



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

REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA

EU for improved border and migration management capabilities in North Macedonia

Action summary

This Action will strengthen border and migration capabilities of the national authorities including combatting and preventing migrant smuggling and human trafficking in line with international standards

In addition, this action will enhance the operational capacity of the border police and improve the border and migration management capacities and assistance of the Transit Reception Centres in the Republic of North Macedonia.

Action Identification	
Action Programme Title	Annual Action Programme for the Republic of North Macedonia for Year 2020
Action Title	EU for improved border and migration management capabilities in North Macedonia
Action ID	IPA2020/41-831/01.02/MK/EUSB
Sector Information	
IPA II Sector	Rule of Law and Fundamental Rights
DAC Sector	15210 Security system management and reform
Budget	
Total cost	4,000,000 EUR
EU contribution	4,000,000 EUR
Budget line(s)	22.02.01.01
Management and Implementation	
Method of implementation	Indirect management
<i>Direct management:</i> EU Delegation <i>Indirect management:</i> National authority or other entrusted entity	This action will be implemented in indirect management with the International Organisation of Migration (IOM)
Implementation responsibilities	IOM
Location	
Zone benefiting from the action	Republic of North Macedonia
Specific implementation area(s)	North Macedonia with a special attention to the Southern border (Balkan migration route)
Timeline	
Final date for concluding Financing Agreement(s) with IPA II beneficiary	At the latest by 31 December 2021
Final date for concluding contribution/delegation agreements, procurement and grant contracts	3 years following the date of conclusion of the Financing Agreement, with the exception of cases listed under Article 114(2) of the Financial Regulation
Indicative operational implementation period	6 years following the conclusion of the Financing Agreement
Final date for implementing the Financing Agreement (date by which this	12 years following the conclusion of the Financing Agreement

programme should be de-committed and closed)			
Policy objectives / Markers (DAC form)			
General policy objective	Not targeted	Significant objective	Main objective
Participation development/good governance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	x
Aid to environment	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gender equality (including Women In Development)	<input type="checkbox"/>	x	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trade Development	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reproductive, Maternal, New born and child health	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
RIO Convention markers	Not targeted	Significant objective	Main objective
Biological diversity	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Combat desertification	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Climate change mitigation	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Climate change adaptation	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

1. RATIONALE

PROBLEM AND STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

In the context of the European refugee crisis, around 1.3 million third-country nationals applied for international protection in the EU, Norway and Switzerland in 2015. The majority of these asylum seekers and migrants arrived via the Western Balkan route. The main route currently leads from Turkey to Greece, and further onward through North Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia.

This crisis has exerted a particularly high pressure on North Macedonia as the country has limited resources to cope with such high influx. Although the migration movements have lowered, they continue over North Macedonia's borders and along the so-called Western Balkan migratory route. Its Southern border remains an attractive route for irregular crossings and migrant smuggling. This is particularly due to different reasons: country location on the Eastern Mediterranean route towards EU Member States (members and non-members of the Schengen zone); geostrategic position of the country on the Western Balkans sub-route; a well-developed road infrastructure and fewer border crossings to pass. Currently, the situation in the region remained relatively stable despite an increased influx in the Eastern Mediterranean which has been reflected in the Western Balkan sub-route in the first part of 2019.

EU support has been provided over the last few years; nevertheless, it is necessary to continue supporting the country with technical and financial assistance, to further strengthen its structures, capacities and resources in place (both material and human) and to enable them to respond to the scope and volume of the migration flows.

In the future, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency will be deployed in North Macedonia with the signature of the operational cooperation agreement, to facilitate cooperation between border authorities. Specifically, at the Southern border of North Macedonia, an increase in the attempts of irregular border crossings between January and June in 2019 has been observed, compared to the same period in 2018.¹ Subsequently, an increase in the smuggling activities and detections of smuggling cases at the Southern border have been reported². The vast majority of irregular migrant detections at the Southern border were recorded in the area of Bogorodica, which still remains the most frequently used corridor. Furthermore, given the increased surveillance measures at the borders between North Macedonia and Greece (and Greece and Albania), there is a risk that irregular flows might be fragmented and might continue through the South-Western part of the country (Prespa and Ohrid region). The geographical terrain in this region is mainly mountainous, with two natural lakes (Ohrid and Prespa). Due to the potential risk of irregular crossings occurring along the southern border towards the Western part of the country, there is a need to enhance control and surveillance of the blue borders in the region of Prespa lake (where the country has common borders with Greece and Albania), and in the region of Ohrid lake (where the country has a common border with Albania), through the use of advanced technological equipment by the border police.

The above-mentioned developments and statistics indicates a high probability for these similar trends to continue in the upcoming months, possibly with the same intensity which justify the necessity to continue to support the joint operation at the Southern border. This support would include the green and blue borders and further strengthen the country's operational capacity to effectively address irregular migration and migrant smuggling and other cross-border crime.

The main geographical areas of intervention are the areas of responsibility of the Police Stations Bogorodica, Dojran and Medzitlija. These are the most critical areas for irregular border crossings and smuggling of migrants in the Southern border. Furthermore, the Western part of the Southern border needs to be strengthened as well through the use of new and advanced technological equipment.

¹ 9,326 between January-June 2019 and 4,728 between January-June 2018.

² 19 cases involving 276 migrants and 30 smugglers arrested between January-June 2019, and 13 cases involving 135 migrants and 12 arrested smugglers between the same periods in 2018.

Furthermore, recognition of the rights and needs of migrants and refugees has to be guaranteed. Without adequate understanding, knowledge, skills and tools, the existing migration management mechanisms risk falling short of guaranteeing security standards that would ensure full respect and protection of migrants' rights. The knowledge and skills of the border police in communication, interaction and treatment of migrants needs to be improved. Particular support is required to ensure cultural interaction and translation in the process of migrant registration. Attention needs to be given to the vulnerable categories of migrants, such as women, children, persons with disabilities, who are more often subject to violence, and their specific rights or needs are less recognised than men's in transit or in the reception centres. The tools used for data collection need to be further upgraded and harmonised with the EU standards and updated to avail collection of more varied data, to support the data exchange nationally and with the partner countries.

The capacity of the country to manage migration flows and treat migrants in line with the international standards needs to be reinforced. Since the beginning of the migration crisis, the main concerns have been addressed by ensuring sufficient accommodation capacities for persons in transit in the transit reception centres, providing medical services and informing on voluntary return to countries of origin in a dignified and humane manner.. Although the number of migrants transiting through the Western Balkans in the past two years cannot be compared to the mass movements seen in 2015 and 2016 (when approximately 800 000 migrants transited through the territory of North Macedonia), from 2017 until June 2019, the number of migrants at the Transit Reception Centres of Kumanovo and Gevgelija has increased. In 2017, IOM teams evidenced 3 255 migrants, and 9 639 in 2019. Through the established operations in the Transit Reception Centres' in 2018, it has provided 21 485 services to 10 507 individuals (76% male, 13% female and 11% children). The assistance provided includes medical checks and referral to hospitals, information and counselling for Assisted Voluntary Return (AVR), pre-school and primary school activities and psychosocial support.

In this context, it is crucial to continue analysing the migration flows and the overall migration situation in the country and within the region, as well as to assist refugees through ensuring and expanding the direct operational capacities of the centres, in close cooperation and coordination with the national institutions of North Macedonia. Finally, there is a further need to improve referral and protection measures as well as to train newly hired front-line governmental staff working in direct contact, with migrant populations, with special emphasis to vulnerable categories of migrants present at the Transit Reception Centres in line with the EU standards.

OUTLINE OF IPA II ASSISTANCE

This Action will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the border control and management of migration flow on the Balkan route in accordance with the EU standards and will combat and prevent migrant smuggling and human trafficking in full respect of the Rule of Law and Fundamental Rights. It will be achieved through three major results:

Result 1 links to improvements in the operational capacity of the Ministry of Interior, border police of the Republic of North Macedonia to carry out border control, in line with EU and international standards. This result will be achieved through five activities: 1) Logistic support to the deployed guest border officers and the re-deployed national border officers along the selected areas to carry out the tasks of border control and management operations; 2) Logistical, operational and staff support of the intrusted agency (deployment of IOM staff to organise and coordinate the support to border police and the running cost of IOM office in Gevgelija); 3) Advisory support to the Ministry of Interior on border management and migration; 4) Provision of capacity-building support.; and 5). supply and deliver of special equipment for border surveillance and control systems and migrants' identification and registration in line with the EU standards, including software solutions, related IT support and communication equipment and trainings delivered for all intended users of such registration tools.

Result 2 envisages the strengthening of border management capacities and assistance to migrants, which will be achieved through the following activities: 1) Support to the maintenance and services of the Transit Reception Centres of Tabanovce (Kumanovo) and Gevgelija; 2) Basic medical services support for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers at the Transit Reception Centres; 3) Support to direct and voluntarily return

AVR to rejected asylum seekers and irregular migrants wishing to voluntarily return to their countries of origin; and 4) Assistance to migrants and refugees children to equitable access to formal and non-formal education programmes.

RELEVANCE WITH THE IPA II STRATEGY PAPER AND OTHER KEY REFERENCES

The proposed Action will help meet several objectives and priorities for assistance stated in the “**Indicative Strategy Paper for the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 2014-2020**” updated in 2018. The Strategy Paper established as priorities to improve the effective management of its external borders and ensure the implementation of visa, migration and asylum policies, in line with the EU *acquis* and ensure full respect of the fundamental rights, including in transit and asylum centres. IPA assistance will be provided to strengthen the material and human capacity to detect and prevent irregular migration, as well as assistance to asylum seekers and victims of trafficking and victims of smuggling; improving the surveillance and detection capacity of the border police in relation to all forms of cross-border crime, and supporting the capacity improvement of the asylum unit and the reception and accommodation facilities.

The Action, through the proposed activities, will also aim at addressing the challenges declared in the **Multi-Country Strategy Paper** that states that Enlargement countries will be supported to strengthen the mixed-migration and border management capacities to help the region to address the smuggling and migration-related challenges, including migrant registration, integrated border management, better management of irregular and assistance for voluntary return.

With regard to the Commission strategy for “**A credible enlargement perspective for and enhanced EU engagement with the Western Balkans**” (COM(2018)65), this Action supports its strategic purpose related to migration and border management by improving border control, ensuring the effective implementation of readmission and return policies and the fight against irregular migration and migrant smuggling.

The **2019 Commission Report on North Macedonia (COM(2019)260)** recognises the effort being made by North Macedonia in the management of mixed migratory flows and its cooperation with the EU Member States and neighbouring countries. Considerable efforts have been made to guarantee basic living conditions and services for all migrants remaining in the country. However, there are still uncertainties about the scope and structure of migration flows. The inconsistent registration of migrants detained in irregular movements prevents profiling that is sensitive to regular and adequate protection, as well as referral to national protection mechanisms. Effective control at the Southern border has been ensured, including with the deployment of guest officers from the EU Member States on the border. However, the problem of frequent smuggling activities on the Northern border needs to be dealt with more thoroughly as the country continues to be under severe pressure due to its geographical location. The proposed Action will help to improve and overcome problems related to the effectiveness and efficiency of the border control system and the reception and accommodation of migrants at the country’s borders.

More broadly, the Action will contribute to the regional **South East Europe 2020 Strategy** strategies Inclusive Growth pillar which has as a key strategy action to build regional capacity for harmonised monitoring of migration and mobility with a view to a gradual lifting of labour market restrictions in the region. The Action will also contribute to the results related to fight against crime, which requires strong interrelations between neighbouring countries, and will contribute to the strengthening of regional stability.

The National Programme for the Adoption of the *Acquis Communautaire* outlines few priorities in the Home Affairs sector: 1) Strengthening the strategic capacities for management of migration; 2) Full implementation of the National Plan for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Illegal Migration, and ensuring victims’ access to assistance, protection and reintegration; 3) Establishment of minimum/maximum standards of technical equipment of the police stations for border checks and border surveillance; 4) Continuous cooperation with neighbouring countries, by realisation of mixed patrols and cooperation through the joint contact centres; 5) Trainings of the members of the Mobile Units; and 6) Exchange of IBM data nationally, regionally and at the EU level.

This Action is also closely linked to the implementation of the following **national strategies**:

- **National Integrated Border Management Development Strategy (2015-2019)** and the related Action Plan, which has established a national IBM coordinator with numerous key functions. One of the main priorities is to improve the border security system through increasing the international cooperation, the cross-border police cooperation and joint patrols along the border, electronic border surveillance and realisation of training programmes on, among other topics, ethic an anti-corruption codes.
- **National Strategy for Combatting Trafficking of Human Beings and Illegal Migration (2017-2020)**, which objective is to detect and prosecute the perpetrators and enhance the status of victims of trafficking in human beings.
- **Resolution on Migration Policy (2015)**, which is the main policy document in the field. One of its strategic priorities is to identify migrants, profile them, and refer to the appropriate protection system.
- **Police Development Strategy (2016-2020)**, particularly with regard to reviewing responsibilities related to receiving and accommodating migrants pursuant to the standards and requirements of the EU an strengthening the border affairs and migration department and the regional centres for border affairs operative capacities, including fighting the cross-border crime and illegal migration.

LESSONS LEARNED AND LINK TO PREVIOUS FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

This Action is the continuation of different actions in the field of border control and migration management in the country and in the region. Different projects have been implemented or are being implemented to address short term needs linked to mid-and longer term support provided under national and regional IPA programmes in the area of the overall border control and migration management systems in the region.

As regard migration policy, the following EU support have been designed:

- Special measure I. The first support package of EUR 3 million was provided under IPA 2015 regional programme (total amount of EUR 10 million) and is intended to support the relevant government institutions with equipment and supply to deliver the necessary services. The equipment includes, among others, terrain vehicles, general and those specialised for medical and waste management, a portable field hospital, and other medical supplies.
- Special measure II. The second support package of EU 10 million is designed to enhance the country's border management capabilities. It envisages reinforcing systematic border checks and border surveillance through joint patrols of national and EU members states border officers and purchase of specialised surveillance equipment as well as support for the registration of migrants. Within this special measure, also the "Support to the management of the Southern border in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" (EUR 9 million). The overall objective is to strengthen the principal Beneficiary's border management. The specific objective is to ensure effective control of the border between the Greece and North Macedonia to discourage smuggling and trafficking of refugees and migrants and to ensure efficient registration and processing of migrants/refugees.
- Special measure III. The EU supports the medical staff of the Ministry of Health in providing services to migrants and local people, and support the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy to refurbishing premises for accommodation of migrants and schemes for assisted voluntary return of migrants (EUR 2,5 million). As well as the "EU support to Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in managing the migration/refugees crisis Balkan route" (EUR 16.2 million). The specific objective is to strengthen operational capacities of the Republic of North Macedonia and Serbia authorities to provide accommodation and basis living conditions to efficiently respond to the needs of migrants and asylum seekers.
- Special measure IV. "Support the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to improve its border and migration management capability" (EUR 3,5 million). The project enables the national border management authorities to strengthen their operational capacity to carry out border control and

surveillance, in line with EU standards through the provision of logistical support, capacity-building, expertise and supply of surveillance vehicles and specialised equipment.

- IPA funded project “*Regional support to protection-sensitive migration management in the Western Balkans and Turkey*” (EUR 8 million) launched in 2016 with a duration of three years involving Frontex, EASO, IOM and UNHCR and focused in capacity building activities for the Ministry of Interior and border police in the region. The main activities being (i) Strengthening identification mechanisms regarding irregular migrants and asylum seekers; (ii) Enhancing the capacities and tools to perform the registration of mixed migration flows; (iii) Setting up and streamlining of referral systems into national mechanisms, (iv) Developing EU compatible system for persons in need of international protection; (v) Establishing appropriate non-voluntary return mechanisms at regional level and operational cooperation with selected countries of origin (excluding Turkey); (vi) Strengthening the information exchange of non-personal information and data on migration and asylum at regional level; (vii) Establishing appropriate voluntary return mechanisms at regional level and operational cooperation with selected countries of origin (excluding Turkey); and (viii) Establishing pool of interpreters and design and implementation of pilot project involving two key countries in the Western Balkans.

- IPA funded programme 2016 “*Migration and asylum, border management and fight against terrorism and organised crime*” (total amount of EUR 16 million), which specific objective is to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the country border management and migration policy and strengthen the national response to organise crime, terrorism and radicalism. The activities related with migration are the following: (i) Improving the administrative capacities in the area of migration and trafficking in human beings, including also outreach work with migrants, asylum seekers and victims of illegal trafficking; (ii) Establishing of a new Reception Centre for illegal migrants; and (iii) Aligning the national systems with the EU and Schengen requirements for border management.

The current Action will ensure a new capacity for hosting and assisting migrants and will also support the national authorities, specially the border control responsible, in implementing a migration policy in line with the EU and human rights standards. Strong coordination between this Action and the targeted national and regional project will be ensured to increase the impact on the migration and border control policies throughout the synergy of actions and expertise.

As there have been a considerable number of interventions through development assistance in the respective fields, there are several important key messages and lessons learnt for the more successful implementation of future measures. They can be summarised as follows :

- Given the complexity of the sector scope and the underlying institutional setup, the success of any intervention is directly proportionate to the extent of readiness of institutions to cooperate, share and exchange information.
- Availability of up-to-date actions and activities assessments and targeted analyses is essential as well as the awareness of sector stakeholders of the data and statistics contained therein.
- Ownership should be increased at policy level rather than at the level of separate actions.
- Awareness and involvement of the stakeholders should be promoted at an early stage and the programming capacities need to be enhanced.
- Sustainability aspects needs to be addressed at the earliest design stage.
- Maturity and flexibility of the separate actions need to ensured. In the context of a sector approach the maturity of an action also relates to the maturity of the strategic framework, the capacity of the institutions and the adequacy of the institutional set-up established to implement specific strategic priorities as well as to the commitment of policy-makers to pursue the agreed reforms.

2. INTERVENTION LOGIC

LOGICAL FRAMEWORK MATRIX

		OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS			SOURCES & MEANS OF VERIFICATION	
OVERALL OBJECTIVE(S) / (IMPACT(S))	INDICATOR'S NAME	Baselines (Value + year)	Milestones 2021	Targets 2022		
This Action will strengthen border and migration capabilities of the national authorities including combatting and preventing migrant smuggling and human trafficking in line with international standards	Level of preparation of North Macedonia in dealing with migration related issues.	Assessment at action entry and end		Quality assessment	European Commission Report	
SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE(S) / OUTCOME(S)	OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS	Baselines (Value + year)	Milestones 2021	Targets 2022	SOURCES OF VERIFICATION	ASSUMPTIONS
To enhance the operational capacity of the border police and improve the border and migration management capacities and assistance of the Transit Reception Centres.	Enhance capacity to monitor migration flows; number of border checks, registration performed Number of refugees benefitting from assistance				Ministry of Interior Illegal and prevented illegal crossing for the period January - December – Department for Crime Intelligence and Analysis – Public Security Bureau Ministry of Health, Ministry of Labour and social protection, International Organisation of Migration	- EU integration remains a government priority, which entails a continuous political and administrative commitment to EU accession and provision of sufficient resources to support EU actions - Political will to strengthen the Rule of Law and Fundamental Rights sector. - Continuous commitment and cooperation of all stakeholders. - Sufficient resources (both human and material resources).

OUTPUTS	OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS (*)	Baselines (Value + year)	Milestones 2021	Targets 2022	SOURCES OF VERIFICATION	ASSUMPTIONS
<p>1. Strengthened operational capacity of border police authorities (including guest borders guards) in North Macedonia to carry out border control, in line with EU standards.</p> <p>2. Improved management and capacity of the border control migration flows, including registration and identification of new arrivals, in line with EU standards.</p>	Number of working days of national border police officers spent on border (Sum of number of working days delivered by each redeployed border police officer per year)	4,380 working days (Southern border)	4,380 working days (Southern border)	4,380 working days (Southern border)	Project report	<p>- Commitment on behalf of all national stakeholders to support the implementation of the action and to coordinate their activities, resources and efforts</p> <p>- The border police of North Macedonia together with guest officers will continue respecting all relevant standards, in particular as regards respect for fundamental rights and human dignity.</p> <p>- National bodies involved in the action dispose with the needed resources (human, administrative, technical)</p> <p>- The country will provide the needed complementary support for the operation of the two transit centres for migrants.</p>
	Number of average days (per month) spent on border by guest borders guards	3000 presence days per month (2019)	3000 presence days per month	3000 presence days per month	Project report	
	Number of hours training for border police officers (number of trained officers multiplied by the number of hours of training received by each trained officer).	1953 trained officers x hours/year (2018)	1953 trained officers x hours/year	1953 trained officers x hours/year	Project report	
	Number of specialised equipment for border surveillance and control and systems for registration of migrants			Target will be decided at the time the Contribution Agreement contract will be prepared.	Project report	
<p>2. Improved border management capacities and assistance to migrants.</p>	Number of migrants receiving assistance, including education assistance (number of migrants receiving assistance multiplied by the number of days migrant receive assistance). Indicator disaggregated: gender, adult and children	10,522 migrants x days/year (76% male; 13% female; 11% children) (2018)	Around 10,000 migrants x days/year if the migration flows is similar to the present one.	Around 10,000 migrants x days/year if the migration flows is similar to the present one.	Project report	
	Number of migrants receiving medical assistance (number of medical checks provided to migrants). Indicator disaggregated: gender, adult	2,930 migrants/year (73% male; 14% female; 13% children) (2018)	Around 3,000 migrants/year if the migration flows is similar to the present one.	Around 3,000 migrants/year if the migration flows is similar to the present one	Project report	

	and children					
	Number of migrants that want to return to their country of origin and supported in their request). Indicator disaggregated: gender, adult and children	21 migrants/year (57% male; 14% female; 29% children) (2018)	Around 20 migrants/year if the migration flows is similar to the present one.	Around 20 migrants/year if the migration flows is similar to the present one.	Project report	

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES

Result 1: Strengthened operational capacity of the border police authorities of North Macedonia (including guest borders guards) to carry out border control, in line with EU standards.

This result will be achieved through the implementation of the following activities:

Activity 1.1 Logistics support to the deployed guest border officers and the re-deployed national border officers along the selected areas to carry out the tasks of border control and management operations.³

- Organisation and provision of accommodation and food, as well as other logistics support, for guest border officers deployed and national border officers re-deployed in the selected border areas, in line with the IOM and EU standards and guidelines.
- Provision of basic maintenance and fuel supply to the national and guest vehicles assigned to carry out border management activities, border patrolling and other border-related activities.
- Hiring language interpreters to facilitate the communication between the migrants with the border police and processing of migrants' cases, *inter alia*.

Activity 1.2 Operational and logistics support office and staff

- Deployment of IOM staff in the selected areas to organise and coordinate the logistic and operational support to national border police officers deployed in the areas of responsibility.
- Running cost of IOM office space already existing in Gevgelija, during the duration of the Action, and acting as a hub coordinating the logistical and operational support, with constant monitoring and supervision of all related expenses.

Activity 1.3 Advisory support to the Ministry of Interior on border management and migration

- Deployment of an international border management and migration expert and a local junior border management and migration expert to the Ministry of Interior.
- Provision of advisory assistance to the Border Affairs and Migration Department within Ministry of Interior on border management and migration, through the international and local junior experts, including, *inter alia*, liaising with EU Delegation, advising on the relevant EU standards and elaborating a weekly report on the border operations.

Activity 1.4 Provision of capacity-building support

- Preparation, implementation and evaluation of training courses for national border police officers/border management officials on humanitarian border management, including relevant EU standards. In the implementation of this activity, the results and recommendations of the previous training realised under similar projects will have to be taken into account. The training topics will be adjusted to competences of the training audience and will include aspects ranging from detection and prevention of illegal migration and considering the gender-related differences.

³ See Conditions for Implementation.

Activity 1.5 Improved management and capacity of the border control migration flows, including registration and identification of new arrivals, in line with EU standards.

- Supply and deliver special equipment for border control systems for migrants' identification and registration in line with the EU standards, including software solutions, related IT support and communication equipment.
- Training delivered for all intended users of the equipment.

Result 2: Improved border management capacities and assistance to migrants

This result involves the following activities:

Activity 2.1 Support to the maintenance and services of the Transit Reception Centres of Tabanovce and Gevgelija.

- Deployment of field workers at the Transit Reception Centres of Tabanovce and Gevgelija in order to ensure logistical support and existence of adequate reception conditions.
- Maintenance of basic utilities and services (electrical network, sanitary network, water supply, internet, etc.), in order to meet the needs of migrants staying in these two Transit Reception Centres in mid to long term.
- Translation services through the deployment of interpreters for refugees and migrants on Arabic, Farsi and/or Pashto to ensure translation and interpretation to meet the needs of migrants, available for the transit reception teams and medical teams.
- Assistance through the Info-points for information share, communication point that migrants can use in order to communicate with their families or search for various information while they are staying in the Transit Reception Centres.

Activity 2.2 Basic medical services support for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers at the Transit Reception Centres.

- Deployment of medical teams based at the established ambulances at the Transit Reception Centres in Gevgelija and Tabanovce, thus ensuring continuity of their activities and adequate access of the migrants and refugees to health care services.
- Transportation and medical assistance of the migrants with health issues to other health care facilities, when needed.
- Cultural orientation sessions for the medical teams, -as well as for the medical personnel working in hospitals and healthcare institutions in the vicinity of the Transit Reception Centres -, on fundamental aspects of working in a culturally diverse environment, including practical tools and rules for interaction that are gender and culturally sensitive.
- Based on individual assessments of migrants, provide essential medicines and/or disinfection means at the Transit Reception Centres to ensure access to basic health care and better hygiene standards.

Activity 2.3 Support to direct and voluntarily return AVR to rejected asylum seekers and irregular migrants wishing to voluntarily return to their countries of origin.

- Deployment of experts on AVR to provide guidance and counselling for rejected asylum seekers and migrants, residing in the Reception Centre for Foreigners, Transit Reception Centres and other

locations throughout the country, who are not in need of international protection and wishing to return voluntarily to their country of origin.

- For those migrants meeting the criteria for AVR, provision of pre-departure assistance, travel documents and arrangements, flight tickets and direct assistance at airports of departure, transit, entry and reintegration assistance.

Activity 2.4 Assistance to migrants and refugees children to equitable access to formal and non-formal education programmes.

- Daily care and educational activities for children organised through basis classes for primary grade level at the Transit Reception Centres of Gevgelija (Children's Corner).
- Vocational education activities suitable for young adults (14+), including languages skills and technical crafts at the TRC in Kumanovo (Youth Point Centre).
- Capacity building activities (trainings) for reception centre staff on unaccompanied minors, migrants' rights, protection and cultural sensitivity.
- Psychosocial support to migrants, through the deployment of a psychosocial team operating within the mandate of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy in the Transit Reception Centres of Gevgelija and Kumanovo.
- Delivery of Non-Food-Items) to migrants, based on need assessment provided by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy team in each reception centre, with special focus on vulnerable groups of migrants such as women, minors and unaccompanied minor migrants.

RISKS

RISKS	L ⁴	MITIGATION MEASURES
Irregular migrant flows might be fragmented and continue through the South-western part of the country (Prespa and Ohrid region)	M	Increased surveillance at the blue borders in the region of Prespa Lake (common borders with Greece and Albania), and in the region of Ohrid Lake (common border with Albania).
Dissatisfaction of guest border officers with the services rendered	L	IOM will develop tools that ensure regular feedback and adequate level of services rendered to the guest border officers.
Limited participation of the national border police officers in the capacity-building activities due to their engagement in the border operations	L	For the training purpose, the Ministry of Interior will assign the border police officers and timetable will be adjusted to allow for adequate level of participation while avoiding any disruption in their daily work.
The implementation of the project is suspended or terminated by DG NEAR if border and migration management activities by the IPA II beneficiary do not meet the standards set out in the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, the European Convention on Human Rights and, in the case of guest border officers sent by EU Member States break the norms and standards set by	L	Capacity-building trainings for border police; provision of advisory services by the international border management and migration expert and supporting the Ministry of Interior in the organization of deployment briefings for the newly deployed guest officers and the re-deployed national officers.

⁴ Likelihood: L = Low / M = Medium / H = High

Union legislation		
Changes in the market prices of the specialized equipment	L	The tender for procurement of specialized equipment will be launched immediately upon the contract signature in order to minimize the risk of major changes in the market prices of specialized equipment
Dramatic change on migration trends with unpredictable duration and number of arrivals.	M	Regular contacts with neighbouring countries and exchange of information on migration flows trends and regular donor coordination meetings that ensure alignment, coordination and coherence of international assistance.
The border restrictions cause more people feeling compelled to seek alternative routes and others becoming stranded	M	The existing resources, both human and logistics/material, are swiftly relocated to potential new migratory entry points in case of opening of new migratory routes.
Relevant government counterparts and implementing partners may encounter difficulties in implementation as the mass migration flows strain the capacities of officials to engage in additional activities.	L	Permanent coordination with the national authorities to ensure implementation of activities in line with the capacities of counterparts to participate.
AVR activities are dependent on the willingness of beneficiaries to engage in this activity, and it may be difficult to anticipate the number of cases as interest may fluctuate.	M	Flexible utilisation of the AVR budget based on the number of identified beneficiaries at each location.
Lack of sufficient medical personnel at the reception sites/local community.	L	IOM and the project partners will deploy medical personnel from other locations within the country.
Lack of gender sensitivity in providing services to the refugees and migrants.	L	Both male and female Information Officers will be deployed in order to meet gender sensitivity requirements in serving the refugees and migrants and ensure gender balanced interpretation teams.

Additional assumptions for the successful implementation of the Action include :

- The national border police officers of North Macedonia together with guest officers will continue respecting all relevant standards, in particular as regards respect for fundamental rights and human dignity, in carrying out operations supported by this Action.
- The countries will provide the necessary number of border police officers, in order to accommodate guest officers from an operational perspective and maintain an appropriate ratio between domestic officers and guest officers.
- The country will provide the needed complementary support for the operation of the two Transit Centers for migrants.

CONDITIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- This Action will continue supporting the deployment of guest border officers only until the agreement between the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (FRONTEX) and North Macedonia is effectively in place. In such circumstances, the Action will be revised accordingly to ensure relevant complementarities. Finally, any support to operations on border not yet covered by ongoing activities will have to be agreed in advance with Commission services.
- Any support to operations on border not yet covered by ongoing activities will have to be agreed in advance with Commission services.

3. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

At the central level, the main institutional stakeholders of the Action are the Ministry of Interior; the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy; the Ministry of Health and the EU Delegation in North Macedonia who will have the broad mandate for overseeing the Action. The **Ministry of Interior** and the **Department for Border Affairs and Migration** within the Ministry of Interior will have the main responsibility of the national border control officers re-deployment and will coordinate with their counterpart in the relevant countries for the deployment of the guest border officers. As well, they will be the main beneficiary of the specialised equipment for the detection, identification and registration of migrants. The Ministry of Interior, as concerns the border control, the fight against migrant smuggling and human trafficking will be the primary beneficiary. The **Ministry of Labour and Social Policy**, which is the leading institution in charge of all aspects of employment, social and equal opportunities policy, will be responsible for the implementation of the related activities within this Action. The **Ministry of Health**, in close cooperation with IOM, will be involved in the provision of medical services at the Transit Reception Centres and in the hospitals, if needed.

The ministries are supported in their responsibilities by the **Sector Working Groups** on Education, Employment and Social Policy and on Home Affairs, which were established in 2015 and 2016 following the introduction of Sector Approach under IPA II. The SWGs are responsible to align the national planning process in the sector with the IPA programming ensuring that all EU funds are properly targeted to achieve synergy with the national and international funds and increase the impact on the sectors. The SWGs are also mandated with the on going monitoring of the implementation at the level of the action.

As implementing partner of the Action, the **IOM** in close coordination with the EU Delegation will oversee the daily operations of the Action and ensure the timely and prudent delivery of assistance to the beneficiaries.

During the implementation period, a **Action Steering Committee** will be established with, inter alia, the following responsibilities: a) provide overall management support and strategic guidance to the Action b) monitor, review and steer the implementation of the project and assess the Action results and impact; c) provide advice to the project management team on issues of key importance to the project; d) advise the EU Delegation on critical issues; e) ensure appropriate circulation of information and harmonisation of best practices; f) ensure that overlap of activities implemented in the country within other on going interventions is avoided and synergies are created where relevant. The Action Steering Committee members will, inter alia, be: IOM, EU Delegation, DG NEAR, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Ministry of Health and other stakeholders as deemed necessary during the inception phase of the Action.

METHOD(S) OF IMPLEMENTATION AND TYPE(S) OF FINANCING (SEE ANNEX IMPLEMENTATION – BUDGET)

Implementation modalities	Total Budget (EUR)	EU contribution (EUR)	Launch of Procedures	Contract signature
Contribution Agreement with IOM	4,000,000	4,000,000	Q2/Q3 2020	Q2/Q3 2020

The total amount allocated for the Action document is **EUR 4 million**.

This Action will be implemented in indirect management with IOM. The implementation entails the realisation of all planned activities under the Action and achieving of all planned results. No fall-back option is envisaged. The envisaged entity has been selected using the following criteria: (i) Financial and operational capacity of IOM, possessing technical competence and high degree of specialisation on migration issues, including in the country. With its significant global footprint and mandate to facilitate

dignified, orderly and safe migration, IOM is uniquely placed in the country to provide efficient and cost-effective technical support solutions for North Macedonia covering the full package of planned activities; (ii) The Commission signed an agreement with IOM on cooperation in addressing the challenges of the on going migration crisis. IOM plays a key role in the implementation of IPA 2014 regional project “*Regional support to protection-sensitive migration management in the Western Balkans and Turkey*”, as well as IPA 2016 national project focused on improving the administrative capacities in the area of migration and trafficking of human beings, including also outreach work with migrants, asylum seekers, victims of illegal trafficking. Moreover, IOM is implementing Special Measures 3 and 4 supporting the country to manage its Southern border in the context of the European migration crisis. This Action 2020 is complementary to all other EU funded interventions ensuring continuity and higher impact of the EU funds on the migration policy of the beneficiary country.

4. PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

METHODOLOGY FOR MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Progress in the implementation of the Action will be monitored through the Performance Assessment Framework (PAF) which is being prepared through a separate EU project and is expected to be put in place in 2019. The PAF is sector-based and integrates macro indicators (outcome and impact levels) and micro indicators (output level) for the sector Rule of Law and Fundamental Rights, deriving from the country sector strategic documents. Since the Action proposes measures relevant to the priorities identified in the national strategic documents, the majority of the formulated indicators are part of PAF. PAF is developed as a web-based application (to be backed up by a Government decision on responsibilities and deadlines) allowing regular electronic input of data, data processing and data analytics. The PAF data will be used in the Sector Working Groups on Home Affairs and Education, Employment and Social Policy, which are also the inclusive platform of all stakeholders to monitor the implementation of the sector priorities.

The Action foresees regular monitoring from the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy; the Ministry of Health and the EU Delegation in North Macedonia through direct participation in the Project Steering Committee as well as regular reporting provided by the implementing agency. The Action further foresees monitoring from the Results Oriented Monitoring (ROM) teams from the EU.

The implementing agency will be responsible for:

- Regular monitoring of the Actions beneficiaries to ensure that they are sufficiently supported and that regular contact is maintained in order to address any issues that might arise or to take remedial actions that may be required.
- Conducting an evaluation to assess the overall impact of the Action and its ability to provide the needed support. The assessment will be used to provide suggestions for the future implementation of similar programming and draw out lessons learned from the current phase. Action monitoring and evaluation will be based on a period assessment of progress in delivering specific Action results and achieving Action objectives. It will ensure inclusion of a gender perspective.

The European Commission may carry out a mid-term, a final or an ex-post evaluation for this Action or its components via independent consultants, through a joint mission or via an implementing partner. In case a mid-term or final evaluation is not foreseen, the European Commission may, during implementation, decide to undertake such an evaluation for duly justified reasons either on its own decision or on the initiative of the partner. The evaluation will be carried out as prescribed as prescribed by the DG NEAR guidelines for Evaluation. In addition, the Action might be subject to external monitoring in line with the European Commission rules and procedures set in the Financing Agreement.

As part of its performance assessment framework, the Commission shall monitor and assess progress towards achievement of the specific objectives set out in the IPA II Regulation on the basis of pre-defined, clear, transparent measurable indicators. The progress reports referred to in Article 4 of the IPA II Regulation shall be taken as a point of reference in the assessment of the results of IPA assistance.

The Commission will collect performance data (process, output and outcome indicators) from all resources, which will be aggregated and analysed in terms of tracking the progress versus the targets and milestones established for the Action, as well as the Indicative Strategy Paper.

5. SECTOR APPROACH ASSESSMENT

The Ministry of Interior is the leading institution in this sector. It is responsible for the coordination and supervision of its implementation and monitoring at the broadest institutional level. The Ministry of Interior is the key player institution that will benefit from the majority of the activities related to fight against organised crime and terrorism under this Action. Within the Ministry of Interior a Department for Strategic planning has been established in November 2015 assuming the responsibility for strategic planning, monitoring of the implementation of the relevant strategies and for quality assurance.

The institutional set-up is supportive for the implementation of the sector reform, mainly due to the existence of clearly defined lead institution. However, identified weaknesses in term of capacities should be resolved in the short-medium term. There is insufficient number of staff in the strategic planning department, financial policy, UBK, IT policy as well as a lack of an institutionalized training policy for the basic and continuous training.

The established **Sector Working Group** on Home Affairs is an inter-ministerial co-operation forum enlarged to donors and civil society and chaired by the Minister of Interior. It meets in three formats: core/expert, institutional (expert and decision-makers) and plenary/extended, involving also donors and civil society along with all national institutions. The SWG is engaged in analysing and defining the sector priorities, as well as monitoring and reporting on the progress of the sector strategies. In 2018 and 2019 the SWG met regularly – about 15 sessions, two of which plenary. One special session of the SWG involving the main stakeholders involved in Migration was held on the 24.07.2019 to agree on the final contents of this AD. Other coordinative mechanisms also exist in the country. The one related to the border control and migrant issues are the following: 1) National Coordination for Border Management. A Government Decision set up the Coordination Centre in 2007, based on the Law on State Border Surveillance and the Law on Border Control. The main aim is improving the interaction amongst the different organisations involved in this field. 2) National Committee for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Illegal Migration. This Committee is the leading institution for the preparation and implementation of the strategy in this area.

The national strategic framework is complicated and is based on over 20 documents such as the Police Development Strategy 2016-2020 which is expected to strengthen proactive policing model and a higher level of protection of life, property and personal security of citizens, The Second National Strategy for Improvement of the Road Traffic 2015-2020, the National Strategy for Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings and Illegal Migration 2017-2020, the National Strategy on Illicit Drugs 2014-2020, the National Integrated Border Management Strategy 2015-2019, the Resolution on the Migration Policy 2015-2020, the National Strategy against Money Laundering and Financing Terrorism 2017-2020, the Strategy to Strengthen the Capacity for Conducting Financial Investigations and Asset Confiscation 2018-2020, the Strategy for integration of refugees and foreigners 2017-2027, the National Counterterrorism Strategy 2018-2022 and the National Strategy for Countering Violent Extremism 2018-2022. Other relevant documents covering some of the important crosscutting issues in the sector include the State Programme for Prevention and Repression of Corruption and Reduction of Conflict of Interest 2016-2019 with the main focus on introduction and development of various criminal, civil and administrative law/initiatives tools in the field; the Strategy for Cooperation of the Government with the Civil Sector 2018-2020 which foresees inter alia stringer role of CSOs as an external oversight and monitoring mechanism in the justice sector, and the National Programme for Adoption of the Acquis (NPAA) which serves as umbrella document for EU integration related reforms in rule of law.

This complicated strategic framework creates some challenges as regards the follow-up and public involvement in the progress on the sector reforms. To ease up the public monitoring the national authorities, with the EU support, work on a PAF integrating the most important performance indicators at macro and

micro level. The PAF is expected to be released in 2019 and will be used through the next strategic programming period.

6. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

GENDER MAINSTREAMING

Effective gender mainstreaming will be taken into account at all stages and aspects during the implementation of the interventions. The Action will take care to ensure gender balance amongst field workers, medical teams, and participants in working groups for development of new policies as well as amongst trainees benefitting from the various opportunities for attaining new skills. Furthermore, the specific needs of both women and men will be incorporated into the development of all training modules developed in order to ensure their accessibility to the target audiences. The Action will ensure gender balance on all capacity building activities and foremost will ensure that the protection and reintegration of migrants will be handled in equal gender terms and environment. Victims of trafficking will have equal and unhindered access to the assistance and the support provided by the authorities and other organisations. While trafficking in human beings mainly affects women, this Action equally takes into consideration the specific needs that might arise for both male and female victims of trafficking. Finally, as regards the border control police officers, the Action will assure a minimum number of women who are part of the relevant border control teams and who participate in the training activities.

Further on, the Action will take on –board the relevant UN recommendations, notably:

- Systematic collection of sex and age disaggregated data in registration systems,
- Availability of targeted services in reception and transit centres,
- Creation of women only spaces,
- Sex segregated toilets and showers.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

The Action promotes equal opportunities to everybody in practice by creating a perspective for development for those living in the most precarious conditions and having less opportunities for development, participation and integration in the health care services, education and labour market. Migrants will benefit from the targeted actions for improving the living and accommodation conditions, basic health assistance and educational support with special attention to the children. As well, the migrants in AVR(R) will receive, where possible, assistance in making “business-plans” contributing to sustainability of return, increasing their employability and promoting the equal opportunities.

The country has put in place the legal framework to ensure gender equality through the adoption of the Law on equal opportunities for women and men and the Law on prevention of and protection from discrimination.

MINORITIES AND VULNERABLE GROUPS

A substantial part of activities is dedicated to minorities and vulnerable groups, such as migrants, asylum seekers and refugees who reside substandard living conditions, including those with serious medical conditions; migrant and refugee children in need for formal and informal education and preschool support; victims of human trafficking; unaccompanied migrant children and women and girls migrants victims of sexual and gender-base violence. Through this Action, different interventions are designed to alleviate and support as much as possible this dramatic situation.

The project activities will support the implementation of the relevant international standards in the respective international documents such as the UN Convention on Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination, Convention against Torture, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment and or Punishment, UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, EU Directive 2008/115/EC on common standards and procedures in Member States for returning illegally staying third-country nationals and in line with recommendations made by relevant international human rights monitoring bodies.

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

The Action has been designed taking into consideration the opinions and recommendations of the most relevant international organisation with specific expertise in the field of the intervention. Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and non-governmental organisations will be involved in the development of new policies through public hearings and as part of working groups when appropriate, and more specifically by participating in the Sector Working Groups (SWGs) on Education, Employment and Social Policy (EESP) and on Home Affairs (HA), which have proved as an excellent tool and platform to involve all relevant stakeholders in programming and monitoring activities. As well, in the frame of the monitoring of the action, the steering committees to be established will include the relevant CSOs to contribute to the analyses of the implementation and provide structured input for the operation of the interventions.

Representatives of the CSOs will also take part as training audience, or trainers in the envisaged capacity building activities. Integration of civil society sector in the overall system for migration management and particularly in the mechanisms for migrant assistance is in line with the on Migration and Stockholm Agenda of the Global Forum for Migration and Development.

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE (AND IF RELEVANT DISASTER RESILIENCE)

The Action does not pursue specific objectives as regards environment and climate change but its implementation will partially contribute to a better understanding of the environmental challenges and the impact on environment of various technologies. The effective management of the migration flows through the country, the government authorities will be better able to manage climate induced displacement both of residence in North Macedonia as well as incoming migrants from neighbouring countries and regions. In relation to trafficking in human beings is less significant, but relevant as well. Increased cooperation with regional neighbours in both migration and trafficking in human beings would facilitate faster response and recovery from disasters in terms of enabling easier movement across borders and faster recognition of the need for international protection.

7. SUSTAINABILITY

The most relevant effect of this Action will result directly in an improvement of the capacity of control and management of national borders and, therefore, in a greater efficiency in the control of the migration flow of the Balkan route and on the fight against human trafficking. In this context, improving the knowledge and skills of national border police and border administration officials to deal with cross-border crime, particularly migrant trafficking will be a prerequisite for project sustainability. Through the advisory support to the Ministry of Interior and the capacity-building activities, the national border police officers will be able to reinforce their knowledge, awareness and skills that will result in an improved job performance. As well, the new and technologically advanced equipment to be delivered will significantly contribute to strengthened technical capabilities of the border police. In terms of long-term benefits, by far, the most significant advantage for the national border officers will be an enhanced capacity in carrying out border operations by acquiring new information and sharing and comparing experiences to tackle to the most stringent issues, in particular counteracting migrant smuggling. Finally, it is also relevant to mention the all the activities will be implemented in accordance with the EU standards and in full respect of the Rule of Law and Fundamental Rights.

As concern the migration management, the Action will be implemented in close coordination and cooperation with the project's stakeholders, ensuring participation, ownership and sustainability. The project envisages active participation of the governmental institutions in co-leading, monitoring and evaluation the project activities, thus ensuring project relevance to the institutional priorities. Therefore, the gaps related to the absence of adequate institutional structures for longer-term accommodation of migrants and the absence of return mechanisms for the migrants who are not in need of international protection will be addressed. Moreover, the Action will support of the public health sector, thus enabling accumulation of expertise in dealing with migration crisis from health perspectives. The government-owned reception facilities to be enhanced within the Action will continue to be used for longer-term accommodation of migrants upon the project completion. Finally, from the financial point of view, the Action will significantly lessen the burden

of the countries' budgets through enhancing and improving the conditions at the reception facilities, coverage of the institutional costs for provision of medical services and essential medicines to the migrants at the reception sites, as well as through supporting the voluntary return and reintegration fund until the establishment of a sustainable AVR(R).

8. COMMUNICATION AND VISIBILITY

Communication and visibility will be given high importance during the implementation of the action. The implementation of the communication activities shall be funded from the amounts allocated to the action.

The communication and visibility approach is based on several pillars:

- Promotion of the action through the visibility and communication strategy "EU for YOU", of the EU Delegation, based on sector campaigns, which target the citizens at large outlining the benefits of the EU aid for the country in a communicative, comprehensible and interactive style. In addition, all EU projects are promoted through the Delegation web-site. As of 2018, the EU Delegation together with NIPAC launched the IPA Visualization Map (euprojects.mk) providing information on all IPA projects in the country.
- Promotion of the EU support at the level of the action –this implies selection of one or two activities out of the whole Action with very high media potential and creating a media event allowing to promote in general the EU values and principles in a certain specific context.
- All materials and publications produced within the Action will strictly follow the requirements and guidelines of the Communication and Visibility Requirements for European Union External Action (2018), used to highlight EU participation, in close coordination with the EU Delegation. All working documents, presentations, invitations, signs/stickers, folders, notebooks, agendas, letters, reference materials, stationery, documentary video materials will clearly identify the project as being part of an EU-funded action. All equipment and supplies procured in the scope of the project will be clearly identified, and visibly bear the EU emblem and the phrase "Provided with the financial support of the European Union" in Macedonian and English languages. The communication and visibility events will be organised in close collaboration with the EU Delegation. All public statements and written materials will be cleared beforehand by the EU Delegation.

All contractors are also expected to show a good communication reflex and the ability to exploit unexpected opportunities to the benefit of the action. Having in mind the importance of the digital communication in today's era of web technologies and social media, creation of EU-funded projects' communication materials in an Internet friendly format is essential. The implementation of the communication activities shall be funded from the amounts allocated to the Action and the separate contracts. It is the responsibility of the contractors and beneficiaries to keep the EU Delegation and the Commission fully informed of the planning and implementation of the specific visibility and communication activities. The Beneficiary shall also report on the visibility and communication actions in the relevant reports.

Visibility and communication actions shall demonstrate how the intervention contributes to the agreed programme objectives and the accession process, as well as the benefits of the action for the general public. Actions shall be aimed at strengthening general public awareness and support of interventions financed and the objectives pursued. The actions shall aim at highlighting to the relevant target audiences the added value and impact of the EU's interventions and will promote transparency and accountability on the use of funds.

Visibility and communication aspects shall be complementary to the activities implemented by DG NEAR and the EU Delegations in the field. The European Commission and the EU Delegations should be fully informed of the planning and implementation of the specific visibility and communication activities.