



EN

THIS ACTION IS FUNDED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION

ANNEX II

of the Commission Implementing Decision on the financing of the annual action plan in favour of the Republic of Albania for 2022

Action Document for EU for Democracy

ANNUAL ACTION PLAN

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

1. SYNOPSIS

1.1. ACTION SUMMARY TABLE

Title	EU for Democracy Annual action plan in favour of Albania for 2022
OPSYS	ACT-61322, JAD.1030030
Basic Act	Financed under the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA III)
Team Europe Initiative	No
Zone benefiting from the action	The action shall be carried out in Albania
Programming document	IPA III Programming Framework
PRIORITY AREAS AND SECTOR INFORMATION	
Window and thematic priority	Window 1: Rule of Law, Fundamental Rights and Democracy Thematic Priority 6: Democracy Thematic Priority 7: Civil Society Thematic Priority 5: Fundamental rights (with reference to media freedom of expression)
Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	Main SDG: SDG 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. Other significant SDGs: SDG 5 Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls; SDG 10: reducing inequalities.
DAC code(s) ¹	Main DAC code: 15150 – Democratic participation and civil society Sub-code 1: 15153 - Media and free flow of information
Main Delivery Channel	42001 - European Commission - Development Share of Budget

¹ DAC sectors (codes and descriptions) are indicated in the first and fourth columns of the tab ‘purpose codes’ in the following document: <http://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-financestandards/dacandcrscodelists.htm>

Markers ² (from DAC form)	General policy objective	Not targeted	Significant objective	Principal objective
	Participation development/good governance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Aid to environment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Gender equality and women's and girl's empowerment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Trade development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Reproductive, maternal, new-born and child health	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Disaster Risk Reduction	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Inclusion of persons with Disabilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Nutrition ³	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	RIO Convention markers @	Not targeted	Significant objective	Principal objective
	Biological diversity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Combat desertification	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Climate change mitigation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Climate change adaptation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Internal markers ¹	Policy objectives	Not targeted	Significant objective	Principal objective
	Connectivity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Digitalisation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Migration ⁴	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	COVID-19	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
BUDGET INFORMATION				
Amounts concerned	Budget line: 15.020101.01 Total estimated cost: EUR 5 000 000 Total amount of EU budget contribution EUR 5 000 000			

² For guidance, see <https://www.oecd.org/development/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-standards/>. Go to "Data collection and resources for reporters", select Addendum 2, annexes 18 (policy) and 19 (Rio) of the reporting directive. If an action is marked in the DAC form as contributing to one of the general policy objectives or to RIO principles as a principal objective or a significant objective, then this should be reflected in the logframe matrix (in the results chain and/or indicators).

³ Please check the [Handbook on the OECD-DAC Nutrition Policy Marker](#)

⁴ For detailed information on programming migration and forced displacement, please have a look at the [thematic guidance note](#) on migration and forced displacement; for information on the migration marker please look at annex 2 of the thematic guidance note.

MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION	
Implementation modalities (type of financing and management mode)	Project Modality Direct management through: - grants
Relevant priorities and flagships from Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans [only for the Western Balkans]	Priorities: “Green Agenda”, “Digital Transition”, “Innovation Agenda”, “Human Capital Development”, “Governance, RoL, PAR” Flagships: “VIII Digital Infrastructure”, “X Youth Guarantee”
Final Date for conclusion of Financing Agreement	At the latest by 31 December 2023
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	72 months following the conclusion of the Financing Agreement
Final date for implementing the Financing Agreement	12 years following the conclusion of the Financing Agreement

1.2. SUMMARY OF THE ACTION

The Action will support democracy in Albania by promoting inclusive participation and the trust of Albanian citizens in democratic institutions in the context of EU accession. Two specific objectives are foreseen: i) to strengthen democratic governance and electoral cycles; and ii) to enhance civil society and media participation in policy dialogue, monitoring and reporting processes. Through the Action, the capacities and role of institutions (Assembly, Central Electoral Committee) and of stakeholders (civil society, media) for cooperation shall be strengthened. Furthermore, the capacities of civil society and media to contribute meaningfully to policy dialogue, monitoring and reporting will be reinforced, with particular attention to building coalitions of Civil Society Organisations for joint advocacy that can contribute to better policymaking, also ensuring better representation of local stakeholders. The capacities of the civil society and media in the EU integration process will be strengthened in order to effectively contribute to the process and participate actively in the National Council for European Integration.

The Action proposes an integrated approach towards Albania’s accession to the EU, combining inclusiveness, transparency and accountability in policymaking. Particular focus is on the electoral cycle, policy dialogue and the contribution of the media to the EU integration process. In line with the IPA III Programming Framework⁵, the Action will contribute to constructive cross-party dialogue within the parliament and foster freedom of expression and the

⁵ https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-01/C_2021_8914_F1_ANNEX_EN_V5_P1_1462290.PDF

independence of media as a pillar of democracy. The Action is designed under the Participation development/good governance general policy objective (principal objective under the DAC markers) and will contribute to SDG 16 ‘Peace, justice and strong institutions’.

2. RATIONALE

2.1. Context

This Action is relevant for the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development Goal 16 in particular⁶. It contributes primarily to the progressive achievement of sustainable development goals (SDG) targets 16.6 - Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels; and 16.7 - Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels; but also promotes progress towards Goals 16.3 - Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all; and 5.5 - Ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.

Civil Society Organisations and media are key actors in protecting and promoting democracy, rule of law and human rights, which are fundamental values of the European Union. They are key partners in devising and implementing policies and programmes that meet people's needs, reduce inequalities, and fulfil the central commitment of the 2030 Agenda to leave no one behind. The crosscutting support to civil society and media as development actors in their own right and their engagement is expected to contribute to democratic processes. The need for working in partnership is promoted in the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development and civil society organisations are recognised as essential development actors and equal partners in order to achieve shared development aims.

The October 2019 Council conclusions on democracy⁷ identified new challenges for the EU: the undermining of democratic processes and institutions; low levels of trust in institutions and politicians; a shrinking democratic space for civil society; increased violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms; and manipulation using online technologies. The “*EU action plan on human rights and democracy (2020 – 2024)*”⁸ sets long-standing priorities on gender equality, freedom of expression both online and offline, and more emphasis on democracy, including addressing the shrinking civic and political space.

The main document governing the relationship between Albania and the EU is the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA), which entered into force on 1 April 2009. In June 2014, Albania was granted candidate status by the EU. A revised methodology for the accession negotiations was adopted by the European Commission in February 2020⁹. In its conclusions of March 2020, the Council of the European Union took the decision to open accession negotiations with Albania¹⁰. The first Intergovernmental Conference opening the accession negotiations with Albania took place on 19 July 2022, following the approval by the Council of the Negotiating Framework. The Commission started immediately the screening exercise, which is the first step in the negotiating process.

The latest Enlargement Package reports on Albania¹¹ acknowledge that Albania has continued to show its commitment and delivered tangible and sustainable results in the key areas identified in the Council Conclusions of March 2020¹². In the coming years, Albania will have to continue to close the gap between the implementation of reforms and the recommendations received in the European Commission reports. Albania opened a new phase in their relations with the EU following the first intergovernmental conferences on accession negotiations on 19 July 2022. The Commission immediately started the screening process, which is the first step of the accession negotiations. The

⁶ Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

⁷ <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-12836-2019-INIT/en/pdf>

⁸ https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/eu_action_plan_on_human_rights_and_democracy_2020-2024.pdf

⁹ COM(2020) 57

¹⁰ <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-7002-2020-INIT/en/pdf>

¹¹ [Albania Report 2022 \(europa.eu\)](https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-7002-2020-INIT/en/pdf)

¹² <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-7002-2020-INIT/en/pdf>

fundamental of the accession process (cluster 1) - including the functioning of democratic institutions and public administration reform, rule of law and fundamental rights - are at the core of the EU enlargement policy and forms a part of the accession criteria. The protection and the fulfilment of the fundamentals are key indicators of a country's readiness to become part of the EU. In September 2022, the process started with screening of the functioning on democratic institutions, and the Chapters 23 (judiciary and fundamental rights) and 24 (justice freedom and security). In this context, Albania should notably follow up on all key OSCE/ODIHR recommendations as reported in their Final Report on April 2021 elections¹³.

The new Parliament (elected in April 2021) was convened in September 2021 and marked the return of the opposition to the assembly, after almost two and a half years of boycott. The return of the elected opposition in the Assembly creates a new political environment that will stress-test the internationally brokered cross-party cooperation agreement of June 2020 and its further implementation. Although there are no specific national policy documents on democracy, the intervention supports the priority reforms that derive from the main national strategic documents relevant for EU integration. In particular, the Action supports the following policy objectives:

- *To increase qualitatively the exercise of parliamentary functions, strengthening the role of the Assembly with the effective contribution of social stakeholders in policymaking, particularly the process of approximation to the *acquis* in view of European integration, increasing transparency, participation and civic education in the activity of the Assembly, also reinforcing the monitoring, reporting and oversight capacities of democratic institutions, media and social stakeholders.* Policy reference: “Action Plan for the implementation of the Strategic Plan of the Assembly 2020-2025” (approved in June 2021).
- *To promote and support capacities of civil society, as democratic watchdogs, to foster coalitions/networks or joint-actions with Academia to reinforce professionalism in outcome-oriented and evidence-informed activities and functions capable to contribute to policymaking processes, monitoring, reporting, and institutional dialogue/consultations, particularly in relation with the legislature in the approximation to the *acquis* in view of EU membership and with the Central Election Commission (CEC) in the electoral cycle phases including electoral observation.* Policy references: Roadmap to the Government Policy Towards an Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development 2019–2023; new Central Election Commission strategic plan (expected Q4 2021); National Plan for European Integration (NPEI) 2021-2023.
- *To promote respect and implementation of fundamental rights, particularly freedom of expression and independence of media as pillars of democracy, data protection and privacy, gender equality and women empowerment, rights of children, youth, minorities and persons with disabilities as backbones of a rule of law-based society.* Policy references: National Plan for European Integration (NPEI) 2021-2023; National Strategy on Gender Equality 2021-2030; on cross-cutting policies, some of the national plans/strategies are currently under revision¹⁴.

The Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance IPA III¹⁵ presents a policy-driven approach, with the strategic and dynamic deployment of assistance, putting the “fundamentals” at its core: focusing on rule of law and respect of fundamental values, strengthening democratic institutions and public administration reform. In line with the IPA III Programming Framework¹⁶, the Action will contribute to constructive cross-party dialogue within the parliament and foster freedom of expression and the independence of media as a pillar of democracy.

2.2. Problem Analysis

Democratic governance and support to electoral cycles

The democratic system of Albania is anchored to the rule of law, fair elections, and responsive public institutions based on separation of government powers. However, Albanian politics remain polarised and the majority and the opposition need to improve political dialogue and work together with all parts of society to further advance the EU reform agenda and accession negotiations.

¹³ <https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/albania/493687>

¹⁴ National Action Plan for LGBTIQ Persons in the Republic of Albania, 2016-2020 - upcoming National Action Plan for LGBTIQ Persons; National Action Plan for Integration of Roma and Egyptians in Albania 2016-2020 – upcoming National Plan of Action for Integration of Roma and Egyptians 2021-2025; National Agenda for Children’s Rights 2017-2020 and upcoming Plan of Action for Children’s Rights 2021-2025.

¹⁵ [IPA III: the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance \(2021–2027\) \(europa.eu\)](#)

¹⁶ C (2021) 8914 final

Strengthening democratic institutions (the assembly and the electoral commission), enhancing civil society and media participation in dialogue on core priorities, particularly on those linked to EU *acquis*, thus consolidating the inclusiveness, accountability and transparency of the electoral cycle will strengthen democracy in Albania.

The new cycle of the parliament provides the opportunity to strengthen pro-active and oversight capacities of MPs and political parties, and to reinforce parliamentary activities and services, in particular the National Council for European Integration and specific Parliamentary Committees. Women's leadership in the legislative processes remains limited and men continue to hold most political and economic positions of power (UN Women 2020). The systematic adoption of gender mainstream provisions is limited both across the legislations and the political parties' programmes (WFD 2021). Despite the significant numbers of civil society organisations (>400) and media (>80) accredited to the Assembly, there is a low participation and a lack of effective consultation and dialogue. The new strategic action plan of the Assembly (2020-2025) provides for several transparency and accountability measures to be implemented by the newly elected legislature. This action will support the Assembly to implement the action plan's strategic goals, namely: a) to institutionalise mechanisms and governance to enable the meaningful participation and contribution of stakeholders to policymaking and oversight, particularly in the approximation to the EU *acquis*; b) to enhance the parliament communication and awareness service establishing, in cooperation with the public broadcaster and other media, a structure and governance to jointly produce/broadcast regular quality information/reporting, particularly on legislative processes related to the EU accession and integration.

The Action will support the work of the Central Election Commission (CEC) and the reform of the electoral system, in complementarity with the on-going EU-funded regional project '*Support to Elections in the Western Balkans*' implemented by ODIHR¹⁷. A comprehensive reform in line with the new electoral cycle, based on OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) recommendations, and promoting inclusiveness (for youth, women, vulnerable groups, minorities, diaspora) is needed to bring the conduct of elections in Albania more in line with OSCE commitments and other international obligations and standards for democratic elections. It will enhance public confidence in electoral management bodies and electoral processes. The support will focus on specific areas including 1) the effectiveness of election management bodies, 2) the capacity of media regulatory bodies to monitor media conduct during elections, and 3) the capacity and independence of electoral dispute resolution bodies. The implementation of the ODIHR recommendation requires that management and staff are depoliticised and professionalised, particularly at district level, supported by technical assistance. Assistance to electoral reform requires the implementation of a comprehensive action plan of the CEC in consultation with civil society and media actors. Civic education, awareness, reporting, and monitoring activities, as well as oversight functions related to the electoral cycle and the legislative reforms focusing on EU *acquis*, are necessary. A transparent and accountable mechanism (tracking) on electoral disputes, including monitoring, reporting and communication on electoral-related court cases, the media electoral campaign, and anti-corruption efforts related to campaign financing, should be established by the CEC in line with the best practices.

Civil society and media participation in policy dialogue

According to the assessment of the Commission 2022 Albania Report¹⁸, The institutionalised cooperation between civil society and the Government still needs to be strengthened to ensure meaningful participation of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in decision-making processes, including in the context of the EU accession negotiations. There has been no progress in the implementation of the roadmap on an enabling environment for civil society, notably as regards the law on voluntarism. The implementation of the new Law on registration of Non-Profit Organisations adopted in June 2021 has not started yet. The High Judicial Council received a budget allocation to procure the electronic register of Non-Profit Organisations and concluded a contract for its implementation in May 2022.

While the 2014 Law on public consultation, laying down the procedural norms for transparency and public participation in decision-making, is generally in line with European standards, consultations often remain artificial exercises. In addition, the financial and legal environment for support to civil society has not yet been complemented

¹⁷ The action supports the implementation of follow up recommendations of ODIHR and EU Electoral Observation missions, in bringing the conduct of elections closer in line with OSCE commitments and other international obligations and standards for democratic elections. The aim is to enhance public confidence in electoral management bodies and electoral processes. It complements regular ODIHR activities and allows for the provision of intensified and more in-depth support.

¹⁸ https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/albania-report-2022_en

by the adoption and implementation of by-laws and instruments to reinforce sustainability and to enable stronger engagement in public policy processes.

To allow a meaningful participation focusing on the EU integration, in both policy dialogue and in the implementation/monitoring of reforms, strengthening the CSOs and media's capacities and their abilities to build coalitions is needed. Strengthening civil society's role, organisation and capacities is a priority to promote EU accession and integration to the general public. Support for EU membership is affected by the lack of public participation and political debate on the EU integration process of Albania in the EU. Themes related to relevant SDG goals and to fundamental rights are unnoticeable in the political and public debate. Promoting and supporting informed debate to focus public input into critical decisions is a priority. Fostering civil society/Academia joint actions and facilitating wide and sustainable coalitions/networks to effectively participate in policymaking, institutional and legislative monitoring, and oversight are needed. There is a lack of official media audit/statistics on the actual audience situation and on the advertising market for the media or on the media finances in general. Independence and freedom of media requires further strengthening to combat disinformation and increase quality journalism/reporting. The legal framework applicable to the media and the journalistic profession is mostly in line with standards but insufficiently implemented, particularly regarding the respect of regulations on media ownership, pluralism and inclusiveness of broadcasted/published services, journalists' contractual treatment and protection. Improvement of quality reporting is required including for the public broadcaster democratic function (information and public awareness), in cooperation with the services of the parliament and the national election commission.

The main stakeholders will include the Parliament, the Central Election Commission, Ombudsman, the Agency for the Support of Civil Society (ASCS), civil society organisations/coalitions/networks, academia, media services, and independent journalists.

3. DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION

3.1. Intervention Logic

The Action "EU for Democracy" will contribute to inclusive democracy in Albania in the context of EU accession by strengthening national institutions (government, parliament, independent democratic institutions) and by reinforcing civil society and media to contribute to policymaking, report and oversight on processes. The **Overall Objective** (Impact) is to increase transparency, accountability and trust in relevant public institutions in the context of EU accession.

The **Specific Objectives** (Outcomes) of this Action are:

1. Integration of civil society and media participation in democratic governance mechanisms and policy making in the Assembly and the CEC reinforced.
2. Civil society and media contribution to policy dialogue, monitoring and reporting processes is more effective.

The Action is built around two main components. The capacities and role of public institutions focusing on EU integrations process and the participation of civil society and media in the policy legislative work in these institutions shall be reinforced in Component 1 *Democratic governance and electoral cycles*; and the capacity of CSOs and media to contribute, monitor and report independently as part of the consultation and decision-making process shall be increased in Component 2 *Civil society and media participation in policy dialogue, monitoring and reporting processes*.

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

- Output 1 contributing to Outcome 1: Capacities of institutions (Assembly, CEC, independent institutions) strengthened and cooperation among stakeholders (institutions and civil society/media) reinforced.
- Output 2.1 contributing to Outcome 2: Tools for an effective policy dialogue in the framework of the EU integration among the CSOs and media designed and implemented.
- Output 2.2 contributing to Outcome 2: More effective and efficient partnership between Parliamentary Committees and the National Council for European Integration (NCEI) and civil society and media representatives created.
- Output 3 contributing to Outcomes 1 and 2: Knowledge and skills of CSOs and media to generate and implement project ideas related to policy dialogue on and monitoring of the EU integration process increased.

The **underlying intervention logic for this Action** is that the capacities and role of the Parliament and the CEC will be enhanced to intensify cooperation in the functioning of democracy in cooperation with civil society and the media in policymaking. Furthermore, the Action will support the civil society to effectively establish outcome-oriented networks/coalitions and foster the involvement of youth CSOs in policy making.

3.2. Indicative Activities

Support to institutions and stakeholders will be outcome-oriented and linked to capacity building as needed to facilitate the achievement of the intended outputs. Support will include the following indicative activities:

- **Output 1** (linked to Outcome 1) Capacities and role of institutions (i.e. Assembly, CEC, independent institutions) strengthened and cooperation among stakeholders (institutions and civil society/media) reinforced.

This may include the following indicative activities:

- *Support the Parliament and the CEC as regards transparency and accountability through institutionalised partnership with the civil society and media.*
 - *Increase awareness and enhance the co-operation between the Ombudsman and Parliament and their cooperation with EU institutions.*
 - *Develop MPs skills through:*
 - a) *Professional expertise (on legislation, oversight and bills tabled in Parliament), transparency and networking development across-party lines.*
 - b) *Capacity building on gender equality including workshops with women's organisations.*
 - c) *Induction package for MPs.*
 - *Sustain relevant election administration reform and processes.*
 - *Support the Assembly strategic plan implementation, with emphasis on civic education, awareness and information for the public, with emphasis on youth, girls and women, vulnerable groups, and minorities, gender mainstreaming and gender-responsive budgeting, women leadership, budget and expenditures and EU values and fundamentals, in view of EU membership.*
 - *Strengthen the capacities and partnership of the CEC, civil society and media on monitoring electoral cycle phases, monitoring and observation of elections, complaint and dispute mechanisms and remedies, and EU values and fundamentals, in view of EU membership.*
 - *Strengthen the capacities and partnership of the Assembly (MPs and staff), civil society and media on legislative procedures, monitoring of legislative processes, parliamentary agenda setting, management of services for the MPs (research, communication, constituencies relations), writing of project proposals, and EU values and fundamentals, in view of EU membership, through tools such as the policy dialogue room.*
- **Output 2.1/** (linked to Outcome 2): Tools for an effective policy dialogue in the framework of the EU integration among the CSOs and media designed and implemented.

This may include the following indicative activities:

- *Support for the establishment of a periodic consultation mechanism/platform (EU Forum) where CSOs and Media could meet with MPs and respective Parliament Staff to dialogue and amend draft laws.*
- *Capacity building for CSOs and parliamentarians to understand their roles and at which stages/junctures in the policy process.*
- *Provision of support to develop an enabling environment for civil society through appropriate means, access to information and ensure higher coherence among CSOs to ensure maximum impact on the good governance and policy making process.*
- *Support for the formation of alliances that bring together NGOs, media, etc., combined with technical specialists and experts for policy making and monitoring the human rights and priorities in line with the EU accession*
- *Support the development of thematic informative programmes and debates to inform the public on the EU integration process, standards, and values.*
- *Support Local CSO and Media on legislative procedures, monitoring of legislative processes, parliamentary agenda setting, budget implementation, management of services for the MPs (research, communication,*

constituency relations), and EU values and fundamentals, in view of EU membership, through a grant scheme and capacity building activities.

- *Develop an online E-Democracy Platform for youth empowerment to open the Parliament to all young citizens, make parliamentary activities more transparent and accessible and foster more active youth participation in politics*
 - *Support online portals with high integrity score and online media adopting self-regulation or code of conduct and sustain the civil society efforts to improve media literacy among the public, with particular focus on young generations, women, and vulnerable groups, through the policy dialogue room (developing soft skills, content etc.)*
- **Output 2.2/** (linked to Outcome 2): More effective and efficient partnership between Parliamentary Committees and the National Council for European Integration (NCEI) and civil society and media representatives created. This may include the following indicative activities:
 - *Support the National Council for European Integration (NCEI) to strengthen the capacities and partnership with the civil society (members of the Council) and media (guests of the Council) representatives:*
 - a) *Monitor the implementation of obligations in the context of accession negotiations with the European Union*
 - b) *Enhance discussion on European integration policies with implementing state institutions and other stakeholders.*
 - c) *Advise on the negotiation process.*
 - d) *Organise the European Integration School as the only training tool of the Assembly and NCEI in the EU integration process regarding the representatives from CSO-s; media; academia; researchers etc. that can contribute in the near future to the negotiation process;*
 - e) *Establish an electronic platform for the discussion of the negotiation positions presented to the NCEI.*
 - **Output 3** (Linked to outcome 1&2): Knowledge and skills of CSOs and media to generate and implement project ideas related policy dialogue and monitoring related to the EU integration process increased. This may include the following indicative activities:
 - *Grant/sub-granting scheme for Civil Society Organisations and Media.*

3.3. Mainstreaming

Environmental Protection, Climate Change and Biodiversity

EU treaties and policies underpin the Union's high-level commitment to environmental sustainability, combating climate change and preserve biodiversity. The Action will contribute to these commitments, by integrating these issues horizontally in the support activities, with particular attention to the implications for policy making, monitoring and reporting. In particular, the action will increase the voice, representation and presence of women, vulnerable groups and youth on these policy areas, which are linked closely to EU integration.

Gender equality and empowerment of women and girls

As per OECD Gender DAC codes identified in section 1.1, this action is labelled as G1¹⁹. This implies that this Action's thread is women leadership in legislative processes, women empowerment in Albanian public administration, and gender mainstreaming across legislations supported by gender-responsive budgeting, in line with the objectives of the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025²⁰ and with the EU Gender Action Plan III for external actions (2021-2025)²¹. Reaching the target where women and men are free to follow their selected path in life and have equal opportunities is a long-term process that requires a constant engagement. This Action contributes to mainstream gender perspective

¹⁹ Principal objective / significant objective/ not targeted

²⁰ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020DC0152>

²¹ join-2020-17-final_en.pdf (europa.eu)

through activities that will be measured by an indicator tracking increased women in leadership in the legislature, and an indicator to monitoring the increase of legislative acts including gender mainstreaming provisions with gender responsive budgeting. The Action will support the mainstreaming of the civil society across all policies and will also reinforce the advocacy opportunities for women, girls, and vulnerable groups in policymaking processes.

Human Rights

Civil Society Organisations are vital to the attainment of human rights and democracy in Albania. The Action will adhere in full to the implementation of the Human Rights-Based Approach to development, encompassing all human rights as well fulfilling the promotion and protection of human rights and democracy as enshrined in the Joint Communication and EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy for 2020-2024²². This Action promotes the horizontal alignment of all interventions to the fundamental rights and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, supported by continuing monitoring and evaluation, ideally to follow both the process and the outcome by integrating the following: participation in and access to the decision-making process; link to human rights; accountability; non-discrimination; empowerment; transparency. The outcomes 1 and 2 of this Action specifically target the participation in and access to decision making process, the accountability, the empowerment and the transparency as fundamental aspects in a functioning democracy.

This Action key scope is the rapprochement of institutions and civil society towards the common goal of EU membership. In particular, the action supports interventions under outcome 1 and 2 aimed at scaling up the cooperation between the public institutions and the civil society, moving from information to partnership. The long-term goal is that institutions and civil society converge into a partnership towards the common goal of EU membership; that implies shared responsibilities in each step of the policymaking, from the agenda setting, to drafting, decision and implementation of activities, and finally reaching the target with co-management.

Other considerations

This Action addresses the rights of minorities and vulnerable groups (including people with disabilities) in the context of the reforms to enhance the inclusiveness in the electoral cycle.

3.5.RISKS AND LESSONS LEARNT

Category	Risks	Likelihood (High/Medium/Low)	Impact (High/Medium/Low)	Mitigating measures
Related to the external environment	Risk 1. Further delay of the Inter-Governmental Conference may decrease public support for EU integration.	L	M	Increase the public and political debate on the benefits of joining the EU, particularly organising media campaigns online.
Related to political dialogue	Risk 2. The Parliament formed in 2021 will be a stress-test for political stability and the cross-party cooperation in the Political Council that is necessary to adopt and implement reforms in view of EU membership.	L	H	-Increase the political dialogue on the “fundamentals” and the principle “more for more” so that that newly elected - Parliament will reconfirm and deepen the commitment on the path towards EU membership.
Related to the implementation of the	Risk 3 – linked to Outcome 1. The Parliament strategy approved in June 2021 needs the new			- Political dialogue and facilitation measures to support a positive dynamic in

²² <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020JC0005>

Category	Risks	Likelihood (High/ Medium/ Low)	Impact (High/ Medium/ Low)	Mitigating measures
institutions' strategies	parliament commitment for its implementation. The announced CEC strategy should be approved following a wide consultation with all stakeholders.	L	M	the Parliament and between political parties. - Continued support to the CEC as a follow up to April 2021 elections, including peer-to-peer exchange/visits. - Increased exchanges between the Albanian Assembly and the EU Parliament. - Increased political dialogue on the "fundamentals".
Related to the implantation of the road map	Risk 4 – linked to Outcome 2. The implementation of the government Roadmap for civil society, which requires centralised political determination and strong inter-institutional coordination, is delayed.	H	H	- Increased political and policy dialogue between the civil society, the Parliament, the Prime Minister and Prime Minister's Office. - Specific obstacles to implementing the roadmap is identified and addressed in the context of improved dialogue with the civil society. - Increased political dialogue on the "fundamentals".
Related to the transparency	Risk 5 – linked to Outcome 3. The respect and enforcement of the legal framework and the rule of law in the media sector is lacking, thereby affecting the freedom of expression and quality of information.	H	M	-The independence and operational capacities of the audio-visual regulatory authority are supported. -The public service broadcaster's independence, professional standards and financial sustainability is strengthened. - The support to media services, independent journalists and to media outlets that score high in integrity and quality of information is increased. - Civil society/media are supported to monitor, report on media ownership and the respect of journalists' rights including labour laws. - Increased political dialogue on the "fundamentals".
	Risk 6 - Tensions between political actors and journalists continue.	M	H	Increased political and policy dialogue between the civil society, the Parliament, the Prime Minister and Prime Minister's Office. - Specific obstacles to implementing the roadmap is

Category	Risks	Likelihood (High/Medium/Low)	Impact (High/Medium/Low)	Mitigating measures
				identified and addressed in the context of improved dialogue with the civil society. -Increased political dialogue on the “fundamentals”.

Lessons Learned:

In Albania, EU assistance to Parliament has been provided through two subsequent twinning projects taking place six years apart. The second project was implemented with Greece after Albania had become a candidate country in 2014 and a new law regulating the role of the Parliament had been adopted. The project helped adapt parliamentary procedures to this new legal framework while further strengthening the capacities of standing committees in approximating EU legislation and overseeing the executive, with some activities already geared towards preparing the Assembly for EU accession negotiations. **The insufficient involvement of Members of the Parliament (MPs) and decision-makers in the projects was noted as a major weakness for the sustainability of project results**²³. Therefore, this Action will mobilise to involve the MPs and other decision-makers in the project activities.

One the other hand, stakeholder interviews emphasized that the timing of the project was not the most conducive due to political situation, but **negative influences were mitigated by strong support and management of the Parliament team**, which was organised in such way that each Twinning project component had a leader. This facilitated the delivery of outputs that were envisaged by the project²⁴.

In general, a more genuine public consultation with civil society and interest groups is needed and identifying limiting factors are insufficient capacity and experience of the MPs and support staff to cooperate with civil society.

Given that civil society participation in decision-making is still occasional, the need to reinforce systematic and transparent consultation of civil society in legislative processes with adequate time frames, at the central and local levels has been reported. A meaningful and systematic consultations of the various Government structures with CSOs should be ensured including effective follow up mechanisms.

Regarding the purchase of the audio-visual equipment that aimed at increasing transparency and easier access to Parliamentary Committee sessions, a lack of proper inclusion of the Media in the application of this system and the shallow consultation of the stakeholders on the adoption of the rules of procedures regarding the audio video system have been noted, indicating the need to increase better consult with stakeholders on processes to ensure **transparency and accountability**.

Available project and handover documentation and as corroborated by stakeholder interviews, confirms that the Parliament team, the Central Finance and Contracting Unit (CFCU) but also EUD have provided adequate assistance in elaboration of the specifications and also technical monitoring (on-the-spot checks) at all stages of the project. The handover note for the equipment has included the inventory of equipment which was established and is monitored by the IPA unit within the Parliament. Following the delivery of the equipment and training of core Parliament staff handling the equipment, the provider (company Infosoft) received a follow up contract for long term maintenance of the system and also assisting the TV stations that want to broadcast sessions to be able to do so.

In general, one of the drivers for achievement of sustainable results was a limited staff turnover of the core parliament staff, which ensured sufficient amount of institutional memory to ensure that the project results are maintained.²⁵

The design of the Action has taken these lessons into account.

²³ European Commission, Evaluation of the Twinning instrument in the period 2010-2017, March 2019 https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/system/files/2019-07/final_report_-_volume_i.pdf

²⁴ This Interim report of actions under Indirect Management with the Beneficiary Country (IMBC) under IPA II – Programme evaluation (September 2021)

²⁵ This Interim report of actions under Indirect Management with the Beneficiary Country (IMBC) under IPA II – Programme evaluation (September 2021)

3.5 Indicative Logical Framework Matrix (see Annex I- If-Then-Because Chain and result statement diagram)

	Results chain: Main expected results (maximum 10)	Indicators (at least one indicator per expected result)	Baselines (year)	Targets (end of program)	Sources of data (1 per indicator)	Assumptions
Impact	Transparency, accountability and trust in relevant public institutions in the context of the EU accession increased.	Progress made towards meeting accession criteria, EU key principles and standards (European Commission)	Level of alignment with EU policies and legislation in the areas covered by this action (2022)	Higher level of compliance with the relevant areas. (2025)	European Commission report on Albania	<i>Not applicable</i>
		Level of trust in Parliament by citizens.	Trust: 31% (totally or tend to) (2021)	- Trust: \geq (41 %) (2025)	Annual Balkan Public Barometer of Regional Cooperation Council	

	Results chain:	Indicators	Baselines	Targets	Sources of data	Assumptions
Component 1: Democratic governance and electoral cycles						
Outcome 1	OC1. Integration of civil society and media participation in democratic governance mechanisms and policy	OC1.1 Number of legal acts/guidelines adopted to intensify cooperation (IPA PF 2.2 match) ²⁶ .	0 (2023)	At least 2 legal acts/guidelines adopted (2024)	Official Gazette, Assembly/CEC reports	The majority and the opposition improve political dialogue and work together with all parts of society to further advance the EU reform agenda and accession negotiations. Parliamentary documentation is available for broader audience.
		OC1.2 Number of Co-operation initiatives with civil society on-going in line with	(2023)	At least XX consultations (#TBD in terms	CEC Reports	

²⁶ The indicator is a match to IPA PF 2.2. Number of legal/administrative acts (incl. at constitutional level) to enhance the effectiveness, accountability and/or transparency of the functioning of democratic institutions a) adopted and/or b) implemented by national parliaments with EU support – the Strategic Plan is a legal act focused on strengthening the rule of law, democracy, the respect of human rights, fundamental rights and international law.

	Results chain:	Indicators	Baselines	Targets	Sources of data	Assumptions
	making in the Assembly and the CEC reinforced	the guidelines (IPA PF 2.10 match) ²⁷ .		of reference of specific project) with CSOs (2025) Policy dialogue room established Capacities of MPs and Parliament's staff increased		Favourable environment for involvement of civil society is ensured The Parliament and the political parties, as well as the CEC, show effective commitment to progress towards building general trust in a more functioning democracy. CEC committed to increase pro-activeness and inclusiveness ahead of next local and national elections.

Component 2: Civil society and media participation in policy dialogue, monitoring and reporting processes						
Outcome 2	OC2. Civil society and media contribution to policy dialogue, monitoring and reporting processes is more effective.	Policy dialogue OC2.1 Number of post-legislative scrutinises performed by civil society and media	0 (2023)	XX scrutinises (#TBD in terms of reference of specific project) (2025)	Official opinions of CSOs and media on legal acts published/ submitted to the institutions	The PMO, the line ministries, and the local administrations implement the Roadmap and the Parliament establishes a cross-party body to recognise the democratic value of civil society and media in policymaking and monitoring processes. Joint actions and coalitions of civil society are created. The Government and the Parliament adopt and implement the Venice
		Monitoring and Reporting OC2.2 Independent body designated to monitor selected Parliamentary activity established.	N/A (2023)	1 independent monitoring body established (reference year)	Legal act for the establishment of the body.	

²⁷ The indicator is a match to IPA PF 2.10 Number of initiatives led by civil society organisations and supported by the EU – the Guidelines could be considered an initiative covering the description provided in the Methodological Note.

		OC2.3 Number of monitoring and/or analytical reports published by the CSOs and/or media.	0 (2022)	XX independent CSO and media reports (#TBD in terms of reference of specific project) (2025)	CSOs and media reports and / or online platforms (where reports are published).	Commission (VC) recommendations and ensure the respect of EU standards for the media/press and the journalist profession.
--	--	--	----------	--	---	---

Component 1: Democratic governance and electoral cycles						
Related to outcome 1	OP1.1 Capacities of institutions (Assembly, CEC, independent institutions) strengthened and cooperation among stakeholders (institutions and civil society/media) reinforced	OP1.1.1 Progress in implementation of the Assembly strategic plan 2020-2025	n/a (2023)	80% of the relevant indicators achieved (2025)	Strategic Plan Monitoring Reports	2 nd phase of political agreement (2020) implemented.
		OP1.1.2 Number of members/ staff in Assembly, CEC, stakeholders, trained by the intervention, that have reported increased capacity in professional expertise, networking development and gender equality (sex-disaggregated)	0 (2023)	150, out of which XX women (#TBD in terms of reference of specific project) (2025)	Self-assessment post-training surveys.	The new Assembly reconfirms cross-party cooperation and implementation of the strategic plan. The CEC reconfirms the intentions to expand inclusiveness and pro-active role.
		OP1.1.3 Number of partnership initiatives established between the Assembly, CSOs and Media for monitoring legislative process, parliamentary agenda and EU values and fundamentals, in view of EU membership.	0 (2023)	XX partnership initiatives sealed to monitor legislative process and parliamentary agenda (#TBD in terms of reference of specific project) (2025)	Reports from meetings	

		OP1.1.4 Number of partnership initiatives established between the CEC, civil society and media on monitoring electoral cycle phases and elections, in view of EU membership. (IPA PF 2.1. match). ²⁸	0 (2023)	XX partnership initiatives engaged to monitor electoral cycles (#TBD in terms of reference of specific project) (2025)	Project progress reports	
Component 2: Civil society and media participation in policy dialogue, monitoring and reporting processes						
Output 2.1 related to outcome 2	OP2.1 Tools for an effective dialogue in the framework of the EU integration among the CSOs and media designed and implemented.	OP2.1.1 Number of meetings and/or consultations between CSOs, Media and MPs conducted through the periodic consultation mechanism/ platform	0 (2023)	XX meetings /consultations through periodic mechanisms (#TBD in terms of reference of specific project) (2025)	Reports from meetings/consultations	Institutional readiness and willingness to foster cooperation and consultation processes with civil society in line with the roadmap.
		OP2.1.2 Number of CSOs and parliamentarians, supported by the intervention, that have reported on better understanding of their roles and junctures in the policy process. (Disaggregated by type of trainees)	0 (2023)	XX of CSOs and XX parliamentarians (#TBD in terms of reference) (2025)	self-assessment surveys	Media interest in the EU accession process

²⁸ The indicator is a match to IPA PF 2.1. Number of electoral recommendations (of the international election observation missions (EOM) done by the OSCE/ODIHR or the EU EOM (case of Kosovo (*)) (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. followed up with EU support, as it will monitor elections and perform follow-up activities - as per the Methodological note, follow-up activities by the country may include: Electoral Review and CSO Reviews, Monitoring.

		OP2.1.3 Number of CSOs that have reported an improved environment to monitor good governance and policy making process.	0 (2023)	XX CSOs acknowledging an improvement in policy dialogue and decision making processes (#TBD in terms of reference of specific project) (2025)	Assessment survey among CSOs	
		OP2.1.4 Number of CSOs and Media, supported by the project), that have reported on improved knowledge and capacity to monitor the legislative process related to EU negotiations process. (Disaggregated by type of beneficiaries and by counties).	0 (2023)	XX out of which XX CSOs and XX media; disaggregated by Albanian countries (#TBD in terms of reference of specific project) (2025)	Assessment survey amongst CSOs and media	
		OP2.1.5 Number of youths that have used the online E-Democracy Platform for youth empowerment (sex disaggregated)	0 (2023)	XX out of which XX women; XX men ((#TBD in terms of reference of specific project) (2025)	Reports on the use of the platform;	
Link to outcome 2	OP2.2 More effective and efficient partnership between Parliamentary committees and the National Council for European Integration (NCEI), and civil society and media	OP.2.2.1 Number of civil society and media representatives, trained by the intervention, that have reported increased capacity to participate in the NCEI (disaggregated by sex and type of representatives)	0 (2023)	XX o(out of which: XX women; XX men; XX representatives of CSOs; XX representatives of media (#TBD in terms of reference of specific project) (2025)	Self -assessment survey before and after the training sessions.	The National Council for European Integration consolidates its role and guarantee its broader involvement in EU integration issues. Recommendations by CoE/VC, OSCE and EU are implemented. -Self-regulation in online media is ensured.

	representatives created	OP. 2.2.2. Number of enhanced meetings between the NCEI and civil society/media had. OP.2.2.3 Number of civil society researchers, academia and media representatives trained by European Integration School (EIS) 10 during 2023 depending also on their application to EIS. 8 (2021) List of participants of EIS published on the assembly website;	0 (2023)	XX meetings (#TBD in terms of reference of specific project) (2025) XX persons trained (#TBD in terms of reference of specific project) (2025)	Meeting minutes List of participants	
Output 3 related to outcome 1 & 2	OP3. Knowledge and skills of CSOs and Media to generate and implement project ideas related to the policy dialogue and monitoring of the EU integration process increased	OP3.1 Number of beneficiaries that have successfully finished grant projects (disaggregated by type of beneficiary).	0 (2023)	20 (out of which 13 CSOs coalitions and 7 Media organisations) (2025)	Final progress reports for grant projects.	CSOs and media are willing to participate in call for proposals

4. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

4.1. Financing agreement

In order to implement this action, it is envisaged to conclude a financing agreement with the Republic of Albania.

4.2. Indicative Implementation Period

The indicative operational implementation period of this action, during which the activities described in section 3 will be carried out and the corresponding contracts and agreements implemented, is 72 months from the date of entry into force of the financing agreement. Extensions of the implementation period may be agreed by the Commission's responsible authorising officer by amending this Financing Decision and the relevant contracts and agreements.

4.3. Methods of Implementation

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 measures²⁹.

4.3.1. Direct Management (Grants)

(a) Purpose of the grant(s)

The purpose of the grant(s) is to support both outcomes of this Action, i.e.:

1. Integration of civil society and media participation in democratic governance mechanisms and policy making in the Assembly and the CEC reinforced.
2. Civil society and media contribution to policy dialogue, monitoring and reporting processes is more effective.

(b) Type of applicants targeted

The potential applicants for funding are non-profit making, and either non-governmental organisations or networks of Civil Society Organisations, or (iii) international (inter-governmental) organisations, or (iv) a public sector operator.

4.3.2. Changes from direct to indirect management mode (and vice versa) due to exceptional circumstances (one alternative second option)

In exceptional circumstances and upon authorisation of the European Commission, changes from direct to indirect management mode are possible, as well as other changes in the management and procurement modes.

In case the action will be implemented in indirect management with an entity, this will be selected by the Commission's services using the following criteria:

- i. Mandate of the entrusted entity covering the nature of the action.
- ii. Experience of the potential entity in particular in the context of the European Union and in Albania.
- iii. Operational capacity/technical expertise, logistical & management capacities, including at the local level.
- iv. Impact, results, leverage effect of cooperation with other entities/donors, also covering effectiveness of the delegation of tasks, included in Albania.
- v. Reduced transaction costs
- vi. The capacity of the entity for providing possible co-financing

²⁹ www.sanctionsmap.eu Please note that the sanctions map is an IT tool for identifying the sanctions regimes. The source of the sanctions stems from legal acts published in the Official Journal (OJ). In case of discrepancy between the published legal acts and the updates on the website it is the OJ version that prevails.

vii. Experience with similar action in support to democracy.

4.4. Scope of geographical eligibility for procurement and grants

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

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

4.5. Indicative Budget

Indicative Budget components	EU contribution (amount in EUR)
Outcome 1: Integration of civil society and media participation in democratic governance mechanisms and policy making in the Assembly and the CEC reinforced. composed of	2 500 000
Grants (direct management) – cf. section 4.3.1	
Outcome 2: Civil society and media contribution to policy dialogue, monitoring and reporting processes is more effective. composed of	2 500 000
Grants (direct management) – cf. section 4.3.1	
Grants – total envelope under section 4.3.1	5 000 000
Evaluation – cf. section 5.2 Audit – cf. section 5.3	will be covered by another Decision
Communication and visibility – cf. section 6	will be covered by another Decision
Contingencies	N.A.
Totals	5 000 000

4.6. Organisational set-up and responsibilities

A **Project Steering Committee (PSC)** will be established that will steer the project implementation. The PSC shall involve representatives from the main stakeholders and beneficiaries, as well as from the NIPAC and EUD. The PSC will be co-chaired by representatives from the two main beneficiaries – the Assembly and the Central Electoral Committee, and will meet at least once a year. The PSC shall closely monitor the fulfilment of the project objective and the project results. The PSC will decide whether Technical Committees should be also established under each component.

The project teams will closely work and coordinate the implementation of the activities.

Complementarities will be sought with the Albanian Integrated Planning System (IPS) - the main system for integrated public policy planning set up by the Prime Minister Order No 157 on 22 October 2018. The IPMG “Good Governance and Public Administration” is chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister assigned to this area of responsibility and its Technical Secretariat is established within the Prime Minister’s Office.

Project teams will be established at both main beneficiary institutions, the Central Election Commission and Assembly.

4.7. Pre-conditions

1. The Parliament and CEC strategies are operational
2. CSOs and media are operating in an enabling environment

5. PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

5.1. Monitoring and Reporting

The day-to-day technical and financial monitoring of the implementation of this Action will be a continuous process, and part of the implementing partner’s responsibilities. To this aim, the implementing partners shall establish a permanent internal, technical and financial monitoring system for the Action and elaborate regular progress reports (not less than biannual) 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 results (Outputs and direct Outcomes) 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).

Roles and responsibilities for data collection, analysis and monitoring

The monitoring mechanism will include a dedicated technical assistance that will be in charge of regular data collection and analysis, quantitative and qualitative studies organisation and management, involving several national institutions (Agency for the Support of Civil Society, National IPA Coordinator (NIPAC), Assembly, Central Electoral Committee and other independent institutions, and civil society/media networks/coalitions, their phase of development, results achieved and where appropriate, the identification of practical problems, aimed at developing solutions.

The implementing entities for the Action shall monitor the Action indicators at their respective components / outputs level and will timely report to the NIPAC on the implementation of the respective activities and alert on any delays and the reasons that caused such delays. The overall monitoring of the implementation of the action will be performed at the level of the Sector Monitoring Committee for Good Governance as well as at the level of the Steering Committee/s established to steer the implementation of the grant scheme and the assistance. Results-Oriented Monitoring will be used in reporting on performance and results, referring to criteria of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability, and provide basic information that can be exploited to orient future monitoring/evaluation/audit and management decision at the Action level. In accordance with the European Code for Conduct on Partnership, specific coordination will be conducted with partners and stakeholders to ensure policy dialogue and knowledge management between the central and sub-national levels of government, and the relevant Civil Society Organisations.

The NIPAC shall be responsible at national level to monitor, review and evaluate the progress on the implementation through the targets established within the Action’s Logframe Matrix and to communicate the information with the European Commission services.

5.2. Evaluation

Having regard to the importance of the action, mid-term evaluation(s) will be carried out for this action or areas of support via the implementing partners.

The Commission or relevant implementation entities shall inform the implementing partners at least two months in advance of the dates foreseen for evaluation missions. The implementing partners 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. The implementing partners 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.

Evaluation services may be contracted under a Framework Contract.

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. COMMUNICATION AND VISIBILITY

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

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

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

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

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

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

7. SUSTAINABILITY

The Government of Albania has already expressed its political commitment for the implementation of the EU *acquis* and furthermore for enabling a functioning democracy, the respect of the rule of law and fundamental rights. Progress in this direction shall thereby be aligned with the IPA III programming framework objective for promoting a more functioning and more inclusive democracy.

The monitoring mechanism put in place will allow monitoring the implementation of the Action, including by organising regular meetings and workshops for the collection of information and discussion on the activities to be performed by the authorities and institutions of Albania and other stakeholders, their phase of development, results achieved and where appropriate, the identification of practical problems, aimed at developing solutions. Annual monitoring reports will contain recommendations for actions to ensure sustainability. This monitoring process will encourage ownership by the national authorities and will lead to a better integration of activities.

Key to ensure the sustainability of the action is the simultaneous capacity building of institutions and stakeholders to fill their respective gaps, individually and collectively, to shift and transform their relationship and power and to merge their capacities strengthening their convergence toward the Albanian stated common goal of EU membership. Once this process is initiated, it can be fully established and maintained in the future. A further critical aspect is the sustainability of the CSOs in Albania which shall be achieved through the implementation of the Roadmap to the Government Policy Towards an Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development 2019–2023³⁰.

The ownership of the Action by the Assembly, the Central Electoral Committee and the other national and local level stakeholders has a central role in assuring the sustainability of the Action. It is thus important to encourage more autonomy towards the implementation as both institutions have demonstrated.

³⁰ DCM No. 25/25.07.2019 [http://www.amshc.gov.al/web/doc/Udherrefyesi-2019-rishikuar-\[EN\].pdf](http://www.amshc.gov.al/web/doc/Udherrefyesi-2019-rishikuar-[EN].pdf)

Annex I - Intervention Logic

If-Then-Because Chain

If Capacities and role of institutions (Assembly, CEC) and cooperation with stakeholders (civil society, media) is enhanced. **(Op 1)**;

If Tools for an effective dialogue on the EU integration process among the CSOs and media designed and implemented **(Op 2.1)** and more effective and efficient partnership between the National Council for European Integration (NCEI) and civil society and media representatives created **(Op 2.2)**, and

If, Knowledge and skills of CSOs and Media to generate and implement project ideas related to the EU integration process are increased **(Op 3)**;

Then, Integration of civil society and media participation in democratic governance mechanisms in the Assembly and the CEC is reinforced **(Oc 1)**; and Civil society and media contribution to policy dialogue, monitoring and reporting processes is more effective. **(Oc 2)**.

This is **because** the capacities of the CSOs and media to engage in monitoring and reporting processes related to EU integration will allow the institutions to establish more efficient dialogue with the stakeholders that will be more effectively involved in activities focusing on democratic governance and EU integration issues.

The achievement of the Intervention's outcomes is subject to the **assumptions** that 2nd phase of political agreement (2020) implemented; the new Assembly reconfirms cross-party cooperation and implementation of the strategic plan; the CEC reconfirms the intentions to expand inclusiveness and pro-active role; Institutional readiness and willingness to foster cooperation and consultation processes with civil society in line with the Roadmap; media interest in the EU accession process; the National Council for European Integration consolidates its role and guarantee its broader involvement in EU integration issues; recommendations by CoE/VC, OSCE and EU are implemented; self-regulation in online media is ensured; CSOs and media are willing to participate in call for proposals.

If Integration of civil society and media participation in democratic governance mechanisms in the Assembly and the CEC is reinforced **(Oc 1)**; and Civil society and media contribution to policy dialogue, monitoring and reporting processes is more effective. **(Oc 2)** **then**, in the long term, transparency, accountability and trust in relevant public institutions in the context of the EU accession increased **(Impact)**, **under the assumption that** the majority and the opposition improve political dialogue and work together with all parts of society to further advance the EU reform agenda and accession negotiations; the Parliamentary documentation is available for broader audience; favourable environment for involvement of civil society is ensured; the Parliament and the political parties, as well as the CEC, show effective commitment to progress towards building general trust in a more functioning democracy; CEC committed to increase pro-activeness and inclusiveness ahead of next local and national elections; the PMO, the line ministries, and the local administrations implement the Roadmap and the Parliament establishes a cross-party body to recognise the democratic value of civil society and media in policymaking and monitoring processes; joint actions and coalitions of civil society are created; the Government and the Parliament adopt and implement the Venice Commission (VC) recommendations and ensure the respect of EU standards for the media/press and the journalist profession.

RESULT STATEMENT DIAGRAM

