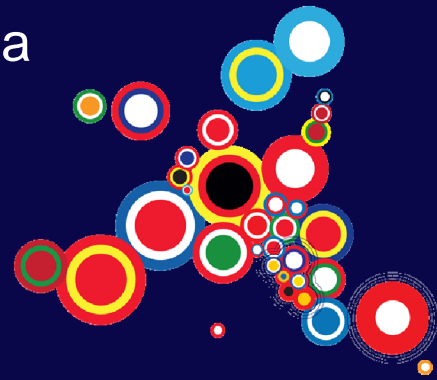




INSTRUMENT FOR PRE-ACCESSION ASSISTANCE (IPA II) 2014-2020

ALBANIA

Civil Society Facility and Media Programme 2018-2019



Action summary

The main objective of this action is to strengthen the role and capacities of civil society actors and enhance freedom of media in Albania as a driver of change in governance through support to advocacy, networking and policy dialogue with state institutions in reform processes toward European Integration.

Support to media organisations and freedom of expression will focus on stronger standards, independent production, investigative media and stronger synergies with civil society actions.

Support to civil society organisations (CSOs) will focus on (i) promoting active citizenship of women and men at local level,; (ii) strengthening evidence based and inclusive policy dialogue and civil society's role in advocacy and monitoring the implementation of reforms essential in the EU accession process; and (iii) strengthen governance, organisational, transparency and evidence based work of civil society. The support will also target policy dialogue between civil society and government for the implementation and monitoring of the European Union Agenda on Children's rights at national and local level.

Action Identification	
Action Programme Title	Civil Society Facility and Media Programme 2018 - 2019
Action Title	Civil Society Facility Action for Albania 2018 - 2019
Action ID	IPA 2018/040-646.02/CSF & Media/Albania IPA 2019/040-647.02/CSF & Media/Albania
Sector Information	
IPA II Sector	Regional and territorial cooperation
DAC Sector	15150 Democratic participation and civil society 15153 Media and free flow of information
Budget	
Total cost	2018: EUR 1 300 000 2019: EUR 4 600 000
EU contribution	2018: EUR 1 300 000 2019: EUR 4 500 000
Co-Financing	2018: EUR 0 2019: EUR 100 000
Budget line(s)	22.020401 – Multi-country programmes, regional integration and territorial cooperation
Management and Implementation	
Management mode	Direct management
<i>Direct management:</i> EU Delegation <i>Indirect management:</i> National authority or other entrusted entity	Delegation of the European Union to Albania
Implementation responsibilities	N/A
Location	
Zone benefiting from the action	Albania
Specific implementation area(s)	N/A
Timeline	
Final date for concluding Financing Agreement(s) with IPA II beneficiary	N.A
Final date for concluding delegation agreements under indirect management	N.A

Final date for concluding procurement and grant contracts	IPA 2018: 31 December 2019 IPA 2019: 31 December 2020		
Indicative operational implementation period	72 months from the adoption of this Financing Decision		
Final date for implementing the Financing Agreement (date by which this programme should be de-committed and closed)	N.A.		
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	<input type="checkbox"/>	x	<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

Albania has been an official candidate for accession to the European Union (EU) since 2014. In July 2016, Albania adopted a comprehensive judicial reform plan, which includes legislative, institutional, and policy changes. In November 2016, the European Council conditionally recommended opening EU accession talks with Albania, subject to continued progress in the implementation of five key priorities and progress in the implementation of the justice reform. According to the 2018 EU Report for Albania, there is still a need for closer cooperation and coordination at all levels of government with parliamentary and civil society platforms dealing with key reforms and EU integration matters. The report notes the need to continue systematic and transparent public consultation with civil society at local and central level. The fiscal and legal environment for civil society in Albania requires improvement as the financial sustainability of civil society remains a challenge.

During 2017, the National Council for Civil Society (NCCS) became active, organizing two meetings with the support of the State Agency for Civil Society. The NCCS has an important role in advising the Council of Ministers on state policies to promote sustainable development of civil society, priorities related to sustainable development of civil society and inclusion in social and economic reforms. It also advises on legislative and public policy improvements that affect the development of civil society and their involvement in the inter-sectoral cooperation.

The 2018 Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on "*A credible enlargement perspective for and enhanced EU engagement with the Western Balkans*"¹ (hereafter the Western Balkan Strategy) notes that governments should ensure that stakeholders can actively participate in the reform and policy making process. This can be for example by establishing inclusive structured dialogues on reform priorities with the involvement of an empowered civil society. An enabling environment for civil society organisations is therefore crucial.

EU support to civil society organisations (CSOs) aims at building stronger democracies, improving accountability systems and ultimately achieving better policy and economic and social development. It seeks to empower civil society to fulfil the following key roles:

- Creating stronger links to citizens women and men alike by engaging in public policy processes, reaching out to society as a whole including marginalized groups and grass-root communities and encouraging civic activism and public participation in policy making across all areas;
- Becoming professional and reliable partners in the policy-making and reform process through evidence-based advocacy across all sectors and close monitoring of reforms;
- Contributing to enhancing responsible and inclusive leadership in the political, economic and social spheres and provide early warning in case of societal change,
- Strengthening economic development and create better links with business by promoting entrepreneurship, social innovation and job creation.

Civil society actors in Albania continue to form a critical component in the reform processes that are currently taking place in the country. The NCCS was established in 2016 and it is expected to provide a framework for more structured government consultations.

The **legal environment** for CSOs improved in 2016 with the adoption of legal initiatives related to volunteerism and social enterprises. The Law 45/2016 on Volunteerism was enacted in April 2016, thereby fulfilling one of the nine priorities identified in the 2015 Road Map for Albanian Government Policy towards a More Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development. In June 2016 the Law 65/2016 on Social Enterprises was enacted, aiming at creating an enabling environment for the establishment and

¹ COM(2018) 65 final. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: A credible enlargement perspective for and enhanced EU engagement with the Western Balkans

operation of these organizations including conditions and criteria that an entity must meet to obtain the status of social enterprise. Civil society actors continued to make efforts to improve their strategic planning, constituency and coalition building, advocacy, and use of new approaches and innovative technologies. Data on the **size of the civil society sector** is still not publicly available. There are around 12,000 CSOs - including associations, foundations, and centres - registered in the Tirana Court of First Instance. However, the total number of active CSOs registered with the tax authorities is just 3,724². The registration process for CSOs continues to be centralised at the Tirana Court of First Instance, a great burden for CSOs outside the capital. CSOs need to travel to the capital not only to register, but also to make any changes to their statutes, including their addresses. The process remains expensive and lengthy and involves judges that are not specialized in CSO legal issues.

No CSOs reported any case of **administrative impediments** or state harassment in 2016³. According to the Monitoring Matrix on Enabling Environment for CSO Development in Albania for 2016⁴ eight out of the ninety-six surveyed CSOs reported that they faced unlawful state interference in their internal matters. CSOs continue to advocate for proportional rules on accounting and financial reporting for organizations of different sizes and income, especially for small CSOs that do not engage in economic activity.

CSOs are allowed to engage in **economic activity and generate income** through service contracts and public procurements. CSOs that do not engage in economic activity are exempt from the value-added tax (VAT) on their non-profit sources of income, including membership fees, funds, grants, and donations. CSOs that engage in economic activity in the social, educational, cultural or sports fields are exempt from VAT when recognized by the competent authority in Albania. Since 2015 an online tax system requires all CSOs as well as businesses to file monthly declarations of income and expenses even when no activities occur, which places a heavy administrative burden on all organizations. CSOs outside the capital do not have access to specialized pro bono legal assistance. There is still a gap in expertise and experience between CSOs in Tirana and those outside the capital.

CSOs continued their efforts to **enhance their constituencies and communicate their work** to them, actively using information and communication technologies (ICT) and social media⁵. Despite CSOs' outreach efforts, CSOs at the local level need to develop more community support and stronger constituencies than organizations with national outreach.

CSOs increased their efforts to create **annual strategic plans** and define their missions and visions in 2016. However, smaller and local CSOs still struggle to develop clearly defined visions and missions. Donor dependence drives many CSOs to adopt broad missions leading to generalization and lack of expert knowledge in specific areas of activity. Many organizations outside Tirana rely mainly on part-time staff or volunteers.

The **financial viability** of CSOs did not change substantially during 2016 and 2017. CSOs primarily rely on grants from foreign donors. The Agency for Support of Civil Society (ASCS) is the main source of government funding to the sector. ASCS funding levels have remained fairly stable since 2009⁶. **Financial support from the private sector** continues to be sporadic and limited. In-kind donations are more frequent than financial donations. Such donations mainly go towards education, marginalized groups (including children and the elderly), and relief for natural disasters. **Philanthropic activity** is more developed among enterprises in the financial and insurance sector, information and communication sector, and mining and excavating industry. The number of CSOs engaging in economic activity remains very limited. However, the adoption of the Law on Social Enterprises is expected to support CSOs' efforts to diversify their funding bases. Very few CSOs have sound financial management systems or publish annual financial reports. Upon donor request, individual projects are subject to independent audit. Minister of Finance Order No. 62 on the National Standard on Accountability Rules of CSOs, which came into force on January 1, 2016, aims at standardising accounting and bookkeeping information on the financial status and financial

² The 2016 CSO Sustainability Index for Central and Eastern Europe and Euroasia, USAID.

³ The 2016 CSO Sustainability Index for Central and Eastern Europe and Euroasia, USAID

⁴ Monitoring Matrix on Enabling Environment for CSO Development in Albania for 2016- Partners Albania

⁵ The 2016 CSO Sustainability Index for Central and Eastern Europe and Euroasia, USAID.

⁶ Annual report 2016, State Agency for Civil Society in Albania.

transactions of CSOs. CSOs consider this a positive development as the Order establishes different reporting requirements for CSOs based on their annual budgets. Cooperation between local government and civil society is developing such as, in cases of provision of social services, services for victims of domestic violence or protection of children, however, such cooperation remains limited due to limited funding to local government for such services and capacities of local administration.

In 2016 **civic activism and advocacy efforts** addressed a wide range of fields including environmental protection, women's and children's rights, high education reform, and rule of law and good governance. In general, CSOs at the national level have stronger advocacy capacities. Advocacy capacities at the local level continue to be underdeveloped and require further support and strengthening.

The number of **public hearings and consultations** has increased through line ministries. However, CSOs continue to be concerned about the impact of these mechanisms. Consultations often seem to be organised as a formality and civil society is not yet considered as an actor in governance processes. Whilst citizens believe they have sufficient knowledge to judge whether a government decision is good or bad for the Albanian society, they do not appear to believe in the efficiency of the mechanisms that enable citizen engagement in policy-and decision-making. The online platform on public consultations is not yet fully functional and accessible. Therefore, CSOs tend to transfer the task of shaping public policies and holding the government to account to the Parliament⁷.

The new Government established in 2017 is still reviewing the implementation of Integrated Policy Management Group Mechanism. The Deputy Prime Minister Office and Development Policy and Good Governance Unit at Prime Minister Office are leading the process of mainstreaming public consultations at horizontal level. The report on Municipalities in the EU Integration process⁸ in Albania highlights that in 2017, citizens received answers to their requests and complaints from their municipalities on average in 75% of the cases; however, provision of official responses does not either necessarily represent a full addressing of citizens' requests and complaints, or represent solving of the problems they embrace. On the other hand, up to 14% of the country's municipalities⁹ still do not organize public hearings. No municipality in the country prepares a budget for citizens. In addition, in 2017, approximately half of the municipalities in the country have no data on the number of recommendations received by civil society organizations during their local decision-making process or the number of accepted recommendations.

Participatory governance supportive of active citizenship is another area that remains to be strengthened. The opinion poll organized by Institute for Democracy and Mediation (IDM)¹⁰, reveals that 47% of surveyed citizens believe that Albanian public institutions are not transparent and accountable, whilst 41% of them believe the Albanian public institutions are transparent and accountable. Systematic stakeholder consultation would underpin transparency, the ownership by individuals and thus the sustainability of legislative processes including the accession process. Overall, the legal framework on associations is broadly in line with European standards. However, considerable progress needs to be made as regards its implementation as associations still face disproportionate scrutiny of their activities, which in some cases has led to judicial proceedings.

During 2016 civil society actors raised **public awareness** of the Law on the Right to Information and the Law on Notification and Public Consultation through TV, pamphlets, and websites. CSOs also highlighted the fact that central and local government bodies are not adequately implementing these laws and still pass laws and strategies without consulting relevant stakeholders. During 2016, CSOs at the national level were consulted on the Laws on Whistle-Blower Protection, Volunteerism, and Social Enterprises. However, despite CSO advocacy efforts, decision makers failed to act on CSOs' proposals to introduce fiscal incentives to increase philanthropy and to make legal changes to improve the distribution of public funding. Civil society organizations in the area of gender equality, gender based violence and child rights protection have been very active in played an important role in monitoring implementation of CEDAW recommendations, Istanbul Convention and the European Charter for equality of women and men in local

⁷ Opinion Poll- Trust in Government- 2015- Institute for Democracy and Mediation.

⁸ Municipalities in the EU Integration process of Albania, 2018- European Union. Project – Municipalities for Europe

⁹ Municipalities in the EU Integration process of Albania, 2018- European Union. Project – Municipalities for Europe

¹⁰ Opinion Poll- Trust in Government- 2015- Institute for Democracy and Mediation

life. An important contribution by civil society organizations is given in the legislative process of drafting the Law on Free Legal Aid, Law on Social Housing, and monitoring of EU Gender Action Plan II.

According to the **CSO Needs Assessment Report 2016** conducted by the EU-funded Technical Assistance for Civil Society Organizations (TACSO)¹¹, CSOs mainly provide **basic social services**, such as health, education, access to legal aid and psychological support in areas where the state has not allocated adequate funds and capacities to support these groups of population. These services are provided primarily to vulnerable social groups, including children, women, the Roma community, people with disabilities and other marginalized groups. Some CSOs also offer specialized social, education and legal services related to women's issues and domestic violence, children's rights, and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) issues. Even though the services offered by CSOs reflect the needs of their constituencies, which are identified through needs assessments, CSOs are highly dependent on donors funding. CSOs are also concerned about the lack of standards when providing services and the lack of monitoring by responsible institutions.

The Albania 2018 report, notes that Albania has ratified most international human rights conventions and developed its legal framework in line with European standards. New legislation has been adopted on children's rights and the protection of minorities. However, the institutional mechanisms remain weak and more efforts are needed to implement existing commitments. Social care services for vulnerable groups need further improvements. Furthermore, the report notes that Albania should improve institutional mechanisms for protecting children, protecting victims of domestic violence, and guarantee gender equality. The European Pillar of Social Rights reflects principles and rights that are essential for fair and well-functioning labour markets and welfare systems. Through a new reinforced social dimension for the Western Balkans, the European Commission aims to work to support employment and social policy in the region, encouraging appropriate engagement from all levels of government, social partners and civil society. This will include an increased focus on employment and social reforms through greater monitoring of relevant policies, including in the context of the economic reform programmes. More financial assistance should be foreseen in the social sector, notably investment in education and health to support social inclusion. The implementation of the EU Children's rights Agenda at local and national level through a coordinated approach is critical to ensure that actions are designed, implemented, and monitored taking into account the principle of children's best interests and it will contribute at enhancing the dialogue between civil society and government.

CSOs are allowed to participate in **public procurement** but according to the Monitoring Matrix on Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development in Albania for 2016 participation in public tenders remains very limited mainly due to the limited capacities of CSOs to meet requirements, lack of trust in the transparency of the process, and the lack of a supportive financial framework for CSOs offering social services. During 2016, ASCS continued to offer technical assistance to CSOs applying for its calls for proposals. It also organised meetings to present the structure and role of the NCCS to local CSOs. TACSO continued to provide support to local CSOs in order to increase their participation in EU funding schemes, provided help-desk days to increase the knowledge of CSOs regarding the legal and fiscal framework in view of legal changes in recent years and supported six municipalities in strengthening collaboration between municipal councils and civil society.

Absorption capacities of CSOs in **rural and remote areas** remains limited, however CSOs continue to engage in networking and coalition building. In 2016, some active networks focused on women's and children's issues, youth issues, LGBTI rights, justice reform and environmental issues. The **business sector** became increasingly interested in inter-sectoral partnerships, increasing its support to CSOs, mainly focusing on people with disabilities, children with autism, and people with Down syndrome. CSOs enjoy some **media coverage** of their activities and advocacy campaigns—mainly those focused on good governance, accountability, women's and children's rights, and environmental protection. **Public perception** of CSOs remains stagnant¹². Furthermore, the majority of people remain sceptical about the **impact of CSOs' work and activities**. Overall, the CSO sector continues to lack self-regulation and few

¹¹ Needs Assessment Report, updated 2016, Albania- EU-funded Technical Assistance for Civil Society Organizations (TACSO)

¹² The 2016 CSO Sustainability Index for Central and Eastern Europe and Euroasia, USAID.

CSOs are transparent about their activities and finances since only a limited number of well-established CSOs publish their reports online.

The overall legal environment for **media organisations** is generally conducive to the exercise of freedom of expression, but implementation remains a challenge. Media ownership is formally transparent and accessible through the National Registration Centre. However, the functioning of the media market remains opaque, with a number of media outlets surviving in a relatively small market with limited resources. Transparency of government funds channelled to the media for advertising or other purposes needs to improve and legislation on state advertising in line with international best practices is lacking. In general, Albanian media are used as a tool to promote political and private interests, rather than to conduct independent and fact-based journalism oriented towards the public interest. The media sector is dominated by polarisation, self-censorship and lack of balanced and objective debate. Media is also not used in a structured manner as a means to educate the general public about the practical relevance of a range of reform processes, which significantly impact on women's and men's lives. The use of gender stereotypes abounds, reinforcing gender roles, discriminatory practice, and the subordination of women.

Journalism in Albania is a precarious profession with low wages and little job security. Poor implementation of the labour code remains a major concern and most journalists work without contracts or have contracts that can be terminated arbitrarily. Delays in paying salaries and missing years of social contribution payments are a widespread phenomenon, often leading to self-censorship. There is a Union of Albanian Journalists, which has limited influence. A significant number of **journalists are not organised or represented** in any form, reflecting the country's lack of tradition of trade union organisations. Professional and ethical standards in journalism need to be strengthened, as well as self-regulation for the media organisations. In addition, there is no any recent analysis on gender and media in Albania that could help in better understanding and addressing specific challenges faced by male and female journalists.

The overall **level of professionalism in the media landscape** needs to be improved. In depth knowledge on EU accession related issues in the field of the rule of law, human rights, economics and public administration reform are not very strongly developed. The fragmentation and politically polarised nature of the media community leaves space for cronyism and a decline in professional standards, which prevents collective action defence of proper labour relations or representative self-regulation in the sector.

OUTLINE OF IPA II ASSISTANCE

The **Civil Society Facility (CSF) and Media Programme 2018/19** for Albania is composed of two main components:

The first component foresees additional investments in the **media-related activities** started under CSF 2016/2017, namely supporting actions related to freedom of media, independent production, improvement of standards and ethics. This is considered key in promoting an enabling environment and increasing capacities of professional journalist associations, media and non-media organizations and establish closer links of various civic actors with media. Application of EU Guidance on gender equality in the audio-visual sector, and of the principles of gender-sensitive communications will be mainstreamed and supported.

The second component will focus on: a) strengthening **CSOs** capacities, engagement and public participation in evidence-based policy dialogue in reform processes and the EU Integration process; and b) strengthening organisational capacities, independence and accountability of the civil society through supporting the National Resource Centre for CSOs. It is planned to further accelerate the current scheme for support to third parties, supporting middle-sized CSOs and striking a good balance between support to small and large CSOs. In addition, a new initiative called Active Citizenship for Transparency and Accountability (ACTA) will be introduced and closely linked with the EU Information desks in the 61 municipalities in Albania. This project called "Municipalities for Europe" will support local governments in playing a more active role in the promotion of EU principles at the local level. It will help build a dynamic approach regarding obligations stemming from the implementation of EU *acquis*, standards and best practises; offer capacity building to local government units to increase their understanding of EU policies, institutions, programmes, and funds; and help to dispel the myths and misconceptions on the EU accession process.

A specific focus will be placed on supporting the engagement of women's organizations as accountability agents in budgetary, legislative, and policy making processes at all levels, and on the promotion of public debate and education on non-discriminatory gender relations, in line with EU Gender Action Plan (GAP) II Objectives 18 and 19. The initiative will support civil society actors at local level, such as activists, networks, city councils, informal groups and civic actions, and increase visibility and awareness on EU support to civil society at local level. Another specific focus will be placed on supporting the EU Agenda for children's rights and the implementation of the new law on protection of children's rights in Albania and building a coherent approach for gender-responsive policy implementation at local level.

RELEVANCE WITH THE IPA II STRATEGY PAPER AND OTHER KEY REFERENCES

The priorities for support to CSOs in Albania are coherent with the overall lines of both the Indicative Strategy Paper for Albania and the Multi-country Indicative Strategy Paper. Both documents highlight the need for further strengthening of civil society, including capacity building, encouraging the creation of an enabling environment for its development, and greater involvement of stakeholders at central and local level in reform processes, including through greater transparency and accountability of the government action and spending and an increased role of media in promoting freedom of expression. The new Western Balkan Strategy emphasises the need to ensure that all key stakeholders actively participate in reform processes through inclusive approaches and close involvement of an empowered civil society. It reconfirms the crucial importance of an enabling environment for civil society organisations.

Support to Civil Society and Media is an integral part of all financial instruments implemented by the European Commission. In 2013 (the then) DG Enlargement defined through a large consultation process involving all the IPA beneficiaries the "**Guidelines for EU Support to Civil Society in enlargement countries, 2014-2020**". The Guidelines identify two main priorities of EU support to civil society: 1) to achieve an environment that is conducive to civil society activities; and 2) to build the capacity of CSOs to be effective and accountable independent actors.

In a parallel process dedicated to freedom of expression, the European Commission launched in 2013 the "**Guidelines for EU support to media in enlargement countries, 2014-2020**". Based on the conclusion of the "Speak-up!2 Conference", the Guidelines set the agenda for EU support to media freedom and media integrity in the enlargement area. The main priorities are: 1) promote an enabling environment for free expression and media; 2) help media outlets assume responsibility for improved internal governance and production; 3) increase capacity and representativeness of media organizations and journalist professional organisations.

Freedom of expression is a key indicator of a Candidate Country's readiness to become part of the EU. It implies a commitment to democracy, good governance and political accountability. The proposed action is guided by of the Indicative Strategy Paper for Albania, which stressed that Albanian media do not sufficiently support the democratic political culture and do not allow women and men citizens to participate in democratic decision-making processes in an informed way. The action is also designed to further implement the EU Guidelines for support to media freedom and media integrity in enlargement countries, 2014-2020. As identified in the Guidelines, the action will focus on freedom of expression and investigative reporting, trainings of journalists and media literacy, in order to strengthen the strategic and operational capacities of media to play their role of watchdogs for enhancing accountability in the political process. Throughout the action, particular attention will be paid to the dissemination and application of EU Guidance on gender equality in the audio-visual sector, and of the principles of gender-sensitive communications.

LESSONS LEARNED AND LINK TO PREVIOUS FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Under the CSF 2016 allocation, a technical assistance was included in support to the government for the improvement of the legal environment for CSOs for an amount of EUR 600,000. The relevant tender was declared void and it caused delays in supporting some important actions in the Roadmap for an enabling policy environment for civil society in Albania. However, the EU Delegation was able to support the Government during 2017-2018 through a technical assistance supporting the roadmap for the enabling environment for civil society. This supported for example a midterm revision of the roadmap, capacity

building activities for the National Council for Civil Society, recommendations on improving the legal and fiscal framework and a number other activities related to the roadmap.

The midterm review of the civil society and media facility 2016/2017 provides some useful recommendations for Albania, which are reflected in the new programming. Main recommendations included: a) maintain diverse planning and application of different instruments; b) support middle-sized CSOs and strike a right balance between financial support to small versus large CSOs, applying clear criteria; c) improve monitoring and evaluation of CSF through the introduction of SMART indicators at all levels of results, and the enhance evaluations of projects, particularly projects that are larger and/ or longer and; d) increase the visibility of the CSF support by introducing a clear visibility and communication plan for the CSF and Media Programme supported actions and their impact.

To address these findings, EUD in Albania will organise regular discussions and provide technical assistance to partner CSOs implementing financial support to third parties in developing a more coherent approach and facilitate a discussion on how to harmonise procedures for the implementation of such schemes. Regular field monitoring and gender-sensitive result based monitoring (ROM) will be organised for long terms and larger projects to ensure that progress is closely monitored and results on women and men are documented. In collaboration with the Europa House, a communication plan for the CSF and Media Programme in close coordination with all partners will be introduced in order to increase visibility of results and interventions on the wide public.

The activities included in the CSF and Media Programme 2018/2019 are defined in coordination with other on-going and planned support provided by the European Commission, such as the CSF 2016/2017, the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), IPA national and regional assistance provided to various sectors and through several modalities. The combination of multi-beneficiary and national IPA programmes and other sources of funding can be extremely efficient by exploiting complementarities and synergies if coordinated well, but can create problems in absorption capacity if there are overlaps of content among the different programmes. The European Commission is the largest donor in the region, providing significantly more support than all other donors taken together.

A lesson learnt from previous programmes is the need to ensure good coordination of the different types of assistance activities, as well as close consultations between civil society and development partners in the country supporting this sector. This programme will further follow the path set by the Civil Society Facility in strengthening the overall coordination and coherence of assistance and activities carried on or funded by the EU, its Member States and other public and private donors, by organising regular meetings with authorities and other key stakeholders in Albania.

A Civil Society Donor Working Group (CSDWG) exists since 2009, under the joint chairmanship of the EU Delegation and the Organisation of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Presence in Albania. The Working Group gathers twice a year and provides a useful forum for exchange of information and coordination among the different donors with a view to strengthen voice of civil society and advocacy efforts, ensure coordination and avoid overlapping, as well as, promote synergies in supporting priority issues for civil society in Albania. The CSDWG is discussing how to implement recommendations of the 2017 report "Civil Society Challenges and Donor Approaches"¹³, and how to further deepen the dialogue among the donors and civil society in strategic areas for the sector such as, sustainable funding, independence of the sector, evidence based policy dialogue, sector programming approach, role of civil society in opening negotiations, etc..

Finally, for greater impact, civil society should not be supported in isolation, but as an integral part of every policy area. Civil society should therefore be regarded as cross-cutting issue and not as separate sector. In Albania, the EU plans to support this approach by supporting civil society capacities to engage in evidence based policy dialogue. The CSF 2016/2017 and EIDHR started implementation of 18 projects of civil society in the area of capacity building in around 12 sectors such as: environment protection, access to

¹³ The report " Civil Society Challenges and Donor Approaches " presents the findings and recommendations of a study commissioned by the Swedish Embassy in Tirana on challenges and approaches of civil society support in Albania, as a request from the Civil Society Donor Working Group in Albania.

health, rural development, gender equality, disability rights, freedom of media, social economy, child rights protection, LGBTI rights. These projects will aim to strengthen CSOs capacities in each area to play their watchdog role and engage at local and national level in more evidence based policy dialogue through a bottom up approach.

The new action on supporting CSOs capacities for evidence based policy dialogue in policy reforms will focus in various areas of reforms such as: good governance, public administration reform, public finance reform, employment, social inclusion and protection, environment protection, rural development, justice and home affairs and other critical areas. This action will further leverage on some good practice such as the regional initiative of think tanks network Western Balkans Enabling Project for Civil Society Monitoring of Public Administration Reform (WeBER). WeBER has played an important role in using evidence based monitoring to hold government accountable and pressure for pushing the public administration reform. In addition, this action will also aim at supporting further the National Council for Civil Society and National Council for EU Integration to exercise their role in the capacity of advising and consulting government on main strategic areas and reform processes. In addition, dedicated funds are allocated to Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs on supporting civil society capacities and engagement in EU Integration process, encourage informed public debates on EU integration process and enhance cooperation and networking in the area of European Integration process.

2. INTERVENTION LOGIC

LOGICAL FRAMEWORK MATRIX

OVERALL OBJECTIVE	OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS	SOURCES OF VERIFICATION	
To strengthen participatory democracies and EU integration process in Albania by empowering civil society and media to actively take part in decision making and by stimulating an enabling legal and financial environment for civil society and pluralistic media.	<p>Quality of existing legislation and policy framework.</p> <p>Quality of structures and mechanisms in place for cooperation between media, CSOs and public institutions at local and national level.</p>	<p>Independent assessments by I.O. and CSOs, including the Monitoring Matrix of the EU Guidelines for Civil Society.</p> <p>EC Progress reports</p> <p>Synthesis of the baseline brief</p>	
SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE	OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS	SOURCES OF VERIFICATION	ASSUMPTIONS
<p>1. To build the capacity of media and journalist organisations in Albania to be independent, credible and accountable watchdogs and increase the availability of qualitative and trustworthy investigative journalism to citizens.</p> <p>2. To improve the environment for active citizenship and enhance capacities of civil society actors in Albania in exercising their role as drivers of change, and watchdogs at local level.</p> <p>3. To support civil society and public institutions work through a systematic evidence based dialogue and cooperation for EU</p>	<p>1.1 Number of journalists (including part-time and freelance) reporting adequate working contracts with sufficient social protection.</p> <p>1.2 – Number of quality programmes and audience shares for investigative journalism.</p> <p>2.1 Level of public perception on civil society actors' engagement at local level on specific participatory governance actions.</p> <p>2.2 Quality of the enabling environment for grass-roots organizations and citizenship initiative at local level.</p> <p>3.1 Number of recommendations on policies legislative changes, reform implementation</p>	<p>EC Progress reports</p> <p>Surveys among journalists and media associations</p> <p>Audience share</p> <p>Gender responsive Perception Survey Resource centre/ TACSO Opinion Poll of IDM (Institute for Democracy and Mediation).</p> <p>Independent assessment</p> <p>National registry on public consultation</p> <p>EC Progress Report</p>	<p>Political stability and EU accession process continued.</p> <p>The National registry on public consultations is functional and ensures the tracking of CS contribution.</p> <p>Active participation of all stakeholders involved in the project implementation.</p>

<p>integration, based on willingness, trust and mutual acknowledgment around common interests and the rights of women and men and through an enabling political, legal and financial environment.</p>	<p>submitted by CSOs through formal policy dialogue mechanisms incorporated by the government.¹</p> <p>3.2. Share of recommendations submitted by CSOs through formal policy dialogue mechanisms that are explicitly gender-responsive.</p> <p>3.3. Share of gender-responsive recommendations submitted by CSOs that are incorporated by the government</p>	<p>Independent assessment</p>	
<p>RESULTS</p>	<p>OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS</p>	<p>SOURCES OF VERIFICATION</p>	<p>ASSUMPTIONS</p>
<p>Result 1.1 - More regular dialogue is established within the media community and Civil Society Organisations on issues of press freedom and integrity, and with authorities on labour standards; trainings on those issues are increased.</p> <p>Result 1.2 - Increased public demand for quality investigative journalism.</p> <p>Result 2.1 – Public institutions at local and national level recognise the importance of CSOs in improving good governance and gender responsive decision making through a structured mechanism for</p>	<p>1.1.1 Number of curriculums for journalist colleges/schools developed and implemented incorporating ethical codes and standards.</p> <p>1.1.2 Number of joint –journalist/CSOs projects/Number of cooperative and regional teams dedicated to journalist investigation.</p> <p>1.1.3 Share of joint journalist/CSO projects with a gender objective.</p> <p>1.1.4 Activity of self-regulatory bodies with broad representation of the media community.</p> <p>1.2.1 Number of independent productions on national media</p> <p>1.2.2 Public recognition of quality investigative journalism.</p> <p>2.1.1 CSO's perception of the quality of cooperation with public institutions.(3.1.c)</p> <p>2.1.2 Government's officials' perception of the</p>	<p>EC Progress Report</p> <p>Independent assessment by International Organisations or regional CSOs.</p> <p>Gender- sensitive survey of journalists</p> <p>Audience measurements</p> <p>Gender sensitive survey of journalists and CSO</p> <p>Gender-sensitive survey or monitoring reports and surveys with CSOs at local and national level.</p> <p>Gender- sensitive survey Resource Centre/ TACSO.</p> <p>Audience survey</p> <p>Gender- sensitive survey/ sample</p>	<p>Media organisations and journalists associations are responsive to the programme opportunities and have the adequate absorption capacities</p> <p>Government's and media organisations are committed to the implementation of the "Guidelines for EU support to media freedom and media integrity in enlargement countries, 2014-2020"</p> <p>Government is committed to develop structures that will</p>

¹ In terms of adequate access to information, sufficient time to comment, acknowledgment of inputs, feedback/ publication of consultation results

<p>inclusion of CSOs and women and men citizens in decision making. (3.1)</p> <p>Result 2.2 – CSOs internal governance structures are transparent, accountable and continuously monitor, use evidence based work, evaluate and communicating results and impact to their constituents and wider public. (4.1)</p> <p>Result 3.1 - A transparent mechanism for structured and evidence based policy dialogue between CSOs and state bodies (Parliament, Central and Local Government) is set – up and operational (NCCS, NCEI, Sector Working Groups/ IPMG).</p>	<p>value of CSOs contribution.(3.1.b)</p> <p>2.2.1 Share and characteristics of CSOs publishing their governance structure, annual plan, annual report, financial report, monitoring and evaluation reports.(4.1.a/4.3.a)</p> <p>2.2.2 Share and characteristics of CSO's that monitor and evaluate their projects and programmes using baselines and quality indicators and make the information publicly available. (4.4.a)</p> <p>2.2.3 Share and characteristics of CSOs reporting that they take part in local, national and regional networking/ coalitions. (4.4..b)</p> <p>3.1.1 Percentage of laws/ bylaws/ policies/ budgets/ programs at local and national level consulted with CSOs (3.1.a)²</p> <p>3.1.2 Quality of structures and mechanisms in</p>	<p>by Resource Centre/ TACSO. Independent assessment Gender- sensitive survey/ sample by Resource Centre/ TACSO.</p> <p>Gender- sensitive survey/ sample by Resource Centre/ TACSO. National Registry or information from national government, CSOs monitoring reports and surveys with CSOs at local and national level.</p> <p>Gender sensitive survey/ sample by Resource Centre/ TACSO EC Progress Report Media outlets records</p>	<p>ensure structured dialogue with civil society actors and improve the legal framework for CSOs functioning in the country and consistently implement the Roadmap for Enabling Environment Policy for Civil Society in Albania.</p> <p>CSOs are able to recognize themselves as key actors for evidence based policy making and dialogue with the governmental counterparts bypassing political polarization.</p> <p>Responsible unit at PM office is committed and fully engaged in supporting the policy dialogue with civil society as a key factor in governance.</p>
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² in terms of:

- adequate access to information
- sufficient time to comment
- acknowledgement of input
- degree to which input is taken into account
- feedback on consultation process.

<p>Result 3.2- Organized civil society effectively network and collaborate with the government through a structured policy dialogue process for implementation and monitoring of EU Children's Rights Agenda at central and local level.</p>	<p>place for dialogue and cooperation between CSOs and public institutions.(3.1.2.d) 3.1.3 Number of CSOs which take part in dialogue, monitoring policies, EU and other donor funding. (2.4/3.1)</p> <p>3.2.1 Share of EU Children's Rights/Protection Agenda effectively consulted with CSOs and implemented.at national and local level</p> <p>3.2.2 Number of gender sensitive watchdog monitoring and accountability initiatives and/or reports produced by CSOs, HR Defenders, children and women's CSOs.</p>	<p>Independent surveys</p> <p>Gender sensitive survey/ sample by Resource Centre/ TACSO</p> <p>Gender sensitive independent assessment by IO or civil society.</p> <p>Sample survey by Resource centre</p>	<p>State Agency for Protection of Children's Rights is committed and fully engaged to ensure a continuous dialogue with civil society, local government and other key actors in implementation of Children's Rights Agenda in Albania.</p>
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DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES

Specific Objective 1: To build the capacity of media and journalist organisations in Albania to be independent, credible and accountable watchdogs and increase the availability of qualitative and trustworthy investigative journalism to citizens.

Result 1.1 - More regular dialogue is established within the media community and Civil Society Organisations on issues of press freedom and integrity, and with authorities on labour standards; trainings on those issues are increased.

Result 1.2 - Increased public demand for quality investigative journalism.

Activity 1 – Journalistic standards and media literacy.

Technical Assistance will be delivered focussing on promoting continuous dialogue in the media community, and training of journalists, on professional standards, freedom of expression and media integrity – including modern analytical approaches in investigative journalism. This will include the promotion of EU Guidance on gender equality in the audio-visual sector, and of the principles of gender-sensitive communications as clear quality markers. It will support journalists' associations to strengthen professional standards and ethics, to develop better labour standards for women and men journalists, and to suggest legal improvements resulting in more enabling environment for media and journalists' independence and integrity. It will also include broader actions for further empowering citizens and civil society in media literacy and creating a culture for critical thinking, freedom of expression, combating hate speech and fake news, the discriminatory portrayal of women, and harmful gender stereotypes. Activities will aim establishing a climate for balanced and objective debates and pluralistic opinions. This will be devised in coherence with the multi-country quality journalism programme.

Activity 2 – Support for independent production.

This activity will support various initiatives stimulating independent production in different areas of reforms and EU integration. It will be focused on the delivery of investigative reporting in selected thematic areas usually not covered by national and local Albanian mainstream media. Themes will cover, *inter alia*, rule of law, environmental protection, consumer protection, education, minorities, health care and European integration. The productions will have a diversity of format, including data-driven investigations, in-depth articles, explanatory stories or features and documentaries. The intention is to set best practices for the production of independent journalism and stimulate the demand for journalism based on critical thinking, analysis and investigation. Overall, this support for independent production aims at creating the conditions for quality investigative journalism with trustworthy, rigorous and credible content. This will be devised in coherence with the multi-country quality journalism programme.

Specific Objective 2: To improve the environment for active citizenship and enhance capacities of civil society actors in Albania in exercising their role as driver of change, watchdog at local level.

Result 2.1 – Public institutions at local and national level recognise the importance of CSOs in improving good governance and gender responsive decision making through a structured mechanism for inclusion of CSOs and women and men citizens in decision making.

Result 2.2 – CSOs internal governance structures are transparent, accountable and continuously monitor, use evidence based work, evaluate and communicating results and impact to their constituents and wider public.

Activity 3 - Resource Centre.

As foreseen after the hand-over from the EU Regional Technical Assistance for CSOs - TACSO II - there will be a need to establish and support the functioning of the Resource Centre (RC) in Albania. The RC will also have 2-3 satellite offices in the country. The RC will provide information services, awareness raising, capacity building, networking, serve as an incubator for advocacy movement and activism, as well as, for

evidence based work, offer training on legal, financial and policy framework for civil society, information on EU policies related to civil society and other areas, and serve as a hub for nurturing civil society actions of both formal and non-formal groups. The RC will ensure as well reach out and grassroots level actions and will contribute to measures related to the implementation of the Roadmap for Enabling Environment for Civil Society in Albania. The technical assistance will ensure support to the continuation of the first phase of the Resource centre funded under CSF 2016/2017. Close coordination with the new TACSO III programme will be ensured.

Activity 4 - Active Citizenship for Transparency and Accountability.

This is an innovative approach to reach out to non-typical civil society actors at local level including support to individuals, networks, city councils, youth groups, schools, informal groups and civil initiatives for flexible and participatory approaches in responding to the needs of activists and civil society actors at local level. The initiative will leverage further on the existing initiatives implemented by civil society and funded by EUD across Albania. It will support citizens and civil society groups (such as youth groups, human rights groups, environment groups etc.) various ideas and actions, through the modality of financial support to third parties, to stimulate local democracy across Albania. It will do so by cultivating a locally rooted civil society, which increase the demand for good governance in local level, through comprehensive decision making, supervision of local government, transparency, accountability, public participation and monitoring the quality and gender responsiveness of public services and the public administration reform and other key reforms. A specific focus will be placed in monitoring of the European Charter for equality of women and men at local level. On the other hand, this initiative will further strengthen citizen's attitudes such as tolerance and respect, openness for change, the ability to adapt, create a compromise, a democratic attitude, a sense of responsibility, abilities to influence political beliefs, loyalty to the principles of democracy, the acceptance of law and human rights, protection of the environment, the abilities to participate in political discussions, the understanding of the occurring political processes at local level and the significance of socially and gender – responsive governance.

The initiative will include a visibility and awareness raising component on EU support to civil society and will be implemented with a functional link to the project on EU Info desks in the 61 municipalities in Albania. Gender equality goals will be explicitly and consistently addressed and incorporated as part of Call for proposal, in line with EU GAP II 2016-2020, Directive 2014/113/ EC (Gender Directive) and Directive 2016/54/EC as well as with the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in local life. In particular, this initiative will be linked and contribute to the equal rights and ability for women to participate in local governance processes and support to women's organizations and other human rights defenders working for gender equality to freely express and advocate for their rights.

Specific Objective 3: To support civil society and public institutions work through a systematic evidence based dialogue and cooperation for EU integration, based on willingness, trust and mutual acknowledgment around common interests and the rights of women and men and through an enabling political, legal and financial environment.

Result 3.1 - A transparent mechanism for structured and evidence based policy dialogue between CSOs and state bodies (Parliament, Central and Local Government) is set up and operational.

Result 3.2- Organized civil society effectively network and collaborate with the government through a structured policy dialogue process for implementation and monitoring of EU Children's Rights Agenda at central and local level.

Activity 5 - Strengthen evidence based and structured policy dialogue in reform processes.

The support to policy dialogue in reform processes is a strategic area of engagement with civil society actors in Albania. The activity will support initiatives of citizens, local civil society, networks, municipal councils and others in the area of reforms and EU integration. This will be a continuation of a first phase to further support and enhance capacities and processes of participation in policy dialogue with the government before

and after reforms are carried out. A special focus will be maintained in sectors which are priority for the accession process and those also supported through budget support such as, public administration reform, anti-corruption, justice and rule of law, employment and vocational education, and other new potential sectors. The mechanism established through such support, will facilitate inclusive policy dialogue and deliver financial support to third parties, such as researchers, think tank organizations, research oriented organizations and other potential actors active in the area of evidence based policy making and monitoring. The initiative will also support structures and mechanism from the government side, such as the Integrated Policy Management Groups (IPMG) and Sector working Groups to engage in a meaningful way in policy dialogue with civil society groups and to improve understanding on the civil society sector, as well as, developing skills in engaging systematically with the sector.

Gender equality goals will be explicitly and consistently addressed and incorporated as part of Call for proposal, in line with EU GAP II 2016-2020, Directive 2014/113/ EC (Gender Directive) and Directive 2016/54/EC. This action in particular will contribute directly to the specific objective related to equal rights and ability of women and women's organizations to participate in policy reforms and governance processes at national level.

Activity 6 - Support to the implementation of EU Agenda on Children's Rights.

The support will aim at strengthening the EU Agenda on Child Rights, the implementation and monitoring of recommendations of the peer review on human rights conducted in 2017 and the implementation of legislation on the protection of children's rights adopted in 2017. The action will focus on building a coherent approach for policy implementation related to children's rights with a special focus at local level and building concrete actions in areas such as: child protection system, models of prevention of institutionalization, family strengthening support and inclusive education etc. Financial support to third parties will be optional under this call. In addition, the call may include various lots responding to priority areas of the agenda for children in Albania. Results from those actions will serve as models for more inclusive evidence based policy dialogue with local and national level and stepping up efforts in promoting, protecting and raising awareness about the implementation of rights of children in practice at local and national level. Gender equality goals will be explicitly and consistently addressed and incorporated as part of Call for proposal, in line with EU GAP II 2016-2020, Directive 2014/113/ EC (Gender Directive) and Directive 2016/54/EC. In particular this action will contribute to objectives related to equal access for girls to quality education free from discrimination, protection of girls from all forms of exploitation, coercion and violence, challenging and changing discriminatory social norms and gender stereotypes.

Activity 7 - Support Services

For all current and ongoing activities and as suggested by the Civil Society Facility and Media Programme midterm evaluation, there is planned support through technical assistance including establishment of a communication strategy for CSF and Media, harmonization of approaches to financial support to third parties and evaluation of impact, documentation of promising practices, specific thematic training, information sessions and support to civil society donor coordination group.

RISKS

The political stability of Albania has been relatively ensured in recent years, although open conflicts between the political majority and opposition are frequent. With the advancement of the reform of the judiciary system – set as a priority for advancement in the path of integration into the European Union – there might be a possible impact on some of the political leaders and the stability of the current political scene. This might affect the advancement of the systematic dialogue currently established between government and groups of CSOs to consolidate their collaboration.

The political commitment of the newly elected government established in September 2017 toward civil society promoting openness, readiness and allocation of structures and resources is very important in the implementation of actions to ensure a continuous and systematic dialogue. The government has already

undertaken the mid-term review of the Roadmap on enabling environment for civil society in Albania and update of key commitments of the government toward civil society in Albania. Close coordination and monitoring of the roadmap by the National Council for Civil Society will be crucial at ensuring that government is hold into account in implementing all commitment on the roadmap. Monitoring of implementation of the amended Law on Public Consultations and close monitoring of the State Agency for Civil Society regarding national funding of CSOs projects and programmes, considered as contribution to realization of public interest will be a crucial feature.

Absorption capacities of media organisations and their fragmentation might affect their expected role in strengthening a culture of accountability, independence and self-regulation. Regular information sessions and a preliminary assessment will be conducted to properly assess the situation and discuss with the sector these issues. Another risk is transparency in re-granting process by the successful implementers. The mitigation measure is close follow-up and involvement in monitoring of re-granting process by EU Delegation.

CONDITIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

An important condition for the proper advancement of the programme is the functioning of the National Council for Civil Society (NCCS) and the National Council for EU Integration (NCEUI). The NCCS is established and becoming active. The Head of the NCCS is the Minister of Health and Social Protection and the Deputy Head of the NCCS is elected by civil society members of the council. The National Council for European Integration is also becoming active and will play in important role in advising the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs on EU integration matters.

The new Government is discussing the framework on undertaking sector approach and policy dialogue through the model of IPMGs, which have a mandate to overview and monitor sector reform coordination and policy dialogue with civil society organisations will be implemented assume and expand its focus.

A binding condition for the release of the share of funding targeting the Albania Government is the satisfactory solution of the problems affecting VAT reimbursement on EU grants to CSOs. The current legal base exists but it is not correctly applied and a specific commitment by the government is needed for the application of the existing rules throughout all public administration bodies both at central and local level. The effective functioning of reimbursement procedure will be closely monitored through a survey administered by the EU Delegation to all its grant beneficiaries.

In order to implement actions in supports to media organisations, the process of calls should encourage civil society organisations and media associations, including journalists and media outlets, to overcome fragmentation by organising networks or platform with representatives undertaking operations on behalf of other members.

3. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Media

Media and journalists associations, Albania's public broadcaster, and schools of journalism will play a role in consultation and coordination for the implementation of the activities related to:

- Activity 1 - **Journalistic standards and media literacy** and
- Activity 2 – **Support for independent production.**

Civil society

The following main institutional stakeholders will play a role in coordination for the implementation of the activities related to Results 2 and 3:

- Activity 3 **Resource Centre**: Collaboration will be established with the State Agency for Civil Society and the National Council for Civil Society as well as with other existing civil society platforms.
- Activity 4 **Active Citizenship for Transparency and Accountability initiative**: Local government/ EU Info desks in all 61 municipalities.
- Activity 5- **Strengthening evidence based policy dialogue in reform processes**: Sector working groups and relevant sub-thematic groups, NCCS, NCEUI, the National Council for Gender equality, parliamentary sub-committee on gender equality, as well as in cooperation with other independent institutions, policy dialogue platforms for the implementation of reforms required for EU accession process.
- Activity 6- **Supporting the implementation of the EU Agenda on Children's Rights**: National Agency for Protection of Children's Rights, Ministry of Health and Social Protection and other relevant line Ministries.

IMPLEMENTATION METHOD(S) AND TYPE(S) OF FINANCING

Direct management by the EU Delegation through indicatively:

Activity 1 - Journalistic standards and media literacy. 1 Service contract.

Activity 2 - Support for independent production. 1 Call for proposal, with an optional financial support to third parties..

Activity 3 - Resource Centre (RC). 1 Service contract. It will be a follow up of the current call for proposal for establishment of the resource centre in Albania. The focus will be further strengthening capacities of the RC through technical assistance.

Activity 4 - Active Citizenship for Transparency and Accountability. 1 Call for proposal, with an optional financial support to third parties in undertaking various initiatives at local level for participatory democracy.

Activity 5 - Strengthen evidence based policy dialogue in reform processes. 1 Call for proposals with an optional financial support to third parties.

Activity 6 - Support to the implementation of EU Agenda on Children's Rights (Child Rights Facility). One call for proposal with an optional financial support to third parties. The call may include various lots related to relevant thematic areas for the country.

Activity 7 - Support Services. 1 service contract

The envisaged assistance is deemed to follow the conditions and procedures set out by the restrictive measures adopted pursuant to Article 215 TFEU.

4. PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

METHODOLOGY FOR MONITORING (AND EVALUATION)

In line with the IPA II Implementing Regulation 447/2014, an IPA II beneficiary who has been entrusted budget implementation tasks of IPA II assistance shall be responsible for conducting evaluations of the programmes it manages.

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 evaluations will be carried out as prescribed by the DG NEAR guidelines for evaluations. In addition, the action might be subject to external monitoring in line with the European Commission rules and procedures.

INDICATOR MEASUREMENT

Indicator	Baseline- 2015	Target 2020	Final 2023	Target	Source of information
CSP indicator (impact/outcome)...(1)		2020			
Specific Objective 1: To build the capacity of media and journalist organisations to be independent, credible and accountable watchdogs and increase the availability of qualitative and trustworthy investigative journalism to citizens.					
<u>Action outcome indicator for Specific objective 1</u>					
1.1 Share of journalists (including part-time and freelance) reporting adequate working contracts with sufficient social protection.	38%	50%	65%		World Press Freedom Index Surveys among journalists and media associations Independent assessment by regional CSOs. Audience measurement
1.2 – Number of quality programmes for investigative journalism.	5	10	15		
Specific Objective 2: 2. To improve the environment for active citizenship and enhance capacities of civil society actors in exercising their role as driver of change, watchdog at local level.					
<u>Action outcome indicator for Specific objective 2</u>					
2.1 Level of public perception on civil society actors' engagement at local level on specific participatory governance actions.	46% of sampled interviewed express trust in civil society ¹⁶	+10%	+15%		Sample based Survey Trust in government opinion poll.
2.2 Quality of the enabling environment for grass-roots organizations and citizenship initiative at local level.	27% of sampled interviewed consulted in the process of preparation of local strategies/ plans)	+ 15%	+30%		Sample based qualitative Survey

¹⁶ Trust in Governance, 2016- Opinion poll. Institute for Democracy and Mediation in Albania

Specific Objective 3. To support civil society and public institutions work through a systematic evidence based dialogue and cooperation, based on willingness, trust and mutual acknowledgment around common interests and the rights needs of women and men and through an enabling political, legal and financial environment.				
<u>Action outcome indicator for Specific objective 3</u>				
3.1 Number of recommendations on policies legislative changes, reform implementation submitted by CSOs through formal policy dialogue mechanisms incorporated by the government. ¹⁷	0	+35%	+50%	National registry on public consultations Reports on the results of inter-ministerial and public consultations
3.2. Share of recommendations submitted by CSOs through formal policy dialogue mechanisms that are explicitly gender-responsive.	0	+30 %	+50%	
3.3. Share of gender-responsive recommendations submitted by CSOs that are incorporated by the government.	0	15 %	+30%	Sample based Survey
Results				
<u>Action outcome indicator Result 1.1:</u>				
1.1.1 Number of curriculums for journalist colleges/schools developed and implemented incorporating ethical codes and standards.	10%	+20%	+30%	Curriculums of journalist colleges/schools
1.1.2 Number of joint –journalist/CSOs projects/Number of cooperative and regional teams dedicated to journalist investigation.	0	2	4	Surveys among journalists and media associations
1.1.3 Share of joint journalist/CSO projects with a gender objective.	0	25%	50%	Number of meeting and activities of representatives bodies.
1.1.4 Activity of self-regulatory bodies with broad representation of the media community.	0	+15%	+25%	
<u>Action outcome indicator Result 1. 2:</u>				

¹⁷ In terms of adequate access to information, sufficient time to comment, acknowledgment of inputs, feedback/ publication of consultation results

1.2.1 Number of independent productions on national media.	Near sustainability media system (IREX index) score 2.44	Sustainability media system (IREX index) score 3.00	Sustainability media system (IREX index) score 3.50	IREX Media Sustainability Index
1.2.1 Public recognition of quality investigative journalism.	0	+10%	+20%	Audience measurement
<u>Action outcome indicator Result 2.1:</u>				
2.1.1 CSO's perception of the quality of cooperation with public institutions.	0	+10	+30	Gender-sensitive survey or monitoring reports and surveys with CSOs at local and national level.
2.1.2 Government's officials' perception of the value of CSOs contribution.	0	+15	+30	Gender-sensitive survey Resource Centre/TACSO.
<u>Action outcome indicator Result 2.2:</u>				
2.2.1 Share and characteristics of CSOs publishing their governance structure, annual plan, annual report, financial report, monitoring and evaluation reports.(4.1.a/4.3.a)	48% ¹⁸	+15%	+ 35%	Gender-sensitive survey Resource Centre/TACSO.
2.2.2 Share and characteristics of CSO's that monitor and evaluate their projects and programmes using baselines and quality indicators and make the information publicly available. (4.4.a)	27% ¹⁹	+ 15%	+ 15%	Gender-sensitive survey Resource Centre/TACSO.
2.2.3 Share and characteristics of CSOs reporting that they take part in local, national and regional networking/ coalitions. (4.4..b)	27% ²⁰	+20%	+35%	Gender-sensitive survey Resource Centre/TACSO.
<u>Action outcome indicator Result 3.1</u>				

¹⁸ Referring to TACSO baseline report, 2015

¹⁹ Referring to TACSO baseline report, 2015

²⁰ Referring to TACSO baseline report, 2015

3.1.1 Percentage of laws/ bylaws/ policies/ budgets/ programs at local and national level consulted with CSOs (3.1.a) ²¹	5%	+25%	+35%	National Register on public consultations
3.1.2 Quality of structures and mechanisms in place for dialogue and cooperation between CSOs and public institutions.(3.1.2.d)	0	20%	60%	Gender- sensitive survey Resource Centre/ TACSO.
3.1.3 Number of CSOs which take part in dialogue, monitoring policies, EU and other donor funding. (2.4/3.1)	15%	+25%	+35%	Gender- sensitive survey Resource Centre/ TACSO.
<u>Action outcome indicator Result 3.2:</u>				
3.2.1 Share of EU Children's Rights/Protection Agenda effectively consulted with CSOs and implemented.at national and local level	0	+35%	+35%	RC /Sample based Survey
3.2.2 Number of gender sensitive watchdog monitoring and accountability initiatives and/or reports produced by CSOs, HR Defenders, children and women's CSOs.	0	+25%	+35%	Gender- sensitive survey Resource Centre/ TACSO.

²¹ in terms of:

- adequate access to information
- sufficient time to comment
- acknowledgement of input
- degree to which input is taken into account
- feedback on consultation process.

5. SECTOR APPROACH ASSESSMENT

Effective pluralism implies the respect for human rights, the rule of law and the possibility for political change. Civil society activities – often defined as primarily non-state, non-business and non-private activities – mirror this pluralism. They encourage citizens to organise themselves and to collaborate in their common interest. A thriving civil society contributes to a more open, participatory and consequently a more dynamic democratic society. Informed, active citizenship and inclusive citizen voice also improve accountability, transparency, and gender and social responsiveness and hence to socio-economic development and growth.

The Government of Albania has shown some level of commitment to achieve continuous progress in the country's European integration process, which is considered essential to maintain and increase the reform momentum and address a number of challenges in many policy areas. Albania has already received the status of the candidate country for the EU membership and is struggling to start opening of the negotiations with European Union.

While stepping further efforts in the process of EU integration, the Government of Albania would need to strengthen the systematic involvement of citizens and civil society organizations in the reform process. Ensuring broad involvement of civil society contributes to the democratization of the country, but also consolidates the nationwide consensus on EU integration and provides a framework to channel expertise and energy within Albanian society into the policy making and implementation.

The Roadmap on creating an enabling environment for civil society in Albania is focused on creating an enabling environment for development of an independent and sustainable civil society, contributing to the success of comprehensive reforms the country is undertaking on the road to the EU accession. The development of meaningful government-civil society cooperation implies establishing adequate institutional structures, procedures, processes and methodologies and building CSOs capacities for effective accomplishment of key tasks in the process of shaping, implementing and monitoring public policies.

The European Commission Progress Report 2018 noticed that the cooperation between state institutions and civil society organisations (CSOs) has improved, but there are a number of areas where progress is needed, especially at the level of local government units where cooperation is limited. In particular, the Report states that “consultations with CSOs need to become more systematic and transparent, including follow-up on their recommendations.” Indeed, despite various initiatives and mechanisms related to the enhancement of the government – civil society relationship, the overall framework for the collaboration of the government with civil society organisations still needs to be improved, in order to create synergy among existing initiatives and contribute to the irreversibility of the EU *acquis* related policy reforms.

The Road Map commitments of Albanian Government are in line with Guidelines for European Union support to civil society in enlargement countries 2014-2020 that have been developed by DG Enlargement of the European Commission with the aim to ensure solid framework for monitoring and evaluating the progress in developing enabling and stimulating participatory democracy in countries moving towards EU accession. The Guidelines are focused on a set of objectives, results and indicators assessing countries' performance in achieving an environment that is conducive to civil society activities, but also the overall effectiveness of the assistance provided.

The Albanian Road Map also identifies possible areas where technical assistance will be needed in the future. In order to ensure effective implementation of strategic priorities identified by the Road Map, the provision of technical assistance to institutions supporting government - CSO cooperation is considered of paramount importance for strengthening the capacities of these institutions in developing cross-sector partnership and cooperation between civil society organizations.

6. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

GENDER MAINSTREAMING

In line with the EU commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment, specific support will be provided to strengthen the capacities of CSOs specializing in gender issues to engage in effective dialogue on implementing the EU Gender Equality *acquis*. EU GAP II 2016-2020", "Financing for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment". Furthermore, special attention will be paid to strengthening women's and girls' voice and participation in policy, governance and electoral processes at all levels, and to the empowerment of girls' and women's organisations and human rights defenders. Support will be provided for strengthening articulate, informed and effective civic engagement of women and girls including in citizen consultations, planning, monitoring, decision-making processes, participatory budgetary processes at local level, and similar.

In line with the commitment to data disaggregation across all EU's monitoring and evaluation, research and surveys on CSOs will include gender-sensitive analysis and sex-disaggregated data, where adequate. Proposed, adopted and implemented reform measures related to the regulation and operation of CSOs will be assessed for their impact on different typologies of CSOs and their areas of engagement, paying particular attention to the impact on NGOs providing essential services to citizens, and on women's rights advocates and human rights defenders.

In line with EU GAP II 2016-2020, Directive 2004/113/EC ("Gender Directive"), and Directive 2006/54/EC, gender mainstreaming will be pursued in all aspects related to all initiatives and support to CSO, irrespective of sector. Gender equality goals will be explicitly and consistently addressed and incorporated as eligibility criterion in all Calls for proposals. In particular, a special focus will be placed at linking actions with objectives on equal rights and ability for women to participate in policy and governance processes at all levels, support to women's organizations and human rights defenders working for gender equality and girls' empowerment and support to challenged and changed discriminatory social norms and gender stereotypes.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Support to vulnerable discriminated, marginalised and underserved groups, including women and girls in difficult conditions and gender discriminated groups, is one of the traditional sectors of activity of CSOs and of EU support in Albania. Organizations active in these areas have been largely involved in the formulation of the Action Document. Intentional efforts will be made to apply rights based approaches for ensuring that CSOs addressing and articulating the rights, needs and entitlements of these groups will be well represented among the beneficiaries of the capacity building components.

MINORITIES AND VULNERABLE GROUPS

Support to vulnerable groups of women and men citizens, including national minorities, is one of the traditional sectors of activity of CSOs and of EU support in Albania. Organizations active in these areas have been largely involved in the formulation of the Action Document and will be among the beneficiaries of the capacity building components. Specific support will be provided for increased and effective articulation of rights, needs and entitlements in dialogue, policy formulation and implementation, and the EU accession process.

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

The Action document is based on the Regional Guidelines for support to CSOs in IPA II and has been widely consulted with CSOs. Feedback is received through several consultation meetings during the year as well as through an online consultation process.

Discussions have been organised with relevant institutions as well such as, National Agency for Civil Society, Prime Minister Office responsible Unit dealing with cooperation with civil society, Agency for the Protection of Children's Rights.

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE (AND IF RELEVANT DISASTER RESILIENCE)

Environmental CSOs are relatively active in the country and in some case benefiting from a good level of networking system in the region. Environment is one of the sectors where support will be provided with the aim of having the CSOs more present in the legislative process as well as in the monitoring of the law implementation and enforcement through the initiative on policy dialogue, active citizenship and media actions.

Climate action relevant budget allocation: EUR 0.4 million
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7. SUSTAINABILITY

The action aims at establishing legal and operational conditions for the autonomous functioning and growth of CSOs and media in the country. On one side the improved legal framework and the implementation of the Roadmap is expected to provide a conducive platform for CSOs activities to be able to meaningfully contribute to the EU accession process in the country. On the other side, the increased organizational and governance capacities as well as strengthening financial independence of the organization are expected to trigger a virtuous circuit for their accrued credibility and development. In addition, the support to further strengthen the policy dialogue processes in reform processes and at the same time strengthen capacities of civil society in evidence based work will contribute to reinforce the implementation of the law on public consultations and law on access to information and create an institutional culture of regular and participatory public dialogue.

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.

All necessary measures will be taken to publicise the fact that the action has received funding from the EU in line with the EU communication and visibility requirements in force. All stakeholders and implementing partners shall ensure the visibility of EU financial assistance provided through IPA II throughout all phases of the programme cycle.

Visibility and communication actions shall demonstrate how the intervention contributes to the agreed programme objectives and the accession process, as well as the benefits 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.