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

**ANNEX**

to the Commission Implementing Decision on the financing  
of the multiannual support measure for communication in favour of the IPA III beneficiaries for 2024-2027

**Action Document for**

**Strategic communication about the European union and the EU accession process**

**(Western Balkans and Türkiye)**

**MULTIANNUAL MEASURE**

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

**1. SYNOPSIS**

**1.1. Action Summary Table**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Strategic communication about the European Union and the EU accession process (Western Balkans and Türkiye)</b> Multi-country multiannual support measure in favour of the IPA III beneficiaries for 2024-2027
<b>OPSYS</b>	ACT-62277
<b>ABAC</b>	ABAC Commitment level 1 number: JAD.1337529 (allocation 2024) JAD.1337537 (allocation 2025) JAD.1337542 (allocation 2026) JAD.1337546 (allocation 2027)
<b>Basic Act</b>	Financed under the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA III)
<b>Economic and Investment Plan (EIP)</b>	No
<b>EIP Flagship</b>	No
<b>Team Europe</b>	No
<b>Beneficiaries of the action</b>	The action shall be carried out in the Western Balkans and Türkiye

<b>Programming document</b>	IPA III Programming Framework			
<b>PRIORITY AREAS AND SECTOR INFORMATION</b>				
<b>Window and thematic priority</b>	Window 2: Good governance, <i>acquis</i> alignment, good neighbourly relations and strategic communication Thematic Priority 4: Strategic communication			
<b>Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)</b>	Main SDG:17 – Partnerships to achieve the Goal			
<b>DAC code(s)</b>	22010 Communication policy and administrative management – 100%			
<b>Main Delivery Channel</b>	60000 – private sector institution 61000 – private sector in provider country			
<b>Markers (from DAC form)</b>	<b>General policy objective</b>	<b>Not targeted</b>	<b>Significant objective</b>	<b>Principal objective</b>
	Participation development/good governance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Aid to environment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Gender equality and women's and girl's empowerment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Reproductive, maternal, new-born and child health	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Disaster Risk Reduction	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Inclusion of persons with Disabilities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Nutrition	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>RIO Convention markers</b>	<b>Not targeted</b>	<b>Significant objective</b>	<b>Principal objective</b>
	Biological diversity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Combat desertification	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Climate change mitigation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Climate change adaptation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>Policy objectives</b>	<b>Not targeted</b>	<b>Significant objective</b>	<b>Principal objective</b>
	EIP	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	EIP Flagship	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	Tags:	YES	NO	
	Transport	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	Energy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

Internal markers and Tags \*

\* While the activities aim at communication of any of the listed policy objectives, the multiannual measure as such does not directly contribute to their achievement.

Environment and climate resilience	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Digital	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Economic development (incl. private sector, trade and macroeconomic support)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Human Development (incl. human capital and youth)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Health resilience	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Migration and mobility	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Agriculture, food security and rural development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Rule of law, governance and Public Administration reform	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Digitalisation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tags	YES	NO
digital connectivity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
digital governance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
digital entrepreneurship	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
digital skills/literacy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
digital services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Connectivity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tags	YES	NO
digital connectivity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
energy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
transport	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
health	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
education and research	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Migration	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduction of Inequalities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
COVID-19	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### BUDGET INFORMATION

Amounts concerned	<p>Budget line: 15.020101.02</p> <p>Total estimated cost: <b>EUR 72 460 000</b></p> <p>Total amount of EU budget contribution <b>EUR 72 460 000</b></p> <p>The contribution is for an amount of EUR 16 360 000 from the general budget of the European Union for 2024 and for an amount of EUR 21 800 000 from the general budget of the European Union for 2025 and for an amount of EUR 17 200 000 from</p>
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	the general budget of the European Union for 2026, and for an amount of EUR 17 100 000 from the general budget of the European Union for 2027, subject to the availability of appropriations for the respective financial years following the adoption of the relevant annual budget, or as provided for in the system of provisional twelfths.
<b>MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION</b>	
<b>Implementation modalities (management mode and delivery methods)</b>	<b>Direct management</b> through Procurement
<b>Final date for concluding procurement contracts</b>	At the latest by 31 December 2025 (Budget 2024) At the latest by 31 December 2026 (Budget 2025) At the latest by 31 December 2027 (Budget 2026) At the latest by 31 December 2028 (Budget 2027)
<b>Indicative operational implementation period</b>	60 months following the adoption of the Financing Decision (Budget 2024) 72 months following the adoption of the Financing Decision (Budget 2025) 84 months following the adoption of the Financing Decision (Budget 2026) 96 months following the adoption of the Financing Decision (Budget 2027)

## 1.2. Summary of the Action

The objective of the action is to raise public awareness and contribute to public support for the European Union and its actions and the EU accession process.

The action provides funding for the European Commission, the EU Delegations in the Western Balkans and Türkiye and the EU Office in Kosovo\* to continue effective, strategic communication based on clear objectives, a common and compelling EU narrative and thematic communication on key priorities.

The action will comprise, among others: (i) EU image-building ('EU-branding') campaigns to position the EU as the main political and economic partner and the biggest financial donor, and as a major engine of positive change, through investments and reforms that benefit society and are firmly attached to EU values; (ii) thematic campaigns on priority areas of cooperation (e.g. sustainable transport, clean energy, environment and climate, digital future, human capital, private sector); (iii) a network of Europe Houses, information centres and information points; (iv) web and social media presence; (v) direct outreach to the targeted audiences (events, festivals, TV and radio programmes, student debates, competitions, awards etc.); (vi) media relations; (vii) opinion polls and surveys (inc. focus groups research).

The communication activities implemented by the European Commission and the EU Delegations and Office are complementary to the communication efforts of the national authorities and civil society.

## 1.3 Beneficiaries of the Action

The action shall be carried out in the Western Balkans and Türkiye.

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\*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.

## 2. RATIONALE

### 2.1. Context

**The future of the Western Balkans** and their citizens lies within the European Union. The EU remains Western Balkans' closest partner, main investor, trading partner and principal donor. **Türkiye** remains a candidate country and a key partner in many areas of joint interest. By 2022, all partners in the Western Balkans and in Türkiye made a strategic choice by submitting applications for membership in the European Union.

At the EU-Western Balkans Summit in December 2022<sup>1</sup>, the EU reconfirmed its commitment to the EU membership perspective of the Western Balkans and called for the acceleration of the accession process. **Communicating** this exceptional partnership, raising the level of understanding of the priorities of the enlargement process, and of scale of EU's support against the background of a challenging geopolitical context and growing disinformation continues to be a major objective of the EU and our partners as well.

Over the recent years, the Commission has **enhanced its engagement with the Western Balkans**. In 2020, the Commission adopted the revised enlargement methodology<sup>2</sup>, to drive forward the enlargement process with a stronger political steer. In 2022, the accession negotiations process started with Albania and North Macedonia and the Commission launched immediately the screening process. Bosnia and Herzegovina was granted by the Council of the European Union candidacy status in December 2022. Implementation of the Economic and Investment Plan<sup>3</sup> continues and currently includes 54 flagship investments across the region (September 2023).

In November 2023, the European Commission adopted the 2023 Enlargement Package, providing a detailed assessment of the state of play and the progress made by Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Türkiye and for the first time also Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia on their respective paths towards accession to the European Union. When it comes to Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Commission recommended the opening of accession negotiations with Bosnia and Herzegovina once the necessary degree of compliance with the membership criteria is achieved.

In November 2023, the European Commission also adopted a Communication on a new Growth Plan for the Western Balkans, with the aim of bringing some of the benefits of membership to the region in advance of accession, boost economic growth and accelerate socio-economic convergence. The objective should be to enable partners to step up reforms and investments to significantly accelerate the speed of the enlargement process and the growth of their economies. For this, the European Commission proposed for the period 2024-2027 a new €6 billion Reform and Growth Facility for the Western Balkans.

In 2024 and in the following years, the EU will continue focusing its communication on the long-term nature of EU partnership and support and its impact on people's life. Main communication priorities will be, among others, the EU accession process, the new Growth Plan for the Western Balkans, implementation of the Economic and Investment Plan, energy, connectivity, green and digital transition, regional economic integration and acceleration of fundamental reforms, including those underlined in the enlargement package.

### 2.2. Problem analysis

#### Public perceptions and communication environment

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/international-summit/2022/12/06/>

<sup>2</sup> COM(2020) 57 final

<sup>3</sup> COM(2020) 641 final

Public support for the EU and the EU accession process – as evident in the recent opinion polls - has remained relatively steady over the past years, with ups and downs in support depending on local political developments and context. In 2022, based on opinion polls commissioned by DG NEAR, on average 70% of the population in the Western Balkans held positive attitude towards the EU, however, spanning from as high as 87% in Albania to as low as 51% in Serbia and 60% in Türkiye. The attitudes among different groups of population within the countries vary. For many still, the EU conjures up with neutral image.

When it comes to recognising the EU's role as the main donor, trade and investment partner, still many people are not aware and rank other players like Russia and China higher. The trend is positive towards more people feeling well informed about the EU funding yet, overall, the perception remains low at 38% in the Western Balkans. Polls in the region also show that many people desire indeed their country to become an EU member, but less believe that it would happen any time soon.

The **communication environment in the Western Balkans** is characterised by high level of polarisation, oversaturated media markets and politicisation of media, as well as rise of social media. Local media in the region tend to report on the EU mostly when prompted by local political developments.

**Disinformation and information manipulation** are increasingly concerning phenomena and perceived on the rise in the region with a fertile ground for pro-Kremlin narratives but also a lot of homegrown disinformation. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has made EU communication more challenging. The European External Action Service's (EEAS) Western Balkans Task Force is engaged in monitoring, analysis and assessment of information environments, including disinformation, information manipulation and interference in the region.

The **communication environment in Türkiye** is characterised by deeply polarised political climate. The centralisation of powers resulted in serious backsliding in democratic standards, rule of law and fundamental freedoms, as well as in the shrinking of space for civil society, human rights NGOs and the media. In 2022, the parliament passed a law which gives the government significant powers to regulate social media content. **External communication activities** will focus on success stories stemming from EU projects so that public opinion is more aware of the concrete benefits EU cooperation brings to Türkiye. Communication activities will also cover EU's policy priorities, including fundamental freedoms, climate change, digital future and clean energy.

The population in Türkiye is receptive to disinformation, including due to lack of trust in the media, low media literacy, and limited access to alternative news sources. The EUD Ankara along with the EEAS are engaged in monitoring, analysis and assessment of information environments, including disinformation, information manipulation and interference in Türkiye.

A particular challenge when **communicating about the enlargement process** is its technical and abstract nature, the unpopular reforms and its long-term prospect, knowing that progress depends on the efforts of individual applicants for EU membership. In this context, the EU is sometimes perceived as a distant bureaucratic institution that demands many short-term efforts while offering only a vague long-term reward. This is linked to the misconception that the progress on the EU path depends on the EU and not on the efforts by the national governments.

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

Effective communication on how the EU and the EU accession process work and its implications for peoples' lives both in the candidate countries and potential candidate, as well as in the EU Member States, remain essential to ensure public support. Public understanding of the benefits of the accession process and EU

membership is instrumental in pursuing the necessary reforms effectively and in countering opposing narratives of other actors in the region.

Furthermore, in the context of hybrid threats, that have become even more serious since Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, the Council of the European Union stated in its Conclusions of December 2022<sup>4</sup> that the strategic communication and countering information manipulation remain of key importance. The Council called upon all partners to clearly **communicate the benefits and obligations** of their path towards the EU, as well as their own commitment to EU values and related necessary reforms.

The **strategic communication network** developed by the Commission services and the EEAS is based on clear objectives, a common and compelling EU narrative and thematic communication on key priorities. The framework is implemented through the following measures:

- Further professionalisation of strategic communication through capacity building measures and trainings, a better use of media opportunities during high-level visits and events, more variety in messaging and in the platforms used, the creation of tailored content and story-telling backed up by better knowledge of audiences and evaluation of concrete results and impact.
- Development of a set of narratives and key messages for each candidate country and potential candidate and for EU audiences in order to support clearer and more coherent communication by all EU actors, including the EU Member States, making best strategic use of EU Info Centres to disseminate the key messages to a wider public and advocating to national authorities in the region to ensure closer alignment with these messages.
- Targeted use of modern digital channels and tools to reach out to various audiences, with a special focus on social media and the use of influencers as multipliers (X, Facebook, Instagram, etc.), based on agreed key messages for partner countries, per region and for EU audiences.
- Implementation of impactful regional communication programmes through professional communication agencies with the capacity for huge campaigns and massive reach in the regions.
- Pro-active contribution to corporate Commission campaigns and initiatives.
- Close cooperation with DG COMM and EEAS StratCom Task Forces to coordinate efforts and shape media messaging and proactive campaigning and to respond to and help build resilience against disinformation and external interferences. Enhancing strategic communication networks by bringing together different services from the European Commission, EEAS, EU Delegations, Council, EP, EU Member States etc in order to improve the coherence and complementarity of activities and make best use of experience and skills.
- Closer cooperation with EU Member States in planning and coordinating communication activities, in particular, developing narratives, aligning messages, sharing information and products or organising joint events in the spirit of the Team Europe approach.
- Synergies with the Western Balkans Investment Framework activities, including communication campaign and visibility of investments in the region through this financial vehicle implementing a large percentage of the EIP financial package in partnership with international financial institutions, member states and Norway.
- Synergies with DG REGIO's on-going and forthcoming Interreg IPA programmes, enabling effective cooperation between EU Member states and their partners on the EU external borders, and with communication efforts of EU Strategy for the Adriatic Ionian Region and EU Strategy for the Danube Region, and their associated transnational cooperation programmes (Danube Transnational Programme (DTP) and IPA Adriatic-Ionian Programme (IPA ADRION)).
- Understanding positive impact of the previous enlargements is particularly important for better perception of EU accession process in the Western Balkans. Thus, the EC Representations in the Member States,

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<sup>4</sup> <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-15935-2022-INIT/en/pdf>

which have comparable experience of EU accession, can advise in developing communication narratives, actions and tools, share communication products or recommend speakers for events.

Communication and information programmes financed under IPA III actions for ‘Strategic Communication about the European Union and the EU accession process’ have served as a primary funding tool to support implementation of these measures by the EU Delegations in the region and the EU Office in Kosovo and by European Commission headquarters.

### 2.3. Lessons Learned

Based on findings and conclusions from closed and ongoing actions, as well as findings and recommendations from previous evaluations (cf. Section 5.3 below), the communication approach in recent years has moved towards strategic communication based on clear objectives, a common and compelling EU narrative and thematic communication on key priorities.

The key elements of this approach are: (i) moving away from project-based communication towards thematic-based communication to avoid fragmentation of messages and support stronger narratives per theme; (ii) generating communication narratives which present the benefits and impact of EU action to the wider public through a combination of human stories and facts; (iii) unifying EU branding by reducing the number of slogans for individual initiatives; (iv) promoting the use of large communication contracts for campaign-led actions implemented by professional communication agencies.

## 3. DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION

The Overall Objective/Impact of this action is to raise public awareness of and enhance public support for the European Union, its actions and the EU accession process.

The Specific Objective(s) (Outcomes) of this action are to inform public about

1. EU values, policies and programmes and their impact on their everyday life
2. the EU accession process with the accompanying fundamental reforms and socio-economic transformation, its long-term benefits and opportunities for citizens and economies, including on concrete large projects;
3. EU funding in the enlargement region, focusing on its tangible positive impact on citizens and economies and EU values and policies implementation.

This action provides **funding for the EU delegations in the Western Balkans and Türkiye and the EU Office in Kosovo** to continue effective, strategic communication based on clear objectives, a common and compelling EU narrative and thematic communication on key priorities. It complements the communication efforts of the national authorities and civil society.

The funding will be used for procurement contracts for the ongoing communication work being done at national level by the EU delegations and the EU Office in Kosovo.

The action will therefore fund, among others: (i) EU image-building (‘EU-branding’) campaigns to position the EU as the main political and economic partner and the biggest financial donor, and as a major engine of positive change, through investments and reforms that benefit society and are firmly attached to EU values; (ii) thematic campaigns on priority areas of cooperation (e.g. green agenda, digital agenda, connectivity, economy, human capital, fair society); (iii) a network of Europe Houses and EU information centres; (iv) digital tools, web and social media presence; (v) direct outreach to the targeted audiences through events, festivals, TV and radio programmes, student debates, etc.; (vi) media relations; (vii) opinion polls and surveys.

The action will also provide funding to continue the **EU regional communication programme *WeBalkans.eu* managed by DG NEAR**. This will ensure a greater EU presence in the communication space in the Western Balkan region in line with EU political priorities and complement communication efforts being



done at national level by the EU Delegations in the region and the EU Office in Kosovo. This regional programme, *WeBalkans.eu*, offers a coordinated, region-wide approach and currently consists of (i) integrated high impact thematic campaigns; (ii) an online portal and social media accounts [WeBalkans.eu](https://www.werbalkans.eu), which serve as a ‘one-stop-shop’ for news, funding opportunities and success stories about EU projects, and explainers on the main areas of EU support; (iii) a network of Young European Ambassadors acting as ‘communicators’ of the EU in the region, in particular among young audiences.

In the upcoming period, the current focus of the *WeBalkans* programme is expected to additionally focus on, inter alia, building a network of media partners and, centralised annual face-to-face opinion polls. It is also expected to reinforce the EU’s strategic communication framework by building digital tools to enhance transparency of EU projects and bringing positive stories to one place.

The communication activities target audiences in the candidate countries and potential candidates, and, as relevant, audiences in the EU Member States.

### 3.1. Intervention Logic

The underlying intervention logic for this action is that by the combined effort of ensuring strong EU’s presence in traditional and digital communication channels such as cultural diplomacy, social media and organising outreach and networking events and integrated media campaigns, the public in the Western Balkans and Türkiye will be more informed about the EU values, policies, programmes, funding and the EU accession process. With a more informed public and under assumption that the EU accession process remains a political priority for both the EU applicants and Member States and that the public remains interested in EU-related information, the public support for the European Union and its action, and the EU accession process will grow stronger over time.

This action provides funding for the EU delegations in the Western Balkans and Türkiye and the EU Office in Kosovo to continue effective, strategic communication based on clear objectives, a common and compelling EU narrative and thematic communication on key priorities. It complements the communication efforts of the national authorities and civil society.

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

- 1.1 contributing to Outcomes 1-3, successfully implemented image-building and thematic **communication campaigns**
- 2.1 contributing to Outcomes 1-3, successfully organised **outreach and networking events** and activities
- 3.1 contributing to Outcomes 1-3, successfully ensured **web and media presence**
- 4.1 contributing to Outcomes 1-3, ensured coverage of EU-related issues in the media

The objectives of the Action contribute, inter alia, to the general objectives of the EIP, which are to spur the long-term economic recovery of the region, support a green and digital transition, foster regional integration and convergence with the European Union. These objectives can only be achieved with adequate communication on the delivery of the EIP, also coordinated with the partner economies, the EU Delegations and the Western Balkans Investment Framework members.

Strategic communication may need to be adjusted and flexibly respond to changing circumstances and ongoing challenges, such as Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine, energy crisis etc.

### **3.2. Indicative Activities**

#### Activities related to Outputs 1-4

The following range of activities can be financed as part of the action, taking into account the target audience and the communication context, in particular, the stage of progress towards EU integration in the individual candidate countries and a potential candidate:

- management of Europe Houses and EU information centres and info points in the region including rental of their locations;
- integrated communication campaigns to increase EU visibility and public support for the EU;
- thematic communication campaigns linked to the political and policy priorities of individual candidate countries and potential candidates, showcasing EU support in the relevant areas;
- outreach and networking (e.g. organisation of visibility events, seminars, conferences, fairs, study visits, workshops and training, including events for specific target groups, e.g. media, business, youth, think-tanks and digital influencers);
- cultural diplomacy activities (e.g. film festivals, book fairs, youth and sports events, video and writing competitions);
- building of a network of media partners, media relations and media rebuttal (e.g. media monitoring, production of media materials, press events, training for journalists, press and media trips);
- online and social media activities (websites, X (Twitter), Facebook, Instagram, etc.);
- production of different information products (publications, audiovisual materials, EU-branded promotional materials);
- opinion polling and surveys on awareness of and support for the EU accession process and EU membership, as well as EU values, policies and programmes;
- monitoring and evaluation of communication actions (e.g. survey-based evaluations, focus groups and studies).
- developing digital tools, drawing inspiration from EU Digttool in the EU Neighbourhood East and EuZaTebe in Serbia, to further strengthen strategic communication

### **3.3. Mainstreaming**

#### **Human Rights**

Participation in the communication activities will be based on equal access and designed with due attention to cultural, ethnic and religious diversity. The action will also include awareness raising and advocacy activities to promote inclusiveness and respect of fundamental human rights.

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

The communication activities will be designed and implemented in line with the green public procurement principles, with due regard to the overall communication objectives. In particular, digital content will be privileged over printed material, and preference will be given to promotional material produced in an environmentally friendly manner. Similarly, online and hybrid events will be considered when this is desirable. The action will also include awareness raising activities on the environment and climate change policy.

## Gender equality and empowerment of women and girls

As per OECD Gender DAC codes identified in section 1.1, this action is labelled as G0. This implies that the communication activities will indirectly contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment, yet the action will not have these as principal or significant objective. The communication activities will be designed and implemented with due attention to gender equality and empowerment of women and girls. In particular, when selecting project success stories and human feature stories, attention will be also given to those involving women.

### 3.4. Risks and Assumptions

Category	Risks	Likelihood (High/ Medium/ Low)	Impact (High/ Medium/ Low)	Mitigating measures
Related to external environment	Risk 1: The EU accession process is hampered by major domestic or international political developments	<b>M</b>	<b>H</b>	Communication activities explaining the complex and long-term nature of the EU accession process and stressing the tangible advantages of EU membership or accession process.
Related to external environment	Risk 2: Misinformation and hostile communication on EU policies, objectives and actions	<b>H</b>	<b>M</b>	Proactive communication on EU policies, objectives and actions. Awareness-raising activities to expose disinformation patterns, support to fact-checking and debunking misinformation, enhancing media literacy among the public and outreach to civil society organisations and media.

### External Assumptions

The EU accession process remains a political priority for the national authorities in the candidate countries and potential candidates, and in the EU Member States, with commitment and willingness of all stakeholders to stimulate the debate on EU-related issues.

The public and media remain interested in EU-related information.

The ongoing coordination on strategic communication among DG NEAR, EEAS, EU Delegations/EU Office, EU Member States, WBIF and other organisations communicating about the EU will remain and further strengthened, including through the WeBalkans regional communication programme.

### **3.5. Indicative Logical Framework Matrix**

Results	Results chain: Main expected results	Indicators	Baselines (year 2022)	Targets (year 2031)	Sources of data	Assumptions
<b>Impact</b>	To raise public awareness of and enhance public support for the European Union and its actions, and the EU accession process.	Percentage of population with a positive general attitude towards the EU	AL 91% XK 90% ME 78% BA 71% MK 70% RS 52%  TR: 60%	AL 91% XK 90% ME 78% BA 73% MK 72% RS 55%  TR: $\geq 60\%$ <sup>5</sup>	Opinion polls	<i>Not applicable</i>
<b>Outcome 1</b>	The public more informed about EU values, policies and programmes and their impact on their everyday life.	Percentage of population who consider themselves well informed about the EU and its policies and programmes	ME 54% MK 44% AL 41% RS 32% BA 27% XK 13% TR: 43%	ME 56% MK 48% AL 45% RS 36% BA 31% XK 17% TR: $\geq 47\%$	Opinion polls	The EU accession process remains a political priority for the national authorities in the candidate countries and potential candidates, and in the Member States, with commitment and willingness of all stakeholders to stimulate the debate on EU-related issues.  The public and media remain interested in EU-related information.
<b>Outcome 2</b>	The public more informed about the EU accession process with the accompanying transformation and its long-term benefits and opportunities for citizens and economies, including on large investments.	Percentage of population who consider themselves well informed about the EU accession process.	MK 53% ME 52% AL 43% RS 28% XK 28% BA 24%  TR: 43%	MK 57% ME 56% AL 47% SR 32% KS 32% BiH 28%  TR: $\geq 47\%$	Opinion polls	
<b>Outcome 3</b>	The public more informed about EU funding in the enlargement region and its correlation with EU values and policy objectives, with a focus on the tangible positive impact of EU-funded projects on citizens and economies.	Percentage of population who consider themselves well informed about the EU funding	MK 50% ME 50% XK 28% BA 27% AL 25% RS 24%  TR: 26%	MK 54% ME 54% XK 32% BA 31% AL 29% RS 28%  TR: $\geq 30\%$	Opinion polls	
<b>Output 1 related to Outcomes 1,2,3</b>	Image-building and thematic communication campaigns successfully implemented	Number of people reached during the campaigns (de-duplicated reach) (per year)	WB: 7 000 000  TR: 65 000 000	WB: $\geq 15$ 000 000  TR: 70 000 000	Audience analytics (WB: baseline from WeBalkans)	

Output 2 related to Outcomes 1,2,3	Outreach and networking events and activities successfully organised.	Number of participants (per year)	WB: 9 000 (in person), 3 200 000 (online) TR: 22 000	WB: ≥ 12 000 TR: 24 000	Desk analysis
Output 3 related to Outcomes 1,2,3	Web and social media presence successfully ensured (owned media).	Number of web visits (per year)	WB: 360 000 TR: 1 000 000	WB: 450 000 TR: 1 200 000	Web analytics Social media metrics
		Number of followers/subscribers on social media (total)	WB: 32 000 TR: 160 000	WB: 40 000 TR: 180 000	
		Number of impressions (engagements ) on social media	WB: 70 M (200 000) TR: 13 M	WB: 70 M (200 000) TR: 15 M	
Output 4 related to Outcomes 1,2,3	Coverage of EU-related issues in the media ensured (earned and paid media).	Number of media items (articles, interviews, op-eds, TV and radio broadcasts, etc.) (per year)	WB: 150 000 TR: 75 000	WB: ≥ 150 000 TR: ≥ 76 000	Desk analysis

## 4. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

### 4.1. Financing Agreement

In order to implement this action, it is not envisaged to conclude a financing agreement with the IPA III beneficiaries.

### 4.2. Indicative Implementation Period

The indicative operational implementation period of this action, during which the activities described in section 3 will be carried out and the corresponding contracts and agreements implemented, is **96 months** from the date of adoption by the Commission of this Financing Decision. Extensions of the implementation period may be agreed by the Commission's responsible authorising officer in duly justified cases.

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<sup>5</sup> Türkiye continued to move further away from the European Union and Türkiye's accession negotiations have therefore effectively come to a standstill. This might have an impact on the public perception.

### 4.3. Implementation Modalities

The Commission will ensure that the EU appropriate rules and procedures for providing financing to third parties are respected, including review procedures, where appropriate, and compliance of the action with EU restrictive measures<sup>6</sup>.

#### 4.3.1. Direct Management (Procurement)

The procurement will help to achieve all outcomes and outputs, as listed in Section 3.

### 4.4. Scope of geographical eligibility for procurement

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

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

### 4.5. Indicative Budget

There are no third-party contributions to the action. The action will be entirely implemented through procurement contracts under direct management.

The amounts indicated for the EU Delegations/EU Office are based on their own 2024-2027 budget estimates.

	2024 budget	2025 budget	2026 budget	2027 budget	Total
Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations	0	0	0	5 000 000	5 000 000
EU Delegation to Albania	0	3 000 000	0	3 000 000	6 000 000
EU Delegation to Bosnia and Herzegovina	2 300 000	2 500 000	3 200 000	300 000	8 300 000
EU Office in Kosovo	3 000 000	500 000	3 300 000	0	6 800 000
EU Delegation to Montenegro	0	2 000 000	0	2 000 000	4 000 000
EU Delegation to North Macedonia	360 000	8 000 000	0	2 000 000	10 360 000
EU Delegation to Serbia	5 500 000	3 000 000	5 500 000	2 000 000	16 000 000
EU Delegation to Türkiye	5 200 000	2 800 000	5 200 000	2 800 000	16 000 000
<b>Total</b>	<b>16 360 000</b>	<b>21 800 000</b>	<b>17 200 000</b>	<b>17 100 000</b>	<b>72 460 000</b>

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<sup>6</sup> [EU Sanctions Map](#) Please note that the sanctions map is an IT tool for identifying the sanctions regimes. The source of the sanctions stems from legal acts published in the Official Journal (OJ). In case of discrepancy between the published legal acts and the updates on the website it is the OJ version that prevails.

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

The EU delegations in the region and the EU Office in Kosovo are responsible for planning, contracting and implementing their respective communication activities. The same applies to the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations for its part of the funding.

The Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, jointly with the EEAS Task Force for Strategic Communication in the Western Balkans, provides a strategic steer to the EU delegations in the region and the EU Office in Kosovo through, inter alia: (i) the communication priorities and global objectives that it sets; (ii) the feedback on communication strategies, annual communication plans and annual reports that it provides; (iii) the forum that it offers for sharing information and best practices (in the form of bi-annual regional seminars, monthly video conferences, and ad-hoc video calls on ongoing communication campaigns and packages.)

While planning their communication activities, the EU delegations in the region and the EU Office in Kosovo seek synergies with the communication efforts of the national authorities and civil society, as well as the Commission services in charge of the specific components of the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance, notably the Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development and the Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy.

## **5. PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT**

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

The internal monitoring of communication activities is carried out by the respective implementing entities, i.e. the EU delegations in the region and the EU Office in Kosovo, and the communication unit of the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations.

Local communication priorities, target audiences, specific activities and performance indicators are set by the EU delegations in the region and the EU Office in Kosovo in the annual communication plans. The Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations reviews these plans jointly with the EEAS Task Force for Strategic Communication in the Western Balkans. At the end of each year, the EU delegations and the EU Office prepare an annual report with an overview of the activities carried out, together with an analysis of the challenges faced and lessons learnt during the year. The reports present the performance levels achieved in comparison with the targets set at the beginning of the year.

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

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

Arrangements for monitoring and reporting, including roles and responsibilities for data collection, analysis and monitoring:

Performance in terms of impact and outcome will be measured through annual opinion polls carried out centrally by the regional communication contract. The polling questionnaires will include a set of core



questions, which makes it possible to compare results at regional level. Each EU delegation in the region and the EU Office in Kosovo can organise additional surveys.

Performance in terms of outputs is assessed through desk study, web analytics, social media metrics and tailor-made surveys for individual integrated campaigns.

Any indicators to measure the outputs, results and impact of activities, complementary to those set out in the logical framework, will be determined taking into account the 2022 European Commission's communication indicators<sup>7</sup>:

## **5.2. Evaluation**

Having regard to the nature of the action, an ex-post evaluation will be carried out for the regional communication programme.

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

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

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

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

## **5.3. Audit and Verifications**

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

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

All entities implementing EU-funded external actions have the contractual obligation to inform the relevant audiences of the Union's support for their work by displaying the EU emblem and a short funding statement as appropriate on all communication materials related to the actions concerned. To that end they must comply

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<sup>(7)</sup> [2022 EC Comm indicators.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#)

with the instructions given in the 2022 guidance document [\*Communicating and raising EU visibility: Guidance for external actions\*](#) (or any successor document).

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

## **7. SUSTAINABILITY**

The action's sustainability, i.e. if and to what extent the benefits/results (outputs and outcomes) achieved are likely to continue beyond the action's implementation period, will be ensured, provided the EU delegations in the region and the EU Office in Kosovo continue their operations and continue to implement communication activities to maintain public awareness of EU actions among the target audiences.

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

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

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

The present Action identifies as:

<b>Contract level</b> (i.e. several contracts will be signed)
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