies (including local), 6 OSCE field missions, and 27 international organizations and their local offices. The number of local counterparts is 514 (35 per cent women).
- As per the project outline, the activities were on hold for several months in Montenegro, Serbia, North Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina due to ongoing elections or referenda or to the finalization and presentation of ODIHR election observation reports.

• OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

- Albania: the Parliamentary Ad Hoc Committee on Electoral Reform Expert received technical support, including analysis papers and background documents. The output of the sessions serves as the basis for amendments to the Electoral Code.
- North Macedonia: the Ministry of Information Society and Administration received informal review of the draft ‘Law on Electronic Documents, Electronic Identification and Trust Services’; the Working Group reviewing the Electoral Code received expert technical support, analysis papers and background documents.
- Serbia: the Republican Election Commission received a ‘work-plan’ for potential support in the areas of training of electoral officials, inclusion of persons with disabilities in the electoral process and election results tabulation and transmission.
- Kosovo: informally reviewed the legal framework for the media coverage of elections and the Counting and Results Center procedures; provided expert support to OSCE Mission in Kosovo workshops on voter register, conditional voting and media coverage of elections.
- A total of three (out of 18 so far) news items were published on the ODIHR website.

• ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Albania: continue to support the Parliamentary Ad Hoc Committee on Electoral Reform in drafting amendments to the Electoral Code, while considering the June local elections.
- North Macedonia: continue to support the review process of the Electoral Code, while considering the April presidential election; provide expert support to the National Coordination Body for implementation of Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; organize the national conference “Electoral Participation of Persons with Disabilities” in February.
- Montenegro: as requested, support the recently established Parliamentary Committee for the Reform of Electoral Legislation.
- Bosnia and Herzegovina: re-start the project activities after the ODIHR’s presentation of its election observation mission final report for the 7 October general elections
- Serbia: continue the co-operation with the Republican Electoral Commission in the areas of training of electoral officials, inclusion of persons with disabilities and election results tabulation and transmission; support the Ministry Public Administration and Local Self-Government with in-depth expert assistance and review of voter registration regulations.
- Kosovo: continue to co-operate with the OSCE Mission to Kosovo in providing support to the Counting and Results Center, and on the topics of voter registration, conditional voting and media coverage of elections.
- Populate the recommendation database with updates on the status of implementation of past election recommendations, as assessed in recent observation activities.
- Organize the regional conference “Electoral Participation of Roma” in June.
- Contribute to the Enlargement Package.
- Translate in six languages and print four additional Handbooks (for the Observation of New Voting Technologies; on Observing and Promoting the Electoral Participation of Persons with Disabilities; on Observing and Promoting the Participation of National Minorities in Electoral Processes; and for Monitoring Women's Participation in Elections).

2.7 SECURITY

Pilot Project deployment of Liaison Officers in the Western Balkans

Programme reference:	Multi-beneficiary Programme under IPA 2017/039-402
Project title:	Pilot Project deployment of Liaison Officers in the Western Balkans
EU contribution:	EUR 2 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans i.p. Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia
Type of contract:	Grant agreement for a pillar assessed organisation with the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation

Contract reference:	CN 2018/395-549
Duration of activities:	01/04/2018 – 31/03/2020
Contact :	olivia.Debaveye@ec.europa.eu

- PURPOSE

The objective of the action is to counter serious crime and terrorism by contributing to better information exchange, and linking investigations in the EU with investigations in hosting Third States, ensuring that relevant data is available by posting a EUROPOL Liaison officer (ELOs) in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia.

- ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

- Selection of the Liaisons Officers and finalisation of the legal provisions – liaison arrangements agreements with the Albania (concluded October 2018)
- Training for the pre deployment preparation (induction programme foresees, along with the regular Europol staff Newcomer’s programme, specific briefings & trainings with Europol crime centres, in-depth information on Europol internal procedures and country-specific briefings):
 - 19 Europol new staff training events
 - Introductions and various briefings by Liaison Bureau Albania & Liaison Bureau Serbia
 - Introductions to Western Balkan Liaison Bureaux
 - Introductions and briefings from Governance departments (including External Affairs, Legal, and press officer)
 - Introduction/briefings – Europol Financial Investigations Group
 - Training mobile office use
 - Placements with European multidisciplinary platform against criminal threats (EMPACT) Support Team, Top Organised Crime Group Cluster, Action Plan Weapons & Explosives
 - Briefings with all Europol Action Plans
 - Introduction to Operations Directorate Management & Operations Heads of Units
 - Training with Operations Department 24/7 Information Hub
 - Introduction to European Cyber-crime Center (EC3) Operations Taskforce
 - Introduction & Briefing European Migrant Smuggling Center (EMSC)
 - Introduction & Briefing European Counter-terrorism Center (ECTC)
- Fact finding missions (i.e. visit of the premises which will be hosting ELOs) carried out in the Serbia and Albania – November 2018.
- Communication with host countries regarding security/safety, ICT and facilities requirement (ongoing).
- Initial assessment on obstacles for cooperation in Albania and Serbia.

• **OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)**

- November appointment of Europol Western Balkans Liaison Officer’s for AL & RS
- November-December in-house training
- Attendance of LO Belgrade to Sweden-Serbia donor conference in Belgrade; Illicit Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons– Nov. 18
- Visit Europol delegation to Tirana Dec 2018
- Visit Europol delegation to Belgrade Dec 2018
- High level Europol conferences awareness events – ELOs introductions

• **ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER**

- Finalization of the legal arrangements with Serbia.
- Redrafting of the visibility and communication plan re the deployment of ELOs.
- Physical deployment of the ELOs to Tirana and Belgrade is foreseen during the first quarter 2019
- Visibility and communication activities are foreseen after the deployment of ELOs both in Tirana and in Belgrade
- Conduct a baseline Evaluation of Europol’s cooperation with the respective countries of deployment
- Enhancing further opportunities for strategic and operational cooperation in accordance with existing cooperation agreements in the hosting countries.

Support to Anti-money laundering and counter-financing of terrorism

Programme reference:	Multi-country Programme, IPA 2017/039-402
Project title:	Regional Programme for South Eastern Europe (XCEU60) – Building Regional Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Financing of Terrorism Capacity in South Eastern Europe
EU contribution:	EUR 2.5 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Grant agreement for a pillar assessed organisation with United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)
Contract reference:	IPA/2017/393-994
Duration of activities:	23 December 2017 – 23 December 2019
Links:	https://www.unodc.org/southeasterneurope/

https://www.unodc.org/brussels/en/aml_cft.html

Contact : olivia.debaveye@ec.europa.eu

- PURPOSE

The **objective** of this action is: (i) **Organized crime and terrorism threats are degraded** due to addressed jurisdictions' enhanced ability to detect, deter and prosecute money laundering, financing of terrorism, including foreign terrorist fighters; (ii) **Regional threats of transnational organized crime and terrorism are reduced** due to addressed jurisdictions' enhanced ability for interagency and international cooperation on anti-money laundering, combating terrorism financing and asset recovery. This project is carried out as a joint UNODC/CEPOL collaborative action.

- ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

1. From June to October, UNODC trainings on financial investigations were completed in each Western Balkan jurisdiction with 127 experts who completed the training.
2. In October-November, UNODC organised three Training-of-Trainers courses on Adult Learning and Training Methodologies in Vienna, Austria. 61 participants representing the Working Groups of National Trainers (WGNT) from the Western Balkan jurisdictions formed during the series of trainings on financial investigations attended these trainings.
3. Six drafts of national curricula on financial investigations were developed by the national trainers.
4. In October, UNODC and European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training (CEPOL) organised a regional meeting of the Heads of Financial Intelligence Units from the countries of the wider Western Balkan region and the relevant stakeholders of the project in Bosnia and Herzegovina to discuss money laundering and terrorism financing threats in the region, underlining current trends, challenges and proactive interventions and regional cooperation to address these threats.
5. In July and December, UNODC and CEPOL organised two national focal points coordination meetings, gathering 24 participants in total, to review the project accomplishments and directions in addition to relaying this information through the channel of the UNODC webpage for South Eastern Europe and a dedicated UNODC project webpage.
6. In September and December, two joint UNODC and CEPOL newsletters were created to inform on the project's activities and accomplishments and promote the EU as the source of funding for this project: <http://www.unodc.org/southeasterneurope/en/joint-unodc-cepol-newsletters.html>
7. In December, UNODC initiated the development of the e-learning management system (web-platform) to allow the addressed jurisdictions to have access to the e-training modules,

training course material, and exchange information on training activities in the area of financial investigations.

8. From September to November, an evaluation team conducted an extensive desk review and data collection during missions to all Western Balkan jurisdictions as well as Slovenia, Austria, Hungary and Belgium with regards to the independent evaluation of the Integrative Internal Security Governance mechanism, with a particular focus on Western Balkans Countering Serious Crime initiative (pillar II), including the EU Action: “Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA II) MCP 2017 - Support to the Western Balkan Integrative Internal Security Governance” . The evaluation team observed 10 events, including trainings and conferences, administered an extensive feedback survey to collect data for analysis (including over 130 responses) and interviewed over 60 key stakeholders. In November, the evaluation team and IES provided preliminary briefings on the evaluation results to the Evaluation Management Group as well as EU DG NEAR. In December, the draft evaluation report was finalised and shared with the Evaluation Management Group for comments on factual errors.

• **OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)**

Numbering corresponds to the numbering of activities above.

1. Following the completion of the trainings on Financial Investigations, a Working Group of National Trainers composed of approximately 10 national trainers selected was formed in each Western Balkan jurisdiction by October 2018.
2. UNODC certified 61 experts as national trainers (43% of whom were women) and promoted women empowerment and gender mainstreaming contributing thereby the Sustainable Development Goal 5 on Gender Equality.
3. Six drafts of curricula on financial investigations were developed in each Western Balkan jurisdiction with UNODC assistance.
- 4 et 5. A total of 57 participants took part in the regional meetings throughout the year enhancing thereby regional cooperation within the project.
6. The visibility of the EU as the source of funding was continuously raised.
7. The list of topics and training documents to be available on the platform was created.
8. UNODC Independent Evaluation Service conducted over 10 field missions and observed more than 10 trainings, interviewed over 60 key stakeholders and collected feedback from over 130 training participants. The draft evaluation report was prepared by four independent evaluators.

• **ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER**

Financial Investigations Component

- Six training courses on financial investigations with a 50% delivery by the national trainers and 50% by the UNODC staff throughout the year.
- Six training courses with a 100% delivery by the national trainers based on the developed national curricula on financial investigations throughout the year.
- Finalization of the national curricula on financial investigations for the Western Balkans jurisdictions by the WGNTs by the beginning of fall 2019 and institutionalization by the national curricula on financial investigations by the end of 2019.
- Technical national UNODC and CEPOL project focal point meetings to be held throughout the year.
- Six study visits to be organised by UNODC and the national authorities of the beneficiary jurisdictions on financial investigations, organised crime and money laundering and terrorist financing in one of the EU Member States.
- UNODC e-Learning web-platform and corresponding e-learning modules to be completed by the end of 2019.

Evaluation Component

- Finalisation of the independent Evaluation Report, including dissemination, independent evaluation quality assessment of the evaluation report and quality assurance.
- Preparation and finalisation of an Evaluation Brief (a two-page document) and a respective presentation, as well as the dissemination of the results of the evaluation
- Support to the preparation of an Evaluation follow-up Plan and the Management Response.
- Follow-up workshops as well as individual meetings with key stakeholders on evaluation findings and recommendations to be held throughout the year to increase the value of the evaluation results for accountability and learning.
- Two joint UNODC and CEPOL newsletters to be issued on the project activities and accomplishments.

2.8 PARTICIPATION OF WESTERN BALKANS JUDICIAL PROFESSIONALS IN EJTN TRAINING ACTIVITIES

Programme reference:	Multi-beneficiary Programme under IPA Transition Assistance and Institution Building Component for the year 2017/393-779
Project title:	Participation in European Judicial Training Network (EJTN) activities
EU contribution:	EUR 300.000
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Grant to EJTN
Contract reference:	2017/393-779
Duration of activities:	01/01/2018 – 31/12/2019

Links: <http://www.ejtn.eu>

Contact : Eleonora Sconci, Eleonora.SCONCI@ec.europa.eu

• PURPOSE

EJTN is one of the beneficiaries of the EU Justice Programme and is addressing its training offer to judges, prosecutors, trainees and trainers from EU Member States. Under this project EJTN aims to be in the position to offer participation in its activities to the judges, prosecutors, trainees and trainers from EU candidate countries (Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia) and potential candidates (Bosnia and Herzegovina; Kosovo*).

• ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

For the second half of the 2018, judges, prosecutors and trainees from the Western Balkans were invited to attend seminars on the following fields of law: Linguistic, Criminal, Civil; Administrative, Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, Judicial Training Methods. In addition, they were also invited to take part to EJTN's Exchange Programme for judicial authorities.

• OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

For the period from June to December 2018, 31 participants from the Western Balkan countries participated to EJTN activities. The participants were divided as follows:

- Exchange Programme for judicial authorities: 1 participant from Montenegro and 1 from the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
- AIAKOS Programme for future and newly-appointed judges and prosecutors: 3 participants from Montenegro;
- EJTN Seminars were attended by 26 participants: Serbia: 3 participants; the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: 4 participants; Albania: 2 participants; Montenegro: 5 participants; Bosnia and Herzegovina: 7 participants; Kosovo: 5 participants.

• ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

For the January-June 2019 reporting period the EJTN has invited 466 participants from the Western Balkans countries to participate to numerous activities including:

AD/2019/01 Mediation and Conciliation EJTN;

AD/2019/02 Administrative and Procedure Law;

AD/2019/03 EU Environmental Law;

AD/2019/04 Data Protection and Privacy Right; CI/2019/01 Consumer protection;

CI/2019/03 Matrimonial property;

CI/2019/04 Cross-border maintenance;

CI/2019/05 European family law;

CR/2019/01 Judicial Cooperation in criminal matters: practical case-based simulation on the fight against migrant smuggling;

CR/2019/02 The European Investigation Order in practice Barcelona; Spain

CR/2019/03 20-22 March Cybercrime and E-Evidence I;

CR/2019/04 Procedural Safeguards in Criminal Proceedings in the EU in Practice;

CR/2019/05 Counter-Terrorism;

CR/2019/06 Cybercrime and E-evidence II;

CR/2019/07 Economic Crimes: asset recovery and confiscation in the EU;

CR/2019/08 Judicial Cooperation in Criminal Matters: Practical Case-Based simulation in the fight against drug trafficking;

CR/2019/09 The Protection of the financial interests of the Union and the EPPO;

HFR/2019/01 Human rights and access to justice in the EU-1;

HFR/2019/02 Conflict of norms / Multi level of protection in the application of fundamental rights;

HFR/2019/03 Applicability and effect of the EU charter on fundamental rights in national proceedings.

Exchange Programme: 2-week exchanges in the courts/prosecution offices of the EU MS; trainers' exchanges and the AIAKOS Programme.

2.9 FINANCIAL INVESTIGATION

Programme reference:	Multi-Country Programme, IPA 2017/393 -268
Project title:	Financial Investigation In-Service Training Programme, Western Balkans 2017-2019
EU contribution:	EUR 2.5 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	PA Grant to the EU Agency for Law Enforcement Training (CEPOL)

Contract reference:	393-268
Duration of activities:	21 December 2017 to 21 December 2019
Links:	https://www.cepola.europa.eu/
Contact :	Olivia Debaveye; (Olivia.DEBAVEYE@ec.europa.eu)

- **PURPOSE**

The project is implemented by the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training (CEPOL) in close cooperation with the United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime (UNODC) under the Integrative Internal Security Governance (IISG) second pillar on Countering Organised Crime and is aiming to develop and sustain the institutional capacity of the law enforcement agencies of the beneficiary countries through training in order to prevent, investigate and prosecute transnational organised crime and financing terrorism in the context of the effective use of financing investigations.

Furthermore, it also centres on supporting the creation of sustainable professional networks building upon practical exchange of professional experience across the region and with the EU Member States.

- **ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)**

- The findings of the Training Needs Assessment, as well as the Project Implementation Plan were presented during the second Focal Points meeting held for the CEPOL National Contact Points and UNODC Focal Points from the Western Balkans on 17 July 2018 in Ljubljana. The inception report of the project was concluded and the activity plan endorsed by the stakeholders.
- Five training courses (2 regional trainings for mixed EU and Western Balkan officials and 3 national trainings in Albania, North Macedonia and Kosovo) were organised for 154 law enforcement participants. The multidisciplinary trainings addressed financial investigation with regard to illegal immigration, organised crime and tax evasion, drug trafficking, terrorism financing, corruption related to allocation of EU funding, and also incorporated law enforcement cooperation at national and international level. Moreover, the activities raise awareness of participants on EU law enforcement agencies, money laundering and cybercrime matters.
- An exchange programme was organised with the 18 Western Balkan and EU participants. Besides, 14 Western Balkan participants participated in regular CEPOL residential courses.
- Two online webinars were delivered related to the exchange programme and national training in Kosovo.

- The third Focal Points Forum was held on 18 December 2018 in Budapest to review the implementation of the projects and discuss further work plans.

• OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

- During the conducted trainings, competencies were developed on various issues related to financial investigations; including knowledge on relevant legal instruments, good practices and lessons learned. Furthermore, the participants witnessed the benefits of interagency and international cooperation, both in the EU and in the region.
- The regional training and the exchange programme considerably contributed to the promotion of active and sustainable networking between the law enforcement personnel, prosecutors and judiciary officials across Western Balkan region and with the EU Member States.

• ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Between January and July 2019 the project will deliver 6 trainings and 5 webinars (3 national and 3 regional) on international cooperation in relation to money laundering and terrorist financing, multiagency cooperation, effective financial investigation against organised crime groups, financial investigation related to cybercrime and trafficking in human beings and illegal immigration dedicated to Heads of police and judicial academies. Detailed training curricula will be prepared.
- The organisation of exchanges will be continued with already matched participants from 2018 and the launching a new call for nominations in 2019 in order to organise exchanges for minimum 90 participants. Additionally, the Project will continue to enable Western Balkan participants to take part in regular CEPOL residential courses related to financial investigation.

2.10 PREVENTION AND COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM

Programme reference:	IPA Multi-beneficiary Programme 2016 / 039-858
Project title:	Support to Prevention and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) in the Western Balkans
EU contribution:	EUR 3 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Grant Contract

Contract reference:	CN 2017/386-831
Duration of activities:	03/04/2017- 30/09/2019
Links:	http://wb-iisg.com/
Contact :	olivia.debavaye@ec.europa.eu

- PURPOSE

The purpose of the Action is to contribute towards efficient capacity-building and improved policy-making on Prevention and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) in the Western Balkans. In addition, the Action efficiently utilizes the concept of the ‘Integrative Internal Security Governance’ (IISG) in the Western Balkans in order to achieve greater sustainability, alignment, coordination and inclusiveness of the Action’s outputs as well as overall reform and EU-Western Balkan cooperation in this policy field.

- ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

During July-December 2018, the project continued to coordinate the IISG and its Pillar I (WBCTi). This included participation in relevant external events (incl. EU) and also regular contributions to external activities on behalf of IISG Support Group and partners; supporting activities and improvement of P/CVE coordination and cooperation at national and at local levels in respective Beneficiaries; regional multi-level policy coordination and enhanced EU-WB cooperation via respective networks of the “Western Balkans Counter-Terrorism initiative (WBCTi) policy coordination platform”– PCC SEE (Police Cooperation Convention for Southeast Europe) Counter-Terrorism Network, Counter-Terrorism Initiative (CTI) Network, Regional Cooperation Council-led Network on Foreign Terrorist Fighters and PVE (RCC NFP FTF PVE) and the regional network of national P/CVE coordinators from Western Balkans; preparation of a proposed policy model concept for comprehensive P/CVE policy solution in respective Beneficiaries – in consultation with partners and with the European Commission; development and production of a P/CVE e-learning module; and maintenance of the regional online platform (<http://wb-iisg.com/>), EU Radicalisation Awareness Network Centre of Excellence expertise/documents with translations and other tools on P/CVE.

In addition, the project supported trainings, awareness-raising, and other operational-level activities both at the state and local community level that equipped different society groups, vulnerable groups and state/local agencies with tools to play their role in P/CVE in the Western Balkans, and publication of a regional study *Cyber Security and Online Radicalisation in the Western Balkans*.

• OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

- The IISG platform (<http://wb-iisg.com/>), and RCC's specialized website (<https://www.rcc.int/p-cve/>) provided a database of activities and expertise.
- Supported the functioning of regional networks: 1) CTI Network of police operatives chaired by the Slovenian Police; 2) PCC SEE Counter-Terrorism Network at strategic level representing law enforcement and intelligence; 3). RCC-led NFP FTF PVE Group at the (politico-strategic) level of Ministries of Foreign Affairs with international dimension; as well as the Regional Network of National P-CVE Coordinators (RNNC) co-established by the EU and IISG.
- 2nd Meeting of the Regional Network of National P-CVE Coordinators (RNNC) (October 2018), ensured exchange of EU good practice, experiences, etc. in beneficiaries.
- 2nd IPAI2016 Partners' Workshop, Vienna (December 2018), enabled a discussion of a possible way forward for the contextual framework of P/CVE reform in the WB.
- Workshop Community Dialogue – Preventing Radicalisation in Local Communities and Among Youth (September 2018) and Regional workshop on media coverage of terrorism and violent extremism-related topics for journalists from the Western Balkans (October 2018) facilitated the training of a vulnerable to radicalisation group and media representatives, with tools and skills to actively engage in P/CVE in their societies.
- RCC's Study - Cyber Security and Online Radicalization in the Western Balkans.
- The project management has initiated the development and sustainable delivery of P/CVE e-learning module for WB6 practitioners, international community donors, P/CVE stakeholders, as a comprehensive learning tool.

• ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Standing visibility and communication actions: regional P/CVE and Counter-terrorism web-based platforms (IISG and RCC) and other complementary activities, incl. providing expertise and coordination as WBCTi coordinator;
- Third IISG Board Meeting (February 2019) enabling operation of IISG
- CTI Network Meeting (March 2019)
- 3rd Regional Network of P-CVE National Coordinators Meeting (April 2019)
- Delivery of E-Learning module on P/CVE (3/4/2018 – 30/6/2019) consisting of five sub-modules.

Programme reference:	Multi-country Programme, IPA 2017/038-961
Project title:	Communities First: Creation of a civil society hub to address violent extremism – from prevention to reintegration

EU contribution:	EUR 910.350
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Grant agreement with Forum mladi i neformalna edukacija - Forum MNE
Contract reference:	CN 2017/393-759
Duration of activities:	06/03/2018 – 05/03/2021
Links:	http://www.forum-mne.com
Contact :	olivia.debaveye@ec.europa.eu

- PURPOSE

The overall objective is to develop a Western Balkans Civil Society Hub to empower civil society organizations (CSOs) to be more effective and accountable actors and to improve their capacity to implement projects and dialogue with governments, influencing policy and decision-making processes as it relates to preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) that leads to terrorism in the region.

- ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

Mapping: This activity has been implemented with aim to identify CSOs (including faith based organisations (FBOs) and formal and informal local community groups) working in P/CVE field in the Western Balkans, as well as to provide understanding of the quality and potentials of their relations with key local/national/regional stakeholders from public, civic and business sector. Mapping has been implemented using a single robust mapping methodology in each of the respective countries. Additionally, based on the findings of national mapping reports, the regional report has been developed. Mapping methodology was developed by an international expert, while experts in the Western Balkans conducted it.

Develop and Coordinate - Network development: Alongside with the mapping research a series of online consultations between co-applicants as well as two partners' meeting were organised. Additionally, each partner has managed to establish links and contacts with relevant authorities at local and national level.

Promotion: Members of the consortium have been acknowledged by a number of national, regional and international actors as valuable partners in P/CVE in the Western Balkans region and have participated in a number of events which enabled them, not only to

promote the project, but also to establish links with relevant stakeholders. Visibility and media strategy has been drafted and currently it has been finalised.

• OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

- Mapped CSO-led P/CVE activities in the Western Balkan region, analysed relationship between governments and civil society around P/CVE in participating countries;
- Enhanced cooperation among CSOs at regional level – consortium held two meetings, one in Podgorica (Montenegro) and the second one in Tirana (Albania)- as well as CSOs and local authorities at the beneficiary level;
- Established connections with relevant experts which enabled consortium members to benefit from the best practices and lessons learned from counterparts around the globe;

• ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

The focus of the activities in the following period will be mapping promotion to national and regional stakeholders. This entails national workshops in each of the participating countries which will gather all relevant stakeholders.

Another important program component will be capacity-building program. It will be implemented in two phases. The first phase is Training of Trainers (ToT) which should ensure the transfer of knowledge of particular P/CVE methodology to the Balkans. International experts will develop a program presenting world community practices and programs, case studies, theoretical background and experiences of people/organizations that implemented the methodology. ToT is developed as a 4-day training for trainers who already have extensive experience in training provision and organizational and project management. Trainers will get the chance to learn how to design the most effective P/CVE training sessions. Second phase will be implementation of trainings in the Western Balkans, implemented by 12 trainers that successfully finished ToT. This 7-modular program will be highly interactive and will tackle P/CVE and organizational and project management topics. Network development and coordination, as well as promotional activities will be implemented continuously.

CHAPTER 3: ECONOMIC GOVERNANCE AND PRIVATE SECTOR DEVELOPMENT

Support in the area of private sector development and investments aims to provide access to finance, raise regional competitiveness, increase competence of human capital, attract investments, facilitate trade and establish a business climate conducive to the development of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). Private Sector Support Facilities established under the Crisis Response Package are also included.

3.1 PLATFORM FOR SME FINANCING AND SUPPORT IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

Programme reference:	Multi-beneficiary Programmes, IPA 2011/021-964; IPA 2012/022-966; IPA 2013/024-091; IPA 2015/031-609; IPA IPA 2016/039-919; 2017/039-402;
Project title:	Western Balkan Enterprise Development and Innovation Facility (WB EDIF)
EU contribution:	EUR 150.3 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Contribution agreements (CA) with OECD and World Bank Group; CA and Delegation Agreements (DGA) with the

	European Investment Fund (EIF) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), Guarantee Facility, ENEF and ENIF;
Contract reference:	CN 2012/295-825; CN 2012/306-154; CN 2012/306-653; CN 2013/319-472; CN 2012/306-667; CN 2013/333-444; CN 2013/318-776; CN 2013/331-504 ; CN 2014/334-654 05/12/2012 – 30/11/2025/; CN 2016/380-963; CN 2017/393-451; 2017/394-450; 2018/401-317; 2018/393-321
Duration of activities:	05/12/2012 – 21/12/2028
Links:	www.wbedif.eu
Contact :	Aleksandra Kostova, alexandra.kostova@ec.europa.eu

- PURPOSE

WBEDIF is a joint initiative of the EU, together with EIB, EIF, EBRD, World Bank, OECD as well as other investing FIs such as KfW, OeEB, DEG, Italy, and the Western Balkans Economies themselves. Through the combined efforts, expertise and skillsets of the partners WB EDIF aims to strengthen the competitiveness of the SMEs across the region. The facility is both improving access to finance and providing advisory services for boosting the entrepreneurial capacity and the business ecosystem.

- ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

- Enterprise Innovation Fund: ENIF has made additional investments, which brings the portfolio to 16 companies of which 15 are in the ICT sector and 1 is in Real estate sector. The SCV team co-organized the roadshow initiated by PODIM conference organizers, which was promoted in the entire region. A number of pitching events, workshops and trainings, including the events within the Startup Europe week took place.
- Enterprise Expansion Fund: The Fund is currently comprised of 12 investments (with 10 companies), bringing Fund utilisation to 33% of capacity for a total of EUR 16.1 million. The underlying ENEF investment projects remain on track, with the financial performance of the companies aligning with or exceeding the original business plan. A number of: (i) one-to-one meetings (over 750), (ii) small-scale local events and bigger national events (already done in Croatia and Serbia) across the region are being organized to leverage more on ENEF clients' successes.
- Guarantee Facility: under the newly launched Guarantee Facility Serbia EIF has selected 5 banks and a high level event took place on 20 November 2018 in Belgrade to mark the launch of the Facility. A guarantee facility delegation agreement aimed at

supporting Youth Employment SMEs in the WB region, funded by EUR 10m of IPA resources was signed.

- **Competitiveness Programme:** The Competitiveness programme is ongoing, procurement negotiations are currently in place. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has already signed the contract. The market uptake of the product is very high.
- **Advice for Small Businesses (EBRD):** Since December 2015 until the end of October 2018, the EBRD ASB has implemented 507 projects under WB EDIF funding – 450 projects with local consultants and 57 projects with international advisors. Beneficiaries are well represented across all sectors, the majority operating in the food & beverages sector (20% of total).
- **SBA Assessment 2016-19: SME Policy Index for Western Balkans and Turkey (OECD):** In the second half of 2018, the OECD and the partner institutions (EBRD, ETF) embarked upon outlining the key findings of the SBA assessment. Specifically, the main achievements and ongoing challenges concerning SME policies were compiled for the seven economies and presented to the SBA Co-ordinators' meeting that took place on 12 July. Between August and November 2018, all the first draft chapters of the SME Policy Index and its accompanying country profiles were shared with the assessed economies, European Commission and relevant EU delegations for their feedback and comments.
- **EU-REPARIS (World Bank):** Regional integration has been the key activity in the past period, whereby Western Balkan Professional Accounting Organisations (PAOs), are linked to international bodies like IFAC (International Federation of Accountants) through workshops. A week of conferences and side events took place between 26 – 29 November 2018. A Ministerial Conference on “Financial Information as a Catalyst for Integration” was organised on November 27.
- **Investment Readiness/ VC Eco-system (World Bank):** The VC Ecosystem assessment is ongoing in former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Albania. The Investment Readiness programme is preparing the second Pioneers of the Balkans competition. The long-term impact assessment of the outcomes of the first competition has been finalised, after intensive data gathering among the participants through a 2-year follow-up survey.
- **Platform communication and visibility activities** have been streamlined and strengthened, resulting in i) new WB EDIF Annual Report with a new design published and used as marketing and communication tool; ii) new WB EDIF website is operational and regularly updated; iii) first WB EDIF Business Forum was organised in Belgrade, bringing together a number of stakeholders and SMEs from the entire region.

- **OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)**

Access to finance for SMEs: good absorption for the guarantee facility as well as healthy uptake of the equity instruments, WB EDIF's financial outreach to SMEs is always increasing.

Reach of Support Services: through its complementary soft measures, WB EDIF has reached multiple stakeholders.

Platform visibility and communication: increased visibility achieved via a number of outreach activities, including among others the creation of the WB EDIF Annual Report (http://www.wbedif.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/WBEDIF-Annual_Report_2017-digital.pdf) and new WB EDIF website (www.wbedif.eu).

- **ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER**

ENIF: Pace of activities is now well established for ENIF, and this is expected to continue also in 2019. In line with the overall market target for a fund like ENIF is to invest ca 75% of their available size by the end of the Investment Period, which will occur in Q3 2020.

ENEF: Overall, ENEF remains well on track. Taking into account the entire core pipeline, ENEF can reach up to 70% utilisation by year-end 2019/ beginning of 2020.

Guarantee Facility: WB EDIF GF Youth the Call for Expression of Interest to be launched in H1 2019.

Competitiveness Programme: a number of announcement of signings / launch events are planned for H1 2019 as well as creation and dissemination of success stories.

Platform Coordination: communication activities will continue in 2019, like regularly updating the events and news on the website, preparing, distributing and promoting the second round of publicly available WB EDIF Annual Report 2018. One new video promoting a case study under one of the selected financial instruments will be produced.

The ongoing Support Services activities will proceed, as will the EIB Bank Lending Survey, updated by the EIB Economics Department. The phase II of the WBG's Venture Capital and Investment Readiness programme was launched in December 2018. Funding has also been approved for an extension of Advisory for Small Businesses, and for the continuation of the EU REPARIS programme.

3.2 EUROPEAN FUND FOR SOUTHEAST EUROPE (EFSE)

Programme reference:	IPA 2015 / 031-609 - Multi-country Action Programme for 2015, and CARDS 2006/018-264 and Multi-beneficiary Programme IPA 2007/019-344, IPA 2008/020-300, IPA 2009/021-373, IPA 2010/022-028
Project title:	<i>European Fund for Southeast Europe (EFSE)</i>
EU contribution:	EUR 87.6 million <i>(nominal value of C shares subscribed in the Western Balkans)</i>
Beneficiary region:	14 countries including Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Delegation (Trusteeship) Agreement with the European Investment Fund (EIF) (and previous Contribution agreements)
Contract reference:	CN 2016/381-821 Previous CN 2006/124-240; CN 2008/154-338, CN 2009/201-622, CN 2009/222-012, CN 2011/268-296)
Duration of activities:	04/08/2006 – 31/12/2023
Links:	www.efse.lu
Contact :	Judit Andrea GYORI, Judit.GYORI@ec.europa.eu

• PURPOSE

EFSE extends loans to selected financial institutions in the region of Southeast Europe (as of 31 December 2018 39 in the IPA Region), including the European Eastern Neighbourhood Region, for on-lending to micro and small enterprises and low-income private households with limited access to financial services. EFSE's partner lending institutions include commercial banks, microfinance banks, microcredit organisations and non-bank financial institutions.

• ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

By 31 December 2018, the outstanding investment portfolio in the EFSE amounted to EUR 931.7 million with 69 Partner Lending Institutions (PLI), thereof EUR 455.9 million with 39 PLIs in the Western Balkans and Turkey. During H2 2018, EFSE signed 25 investments totalling EUR 162.0 million, of which EUR 18.0 million with 6 Partner Lending Institutions (PLIs) were in the Western Balkans and Turkey.

In terms of the sub-loan portfolio, by 31 December 2018, the outstanding sub-loan portfolio amounted to EUR 867.3 million, including EUR 499.5 million in the Western Balkans and Turkey. This translates into an on-lending rate of 104% for the total Fund and 109% for the Western Balkans and Turkey by 31 December 2018.

Almost 961,000 sub-loans have therefore been financed since EFSE's inception, accounting for EUR 7.0 billion in lending, with a clear focus on microloans below EUR 20,000.

On the TA side, the EFSE Development Facility (“DF”) has 46 projects under management in the Western Balkan region and Turkey, with a total volume of EUR 6.1 million. In Kosovo, the EFSE DF supports PLIs in reviewing their profitability and risk management practices, with the aim to serve MSE clients in a sustainable and responsible way. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the EFSE DF is supporting PLIs in their efforts to digitize their advisory services for agricultural and MSE clients for better access to market information. As part of its Entrepreneurship agenda, the EFSE DF is collaboration with Technolera business accelerator in Turkey to identify, promote and scale up innovative technology-based solutions for agriculture and finance. As a result of its business acceleration projects in the Western Balkans, the EFSE DF organized the EFSE Entrepreneurship Tournament in Sarajevo that brought together more than 220 participants from the entrepreneurship ecosystem, such as individual businesses, investors, EFSE PLIs and the government. The tournament provided a platform for early stage, scalable businesses to present themselves and engage with potential business partners and investors.

The Fund has been well funded in H2 2018 and has mobilized EUR 60 million of subscriptions, from private investors (in total EUR 121m in 2018), including a EUR 20 million roll-over of maturing Notes, bringing the share of private investor Notes to 23% as of 31 December 2018. The subscription of additional funding was driven by the Fund’s strong disbursements especially in the Western Balkan region and Romania. Overall, the Fund's performance remains very solid with a good risk profile, very good financial performance and continued leveraging the Fund's C Shares. The Fund was able to create high visibility through various initiatives and activities beyond mere investments, such as social business incubation, financial literacy or fintech projects. Moreover, the fund has worked on closing the “EU4Business – EU Local Currency Partnership Initiative”, i.e. the cooperation to foster local currency lending in the Neighborhood region. In Q3 2018, the first funding earmarked for local currency lending was secured with the conversion of EUR 12 million BMZ C Shares to L Shares. The EU contribution to L Shares of EUR 43.7 million has been contracted with the entrusted entity and is expected to be subscribed in February 2019. A possible new initiative to seek investment opportunities to foster entrepreneurship in the fund’s target regions was presented to and welcomed by the Board in December.

OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

EFSE investment portfolio figures as at end Q4 2018*	
1. Total Invested Portfolio (Q4 2018 figures)	EUR 931.7 million
2. Number of current Partner Lending Institutions (Q4 2018 figures)	69
3. Type of Partner Lending Institution (Q4 2018 figures)	65% Commercial Banks, 15% Micro-finance Institutions, 20% Non-Bank Financial Institutions
EFSE sub-loan figures as at end Q4 2018*	

4. Active End Borrowers (Q4 2018 figures)	133,913
5. Reached End Borrowers since inception (Q4 2018 figures)	961,000
6. Average sub-loan amount outstanding (Q4 2018 figures)	EUR 6,476.54
7. Disbursed sub-loans since inception (Q4 2018 figures)	EUR 7.0 billion

- ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

An intensive monitoring regime for the Fund’s investments in Turkey continues to be in place while no new investments in Turkey are currently pursued. There is also a continued economic stagnation and low-price environment in South-east European countries, next to political uncertainty in the Ukraine. The investment pipeline for 2019 looks promising, lifting the Fund’s business plan target to EUR 953 million at year-end. In the early 2019, the Fund will subscribe L Shares for the Neighborhood East and will start the partnership for local currency lending. First potential local currency transactions are already considered in the investment pipeline. Moreover, the new concept for potentially better supporting scalable enterprises and entrepreneurship with investments in the fund’s target regions will be further developed and evaluated.

In the first half of 2019, the EFSE DF will roll out through proven partnerships the business acceleration and investment readiness programs that target scalable businesses. These and other trainings and mentoring programs are bundled under the Entrepreneurship Academy that makes the substantial work of the Fund in Entrepreneurship visible. Another priority will be the implementation of the EFSE Fintech Strategy that will support PLIs in their digitalization efforts and regulators in their efforts to create an enabling environment for Fintech. The EFSE DF will furthermore support responsible local currency lending of the Fund with complementary DF activities, such as capacity building of PLIs to effectively use funding in local currency.

3.3 CRISIS RESPONSE PACKAGE

Programme reference:	Multi-beneficiary programme, IPA 2009/021-373
Project title:	Private Sector Support Facility for Turkey (PSSF) - Crisis Response Package
EU contribution (IPA only):	EUR 22.5 million
Beneficiary region:	Turkey
Type of contract:	Contribution agreement with EBRD

Contract reference:	CN 2009/228-868
Duration of activities:	18/12/2009 – 30/11/2021
Links:	http://www.turseff.org ; http://www.midseff.com ; http://www.msmeturkey.com
Contact:	Domagoj Denacic; Domagoj.DENACIC@ec.europa.eu

- PURPOSE

The EU/EBRD programme "Turkey Private Sector Support Facility" (PSSF) assists economic actors in Turkey through loans, grants and technical assistance (TA) in increasing their competitiveness in products and services to face the challenges of the economic and financial crisis in the short and long term. To this end, it provides necessary financial and human resources as well as technical skills.

- ACTIVITIES (JULY – DECEMBER 2018)

MSME Finance Window – In the last quarter of 2018, the EC and EBRD agreed that funds remaining under this window (approx. EUR 1,3 million) will be used for Technical Assistance (TA) to support the new Turkey Women in Business Programme (TurWiB II), which was approved and launched by EBRD in mid-2018. The Programme will provide up to EUR 840 million in dedicated credit lines to Partner Financial Institutions (PFIs) which will be used to finance women-led SMEs in Turkey. Following on the success of the original TurWiB programme (2014-2017), this second phase will focus on reaching the most underserved women entrepreneurs, including those outside of the main commercial centres in Turkey, thus reaching SMEs that have not previously had access to financing.

During the reporting period, the EBRD completed procurement for a Programme Consultant (PC) who will begin offering TA to PFIs in Q1 2019. The TA will help the PFIs (participating financial institutions) to assess their portfolios, delivery models and delivery mechanisms, and will help them to build internal capacities and skills to implement the objectives of the Programme.

Energy Efficiency Window - Finans Leasing joined TurSEFF (Turkish Sustainable Energy Financing Facility) III in H2 of 2018 - the third leasing company and fifth PFI now active under the Facility. The Facility Consultant (FC) organised kick-off meetings with Garanti Leasing and Finans Leasing during the period, and continued assessing projects identified for funding by all active PFIs (including 20 SARs (Simplified Assessment Reports)/FARs (Full Assessment Reports) completed during the period). To build programme awareness, the FC participated in a total of 20 events and conferences throughout Turkey – most notably

organising and delivering 5 one-day municipal sector conferences with Manisa, Erzurum, and Şanlıurfa Municipalities and at the Union of Marmara Municipalities (in Istanbul) and the Union of Turkish Municipalities (in Ankara). The seminars received a lot of publicity and were very well received by attendees; as a result the FC has already received training requests from other municipal sector organisations, and expects increased interest in public-sector investments after the upcoming municipal elections. Under MidSEFF (Turkish Mid-size Sustainable Energy Financing Facility), monitoring of the few ongoing sub-projects continued until the Facility Consultant's contract came to an end in late December.

Advice for Small Business (ASB) Window - During the reporting period the team has started 3 projects with international advisors (formerly EGP, Enterprise Growth Programme), and launched 24 projects with local consultants (formerly BAS, Business Advisory Services) – of these, 10 are currently ongoing and 13 are completed and 1 was cancelled.

• OUTPUTS (JULY – DECEMBER 2018)

MSME Finance Window – There were no outputs under this window during the period.

Energy Efficiency Window - Under TurSEFF III, EUR 197 million of EUR 400 million funds have now been allocated to five PFIs. Four of the five PFIs are actively lending their funds, and 37 sub-loans totalling EUR 20,6 million were disbursed during the reporting period. In total, 97 sub-loans for just over EUR 58 million have now been on-lent to sub-projects. MidSEFF funds are effectively fully allocated to PFIs and the disbursement or utilisation period for all PFIs has ended with the Facility totalling EUR 914.5 million invested in 56 sub-projects. One sub-loan worth EUR 15 million remains in the pipeline; it has been assessed by the FC and may be added to the portfolio in Q1 2019. No further projects will be added to the portfolio.

Advice for Small Business (ASB) Window - Since the inception of the Programme, 24 projects with international advisors (formerly EGP) were started under EU PSSF for Turkey. Out of these, 14 projects were completed, 4 projects were cancelled due to insufficient commitment of the company's management and 6 projects are ongoing. In addition, a total of 211 projects with local consultants (formerly BAS) were launched, two of which were cancelled. To date, 166 of the projects have been evaluated one year following completion. (14 projects are currently ongoing, 1 was cancelled and 9 are completed but not evaluated yet).

• ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

MSME Finance Window – During the next period, EBRD will meet with potential PFIs with the aim of signing the first Loan Agreements under the Programme by the end of Q1. As PFIs join the Facility, the FC will begin to offer TA services – including a baseline assessment in cooperation with each PFI to guide the design of specific TA package. In particular the baseline assessments will 1) recommend how PFIs can improve their delivery of financial and non-financial products and services to women-led MSMEs, and 2) explain the reasons behind gender gaps in the use and access to credit and non-financial services. The PC will also draft

the marketing strategy for the overall Facility, including the planning of all Donor Visibility events and materials.

Energy Efficiency Window - The TurSEFF III Facility Consultant will continue business development activities for four active PFIs through a series of meetings planned with potential PFI clients, vendors and suppliers, business and professional associations, NGOs and Government organisations. Capacity building trainings – on either programme or technical subjects – will be held at regional and at HQ offices amongst all active PFIs. Only Vakifbank, who is nearing the end of the credit line, will not receive any further training and will focus solely on disbursement of remaining funds (expected to allocate it’s final project in Q1 2019). In addition, a Marketing Strategy and Action Plan will be developed for both Finans and Garanti Leasing, and marketing materials such as infographics, sector leaflets, and online tools will be developed for the programme as a whole. Under MidSEFF, the contract of the Project Consultant has now expired and no further work is expected under the Facility.

Advice for Small Business (ASB) – The current pipeline of two projects with international advisors (formerly EGP) will be approved and started in the second quarter of 2019 effectively allocating all available resources. The team also plans to start 44 business advisory projects with local consultants in 2019 and organize 2 *Grow Your Consulting Business* trainings to train 30 local consultants.

Programme reference:	Multi-beneficiary programme, IPA 2009/021-373
Project title:	SME Recovery Support Loan for Turkey – Crisis Response Package
EU contribution:	EUR 30.00 million
Beneficiary region:	Turkey
Type of contract:	Contribution agreement with EIB
Contract reference:	CN 2009/228-929
Duration of activities:	22/12/2009 -21/12/2017
Links:	http://www.eib.org/projects/pipeline/2009/20090580.htm http://www.eib.org/projects/press/2010/2010-131-eib-provides-EUR-150-million-innovative-recovery-support-loan-to-smes-in-turkey.htm
Contact :	Domagoj Denacic, Domagoj.DENACIC@ec.europa.eu

- PURPOSE

The overall objective of the SME Recovery Support Loan is to mitigate the crisis impact for SMEs and contribute to the development of the Turkish economy and employment sector.

The main objective is to support SMEs with concrete productive investments by providing access to attractive and longer-dated debt financing.

• ACTIVITIES

The SME Recovery Support Loan is combined with an EIB loan for SMEs (together, the Facility) and fully disbursed to the two selected financial intermediaries since April 2011.

- Halkbank: their share of the Facility (EUR 74.82 million) is fully allocated to 148 SMEs since the end of 2011. The average size of allocation is EUR 0.51 million.

Akbank: their share of the Facility (EUR 74.82 million) is fully allocated to 89 SMEs since the end of June 2012. The average size of allocation is EUR 0.8 million.

A Steering Committee meeting was held on November 2016 to present the activities implemented in the last 12 months as well as present the proposal for a second round of loans, which was approved. It has been proposed to extend the Contribution Agreement (CA) for 12 months from 22 December 2016 to 22 December 2017 to allow the EIB to define, approve and deploy the second round.

However, the proposal for the second round has not been approved by the relevant EIB decision-making bodies. Consequently, the Contribution Agreement expired on 22 December 2017 and there were no actions to report in 2018.

• OUTPUTS

There are no outputs to report in 2018.

• ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

No further activities are planned in 2018.

Final report of the project has been approved in first half of 2018.

3.4 OECD-SUPPORT TO ECONOMIC COMPETITIVENESS IN SOUTH EAST EUROPE

Programme reference:	2016/373-821
Project title:	OECD Support to Economic Competitiveness in South East Europe
EU contribution:	EUR 10.7 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey

Type of contract:	Contribution agreement with OECD
Contract reference:	CN 2016
Duration of activities:	01/04/2016 – 30/09/2019
Contact :	Youssef Tadros, Youssef.tadros@ec.europa.eu

- PURPOSE

Assist the Western Balkan and Turkish economies in reinforcing their economic competitiveness and growth by identifying policies for enhanced competitiveness and long-term growth and by building capacity to further develop and implement these policies.

- ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

Economic Reform Programmes: The OECD held five ERP capacity building workshops between September and October 2018 (ALB, BiH, MKD, KOS, SRB). During these workshops OECD experts gave feedback on the initial ERP drafts and provided substantive input on specific policy challenges during focus group sessions. The events in Sarajevo and Belgrade were held as part of the launch of the Competitiveness Outlook to allow a subsequent discussion on potential new reform measures addressed through the ERP. A regional policy dialogue seminar on industrial policy organised in Paris on 24 October 2018, gathering 18 senior policymakers from the Western Balkans as well as a dozen speakers and experts from OECD and EU countries. In the 4th quarter 2018 the OECD provided remote feedback and guidance to WB governments (esp. MKD, ALB) on the different ERP drafts.

Competitiveness Outlook: Following the release of the Competitiveness Outlook at the SEE High-level Conference 2018, the OECD organised, over the summer and autumn of 2018, four regional publication launch meetings across the SEE capital cities to present the project results. These meetings brought together several hundred participants including government agents, senior government officials (e.g. ministers), the international development community active in the region as well as the diplomatic corps (e.g. EU Delegations), local and international business sector representatives, academia and NGOs.

SBA Assessment: The inputs and data collected in the first half of 2018 were further analysed, and the initial findings of the assessment were subsequently presented to the SBA Co-ordinators and the European Commission representatives at the meeting held in Paris on 14 July. Upon approval of the key findings and recommendations, the OECD and the partner institutions (ETF, EBRD) drafted the SME Policy Index publication, as well as country profiles, throughout the second semester of 2018. The draft chapters of the publication were shared with the European Commission (DG NEAR, DG GROW) and the EU delegations in the Western Balkans and Turkey. The OECD team incorporated all the valuable feedback and comments in the revised drafts.

• OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

Economic Reform Programmes: The OECD support helped WB government officials developing their ERPs 2019-21. More specifically, they gained new insights and best practices how to address policy challenges in selected areas, such as taxation, informal economy, labour market, SME support measures. They understand better the purpose of systematic monitoring of reform implementation, know better how to define monitoring indicators and ensure consistency between macro-economic projections, budgetary plans and proposed structural reforms. Through the industrial policy seminar, 18 senior government officials from the Western Balkans gained practical knowledge of the latest global and regional developments on industrial policy.

Competitiveness Outlook: Four regional publication launch meetings organised across the SEE capital cities with several hundred participants. Economy-specific results presented as the basis for increased government capacity and implementation. Discussions held with government officials about reform priorities for each SEE economy.

SBA Assessment: The OECD ensured the strong involvement of a wide-range of stakeholders (e.g. ministries, public agencies, chambers of commerce) across the region in the preparation process of the SME Policy Index, most notably by seeking their views on the draft chapters. This, in turn, improved the buy-in of the suggested policy recommendations, and contributed to creating consensus on the way forward in overcoming SME Policy related challenges.

• ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

Economic Reform Programmes: The OECD will review the submitted ERPs 2019-2021.

Competitiveness Outlook: The OECD will collaborate with the SEE government officials to support them in the planning and implementation of structural reforms stemming from the Competitiveness Outlook assessment.

SBA Assessment: In early 2019, the OECD content review, editing and mise-en-page process will continue, subsequent to which the manuscript of the publication will be finalised. The SME Policy Index publication will be launched at a high-level event in early May (*tbc*), which will be followed by country launch meetings in the Western Balkans and Turkey. To increase the visibility of the SME Policy Index publication, different promotional materials will be developed and disseminated all through the first semester.

3.5 TRADE - SUPPORT TO FACILITATION OF TRADE BETWEEN CEFTA PARTIES

Programme reference:	Multi-beneficiary Programme, IPA 2018
Project title:	Support to CEFTA Secretariat 2018-2019
EU contribution:	EUR 200,000
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Moldova

Type of contract:	Operating grant with the CEFTA Secretariat
Contract reference:	CN 2018/399-060
Duration of activities:	01/08/2018 – 31/07/2019
Links:	http://cefta.int/
Contact:	Gabriel Blanc, Gabriel.BLANC@ec.europa.eu

- PURPOSE

The overall objective is to enhance economic development through supporting liberalisation and facilitation of intra-regional trade in the context of the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA). The Project supports the operation of the CEFTA Secretariat, which provides technical and administrative support to the CEFTA Structures (Chair in Office – CiO, the CEFTA Joint Committee – JC, the CEFTA Subcommittees, CEFTA Working Groups and CEFTA Committee for Trade Facilitation).

- ACTIVITIES (AUGUST-DECEMBER 2018)

The CEFTA Secretariat assisted the CEFTA Parties in the implementation of priorities outlined in the 2018 Work Programme and facilitated the organisation planned meetings of the CEFTA Structures. At the same time the CEFTA Secretariat assisted the CEFTA Parties with the implementation of the MAP.

It has to be stressed that during this period the Secretariat has been working without staff and then in this period the Advertisements for new positions have been launched. The only staff member in the Secretariat is the Director, for the full duration of the reporting period. Moreover, The imposition of the taxes of 100% have slowed the work of the CEFTA bodies.

Regarding the Additional Protocol 5, during the reporting period 6 of the 7 CEFTA Parties have Completed parliamentary ratification procedures as required by the Protocol. The Ratification of the 7th Party is expected in February 2019.

For the preparation of smooth and timely implementation of the Additional Protocol 5, the CEFTA Parties agreed to the SEED+ preparation and the SEED+ Project was prepared in cooperation with Italian Customs and the EC during this Reporting Period. During the CEFTA Subcommittee on Customs and Rules of Origin meeting , held on 13 November 2018, the Subcommittee agreed on the text of the AEO validation Decision, in order to start up the validation Process and start the implementation of the Annex 3 of the AP5. The SC on customs, as well discussed the needs for training for the implementation of the Decision 3/2015 as of 1 July 2019. The changes of the PEM were discussed and as well the Progress made in the area of Risk management.

The changes to the AEO Decision were proposed on the Trade Facilitation Committee meeting on the 26 November in Pristina. The ad-hoc group has continued the work on the harmonisation of certificates for the SEED+ implementation. On its meeting in Sarajevo in

September 2018, the Working group has agreed the first page of the Veterinary Certificate. It was confirmed on the Agri and SPS Subcommittee held on October 4th 2018 in Sarajevo. The implementation of the AP 5 is continuing and the SEED+ Contract was signed by the CEFTA Secretariat on the 21st of December 2018. In the same meeting, the Subcommittee on Agriculture and SPS agreed to deepen the statistical data to be collected by the CEFTA Secretariat on agricultural products, namely to collect data at HS 8 level. Moreover, the Agreement was reached to start the discussions to gather the data on Agricultural Subsidies. The SC agreed as well that the AP5 should be amended for the Annex 1 in order to change several fields from Mandatory to optional in the veterinary Certificate.

The Trade Facilitation Committee has met in Pristina on the 26 November 2018, and had several conclusions related to the implementation of the AP5. Besides changes to the draft decision on AEO, the TFC has concluded that the Sector for the mutual recognition of documents will be the vegetables sector from the GIZ Study.

In September 2018 the CEFTA Secretariat's Steering Committee has been organized in accordance with the financing agreements signed between the Secretariat and the European Commission (EC). The meeting provided with the opportunity to CEFTA Parties and key donors to meet not only to review activities of the Secretariat but also to discuss any open issues in relation to the implementation of the Secretariat's mandate, and to revisit CEFTA Chairmanship priorities regarding the implementation of the Agreement.

The contact points have had two meetings of the Committee of the Contact points. The first one was held on the November 8th during the meeting of the NTFCs in Vienna, and the next one was held in Pristina on the 5 December 2018. The main conclusions are that the common solution is found for the AP6 and that the progress has to be achieved in the implementation of the AP . The Priorities of the MAP deliverables have been presented and adopted, and the work on them should be a priority until the Poznan summit 13th Joint Committee meeting was held on 6th December 2018, in Pristina. The meeting was finished without the adoption of the agenda and no conclusions were taken. Chair in Office have organised CEFTA Week 2018, an annual event which gathers representatives of national institutions, private sector and academia to discuss implementation of CEFTA. The event was held on 4 December 20178 in Pristina. CEFTA Week 2018 represented series of discussions and presentations on different aspects of this Agreement. The discussions were divided in three blocks, Customs, Services and NTMs.

On 21 November 2018 the 5th meeting of the CEFTA Subcommittee on Trade in Services was held in Pristina. The Parties discussed about the outstanding issues related to the Additional Protocol 6, the Secretariat's report on the activities of the Working Group on Trade in Services Statistics, FATS and FDI Statistics and Joint Working Group on Recognition of Professional Qualifications and presentations of the current status of the implementation of the WTO Project on Services Trade Restrictiveness Index 12 sectors for CEFTA Parties. The Meeting of the CEFTA Working Group on Trade in Services Statistics, FATS and FDI Statistics on November 20th 2018, in Pristina. The main objective was to update the Database on Statistics and discuss the open issues. The Secretariat was entrusted to prepare the reports on the weaknesses and further steps of the Statistics portal and to prepare the improvements to the Portal for the meeting to be held in March 2019.

The NTM SC has met in Pristina in November 2018 and has adopted the vegetables as the sector for the Border documents recognition, as well as the draft outline of the NTM Report that is to be prepared in the next period.

The text of the AP7 was delivered to the Parties and it is expected that they nominate negotiators and adopt the draft text and negotiations positions.

Besides that, the Secretariat has participated at numerous workshops organised by the GIZ, IFC, USAID, UNCTAD, WTO and other conferences where their presence was needed. Meetings of the MAP coordinators and the SHERPAs were attended by CEFTA Staff

• OUTPUTS (AUGUST-DECEMBER 2018)

- *The Director of the CEFTA Secretariat has signed the Action Grant to implement SEED+ with the EC on 21 December 2018.*
- *Ratification of the AP5 is done in 6 of the 7 CEFTA Parties.*
- *AEO Validation Decision is prepared*
- *CEFTA Ad hoc working group for certificates has agreed the 1st page of the veterinary certificate*
- *The AP6 denomination was agreed by all Parties*
- *The SEED+ Contract was signed by the CEFTA Secretariat*
- *The AP7 draft text was delivered to the Parties for the appointment of negotiators and acceptance of the draft text for the negotiations.*

• ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

The recruitment of the first wave of the recruitment procedures should be completed in the next period.

The CEFTA Secretariat will keep providing technical and administrative support to the Chair in Office for the implementation of the Chairmanship Programme 2019 and will continue assisting the CEFTA Parties in the organisation of all the regular meetings of the CEFTA structures and in conducting negotiations.

In particular, the CEFTA Secretariat will mainly provide support on the following areas:

- 1) Preparation of Implementing Provisions for Mutual recognition of Border Documents and AEO Programmes according to the AP 5.
- 2) Continue the negotiations on AP7
- 3) The Adoption of the AP6 and its ratification process should start
- 4) Encouraging to coordinate the positions of CEFTA Parties in the revision exercise of the PEM Convention and to undertake trainings on the full cumulation and duty drawback.

- 5) Adoption of the AEO validation Decision
- 6) Implementation of the SEED+
- 7) Finalisation of the Contract on STRI and its inclusion in the implementation of the AP6
- 8) Regular update of the CEFTA Statistical Portal on Goods, Services and FDI Statistics
- 9) Identification of barriers in electronic commerce amongst CEFTA Parties
- 10) Work on establishment of the CEFTA Contact Points for Services.

Programme reference:	Multi-beneficiary Programme, IPA 2014/031-603
Project title:	Strengthening the CEFTA Structures and their implementation capacities
EU contribution:	EUR 2,579,700.00
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Moldova
Type of contract:	Action grant with the CEFTA Secretariat
Contract reference:	CN 2015/356-738
Duration of activities:	01/05/2015 – 31/12/2019
Links:	http://www.cefta.int
Contact :	Gabriel Blanc, gabriel.blanc@ec.europa.eu

- PURPOSE

The specific objective of the Action is to provide the CEFTA Parties with technical assistance related to the priorities identified in the Integrated Growth Pillar of the SEE Strategy 2020, where specific technical preparations are needed.

- ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

The National Experts Programme was successfully implemented during this period and four experts from Kosovo*, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania supported the CEFTA Secretariat in the four committees: customs and rule of origin, NTMs, services and agriculture. The project “Legal Counsel on CEFTA Negotiations and Implementation” has been implemented as envisaged by the ToRs. In August, the legal counsel resigned and a new tender has been launched to continue to implement this activity. The multiple Framework Contract was awarded and signed and implemented during this period allowing the organisations of events, meetings, workshops in Brussels and in the CEFTA region, namely the CEFTA Week in December.

The project “Preparation of Questionnaires for Risk Management Systems” was implemented during this reporting period. The project “Establishment of the Regulatory

Database in Services Sectors” was held in Belgrade on 5 July . 7 experts (one from each CEFTA Party) attended the meeting conducted by the WTO Expert together with the Director of the CEFTA Secretariat. The project “LSEE-CEFTA collaboration on CEFTA Academia Network “with London School of Economics enterprise was also implemented during this period. An agreement with the World Bank was signed to report on the Effects of Approximating the EU CET Externally Financed Output (the EFO).

The project on “Report on Legislation and policy Measures in the sector of E-commerce in CEFTA Region” started during this period and the Inception Report was prepared. The WG on the harmonisation of the certificates continued its work on the September meeting, as the preparatory work for the implementation of the SEED+. The work on the veterinary certificates is progressing and it is expected that the work will continue with the SPS certificates.

In the reporting period, the Parties have improved reporting statistics through the Statistical Portal. The Working Group decided that the next meeting was agreed to balance the data and to prepare the potential extension of the Database to the HS8. The Exploratory meeting on the competition and State aid was held in Skopje, but common ground was not found, so an additional meeting will be needed in the next period.

The work on the REA MAP is gaining pace and during this period the CEFTA Parties agreed the Deliverables for the Poznan summit. The AP7 legal text was provided for the adoption by the Parties, who are currently passing their internal procedure for adoption and the nomination of the negotiating teams. The AP6 was agreed by the Parties during the Vienna meeting of Contact Points and is now under preparation for the adoption. The CEFTA Secretariat participated in the UNCTAD Annual Conference in November 2019 and has established working contacts with UNCTAD and WTO. The CEFTA Week was held in Pristina from 3rd to 6th December 2018. The SEED+ Contract was prepared and signed on 21 December 2018. In the same time the tender for the maintenance of the SEED has been prepared.

• OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

The Questionnaires for Risk Management Systems have been prepared and the document was filled in by the Parties. The expert has compiled the data, but there are still several missing. The work on the Establishment of the Regulatory Database in Services Sectors has been progressing and the first results were presented on the Committee for Services and on the CEFTA Week during the Panel on Services.

The outline report on the Effects of Approximating the EU CET Externally Financed Output (the EFO) was presented in the Vienna Contact Points meeting and the Parties have commented the report in order to improve it. The Project “Report on Legislation and policy Measures in the sector of E-commerce in CEFTA Region” was successfully tendered and the

inception report was prepared and sent to the Parties during this period for comments. The CEFTA Week was held in Pristina from 3rd to 6th December where the achievements and results of the Chairmanship 2018 were presented.

• ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

The continuation of the National Experts Programme is planned for January to June 2019. A study tour for the Chairmanship 2019 will be prepared and executed where the detailed time plan will be developed taking into account the priorities that are envisaged by the MAP for the Poznan meeting. The tender on MIS will be launched and published and the contract will be signed in this period allowing its implementation in 2019. The contract “Legal Counsel on CEFTA Negotiations and Implementation” will be signed in January 2019 the implementation will start immediately after. A tender will be launched to ensure the maintenance of the SEED. The contract is expected to be signed in February and the implementation will start immediately after. The work on e-commerce will continue. The exploratory meeting will be held for competition state aids (2nd) and one on the market surveillance.

Programme reference:	Europe Aid/151895/DH/ACT/Multi
Project title:	Support to facilitation of trade between CEFTA parties
EU contribution:	EUR 3.00 million
Beneficiary region:	CEFTA signatory parties
Type of contract:	PA Grant Agreement with Deutsche Gesellschaft fuer Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH and the International Trade Centre (ITC)
Contract reference:	2016/383-050
Duration of activities:	http://cefta.int/trade-facilitation/
Contact :	gabriel.blanc@ec.europa.eu

• PURPOSE

The overall objective of the project is to improve capacities of the public and private sector in the CEFTA Parties to address the obstacles to deeper trade integration in the CEFTA region. This goal will be pursued by supporting the implementation of the CEFTA Additional Protocol 5 on Trade Facilitation.

- ACTIVITIES (AUGUST - DECEMBER 2018)

Three pilot validation missions were organised under the project in September and October 2018 in Moldova (Sept 5-7), Macedonia (Sept 18-21) and Serbia (Oct 2-5). The main purpose of the visits was to validate the programme content, the authorisation process in design and implementation of the national AEO programme, as well as to validate the operational execution of the AEO programme. Besides reviewing documentation and practice regarding the implementation of AEO programme in the pilot parties, the validators also had an opportunity to visit AEO accredited companies or AEO applicant companies in the pilot parties. The fourth validation mission will be conducted in 2019 as planned by the project.

The regional report, encompassing all the main regional barriers to trade was presented to the CEFTA parties in Pristina in September 2018. The report is a result of the common issues identified in all CEFTA Parties. The report states clearly the regional recommendations for improvement, which will be the basis for developing regional action plans with timetables for implementation of the prioritised recommendations that will be supported during the year 2019.

In October 2018, a second workshop on Risk Management (RM) was organised in Skopje, Macedonia. The workshop served as a following step in capacity building activities of RM officers in CEFTA Parties. The final goal of this activity is to develop 20 joint risk profiles common for all CEFTA Parties. Intensive work has been done during the two-day workshop with new risk areas developed and format of the profiles defined. Likewise, a common template for use of all parties was proposed. It has been agreed that the joint risk profiles are proposed by the end of the year and that the final confirmation of the profiles takes place in the first quarter of 2019.

A regional meeting with NTFC members was organised in Vienna, on November 8, 2018. The purpose of this meeting was to present the Business Process Analysis (BPA) methodology, which is being applied in each CEFTA party, as well as to analyse and resolve trade facilitation related issues in intra-regional trade. The national quality diagnostic studies were developed for each Party in the Western Balkans region and the preliminary results of these findings were presented. Finally, NTFC members of each CEFTA party held one-on-one meetings with ITC experts working on the BPAs in their respective party in order to go over the preliminary results and findings and to agree on a way forward.

Two AEO trainings were organised for all CEFTA Parties in Tirana and Belgrade, in mid-November 2018. A training programme was organised as a two-day training for customs administrations' officials to address their needs predominately covering safety and security AEO criteria and requirements. These include physical and data/IT security but also including sessions addressing most problematic issues related to financial solvency, the systems of managing commercial and transport records in line with the related AEO criteria.

The second meeting of the Regional Business Advisory Group (RBAG) was organised on November 7 in Belgrade, Serbia. The meeting was attended by representatives of businesses from both vegetables and metals sector from the six Western Balkans CEFTA Parties. The aim of the meeting of the group was to discuss the project's activities undertaken in the period March – November 2018 and prioritise the activities for the upcoming period. The RBAG representatives agreed on the priorities in the forthcoming year and discussed the advocacy approach the group will take in addressing the national and regional bodies.

As the final event of the year 2018, a regional conference entitled „Promoting Mutual Recognition of AEO in the CEFTA Context“ was organised on 13-14 December in Belgrade, Serbia. The two-day conference gathered more than 100 participants from the public institutions and private sector from all CEFTA parties and the EU, renowned international AEO experts and international organisations' representatives. The key objective of the conference was to provide a forum to inform about and discuss the AEO Programme objectives and requirements, benefits for the Customs and private sector, as well as framework for the Mutual Recognition of AEOs, bringing together the EU and CEFTA public and private sector perspective and experiences.

The project website is regularly updated and newsletter prepared and distributed to all stakeholders.

• OUTPUTS (AUGUST - DECEMBER 2018)

Three pilot validation missions were organised under the project in September and October 2018 in Moldova, Macedonia and Serbia. Validation reports were prepared, stating the overall results of the three missions. A regional report on trade barriers was presented and discussed with all CEFTA parties and the results validated. Parties agreed to prepare prioritisation lists for all the stated barriers that can be dealt with within the last year of the project. Risk Management officers discussed and agreed the approach to developing 20 joint risk profiles. Template for risk profiles developed and adopted by all Parties' Risk Management representatives. The Business Process Analysis (BPA) methodology was presented to all NTFC members. Two AEO trainings conducted concerning physical and data/IT security but also issues related to financial solvency, the systems of managing commercial and transport records in line with the related AEO criteria.

RBAG representatives agreed on the priorities in the forthcoming year and discussed the advocacy approach the group will take in addressing the national and regional bodies. An AEO conference gathering 100 participants from public institutions and private sector from CEFTA Parties and the EU, as well as international experts on AEO was organised. The capacity development event resulted in discussions about the relations of the public and private sector in the process of obtaining and keeping AEO status, as well as the challenges

and benefits in the process. The project website is regularly updated and newsletter prepared and distributed to all stakeholders involved or interested in the project.

• **ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER**

Following the discussion of preliminary BPA results, the validation of national maps and findings will be organised in February-March 2019. A regional workshop on Risk management for final confirmation of the risk profiles will take place at a workshop organised in February 2019. Awareness raising workshops with other government agencies at national and regional levels will be organised in April - May 2019. A regional workshop on Risk management for evaluation of results of implementation of joint risk profiles will be organised in June 2019. Meetings of Regional Business Advisory Groups (sector-specific) in June 2019. The fourth validation mission will be conducted in 2019 in one of the remaining CEFTA parties. It is expected that Albania, Montenegro and Kosovo might be ready and ask for validation in 2019.

3.6 COMPETITIVENESS

Programme reference:	IPA Multi-Country Programme – decision MCP2017/39-402
Project title:	Triple P Tourism in SEE: Promotion, Policy and Pilots
EU contribution:	EUR 5,000,000
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans IPA Six (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia and North Macedonia)
Type of contract:	Grant to the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC)
Contract reference:	2017/392-591
Duration of activities:	19/12/2017 – 19/12/2020
Links:	https://www.rcc.int/tourism
Contact :	Laurent GUIRKINGER, Laurent.GUIRKINGER@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The objective of the Triple P Tourism in South-Eastern Europe (SEE) Promotion, Policy and Pilots (Triple P) project is to contribute to the economic growth and competitiveness of the Western Balkans region. It aims to do so through the consolidation of a fragmented tourism offer in the Western Balkans Six and the development of internationally competitive regional tourism routes and offers, which would attract more international tourists, lengthen their stay in the region,

increase revenues and contribute to the increase of employment in the industry, as well as in the overall economy of the region.

• ACTIVITIES (JULY - DECEMBER 2018)

- Regional dialogue maintained, with 8th Tourism Expert Group (TEG) meeting held on 6 December 2018.
- Product development for regional tourism routes advanced, with the following concepts for cultural tourism: Crossroads of Civilisations, Art and Design of the World War II (WWII) Monuments route concepts have been developed, offering the main framework and justification as well as basic criteria and identification of sites and locations. Additionally, archaeological heritage of the Roman period will be coordinated with the certified European Cultural Route of Roman Emperor's and Danube Wine Route to facilitate expansion of the existing route deeper in to the region. Regional coordination of adventure travel route, Via Dinarica, was re-launched by defining the needs for developing the regional coordination as well as identifying joint promotional actions.
- Promotion of the Western Balkans regional routes undertaken at most important international trade fairs, accompanied by targeted outreach by exposure in renowned publications.
- Policy reform needs have been identified in cooperation with OECD for further review and reform proposals development: ease of border crossing, workforce skills and mobility and quality of tourism data and statistics.
- The 1st Call for Proposals for small grants was implemented and grants awarded. A total of 12 grants have been awarded that support interventions on regional cultural and adventure routes. The grants are distributed across all 6 Western Balkans economies.

• OUTPUTS (JULY - DECEMBER 2018)

- **Maintained regional cooperation dialogue (RCC Tourism Expert Group - TEG)**
 - 8th TEG meeting held in December 2018, along with in-between consultations;
 - Cooperation established with European Institute for Cultural Routes and their Routes4U project, EU Strategies for the Adriatic-Ionian Region (EUSAIR) and Danube Region (EUSDR).
- **Activity 1 – Product Development and Promotion**
 - Advance product development for all 4 selected regional routes:
 - Crossroads of Civilizations: Developed product justification and concept, guidelines for selection of sites, core group of sites and locations;
 - Art and Design of WWII Monuments: Concept fully developed including three itineraries;

- Archaeological Heritage of the Roman period: platform established for furthering inclusion of the Western Balkans archaeological sites from the Roman period into Roman Emperor's and Danube Wine Route;
 - Via Dinarica: regional coordination for Via Dinarica development re-launched, including the process to identify and establish CLOs (Country Lead Organizations) where non existing, by enabling placement of products from to the www.outdooractive.com platform Via Dinarica section.
 - Western Balkans as travel destination promoted at/through:
 - Adventure Travel World Summit (ATWS 2019) (outreach to 25,000 trade and 200,000 general community via the Adventure in Motion – video competition partnership), regional stand including panel presentation;
 - Market outreach towards travel media – journalists and editor of key travel media outlets launched, resulting in 2 articles (Lonely Planet and National Geographic Travelers) and a feature presentation in the Travel Trends;
 - “Triple P” project and EU assistance to regional tourism development delivered at the Weekend Media Festival, and core group of regional media established to follow the project efforts;
 - Project and EU support presented at the EUSAIR and EUSDR meetings, European Cultural Tourism Network (ECTN) conference (Pafos, Cyprus, October 2018) and Annual Forum for Cultural Routes (Gorlitz Germany, September 2018) and Routes4U Danube Regional Meeting (Bucharest, Romania, November 2018)
- **Activity 2 – Policy Reform**
 - Industry gaps and needs related to tourism policy identified based on OECD tourism policy assessment and comparative analysis.
 - Three policy areas selected for deeper analysis and development of recommendations for regional action to overcome:
 - Ease of border crossing, including visa needs, ability to hike or mountain bike across border lines, and length of waiting times at official border crossings for multi-country tours;
 - Workforce skills and mobility, including joint training and recognition of certifications for specific technical skills;
 - Data quality and statistics, including measures to improve industry information for better industry positioning and recognition.
- **Activity 3 – Pilot Projects**
 - 1st Call for Grant Proposals successfully implemented, with 12 small grants awarded on 9 November 2018, in amount of EUR 548,173. The whole region represented both as resident economies and inclusion in grant supported actions.

- **ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER**

- **Product Development:** For 3 regional routes under development (Crossroads of Civilizations, Art and Design of WWII Monuments and Via Dinarica) the project will develop business and management model as well as 3 year marketing strategy and immediate action plan. For the archaeology sites of the Roman Period the assessment of the proposed sites and their ability to be included in the route will be completed.
- **Promotion:** Triple P and regional routes will be promoted at the following events: International Fair of Tourism (IFT) in Belgrade, Serbia (February 2019), Fiets and Wandelbeurs in Utrecht, The Netherlands and ITB in Berlin, Germany (both in March 2019), further international travel media coverage for the region and its new routes; regional tourism online communication and cooperation platform will be launched.
- **Policy**
 - In depth analysis will be conducted and recommendations developed for the selected three policy areas.
- **Pilots**
 - The 12 grants of the 1st Call will be completed.
 - The 2nd Call for proposals will be announced in May 2019.
- **Other**
 - Analysis of the annual industry survey will be completed.
 - 9th TEG meeting will take place in June 2019

Support for Regional Investment Policy and Promotion in the Western Balkans (WBG)

Programme reference:	2016 / 037-900 Multi-country Action Programme for 2016
Project title:	Administration Agreement between the European Commission and the International Finance Corporation concerning the Western Balkans Regional Investment Policy and Promotion
EU contribution:	EUR 2.5 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Single Trust Fund with the World Bank
Contract reference:	CN-2016/379-787
Duration of activities:	18/04/2017 – 18/04/2020
Links:	Contact : Gabriel Blanc, gabriel.blanc@ec.europa.eu

- PURPOSE

The overall objective is to, as part of the overall Western Balkans Regional Investment Policy and Promotion (WBIPP Program) and the Regional Economic Area (REA), contribute to greater convergence of regional investment policies in the Western Balkans and greater alignment with the relevant EU and international standards. This will improve the attractiveness of the region for foreign investors (extra- and intra-regional) and ultimately lead to increased investment.

- ACTIVITIES (JULY – DECEMBER 2018)

During the current reporting period the project's main focus was on translating the broad reform objectives outlined by the regional investment reform agenda (RIRA) into concrete economy level reform action plans for each of the Western Balkan beneficiaries. Representing the main output of the project's work during the current supervision period, six economy level investment reform action plans (IRAPs) have been prepared in close consultations with the governments within the Western Balkan region. These action plans are due to be adopted by the governments of the region as their main roadmaps for implementing reform commitments from RIRA in the next reporting period.

In parallel, the project has ramped up its activities for investment promotion. The preparations for targeted investment outreach activities for the Western Balkan economies have been initiated through a series of individual technical level meetings with the IPAs of the region, and the consultations on the establishment of a joint investment promotion initiative (JIPI) for the region are progressing as planned.

OUTPUTS (July – December 2018)

The project led the development and formulation of six economy level investment reform action plans (IRAPs) representing the main roadmaps for the Western Balkans to implement the reform commitments outlined in the regional investment reform agenda (RIRA). The documents lay out specific reform actions that will be implemented by the Western Balkan economies going forward, including specific timelines, responsibilities and expected outcomes. IRAPs are expected to be adopted by the six economies of the region during the next reporting period and reported to the Berlin process.

The project developed a monitoring and reporting framework that will enable the economies of the region to track and report progress with RIRA implementation. This will facilitate their reporting to the Berlin process as well as other relevant stakeholders and outside audiences.

The project initiated a comprehensive assessment of the Western Balkan's current legal base for investment. The findings of this assessment will inform the formulation and implementation of concrete policy reform actions in subsequent reporting periods.

The project conducted a series of in-depth consultations and technical level workshops with the investment promotion agencies (IPAs) of the region to facilitate the establishment of a Joint Investment Promotion Initiative (JIPI). The consultations helped specify the scope and scale of the proposed cooperation in the context of JIPI.

The project initiated the targeted investment outreach activities for the Western Balkan economies through a series of individual meetings with the IPAs of the region to define the modalities of cooperation, identify target sectors, scope and scale of the proposed outreach activities, and timelines.

- **ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER**

Activities in the next reporting period will be geared towards the support of the economies in implementing the economy level Investment Reform Action Plans (IRAP) and in enhancing the region's investment attractiveness through tailored investment promotion and outreach activities. The monitoring and reporting framework to track progress with RIRA implementation on regional level will be finalised and data collected on initial results achieved during CY 2019 (June 2019).

The draft assessment report of the Western Balkans current legal base for investment, including IIAs, will be completed to help inform the formulation of concrete policy reform actions (June 2019). Technical assistance to the Western Balkan economies with the implementation of investment policy reforms as per the workplan and timeline outlined by the respective IRAPs (June 2019). Implementation of a joint training event on core promotion and facilitation capabilities for IPA staff from the region as part of the Joint Investment Promotion Initiative (JIPI) (May 2019).

Implementation of a rapid institutional needs assessment for the six IPAs of the region to identify and fix critical capacity gaps to effectively perform the planned economy level outreach activities, assess the proposed value propositions for the outreach campaigns, and provide support with the development of required marketing materials (June 2019).

CHAPTER 4: INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT AND NUCLEAR PROTECTION

One of the priorities for IPA assistance is to help Beneficiaries by jointly working on increasing competitiveness and investments in infrastructure. Interventions in this sector have the ultimate goal of supporting the modernisation of their economies, also with a view to promote transport and energy networks, energy efficiency and renewable energy as well as environment and social infrastructure. Close coordination with International Financial Institutions (IFIs) is essential and the EU technical assistance and investment grants instrumental for the projects to materialise.

4.1 WESTERN BALKANS INVESTMENT FRAMEWORK (WBIF)

The Western Balkans Investment Framework (WBIF) was established in 2009 as a regional tool for EU enlargement. It supports socio-economic development and EU accession across the Western Balkans through the provision of financing and technical assistance to strategic investments. It pools resources from the European Commission's Instrument for Pre Accession (IPA) with those of the involved Financial Institutions (FIs), bilateral donors and the governments of the Western Balkans.

The WBIF increases the region's capacity to finance crucial infrastructure and priority investments in line with accession priorities and enhances the overall coordination of assistance. The WBIF seeks to maximise the impact of grant financing by using it to leverage lending by the involved Financial Institutions to priority strategic investments as identified by the Western Balkan beneficiaries. Since its launch, the WBIF has developed a pipeline of priority investments of approximately EUR 16.8 billion. A grand total of 271 technical assistance (TA) and investment grants (INV) with a cumulative value of EUR 842 million have been awarded to 162 investment projects.

The grants are used for project preparation, implementation, and co-financing of infrastructure investments for which financial support is provided by the partner organisations – CEB, EBRD, EIB, KfW, as well as by the World Bank Group in its

capacity of participating organisation. The grant assignments are implemented by the Lead FIs or the European Commission. The implementation of EU grants, is carried out either under Commission awarded TA contracts - the Infrastructure Project Facility (IPF) and Contribution Arrangements with the European Western Balkans Joint Fund (EWBJF) Managers (EBRD & EIB) for the co-financing of connectivity projects. The European Commission is the largest contributor to the WBIF with a total of EUR 773 million channelled through the WBIF. Some EUR 474 million has been allocated for the co-financing of investments in the energy, transport and environment sectors under the Connectivity Agenda and the Municipal Window. Between 2009 and 2017, bilateral donors have contributed more than EUR 75 million to the EWBJF.

- PURPOSE

The WBIF has three objectives: 1. To create a one-stop-shop, where a request for project support can be presented, screened, assessed, and, eventually, provided with the required financing for its implementation; 2. to pool different sources of funding (FIs, EC and bilateral donors) and work out an appropriate blend of grants and loans for various actions; and 3. to strengthen the strategic and policy coordination of actions by multiple donors and investors that addresses the socio-economic priorities for the region. These socioeconomic priorities are accession-driven and relate to the alignment of the WB6 candidate countries and potential candidates with the EU acquis. WBIF activities are supported by the EC-financed IFI Coordination Office – see below for a more detailed description of its activities. The identification of priority projects is a result of consultations with other relevant DGs (Environment, Climate Action, Move, Energy, Regional Policy, Economic and Financial Affairs) thus ensuring coordination with their activities in the region.

- ACTIVITIES (JULY - DECEMBER 2018)

Activities during the second half of 2018 included the assessment and approval of TA Round 20 as well as the approval of INV Round 3 projects during SC meeting in Luxembourg in December. The INV grant call for proposals was open to all four sectors although the approval of environment and social sector projects was subject to availability of funds from bilateral donors' resources as IPA funds are limited to the financing of connectivity projects only. In 2018, the WBIF Steering Committee approved a total of €277 million in grants of which €238 million in investment grants and €39 million in TA grants. Since WBIF was established in 2009, it has awarded in total €1,05 billion in grants. The autumn Project Financiers Group meeting was held in Brussels in November 2018, and the autumn Steering Committee meeting took place in Luxembourg in December 2018.

- ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

In 2019 the WBIF will celebrate its 10 anniversary with increased communication and visibility activities highlighting results achieved through videos, a photo exhibition and feature stories on the web, as well as updated written material. The indicative work programme for the first half of 2019 includes the assessment of Investment Call Round 4 and approval of TA call Round 21. The expansion of the WBIF to include the concept of the “reinforced WBIF umbrella” and the preparations for “WBIF 2.0” will be tabled for approval at the next Steering Committee meeting in Berlin in June. On a strategic level the aim is that in the future EU policy aspects will drive stronger the investment decisions, in particular linked to the Economic Reform Programme (ERP) process, Regional Economic Area (REA) and connectivity reform measures. On the instrument level, the governance structure of the different tools supporting investments in the Western Balkans will be streamlined and to the extent possible managed by a reinforced central WBIF Secretariat. The next PFG meeting will be held in Tirana in May 2019. The next Steering Committee meeting will take place in Berlin in June 2019.

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4.2 WBIF CONNECTIVITY INVESTMENT GRANTS

Programme reference:	IPA II Multi-country Programme Connectivity 2015-2016 (DN 2015/038-055 and 2016/038-727)
Project title:	<i>Contribution Arrangement with respect to the European Western Balkans Joint Fund under the Western Balkans Investment Framework (WBIF)</i>
EU contribution:	EUR 144 900 000
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Contribution Arrangement with the European Western Balkans Joint Fund managers (EBRD and EIB)
Contract reference:	CN 2016/375-830, CN 2016/375-855 and CN 2016/380-342
Duration of activities:	16.06.2016 – 31.12.2024
Links:	www.wbif.eu
Contact :	Judit Andrea GYORI, judit.gyori@ec.europa.eu

Programme reference:	IPA II Multi-country Programme Connectivity 2016 part II (DN 2016/039-401)
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Project title:	<i>Contribution Arrangement with respect to the European Western Balkans Joint Fund under the Western Balkans Investment Framework</i>
EU contribution:	EUR 145 500 000
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Contribution Arrangement with the European Western Balkans Joint Fund managers (EBRD and EIB)
Contract reference:	CN 2017/390-295
Duration of activities:	04.12.2017 – 31.12.2025
Links:	www.wbif.eu
Contact :	Judit Andrea GYORI, judit.gyori@ec.europa.eu

Programme reference:	IPA II Multi-country Programme Connectivity 2017-2018 (DN 2018/039-876 and 2018/040-650)
Project title:	<i>Contribution Arrangement with respect to the European Western Balkans Joint Fund under the Western Balkans Investment Framework</i>
EU contribution:	EUR 104 873 460
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Contribution Arrangement with the European Western Balkans Joint Fund managers (EBRD and EIB)
Contract reference:	CN 2018/397-087 and 2018/397-088
Duration of activities:	14.05.2018 – 31.12.2026
Links:	www.wbif.eu
Contact :	Judit Andrea GYORI, judit.gyori@ec.europa.eu

- PURPOSE

The WBIF connectivity investment grants contribute improving connectivity within the Western Balkans, as well as between Western Balkans and the European Union, and will serve as a driver for economic growth, jobs and new investments in the region. The Western Balkans indeed has made the connectivity agenda one of its highest priorities, with a special emphasis on the preparation and financing of major regional infrastructure investment projects. In this context in 2015, the European Commission set aside up to EUR 1 billion in grants, from the EU Pre-Accession Instrument, for connectivity investment projects (transport and energy) and technical assistance for the 2014-2020 period. The WBIF connectivity investment grants support the development of infrastructure investment connectivity projects in the Western Balkans not only through technical assistance aimed at project preparation, but most importantly through the financing of a share of the actual investment costs.

• ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

- The connectivity investment grants are approved on an annual basis by the WBIF Steering Committee. For the time being, the Steering Committee held three investment rounds and approved eight grants in December 2015 (“round 0”), three grants in December 2016 (“round 1”), two grants in December 2017 (“round 2”) and 9 grants in December 2018 (“round 3”).
- Eleven transport projects, supported by 9 investment grants and 2 TA grants with an overall EU grant value of EUR 192.7 million, were politically endorsed under the fourth Connectivity package in Sofia in May 2018. The 19th Steering Committee of the WBIF held on 6th December in Luxembourg approved all 9 investment grants with a total grant volume of EUR 183.1 million, while the 2 TA grants of EUR 9.6 million were approved under “TA round 21” at the 18th Steering Committee of the WBIF in June 2018 in Paris.

Several other important activities took place during the reporting period:

- Up to now, construction works started on 5 connectivity projects (2 energy and 3 transport)
- The design is completed for 18 projects, out of which the works tenders were launched for 13 projects up to end of 2018.
- WBIF investment round 4 was launched during summer 2018 and the deadline for applications was 30 November 2018. Out of the 24 applications submitted by the beneficiary countries, 17 grants requests (EUR 578 million) are for projects in the energy and transport sectors. The endorsement, screening and assessment of the applications will take place in first half of 2019.
- Three transport projects politically endorsed in Trieste in 2017 for the Mediterranean Corridor (Road Corridor Vc) in Bosnia and Herzegovina were approved by the WBIF Steering Committee through written procedure on 29 June 2018.

• OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

- Initiation/continuation of construction activities in IPA II beneficiaries, construction works ongoing on 5 projects (2 energy connectivity projects and 3 transport projects)
- Start of the construction of works on the project Mediterranean Corridor: Bosnia-Herzegovina – Croatia CVC Road Interconnection Buna – Pocitelj Subsection, endorsed in May 2018 in Sofia
- More than EUR 2.4 billion investment leveraged through the projects endorsed at four EU-Western Balkans Summit to date supported by EUR 700 million in grants under the contribution arrangements, grants from IPA national envelopes and the latest Decision of IPA II Multi-country Programme Connectivity 2018-2019 adopted by the Commission on 29 November 2018
- Grant agreements of EUR 87.6 million signed on two connectivity rail projects approved for Kosovo and North Macedonia in 2016 and 2017, respectively.

• ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Screening and assessment of the WBIF investment round 4 and preparation for approval (two Paris Group meetings and Project Financiers' Group meeting between April – May 2019)
- Steering Committee meeting of the Western Balkans Investment Framework on 25-26 June 2019 in Berlin
- Political endorsement of the 5th Connectivity package in Poznan at the Western Balkans Summit in early July 2019
- Preparation of the Decision of IPA II Multi-country Programme Connectivity 2019-2020 starts with expected adoption by the Commission in November 2019 and preparation of next Contribution Arrangement with the European Western Balkans Joint Fund to contract funds from the Connectivity decision 2018-2019.
- Commencement of works on 9 new connectivity transport projects (6 road projects, 3 train projects)
- Expected completion of the first connectivity project; Mediterranean Corridor (CVc): Bosnia and Herzegovina – Croatia Road interconnection, Svilaj – Odzak and Svilaj Bridge
- Decision on the revised structure of the WBIF umbrella and processes with view to strategic and financial expansion also foreseen in the Western Balkan Strategy

4.3 HORIZONTAL SUPPORT TO IFI COORDINATION (IFICO)

Programme reference:	IPA II Multi-country Action Programme for 2017 - part NEAR (DN 2017/039-402)
Project title:	Horizontal support to coordination with International Financial Institutions and bilateral donors in the Western Balkans (i.e. IFICO3)
EU contribution:	EUR 4.52 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Service contract with Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH
Contract reference:	CN 2018/395-656
Duration of activities:	27.02.2018 – 26.02.2020
Link:	www.wbif.eu
Contact:	Antonio García Suárez, Antonio.Garcia-Suarez@ec.europa.eu

• PURPOSE

The IFI Coordination Office (IFICO) refers to the consultancy service contract awarded by DG NEAR aiming to ensure better coordination and cooperation between the beneficiaries, the EC, the IFIs and bilateral donors. The IFICO provides a range of technical, management and communication services to support coordination among all WBIF stakeholders. It delivers analytical and operational services to the EC, IFIs and bilateral donors in the main WBIF sectors (Digital, Energy, Environment, Social, Transport) to facilitate better programming and planning of assistance including investments.

IFICO supports the WBIF structures, particularly the WBIF Secretariat and the WBIF Steering Committee, and has developed a range of WBIF related communication activities including the WBIF website and a management information system (MIS).

• ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

- Overall support to the WBIF Secretariat
- Support to the WBIF Secretariat in the organisation and follow-up of the WBIF Project Financiers' Group meeting in November in Brussels and the Steering Committee meeting in December in Luxembourg.
- Support to the EC in the screening and assessment of TA Round 20 and finalisation of INV Round 3.
- Support to beneficiaries for the preparation of grant applications for TA Round 20 and INV Round 4.
- Assistance to beneficiaries to enhance the functioning of the NIC framework and improve the quality of the SPPs.
- Preparation of analyses and assessments on relevant topics, such as identification of TA and INV funding needs in the WBIF project portfolio, WBIF Self-assessment, integration of WB EDIF into the WBIF.
- Drafting of Terms of References for approved TA projects.
- Finalisation of the WBIF Communication and Visibility Guidelines.
- Support to WBIF stakeholders with the organisation of visibility events for WBIF projects and preparation of communication and visibility materials (brochures, WBIF folder and roll-up, notebooks, and sub-sector video clips).
- Design of the upgraded WBIF website.

• OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

- Supported preparation, organisation and follow-up of WBIF related meetings, in particular the Project Financiers Group meeting in Brussels and the WBIF Steering Committee meeting in Luxembourg.
- Supported the EC and the WBIF Secretariat in the screening process for applications from TA Round 20 and preparation of INV Round 4.
- Maintained and further developed the WBIF MIS.
- Maintained the WBIF website.
- Drafted and submitted 8 Terms of References for selected TA projects.
- Delivered the semi-annual WBIF Monitoring Report (November 2018) and bi-monthly reports of active WBIF IPF-implemented projects.
- Finalised the WBIF Communication and Visibility Guidelines.
- Produced communication materials including country and sector brochures, WBIF folder and roll-up, notebooks.

• ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Continuation of support to the WBIF and its stakeholders.

4.4 WBIF INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS FACILITIES (IPF)

Programme reference:	IPA I Multi-beneficiary Programmes 2011 (DN 2011/022-964) and 2012 (DN2012/022-966)
Project title:	Infrastructure Projects Facility 3 – Technical Assistance Window
EU contribution:	EUR 22.422 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Service contract with Mott MacDonald Limited
Contract reference:	CN 2012/293-208 and CN 2013/331-494
Duration of activities:	20.06.2012 – 30.09.2018
Links:	www.wbif.eu
Contact :	Antonio García Suárez, Antonio.Garcia-Suarez@ec.europa.eu

Programme reference:	IPA II Multi-country Programme 2014 (DN 2014/031-603)
Project title:	Support to the Western Balkans Investment Framework projects – Infrastructure Project Facility (extension IPF4 and IPF5)
EU contribution:	EUR 35.54 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Specific Grant Agreement with the European Investment Bank
Contract reference:	CN 2015/368-253
Duration of activities:	17.12.2015 – 31.12.2020
Links:	www.wbif.eu
Contact :	Antonio García Suárez, Antonio.Garcia-Suarez@ec.europa.eu

Programme reference:	IPA II Multi-country Programme 2015 (DN 2015/031-609)
Project title:	Support to the Western Balkans Investment Framework projects – Infrastructure Project Facility 2015 (IPF 6)
EU contribution:	EUR 26.12 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Specific Grant Agreement with the European Investment Bank
Contract reference:	CN 2016/379-644
Duration of activities:	23.11.2016 – 31.12.2021
Links:	www.wbif.eu
Contact :	Antonio García Suárez, Antonio.Garcia-Suarez@ec.europa.eu

Programme reference:	IPA II Multi-country Programme Connectivity 2016 part II (DN 2016/039-401)
Project title:	Support to the Western Balkans Investment Framework projects – Infrastructure Project Facility 2016 (IPF7)

EU contribution:	EUR 36 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Specific Grant Agreement with the European Investment Bank
Contract reference:	CN 2017/388-401
Duration of activities:	13.09.2017 – 31.12.2022
Links:	www.wbif.eu
Contact :	Antonio García Suárez, Antonio.Garcia-Suarez@ec.europa.eu

- **PURPOSE**

The Infrastructure Projects Facilities (IPFs) are consultancy services contracts implementing the Western Balkans Infrastructure Framework (WBIF) technical assistance grants for priority infrastructure projects in the Energy, Environment, Social and Transport sectors.

Technical assistance is most largely requested for pre-feasibility studies, general designs, feasibility studies, preliminary designs, financing plans, cost-benefit analysis, tariffs plans, environmental impact assessments, detailed designs, etc., that is to say for the preparation of project documentation. Technical assistance may also occasionally be provided during the implementation phase, for the preparation of tender dossiers and for the supervision of works, providing therefore support throughout the project cycle. In some exceptional cases, IPFs may be asked to provide ad-hoc advisory and technical assistance, for example for regional sector development studies.

To date, seven IPFs have been deployed. The European Commission has been managing directly the first three facilities, which have all come to an end. To ensure the implementation of WBIF technical assistance grants in the most efficient manner while minimising the administrative weight on the European Commission, it was decided that the EIB would manage the facilities from IPF4 onwards.

- **ACTIVITIES (JULY–DECEMBER 2018)**

IPF3 ended on 30.09.2018 and implemented 26 sub-projects: 9 in the Energy sector, 7 in the Social sector, 5 in the Environment sector and 5 in the Transport sector. In addition, they prepared 2 major regional studies (Regional Connectivity Gap Analysis and Western Balkans Hydropower Development Study), drafted 11 Terms of Reference and carried out different horizontal activities in support of the WBIF Secretariat.

IPF4 ended on 31.12.2018 and implemented 20 sub-projects: 9 in the Transport sector, 4 in the Energy sector (out of which one with a regional dimension), 4 in the Social sector (one with a regional dimension) and 3 in the Environment sector (one with a regional dimension). In addition, they prepared 8 Terms of Reference.

IPF5 has currently 15 assigned sub-projects (i.e. TA grants), out of which 13 are ongoing: 5 in the Environment sector, 4 in the Transport sector and 4 in the Social sector (one currently on hold). While none of the sub-projects have yet been finalised, several are planned for completion in the next reporting period, and all are progressing satisfactorily. An ad-hoc advisory TA for DG NEAR, which comprised a regional renewable energy study, was completed to draft final report stage in September 2018 and will be finished in early 2019 following a workshop. Two terms of reference have been completed during the reporting period and another one is awaiting final approval.

IPF6 has currently 13 assigned sub-projects, all of them ongoing: 9 in the Transport sector, 2 in the Energy sector (out of which one with a regional dimension), 1 in the Environment sector and 1 in the Social sector. Two Transport sub-projects in Kosovo are nearing completion, while the remaining eleven are in the initial stages of implementation.

IPF 7 has currently 20 assigned sub-projects, out of which 16 are ongoing: 12 in the Transport sector, 2 in the Environment sector and 2 in the Energy sector (both with a regional dimension). In addition, IPF 7 has also performed ad-hoc services during this reporting period. The Team Leader has assisted with the finalisation of the Regional Strategy for Sustainable Hydropower, while the Deputy Team Leader has been leading the Guarantee Facility ex-ante assessment.

• **OUTPUTS (JULY–DECEMBER 2018)**

- 13 sub-projects completed
- 3 TOR completed

• **ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER**

- Continuation of the implementation of TA grants in the IPA II Western Balkans countries.

4.5 TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO CONNECTIVITY IN THE WESTERN BALKANS (CONNECTA)

Programme reference:	IPA II Multi-country Action Programme for Connectivity 2015-2016 Part I (DN 2015/038-055) and IPA II Multi-country Programme 2018 - PART NEAR (DN 2018/040-113)
Project title:	Technical Assistance to Connectivity in the Western Balkans (CONNECTA)
EU contribution:	EUR 17.03 million

Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Service contract
Contract reference:	CN 2016/382-382 and 2018/402-907
Duration of activities:	19.12.2016 – 31.12.2022
Contact :	Antonio García Suárez, Antonio.Garcia-Suarez@ec.europa.eu

- PURPOSE

The CONNECTA facility:

- contributes to the preparation of high priority Transport and Energy Connectivity infrastructure projects, ensuring their technical and economic viability, in order to bring them to maturity for investment co-financing, and;
- provides support for the preparation and implementation of short and medium-term regional connectivity reform measures (CRMs) in the Transport sector, such as road and rail maintenance schemes, rail reform, road safety or Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS).

In the context of lengthy project preparation processes, it contributes to a shorter and more flexible mobilisation of technical assistance by filling gaps in project preparation and/or accelerating project cycles for key transport and energy projects. This results in a more rapid completion of the project documentation, increasing the number of projects mature enough for investment co-financing.

Thus, CONNECTA boosts the Connectivity Agenda and supports the development of Transport and Energy interconnections within the Western Balkans and between this region and neighbouring EU Member States. It also supports the indicative extension of the Trans-European Transport network (TEN-T) core corridors to the Western Balkans and the alignment with the relevant EU policies of TEN-T standards.

- ACTIVITIES (JULY–DECEMBER 2018)

CONNECTA has been assigned a total of 10 sub-projects covering both the Transport and the Energy sectors. Five of the assignments are regional in nature covering road safety, road and rail maintenance, ITS for road and rail, improvement of border crossings and the first steps for the preparation of an inventory for public buildings, which will assist in improving energy efficiency. The four regional Transport sub-projects were all implemented in close cooperation with SEETO and their aim is to fill gaps in the steps taken by the beneficiary

countries to reform their transport systems in alignment with the Connectivity Agenda. Three of the remaining sub-projects relate to transport infrastructure assignments in North Macedonia. One sub-project covering the cost-benefit analysis for a new gas interconnector in Bosnia and Herzegovina was completed during the previous reporting period. Three regional transport sub-projects covering road safety, maintenance and ITS were completed during this reporting period. In addition, two transport infrastructure sub-projects on the preliminary design of the Budva by-pass in Montenegro and a review of ITS on road Corridor X in North Macedonia were also completed during this period.

• **OUTPUTS (JULY–DECEMBER 2018)**

- 5 sub-projects completed

• **ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER**

Completion of the remaining regional transport sub-project covering border crossings. Completion of the first steps of the public buildings related energy efficiency sub-project. Commencement of new sub-projects, for instance study and design documentation for a new gas interconnector between North Macedonia and Greece, completion of documentation for a section of the Niš railway by-pass in Serbia, or several CRM related assignments covering ITS and road safety in Albania, North Macedonia and Serbia.

Programme reference:	Multi-country Programme, IPA II 2015/038-055
Project title:	<i>Technical Assistance to Connectivity in the Western Balkans Component 2: Regional Energy Market</i>
EU contribution:	EUR 1 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Grant
Contract reference:	IPA/2016/373-263
Duration of activities:	07/06/2016 – 06/06/2019
Links:	https://www.energy-community.org/
Contact:	Anna Soltysik, Anna.SOLTYSIK@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

Assisting the Western Balkans to achieve their goal to create a regional energy market by facilitating the implementation of so-called “energy soft measures” that will remove existing legislative and regulatory barriers and enhance the institutional structures necessary for the functioning of this market in line with the Energy Community Treaty and relevant EU acquis.

ACTIVITIES (JANUARY-JUNE 2018)

- Capacity building of state-owned power producers (8 companies from Western Balkans) to optimization of trading portfolio and development of trading strategies.
- Identification and evaluation of possible models of the organisation and operation of the day-ahead market in Bosnia and Herzegovina, presented in two workshops for all interested stakeholders and market participants (the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations, entity ministries in charge of energy as well as all institutional stakeholders and economic operators in the power sector of Bosnia and Herzegovina)
- Establishing institutional setup for an organised day-ahead market in Montenegro.
- Establishing institutional setup for an organised day-ahead market in North Macedonia.
- Implementing reforms of the Albanian energy sector pursuant to the Third Energy Package and Western Balkan commitments.
- Implementation of a regionally coordinated capacity calculation in Western Balkans.
- Facilitation of negotiations in a dispute between the transmission system operators of Serbia (EMS) and Kosovo (KOSTT), and/or, as the case may be between representatives of the Government of Serbia and representatives of the Government under which the following meetings were held: meeting with representatives of Serbian Government, the Ministry and the transmission system operator EMS, meeting with representatives of Government, the Ministry and the transmission system operator KOSTT, meeting with ENTSO-E Secretariat, meeting with the European Union External Action Service chaired by Vice President Mogherini and an the analysis of historical, technical and financial aspects of the dispute.
- Implementation of cross-border electricity balancing in the Western Balkans.
- Implementation of a regional day-ahead market in the Western Balkans.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY-JUNE 2018)

- Manual defining procedures required for trading of state-owned production companies in competitive electricity markets (forward, day-ahead, intraday, balancing) distributed to all training participants and made available to interested stakeholders
- State-owned companies got better understanding and knowledge of how to trade in the competitive electricity markets and how to optimise trading portfolio and develop trading strategies
- Proposal for the institutional and operational set up of a day-ahead market in Bosnia and Herzegovina, including necessary changes of the existing legislation in order to support development of the proposed solution, procedural, contractual and

operational arrangements, and a detail roadmap and timeline for the implementation of the day-ahead market in Bosnia and Herzegovina distributed to the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations and all other relevant institutions

- Report on the possible models of strategic partnership for the organisation of a day-ahead electricity market in Montenegro, taking into account the Western Balkan targets and deadlines provided to BELEN and its owners
- Procedure and criteria for selection of a strategic partner for the establishment of a day-ahead market in Montenegro to BELEN and its owners
- Draft tender documents, including request for information (RFO) and request for offer (RFO) for selection of strategic partner for the establishment of a day-ahead market in Montenegro to BELEN and its owners
- The power exchange company BELEN and its owners, EPCG, CGES and COTEE get understanding and practical knowledge of the possible models of strategic partnership and the procedure and criteria for its selection, necessary in order to conduct a tendering procedure for selection of the strategic partner in Montenegro
- Proposal for the institutional and operational set up of a day-ahead market in North Macedonia, including necessary changes of the existing legislation in order to support development of the proposed solution, procedural, contractual and operational arrangements, and a detail roadmap and timeline for the implementation of the day-ahead market in Bosnia and Herzegovina distributed to the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations and all other relevant institutions
- Amendments to the Power Sector Law in Albania adopted, introducing provisions necessary for the establishment of a power exchange in Albania (APEX)
- The distribution system operator OSHEE finalised legal unbundling in line with the Western Balkans and 3rd Package requirements
- The Western Balkans and neighboring TSOs better informed of the governance process and the methodology for a capacity calculation process in line with the EC Regulation on capacity allocation and congestion management (CACM) for Shadow Capacity Calculation Region (CCR) 10 (Shadow SEE region)
- Report on the recommendations, possible options and strategic steps to be taken towards resolution of dispute between the transmission system operators of Serbia (EMS) and Kosovo (KOSTT)
- Draft reports on assessment of national balancing markets of Western Balkans parties and on assessment of impact of existing Control Blocks on balancing market cooperation developed and distributed to all WB XB PSC members
- Model for imbalance netting developed for the Western Balkan region
- Western Balkans Ministries, TSOs and NRAs got understanding of the models of electricity balancing cooperation in line with the 3rd Energy Package and Commission Regulation establishing a guideline on electricity balancing
- A centralised database for the implementation of regional day-ahead market in the Western Balkans accompanied by the database guideline developed and access available to all Western Balkans DAMI PSC members
- The first draft version of the template General Framework Agreement for day-ahead market coupling between Western Balkans parties and between Western Balkans

and EU MSs developed, presented and shared with the the Western Balkans DAMI PSC

- Memorandum of Understanding on the market coupling project between TSOs and NRAs of Albania and Kosovo developed and distributed to the signatory parties
- A list of relevant legislation for gap analysis of frameworks necessary for market coupling between Albania and Kosovo developed
- MoU of day-ahead market coupling between Bulgarian and Macedonian transmission system operators, the national regulatory authorities and the Bulgarian power exchange (IBEX) signed on 12 April 2018
- Inter-governmental MoU on market coupling between Bulgaria and North Macedonia developed and signed by Ministers of Bulgaria and North Macedonia on the margin of the EU-Western Balkans summit in Sofia on 18 May 2018
- Terms of reference, project structure and guidance for BG-MK market coupling developed and submitted to the project working group
- WB Ministries, TSOs, NRAs and PXs got understanding of the market coupling process, governance and necessary contractual framework to enable the process

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Establishing institutional setup for an organised day-ahead market in Montenegro (continuation of the activity from the previous semester).
- Implementation of a regionally coordinated capacity calculation in Western Balkans (continuation of the activity from the previous semester).
- Implementation of cross-border electricity balancing in the Western Balkans (continuation of the activity from the previous semester).
- Implementation of a regional day-ahead market in the Western Balkans.
- Establishment of electricity balancing market in the North Macedonia.

4.6 JOINT ASSISTANCE TO SUPPORT PROJECTS IN EUROPEAN REGIONS (JASPERS)

Programme reference:	IPA II Multi-country Programme 2015 (DN 2015/031-609) and Multi-country Programme 2016 (DN 2016/037-900)
Project title:	JASPERS IPA II
EU contribution:	EUR 5 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Specific Grant Agreement with the EIB
Contract reference:	CN 2016/368-304 and CN 2017/390-198
Duration of activities:	01.01.2016 – 31.12.2020
Links:	http://jaspers.eib.org/
Contact :	Antonio García Suárez, Antonio.Garcia-Suarez@ec.europa.eu

• PURPOSE

JASPERS is a technical assistance partnership between the European Commission and the European Investment Bank (EIB), which provides independent advice to beneficiary countries to help prepare high quality major projects to be co-financed through the European Regional Development Fund and the Cohesion Fund. Besides, JASPERS is now also supporting the countries eligible for Cohesion Funds in the context of the Connecting Europe Facility. Since 2013, JASPERS has been expanding its services to the IPA countries (initially to North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia, since 2016 to all IPA countries including Turkey).

• ACTIVITIES (JULY–DECEMBER 2018)

JASPERS' main role is to contribute to enhancing the quality of infrastructure projects to investment maturity, in line with requirements associated with IPA II financing. It supports beneficiaries in scoping and supervising the work of consultants tasked with the preparation of the necessary project documentation. In addition, JASPERS offers assistance to the beneficiaries for the preparation of their sector strategies and project pipelines, to improve programming and to foster institutional capacity.

During the second half of 2018, JASPERS continued to offer its services to all IPA countries. As of 31 December 2018, JASPERS had 25 active assignments (11 in North Macedonia, 8 in Montenegro and 6 in Turkey). Following the signature of Working Arrangements with Kosovo in August 2018, a first assignment, consisting of an initial workshop on project preparation, was provided in Prishtina during the fourth quarter of 2018. In the context of this assignment, one new JASPERS assignment in the health sector was scoped out, for inclusion into the JASPERS Action Plan in January 2019. A fact finding mission to Albania carried out in October 2018 led to the identification of two WBIF-supported transport projects for possible JASPERS assistance. Subsequent visits for the scoping of the associated assignments are foreseen to take place in January 2019. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, JASPERS is in the process of negotiating Working Arrangements with the view to getting these signed in early 2019, thereby paving the way to work on concrete advisory assignments.

• OUTPUTS (JULY–DECEMBER 2018)

- 4 assignments completed (1 in Kosovo*, 1 in North Macedonia and 2 in Turkey)
- 1 leaflet produced ("JASPERS in IPA")
- 30 missions (5 in Albania, 8 in Kosovo, 7 in North Macedonia, 4 in Montenegro and 6 in Turkey)
- Active participation in the WBIF Project Financiers Group meeting in November 2018 and in the WBIF Steering Committee meeting in December 2018

- These figures do not include the activities in Serbia, implemented through a grant agreement between JASPERS and the EUD.

N.B. These figures do not include the activities in Serbia, implemented through a grant agreement between JASPERS and the EUD in Belgrade.

• ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Continuation of the implementation of technical assistance in IPA II beneficiary countries.

4.7 GREEN FOR GROWTH FUND (GGF)

Programme reference:	IPA 2015 / 031-609 - Multi-country Action Programme for 2015
Project title:	<i>Green for Growth Fund, Southeast Europe (GGF)</i>
EU contribution (IPA only):	EUR 58.6 million - Shares, EUR 10.8 million - Technical Assistance (TA)
Beneficiary region:	19 countries including Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Delegation (Trusteeship) Agreement with the European Investment Fund (EIF)
Contract reference:	CN 2016/381-814. Previous CN 2009/228-008; 2009/228-006; 2011/267-146; 2010/257-202; 2010/257-202
Duration of activities:	17/12/2009 - 31/12/2023
Links:	www.ggf.lu
Contact:	Anna Soltysik, Anna.SOLTYSIK@ec.europa.eu

• PURPOSE

The GGF is a public-private partnership that provides refinancing to financial institutions (FIs) to enhance their participation in the energy efficiency (EE) and renewable energy (RE) sectors and makes direct investments in EE/RE projects in Southeast Europe (SEE), ENR-East and ENR-South. The complementary GGF TA Facility supports the Fund in reducing energy consumption and CO² emissions through capacity building with FIs/projects and awareness raising.

• ACTIVITIES (JULY - DECEMBER 2018)

GGF continued to build-up a diversified portfolio and increased impact by transferring best practices across a broad spectrum of Partner Institutions (PIs). During second half of 2018, the GGF signed and/or disbursed 27 new investments (partially subsequent tranches of

previous investments) to financial institutions and direct investments, amounting to EUR 91.3 million. In SEE, these new investments were related to one financial institution in North Macedonia, one leasing company in Turkey, three microfinance institutions in Kosovo, one microfinance institution in Bosnia & Herzegovina and two project finance investments in Serbia, totaling EUR 29.5 million.

GGF continued to build upon its strong momentum, increasing the environmental impact of the Fund through considerable on-lending and outreach. GGF's cumulative sub-loan portfolio reached EUR 592.1 million in SEE and EUR 768.7 million in total by the end of Q3.

On the funding side during 2H2018, a EUR 25 million A Share commitment of EIB was signed. In addition, a EUR 20 million (USD equivalent) A Share commitment from FMO as well as a EUR 25 million A Share commitment of KfW were finalized and will contribute to strengthen the Fund's capital base in the next years. Also during the period, the delegation agreement between the Neighbourhood Investment Facility and KfW for an additional EUR 8 million C Share investment and EUR 2 million TA contribution for the ENR-East was signed. Subscription of this C Share investment is expected for Q1|2019. Furthermore, EUR 5 million ENR-South C Shares from the Luxembourg-EIB Climate Finance Platform were subscribed in December. The C share buffer in the ENR-South region will further be strengthened by a EUR 4 million C Share investment from CAMENA, for which substantial progress in the documentation could be achieved. Both of these C Share investments are under the trusteeship of EIB. With an additional private investment subscribed in December 2018 the share of private capital on total capital accounted for 25% at year-end.

The TA Facility approved 20 new projects with a total budget of EUR 1.0 million in the second half of 2018. The current funding of the TA Facility benefited from the execution of the extension of the EC Donation Addendum until end of 2019 (earmarked for projects in SEE). A similar extension until end of 2021 is expected to be executed in H1 2019 in regard to the EC Donation Addendum (eligible for ENR-East). Furthermore, a EUR 2 million EC donation for ENR-East was approved.

With these contributions, and the approved EUR 2 million donation to the ENR-East region, the TA Facility is sufficiently funded in the near-term. However, to ensure availability of funding across all of its regions, the Facility will continue to seek further funding, particularly for the MENA region.

• OUTPUTS (JULY - DECEMBER 2018)

GGF figures as at end Q4 (aggregate for the region of Southeast Europe):

- Total cumulative investment portfolio since inception: EUR 460.0 million.
- Number of active Partner Institutions: 26.
- Number of active target countries: 8.
- CO₂ Savings / CO₂ Reduction (Q3): 476,160 tons of CO₂/year (59%).
- Energy Savings (Q3): 1,730,429 MWh/year (56%).

- ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

The Fund will enter 2019 with a strong approved pipeline of EUR 90.1m, with investments under consideration, in particular in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, Ukraine, Lebanon, Tunisia and Egypt.

To further leverage the investments of the donors the Fund is seeking additional capital and is in active discussions with several potential private and public investors.

The Fund will continue exploring the potential of investments which complement energy savings and/or CO₂ reductions by achieving measurable impact in water, waste and resource efficiency (“nexus investments”) in 2019. In addition, following shareholder approval of the implementation of L Shares, the Fund will particularly intensify fund raising efforts with potential investors who have signaled their interest in investing in class L Shares.

4.8 REGIONAL ENERGY EFFICIENCY PROGRAMME FOR THE WESTERN BALKANS (REEP)

Programme reference :	Multi-beneficiary Programme, IPA 2012/022-966
Project title:	Regional Energy Efficiency Programme for the Western Balkans - REEP
EU contribution:	EUR 20.0 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Contribution agreement with EBRD
Contract reference:	CN2013/311-406
Duration of activities:	24/06/2013 – 31/12/2019
Links:	http://: www.wb-reep.org
Contact :	Anna Soltysik, Anna.SOLTYSIK@ec.europa.eu Wolfgang Schlaeger, wolfgang.schlaeger@ec.europa.eu

- PURPOSE

The overall aim is to establish a sustainable market for energy efficient financing of private and public sector. It will enable the public sector to take leadership in energy efficiency investments and facilitate access to medium and long-term credits for municipalities needed to implement infrastructure investments and improve the investment climate for business development.

• ACTIVITIES (JULY- DECEMBER 2018)

Window 1 - Public Sector Energy Efficiency, Policy Dialogue, Institutional Capacity Building and Business Development Programme

Theme 1 ESCO Support

ESCO legislative work (policy dialogue)

This work has been completed, ESCO contract templates for street lighting and building projects have been shared with the legislatures of all Western Balkan beneficiaries.

ESCO project preparation work

Project preparation is progressing in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and has started in North Macedonia, Kosovo and Albania.

Theme 2 Energy Efficiency Policy Dialogue: All REEP policy deliverables (28 in total) were completed and submitted to the beneficiaries by December 2016. They are currently at different stages of adoption and implementation, as follows:

- 19 have been adopted in the national legislative frameworks or implemented as intended (of which three regulations on Kosovo were adopted in this reporting period),
- 3 are pending adoption based on additional legislative changes (outside the scope of REEP), and
- REEP Plus has been providing additional support to facilitate the adoption the remaining 6 deliverables.

Continuity in the policy work has been instrumental to address the cases of delayed adoption.

Window 2 (part of the WeBSEFF programme) – Sustainable Energy Credit Lines

During the reporting period, EBRD signed a loan agreement with Banca Intesa for EUR 15 million – the PFI's second credit line under the Facility. So far a pipeline of over EUR 5.98 million in sub-loans has been generated for Banca Intesa, of which EUR 2.73 million has now been signed. The programme also continued to support two PFIs with sub-projects still under implementation and two PFIs with projects at verification stage. In addition, during the period a total of 20 projects were assessed and one verification was conducted on-site with Verification report issued.

The Facility has been marketed through participation in several external events, organisation of meetings with Municipalities (Nis, Pancevo, Loznica, Uzice, cacak, Jagodina, Pirot, Subotica and Ruma), and distribution of promotional materials at the events. A PFI-specific promotional campaign was also implemented with Banca Intesa over November and December 2018, which included billboards in seven cities across Serbia.

Window 3 Sustainable Energy Direct Financing Facility

A fifth project (out of the 7 approved projects under WeBSEDFF) was completed in December 2018 and is awaiting commissioning for operation, at which time verification will

be completed and the incentive payment of up to EUR 380,000 will be made (expected in the first half of 2019).

The project team was unable to identify any suitable projects during the second half of 2018. Thus, there were no approvals or signings during this reporting period.

• OUTPUTS (JULY - DECEMBER 2018)

Window 1 Public Sector Energy Efficiency, Policy Dialogue, Institutional Capacity Building and Business Development Programme

Theme 1 ESCO Support

ESCO legislative work (policy dialogue)

ESCO contract templates were prepared and provided to legislatures of all Western Balkan countries. In Serbia support was provided for the revision of the Law on Rationale Use of Energy, of which the ESCO contracts are a bylaw.

ESCO project preparation work

In total investments with a value of EUR 98 million were supported in different ways under REEP, partially by the provision of ESCO contracts, partially by providing technical advice, partially by preparing related ESCO tenders.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, feasibility studies for 2 biomass ESCO district heating projects were initiated. A feasibility study for a street lighting ESCO project is under way in Banja Luka. The project in Zenica hospital with a signed [loan agreement with the EBRD](#) (see REEP Plus, Window 4) is entering the implementation phase.

In Serbia, as of end of 2018 there were 30 approved ESCO street lighting projects and 6 thermal ESCO projects [approved by the respective authority](#).

In Croatia, several prepared street lighting ESCO tenders have been published. Through the direct preparation of street lighting projects and by municipalities copying the REEP-supported tender and contract templates, 38 street lighting projects have been initiated in Croatia.

Theme 2 Energy Efficiency Policy Dialogue: There are no REEP policy outputs in this reporting period, as the work transitioned into REEP Plus (please see the REEP Plus section).

Window 2 Sustainable Energy Credit Lines

EUR 107 million of the EUR 117 million funding available is allocated to PFIs, of which EUR 91.4 million has been disbursed to PFIs to finance eligible sub-projects.

Overall, 312 sub-projects were approved and signed for a total of EUR 82.35 million by the end of H2 2018. Nine of these were signed in H2 2018 for EUR 3.08 million, of which 3 were public sector municipal infrastructure projects worth EUR 0.3 million implemented by municipalities.

One sub-project was successfully verified in H2 2018. To reporting end date, EUR 5.2 million has been paid in investment incentives to sub-borrowers of which EUR 12,047 was paid out in H2 2018. As of end of December 2018 the total (equivalent) primary energy savings is 556,635 (MWh/y), with CO2 emissions saving of 135,817 (tonnes/y).

Window 3 Sustainable Energy Direct Financing Facility

At 31 December 2018, the EBRD had approved 7 projects under the second phase of the WeBSEDF: 4 small hydropower plant projects in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Montenegro, 1 biomass project in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and 2 biogas projects in Serbia. The amount of finance provided is EUR 31.9 million (of which EUR 6.0 million is still not committed). The implementation of these projects will add up to 25.9 MW of electricity generation capacity, with annual production of 253.5 GWh and will lead to estimated CO₂ emission reductions of 339,826 tonnes per year. Of these 7 projects, 5 have been completed and verified, 1 was completed in late 2018 and will be verified during the first half of 2019 (referred to in the *ACTIVITIES* section above), and the last one is still in early stages of implementation. (Note that the latter project may not be fully completed). In total, the 7 projects will qualify for up to EUR 2.14 million worth of incentive payments, if all are completed.

- **ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER**

Window 1 - Public Sector Energy Efficiency, Policy Dialogue, Institutional Capacity Building and Business Development Programme

Theme 1 ESCO Support

ESCO legislative work (policy dialogue)

In the Western Balkans EBRD has planned to implement ESCO contracts in actual projects (i.e. to implement the ESCO related aspects of the EED by means of applying ESCO contracts). In Serbia, the Legislature is updating the bylaw (rulebook) under the Law on Rationale Use of Energy, which also includes the ESCO contracts.

ESCO (project preparation work)

The technical support for preparing ESCO street lighting tenders in North Macedonia, Kosovo and Albania will start in Q1/2019. Similar additional technical support will start in Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia Herzegovina in Q1 or Q2/2019.

Theme 2 Energy Efficiency Policy Dialogue: The REEP team continues to work on and monitor progress of the deliverables pending government adoption, as outlined in the *ACTIVITIES* section above.

Window 2 Sustainable Energy Credit Lines

Activities next period will focus on continuation of project assessments for existing PFIs under the Facility (mainly in Serbia) and on pipeline and portfolio generation for the newly signed Banca Instesa credit line. In early 2019, the EBRD will also seek to sign a loan

agreement with one additional PFI for the last remaining EUR 10 million financing available under the Framework and begin project origination and pipeline development for this PFI.

Furthermore, the team will continue cooperation with Banca Intesa marketing department to determine further specific marketing activities in Q1 2019. WebSEFF II will be presented at several events such as the 8th International Energy Days in Novi Sad and the Textile Fair in Belgrade, and the programme team will take part in local and municipal level outreach activities.

Window 3 Sustainable Energy Direct Financing Facility

One project will be verified with the incentive payment of EUR 380,000 payable in the first half of 2019. During the period, efforts will also be made to identify and approve to 1-2 additional projects to fully utilise the remaining EUR 24 million available under the WebSEDF (EUR 15 million for ESCO projects and EUR 9 million for non-ESCO projects).

Programme reference :	Multi-beneficiary Programme, IPA 2016/039-858
Project title:	Regional Energy Efficiency Programme for the Western Balkans – REEP Plus
EU contribution:	EUR 30 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Contribution Arrangement with the WBIF Joint Fund
Contract reference:	CN 2017/383-636
Duration of activities:	21/06/2017 – 21/06/2021
Links:	http://www.wb-reep.org ; https://ebrdgeff.com/
Contact :	Anna Soltysik, Anna.SOLTYSIK@ec.europa.eu Wolfgang Schlaeger, wolfgang.schlaeger@ec.europa.eu

• PURPOSE

The REEP Plus programme builds on of the success of REEP in its aim to establish a sustainable market for energy efficient financing of private and public sector in the Western Balkans. REEP Plus will allow for the continuation of ongoing activities, scale up investments in sustainable energy opportunities, and expand the scope of support with focus on energy efficiency in buildings and the residential sector.

• ACTIVITIES (JULY - DECEMBER 2018)

Window 1 - Policy Dialogue and ESCO development

Theme 1 ESCO Support: The activities are funded under REEP.

Theme 2 Energy Efficiency Policy Dialogue: Ten policy assignments have been under implementation in this reporting period. The call-off contracts of six assignments were extended, as a result of new tasks that had to be added to the existing scope of work.

Window 2 (part of the WB GEF programme) – Sustainable Energy Credit Lines

Three Loan Agreements with PFIs were signed in this period for a total of EUR 14 million, as follows:

- UniCredit Bank, Serbia – EUR 5 million (07 September 2018)
- Fondi Besa, Albania – EUR 3 million (12 September 2018)
- Union Bank, Albania – EUR 6 million (07 November 2018)

EBRD focused its efforts on supporting PFIs in sub-loan disbursement as well as verification of sub-projects this period, as eleven of the thirteen PFIs are now actively signing sub-loans for residential projects under the Facility. A well-attended launch event was organised in Belgrade (26 September) to mark the start of GEF activities in Serbia. Kick-off meetings were held with Union Bank Albania and UniCredit Bank Serbia in early July. The Facility was also promoted at several key events within the regions – for example the Green Festival in Prishtina (along with PFI TEB), the Climate Diplomacy Village in Belgrade, the Energy Expo & Forum 2018 in Tirana and the Third International Conference on Energetics in Skopje. Two information and vendor events were held with Sparkasse Macedonia (Skopje and Strumica), two vendor workshops were held in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Sarajevo and Banja Luka) and one in Kosovo (Peja). A significant amount of time was spent meeting with vendors and producers to develop the Technology Selectors. Finally, the GEF website for Albania was launched in October to promote the Facility and the two new PFIs.

Window 2 (KfW part of the REEP plus programme) – Sustainable Energy Credit Lines

Four Loan Agreements with PFIs were signed in this period for a total of EUR 51 million, as follows:

- Erste Bank, Serbia – EUR 15 million (21 December 2017)
- MFI Partner, Bosnia and Herzegovina – EUR 1 million (28 December 2017)
- Raiffeisen Leasing, Serbia – EUR 15 million (14 December 2018)
- UniCredit, Serbia – EUR 20 million (17 December 2018)

After informing the partner financing institutions in the region about the incentive scheme provided through the REEP plus program for EE loans to SME and municipalities, the demand for EE loans in combination with grants for end borrowers was exceeding the availability of grant funds available (5 million EUR) for loans provided by KfW. KfW therefore chose to limit the grant funds to beneficiaries to 10% of the investment (loan) amount. This allows for a larger number of investments and end beneficiaries to receive support by the program. The demand for EE loans being higher and not being able to complement these loans with grant funds under the REEP plus program, the German Government decided to make additional grant funds available to meet the immediate demand in the market. Therefore, KfW was able to sign one additional loan agreement in Serbia:

- Credit Agricole, Serbia – EUR 10 million (17 December 2018)

This loan Agreement is complemented by grant funds for end-borrowers (10% of investments) from the German budget under the same conditions as under the REEP plus program.

Window 3 Sustainable Energy Direct Financing Facility

During the period, funding of up to EUR 50,000 was allocated to a TC project for the technical and environmental due diligence of a wind farm project in Kosovo. The project consultant has now begun work and is expected to complete the project assessment in Q1 2019. Note that this project is considered under the REEP Plus agreement due to its large investment size, which makes it ineligible under the earlier REEP.

Window 4 Direct Lending to Municipalities

Following signing of the Energy Efficient Refurbishment of Zenica Hospital as the first transaction under this Window in June 2018, the focus in this reporting period was on (i) ratification of the grant and loan agreements by respective government and parliamentary bodies, and (ii) preparation of tender documentation, which has been completed and is currently under review. Discussions on another project in Montenegro also commenced in H2 2018.

• OUTPUTS (JULY - DECEMBER 2018)

Window 1 - Policy Dialogue and ESCO development

Theme 1 ESCO Support: The activities are funded under REEP.

Theme 2 Energy Efficiency Policy Dialogue: In this reporting period, the following deliverables were completed and submitted to the beneficiaries:

- Albania EPBD – activity database, cost-optimal analysis for residential buildings, EPC draft regulation.
- Albania EED – diagnostic review. Deliverables were presented at a workshop in Tirana on 20 November 2018.
- Bosnia and Herzegovina Republika Srpska – Work Plan report and Policy Options Report were presented and discussed at a workshop with the beneficiary in Banja Luka on 13 December 2018.
- Bosnia and Herzegovina Federation – Activity database, construction database, updates to the energy calculation software required to support implementation of the EPBD. Deliverables were presented and discussed with the beneficiary on 12 December 2018.
- North Macedonia – Draft Energy Efficiency Law was published for public consultation; Additional deliverables included (i) Regulatory Impact Assessment; (ii) summary of comments received during the public consultation.
- Kosovo – Three regulations supported by REEP Plus were adopted in December 2018: (i) Regulation (MESP) no. 02/18 on national calculation methodology for integrated energy performance of buildings ([link](#)); (ii) Regulation MESP no.03/18 of the

procedures on energy performance certification of building ([link](#)); (iii) Regulation MESP no. 04/18 for minimum requirements for the energy performance of buildings ([link](#)).

- Montenegro - the project delivered finalised space heater and water heater ecodesign rulebooks, conducted a market assessment of transformers, updated draft regulation on transformers, a RAC excel tool, and conducted a market inspection workshop.
- Serbia (EED) – Draft framework notification for Article 7, including derivation of Article 7 target for Serbia and summary of Serbia’s policy mix to achieve required savings.
- Serbia (EPBD) – Draft NCM, activity base, definition of reference buildings, compilation of EE measures and packages were delivered to the beneficiary. First round of feedback from Ministry and TWG has been received and is integrated in the subsequent draft reviews.
- A regional activity involving preparing policy guidelines for Energy Efficiency Obligation schemes was finalised. The policy guidelines were released in October 2018 and are a tool to distil international best-practice into a clear and consistent framework for designing and identifying suitable interventions to address barriers/gaps in EEO schemes (existing or planned).

Window 2 (part of the WB GEF programme) – Sustainable Energy Credit Lines

The Facility now totals EUR 53.5 million in PFI loans to 13 PFIs in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Serbia and Albania. During H2 2018, the 11 active PFIs signed a total of 663 sub-loans with a combined value of EUR 3.25 million. In addition, EUR 581,657 of incentives payments were disbursed to sub-borrowers with successfully verified sub-projects.

To date, a total of EUR 5.82 million has been signed in 1,100 sub-loans, and EUR 633,183 has been disbursed as incentives to sub-borrowers. As of end of December 2018 the total (equivalent) primary energy savings is 20,490 (MWh/y), with GHG emissions saving of 5,691 (tonnes/y).

Window 2 (KfW part of the REEP plus programme) – Sustainable Energy Credit Lines

Out of the loan agreements signed in an amount totaling 50 million EUR with 4 PFIs, the loan agreements signed in 2017 are completely disbursed to the PFIs. The bank in Serbia has disbursed 0,5 million EUR to end borrowers so far to various SME. The primary energy savings of these investments are calculated at over 550 MWh/a. CO₂ savings amount to 136 t/a.

The MFI in Bosnia and Herzegovina has disbursed over 0,1 million EUR to MSME which lead to primary energy savings of over 280 MWh/a. CO₂ savings amount to 900 t/a.

The banks which signed the loan agreements end of 2018 are in the process of building up a portfolio. All banks are or will be assisted by consultants which are financed out of German budget funds.

Window 3 Sustainable Energy Direct Financing Facility

The wind-farm project in Kosovo supported with TC funding under this programme is still in the process of evaluation and structuring. The EBRD loan is likely to be extended in the first half of 2019.

Window 4 Direct Lending to Municipalities

Completed tender documentation for the Zenica Hospital Project.

• ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

Window 1 - Policy Dialogue and ESCO development

Theme 1 ESCO Support

The activities are funded under REEP.

Theme 2 Energy Efficiency Policy Dialogue

Implementation of the current assignments will continue in the next semester as per the respective Terms of Reference, including:

- Albania: EPBD regulations to be finalised.
- Finalisation of EPBD support for Bosnia and Herzegovina, both in Federation and Republika Srpska.
- North Macedonia: Supplementary activities to facilitate the process of government adoption of the Energy Efficiency Law; discussions with beneficiary on follow-up activities for relevant secondary regulations.
- Kosovo: Implementation of EPBD regulations adopted in H2 2018. Potential activity related to recently adopted EE Law (related to Article 7 of EED).
- Montenegro: Support for NEEAP 2019-2021, as well as additional work on Ecodesign.
- Serbia EED: Final stage of activities related to EED Article 7 notification.
- Serbia EPBD: Delivery of cost-optimality analysis and draft regulatory amendments.
- The REEP Plus team, in discussion with beneficiaries, has developed a tentative list of policy assignments to be initiated in 2019. These will be kicked off, pending progress in adoption of REEP deliverables and status of the ongoing assignments.
- Planning of local/regional awareness-raising event on the energy efficiency policy work.

Window 2 (part of the WB GEFF programme) – Sustainable Energy Credit Lines

In the next semester, EBRD will continue discussions with PFIs in Montenegro, North Macedonia, Kosovo and Albania with the aim of signing the remaining EUR 31.5 million in financing by end of 2019. A launch event for Albania is planned for March 2019, and the team will also prepare a country-wide Marketing Strategy and vendor events to help promote the Facility within the region. Training and development of marketing strategies will be prioritised for the new-to-join PFIs. Finally, the Technology Selectors for Albania is expected to launch in March 2019.

Window 2 (KfW part of the REEP plus programme) – Sustainable Energy Credit

For the banks who signed loan agreements end of 2018 KfW will tender the consultant services in the first quarter of 2019 to provide the banks with support in the implementation of the credit lines. A launch event for all banks who are participating in this program in Serbia is planned for the first or second quarter 2019.

Window 3 Sustainable Energy Direct Financing Facility

During the first half of 2019, it is expected that EBRD will extend its first loan to the wind-farm project and will continue efforts to identify additional potential projects for financing and develop a pipeline of suitable projects.

Window 4 Direct Lending to Municipalities

- Tender for the Zenica Hospital Project is expected to be launched in Q1 2019.
- EBRD will continue to market the products eligible to public authorities and to identify projects for funding under this window.

CHAPTER 5 : ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

5.1 ENVIRONMENT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMME FOR ACCESSION (EPPA)

Programme reference:	Multi-country Programme, IPA II 2017/039-874
Project title:	<i>EU Environment Partnership Programme for Accession (EPPA)</i>
EU contribution:	EUR 2 246 300
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Service contract with NIRAS IC Sp. z o.o.
Contract reference:	22.020401/2018/794021/ENV.F.2
Duration of activities:	36 months (2/2019 - 02/2022)
Links:	
Contact:	Madalina IVANICA, Madalina.IVANICA@ec.europa.eu Andrzej JANUSZEWSKI, Andrzej.JANUSZEWSKI@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The overall objective of the project is to strengthen the implementation of the EU environmental acquis in the Western Balkans and Turkey in areas relevant for addressing trans-boundary environmental issues.

ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

N/A (project starts in 02/2019)

OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

N/A (project starts in 02/2019)

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

Project is starting with implementation on 14 February 2019 with several activities planned in the inception phase, starting with the analysis of the existing situation and finishing with the definition of the detailed work plan for the project.

Project activities will be grouped within following action areas:

1. Awareness raising on the latest EU environmental policy priorities and developments
2. Capacity building for waste management
3. Capacity building in transboundary water management and protection of marine and coastal areas
4. Capacity building for alignment with the air quality and industrial emissions EU acquis
5. Capacity building in managing national and transboundary nature protection issues
6. Compliance checks for draft legislation and
7. Support for capacity building for selected national Civil Society Organisations.

5.2 DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT

Programme reference:	Multi-country Programme, IPA II 2015/038-052
Project title:	<i>Disaster Risk Assessment and Mapping</i>
EU contribution:	EUR 2 999 250
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Procurement
Contract reference:	ECHO SER/2016/740641
Duration of activities:	01/12/2016 - 01/12/2019
Links:	http://www.ipadram.eu/
Contact :	Biljana Zuber, biljana.zuber@ec.europa.eu

- PURPOSE

Improving beneficiaries' systems for disaster loss data collection, risk assessment and mapping, and alignment with and integration into the Union Civil Protection Mechanism.

- ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

- Two consultation meetings in North Macedonia
- Risk assessment workshop in Turkey in July
- Technical workshop on Disaster Loss Data (DLD) in Bosnia and Herzegovina in July
- Advisory mission/ Technical workshops on DLD and Risk Mapping; and training on Sendai in Montenegro in September (organised jointly with United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN ISDR))
- Advisory mission/ Technical workshops on DLD and Risk Mapping; and training on Sendai in Albania and Kosovo in October
- Finalising and consolidating all national Plans of Action with precise planning of activities
- Three exchange of experts from Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Serbia
- Regional workshop on Disaster Loss Data (DLD) and wild fires in Slovenia, November
- 4th Steering committee meeting in November in Slovenia.

- OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

- Developed platform as a draft version for the Electronic Regional Risk Atlas
- Improved understanding and use of the online Sendai Framework Monitor (SFM), launched in March 2018, to monitor progress on implementing the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030.
- Improved understanding and knowledge of Risk Mapping and developing Electronic Regional Risk Atlas
- Exchange of expertise among the Member States and partners of the Programme
- Developed a prototype web based IPA DRAM Knowledge Management system (seeKMS) for strengthening the capabilities in sharing documents, publications and media dealing with Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and Climate Change Adaptation (CCA)
- Newsletters No 4 and 5

- ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Advisory missions on DLD, Risk Assessments, Electronic Regional Risk Atlas and DESINVENTAR in Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey

- Gender and DRR workshop in March in Sweden
- Exchange of Experts on Electronic Regional Risk Atlas to CIMA in Italy
- Regional workshop on Electronic Regional Risk Atlas, Italy in June
- 5th Steering Committee meeting in Italy, June

Programme reference:	Multi-country Programme, IPA II 2017/039-402
Project title:	<i>Western Balkans Disaster Risk Management Programme</i>
EU contribution:	EUR 3 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Trust Fund
Contract reference:	IPA/2018/397-264
Duration of activities:	16/07/2018 – 31/12/2021
Links:	https://understandrisk.org/wp-content/uploads/UR-Balkans-Proceedings-2018-revised.pdf
Contact:	Anna Soltysik, Anna.SOLTYSIK@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The objective of the Western Balkans Disaster Risk Management Program is to build the capacity of selected beneficiaries in the Western Balkans region (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia) to improve disaster risk informed decision-making at regional level, strengthen national capacity for the prioritization of risk-informed investments, and improve regional and national capacity to conduct post-disaster needs assessments and formulate resilient recovery frameworks.

ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

The implementation of activities commenced in April 2018. During the period under review, activities mainly focuses on setting up the internal modalities for this trust fund, and on defining the work plan and timelines for program activities. The main activity delivered was the [Understanding Risk Balkans Conference](#), which took place in Belgrade, Serbia on September 17 to 19, 2018.

OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

The Understanding Risk Balkans Conference was successfully delivered, jointly organized with the Government of Serbia, the conference brought together more than 350 attendees from 46 countries. Experts and practitioners from the Balkans region and beyond have

shared experiences and lessons learned on identifying, communicating and assessing risk during the three-day event. The conference was highlighted by 12 technical sessions, which focused on different sectorial needs in DRM and provided a platform for discussion on an array of related topics from the catastrophe insurance market to flood risk mapping, from the use of open data to seismic risk in multi-family apartment buildings. Government representatives from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia attended the Understanding Risk Balkans Conference, which promoted communication of risk information and shared best practices on DRM.

The event achieved its intended objective of promoting risk understanding in the region and has generated growing support among experts and practitioners to further advance the DRM agenda in general. Through this conference, the World Bank and its Western Balkans partners have increased awareness on the region’s disaster risks and renewed their collaborative commitment in the DRM sector.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

During the next reporting period, program activities will focus on developing Regional Framework for Data Sharing. Activities will include:

- (i) Assessment of the availability of required data in selected river catchment(s) for setting up and operating a pilot operational flood forecasting system. This will include assessment of real-time meteorological and hydrological observations, historical precipitation and temperature observations, high resolution numerical weather prediction and quantitative precipitation estimation products, and satellite data including snow cover, snow water equivalent, soil moisture and soil temperature.
- (ii) Development of recommendations for improving data availability to address priority needs for achieving more reliable results from hydrological models
- (iii) Drafting of a data policy agreement between all the program participants addressing differences between the existing official WMO data policies and the required additional data

CHAPTER 6: CIVIL SOCIETY AND MEDIA

The overall objective of this support is to strengthen civil society organisations and their role in the political as well as the European integration process of the IPA beneficiaries. This should result in an improved dialogue on legislation and policies between governments and civil society as well as the strengthening of social partnerships underpinning reforms.

This support is mainly being delivered through the Civil Society Facility (CSF) and will ultimately result in a more civil society-friendly environment, a consolidation of the democratic process and good governance.

Media freedom and freedom of expression are also seen as important in this context. In 2014 DG Enlargement has developed two sets of guidelines aiming to support the civil society and media sectors in the region through an inclusive and participative approach with contributions from all relevant stakeholders, CSOs, journalists' and media professional organisations of the region.

"The Guidelines for EU support to civil society in enlargement countries, 2014-2020" complemented by a result framework with clear objectives and indicators to be monitored in the years to come have been finalised and constituted a reference document for the MCSP 2014-2020.

The "Guidelines for EU support to media freedom and media integrity in enlargement countries, 2014-2020" that are built on the policy vision as set out in the Conclusions of the Speak-up! Conferences were finalised in March 2014.

Link to the guidelines:

http://www.tacso.org/documents/otherdoc/?id=9887&template_id=73&langTag=en-US

Civil Society Facility

The CSF is a single facility for the benefit of the whole of the Western Balkan region and Turkey. It is a single programme but financed and implemented separately by the multi-beneficiary IPA programme and the various national IPA programmes.

The CSF consists of three strands of activities which aim at strengthening Western Balkan and Turkish civil society's commitment and involvement in the transformative process in view of their eventual integration into the EU:

- Support/technical assistance (TACSO) for local civic initiatives and capacity building, thereby enforcing the role of civil society at national level;
- Actions to build partnerships and develop networks between CSOs, businesses, trade unions and other beneficiary social partners and their counterparts in the EU to promote transfers of knowledge and experience. The main instruments (implementation modalities) of the action at regional level are the Framework Partnerships Agreements (FPAs), functional to create long-term CSOs coalition building and re-granting schemes for smaller organization;

A "People 2 People" (P2P) programme to bring a variety of organisations in the ELARG region into contact with EU institutions and European-level counterparts. These include CSO representatives, human rights and minority defence activists, NGOs dealing with *acquis*-related subjects, journalists, young politicians and trade union leaders. TACSO has taken over the management of the third strand, the P2P programme applying a demand driven approach.

6.1 ACTION GRANTS

Programme reference:	Civil Society Facility and Media Programme, IPA 2016/038-960 and IPA 2017 / 038-961
Project title:	Support to regional thematic networks of Civil Society Organisations – Long-term Grants
EU contribution:	EUR ca. 16 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	17 Grants
Duration of activities:	January 2018 – December 2021
Contacts:	Maria Esposito, maria.esposito@ec.europa.eu Jlenia Destito, jlenia.destito@ec.europa.eu Kristina Vujic, kristina.vujic@ec.europa.eu Victor Dragutan, victor.dragutan@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The 17 Long-term grants, involving 118 CSOs, were awarded after a Call for proposals launched under the Civil Society Facility and Media Programme 2016-2017 to provide support to regional thematic networks of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), fostering regular

networking at regional and EU level, facilitating the exchange of knowledge, skills and connections, and increasing and widening their impact in campaigning and advocacy.

The CSOs networks supported in this framework are active in a number of sectors identified as relevant for the region. The final aim is to strengthen their capacities to advocate and effectively dialogue with Governments in order to influence policy and decision making processes, and to produce lasting change in the society.

ACTIVITIES IN THE PAST SEMESTER AND PLANNED FOR THE NEXT

The European Union, Innovation & Media Partnerships for Action, Collaboration and Transformation in the Western Balkans - EU-IMPACT-WB (2017/394-404) The project consortium members held series of meetings and other coordination activities to enable the establishment of both the Project Steering Committee (PSC) and the Project Advisory Committees (PAC). Significant work was also put in place to produce the Visibility and Communication Plan, the Quality Benchmarks Handbook and the PAC Handbook. During the second half of the reporting period the team entirely focused on Activity 1.2 “Creation and publishing of the regional platform for young entrepreneurs and social innovators”. The regional conference to mark the project launching was planned. The project has also made significant progress in putting together the scope of works and the required methodologies for the planned activities under the Activity Cluster 2. During the reporting period series of coordination meetings took place between the project consortium members and also with the relevant stakeholders. In following period. the project will focus in creation and publishing of the regional platform for young entrepreneurs and social innovators, it will conduct the mapping and GAP assessment, it will establish operational methodologies for the social innovation hubs and launch the same, it will develop modules for e-learning and it will launch the online learning platform.

WeB4YES – Western Balkan Civil Society Organization for Youth Employment Support (2017/394-387). The Project addresses the challenges of insufficient cooperation among the civil society actors and public authorities in Western Balkan in policy processes regarding youth unemployment. Starting from July to December 2018 the following activities were implemented in the scope of the project: Collection of the data and completion of the research reports on entrepreneurial learning and enabling environment on youth entrepreneurship at the level of the countries/territories involved in the project, as well as at the level of the region; Organization and implementation of National Fora on Youth Employment meetings in Belgrade, Podgorica, Pristina, Sarajevo, Skopje and Tirana dedicated to youth entrepreneurship; Forming the national delegations for participation at the regional thematic discussion forum; Organization and implementation of the Regional Forum on Youth Entrepreneurship in Durres, Albania; Content editing, design, pre-press and publication of the regional research reports and regional policy briefs (1 regional research report published online and 2 policy briefs published in online and hard copy version, English language versions); Translation into 5 languages of the consortium of the regional policy briefs “Youth Employability – Key Policy Challenges in the Western Balkans”, “Active Labour

Market Measures for Youth Employment – Key Policy Challenges in the Western Balkans”. Online publication of the translated briefs; Web development and content update of e-services for unemployed youth from the Western Balkans. Filling in the sections dedicated to each country/territory; Promotional activities organized via [Project website](#), [FB page](#) and [Instagram](#) as well as through traditional media, including the dissemination of the published publications.

Regional Youth Compact for Europe (2018/395-387) The Regional Youth Compact for Europe aims to empower CSOs, particularly youth organizations, in the Western Balkans and Turkey to effectively participate in policy design and monitoring EU integration in the Western Balkans. The thematic focus is the rule of law, fundamental rights (Chapter 23 and 24) and economic and social rights, especially employment (Chapter 19). Project is implemented by 14 partners from the region. During the previous period the activities included following: 3 Project Management Team meetings; Training for the network members; Study visit to National Convention on the EU; Public presentation of the RYCE project; Panel discussion; 2 Community multi-stakeholders’ platforms “Monitoring Reforms Locally – Good Practice Become Our Practice”; Creating visibility and communication plan. Implemented activities contributed to the following outputs: Increasing knowledge of local CSOs for public policy analysis, leading a structured dialogue and influencing reform processes; exchanging good practices and lessons learned from the process of association and stabilization and accession negotiations; expanding the number of organizations with which we cooperate; creating synergies.

6.2 OPERATING GRANTS

Programme reference:	Civil Society Facility Programme and Multi-beneficiary Programme, IPA 2014/031-605
Project title:	Operating grants
EU contribution:	EUR 1.48 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Grants
Duration of activities:	01/01/2017 – 31/12/2017
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PURPOSE

Operating grants contribute to the general expenses of an organization whose overall mission and objectives correspond to the policy priorities of the European Commission. The current operating grants provide structural support to 10 regional partnerships of CSOs working on topics such as youth policies, social dialogue, rule of law, promotion of the rights

of persons with disabilities and LGBT persons. The operating grants were concluded in 2014 following a call for proposals for a period of 12 months with the possibility of extension for up to 48 months. In October 2016 an evaluation took place and resulted in the extension of support for one more year to all 10 regional CSO partnerships.

Regional CSO platform advocating social innovation under employment policies that guarantees security for youth at risks – YOU SEE! Platform (2017/391-846 continuation of 2016/382-275, 2015/368-862 and 2014/351-917). In focus of last six months of project realization was preparation of final events Socialthon and Upbeat Forum. The "Socialthon" two-day regional competition for young people was held in Podgorica from 3rd to 5th November 2018. It is intended for all those who want to be social entrepreneurs, for young people who have the idea of how technology can be used to create a social or environmental impact or for young people from the region who, for example, can improve or better deliver physical products or services using technology. This event was organized for those who want to acquire valuable tools to better brand themselves, their product or service and have been guided until the next phase of their vision. "Socialthon" is aimed at young people who through the development of start-up ideas want to solve a social problem in their community. Result of Socialthon is created solution for 6 different recognized community challenges. UpBeat Social Innovation Forum - vol. 2 on 4th and 5th December 2018, at "Center Ville" Hotel in Podgorica. The UpBeat Forum is a two-day event that brought together relevant stakeholders in the areas of employment, entrepreneurship, social innovation and blockchain technology, in order to contribute to the quest for a new approach to the development of community innovation. The Forum brought together young people, creators, professionals, as well as business representatives to create solutions to various community challenges in areas that respond to stakeholder capacities. The Forum gathered over 150 relevant actors from Western Balkan region and Europe, representatives of the Ministry of Science, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Sports, Employment Agency, representatives of business and civil sector, representatives of international organizations, as well as participants from countries of the Western Balkan region. This event is realized in cooperation with SIC (Social Innovation Community) platform.

Regional Youth Exchange Association (2017/390-800 continuation of 2016/381-965, 2015/371-378 and 2014/351-845) The "Regional Youth Exchange Association" project was designed to provide possibilities for established regional youth exchange institution (RYCO) to develop its practice, test developed models, and adopt the best possible mechanisms to achieve the institution's mandate. YIHR continued to work on building the capacities of RYCO for facilitating youth exchanges in close cooperation with institution's bodies and its staff. Nine youth exchanges were organised around the Western Balkan region, with around 200 participants. Four youth camps in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo hosted around 90

participants. Travelling School on Nationalism was held, going from Kosovo, through Montenegro with finish in Bosnia and Herzegovina with 15 participants. After the RYCO launched Call for Project Proposals, YIHR organised events for schools and youth CSO's, providing information about the call itself, but also about specifics of youth exchanges in the region. YIHR empowered RYCO staff for dealing with the past element of youth exchanges in the Western Balkans region. Experiences and evaluations of more than 300 participants of dealing with the past exchange programs will be shared with RYCO and contribute to its future programme planning. More than 100 high schools and grassroots youth organisations are informed and motivated to apply for RYCO grants and organising regional youth exchanges for the first time, which is of crucial importance for expanding the potential beneficiaries of RYCO programs. RYCO's Secretariat and Governing Board accepted the recommendation from YIHR to allow young people from Croatia to be beneficiaries of RYCO's programs, although Croatia is not a RYCO signatory, and hopefully this will expand to youth organisations from Croatia in the future.

Young With a Voice (2017/391-692 continuation of 2016/381-500, 2015 / 371-191 and 2014 / 351-938). Brochure "State of Child Rights in the Western Balkans" was presented in Brussels in September, at two meetings with relevant European stakeholders, including representatives of Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR) and Department for Justice (DG JUST). Local child driven activities were implemented in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Kosovo and Serbia, enabling children to participate and give their voice regarding the issues they recognize as important. Final project conference was organized in Belgrade, Serbia, on November 7th, 2018, gathering representatives of civil society, public institutions, experts and other relevant stakeholders to meet and discuss the current state of child rights and child protection in the region, with special emphasis on process of deinstitutionalization in the region in perspective of the EU integrations. Based on the conference results, regional Policy Statement was developed and disseminated to all relevant actors.

Balkan regional platform for youth participation and dialogue (2017/391-600 continuation of 2016/382-276, 2015/371-185 and 2014/351-922). After adoption of an updated partnership strategy of the Balkan Network for Local Democracy operating as a thematic CSO association comprising eight Local Democracy Agencies with their host cities and the capacity building programme on youth cultural participation, the policy recommendations were further promoted in the countries included. Regional exchange programme for youth workers, Local Youth Fund and Youth Taking Over Day programmes were being implemented in eight LDA host cities. An interactive regional co-operation platform promoting active youth citizenship and participation in the reform process towards the EU integration remains functional: (<http://www.aldabalkan-youth.eu>). Regional evaluation meeting in Novi Sad 17/20 October helped consolidate the thematic CSO association and increased the visibility of overall achievements of the work programme.

Strengthening NGO capacity and promoting public health and human rights oriented drug policy in South Eastern Europe (2017/391-625 continuation of 2016/382-208, 2015/ 371-158 and 2014/351-836). Main activities in this period were the capacity building trainings on budget, advocacy and monitoring which took place in September and October in Bosnia Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia. Identifying the issues and causes of the problem, research and budget analysis. In the framework of maintaining regular contacts with member organisations, two study visits have been realised by members of the DPNSEE board in respectively Romania and Greece. In December, the DPNSEE annual General Assembly took place in Belgrade. New members joined the DPNSEE. The umbrella organisation has now 24 ordinary and 2 associate members. DPNSEE organised in December, the conference on “Regional cooperation for the development of civil societies and open dialogue”. Main issues of deliberation at the conference were Drugs and immigrants, legislation and procedures in cases of arrest and judiciary process for drug users and, accreditation of services by national health institutions. Diogenis has published the two latest issues of the quarterly newsletter as well a briefing paper on “Drug policy reform dialogues in South East Europe. The contribution of NGOs”.

European Integration and the social dimension: strengthening regional cooperation of trade unions in the Balkans (2017/391-635 continuation of 2016/381-594 2015/371-495 and 2014/351-847). Focus: institutional capacity building, expertise & knowledge development within the Trade Union (TU) organisations to empower them as competent social partner in the social dialogue. The Solidarnost Youth Academy (+DGB Youth) focused on improving relations among TU youth committees and RYCO, the rising populism in Europe and in the Western Balkans as well as environmental standards protection (Declaration: Youth in the Era of Digitalisation). Plenary was dedicated to the project evaluation, the follow up project and to defining priorities of Solidarnost (formalisation of the TU network) within the ETUC and the ITUC. WG IT-Media-Communication TU members organised a joint session with the regional journalist association network (+EFJ) in order to re-establish weak ties with media workers and fight jointly for media freedom, workers/journalists safety and labour standards improvement. WG social dialogue gathered social partners (employers & unionists) from the Western Balkans in order to set common denominators for a future joint (capacity building) SD project. WG socio-economic development brought together pensioners’ TUs/associations who have been pushing towards governments’ respectation of SD and equal participation of all social partners in the reform process (National Profile Analysis on Pension Systems) See: www.onthewaytoeu.net

Balkans Independent Disability Framework - BIDF (2017/391-494 continuation of 2016/382-458, 2015/371-187 and 2014/351-920). The network BIDF is established in four Balkan countries, with four associations of persons with disabilities (APwDs) coordinating national networks of PwD associations. With the goal to promote and facilitate the inclusion

of disability in policies and practices at the national and regional level, and through a systematic approach, the network BDF has worked in capacity building and empowerment of its members and on advocacy on accountability, transparency, policy improvement – both at the national and regional level. The last year of the project ended in December 2018. One of the main closing events took place in Belgrade on 16-17 October 2018, where a joint regional conference organized with OSCE was held on Political and electoral participation of persons with disability. Altogether 82 participants from 14 countries, including prominent activists in the field of disability rights, current and former parliamentarians with disabilities, academia, representatives of APwDs and experts from international organizations, including the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRC) attended the event.

6.3 LONG- TERM GRANTS

Programme reference:	Civil Society Facility and Media Programme, IPA 2014/031-605
Project title:	Support to regional thematic networks of Civil Society Organisations – Long-term Grants
EU contribution:	EUR 15.8 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	16 Grants
Duration of activities:	December 2015 – December 2019
Contacts:	Maria Esposito, maria.esposito@ec.europa.eu Kristina Vujic, kristina.vujic@ec.europa.eu Jlenia Destito, jlenia.destito@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The 16 Long-term grants were awarded after a Call for proposals launched under the Civil Society Facility and Media Programme 2014-2015 to provide support to regional thematic networks of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), fostering regular networking at regional and EU level, facilitating the exchange of knowledge, skills and connections, and increasing and widening their impact in campaigning and advocacy.

The CSOs networks supported in this framework are active in a number of sectors identified as relevant for the region. The final aim is to strengthen their capacities to advocate and effectively dialogue with Governments in order to influence policy and decision making processes, and to produce lasting change in the society.

About 20% of each project budget will be used to provide financial support to CSOs external to the beneficiary network, with the purpose of reaching out to, and building capacities of, grass-root and other types of non-governmental local organisations.

The 16 action grants have completed their inception phase in the first six months of 2016.

ACTIVITIES IN THE PAST SEMESTER AND PLANNED FOR THE NEXT

The projects are divided in 3 thematic areas:

- RULE OF LAW, GOVERNANCE AND MEDIA FREEDOM
- SOCIAL INCLUSION, MIGRATION AND RECONCILIATION
- SUSTAINABLE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

1. RULE OF LAW, GOVERNANCE AND MEDIA FREEDOM

SIGN Up for Impact (2018/395-435). In the reporting period, several SIGN partners made significant progress in their advocacy efforts. Trag Foundation contributed to the establishment of the Council for Philanthropy within the Office of the Prime Minister of Serbia while FIQ managed to include several draft laws and policy proposals into the final Strategy of Cooperation between Government and CSOs 2018-2023. SIGN also built a regional pool of trainers for local resource mobilization that are currently providing know-how to 50 local CSOs selected to participate in SIGN's sub-granting component. Several partners held extensive promotional activities through media and local events and held their annual Philanthropy Awards that gathered more than 500 participants in three countries of the WB region.

2. SOCIAL INCLUSION, MIGRATION, RECONCILIATION

Programme reference:	Civil Society Facility and Media Programme 2014 – 2015, Support to regional thematic networks of Civil Society Organisations
Project title:	Divided Past – Joint Future
EU contribution:	EUR 897.790,54
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Grant agreement
Contract reference:	CN 2015/370-393
Duration of activities:	01/01/2016 – 31/12/2019
Links:	http://www.jointfuture.org
Contact :	Jugoslav Jevdic, jugoslav.jevdjic@okcbl.org

• PURPOSE

The purpose of this action is to get governments from the beneficiary region recognizing Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) to be recognised by governments as an important societal factor with strong capacity to implement the peace building and reconciliation agenda in the

Western Balkans and Turkey by development and using of social innovations. This action aims specifically at strengthening CSOs regional cooperation and capacities.

• ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

During the reporting period, the following key activities were performed:

1. A testing phase of the first version of the manual “CSO cross-stakeholder approach in advocacy and non-formal education for peace dialogue and reconciliation in WB and Turkey” (under sub-granting scheme).
2. The planning and implementation of a 2-day regional consultative meeting with business sector in Serbia.
3. The planning and implementation of 7 national advocacy campaigns under the title “Embracing damage” in targeted countries.
4. The selection and starting of 19 projects by CSOs from 7 targeted countries (under sub-granting scheme).
5. The preparation of a second call for project proposals to be awarded up to 35 project.

• OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

Activity: Manual “CSO cross-stakeholder approach in advocacy and non-formal education for peace dialogue and reconciliation in WB and Turkey”

Output: a first version of the manual was issued and used in testing phase in.

Activity: 2-day regional consultative meeting with business sector

Outputs: Representatives of 28 companies from Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro participated to the meeting and contributed to identifying possible areas of cooperation amongst business and civil society sector towards the peace building and reconciliation.

Activity: 7 national advocacy campaigns

Outputs: a larger public in 7 targeted countries is informed on the project, its activities and its results, including the importance of peace building process for stability and prosperity.

Activity: Sub-granting scheme for projects of CSOs from targeted countries.

Outputs: Out of 40 project proposals, 19 projects were selected. Their respective implementation has started as of 10 December 2018.

• ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

The following key activities and events are planned for next semester:

1. The selection and start of 16 additional projects of CSOs from 7 targeted countries within the sub-granting scheme.
2. The regular monitoring of the implementation of 19 selected projects in 2019.
3. Regional consultative meetings with business sector in Turkey in order to explore and define possible cooperation amongst CSOs and business in area of peace building.
4. The planning and implementation of regional social innovation labs to test the manual “CSO cross-stakeholder approach in advocacy and non-formal education for peace dialogue and reconciliation in WB and Turkey”.
5. The planning and implementation of a regional training for national trainers that will promote cross-stakeholder approach in their countries.
6. The planning and implementation of 7 national trainings on usage of cross-stakeholder approach.
7. The selection and starting of job shadowing projects in area of peace building.

Taking action on social inclusion of older people - TASIOP (2015/370-287). The project entered its final phase in which the emphasis was on the educational workshops for older people to increase their knowledge about human rights, the way to access them and promote volunteering and participation in the community. More than 4,000 older people were reached across the five project countries through these activities, with support to their further community based activities provided per request. Likewise, the local, community based social inclusion initiatives for older people were finalised in four out of five project countries – the implementation period was extended in Bosnia and Herzegovina due to administrative obstacles. The total of 62 micro-projects were implemented. The data on lessons learned was collected from each of the local initiatives and the publication on good practice is in preparation, to be printed in all five languages as well as English at the end of the project. Workshops on communication with the media and workshops with journalists on reporting on older people and ageing were organised in all project countries. Campaigns to mark the 1 October, International Day of Older people were organised, including a 70 day long street photo exhibition in Belgrade (with estimated 300,000 visitors over this period) as well as participation of an older female Red Cross of Serbia volunteer in marking of the International Day of Older Persons, at the UN headquarters in New York. A large, two-day final conference of the project was organised in Belgrade, Serbia, with more than 100 participants (including EU representatives, governmental representatives of several countries, as well as representatives of international organisations and Serbian institutions), followed by final national conferences in Montenegro, North Macedonia and Albania. Final

public campaigns were prepared in each country as one of the final activities in the project, aiming to reach the public with messages on social inclusion of older people through the traditional media and other means. Project partners in all the beneficiaries participated in meetings with decision makers and in the work of different bodies creating public policy, advocating for decisions and policies to ensure increased social inclusion of older people and improved quality of their life.

Increasing capacities and strengthening the role of regional CSOs for improving labour conditions and labour dialogue with public institutions (2015/370-380). In the reporting period (July - December 2018) within the project activities, five national baseline studies were promoted, 5 public debates in 5 IPA countries were prepared and organized, on which the acquired knowledge and experience from the realized study visit to the European Agency for Occupational Safety and Health, Bilbao was successfully transferred. In the mentioned reporting period, the preparation of the Regional Study and Strategy has started, for that purpose, a Workshop, from 04 - 06 December 2018 in Ohrid, was organized. On the workshop, there were representatives from public institutions, experts in the field of education, the authors of the national studies, OSH representatives from organizations of all 5 IPA countries, project promoters, as well as representatives from the countries that supported the action. At the workshop, using Skype call, representatives from IOSH, the State Labor Inspectorate from Turkey and from the European OSH agency, Bilbao, took part in the workshop. At the workshop, the author of both documents presented the draft versions, and all received, remarks, ideas, knowledge, practices were transmitted in the final version of the Regional Study and Strategy. In the period from 01 - 03 November, in Pristina, IV - an international OSH conference was held, a tool for network functioning. At this conference, research stories were promoted and presented - a product of 10 projects from 5 IPA countries, developed by project grantees. In December, a regional TV spot was prepared, with clear message to introduce the general public to the existence of BALkanOSH network, the possibility of joining it and creating a preventive culture for the OSH in the Balkans. Project website and social networks were maintained up-to-date, in five languages. Project implementors organized events on various locations (factories, construction sites, conferences, seminars etc.) where project activities were promoted. All the events were transparent and covered on social media, broadcasted on national/local electronic media and communicated through promotional material, in each IPA beneficiary country.

Youth Banks Hub for Western Balkans and Turkey (2015/370-394). During the project, YBH4WBT* Network of 20 organizations has been established in order to ensure greater involvement of young people in Western Balkans and Turkey. The new members, 15 local CSOs, successfully completed the tailored capacity-building program and launched local

* Youth Banks Hub for Western Balkans

advocacy initiatives. New Youth Participation Index was published*, and being the only research presenting comparative data in targeted countries, has caused a great media interest. Based on the external evaluation's recommendations, promotion of the project result was held through 15 public events involving representatives of EU Delegation, national authorities in charge of the youth, statistic, public policies and other relevant stakeholders. Promotion has included strong social media campaigns and rebranding the website†.

Joint Initiative to Empower Roma Civil Society on the Western Balkans and Turkey – JIERCSWBT (2015/370-300). The action sets up a supporting facilitating structure for (pro) Roma civil society to actively participate in the local and national policy and decision making process. JIERCSWBT project mobilised and supported 74 Local CSOs in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Kosovo, Serbia, and Turkey by organising them in 7 national coalitions. Each of them meets regularly, having in total 11 meetings, to analyse the implementation of the national action plans for Roma integration and to plan and implement advocacy initiatives. JIERCSWBT project, provided support through small grant scheme for 30 local advocacy initiatives, implemented by 31 CSOs across the region. Project team co-organised together with European Commission DG NEAR, the public hearing - "Reintegration" into the Western Balkans: Returnees' perspective with special attention to Roma community. Participation at 12th meeting of the European Platform for Roma Inclusion organised by DG JUST – first time enlargement countries participated equally. Project partner participated in the conference on– How to address anti-Gypsyism in a post-2020 EU Framework, organised by Austrian Presidency of the European Council, spotlighting the Enlargement countries

The transparency standards and implementation tools are available in seven languages and 17 CSOs are making use of them. Continuous coaching and mentoring is available for grassroots CSOs in setting up these standards.

3. SUSTAINABLE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Long Term Grants 2015

Active Local Territories for Economic development of Rural Areas (2015/370-371). The implementation planned activities continue during the reporting period. In October 2018 the 2nd Rural Policy Forum was organised in Jahorina (BiH) in cooperation with the Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group in South Eastern Europe. 45 participants from the Western Balkans and Turkey had the exchange information and discuss about key

* <https://ybhwbteu/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/YPI-22.11.-e-verzija.pdf>

† <https://ybhwbteu/>

themes, such as the diversification of economic activities in rural areas, the role of CSOs in supporting economic activities in rural areas, and social entrepreneurship as a possibility of diversifying economic activities in rural areas and supporting employment of marginalized groups. The 2nd multi-national thematic meeting between CSO Networks from the Western Balkans and the EU was also organized, providing a good opportunity for dialogue and sharing of good practices among participating CSOs and CSOs networks. In upcoming reporting period, project partners will continue to work to strengthen national platforms for supporting rural development. At the regional level the 3th Rural Policy Forum will be organised in Serbia. More information is available at <http://balkan-noborder.com/> .

Sustainable agriculture for sustainable Balkans: Strengthening advocacy capacities of CSOs and developing policies in the Western Balkans (2015/370-487). The project aims to strengthen capacities for sustainability, networking and advocacy of CSOs working on sustainable agriculture in the Western Balkans. During the period July – December 2018, the main activities of the project were aimed at the finalisation of projects conducted by CSOs supported within the framework of our Grant & Training Programme. After the revision process, all final reports from the 10 CSOs supported through the project have been approved. Consequently, final payments to all supported organisations have been released. More information about the supported projects can be found at www.sasb-eu.org. During the period January-June 2019 we are planning for preparatory activities to successfully finalise the project. These include the organisation of project partners' meetings and of the closing conference, a photo competition, the finalisation of project publications.

CO-SEED - Civil society acts for environmentally sound socio-economic development (2015/371-198). During the period July-December 2018, efforts were furthered to agree on a roadmap for improving the regulatory framework regarding Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) and Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEAs). To this end, roundtable meetings were organised across the region, media workshops were held and participation to public consultation meetings for EIAs and SEAs was ensured by the beneficiary CSOs. In Albania, Montenegro and Serbia, public authorities and CSOs signed a number of collaboration agreements for the future improvement of the regulatory framework. In Turkey, through CSO action a major legislative initiative that would undermine the EIA processes was stopped. In December 2018, the project evaluation meeting took place. The coming period includes the last two months of the project, where the final evaluation will take place and narrative and financial reports will be submitted. More information is available at <http://co-seed.eu> .

Smart Start - Sustaining civil society impact through social entrepreneurship and innovations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey (2015/369-433) From July to December 2018, Smart Start has entered the final year of its implementation. During the reporting period the last call for

Social Innovation Competition (SIC) was opened, CSOs benefitting from financial support have continued their projects' implementation, and the project has continued strengthening CSOs' capacities. More than 70 applications were received under the second SIC call for proposals, and 5 proposals in five different countries were awarded a grant. Furthermore, Smart Start has organised the advocacy campaigns related to sustainability of CSOs through social entrepreneurship. The project has advocated for the establishment of a conducive legal framework for social entrepreneurship. Smart Start has promoted CSOs and social enterprises, and shared good practices identified in the European Union as well as in the Western Balkans and Turkey with regard to sustainability and social entrepreneurship. In the following period, Smart Start will close 60 grants, complete advocacy campaigning activities and organise 5 final events in order to promote the project results and achievements.

SOCIETIES - Support of CSOs in Empowering Technical skills, Inclusion of people with disabilities and EU standards in South East Europe (2015/370-229). Throughout the second half of 2018, the three final training sessions have been organized, addressing fundraising, public relations, organisational development and strategic planning. The five Working Groups for Social Inclusion actively worked at the preparation of the Policy papers that will be presented at the National forums planned for April and May 2019. On 10 October 2018, the World Mental Health Day, a very successful regional anti-stigma campaign was launched under the slogan *It can happen to anyone*. The best graphic solution to represent the slogan was selected through a regional contest, a 3-week campaign was launched on social media and several public events were organised involving sub-grantees, CSOs, public institutions and other stakeholders. The awareness campaign ended with the celebration of December 3rd, the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. The first half of 2019 will see the completion of the capacity-building programme and of the study visits. The third study visit is scheduled for March 2019 and it will gather 20 CSOs representatives from the region. After the study visits to Bulgaria and Italy, this time Serbia will have the opportunity to present its best practices related to community-based services and social enterprises run by the CSOs active in the field of disability and mental health.

Long Term Grants 2017

ENV.Net Factoring the Environmental Portfolio for WB and Turkey in The EU Policy Agenda (2017/394-372). The project is aimed at factoring the environmental portfolio for the Western Balkans and Turkey in the EU policy agenda. During the second half of 2018, the project focused its efforts on: (1) Applying and preparing the first region-wide circular economy report for Western Balkans and Turkey; (2) Providing elaborate input during the EU-led consultation process on numerous chapters of the Country Reports; (3) Organising a regional conference on Circular Economy in Belgrade (11/2018); Conducting various national campaigns on environmental issues, such as hydropower plants in protected areas. For 2019

the focus will be on the support to third parties (sub-grant program) in the whole region, and on the organisation of the 2nd regional conference on Circular Economy.

GEAR – Green Economy for Advanced Region (2017/394-354), implemented by FORS Montenegro, SMART Kolektiv, the Centre for Development and Support, EDEN Centre, Eko-Svest and the Association Slap, aims to increase the activities and impact of CSOs from the region on environmental protection. During the reporting period the main activities included establishing the network of CSOs and developing its strategy, the capacity building programme for CSOs within which 7 trainings on *Green Economy, Public Advocacy and Lobbying, Participation in Decision Making* and *Project Cycle Management* were organised, developing publications on Green Economy, presentations of good practices in green economy, preparing of the Calls for proposals for local CSOs and media campaigning. In the upcoming period, the partners will work mainly on launching the Call for proposal for CSOs, evaluating and awarding sub-grants. The implementation of the capacity building programme will also continue with the organisation of the study visit to Croatia, of round tables, awareness raising activities, etc.

NAGE – Networking and Advocacy for Green Economy (2018/395-379). NAGE – Networking and Advocacy for Green Economy (2018/395379). The project aims to enhance the impact of the Balkan Rural Development Network (BRDN) and its constituents on policy and decision-making. The action will strengthen the positioning of BRDN and its constituent networks in the region, through encouraging grassroots involvement, networking and advocacy to advance the issue of environmental protection and green entrepreneurship, by offering evidence-based policy solutions. In the reporting period, the Communication and Visibility Plan, the Media Advocacy Plan, the Internal progress monitoring plan (M&E plan) and Financial Management procedures of the NAGE project were prepared and disseminated to all project partners. Three training sessions on transparent and accountable governance, on planning and reporting, and on financial management and procurement were organised for the BRDN members. In the coming period, the project will continue to spread the knowledge acquired through national trainings for grass-root organisations. Two additional trainings on advocacy, lobbying and networking and on green economy and entrepreneurship will be organised in a cascade manner for BRDN members and for national grassroots organizations. Project promotional materials will be produced.

Empowering CSOs in Combatting Discrimination and Furthering Women’s Labour Rights (2018/394-402). In the reporting period, the project focused on researching gender-based discrimination related to labour. An online survey collected thousands of responses from women and men in the region. Partners interviewed relevant institutions, processed official data requests, analysed qualitative data, and drafted country-specific reports. The Communication and Visibility Plan (CVP) was drafted and is undergoing review by partners. Partners’ Organizational and Advocacy Capacity Assessments were completed; the preparation of Capacity Development Plans started based on the assessments’ results.

Upcoming main activities are: peer review, editing, translating and printing of country reports; finalizing a consolidated regional report; and organizing launching (visibility) events in each country and in Brussels. The CVP will be submitted for approval. Strategic Planning meetings will be held in March to specify further activities (awareness-raising, sub-granting), informed by the research.

6.4. REGIONAL PROGRAMME ON LOCAL DEMOCRACY IN THE WESTERN BALKANS - RELOAD

Programme reference:	Civil Society Facility and Media Programme IPA 2016/038-960
Project title:	Regional Programme on Local Democracy in the Western Balkans - ReLOaD
EU contribution:	EUR 8.5 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Grant agreement (for pillar assessed organisations) with UNDP
Contract reference:	2016/382-867
Duration of activities:	01/02/2017 – 31/01/2020
Links:	http://www.ba.undp.org/content/bosnia_and_herzegovina/en/home/operations/projects/poverty_reduction/regional-programme-on-local-democracy-in-the-western-balkans--re.html
Contact:	Maria Esposito, maria.esposito@ec.europa.eu

• PURPOSE

ReLOaD aims to strengthen partnerships between local governments and civil society by scaling-up a successful model of transparent and project-based funding of CSOs. The Western Balkan (WB) countries/territories namely Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo*, Montenegro, and Serbia, invest significant efforts to mainstream the EU accession agenda within their socio-political contexts. The ReLOaD will, as support to these efforts, expand LG - CSO relations, facilitating dialogue among them, and improve quality of CSO services, by focusing on needs of 50 LGs, and supporting implementation of 200 CSOs’ projects, for the benefit of 38,000 people.

* 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.

• ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

- Awareness raising and familiarisation of partner local governments with the the Methodology for CSO funds disbursement and accompanying tools leading to preparation of adoption of new regulatory framework on a local level. Model further showcased through organisation of Public calls for CSOs in all six WB IPA beneficiaries,
- 39 trainings on “Transparent financing of CSOs from municipal budgets” and “Inclusion of citizens in decision making process”) for 415 council members and other local governments practitioners (in BiH only),
- 10 trainings in PR and visibility for 55 grant-awarded CSOs in 10 local governments - Cohort 2 (in BiH only),
- Preparing and introducing measures for additional capacity development of CSOs focused on improving skills when competing for funding under Public calls for CSOs (longer time for CSO duration, mentoring for CSOs, provision of longer PCM training for CSOs, lessons learned and common mistakes reports for CSOs shared, etc.),
- 11 Public calls for CSOs (repeated once) has been executed in the following all six IPA beneficiaries: Montenegro, Kosovo and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, including defining and agreeing on thematic priorities by LGs and civil society in target localities,
 - 118 grassroots CSO projects initiated (contracts signed) servicing the needs of local population in partner municipalities within the six IPA beneficiaries in the WB region,
 - Unlocked payments and continuation of implementation of 45 CSO projects across the WB that had been contracted based on the results of public calls for CSOs from first semester of 2019.
 - 15.000 citizens benefiting from the grassroots CSO projects.

Note: All Action’s activities related to implementation of grant scheme for CSOs were on hold from April to Oct. 2018, due to the perceived conflict of interest by the European Commission. The issue was fully clarified and resolved in Oct 2019 which unlocked the activities related to provision of grants to CSOs.

- Transparent and easily accessible information and resources for civil society through designated ReLOaD tab on 21 LG’s websites introduced for the first time (BiH only),
- 1st Regional WB Conference and 1st Project Board Forum organised with purpose to reflect on the challenges in existing practices in view of improving transparency and supporting development of credible and vibrant civil society. The event was successively organised and attended by 70 national and local governments representatives, CSOs and other relevant stakeholders,
- An online interactive platform to facilitate virtual knowledge sharing, advocacy and communication and cross-country thematic networking developed and tested,

- Development of adjusted tools and procedures for the second round of public calls for CSOs in partner LGs across the WB.

• OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

- Ground prepared for local counterparts regarding procedures and legislative framework as well as necessary steps to improve transparency,
- Partner local governments learnt in practice how to maintain transparent process of Public calls for CSOs and prepared to initiate individual Calls for CSOs with newly spotted Methodology in practice,
- Grassroot CSOs increased their knowledge in project cycle management to better respond to requirements of public calls for CSOs,
- Increased transparency through presentation of key information for civil society partner municipalities in BiH,
- Citizens in local communities directly benefited from different services provided by CSOs project through the Action.

• ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Continuation of awareness-raising and familiarisation of LG leadership and staff as well as CSOs on the Methodology for CSO Fund Disbursement and its benefits – institutionalization of the Methodology in partner LG,
- Setting up of a financing mechanism in line with national legislations (i.e. specific municipal budget lines) to fund CSO activities within each participating LG;
- Launching the second round of public calls for CSOs in 53 partner municipalities with newly introduced measures for additional support to CSO,
- Continuation of capacity development for CSOs in targeted localities,
- Implementation of CSO projects in targeted localities,
- Monitoring of CSO projects in targeted localities and constant on the job support to CSO in improving their capacities for general implementation of projects,
- Formalization of monitoring of CSOs within partner local governments,
- facilitation of knowledge sharing, advocacy and communication and cross-country thematic networking via knowledge platform and regional conferences,
- Design knowledge products and tools to strengthen local participatory democracy and public services delivery.

6.5 MEDIA

Programme reference:	Civil Society Facility and Media Programme 2014-2015, allocation 2015 (2015/037-653)
Project title:	JUFREX - Reinforcing Judicial Expertise on Freedom of Expression and the Media in South-East Europe
EU contribution:	EUR 2.5 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	PAGODA with CoE
Contract reference:	CN 2016/372-924
Duration of activities:	20/04/2016 – 19/04/2019
Contact:	Victor Dragutan, Victor.DRAGUTAN@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The objective of the programme is to promote freedom of expression and freedom of the media in line with CoE standards, with a specific focus on the Judiciary. The programme comprises one major component, namely the judiciary, and two additional components (regulators and media actors) relating to the interconnected segments, which are of significant importance for freedom of expression and exercise of human rights, in line with CoE and European standards. The programme is implemented through activities both at regional and national level in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia.

ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

Component 1 – Legal professionals: Fifth regional conference of certified trainers, including judges, lawyers and prosecutors was organised in Skopje, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, on 18-19 November 2018 focusing on latest updates on ECHR case law on the right to privacy and good administration of justice. More than 30 cascade training sessions on Freedom of Expression and Freedom of the Media related issues have been organised through grant agreements with the national partners.

Component 2 – Regulatory Authorities: The third regional conference for regulatory authorities was held on 5-6 July in Ohrid, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, and addressed the following topics: Media literacy and the Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)1 on media pluralism and transparency of media ownership; Co-regulation; Media diversity, pluralism funds; CoE recommendation on the roles and responsibility of internet intermediaries; and Preparation of the regional publication on protection of minors. At national level, expertise has been provided on several occasions to the respective agencies

and their representatives have been invited to a number of inter-professional seminars with legal professionals as well as journalists and other media actors.

Component 3 – Media actors: More than 23 activities in the different countries involved a varied number of stakeholders ranging from journalists, students, other media actors, to media regulatory authorities and legal professionals. Activities took the forms of round tables, interprofessional seminars, lectures, training sessions, conferences, study visits and exchanges between different associations of journalists and publications, such as the promotion of the “Lexicon of Judiciary and Media Terms” in Bosnia and Herzegovina or “The right to access information: national and international jurisprudence” in Kosovo.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY-JUNE 2018)

Component 1 – Legal professionals: More than 500 among judges prosecutors and lawyers, have been trained in the 6 project countries on several aspects of the Article 10 ECHR and the case law of the Court. The capacities of national academies of judges and prosecutors, as well as bar associations, to manage grant agreements and organise training events have been enhanced. Training materials tailored to the 6 specific countries’ system have been systematically used by the trainers and integrated in the national training modules. About 50 certified trainers have been updated on last developments related to freedom of expression.

Component 2 – Regulatory Authorities: All national versions of the regional publication “Media regulatory authorities and hate speech” have been printed and disseminated. A Study on Media Regulatory Framework and the Online Media – has been carried out in “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”. A Study visit to the Media literacy centre and Hungarian regulatory authority for electronic media (NMHH) brought representatives of their homologues from Serbia and Montenegro in Hungary. Also, a Study “Regulatory Authorities for Electronic Media and Media Literacy - Comparative analysis of the best European practices” was delivered in Serbia and publicly presented.

Component 3 – Media actors: More than 400 journalists and media actors were involved in different types of activities addressing a wide range of topics such as: media literacy, protection of journalists and of whistleblowers, defamation, access to public documents, hate speech, ethical standards, media reporting on judicial proceedings, protection of minors, protection of right to privacy and freedom of expression online and off line in general.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

Final event including the sixth and last regional conference of the Judiciary, as well as all other components and third annual Steering Committee to take place in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina on 4 - 5 April. Closure and reporting both narrative and financial of all 23

grant agreements. Study visit for lawyers from the whole region to Strasbourg on 23-24 April. Publication in the six local languages of the “Media regulatory authorities and protection of minorities” booklet. Publication “Dictionary of Media and Judicial Terms” to be finalised, printed and distributed in all countries. Few other activities addressing legal professionals, media actors, and regulatory authorities on freedom of expression related issues to be carried out in all countries.

Programme reference:	The Civil Society Facility and Media Programme for the years 2014-2015, allocation 2014 (2014/ 031-605)
Project title:	Building Trust in Media in South East Europe and Turkey
EU contribution:	EUR 1.5 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	PAGODA with UNESCO
Contract reference:	CN 2015/367-802
Duration of activities:	01/01/2016 – 31/12/2018
Contact:	Victor Dragutan, Victor.DRAGUTAN@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The project Building Trust in Media in South East Europe and Turkey aims to strengthen freedom of expression, access to information, and free, independent and pluralistic media in South East Europe and Turkey. The activities focused on strengthening media self-regulation in the region, on increasing media good governance and on developing Media and Information Literacy (MIL). The implementation started in January 2016.

ACTIVITIES

Activities aimed to strengthen media self-regulation, to increase media good governance and Media Information Literacy (MIL) are under way in all countries covered by the project (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia, Turkey and Kosovo under UNSCR 1244). Following key activities took place between July and December 2018:

- Representatives of all press and media councils of the target countries took part in the [annual meeting of the Alliance of Independent Press Councils in Europe](#) (AIPCE) in Helinski from 11 to 12 October 2018 to discuss ethical implications of the use of algorithms in journalism.
- Press and media councils from the region organized various capacity-building activities and awareness-raising activities as defined in their work plan. Among others, the Macedonian Media Council organized an [ethical award competition](#) to

support professional and inclusive journalism, [an Ethics School for students of journalism](#) and young journalists was organized in Pristina, and exchange visits between press councils of the region took place.

- A regional meeting of the Labour Rights Expert Group + (LAREG +) of the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ) took place in Brussels in October 2018.
- The Ethical Journalism Network (EJN) organized media consultations with media owners and editors of media outlets in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania and Turkey with the aim of improving their capacity to apply ethical standards and to promote media good governance and internal media audits.
- Drafting of a Background Document on MIL Policy and Strategy in Turkey, followed by a National Consultative meeting on MIL Policy in the country.
- Organisation of [a conference](#) to discuss the current state of play of media self-regulation in Turkey and present the partner P24 publication on opportunities and challenges for self-regulation in the country

OUTPUTS (JANUARY-JUNE 2018)

- Increased visibility and capacity of press councils in SEE and increased connections between representatives of press councils from the whole region (including Turkey and Albania) through participation in international and regional events.
- Recommendations to further promote and support media self-regulation in Turkey.
- [Elaboration of a regional Charter on on journalists'](#) working conditions in South East Europe and Turkey through LAREG plus group.
- More than 25 media outlets joining a regional coalition of media outlets agreeing to the idea of media Ethical Audits and increased transparency in media.
- Strengthened social media strategy and educational content disseminated on MIL to build trust in media.
- Engagement of stakeholders in drafting and debating MIL policy documents and establishment of successful partnerships of CSO sector and government on MIL.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Capacity-building activities, awareness-raising and networking activities to raise the profile of press and media councils in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the FYR Macedonia, Serbia and Kosovo (under UNSCR 1244).
- Regional training of press and media councils from South East Europe and Turkey in Serbia in February 2019.
- Organization of a training of trainers on journalist's labour rights in Belgrade and Pristina.
- Organization of an international Conference with the Turkish press council and development of promotional materials about this self-regulatory mechanism.

- Production of visibility brochures and materials to disseminate information about the impact of the Project.

Programme reference:	Civil Society Facility and Media Programme 2016-2017
Project title:	Media for Citizens - Citizens for Media; Building capacities of CSOs to advance Media and Information Literacy in Western Balkans
EU contribution:	EUR 955,362
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Grant contract
Contract reference:	2017/394-130
Duration of activities:	01/02/2018 – 01/02/2021
Links:	http://seenpm.org/category/mccm/
Contact :	Victor Dragutan, Victor.DRAGUTAN@ec.europa.eu

• PURPOSE

Seven media development organizations in the Western Balkans have joined forces to build capacities of CSOs to advance media and information literacy (MIL) in the region through research based advocacy and networking, capacity building actions, public campaigns and supporting CSOs in taking active role in developing and promoting MIL policies and practices in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia.

• ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

Research and informed advocacy. Regional research, aimed at mapping and better understanding of the state and development of media and information literacy in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Macedonia and Serbia, was conducted and research reports were prepared for publishing and promotion across the region. Five country reports providing systematic overview of MIL related initiatives, and one regional overview have been produced.

In each of the countries, informal groups/coalitions comprised of relevant public institutions representatives, CSOs, donor organisations and experts in the field of media, education, librarianship, information technology have been formed and their joint work on identifying media and information policy priorities has been facilitated by project partners.

Capacity building and networking for COSs at regional and local level. Regional conference “Media for citizens – citizens for media” was held in Novi Sad, Serbia in November 2018. Conference gathered over 70 media and information literacy (MIL) experts, journalists, civil society activists and representatives of education sector and state agencies enabling vibrant discussion on the current state of MIL in the Western Balkans through analysing ongoing initiatives, activities and strategies. The conference allowed for experience exchange among actors from different sectors and countries.

A series of *trainings of trainers* was organized in each of the five participating countries resulting with over 60 new media and information trainers capable of supporting local CSOs in designing and implementing MIL programs.

Relying on newly build training resources, first cycle of media and information trainings and workshops for CSOs in five countries has been organized with participation of 60 representatives of local civil society organisations active in the field of media and education development.

Sub-granting scheme to support 20 CSOs to realise MIL initiatives at local levels was announced and promoted in five countries.

- **OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)**

As a result of conducted research, media and information stakeholders across the region now have a basis for informed advocacy, policy development and enhancements of MIL-related practices. Insight into main projects, initiatives and actions in the area of promotion and development of MIL contributed to better understanding of current state of the arts in each of the countries within the partnership. Concrete recommendations are made to inform the next steps in development and improvement of MIL strategies, policies and practices in participating countries, both in the course of this project and beyond.

Platforms have been established in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia to enable multi-disciplinary and cross-sectoral approach to developing and implementing activities leading to MIL enhancements. The joint work of state institutions, CSOs, public and private media, library and academia representatives as well as education and IT experts is enabling a common understanding of the media and information literacy concept, harmonisation of objectives and activities of ongoing initiatives and determination of country level priorities in terms of MIL policy development.

The region is enriched with a pool of 60 experts qualified to disseminate knowledge on media and information literacy among CSOs of different profiles, but also among education and media workers, state institution representatives. This pool of experts is now a

knowledge base serving the goals of not only this program, but also extending the overall capacities of partner organizations to develop sustainable projects on the broad spectrum of media and information literacy initiatives.

Trainings held for CSOs have increased the capacities of 60 locally based CSOs in the region to understand MIL and its importance for media freedom and media integrity. Trainings have provided them with knowledge on media and information literacy and have provided opportunity to think about all the ways the groups they serve can benefit from increased media literacy skills and how they can help them in that process.

The sub-granting scheme has provided opportunity to support up to 20 locally based MIL initiatives proposed and designed by CSOs across the region.

Over half million people have been reached with information about project activities in five countries.

• ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

Supporting the work of national stakeholder groups/coalitions in identifying and developing MIL policy priorities, implementing advocacy campaigns and improving MIL related practices in relevant fields, primarily in media and education.

Designing and implementing public campaign based on participation of media and education workers to increase understanding of citizens about the media and information literacy and its' importance for safeguarding media freedom and freedom of expression.

Building cooperation between schools and civic media (non-profit) media in teaching MIL.

Launching a second call for applications under the sub-granting scheme.

Programme reference:	Civil Society Facility and Media Programme 2016-2017
Project title:	Support to independent media and civil society in the Western Balkans and Turkey
EU contribution:	EUR 6 000 000 (95%)
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia) and Turkey
Type of contract:	Grant contract
Contract reference:	2017/394-375
Duration of activities:	01/01/2018 – 31/12/2021
Links:	https://www.democracyendowment.eu/
Contact :	Victor Dragutan, Victor.DRAGUTAN@ec.europa.eu

• PURPOSE

The purpose of the action is to enable a continued pluralistic, independent civil society and media environment, as well as high quality journalism in the Western Balkan countries and Turkey. It will be achieved through flexible re-granting that fills the gap not covered by available EU and other donor funding - in terms of actors (individuals, start-ups, etc), type of support (core, emergency) or themes (not covered by current programmes).

• ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

- Online EED grant giving facility updated and open to the applicants from the Western Balkans: <https://www.democracyendowment.eu/support/>
- Outreach missions to all countries organised;
- EED Programme and Grants Team for the Western Balkans and Turkey established (3 Programme Officers, 1 Grants Officer, as well as Country Consultants for Turkey);
- Ongoing management of 22 grants awarded during 2018 (assessment of applications, contracting, review of reports, monitoring);
- Mentoring to applicants and grantees continuously provided;
- Promotion, networking and coordination with donors and stakeholders in the region and international level.

• OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

- Potential applicants in all Western Balkan countries and Turkey are well informed about EED funding opportunities;
- 141 applications from Western Balkans and Turkey received during 2018;
- 22 grant contracts were awarded with total 2,18 million euro allocated (1,4 million in Western Balkans and 0,78 million in Turkey);
- The awarded initiatives supported 15 media initiatives (out of which 11 in the Western Balkans and 4 in Turkey) and 7 civil society actors (out of which 3 in the Western Balkans and 4 in Turkey). They focus on the following main areas:
 - Support to independent media and innovative media products that promote high ethical standards and quality journalism;
 - Empowerment of independent media outlets (including up-to-date technologies, new ways of reaching audiences and generating income, etc.), as a key to safeguarding media freedom in the region;
 - Support to democratic initiatives that return to the core of citizens' activism, approaching issues in innovative, thematic, inter-sectoral and multi-disciplinary ways; and
 - Grass-roots initiatives and voluntarism.

- Coordination with EU Delegations, EC services and other donors and stakeholders in the beneficiary countries established.

• ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Ongoing grant portfolio management (assessment of received applications, contracting, review of reports, monitoring)
- Mentoring and technical assistance to applicants and grantees
- Outreach activities to inform potential new applicants about EED grant-giving scheme (missions, social media, participation at events)
- Establishment of pool of regional/field experts and country consultants
- Networking and coordination with donors and stakeholders in the region and international level
- Support to grantees in networking at country and EU level

Programme reference:	Civil Society Facility and Media Programme 2016-2017
Project title:	Technical Assistance to Public Service Media in the Western Balkans
EU contribution:	EUR 1.5 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Service Contract with IFJ
Contract reference:	EuropeAid/135382/DH/SER/MULTI
Duration of activities:	01/02/2018 – 31/07/2020
Contact :	Victor Dragutan, Victor.DRAGUTAN@ec.europa.eu

• PURPOSE

The project aims to contribute to the reform and professional development of Public Service Media (PSM) in the Western Balkans in order to produce increasingly pluralistic, independent and accountable content. Key components of the project are: introducing the European model of public service media funding and governance, assistance in building broadcasters internal capacities and support for content development.

• ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

- Drafting of the report “Financing of Public Service Media in the Western Balkans”.
- Organized round table debates on PSM funding modalities in five countries
- Organized round table debates on PSM governance and regulation in five countries.
- Organized regional meeting on editorial guidelines, including one follow up coaching workshop with newsroom editors and journalists.

- Organized study visit to Helsinki, focused on integrated newsrooms, the rise of online media and the emergence of new professional profiles.
- Interviews conducted with top and middle level management and staff at the six PSM to develop Management Reform Needs Assessment document and Road Maps for Management Changes for each of six public broadcasters.
- One regional investigative reporting workshop organized for reporters from seven PSM, followed by on line coaching sessions for research, preparation and production of investigative story ideas.
- One regional training for archiving staff, followed by on line coaching sessions to develop regional archive-exchange-platform.

• OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

- Updated regional report “Financing of Public Service Media in the Western Balkans” developed and presented to 120 project stakeholders in 4 countries
- Updated regional report “Challenges To Supervisory Boards Of Public Service Media In The Western Balkans” developed and presented to 120 project stakeholders in 4 countries
- More than 200 public media stakeholders got engaged in debates to identify priorities for strengthening independence of PSM through reformed financing models and improved governance structures.
- More than 100 media professionals from 4 national public broadcasters interviewed in order to assess needs for management changes
- Commitment from 12 journalists and news editors to carry out actions to develop their editorial guidelines, enforce the implementation of such codes of conduct where they exist already and better integrate journalists in this process
- 17 News and technical directors gain insight into the crucial issues on newsroom integration
- 6 Archive departments representatives in 6 PSMs agreed on metadata-model, content-set and rule-set for set-up, filling and managing the archive-exchange.
- 13 journalists enhanced investigative reporting skills. More than 20 story ideas discussed and prepared for future work.
- Public awareness on public service media issues raised in 6 countries through activities generated publicity. More than 80 news items published, including 20 posts on the official Project’s Facebook page, as well as at the web stories on website of the project implementing partners.

• ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Regional meeting on PSM funding models, with representatives of PSM, parliaments, regulatory authorities, NGOs, journalists’ unions, and media associations.
- Joint visit to EU Member States (Austria and Slovenia) aimed at exploring best PSM practice in governance, regulation and legislation.

- Regional meetings on complaints mechanism with the 12 directors and editors-in-chief from the 6 PSMs to strengthen PSM complaints mechanisms.
- Coaching sessions to strengthen editorial guidelines and complaint mechanism.
- Developing plans for integrated newsrooms with a focus on capacity-building, transitional strategies, technical enhancements and improved efficiency, followed by assistance in finalising plans for integrated newsrooms in all six PSMs.
- Finalizing Analysis of Needs for Management Reforms and Road Map Documents for Management Changes for PSMs.
- Organizing regional workshop for regulatory bodies and PSMs on audience surveys.
- Coaching journalists in research, preparation and production of investigative stories.
- Training for children and youth programme departments and organization of regional workshop, followed by coaching to producing pilot formats.
- Ad hoc coaching to develop sustainable platform for the exchange of PSM archive-content

The project is run by a consortium led by the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) together with the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ), the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN), the Eurovision News Exchange for South East Europe (ERNO) and the Austrian Public Broadcaster (ORF)

Programme reference:	Civil Society Facility and Media Programme, IPA 2014/031-605
Project title:	Western Balkan’s Regional Platform for advocating media freedom and journalists’ safety
EU contribution:	EUR 1,189,615.97
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Grant contract
Contract reference:	CN 2015/369 – 846
Duration of activities:	01/01/2016 – 31/12/2018
Links:	www.safejournalists.net
Contact:	Victor Dragutan, Victor.DRAGUTAN@ec.europa.eu

• PURPOSE

The Action’s goal is to empower journalist organisations to be effective and accountable advocates of application of EU standards of media freedom and integrity in the region. It did so by strengthening partner’s internal capacities (production and implementation of strategic and advocacy plans, tools to assess the level of media freedoms, etc.) and external efforts (sub-granting scheme, urgent actions in cases of attacks on journalists, etc.)

• ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

The Action ended on 31.12.2018 meaning that the activities performed in the last 6 months were mostly focussed on finalisation of the successful project, but not exclusively:

- **Capacity building:** a two day workshop themed Monitoring and evaluation that was additionally used for internal evaluation of the overall Action by participants
- **Production of the Indicators on the level of media freedom and journalists' safety** - [5 national reports](#) were finalised and presented in each country and Indicators on the level of media freedom and journalists' safety – a [comparative analysis](#) was produced and presented at an [international conference](#) in Podgorica, MNE.
- **Finalisation of the regional [small grants scheme](#)** implemented with locally and regionally rooted civil society initiatives, engaging human rights activists, journalists and media, aiming to protect the freedom of expression and freedom of media.
- **Implementation of a Regional alert system:** the Network reacted 8 times (four incidents of physical attack, 3 threats to life and one case of property destruction) by informing national and international stakeholders urging them to act. This was also done through meetings with EC, MEP and other national/international stakeholders.
- **Evaluation:** in the course of the reporting period evaluations of the strategic and advocacy plans produced and implemented as a part of the project was implemented.
- **Final external evaluation of the Action** is under way.

• OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

- **Capacity building:** 17 staff members have better understanding of the necessity and process of systematic monitoring of activities, collating relevant data and its evaluation
- **Indicators on the level of media freedom and journalists' safety:** [5 national reports](#) and one [comparative analysis](#) was produced and presented to more than 250 stakeholders
- **Finalisation of the regional [small grants scheme](#):** 4 regional and 11 national projects, encompassing 24 different organisations (9 in Serbia, 6 in FYROM, 4 in BH, 2 in Kosovo and 3 in Montenegro). More than 40 stories about media freedoms and safety of journalists were published.
- **Implementation of a Regional alert system:** the Network reacted 8 times (four incidents of physical attack, 3 threats to life and one case of property destruction) by informing national and international stakeholders urging them to act. This was also done through more than 100 meetings with national and international stakeholders.
- **Evaluations:** 10 organisation specific reports, with recommendation, 1 report by Strategic expert focussed on the process of strategic planning in the region
- **Final external evaluation of the Action** is under way, however its preliminary findings state that the Network not only it is still highly relevant, but that majority of targets were met or surpassed. It also gave concrete recommendations as to how it can be improved in order to increase its outcomes and impact in the future.

- ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

NB: The *Western Balkan's Regional Platform for advocating media freedom and journalists' safety* project supported by EC ended on Dec, 21 2018. The Network continues to operate with minimum resources, focussed on collating data about the attacks on journalists and alerting national and international community. Implementation of strategic and advocacy strategies continues.

Programme reference:	EuropeAid/154870/DH/ACT/Multi
Project title:	Balkan Transitional Justice Initiative
EU contribution:	EUR 883,810
Beneficiary region:	Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia
Type of contract:	Grant Contract
Contract reference:	2017/393-744
Duration of activities:	01/01/2018 – 31/12/2020
Links:	http://birn.eu.com/
Contact:	Victor Dragutan, Victor.DRAGUTAN@ec.europa.eu

- PURPOSE

The overall objective of the project is to increase public knowledge and awareness about transitional justice processes and their impact on reconciliation and intercultural dialogue in post-conflict societies such as Western Balkan countries. The project aims to engage civil society actors and journalists in the promotion of more effective transitional justice strategies.

- ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

- The Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN) regional team of journalists extensively covered war crime trials in national courts in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo and Serbia. Special focus was also given to the trials happening before International Criminal Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia. In total, BIRN covered and reported on over 100 trials for war crimes. Together with war crime trials, BIRN journalists also covered other important transitional justice topics in the region.
- BIRN BiH produced episodes of TV Justice, a monthly 30-minute programme covering the latest developments at the War Crimes Chamber of the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

- An Online War Crimes Verdicts' Map was updated with new verdicts. BIRN journalists are gathering all completed war crimes cases brought by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and national courts in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo. Verdicts collected so far have been published on [War Crimes Verdicts Map](#).
- Three stakeholder meetings organised in Croatia, Serbia and Kosovo, aimed at discussing current issues in regional cooperation in prosecution of war crimes. Participants were representatives of justice ministries, victims' associations, courts, prosecution offices, local civil society organisations, international organisations, journalists, professors, lawyers, independent experts etc.
- BIRN organised a regional conference called '*After the ICTY: Regional Cooperation, Accountability, Truth and Justice in the Former Yugoslavia*' in Sarajevo. The conference opened a floor for a discussion related to regional cooperation in war crimes prosecutions in the Western Balkans.
- The main conclusions from the conference, as well as from four stakeholder meetings, were published in a form of a report and used for a further advocacy on regional cooperation regarding war crimes prosecutions in the region. Full report can be found [here](#).
- BIRN opened a call for journalists from Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia and Albania. During 2019, selected journalists will receive a 1000 euros grant to produce an in-depth story on transitional justice issues in the region.

• OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

- BIRN team produced over 350 articles in English language and over 1050 articles in BCMS, Albanian and Macedonian languages. Total number of international, regional and local republications was over 3000.
- Six TV Justice episodes were produced and published. TV Justice was aired by two public broadcasters, Federalna TV and BHT 1, both having a share of 23,5% and screened by over 20 media outlets.
- In total, over 30 relevant stakeholders from Croatia, Serbia and Kosovo participated in stakeholder meetings.
- War crimes verdict map was updated with over 100 new verdicts.
- Regional conference brought together over 140 participants, including policy-makers, governmental and institutional representatives, CSO workers, journalists and media workers, students of political and media studies. Also, over 10 media outlets were present at the conference.
- The report containing recommendations on regional cooperation for transitional justice was sent to more than 100 relevant stakeholders in the region, including local CSO's, academia, media, international organisations and representatives of institutions of Kosovo, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia.

- 10 journalists were selected to receive a 1000 euros grant to produce a story on transitional justice issues in the region.

• ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- BIRN will continue to report on war crime trials and transitional justice issues in the post-Yugoslav countries and Albania.
- Special focus page will be open for the news regarding Specialist Chambers and Special Prosecutor Office for Kosovo in the Hague.
- War Crime Verdicts Map will be updated/upgraded in order to be more user-friendly.
- 10 grantees will produce and publish stories on transitional justice issues in the region. Completed stories will be published on Balkan Transitional Justice website and translated to all local languages
- Regional training for journalists and study trip to the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals and Specialist Chambers and Specialist Prosecutor Office for Kosovo in the Hague.

6.6. CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES AND PROTECTION OF CHILDREN

Programme reference:	Civil Society Facility and Media Programme IPA 2014/031-605
Project title:	Protecting children from violence and promoting social inclusion of children with disabilities in Western Balkans and Turkey
EU contribution:	EUR 5 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Grant Agreement with UNICEF
Contract reference:	2015/368-251
Duration of activities:	36 months
Contact :	

• PURPOSE

The overall purpose of this Action is to build strong partnerships between civil society organisations, governments and community groups to promote human rights, improve public services to protect children from various forms of violence and promote social inclusion of children with disabilities.

- ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

A number of events was organized as part of the Action to support peer-learning, increase visibility and awareness on the situation of children with disabilities and improve results delivered as part of the Action. The regional meeting in Skopje brought together 40 participants (implementing partners, government representatives, EUDs, EC and UNICEF) to take stock of the progress made in the last three years of the Action's implementation and identify steps towards addressing remaining gaps. A closing visibility with the participation of all key stakeholders was organized in the European Parliament to mark the International Day of Persons with Disabilities by raising awareness on the situation of CWD in the Western Balkans and Turkey based on the evidence collected through this Action. The Results Oriented Monitoring Mission was organized and found a good progress in implementing the Action and identified the remaining challenges on VAC and CWD in the participating countries. To further strengthen the role of the Disabled Persons Organisations (DPOs) on advocacy and policy dialogue on the issue of CWD, the European Disability Forum (EDF) convened several sub-regional and national workshops in Montenegro, Albania and Turkey. number of activities in countries included in the Action contributed to improved information and data collection/availability on VAC. In Albania - there were 581 registered calls on violence, abuse and neglect of children by ALLO 116, in Northern Macedonia - specifically designed indicators to guide data collection in all key sectors were developed, and through a joint effort of several SCOs and a partner "Open Gate – La Strada" the set of the indicators aimed at collecting stronger data on VAC among the CSOs was tested. In Serbia - re-test survey on intersectoral collaboration in protection of children from violence was realized by (MODS) Network of child rights organizations), and in Turkey - comparative factsheets were developed in collaboration with local Bar Associations and University-based Child Protection Centres to generate better evidence on the trends and cases of VAC. Capacity building of the relevant professionals, CSOs and parents continued in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) through a method "Circle of Friends"- designed to increase the socialization and inclusion of CWD. In Montenegro - using nationally or internationally accredited programmes on protection from violence and supporting children with disabilities; and in Turkey - to increase the capacities of the members of the NGO Network for the Rights of Children with Disabilities (EÇHA) (reached 47 members) on advocacy and combatting discrimination against disability. In Serbia - a final conference and knowledge exchange meeting was organized with 46 participants from the different sectors and representatives from ministries and independent bodies. A number of high-level awareness raising/public and advocacy campaigns/events were carried out in Albania ("Here We Are" - event organised by children with disabilities and dedicated to the launch of the SitAn on CWD), in BiH - the campaign to end corporal punishment in collaboration with National Human Rights Office Tuzla and SCOs, and the production of the theatre play "Hero" focused on the detrimental impact of corporal

punishment), in Kosovo* - advocacy campaign for the parents on the importance of education and enrolment of CWD in the education, and awareness raising activities between the children with disabilities and community members. In Northern Macedonia - “Parenting Is Also Learned” campaign to break the taboo and open discussion on violence and childhood adversities by using compelling digital material with a narrative “Love is instinctive, effective parenting is learned” was launched; and in Serbia - a closing ceremony of the *Sport for All* - inclusive sport and recreative activities for CWD in the six municipalities was organized. In support of this, educational, advocacy and awareness raising materials were produced in close cooperation with the NGOs/DPOs: children’s books, advocacy videos, radio spots, short human-interest stories and documentary photo exhibition on CWD in Albania, a Handbook ‘Quality Inclusive Teaching Practices’ and Guidelines for its application and a completed KAP Survey on social norms on violence against children and social inclusion of children with disabilities in BiH, the evidence-based parenting programme “Parenting for Lifelong Health for Young Children” - implemented for the second time in 3 municipalities in Montenegro, accompanied by the second TV commercial on positive parenting; on the understanding of inclusion and its practice in preschool education in Northern Macedonia; and a series of advocacy notes on the effects of the new media on VAC, corporal punishment, sexual exploitation of children in Turkey (developed by the NGO Network on Preventing Violence Against Children - ICC), including an analysis of national action plans and strategies concerning VAC, as well as the guidelines for children, families and civil society organizations on the application procedures for the Ombudsman Institution.

- **OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)**

As a result of the active outreach work supported by this Action, the public services are improved to better identify and deal with the cases of violence against children: ALO116’s (Albania) 2018 preliminary data indicates a significant increase of the calls received overall – 44,906 calls, and nearly doubling the figure of the cases - 1027 of child abuse, violence and neglect; the parent line provided by CSO Roditelji (Montenegro) provided more than 500 counselling calls since its launch; several training programmes attained national accreditation based on the internationally renowned tools resulting in the first graduates: 40 centres for social work professionals on domestic violence, 30 health professionals from the national Centre for Autism, Developmental Disabilities and Child Psychiatry and primary health centres, and 16 social and child protection professionals on the rights of children with disabilities. With the establishment of the National Coordination Body for Protection of

* For the European Union, 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. For UNICEF, references to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of UN Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999)

Children from Abuse and Neglect in Northern Macedonia, the key state sectors have begun to use a common language and are working towards a uniform understanding of the complex issue of violence against children; 5 more municipalities in Serbia adopted local VAC protocols which makes the total of 28 produced VAC protocols as part of the Action; finally, the number of applications on children’s rights violations received by the Ombudsman Institution in Turkey increased up to 800 (four times increase compared to the previous year). The evidence generation on CWD through the SitAns developed in strong partnership with the DPOs, led to the important legislative undertakings and advocacy action plans in Kosovo and Albania, accompanied by public discussions reaching out to over 8,000 children, parents, care givers, Government and non-government representatives in Albania. In Serbia, 1700 children participated in inclusive sport and recreative activities in six municipalities and promoted social inclusion. The campaigns on the prevention of VAC resulted in significant community engagement in BiH (500,000 citizens reached) in finding alternative solutions to physical punishment of children; a petition on the legal prohibition of all forms of corporal punishment gathered over 16,500 signatures in BiH, and secured commitment from Members of Parliament in both entities to submit the initiatives for debate to the Entity Parliamentary Assemblies. In Northern Macedonia, the campaign reached over 1 million and engaged 100,000 people on social media in just over one month and the response at town hall meeting – 2000 people attending 5 events. Fifty-five parents received certificates for completing the evidence-based parenting programme “Parenting for Lifelong Health”, adding up to a total of 120 during 2018 across 4 largest municipalities in Montenegro. Thanks to the completed activities and capacity built with the Action, the NGO Networks (VAC – under the leadership of ICC and EÇHA – on disability) are equipped with better skills in generating evidence from the field and will continue their evidence-based advocacy and lobbying efforts vis-à-vis various stakeholders in the coming term. A regional synthesis on the situation of children with disabilities in Western Balkans and Turkey presented to the European Parliament, CSOs, DPOs and EC in Brussels, called for urgent action to improve the inclusion of children with disabilities in society, and help children fulfil their potential.

- ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

The Action ended on 31 December 2018 and final report will be prepared and submitted in June 2019.

6.7. ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN THE WB COUNTRIES AND TURKEY

Programme reference:	Civil Society Facility and Media Programme IPA 2016/038-960
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Project title:	Ending violence against women in the Western Balkan Countries and Turkey: Implementing Norms, Changing Minds
EU contribution:	EUR 5 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Grant Agreement with UN Women
Contract reference:	2017/380-469
Duration of activities:	01/02/2017 – 31/01/2020
Links:	http://eca.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/regional-programme-in-the-western-balkans-and-turkey

- PURPOSE

The three-year programme, ‘Implementing Norms, Changing Minds’, aims to end gender-based discrimination and violence against women in the Western Balkans

(Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia) and Turkey with a particular focus on the most disadvantaged groups of women. To achieve this goal, the programme strengthens civil society (women’s rights organizations in particular) to advocate for an enabling and effective implementation of normative frameworks; to transform gender-discriminatory stereotypes, perceptions and beliefs; and to empower women and girls who have experienced discrimination or violence (including those from disadvantaged groups) to advocate for and use available, accessible and quality services

- ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

With a view to create an enabling legislative and policy environment in line with international standards on eliminating violence against women and all forms of discrimination, the Government of the former Yugoslav Republic (fYR) of Macedonia, UN Women, the European Union, and the Council of Europe (CoE), in partnership with European Women’s Lobby, convened a regional forum to discuss the progress in implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, known as the Istanbul Convention, within the broader commitments on gender equality and ending violence against women in the Western Balkans and Turkey. Under the title “Integrated policies, inclusive partnerships”, over 150 representatives from governments, civil society and regional institutions from the Western Balkans and Turkey

convened in Skopje on 27 and 28 November 2018 to discuss the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Istanbul Convention, so as to push this agenda forward by developing concrete proposals for action at national and regional levels.

During the reporting period, 20 CSOs and CSO networks directly supported by the programme contributed to the collection and analysis of data and to build the capacities of CSOs and state institutions to report on human rights instruments; inter alia: in **Albania**, the Monitoring Network on Gender-based Violence developed a practical manual for CSOs on their involvement in the monitoring process of CEDAW, the Istanbul Convention and Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process and the methodologies for preparing shadow/alternative reports; upon the request of the Albanian Ombudsman, a manual was also developed to guide the institution in monitoring international human rights obligations and preparing shadow/alternative reports to human rights mechanisms. In **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, CSO United Women Banja Luka, as lead of a platform of 22 women's rights CSOs, collected data towards drafting an alternative report to GREVIO, and 53 women from 32 women's organizations took part in two three-day trainings on monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the Istanbul Convention. In **Serbia**, SOS Network Vojvodina, comprising five women's organizations, finalized the process of data collection and analysis for the comprehensive shadow report to GREVIO, as well as for the shadow report to CEDAW Committee. In **Turkey**, Turkish Women's Union, on behalf of 14 CSOs under the umbrella of the Executive Committee on NGO Forum for CEDAW, produced an interim GREVIO shadow report together with 65 women from 47 women's CSOs. At **regional level**, Bibija Roma Women's Centre (Serbia) has established the first platform in the region working on ending violence against women among Roma communities along with NGO Otaharin (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Roma Women and Youth Association "LULUDI" (FYR Macedonia), and NGO Young Roma (Montenegro).

With a view to empower women and girl survivors of violence to access general and specialist services as defined by Istanbul Convention, the programme implemented, inter alia, the following activities: in **Albania**, Human Rights in Democracy Center (HRDC) in partnership with the Shelter for Women and Girls conducted 22 capacity building activities for service providers from the police, municipal units, health, and education sectors – the main actors of the multi-sectorial mechanism for addressing cases of domestic violence. In **Kosovo**, a manual on case management of GBV and DV cases was developed and launched to inform local and central level institutions and international organizations work on ending violence against women. The manual followed an assessment undertaken by Safe House on possible malpractices in shelters' service provision. In **Montenegro**, standard procedures for SOS helplines and shelters were developed, and in **Serbia**, CSO ...iz kruga Vojvodina validated a proposal for amending the guidelines of seven Centres for Victims of Sexual Violence in

order to address the needs of women living with disabilities, and more specifically the procedures in cases of sexual violence.

As part of the Gender Lab, the programme directed efforts towards increasing the capacities of CSOs to develop and implement strategic communication programmes for achieving specific behavioural results with regard to reducing violence against women in selected communities within programme-participating countries. Over 25 organizations from the region benefited from on-the-job training and took part on a 3-day Communication for Behavioural Impact (COMBI) Planning Methodology Training to assist them in developing Integrated Marketing Communications/ COMBI plan at community level to address specific behavioural issues related to gender inequalities and violence against women.

• OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

In **Albania**, as a result of advocacy and monitoring work of the supported Monitoring Network on Gender-based Violence, the Director of the Service of Internal Affairs and Complaint of the Interior Ministry, adopted a six-month inspection plan to monitor the procedures of police officers when dealing with domestic violence cases. In **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, the Safe network (network of CSOs running shelters) is better equipped to conduct constructive dialogue with government counterparts when it comes to integration of specialist support services (shelters, SOS helpline, free legal aid) into the system of protection from domestic violence. In **FYR Macedonia**, four organizations supported within the programme are recognized by the government as relevant partners for the implementation of Istanbul Convention and participated in the working group for the new law for prevention of and protection from gender-based violence. In **Kosovo**, due in part to efforts from CSOs supported by the programme, the Criminal Code is now better aligned with international norms through amendments adopted in January 2019 that include domestic violence as a separate offense, accurately define all acts of domestic violence, and codify all Articles of the current Criminal Code into a single Chapter. Moreover, the first Monitoring Report of the National Strategy for Protection against Domestic Violence 2016-2020 has been conducted with support of the programme. In **Montenegro**, GREVIO's recommendations, which were significantly based on input from programme-supported CSOs, served as a foundation for both the advancement of the legal framework in 2019 and also its effective implementation. In **Turkey**, 1276 Syrian women have increased knowledge of their rights and how to make use of them in Turkey. Collaboration among Turkish CSOs and Syrian women groups has been strengthened, and key governmental stakeholders developed an understanding of the issues faced by Syrian women in their localities and their rights and entitlements.

Regionally, more than 150 representatives of governments of 6 programme-participating countries, CSOs, human rights institutions, and EU delegations have increased knowledge and awareness of the current situation, challenges and best practices in the implementation of CEDAW and the Istanbul Convention through participation in the the Regional Forum ‘Integrated policies, inclusive partnerships.’ The forum, which signified the first time the countries united under the gender equality agenda, was jointly organised by UN Women, in collaboration with the Government of FYR Macedonia through the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, EC DG NEAR, and the Council of Europe (CoE), in partnership with European Women’s Lobby.

Additionally, through the Civil Society Strengthening Platform (a result of the programme’s support to Women Against Violence Europe – WAVE), 9 CSOs increased their collaboration, shared good practices, and identified next steps in the fight against violence against women by convening at the regional level.

Furthermore, key steps were taken to strengthen Roma and pro-Roma women’s rights civil society networks and platforms. Following a project cooperation agreement signed with BIBIJA Roma Women’s Centre, 3 Roma women’s organizations became directly engaged in the programme, and 26 organizations attended a meeting organized by Roma Women and Youth Association Luludi to create an informal regional network in October 2018.

As a result of efforts by implementing partner Imkaan, all stakeholders have essential information on the nature and types of services that exist for minoritized women and girls facing violence through the publication of “A thousand ways to solve our problems: An analysis of existing violence against women and girls (VAWG) approaches for minoritized women and girls in the Western Balkans and Turkey.” Over ‘40 by and for’ organizations contributed to the research for this report.

Implementing partners now have more comprehensive, up-to-date information on public attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs toward gender equality and violence against women through the finalization of baseline survey reports in 6 programme-participating countries. The baseline data will inform Gender Lab interventions and will be used as a comparison to endline data to gauge the effectiveness of interventions. The baseline report also includes a mapping of campaigns conducted in the previous 5 years that were perceived to be effective, which will serve as good practices for the development of future interventions.

15 representatives of 11 CSOs from all 7 programme-participating countries and 7 representatives of UN Women involved in programme implementation increased their capacities to develop and implement strategic communication programmes to achieve specific behavioural results (COMBI) related to ending violence against women. The COMBI

workshop, led by an international expert on behavioural change, provided an interactive setting for participants to improve their skills and understanding.

- **ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER**

In the first half of 2019, the programme's focus at regional level will include:

- Meeting with over 50 CSO programme partners to take stock on programme challenges, lessons learnt and achievements to address the main pressing issues on violence against women in the region, and inform the second Regional Forum on the Implementation of Istanbul Convention to be held in the last term of 2019;
- Rolling out the Regional Expert Working Group on intersectional approaches to gender-based discrimination and violence against women: 3-day workshop in Sarajevo on 8-10 April "Intersectional Approaches and the Value of Specialist 'by and for' organisations" for over 20 organizations from minorities throughout the region; and 2-day meeting with organizations representing minorities and development partners to inform the development and gender equality agenda in the region in June (dates to be determined);
- Building the capacities of over 60 CSOs and relevant key stakeholders to provide services to victims of violence in line with the provisions and standards of Istanbul Convention: publication on action-oriented research to inform the provision of general and support services to survivors of violence, particularly in the justice sector, and for improved case management;
- Building the capacity of women's organizations to engage in the implementation and monitoring of national and regional policies on gender equality, ending violence against women, and women's rights, and to advocate for local and national governments' accountability on CEDAW Recommendations and Istanbul Convention implementation:
 - The Civil Society Strengthening Platform will **conduct an in-depth assessment** of the collaboration of regional women's NGOs and networks accessible to women from all backgrounds and its influence on increasing the implementation of the IC and the accountability of governments in project partner countries. Following the in-depth assessment, **a comprehensive report** will incorporate the results of the assessments and explore case studies/best practise examples, as well as the most and least implemented aspects of the Istanbul Convention in the region. **One three-day training in Montenegro** (25th and 26th March) for regional networks and NGOs on 1) how to strengthen regional women's networks and make them more accessible (using the findings of 'Doing it Right' report from year one), as well as developing strategies on how to make the CSSP sustainable beyond the duration of the project, and 2) the follow up process of reporting to GREVIO.

- BIBIJA Roma Women’s Centre along with partner organisations will hold a conference in Belgrade with organizations and members of the national networks actively involved in the monitoring platform. Monitoring reports will be produced to be presented at the regional conference that will also serve for exchange of good practices, networking and advocacy for improvement of the status of Roma women in line with the international standards. The national and regional monitoring report as well the outcomes of the regional conference will be the basis for the network future endeavors and will inform the 2-year action plan if the network members convene to develop one.

CHAPTER 7: SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

7.1 CAPACITY BUILDING IN HIGHER EDUCATION (CBHE)

Programme reference:	IPA 2011/SI2.596555; IPA 2012/SI2.615827; IPA 2013/SI2.645034; IPA 2014/SI2.691984; IPA 2015/D45.B1515.000567; IPA 2016/D45.B1616.001476
Project title:	Tempus: Trans-European Mobility Scheme for University Studies; Erasmus+ Capacity Building in Higher Education (CBHE)
EU contribution:	IPA 2011/SI2.596555, EUR 15.3 million IPA 2012/SI2.615827, EUR 14.9 million IPA 2013/SI2.645034, EUR 11.7 million IPA 2014/SI2.691984, EUR 10.07 million IPA 2015/ D45.B1515.000567, EUR 13.2 million IPA 2016/ D45.B1616.001476, EUR 13.5 million IPA 2017/D45. B1717.001712, EUR 10.3 million
Beneficiary region:	Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, and Serbia
Type of contract:	The programmes are implemented by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA)
Links:	http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/tempus http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus/actions/key-action-2-cooperation-for-innovation-and-exchange-good-practices/capacity-0_en
Contact:	Albert Sese Ballart, Albert.SESE-BALLART@ec.europa.eu

• PURPOSE

The Erasmus+ Capacity Building in Higher Education (CBHE) facilitates the reform of higher education institutions by upgrading the quality and management of academic institutions, in line with changing political, social and economic needs and through voluntary convergence with higher education reform developments in the EU Member States.

• ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

- **National Erasmus+ Offices/International Contact Points (NEO/ICP)** meeting was held in October and focussed on the update of knowledge and skills for the management of the NEOs activities. Staff was trained on the three main pillars of the NEO activities, namely (a) promotion and communication with applicants and the wider public, (b) monitoring of actual beneficiaries and the implementation of projects, and (c) management of NEO offices. Furthermore, at the meeting NEOs were familiarised with the concept of quantitative and qualitative success indicators of their work. The meeting further encouraged networking between different actors in order to foster and facilitate cooperation between Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) from programme and partner countries in the framework of the international dimension of the Erasmus+ Programme.
- **4 seminars** were held respectively in Kosovo, Serbian and Montenegro addressing more than 250 participants (e.g., Higher Education Reform Experts, rectors, students, quality assurance experts, etc). They covered a number of thematic areas such as Challenges of the digital era for higher education (Serbia), Academic freedom and ethics (Kosovo*), Status of doctoral candidates (in Montenegro).
- **4 thematic CBHE projects cluster meetings** were held respectively in Albania, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia. There attracted more than 200 project representatives. The clusters covered a wide range of themes such as Quality Assurance (Albania), University-enterprise cooperation (Bosnia), Curriculum development-challenges and achievements (Montenegro), and Student internship models as tool for increasing employability of graduates (Serbia).
- More than **40 monitoring visits** were carried out in the Western Balkan region.
- 18 selected projects (2018 selection) have signed grant agreements with EACEA and started their activities.

• OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

- The thematic cluster meetings are an excellent floor to simulate the networking and to increase synergies between the beneficiaries. They have helped clarify and provide advice on project implementation, and raise awareness on the beneficiaries' role and responsibilities. These events also demonstrated how capacity-building projects impact

not only institutions and individuals but also system levels focusing on country's priorities. The results and outcomes of thematic cluster meetings are encouraging in terms of the CBHE impact at all levels, in building capacities of universities (students and staff) and the private sector, and in bridging the gap between industry and academia.

- The four seminars resulted in a number of recommendations to be addressed at institutional and national levels.
- The 40 monitoring visits confirmed that the projects are well implemented, and that they have a significant impact at individual and institutional level. The mobility of academic staff, as well as introduction of the new curricula are seen as key elements for the modernisation of the higher education institutions. The visits confirmed that the Partner Countries' institutions use ever more the CBHE as a tool for developing their strategies and to expand their cooperation internationally.

• ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- 2018 beneficiaries' meeting, January 2019
- 12 seminars addressing higher education reform are foreseen in 2019.

7.2 ERASMUS MUNDUS

Programme reference:	Multi-beneficiary Programme, IPA 2013/935
Project title:	Erasmus Mundus Action 1 and Action 2
EU contribution:	Action 1: EUR 8.0 million Action 2: EUR 12.0 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	The programme is implemented by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA)
Links:	https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/sites/2007-2013/erasmus-mundus-programme_en http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus/actions/key-action-1-learning-mobility-individuals/erasmus-mundus-joint-master-degrees_en
Contact:	Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, EACEA-EPLUS-JMD@ec.europa.eu

• PURPOSE

The Erasmus Mundus programme's objective was to promote European higher education, to help improve and enhance the career prospects of students and to promote intercultural

understanding through cooperation with third countries, in accordance with EU external policy objectives, in order to contribute to the sustainable development of third countries in the field of higher education. The programme has been discontinued in 2014 and incorporated in the Erasmus+ Programme (2014-2020).

- **ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)**

Erasmus Mundus Action 1

Action 1 of the former Erasmus Mundus programme supports high quality joint master courses and doctoral programmes run by consortia of European and third country higher education institutions (HEIs). The action mainly fosters cooperation between HEIs and academic staff in Europe and third countries with a view of creating poles of excellence and providing highly trained human resources. The joint programmes involve mobility between institutions of the consortium and lead to the award of recognised joint, double or multiple degrees. Students and doctoral candidates are awarded Erasmus Mundus scholarships/fellowships. 12 doctoral programmes co-funded by IPA are still ongoing.

Erasmus Mundus Action 2

Under Action 2, the Erasmus Mundus Partnerships brought together HEIs from the EU on one hand and those from a particular region in the world on the other hand, to manage mobility flows between the two regions for a range of academic levels – undergraduate, master, doctorate, post-doctorate – and for academic staff. These partnerships allow sharing of best practice and exploring further opportunities for cooperation between European and Western Balkan HEIs through bilateral agreements and other measures. This action has been discontinued in 2014. Two projects came to an end in July, leaving the last 2 remaining projects still in operation.

- **OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)**

Erasmus Mundus Action 1

12 of the Erasmus Mundus Joint Doctorates (EMJD) that are still ongoing were selected under the former Erasmus Mundus programme. These doctoral candidates completed their studies in the second semester of 2018 and most of them already submitted their final reports.

Erasmus Mundus Action 2

Among the very last on-going projects of this action, two came to an end mid-July and their reports arrived in autumn. They are currently being assessed. These partnerships enhanced regional cooperation between the participating universities from the Western Balkans and strengthened academic links with the European Union.

- ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

Erasmus Mundus Action 1

The final reports of the EMJDs that had benefited from the IPA funds (2014 intake) and submitted by the end of 2018 and are being analysed. The results will be known in the first half of 2019.

Erasmus Mundus Action 2

The last two running projects under this action will come to end in the first half of 2019. Their final reports will be submitted and analysed subsequently.

7.3 ERASMUS+ CAPACITY BUILDING IN THE FIELD OF YOUTH

Programme reference:	IPA Multi-Country Programme - annually
Project title:	Erasmus+ Capacity building in the field of youth – Western Balkans
EU contribution:	EUR 3 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	The programme is implemented by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA)
Duration of activities:	between 9 and 24 months
Contact :	Albert Sese Ballart, Albert.SESE-BALLART@ec.europa.eu

- PURPOSE

The objectives of these projects are to enhance cooperation between Programme and Partner Countries, improve the quality and recognition of youth-work, non-formal learning, and volunteering in Partner Countries and foster synergies with education systems and the labour market, reinforce non-formal learning mobility schemes and programmes, and promote transnational non-formal learning mobility. Further, the projects aim to promote strategic cooperation between youth organisations and public authorities and raise the capacities of youth councils, youth platforms and local, regional and national authorities dealing with youth in Western Balkan countries.

• ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

In December, the Youth sector in EACEA provided an on-line web streaming information session on Capacity Building in the Field of Youth for the call 2019, including question & answer component (questions received via e-mail, answered during the session). The web-streaming session and frequently asked questions are available on the EACEA's website.

• OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

- The deadline for the 2018 selection was in March 2018 (described in previous Activity Report). The notification letters were sent on 30 August and the results were published on EACEA's website on 14 September. For the Western Balkans, 38 applications were selected. These were contracted during October-December. All pre-financing was done by the year end. Furthermore, four applications were put on the reserve list.
- The Call for proposal 2019 was published on 24 October with a new deadline of 24 January instead of 8 March as in previous years.
- The on-line web streaming information session on Capacity Building in the Field of Youth for the call 2019 took place on the 18th December. Over 1,300 people were connected.

• ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- 24 January was the deadline for the CBY call for proposal. In total 512 applications were received, of which 109 were from the Western Balkans. This number is lower than in previous year as Serbia is now a Programme Country of Erasmus+.
- On 25 January, the kick-off information session will take place for the projects selected in 2018.
- EACEA UNIT A6 – Youth sector is currently selecting experts for the evaluation period and preparing the on-line briefing for the selected experts.

7.4 EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS

Programme reference:	Multi-beneficiary Programme under IPA Transition Assistance and Institution Building Component for the year 2015, IPA 2015/038-054.11
Project title:	Employment and Social Affairs Platform (ESAP)
EU contribution:	EUR 3 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans

Type of contract:	Grant agreements with the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO)
Contract reference:	VS/2016/0054 (RCC) and VS/2016/0002 (ILO)
Duration of activities:	01/03/2016 – 28/02/2019 (RCC) 01/04/2016 – 31/03/2019 (ILO) <i>Both requested amendment (no-cost extension until 31.10. 2019).</i>
Contact:	Christiane Westphal, Christiane.Westphal@ec.europa.eu

• PURPOSE

The overall objective of the Employment and Social Affairs Platform is to assist the Western Balkan countries with the employment and social policy reforms in their pre-accession process. The action will help improve the regional cooperation in employment and social policy-making, labour market governance, working conditions and social dialogue.

• ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

ILO

- Annual meeting of Regional Network for Agencies of Peaceful Settlement of Labour Disputes (Serbia, July 2018);
- Annual Meeting of CEELEX Network Central Eastern European Labour Expert Network (FYR of Macedonia, September 2018);
- CEELEX Community of Practice – meetings at ESAP online Platform (November and December 2018);
- Update of ESAP platform and Case database (October – December 2018).

RCC

- 3 regional analyses on internships, local employment partnerships and on-the-job training;
- 2 regional peer review workshops on internships and local employment partnerships;
- Within the benchlearning exercise among Western Balkan Public Employment Services (PES), two peer visits among PES offices and a regional analytical report on management by objectives and local employment plans;
- 6 national diagnostic reports on informal employment, and organization of the first national workshop (Albania) for discussing findings and recommendations;
- Technical assistance to several national activities.

• OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

ILO

- Report “A Comparative Overview of Drivers and Outcomes of Labour Law and Industrial Relations Reforms in Selected Central and Eastern European Countries”;
- CEELEX database updated and direct linkage to ESAP platform established;
- Multi-language case database for labour dispute case developed;
- Chat fora relating to individual dispute cases established;
- Monitoring system for usage of ESAP platform established.

RCC

- Updated knowledge in Western Balkan Ministries of Labour and Public Employment Services about good practices in the design, implementation and monitoring of employment measures related to internships, on the job training and local employment partnerships;
- Updated knowledge of PES officials on best regional practices related to performance management, local action plans and evaluation of active measures;
- Key national stakeholders (Ministries of Labour, Finance, Labour Inspectorates, Tax Authorities and Social Security Institutions) familiarized with the holistic approach to tackling informal employment.

• ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED WITHIN THE CURRENT AGREEMENT DURATION AND FOR THE EXTENSION PERIOD

ILO

- High level regional meeting for Directors of Labour Inspectorates and relevant staff – March 2019;
- Meeting in ESAP Community of Practice: Agencies for Peaceful Settlement of Labour Disputes – May 2019 ;
- Meeting with CEELEX experts - July 2019 ;
- High-level conference of Economic and Social Councils - September 2019

RCC

- 5 national workshops on informal employment, March – April 2019;
- Regional seminar on efficacy and importance of good design of Active Labour Market Policies and Measures in the Western Balkans based on the results of regional peer reviews, April 2019;
Regional seminar on modernisation of Public Employment Services based on the benchlearning results, June 2019.

7.5 TRENDS ON MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE STUDY (TIMSS)

Program reference:	IPA Multi-Country Programme 2017/040-009
Project title:	Participation of the Western Balkan countries to the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study – TIMSS 2019
EU contribution:	EUR 1,498,597
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Grand Contract with International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA)
Contract reference:	TIMSS EAC/S07/2017
Duration of activities:	2017 – 2020
Contact:	Albert Sese Ballart, Albert.SESE-BALLART@ec.europa.eu

- PURPOSE

TIMSS 2019 reports on the overall achievement at the end of the primary education against international benchmarks. This is done by major content domains (mathematics and science), as well as by cognitive domains. Like the previous TIMSS assessments, the study will collect detailed information about curricula, curricula implementation, instructional practices, school resources, and other context information.

- ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

- Finalization of the TIMSS 2019 Data Collection instruments, procedures and samples at the international, as well as the national levels (within school sampling of the classes);
- 5th meeting of TIMSS 2019 National Research Coordinators (NRC) was held from 13-17 August in Stockholm, Sweden. It focused on reviewing results of the 2019 field test, and on modifications and/or amendments of instruments and procedures;
- Between 28-31 August, the TIMSS 2019 Data Manager Seminar was held in Hamburg, Germany. The aim of the training was to update Data Managers from participating countries on any changes and improvements related to the software used for TIMSS 2019 during the data collection stage, and provide some hands on activities to master the necessary skills;
- A dedicated meeting was organized on 30-31 October in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. This meeting focused on various aspects of quality assurance, particularly in relation to the finalization of the language versions of national instruments and implementation of

the data collection procedures at the level of participating schools. The meeting allowed for discussions on the challenges and opportunities related to reporting of the deemed final results within the Western Balkans at a national as well as the regional level.

• OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

- The first version of WinW3S for data collection was released, in July;
- The OSS software was released in September;
- The TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center posted “Survey Operations Procedures Unit 4: Preparing the Assessment Instruments” and international version of the instruments in three sections released to countries between August and September. It also posted “Survey Operations Procedures Unit 5: Administering the Assessments” in September.
- Following on the data management seminar, the IEA Hamburg released the TIMSS 2019 “Survey Operations Procedures Unit 7: Creating and Submitting the TIMSS 2019 Databases” on the TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center's Google drive in November. This included information necessary for completing the WinW3S database, creating and completing Data Management Expert (DME) databases, as well as submitting the required data and documentation.

• ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Continuation of managing main survey instruments translation and layout verification – all language versions of instruments foreseen for the data collection are due to undergo the international language and layout verification prior to use within the testing sessions;
- Training International Quality Control Monitors to conduct quality assurance site visits during data collection and document the results, January 2019;
- Training countries in main survey data collection and scoring procedures (6th TIMSS NRC meeting in Limassol, Cyprus, March 11-15, 2019);
- The TIMSS 2019 “Survey Operations Procedures Unit 6: Scoring the Constructed Response Items accompanied by the TIMSS 2019 Scoring Guides” will be released in connection with the 6th TIMSS NRC meeting;
- Data collection is foreseen for March-May 2019;

- Constructing an international database and checking the accuracy and comparability of the national datasets (from April until autumn 2019, based on national data collection schedules).

7.6 EU SCHEME FOR YOUNG PROFESSIONALS

Programme reference:	Multi-Country Programme under EU Integration Facility, IPA 2017/039-402
Project title:	EU Scheme for Young Professionals in the Western Balkans
EU contribution:	EUR 1.8 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Delegation Agreement with British Council
Contract reference:	CN 2017/389-939
Duration of activities:	27/09/2017 - 26/09/2019
Links:	http://eu4wb6.com
Contact :	Karolina Buzaljko, karolina.buzaljko@ec.europa.eu

• PURPOSE

The EU Scheme for Young Professionals in the Western Balkans aims to promote regional cooperation, while building professional capacity of next generations of public administrators and policy makers in the Western Balkans. The action involves 30 young civil servants (5 from each Western Balkan beneficiary) per year, who participate in a) a 2-week executive programme at SciencesPo in Paris, France, b) a 2-week executive programme at College of Europe in Bruges, Belgium and c) a 2-week exchange programme in the Western Balkans. The current action is a 2-year continuation of a pilot action from 2016/17.

• ACTIVITIES (JULY- DECEMBER 2018)

- Rules of Procedures (RoPs) for selection of civil servants'/beneficiaries of the training program/package, were revised in consultation with all NIPACs of the Western Balkans countries. Based on the revised RoPs the selection process was launched throughout the Western Balkans, in close coordination with NIPACs.

- A group of 30 young civil servants were selected. Selection included administrative check, tests and interviews. Interview panels were comprehensive and comprised of a representative of EU Delegation, a representative of NIPAC, an external expert and a representative of British Council.
- Six visibility events were organised throughout the region, as part of pre-departure package for the civil servants. EU Delegations and respective Ministries facilitated the events.
- First training (at SciencesPo) took place during the first two weeks of December 2018. Upon last year's recommendations, the training program included a practical approach.
- First meeting of the alumni was held in December 2018, resulting in the formal formation of the Alumni, board selection and a decision that alumni join already established Western Balkan Alumni Association.
- An external evaluation was conducted between July – September 2018, to draw lessons from both the pilot and the first round of the current project. Key findings and recommendations from the evaluation include:
 - ✓ The project has **had a positive impact** on facilitating and improving two cornerstones of the EU Accession process: regional cooperation and public administration reforms in the Western Balkans;
 - ✓ The **feedback** from all partners in the administration of the Western Balkan countries is **extremely positive**;
 - ✓ **Regional exchange has been identified as the highlight of the project** with significant positive impact on participants and future cooperation among them;
 - ✓ Regional exchange programme and **regional assignments have produced** significant value-added elements for the project and should be strengthened in the future;
 - ✓ Undertake measures **to formalize the Alumni Board** and support activities under the alumni network of the EU Scheme for Young Professionals.

• OUTPUTS (JULY- DECEMBER 2018)

- A group of 30 civil servants interested to contribute to the integration process and regional cooperation were selected to join the program.
- Alumni network was formalised to streamline and strengthen regional cooperation.

• ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER.

- The second executive training to take place in College of Europe.
- Visibility event to be organized in Brussels.

- Regional exchange program in the Western Balkans to be held during March 2019 with finalisation of thematic papers.
- Regional conference to be organized in Tirana, May 2019.
- Alumni to producing draft strategy and action plan, to participate in the Western Balkan Alumni conference (March 2019) in Tirana and to formally join the network while identifying joint cross -country projects.

7.7 PILOT VET MOBILITY SCHEME FOR THE ENLARGEMENT COUNTRIES

Programme reference:	IPA Multi-beneficiary Programme 2018/040-822
Project title:	Pilot Vocational Education and Training mobility scheme for the Enlargement countries (Western Balkans 6 + Turkey)
EU contribution:	EUR 2 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Cross-delegated to EAC
Contract reference:	Procurement ongoing
Duration of activities:	The maximum duration of the project will be 42 months
Contact :	Albert Sesé Ballart, Albert.SESE-BALLART@ec.europa.eu EAC-VET-MOBILITY-SCHEME@ec.europa.eu

• PURPOSE

Erasmus+ offers training, learning and mobility opportunities for VET learners and staff, but this is not open to the international dimension of the programme. Partners in the Western Balkans and Turkey are asking for an international opening of the VET actions under Erasmus+, to benefit from the rich experience, which has been accumulated under Erasmus+ and its predecessor programmes. The project will fund learners and staff mobility, as well as management costs for the selected consortia of VET providers.

• ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Getting the draft Decision on Unit Costs approved (expected 28/01)
- Translating the Call into FR and DE (expected 14/02)
- Launching of the Call between 15/02 and 20/02
- Explanatory webinar for potential applicants: last week of February

- Deadline for applications and Appointment of the Selection Committee, March – April 2019
- Selection of the consortia of VET providers. The different proposals will be evaluated by external experts in VET together with the rest of the Evaluation Committee members. April - May 2019
- Contracting, May – June 2019.

7.8 REGIONAL CSO ACTIVISM FOR REGIONAL RECONCILIATION IN THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA - IN SUPPORT OF RECOM

Programme reference:	IPA Multi-Country Programme 2017/038-961
Project title:	Regional CSO Activism for Regional Reconciliation in the Former Yugoslavia - In Support of RECOM
EU contribution:	EUR 920.00,00
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Grant agreement
Contract reference:	CN 2017/394-747
Duration of activities:	01/03/2018-28/02/2021
Links:	http://recom.link/
Contact :	Catherine Denis, Catherine.DENIS@ec.europa.eu

• PURPOSE

The aim of this action is to promote the establishment of a Regional Commission for the facts about war crimes and other serious human rights violations in the former Yugoslavia (so-called "RECOM"). This action is supported by the Coalition for RECOM, which brings together about 2,050 civil society organizations from post-Yugoslav countries. In 2011, 580 000 citizens signed a petition for the establishment of an inter-State commission with the task of naming all war victims and the circumstances of their deaths / disappearances. RECOM is conceived as a victim-centered, truth-seeking body. It will contribute to curb the negative public perception of the other victims, to stimulate solidarity, and bring closer opposing positions of the same events.

• ACTIVITIES (JUNE-DECEMBER 2018)

1. Strengthening of international support for the establishment of RECOM

Members of the Coalition for RECOM conducted advocacy activities in support of the establishment of RECOM as a regional instrument that directly contributes to reconciliation.

2. Debates on the potential of RECOM to contribute to building a collective social remembrance

Members of the Coalition for RECOM organized debates in Podgorica and Zagreb to discuss the role of RECOM. Media provided wide coverage of these debates.

3. Documenting human losses and places of detention

Researchers from member organizations of the Coalition for RECOM have continued to interview witnesses and members of families of Albanian victims, to collect data on Serbian victims, on the circumstances surrounding the deaths of war victims in Croatia, and on places of detention in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

• OUTPUTS (JANUARY-JUNE 2018)

1. Enhanced political support to the establishment of RECOM: Following advocacy activities, the appointment of legal experts by the President of Serbia and the President of Kosovo* to work on the Statute of RECOM.

2. Enhanced public support to the establishment of RECOM: all media outlets carried the message of the Coalition for RECOM on the need to establish a record of the victims of the recent wars in the region.

3. Results on the data gathered: From the statements of 350 witnesses and family members and on the basis of other data, the circumstances surrounding the deaths of 700 Albanian victims (in the municipalities of Istok, Djakovica and Lipljan), the deaths of 110 Serbian victims and the deaths of 250 victims in Croatia were established. 30 places of detention were further identified and 23 reported camps (in the records of inmates' associations) were established as not being places of detention.

• ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

In January 2019, the Centre for Civic Education will launch a competition for small grants to be offered for initiatives and actions that contribute to reconciliation and promote the establishment of RECOM.

By May 2019, the Coalition for RECOM will organize two expert meetings with representatives of concerned authorities, to discuss and work on a Statute of RECOM. The

Coalition will prepare a **Policy Brief** on “Memorialization Practice in Post-Yugoslav Countries”.

By June 2019, the Coalition for RECOM will organize three debates on reconciliation, building a collective social remembrance and the practices of memorialization, in the territory of the former Yugoslavia.

By the end of June 2019, the Coalition for RECOM will collect the identities and circumstances of the deaths of at least 700 war victims. It will draw up narratives concerning 500 victims and 60 places of detention in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

CHAPTER 8: OTHER HORIZONTAL ACTIONS

8.1 EU AGENCIES

Programme reference:	IPA 2016/037-900, 2018/040-113
Project title:	Preparatory measures for the participation of candidates and potential candidates in EU Agencies
EU contribution:	
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Grant contracts
Contract reference:	1 contract signed in 2016, 10 contracts signed in 2017, 3 contracts signed in 2018
Duration of activities:	Q4 2016 – Q3 2021
Contact:	Jutta POMOELL-SEGUROLA jutta.pomoell-segurola@ec.europa.eu

List of Agencies, duration of activities and total amounts:

CN	Agency	Duration	Amount in EUR
2016/377-705	European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound)	12/10/2016 – 11/01/2019	350.000
2018/402-940	European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound)	12/01/2019 – 11/07/2021	550.000
2017/386-267	European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC)	19/08/2017 – 18/08/2019	310.000
2017/389-613	European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE)	01.09.2017 – 30.11.2018	200.000
2018/402-854	European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE)	01/01/2019 – 30/06/2021	550.000
2017/386-560	European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA)	01/01/2018 – 31/12/2019	290.000

2017/386–550	European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA)	01/07/2017 – 30/06/2019	340.000
2017/390-067	European Chemicals Agency (ECHA)	01/03/2018 – 28/02/2019	180.000
2018/403-813	European Chemicals Agency (ECHA)	01/04/2019 – 31/03/2021	450.000
2017/388-568	European Food Safety Authority (EFSA)	01/12/2017 – 31/05/2019	320.000
2017/391-240	European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA)	01/05/2018 – 30/04/2020	200.000
2017/390-035	European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA)	01/12/2017 – 30/11/2019	290.000
2017/391-230	European Railway Agency (ERA)	01/01/2018 – 31/12/2019	200.000
2017/391-249	European Environment Agency (EEA)	01/02/2018 – 31/01/2020	320.000

- **PURPOSE**

The programme supports EU Agencies to carry out preparatory measures with Beneficiaries and stakeholders to ensure that Beneficiaries are able to participate effectively in the activities of EU Agencies as they implement important parts of the EU *acquis*.

Activities are designed to help beneficiaries understand the function and operations of EU Agencies, and more importantly, their role within them. EU support also permits IPA II beneficiaries to involve other relevant national stakeholders in their activities in ways similar to those of EU Member States. This support mainly consists of advice on organisational matters, staff training and participation in stakeholder meetings.

- **ACTIVITIES (JULY – DECEMBER 2018)**

Eurofound

- Initial translations of the questionnaires and the sampling plans for the European Company Survey for Turkey, Serbia, North Macedonia and Montenegro were finalised in July and August. The survey was piloted in all relevant IPA II beneficiaries between

September and November. The results of the pilot test showed that carrying out the survey using a push-to-web approach was challenging. The pilot results required a reconsideration of the scope of the following project. Nevertheless, the questionnaire translation will be updated to reflect the pilot findings.

- The National Experts contracted by Eurofound delivered the final drafts of the Working Life country profiles of Albania, North Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey. All contributions have been quality checked and approved by Eurofound's research staff and are currently edited. It was impossible to identify a national expert for Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- After the seminar in Belgrade in June when Eurofound presented the results of the European Quality of Life Survey, it was agreed with several national experts available to contribute to drafting of the Candidate Countries country profiles on the Quality of Life. Contracts were finalised in July and drafting took place in August and September. The individual country sections and an introduction have been integrated in a report and have been evaluated by the Eurofound Advisory Committee in October; comments by the European Commission (EMPL) and by the European Training Foundation were also received and incorporated. The draft was finalised and handed over for publication, which is foreseen for March.

EASA

- Dedicated on-site support activities were conducted for another two of the Western Balkan countries with the aim to further support safety analysis and occurrence reporting according to the EU requirements.
- Subsequently, on the job training (OJT) sessions were delivered by EASA experts in the premises of the Agency.
- The Project Steering Committee was held in the premises of EASA in November.

ECDC

Five ECDC technical and network meetings were organised for the Western Balkan countries and Turkey. In total, 40 experts attended ECDC events, such as the Annual European Legionnaires' Disease Network meeting, the Joint meeting for ECDC National Focal Points (NFP) for Preparedness and Response and NFP for Threat Detection, the Joint meeting of ECDC NFP for Surveillance and NFP for Microbiology, the Annual Emerging and Vector-borne Diseases, the Regional course on how to plan simulation exercises in public health settings, and the Regional Simulation Exercise in preparedness for spread of pandrug-resistant bacteria associated with healthcare.

In addition, the coordination teleconference between ECDC and National Correspondents was organised on 2 October 2018 in order to reflect on the first ENLabCap survey results and

individualised country reports based on the 2016 data and to discuss the upcoming Joint ECDC/EFSA Regional workshop on One Health approach against antimicrobial resistance (AMR) in EU pre-accession countries, scheduled for February 2019. The second round of the annual ENLabCap survey for 2017 data collection was launched on 8 October.

ECHA

The beneficiaries have been given an opportunity to take part in three EU level events and one training:

- Biocides IT tools training at ECHA on 23 October 2018; thirteen experts representing Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey.
- Biocides Day Conference at ECHA on 24 October 2018; thirteen experts representing Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey.
- European Commission 2nd Conference on REACH (registration, evaluation, authorisation and restriction of chemicals), CLP (classification, labelling and packaging of substances and mixtures) and Biocides Enforcement in Brussels 13 November 2018; five experts representing Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey.
- ECHA's Forum for Exchange of Information on Enforcement - Open session in Brussels on 14 November 2018; five experts representing Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey.

The workshop on substances of very high concern was postponed to 2019; other workshop topics, e.g. IUCLID*, were covered in the back-to-back events on biocides and enforcement that took place in the autumn of 2018.

EFSA

- Hands-on IPA trainings on the methods and tools for pesticides and veterinary medicinal product residues (VMPR) data collection and reporting to EFSA have been arranged in Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- IPA representatives participated in the EFSA's 3rd Scientific Conference 'Science, Food, Society', which was attended by more than 1,100 delegates from around the world and followed by another 800 via live video link.
- In September, the visit from a Turkey delegation, arranged by the US Department of Agriculture Foreign Agriculture Service, was hosted on EFSA premises to exchange information on food safety issues with a focus on GMO.

* Software to record, store, maintain and exchange data on intrinsic and hazard properties of chemical substances

- Agreement on the participation of the Assistant Coordinator in the framework of the Programme has been concluded with Serbia in November.
- The workshop on lumpy skin disease (LSD) brought together scientists who are members of the standing working group on LSD of EFSA together with representatives from LSD affected and at risk countries in order to i) share the knowledge about LSD, ii) explain the analysis performed by EFSA and make them applicable to each country situation, iii) update the data models used so far for the data collection in view of the next EFSA outputs, iv) provide the participating countries with practical indications about how to do surveys for testing vaccination effectiveness, vaccine monitoring and surveillance for detection of the disease.

EIGE

- EIGE has organised several events with the EU candidate countries and potential candidates from the Western Balkans and Turkey. In September, the regional meeting “Collection of data on violence against women: Where do we stand?” has been organised jointly with the OSCE. The meeting gathered over 50 participants from across the Western Balkans stemming from the national authorities for gender equality, law enforcement, statistical offices, independent bodies, civil society and international community to discuss data collection practices in relation to violence against women in the region and in the EU, including requirements stemming from the Istanbul convention.
- In September, EIGE further conducted a training on development of National Gender Equality Index for Kosovo, as agreed with the Agency of Gender Equality of the Government of Kosovo. This represented as a positive step for Kosovo to continuing the efforts on developing its national Gender Equality Index.
- In October, the 8th regional meeting with the EU candidate and potential candidate countries was successfully organised in Vienna during the Austrian Presidency of the Council of the EU. For the first time, a civil society perspective added to the meeting. Additionally, EIGE has invited two journalists from the Western Balkans for the EIGE’s Journalist Thematic Network Meeting along with journalists from the EU, taking place also in Vienna.
- In November, EIGE successfully completed the task of data collection on women and men in Decision Making Database for Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, including updated data from North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey, available online.
- In December, EIGE supported the national launch of the second edition of the Gender Equality Index for Serbia and it organised a high-level visit of EIGE’s director to participate at the Launch conference. The event received a lot of visibility and meetings with key national and international stakeholders were organised, including discussion with civil society and several media appearances.

- Throughout the reporting period, EIGE has continued its work on the collection of good practices from the Western Balkans and Turkey and by the end of 2018 successfully collected 14 of them.

EMCDDA

- A mid-term progress coordination meeting took place in Skopje in September, where two representatives from each beneficiary attended.
- The second Project Steering Committee, with participation of representatives from DG NEAR, DG HOME, Permanent missions and national correspondents of the beneficiary countries, took place in Brussels in November.
- 19 national experts attended three EMCDDA annual expert meetings (drug-related infectious diseases in September, treatment demand indicator in October and drug-related deaths in November) at which specific satellite meetings allowed them to discuss further developments.
- The BC national correspondents attended the Extended Reitox network meeting in November and seven experts participated in the two-day long training on Universal Prevention Curriculum.
- The EMCDDA welcomed the Deputy Ministers of Health and the Deputy Ministers of Interior from Kosovo and from North Macedonia, during high-level visits organised respectively in October and December in Lisbon.
- The general population survey's fieldwork was conducted nationwide in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in line with the foreseen work plan.
- EMCDDA launched an EU Early Warning System notification service and 30 notifications were shared in the reporting period. The reports of the national drug observatory (NDO) and the national early warning system (NEWS) in Serbia and Montenegro were submitted to the EC services and shared with the national correspondents and Permanent Missions.
- A seminar on new psychoactive substances (NPS)-health related consequences was held in Serbia in December.

EMSA

- EMSA arranged a training session for the focal points on how to use EMSA's tools RuleCheck (an electronic database system for the harmonized implementation of international and EU maritime legislation) and the Maritime Knowledge Center (containing distance learning training modules). Following the training, access to these tools was provided to officers in the administrations.
- EMSA also arranged a training session on the IMO Instruments Implementation Code in cooperation with the International Maritime Organisation (IMO). In addition to this training, which is an important support for States preparing for the mandatory IMO

Audit, an EMSA team conducted a Preparatory IMO Audit in Montenegro to prepare Montenegro for their IMO Audit, scheduled in 2019

- Several activities related to the area of Port State Control (PSC). EMSA arranged an in-country tutoring project on PSC for Albanian Port State Control Officers (PSCO's). PSCO's from Montenegro participated in two events arranged by the Paris MoU. PSCO's officers from Turkey were invited to a seminar of the Mediterranean MoU, arranged at EMSA in Lisbon.
- Montenegro, was invited to some meetings and workshops relating to vessel traffic monitoring, normally arranged for EU MS.

EU-OSHA

- EU-OSHA supported with speakers a conference on Management of Dangerous Substances in Serbia, regional conference in Kosovo and an event in Turkey. The Focal points in the Western Balkans and Turkey organised various awareness raising activities related to the European occupational safety and health (OSH) week in October and the beginning of November.
- Representatives from beneficiary states attended a sector-based workshop on e-tools Occupational Risks related to Transport. Several OSH professionals from the Western Balkans and Turkey attended a Focal Point meeting in Bilbao, Spain.
- More than 400 participants from local governments, social partners, business and media, as well as OSH professionals attended the supported events.
- As throughout the action Serbia and North Macedonia will be included in the 3rd European Survey for Enterprises for New and Emerging Risks, the preparation of the fieldwork is under way. A contract has been signed with a local translator in Serbia.

ERA

Three workshops had been organised to train and inform experts of the Western Balkans in the field of accident investigation European railway regulations and tasks entrusted to National Safety Authorities (NSAs) and National Investigation Bodies (NIBs).

The traineeship of 2 trainees of the Western Balkans at ERA facilitated further for the trainees to have an insight in the work of ERA regarding development of railway regulations, support to the implementation of EU regulations in EU and its neighbourhood and networking with EU organisations and organisations of the region.

Other activities:

- Participation of accident investigation experts in the Workshop on Rail Safety Accident Investigation, 11 – 12 September 2018, Lisbon, Portugal;

- Participation of experts at the “New challenges for railway authorities of the Western Balkans” workshop exchanging experiences with experts from Hungary, Croatia and Slovenia on the alignment of National Rules to European regulations 16 October 2018;
- Participation of experts at the 6th Regional Workshop on Railway Safety and Interoperability, 17th of October 2018, Budapest, Hungary EEA;
- Participation of Western Balkan experts in general meetings, for the National Focal Points (NFP) and specific meetings for the National Reference Centres.

EEA

- As part of its main activity under the current grant, EEA has supported the participation of Western Balkans experts in 16 separate meetings, including general meetings for the National Focal Points (NFP) and specific meetings for the National Reference Centres.
- EEA has provided further support to the gross salaries of four NFP Assistant Coordinators from the Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and North Macedonia). These assistants’ work is increasingly focusing on the management of environmental data flows to address EEA’s need for data, indicators and assessment and to assist in the preparation of the 2020 State of the Environment Report (SOER).
- EEA has started the preparation of the Western Balkans publication aiming to a follow-up to the earlier published leaflet “Western Balkans environmental core set of indicators 2012”.

• OUTPUTS (JULY – DECEMBER 2018)

Eurofound

- Translation of the European Company Survey questionnaire and sampling plan for Turkey, Serbia, North Macedonia and Montenegro. Pilot of the survey was conducted.
- Drafts have been created for the Working Life country profiles for Albania, North Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey
- Draft of the report on Quality of Life including Serbia, Montenegro, Albania and Turkey has been finalised.

EASA

Activities undertaken have helped the beneficiaries to strengthen and to acquire new skills and knowledge on aviation safety with particular focus on EU rules and requirements on safety analysis and occurrence reporting to establish well-functioning and sustainable oversight systems.

ECDC

- The Western Balkans participated in the ECDC ENLabCap survey. Its results and the reports produced thereafter will equip public health microbiology experts with a sound basis to assess public health microbiology vulnerabilities, detect changes from previous years, and monitor key public health microbiology capabilities and capacity for surveillance and epidemic preparedness in comparison, both with EU levels and among EU pre-accession countries. This assessment will also help to identify possible areas for action and to evaluate the impact of health system reforms.
- Following the discussions with National ECDC Correspondents and with EFSA on policy priorities for the Western Balkans, ECDC embarked on planning together with SANTE, NEAR and WHO/Europe the “Joint ECDC and EFSA Regional workshop on One Health approach against antimicrobial resistance in EU pre-accession countries” foreseen on 26-27 February 2019 in Serbia.
- Based on the analysis of data collected from the Western Balkans under the ongoing ECDC IPA action (2017/386-267), ECDC, together with the national representatives, has published the article “Investing in Public Health Microbiology Laboratories in Western Balkan Countries Enhances Health Security From Communicable Disease Threats in Europe”. This highlights the key areas for investing in public health microbiology laboratories in order to strengthen health security in Europe.
- All EU candidate and potential candidate countries (with exception of Bosnia and Herzegovina) continued to be included into annual data call to submit their national surveillance data on selected diseases to the European Surveillance System (TESSy). ECDC has also initiated the extension of microbiological support to the European surveillance of *Clostridium difficile* infections to Western Balkan countries and Turkey.

ECHA

- The Biocides IT tools training was a tailor made training for the IPA beneficiaries. The training by ECHA experts gave an introduction to biocidal products regulation (BPR) dossiers, biocides IT tools such as IUCLID, SPC Editor* and R4BP 3[†] as well as related reports. The training increased the knowledge of the beneficiaries in these tools.
- The Biocides Day Conference gave an insight into the latest developments in biocides at the EU level and provided a platform to discuss what should be improved for the next five years. The focus was on experiences from companies, stakeholders, Member States,

* Online application prepared by ECHA in order to support companies in preparing their applications for authorisation of biocidal products, either on a national or European level

[†] Central hub through which all biocides applications are made

European Commission and ECHA. The beneficiaries received an overview of the different stakeholders' views and an update on the current issues in this field.

- The European Commission 2nd Conference on REACH, CLP and Biocides Enforcement discussed the Chemicals Regulations enforcement in the EU and identified good practices in the field of enforcement. The beneficiaries learned of the issues and challenges at EU level.
- The Forum for Exchange of Information on Enforcement - Open session introduced the ECHA Forum Joint initiative with accredited stakeholders on the safety data sheets' (SDS) quality improvement as well as covered several topics proposed by ASOs, e.g. supply chain communication, read-across approach. The beneficiaries increased their knowledge on the enforcement and its challenges from the stakeholders' perspective and, in addition, got an update on the current and finalised ECHA Forum projects.

EFSA

- After the training on the methods and tools for pesticides and veterinary medicinal product residues (VMPR) data collection in North Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro confirmed their participation in EFSA data reporting cycle in 2018.
- In relation to the Lumpy skin disease (LSD) mandate EFSA published in October a report that gives advice on the ideal duration of vaccination programmes to eliminate the disease, and probability that disease will reappear and at possible surveillance methods
- The European Union summary report on trends and sources of zoonoses, zoonotic agents and food-borne outbreaks in 2017 including the data from relevant IPA countries was published on EFSA's website in December.

EIGE

- Cooperation with the Western Balkans and state institutions progressed as expected and exceeded expectations in some cases. EIGE has maintained good working relationship with the institutions responsible for advancing on gender equality. Cooperation with the Turkish national authority for gender equality was re-established and they have participated in the 8th Regional Meeting.
- All project beneficiaries are included into Women and Men in Decision Making database and have taken concrete steps in the production of their national Gender Equality Index. More civil society organizations have been better informed about EIGE's work in the region and the media.
- EIGE's publications and other tangible work outcomes have been regularly shared with key partners in each IPA beneficiary via stakeholders' emails.

EMCDDA

- At least 26 experts from the beneficiaries have better knowledge on the EMCDDA reporting requirements and quality procedures for data collection in their area of expertise, including in the area of prevention. The NEWSs in the beneficiaries are better and faster informed about NPS detected in the EU, which allows for more rapid action at national level.
- The EC stakeholders were enabled to produce a long-term roadmap for strengthening NDO and NEWS in Montenegro and Serbia.
- The international stakeholders working in field of drugs are better informed about the EU activities in the beneficiary countries, which allow for more coordinated and informed approach for the activities at national levels.
- In December, the EMCDDA Management Board (MB) mandated the EMCDDA Director to sign a working arrangement with the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Health and Social Protection of the Republic of Albania.
- The methodological and field work description report of the general population survey (GPS) in Bosnia and Herzegovina was submitted to the EMCDDA in December.

EMSA

- The beneficiaries strengthened their administrative capacity and organisation capability for the implementation and enforcement of international and EU maritime legislation. EMSA's tool RuleCheck will serve as a decision-making tool for port and flag state officers and will assist in the harmonised implementation of legislation. The access to the Maritime Knowledge Center and its distance learning training modules will enable a larger number of officers to be trained on the many areas included in the catalogue, in a cost-efficient manner.
- Trainers from five EU MS were involved in the activities, which has enabled the sharing of best practices and extending knowledge.
- The participation of Port State Control officers from Montenegro to the Paris MoU events has assisted the country to move closer to meeting the requirements for membership in the Memorandum. Albania, also aspiring to seek membership to the Paris MoU, could benefit from the in-country tutoring project on PSC. The support of Port State Control officers from Turkey to attend a seminar of the Mediterranean MoU has enabled them to enhance knowledge of the relevant procedures.
- The Preparatory IMO Audit conducted in Montenegro supported the country's possibility to successfully pass the IMO Audit in 2019.

EU-OSHA

Throughout the implemented activities, EU-OSHA managed to reach the stakeholders dealing with occupational safety issues in most of the beneficiaries. The positive effects were supported by additional visualisation activities (interviews and entries in traditional and social media, distribution of promotional materials, etc.) Apart from benefiting their local OSH capacity and raising awareness on common problems, the participants of the supported events were able to exchange experience and ideas with their counterparts from the Member States.

ERA

The participation of experts from the Western Balkans and Turkey in the accident investigation experts in the “Workshop on Rail Safety Accident Investigation, 11 – 12 September 2018, Lisbon, Portugal” provided a better understanding in the requirements and tasks laid upon independent rail accident investigation bodies and facilitate the exchange of practical experiences on (independent) accident investigation methods and procedures. It also underlined the importance to share the results of investigations with other NIBs and stakeholders of the region but also with European organisations.

With the intention to inform experts of the Western Balkans about further developments of European railway regulations ERA invited experts and representatives from Ministries of Transport (MoT) and NSAs of the Western Balkans to a workshop 16th and 17th of October in Budapest. While 16th of October provided helpful information about the alignment of national railway regulations to European regulations. Experts of NSAs and Ministries of Transport (MoTs) of the region agreed to “clean up” / align national rules for railway of their states with European regulations via a taskforce starting in 2019. On 17th of October experts of the region participated in the “6th Regional Workshop on Railway Safety and Interoperability”, 17th of October 2018, organised by ERA and the MoT of Hungary This workshop provided IPA experts from NSAs and MoT a better knowledge about the work currently done by ERA in the field of railway specifications, especially in the field of the 4th railway package (certification and authorisation) but also in the field of Safety Culture, Human and Organisational factor.

EEA

- Participation of the National Focal Points and the assistant coordinators in two European Environment Information and Observation Network (Eionet) National Focal Points (NCP) meetings, in in June (Copenhagen) and in October (Athens).
- Participation of the environment experts from the Western Balkans in the Eionet/National Reference Centre (NRC) meetings.

- Webinar with the Western Balkans colleagues organised on in November with the aim of identifying the priority areas for the future cooperation and development of a joint strategy for EEA-WB to be presented to the EEA Management Board (MB).
- Preparation of a publication capturing the key elements of the EEA-WB cooperation feeding into the MB discussion.

- **ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR JANUARY – JUNE 2019**

Eurofound

Eurofound is now working on the editing of the report on Quality of Life in Serbia, Montenegro, Albania and Turkey. While the first edit from the external editors is reviewed by Eurofound's researchers, an external peer review has been sourced in parallel. The draft will be handed over to Eurofound's editorial team for the final editing in February, and publication is foreseen around April.

EASA

- Dedicated on-site support missions to another one/two of the Western Balkan beneficiaries with a review of the status of the safety analysing and occurrence reporting system.
- OJT with regard to the implementation of safety analysing and occurrence reporting system(s).
- On-site support to another one/two of the Western Balkan beneficiaries with a review of the State Safety Programme (SSP) implementation.

ECDC

- The flagship meeting will be the ECDC/EFSA Regional workshop on One Health approach against antimicrobial resistance with the overall aim to boost the advancement of One Health response to antimicrobial resistance in the Western Balkans (WB). The country delegations will include four officials from each country representing the human health side (ECDC) and the animal health/food safety side (EFSA). The European Commission services are closely involved in the preparations of the meeting and its main expected outcome, i.e. defining key building blocks and securing high-level commitment from the countries for a Joint Regional Action on One Health against antimicrobial resistance in Western Balkans with tangible, budgeted, and time-bound interventions to be financed by the EU.
- 9th Annual Food and Water-borne Disease Network meeting,
- the Annual meeting of the Tuberculosis surveillance network,

- Other meetings to take place will be: the Joint annual meeting of NFPs for Preparedness and Response and NFPs for Threat detection, NFPs for Microbiology, and the Regional training course on Cross-sectoral biorisk awareness and mitigation training.
- ECDC will provide microbiological support to the Western Balkans and Turkey in order to facilitate their participation in the European surveillance of *Clostridium difficile* infections.

ECHA

- ECHA has requested a 6 month extension to the current project to cover the participation of beneficiaries to the following three EU level events in spring 2019: 14th HelpNet Steering Group meeting and related workshops, ECHA Stakeholder Day and Helsinki Chemicals Forum, and beneficiaries' subscription to an online e-learning course as well as translation of relevant ECHA material (guidance and/or leaflets) into the beneficiaries' official languages according to current needs. The aim is to keep the beneficiaries up-to-date on the current issues and continue close cooperation with ECHA and its stakeholders.
- Related to the new IPA project starting in March 2019 and a study foreseen to map the current status of the chemicals management situation in Montenegro and Serbia as well as provide an action plan to ensure that the requirements of the EU acquis are met when becoming an EU Member State, two explanatory missions to these countries will take place in Jan and Feb.

EFSA

- Together with the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), and in close collaboration with the European Commission services (DG SANTE and DG NEAR), as well as World Health Organisation (WHO) Europe, EFSA will organise a Regional workshop on One Health approach against AMR for EU pre-accession countries (26 -27 February, Belgrade, Serbia).
- Assistant coordinators will be invited to attend a Focal Point meeting in February 2018. An info session on the SIGMA project which aims to harmonize data collections on animal health and to automatize the data exchange between Member States and EFSA will be arranged.
- The 39th Focal Point meeting will be organised on 22-23 May in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

EIGE

As of December 31st 2018, EIGE has successfully completed the implementation of the current project and in the upcoming period, EIGE is starting implementing the new project.

Regional coordination will continue, as well as support to the IPA beneficiaries in gender statistics (Women and Men in Decision Making database and Gender Equality Indices) collection of good practices and work in the area of combatting gender stereotypes. Work with civil society, academia and media will also be continued.

EMCDDA

- A working arrangement with the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Health and Social Protection of the Republic of Albania to be signed in March 2019 on the margins of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, in Vienna. Such working arrangement will further strengthen the exchange of expertise and will contribute to developing drug data-collection and reporting capacity in the country. Kosovo has made a similar request; however the process to establish a working arrangement with the EMCDDA is at the initial stage; negotiations on the draft text will only be initiated following a positive opinion of the EMCDDA MB, to be given at their meeting of June 2019.
- The GPS in Bosnia and Herzegovina is in its final phase and the data report is expected to be submitted to the EMCDDA in January 2019. The results of this first national survey may be the focus of a national press launch, to be organised in the first trimester in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- The work on the updated Information maps, NEWS profiles and updated national reports - as well as the annual review of Roadmaps for participation in the EMCDDA - will be concluded.
- The third and last Project Steering Committee meeting will be organised in Brussels in February.
- The final IPA conference will be organised in June, at a place still to be confirmed.

EMSA

There are several trainings planned for the first half of the year, starting with a newly developed one-week training programme for Flag State Inspectors and continuing with training related to the monitoring of Recognised Organisations and on the Human Element. In addition, a workshop has been arranged on the implementation in the Mediterranean countries of the new requirements for Sulphur emissions, where coastal Enlargement countries will take part together with relevant countries from EU MS, from the SAFEMED countries and other important stakeholders.

EU-OSHA

There are several trainings planned for the first half of 2019 as well as continuation of the preparation of the European Survey of Enterprises on New and Emerging Risks (ESENER) and start of the fieldwork that will be carried out in Serbia and North Macedonia. It is expected

that there will be positive progress on the Development and adoption of risk assessment tools for SMEs in Turkey.

ERA

The year 2019 will see the start of a taskforce on “cleaning up” / alignment of national rules for railways of the IPA beneficiaries with EU and regulations of the International Organisation of Railway Transport (OTIF) as well as the start of “peer review” activities of NIBs of the Western Balkan region. It envisages further to improve communication and experience exchange between organisations of the region and EU member states via participation at NSA and NIB network meetings and will stimulate the signing of a “safety culture “ declaration by CEOs of railway companies and railway administrations of the region. Further exchange of experiences and information on European regulations are envisaged by specific workshops e.g. on Safety Management Systems (SMS) and safety culture planned for February 2019 in Belgrade or participation at CCRCC 2019, the global conference organised biannually by ERA on ETCS, the European Train Control System and GSM-R issues in Valenciennes, close to ERA premises October 2019.

To support the implementation of EU regulation in the region in addition to common events ERA agreed to participate in bilateral activities e.g. to carry out audits or participate in workshops related to NIB and NSA activities.

Visibility of the actions will be supported further by developing brochures but also a video on IPA activities carried out by ERA during recent years, focussing on the results achieved in 2018 – 2019.

EEA

- Preparation of the EEA country visits to Albania and Montenegro lead by the EEA Executive Director in early 2019, following the visits held in North Macedonia and Serbia in June 2018.
- Preparations for EEA country visits to Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina are ongoing and to be held in the first half of 2019.
- Western Balkans National Focal Points (NFPs) are expected to participate in the February and June NFP/Eionet meetings and NRCs will be invited to NRC and Eionet Expert meeting on a routine basis.
- A dedicated session on the results of EEA-WB cooperation will take place during the upcoming NFP/Eionet meeting in February.
- A concept note on the Western Balkan cooperation will be presented to the EEA MB in March.

- Publication of a dedicated Western Balkan brochure reflecting key elements of the EEA-WB cooperation.
- Joint discussion/webinar between the EEA and the EU delegations in the West Balkans will be organized so as to enhance the EU support and better coordinate activities in the field of environment in the field.

8.2 ANIMAL DISEASE ERADICATION IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

Programme reference:	IPA Multi-beneficiary Programme 2018/040-822
Project title:	EU Regional action on animal disease eradication in the Western Balkans
EU contribution:	EUR 1.5 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Cross-delegated to DG SANTE
Contract reference:	Procurement being prepared
Duration of activities:	The maximum duration of the project will be 24 months
Contact :	Aart BROUW; Aart.BROUW@ec.europa.eu

• PURPOSE

Animal health and food safety issues are considered as a priority in the indicative Strategy Papers 2014-2020 of the Western Balkans. As candidates for EU membership, the Western Balkans are going to form part of the internal market. If the Western Balkans have a different animal health status to the rest of the EU, then they cannot safely trade with other parts of the EU. The overall objective is to contribute to animal disease freedom in the Western Balkans and the improvement of access to the EU's single market of animals and animal products from relevant IPA II beneficiaries. The action would interact and support national disease surveillance, control and eradication programmes in the Western Balkans, in particular those that are set up to vaccinate against particular diseases. Examples of such animal diseases are for instance rabies, classical swine fever, lumpy skin disease, bluetongue and Brucella melitensis. Control and eradication of transboundary animal diseases at source using a regionally coordinated strategy benefits the EU by substantially reducing the threat to human and animal health, food safety and livestock production and trade.

• ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Preparation of the tender documents and launch of the call for tender
- Deadline for applications and appointment of the Selection Committee, June 2019

8.3 REGIONAL COOPERATION COUNCIL

Programme reference:	Multi-country Action Programme for 2016, IPA 2016/037-900
Project title:	Enhancing mobility, connectivity and competitiveness in South East Europe – Support to RCC
EU contribution:	EUR 7.5 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Grant agreement with RCC
Contract reference:	CN 2016/380-471
Duration of activities:	01/01/2017 – 31/12/2019
Links:	www.rcc.int
Contact:	GUIRKINGER Laurent; Laurent.GUIRKINGER@ec.europa.eu

• PURPOSE

The purpose of this project is to provide financial assistance to the functioning of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) Secretariat and contribution to the activities for 2017-2019, as foreseen in its Strategy and Work Programme 2017-2019, in particular implementing the South East Europe (SEE) 2020 strategy.

• ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

- SEE2020 and the Multi-annual Action Plan for a Regional Economic Area (MAP REA) horizontal: SEE2020 Governing Board meeting; Launch of the Balkan Barometer 2018 edition; 7th meeting of the SEE2020 Monitoring committee; Start of the SEE2020 annual monitoring cycle for 2019; Finalised 4th Call for Proposals to encourage Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) contribution to MAP REA; Coordination meeting of MAP coordinators and completed abridged Interim Progress Report on MAP REA implementation for July-December 2018;

- MAP Investment: Two rounds of National consultations on Investment Reform action Plans (IRAPs) in the Western Balkan capitals; Coordination meeting of Foreign Investor Councils on the Regional Investment Reform Agenda (RIRA) development; Meeting of SEE Investment Committee (SEEIC) - Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) Joint Working Group on Investments (JWGI); International Investment Conference of the Belgrade Stock Exchange; Meeting of the Western Balkans Capital (Financial) Markets; SEEIC plenary meeting;
- MAP Mobility: Training of negotiation teams on Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications for opening the negotiations on Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA); Launch of negotiations on Draft Agreement on Recognition of Professional Qualifications of Doctors of Medicine, Dentists, Architects and Civil Engineers (Meeting of Lead Negotiators and 1st negotiations meeting); Meeting of Working Group on Recognition of Academic Qualifications (WGRAQ); Continued implementation of the joint exercise on recognition of academic qualifications; Development of beta version of the Joint Information System for Recognition of Academic Qualifications; Meeting of Working Group on Research and Development (R&D) on Mapping Research Infrastructures;
- MAP Digital: Two Meetings of the WB6 Digital Summit 2019 Steering Committee; Two meetings on Western Balkans Roaming Policy coordination; Two meetings of Western Balkans Computer Security Incident Response Teams (CSIRSTs) network; Facilitated participation of CSIRTs in capacity building programs;
- 3rd Regional Ministerial panel on Environment and Climate Action; Regional representation at the 14th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 14) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD);
- Good governance: Training on Corruption Risk Assessment in health care institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina; Regional peer-review workshop on the application of Western Balkans Recommendation on Public Participation; Meetings of Western Balkan Working Group on Justice (WB WGJ) and SEE Judicial Training Institutions Network Meeting (SEE JTI);
- Assisting South-East European Cooperation Process (SEEC) and SEEC Chairmanship-in-Office (C-i-O): SEEC Meeting of Western Balkans Ministers of Foreign Affairs; 27th Coordination meeting of SEEC Troika, RCC and the EU; 35th RCC Board Meeting; Standing Committee of the SEEC Parliamentary Assembly;
- Security cooperation: 8th South-East European National Security Authorities (SEENSA) Conference at directors' level; 10th South-East European Military Intelligence Chiefs (SEEMIC) Directors' level meeting; 'Train the trainers' regional Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) seminar; 3rd Regional Coordination Conference for Counter-Terrorism (CT) and P/CVE in South-East Europe (SEE); 6th Meeting of SEE NFP Group (National Focal Points for P/CVE);
- Informal meeting of the Western Balkans Ministers of Foreign Affairs (MFAs) with the EU Commissioner Hahn.

• OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

- SEE2020 Annual Report on Implementation (ARI) for 2018 endorsed; SEE2020 monitoring cycle for 2019 launched; Balkan Barometer (BB) 2019 launched; Completed actions of three grantees for direct contribution to MAP REA implementation through provided contribution and support to: RIRA, Digital skills and public-private dialogue in reducing trade barriers under the 4th Call for Proposals of RCC's small-grant facility;
- Efficient regional coordination and monitoring on MAP REA: Regular regional coordination and strategic discussions at the level of REA Coordinators maintained; Systemic monitoring and reporting within MAP REA structures and beyond sustained; Progress on MAP REA implementation reviewed and forward-looking commitments defined at the high level events as part of Berlin Process (Economy Ministerial Meeting and London Summit); Progress on MAP REA implementation assessed - abridged report prepared; Key deliverables for 2019 and Poznan Summit agreed by REA Coordinators;
- IRAPs developed, along with priorities for reforms per each economy; Private sector involved in RIRA implementation, benefiting from experiences shared and obstacles identified within the Foreign Investor Council's White Books; RIRA Monitoring and impact assessment system presented, as well as joint regional programme on investment promotion (including a tailor made programme for regional investor outreach and capacity building for participating investment promotion agencies (IPAs)); ToRs for Policy paper on WB6 priority investment policy needs and Regional legal review on Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT)/ International Investment Agreements (IIAs) prepared; Regional discussions on SEEIC transformation initiated; programme proposal developed entailing diagnostics of main challenges to financial sector development; Working group on Capital Markets transformed into Working Group on Financial Markets;
- Negotiations on mutual recognition of professional qualifications launched; Completed beta version of the Joint Information System on Recognition of Academic Qualifications (AQ); Identified needs for completing mapping of research infrastructures in WB6; Agreed Joint Statement on EC's Horizon Europe proposal by WB6 Ministers of Science;
- Advanced implementation of MAP REA digital measures: Negotiations on a new Regional Roaming Agreement (RRA2) initiated, with the aim to sign RRA2 during the Digital Summit 2019 and introduce Roam Like At Home by 2021; Advanced preparation of the Digital Summit 2019 ; Completed study "Regional Approach for Improving Digital Skills in WB6" as part of RCC'S Small Grants Scheme; Regional dialogue on cyber security maintained and capacity building extended to WB6 CSIRTs;
- Adopted Ministerial Declaration reconfirming commitments for strengthening regional cooperation in achieving Paris Climate and 2030 policy targets; Biodiversity Task Force mandate extended till the end of 2020; Nexus Mapping Study in SEE developed;
- Enhanced capacities to support the implementation of Western Balkan guidelines on public participation; Comprehensive Checklist of Corruption Risks in Healthcare Sector

published; Regional analysis towards creating justice E- environment: promoting judicial training and regional cross-border cooperation in SEE; Data base of regional legal experts in EU law established; Role of RCC as focal point in regional judicial cooperation endorsed;

- Support to SEECF parliamentary cooperation provided; National Focal Points (NFP) Group reinvigorated (National Countering-Terrorism (CT) and Prevention/Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) Coordinators instead of Ministry of Foreign Affairs contact points); Greater focus on P/CVE and cybersecurity achieved; A way forward in developing regional approach toward cybersecurity challenges, and in preventing local (including online) radicalization agreed; South East European Military Intelligence Chiefs Forum (SEEMIC) Open Source Intelligence Report “Challenges to critical infrastructure cyber security in SEE” adopted; Conclusions on the whole-society approach in Prevention/Countering Violent Extremism reached; RCC-commissioned Study “Cybersecurity and online radicalization” presented at the 3rd Regional Coordination Conference for Countering-Terrorism and Prevention/Countering Violent Extremism in South East Europe;

• ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Conducting regional donor coordination activities; Organising annual donor coordination meeting; Update of the SEE Donor Assistance Database (SEEDAD); 6th SEE2020 Governing Board meeting; Endorsement of SEE2020 Annual Report on Implementation (ARI) for 2019; Launch of BB 2019; Coordination meeting with SEE2020 Regional Dimension Coordinators; Coordination meeting of MAP Coordinators and MAP CCPs; Preparation of the Annual Report on MAP REA; Communication of results on MAP REA implementation through visibility tools; Support to the preparation of REA-relevant upcoming events in the frames of WB Poznan Summit;
- MAP Investment Activities: Four technical workshops on the topics of ISDS, Financial Markets, RIRA regional instrument and Capacity Building for Investment Promotion Agencies; Working Group on Financial Markets meeting; SEEIC-CEFTA Working Group on Investments meeting; Investment Conference (Sarajevo Business Forum); SEEIC Plenary meeting and SEEIC Ministerial meeting; Meeting of Working Group on Industrial Policy;
- MAP Mobility Activities: 6 negotiation meetings on the Agreement on Recognition of Professional Qualifications; 3 meetings to agree the model for automatic recognition of Academic Qualifications; Complete joint exercise on recognition of AQ; Working Group on Open Science and EU National Contact Points on Scientific Information Meeting; Workshop on mapping research infrastructure;
- MAP Digital Activities: High level Digital Summit co-organized; Finalization of Regional Roaming Agreement (RRA2) and prospective signature during the Digital Summit; Regional capacity building meeting of CSIRTs; Initiation of the organization of the next

Western Balkans Digital Summit (DS 2020); Regional meetings on roaming; Regional meeting aimed at integrating WB within Programme for Interoperability solutions for European public administration, businesses and citizens (ISA²);

- Regular meeting of the Regional Working Group on Environment; Nexus workshop for representatives of ministries of environment in the Western Balkans ;
- 2 meetings of the Western Balkans Working Group on Justice (WB WGJ); SEE Association of Mediators Network Meeting; Conference on Rule of Law – regional cooperation; Finalization and endorsement of the regional overview ‘Towards creating justice E-environment - common standards on promoting judicial training and regional cross-border cooperation in SEE’;
- Two RCC Coordination meetings and two Board meetings; RCC Annual meeting; Western Balkans Informal Ministers of Foreign Affairs’ Ministerial; SEECF High level events; Diplomatic Training Seminar; 9th South East European National Security Authorities (SEENSA) working group meetings; 11th South East European Military Intelligence Chiefs (SEEMIC) Expert working group meeting; 7th Meeting of the South East European National Focal Points Group for Prevention/Countering violent Extremism and Foreign Terrorist fighters (SEE NFP Group for P/CVE – FTF); Regional expert workshop on prevention and countering of online radicalization.

8.4 CROSS-BORDER INSTITUTION BUILDING - CBIB+ PHASE II

Programme reference:	Multi-Country Action Programme 2014/031-603
Project title:	Cross-border Institution Building - CBIB+ Phase II
EU contribution:	EUR 2 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans (WBs)
Type of contract:	Service contract with GIZ International Services (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH)
Contract reference:	CN 2015/368-298
Duration of activities:	01/12/2015 – 31/12/2018
Links:	www.cbibplus.eu
Contact :	Laurent GUIRKINGER, Laurent.GUIRKINGER@ec.europa.eu

• PURPOSE

This project aims at enhancing regional coordination and harmonisation of approaches, as well as promoting a culture of best practices and sharing of experience in the field of cross-border cooperation (CBC) at intra-Western Balkans. It also supports a smooth transition

from the IPA to the IPA II programmes in CBC, particularly in those countries operating under indirect management.

• ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

- Two regional CBC events organised: Workshop on post-2020 IPA-IPA* CBC (18-19 September 2018 in Bečići, Montenegro) and the 6th Regional CBC Forum (14 November 2018, in Pristina, Kosovo)
- Coordination and support to a technical working group (TWG) on indirect management under IPA II CBC programmes (2 meetings organised within this period);
- 'Practical Communication: a handbook for CBC projects in the Western Balkans implemented under the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance' adjusted and improved and shared with all relevant stakeholders;
- A horizontal analysis and synthesis report comprising the responses provided under eight (8) 2007-2013 IPA CBC programmes ex-post surveys prepared;
- The survey report on unsuccessful applicants under 1st call under the 2014-2020 CBC programme North Macedonia - Albania finalised;
- Three analytical reports on the questionnaires for the post-2020 IPA CBC strategic orientation finalised;
- The strategy for exploiting lessons learnt and synergies finalised;
- A methodology for systematic impact measurement to improve the overall quality of the programmes finalised in December 2018;
- The regional IPA II CBC monitoring system software developed, including an instruction manual for its use, and projects contracted under the 1st round of IPA II CBC programmes entered into the system (5 programmes in total so far) and regular reporting of the grant beneficiaries via the monitoring system has been initiated;
- Upon request of the contracting authorities, the list of programme level indicators to be included in the guidelines for applicants of the 2nd calls developed for MK-AL, BA-ME, RS-MK, RS-BA and RS-ME[†] programmes;
- Delivery of 10 training events for programme management structures and grant beneficiaries following ad-hoc requests, as well support provided to the Joint Technical Secretariats during the delivery of 4 training events for potential applicants of the RS-MK programme;
- Upgrading and continuous use of several communication tools such as the project website, the newsletter (8th issue published), social media pages (Interreg* good practices) and flash news;

* IPA – Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance is the means by which the EU supports reforms in the 'enlargement countries' with financial and technical help.

† AL: Albania, BA: Bosnia and Herzegovina, ME: Montenegro, MK: North Macedonia, RS: Serbia

- Short video on the achievements of the projects united under the 'Via Dinarica' concept that were implemented under four (4) IPA CBC programmes prepared, and presented in Brussels during the EU Week of Regions and Cities as well as in the 6th Regional CBC Forum and further promoted through different on-line tools;
- The workshop titled 'Instrument for Pre-Accession cooperation programmes enhancing enlargement agenda' jointly organised with Interact, DG REGIO and DG NEAR during the European Week of Regions and Cities on 9 October 2018 in Brussels;
- Best case project examples from two 2007-2013 IPA CBC programmes (AL-ME and HR-BIH) entered into the KEEP database managed by Interact[†].

• OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2018)

- Best practice culture and sharing of experience promoted through the regional CBC forum, project on-line tools and newsletters.
- Capacities of the IPA II CBC programme structures strengthened as required and justified by specific needs by training delivery and guidance documents.
- The basis for a better monitoring of the IPA II CBC programmes is set through the establishment of a result/impact measurement system.
- Targeted and systematic measures that are enhancing better visibility and promotion of CBC IPA programmes and their achievements undertaken (training events for programme structures, project newsletters, website, Facebook, etc.).

• ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

No activities planned for the next semester. The project ended on 31 December 2018. However, a new phase (III) of this project started on 1 January 2019.

* European Territorial Cooperation (ETC), better known as Interreg, is one of the two goals of cohesion policy and provides a framework for the implementation of joint actions and policy exchanges between national, regional and local actors from different Member States

[†] Interact is an EU programme, funded by ERDF, focused on service delivery to support cooperation programmes (Interreg, Interreg IPA-CBC and ENI-CBC).