



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

MULTI-COUNTRY

EU support to the Western Balkans Youth Window under Erasmus +

Action summary

The European Union shares with the Western Balkans ambitious objectives for smart, inclusive and sustainable growth with a view to delivering high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion. Investing in human and social capital is an essential condition to achieve those growth targets.

The Western Balkans Youth Window reinforces the levels of participation of the relevant IPA II beneficiaries in the EU's Erasmus+ programme in two ways:

- By increasing the number of Erasmus+ non-formal learning projects involving the participation of organisations and participants – notably young people and youth workers – from the beneficiaries;
- By allowing organisations from the beneficiaries to be project coordinators and apply directly for an EU grant under the framework of Erasmus+.

This is a recurrent action in view of providing dedicated support to the relevant IPA II beneficiaries who as Erasmus + Partner countries do not benefit from the full extent of the Erasmus+ programme. The action is implemented by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency of the EU (EACEA).

Action Identification			
Action Programme Title	IPA II Annual Multi-Country Action Programme 2019		
Action Title	EU support to the Western Balkans Youth Window under Erasmus +		
Action ID	IPA 2019/NEAR>EACEA.09/MC/Youth		
Sector Information			
IPA II Sector	9. Regional and territorial cooperation		
DAC Sector	11420 – Higher education (Youth)		
Budget			
Total cost	EUR 3 million		
EU contribution	EUR 3 million		
Budget line(s)	22.020401 – Multi-country programmes, regional integration and territorial cooperation		
Management and Implementation			
Management mode	Direct management		
<i>Direct management:</i> Implementing Agency	Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA)		
Implementation responsibilities	Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) (co-delegated by Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations)		
Location			
Zone benefiting from the action	Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo* and Montenegro		
Specific implementation area(s)	N/A		
Timeline			
Final date for contracting including the conclusion of delegation agreements	At the latest by 31 December 2020		
Indicative operational implementation period	72 months from the adoption of the Financing Decision		
Policy objectives / Markers (DAC form)			
General policy objective	Not targeted	Significant objective	Main objective
Participation development/good governance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
Aid to environment	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gender equality (including Women In Development)	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trade Development	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>

* 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

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

The Western Balkans share with the European Union ambitious objectives for smart, inclusive and sustainable growth with a view to deliver high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion. Investing in human and social capital is an essential condition to achieve those growth targets. Such investments can yield even better returns when they are focused on the young generation, who has to have the skills needed to succeed in an increasingly complex and fast-changing social and economic reality, and a feeling of appropriation and contribution to a common project.

While education is a key tool to equip and empower young people with the right skills set and values, the effectiveness of traditional education to equip in particular young people with the competences that will prepare them for a demanding and rapidly changing labour market is being challenged also in the Western Balkans. Young people are confronted with rising levels of knowledge and multiple skills requirements including 'soft skills' such as confidence, teamwork, self-motivation, networking and presentation skills – a need that cannot be satisfied by the formal education sector alone. A wide range of skills and attitudes that likely increase young people's achievements in school settings, as well as opportunities to find a job could be developed through out-of-school activities, in non-formal learning settings.

Another challenge relates to the development of social capital among youth, the empowerment of young people and their ability to participate actively in society. Young people are less likely to vote than adults and their voices are less often heard in political debates. Overall results indicate that the 61% of potential voters (age over 18) participated in the last elections held in their respective IPA II beneficiary. The results by relevant IPA II beneficiaries confirm that a significant number of young respondents participated in political elections but the numbers are still low: Kosovo (71%), North Macedonia (64%), Bosnia and Herzegovina (63%), Serbia (57%) Montenegro (52%) and Albania (44%)¹. Insufficient opportunities for participation, mistrust in institutions, insufficient youth-targeted information, inadequate tools to reach out to young people are among the causes of such disaffection and significant decline in participation in society and democratic life. On the other hand, new forms of involvement are emerging through new media and social networks, which young people embraced.

In this context, the Western Balkans need to extend and broaden learning opportunities for young people as a whole, including supporting the acquisition of skills through non-formal educational activities and involvement in youth organisations. Non-formal learning includes various structured learning situations, which do not have the level of curriculum, syllabus, accreditation and certification associated with 'formal learning', but have more structure than that associated with 'informal learning', which typically takes place spontaneously as part of other activities. Learning can take place everywhere: in schools but also in associations, on social media or in social life. Some young people are actively engaged and take leadership roles in youth organisations. This helps them acquire transversal skills that allow them to be fit to adapt to the rapidly evolving change in demands for jobs and skills, even for jobs and skills that do not yet exist.

The European Union aims at encouraging people-to-people contacts, in particular among the young generations, as an important dimension of its relations with third countries. People-to-people contacts are important to promote mutual understanding, as well as social, cultural and economic development. They are a particularly important tool in the accession context where the advancement on a European path requires embracing common European values. These can be instilled through a culture of dialogue and exchange represented by people-to-people contacts.

The Erasmus+ Programme is one of the key instruments of the European Union for achieving its objectives in terms of young people's personal, socio-educational and professional development. The Erasmus+ programme has a youth dimension, which offers opportunities for young people and youth workers in the area of non-formal learning. Such a youth dimension is also open to young people, youth workers and youth

¹ http://www.alda-europe.eu/public/publications/141-Balkan_Platform_Comparative_Study.pdf

organisations from the relevant IPA II beneficiaries, although in a limited manner and with resources that are not able to cope with the growing demand.

In view of reinforcing the level of participation of the relevant IPA II beneficiaries in Erasmus+ youth activities and tackle the needs of youth, the proposed action aims to continue implementing a specific Western Balkans Youth Window under Erasmus+. The action continues the successful work carried out under previous IPA-funded Western Balkans Youth Windows.

The Western Balkans Youth Window will support the beneficiaries in two ways:

- by increasing the number of Erasmus+ non-formal learning projects involving the participation of organisations and participants – notably young people and youth workers - from the beneficiaries;
- by allowing organisations from the beneficiaries to be project coordinators and apply directly for an EU grant under the framework of Erasmus+.

By supporting specific IPA II beneficiaries who currently are yet to become Erasmus+ Programme countries² which will enable full access to Erasmus+ actions, this action should be seen as a bridging measure. This action will take into account the objective of preparing the beneficiaries to become Erasmus+ Programme countries.

OUTLINE OF IPA II ASSISTANCE

Under Erasmus+ Key Action 2, which fosters cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practice and, more specifically, capacity building in the field of youth, the Western Balkan Youth Window will promote the sustained development of youth organisations in the region and the practice of youth work using non-formal learning, as appropriate, by supporting:

- activities encouraging cooperation, networking and exchanges of practices in the field of youth, such as seminars, conferences, workshops, meetings, training courses, study visits and job-shadowings, and notably activities involving young people with fewer opportunities, aimed to develop competences and skills that increase their employability or self-employment prospects, foster their active participation in society and reinforce their mutual understanding, sense of solidarity and tolerance;
- youth exchanges and the participation of young people in volunteering activities (with a special attention paid to the involvement of young people with fewer opportunities) and the mobility of youth workers between Erasmus+ Programme countries and relevant beneficiaries from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Kosovo. Professional development activities for youth workers, that raise the quality, the international dimension and recognition of their work are also supported;
- cooperation activities that foster networking between civil society organisations, public authorities and institutions active in youth to strengthen their capacities, establish or reinforce their cooperation on a trans-national cross-border basis within the organisations from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Kosovo on the one side and those from other Erasmus+ Programme countries on the other.

The following stakeholders will benefit from the action:

- **Young people:** youth is a period of transition, generally agreed as the passage from a dependent childhood to independent, autonomous adulthood.
- **Youth workers:** professionals who work with young people in a wide variety of non-formal and informal contexts (e.g. within youth organisations, municipalities and youth centres).

² North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey are Erasmus + Programme countries and therefore not covered by this action.

- **Non-governmental youth organisations:** these organisations should be present at every level of decision making, from the local level to the international level and represent a whole range of youth groups.

RELEVANCE WITH THE IPA II MULTI-COUNTRY STRATEGY PAPER AND OTHER KEY REFERENCES

Financial assistance will be granted in line with the areas identified as priorities in the revised Multi-Country Indicative Strategy Paper (MCSP) 2014-2020³. Furthermore, financial support for capacity building projects in the field of youth non-formal learning – including a flexible range of activities such as capacity building activities and mobility activities for young people and youth workers – will support the implementation of the enlargement strategy for the Western Balkans and Turkey, as well as the Western Balkan Strategy of 6 February 2018 for “*A credible enlargement perspective for and enhanced EU engagement with the Western Balkans*”, and the Sofia Priority Agenda of 17 May 2018.

The action is in line with relevant EU policies, the applicable macro-regional strategies and the South East Europe (SEE) 2020 Strategy priorities of Smart Growth and Inclusive Growth.

LESSONS LEARNED AND LINK TO PREVIOUS FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Since 2000, organisations and young people from the Western Balkans have had the possibility to participate as partners in certain activities supported through the EU's Youth programme (2000-2006).

From 2008-2013 and from 2015 onwards, organisations from the Western Balkans had the opportunity to become coordinating organisations for youth projects and to apply directly for a project grant through a dedicated Western Balkans Window within the EU's Youth, Youth in Action and Erasmus+ programme. Although funds for Western Balkan Youth Window have been increased over the years, the demand for non-formal education of young people still exceeds the available budget by far.

The evaluation study “*The impact of the cooperation with south-east Europe within the Youth in Action programme*” from 2012 confirmed the programme’s significant impact on young people’s competences and attitudes in the area of intercultural learning, self-esteem, communication in foreign languages and ability to plan and organise actions, as well as awareness of learning processes. The results of the study particularly stressed the deconstructing of prejudices among young people from the programme beneficiaries towards young people from South East Europe and vice versa. Approximately 76 % of respondents believed that the Youth in Action programme had contributed to positive changes in the development of youth work in their region. More young people were confirmed to take part in youth organisations and a number of new organisations had been developed as a result of the programme.⁴

³ C(2018) 3442, 31.05.2018

⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/youth/library/reports/youth-work-nonformal-learning_en.pdf

2. INTERVENTION LOGIC

LOGICAL FRAMEWORK MATRIX

OVERALL OBJECTIVE	OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS (*)	SOURCES OF VERIFICATION	
To increase regional cooperation and reconciliation of young people in the targeted IPA II beneficiaries	Level of cooperation among the young people in the targeted IPA II beneficiaries and the EU	Official statistics of central administrations, surveys of professional evaluation organisations	
SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE	OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS (*)	SOURCES OF VERIFICATION	ASSUMPTIONS
To foster international non-formal learning activities ⁵ that support building mutual understanding and employability of young people (including young people with fewer opportunities) from the targeted IPA II beneficiaries.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of young people (sex-disaggregated) in the targeted IPA II beneficiaries who participate in non-formal learning activities. - Proportion of youth organisations offering youth exchanges and volunteering activities. - Proportion of young people (sex disaggregated - including young people with fewer opportunities) who have access to youth exchanges and volunteering activities. - Proportion of youth workers (sex disaggregated) from the targeted IPA II beneficiaries who have access to mobility activities. - Proportion of youth organisations from the targeted IPA II beneficiaries 	<p>Official statistics of central administrations, and related stakeholders and the EACEA,</p> <p>surveys of professional evaluation organisations</p> <p>Reports from beneficiaries of joint projects.</p>	Involvement of youth organisations, youth workers and young people in joint activities

⁵ Such as volunteering, training, common projects, participation in seminars, study visits, job shadowing

	reporting that they have enlarged their international network.		
RESULTS	OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS (*)	SOURCES OF VERIFICATION	ASSUMPTIONS
Result 1: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Degree of cooperation between youth organisations from targeted IPA II beneficiaries with organisations from the Erasmus+ Programme countries as well as the exchange of expertise and know-how between them in the field of youth and non-formal education strengthened; 	(i) Number of joint projects supported annually under the Western Balkans Youth Window; (ii) Number of meetings, seminars and events between youth organisations from the targeted IPA II beneficiaries and the Erasmus+ Programme countries	-general statistics on the implementation of the programme by EACEA; -official statistics of central administrations; -surveys by specialised organisations; -use of Youthpass for the personal development of young people and youth workers	See above.
Result 2: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Degree of involvement of young people from targeted IPA II beneficiaries in international youth cooperation to acquire socio-economic skills, which could facilitate young people's employability and their integration⁶ in society increased. 	(i) Number of young people (sex-disaggregated) participating in youth exchanges; - % of young people with fewer opportunities (sex disaggregated) out of the total of young people participating in youth exchanges (ii) Number of young people (sex disaggregated) participating in volunteering activities; - % of young people with fewer opportunities (sex disaggregated) out of the	Reports from beneficiaries of joint projects.	

⁶ Special emphasis will be given to promoting equity and inclusion by facilitating the access to activities for participants with disadvantaged backgrounds and fewer opportunities compared to their peers for reasons such as: disability, educational difficulties (e.g. early school leavers, young people with low school performance), economic obstacles, cultural differences (e.g. immigrant or refugees), health problems, social problems (e.g. people facing discrimination because of gender, age, ethnicity, religion or sexual orientation, geographical obstacles (e.g. people from remote or rural areas)

	total of young people participating in volunteering activities (iii) Degree of employability and level of skills and competences as assessed by young people before and after having participated in a joint activity.		
<p>Result 3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Degree of involvement of targeted IPA II beneficiaries youth workers in joint projects with youth organisations from Erasmus+ programme countries increased 	<p>(i) Number of youth workers (sex-disaggregated) from targeted IPA II beneficiaries participating in joint projects with organisations from Erasmus+ programme countries.</p> <p>(ii) Level of skills and competences as assessed by youth workers before and after having participated in joint projects.</p>	<p>Reports from beneficiaries of joint projects.</p> <p>Reports from beneficiaries of joint projects.</p>	
<p>Result 4:</p> <p>The operational capacity of organisations established in the targeted IPA II beneficiaries, notably youth organisations, NGOs and National Youth Councils with regard to the management of international cooperation projects supported by European Union funds improved.</p>	Number of joint projects managed by youth organisations from targeted IPA II beneficiaries.	Reports from beneficiaries of joint projects.	

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES

Main activities

In order to reach the objectives of the action, organisational development and capacity building projects in the field of youth will be implemented with the aim to strengthen youth cooperation between Erasmus+ Programme countries and the targeted IPA II beneficiaries, as well as cross-border cooperation within Erasmus+ Partners of the Western Balkans.

The projects can target issues such as:

- promotion of strategic cooperation between youth organisations and public authorities;
- fostering cooperation between youth organisations and organisations in the education and training fields, as well as with representatives of the business and the labour market;
- strengthening the capacities of youth councils, youth platforms and local, regional and central authorities dealing with youth;
- supporting Youth Exchanges and the participation of young people in volunteering activities (with a special attention paid to the involvement of young people with fewer opportunities) and the mobility of youth workers; and
- enhancing the management, governance, and internationalisation of youth organisations in the targeted IPA II beneficiaries.

Activities will include seminars, conferences, workshops, meetings, training courses, study visits and job-shadowings to allow for cooperation, networking and exchanges of practice as well as capacity building. The activities should support active citizenship, social inclusion and solidarity amongst young people and the society they live, and to foster key skills and competences.

The action will work at the levels of young people, youth workers and organisations active in the field of Youth who offer non-formal learning and mobility activities "out-of-school" or through leisure time activities. These organisations are instrumental for reaching out to young people and in particular young people with fewer opportunities.

Project promoters will be expected to plan, organise and evaluate the results of their activities.

Expected results

- Strengthening of cooperation between youth organisations from the targeted IPA II beneficiaries with organisations from the Erasmus+ Programme countries as well as the exchange of expertise and know-how between them in the field of youth and non-formal education;
- Improved involvement of young people from the targeted IPA II beneficiaries in international youth cooperation to acquire socio-economical skills that could facilitate young people's employability and their integration in society;
- Increased involvement of the youth workers from the targeted IPA II beneficiaries in joint projects with youth organisations from Erasmus+ Programme countries;
- Improvement of the operational capacity of organisations established in the targeted IPA II beneficiaries, notably youth organisations, NGOs and National Youth Councils, in particular with regard to the management of international cooperation projects supported by European Union funds.

RISKS

Risk 1. Uneven delivery of the grant scheme across the Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Kosovo: Variation in the capacity and commitment of civil society organisations across the region may lead to an uneven pattern of grant awards (for example, between urban and rural areas). Grant scheme management should take measures to ensure equity of access for interested stakeholders, particularly focusing on young people with fewer opportunities and participants who traditionally have been

underrepresented in such schemes, and provide opportunities ensuring that NGOs' needs for capacity building are effectively addressed.

Risk 2. Difficulties encountered in reaching key target groups: The majority of young people in Western Balkans do not participate in organised activities. Furthermore, among certain disadvantaged groups, a considerable degree of isolation from mainstream social engagement is observed. Consequently, there is a risk that the programme will not be able to involve these key beneficiaries into its activities. This will be mitigated through the focus of the grants scheme on engaging with disadvantaged youth and through the support to be provided by the SALTO South-East Europe Resource Centre in reaching out to this category of young people.

CONDITIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency of the EU (EACEA) is responsible for the management of parts of the EU's funding programmes in the fields of education, culture, audio-visual, sport, citizenship, and volunteering, including the Erasmus+ Key Action 2 and the Western Balkans Youth Window. The mandate of EACEA is foreseen to be amended to include youth for IPA II.

Failure to comply with the requirements set above may lead to a recovery of funds under this programme and/or the re-allocation of future funding.

3. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Western Balkans Youth Window will be implemented by the EACEA under the supervision of the European Commission (the Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture and Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations). Regular information on the implementation progress and results will be provided by the Agency to the European Commission and the relevant Committees.

Furthermore, the *Erasmus+ Sport, Youth and EU Aid Volunteers* Unit of the EACEA:

- provides support to the target public of the Programme, the beneficiary organisations and the participants engaged in project activities; and
- gives support concerning the diffusion of good practice.

The SALTO⁷ South East Europe (SEE) Resource Centre, supported by the Erasmus+ Programme, will promote information about the Window and the involvement of young people, youth workers, youth organisations and other youth stakeholders in joint activities of participants from Erasmus+ Programme countries and the targeted IPA II beneficiaries. In this context, SALTO SEE will offer training and project partner finding activities for youth leaders and youth workers and will contribute to the training of volunteers in South East Europe and the production and dissemination of resource material. SALTO SEE is based in the Erasmus+ National Agency of Slovenia. SALTO SEE's activities are complemented by Contact Points in the Western Balkans that ensure proximity of support for those interested in organising or carrying out youth projects under Erasmus+.

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

The action is co-delegated to EACEA. It will be implemented in direct management by EACEA on the basis of the Erasmus+ Call for Proposals. Projects funded under the grant scheme will correspond to Erasmus+.

⁷ SALTO stands for "Support, Advanced Learning and Training Opportunities"

Key Action 2 projects, which foster the cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices and contribute to capacity building in the field of youth. Organisations from the relevant IPA II beneficiaries can submit applications under Key Action 2, in accordance with the deadlines for submission of applications set out in the Erasmus+ Programme Guide.

The activities supported under Key Action 2 of Erasmus+ are to be managed at centralised level. Grant proposals are submitted to, selected and managed by EACEA in Brussels.

The financial planning prepared by the EACEA allows involving annually about 3,000 – 5,000 young people and youth workers from the relevant IPA II beneficiaries and the EU into joint activities.

The indicative duration of the grant contracts will be from 9 to 24 months.

4. PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

METHODOLOGY FOR MONITORING (AND EVALUATION)

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 set in the Financing Agreement.

Implementation of the Western Balkans Youth Window will be monitored on a permanent basis by the EACEA through analysis of progress reports, financial statements and final reports prepared by the beneficiaries as well as through monitoring visits.

In addition, the outcomes of the Western Balkans Youth Window will be monitored in the context of Erasmus+ surveys launched periodically and targeting samples of beneficiaries and participants.. Baseline figures refer to 2008 being the first year of the first Western Balkans Window. Target figures refer to projects selected in the target year.

INDICATOR MEASUREMENT

Indicator	Baseline (2008)	Target 2020	Final Target (2022)	Source of information
Number of organisations (youth and other) from the targeted IPA II beneficiaries participating in joint activities under this Window with organisations from Erasmus+ Programme countries.	127 organisations	300 organisations over the period of 2 years	300	Official statistics of central governments, surveys of professional evaluation organisations and reports from beneficiaries of joint projects.
Number of young people reached (sex disaggregated)	2400 individuals	4000 individuals over the period of 2 years	4000	Official statistics of central governments, surveys of professional evaluation organisations and reports from beneficiaries of joint projects.
Number of joint projects managed by youth organisations from the targeted IPA II beneficiaries	38 grants / contracts	60 grant / contracts	60	Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency
Number of youth workers from the targeted IPA II beneficiaries participating in joint projects with organisations from Erasmus+ programme countries.	1000 youth workers	1500 youth workers	1500	Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency
Number of meetings, seminars and events between youth organisations from the targeted IPA II beneficiaries and the Erasmus+ Programme countries	400 meetings, seminars and events	800 meetings, seminars and events	800	Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency

5. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND GENDER MAINSTREAMING

An important priority of the youth actions supported under Erasmus+ is to give all young people equal opportunities to access the activities supported through the programme. These actions are open to all young people, not having regard of their educational background or their status.

In terms of gender equality, girls and boys are expected to participate proportionally to their share of the population. In many areas, however, girls participate less than what would be expected. Girls are at a particular disadvantage or at risk of discrimination in the labour market (employability, transition from education to work, unemployment, low pay and precarious employment as young mothers and lack adequate work-life balance measures), and often choose fields of studies that may translate into lower employment rates. Measures to redress inequalities among girls and boys will be implemented in the selection of participants.

MINORITIES AND VULNERABLE GROUPS

Young people have been hit particularly hard by the economic crisis of 2008 and its aftermath. Today, an increasing number of young people are long term unemployed, face discrimination and situations of social exclusion and poverty, or are at risk of socio-economic marginalisation. The Erasmus+ Programme is taking active measures to counter this by helping some of the most vulnerable people in society: those young people who have fewer opportunities compared to their peers⁸.

The obstacles or difficulties these persons may face are:

- Disability (i.e. participants with special needs): people with mental (intellectual, cognitive, learning), physical, sensory or other disabilities;
- Educational difficulties: young people with learning difficulties; early school-leavers; lower qualified persons; young people with poor school performance;
- Economic obstacles: people with a low standard of living, low income, dependence on social welfare system; young people in long-term unemployment or poverty; people who are homeless, people in debt or with financial problems;
- Cultural differences: immigrants or refugees or descendants from immigrant or refugee families; people belonging to a national or ethnic minority; people with linguistic adaptation and cultural inclusion difficulties;
- Health problems: people with chronic health problems, severe illnesses or psychiatric conditions;
- Social obstacles: people facing discrimination because of gender, age, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, disability, etc.; people with limited social skills or anti-social or risky behaviours; people in a precarious situation; (ex-)offenders, (ex-)drug or alcohol abusers; young and/or single parents; orphans;
- Geographical obstacles: people from remote or rural areas; people living in small islands or peripheral regions; people from urban problem zones; people from less serviced areas (limited public transport, poor facilities).

Equity and inclusion will be particularly promoted by facilitating access to activities for participants with disadvantaged backgrounds and fewer opportunities compared to their peers. The projects supported under

⁸ The work on social inclusion in the context of youth is supported by [Erasmus+ Inclusion and Diversity Strategy](#)

the Erasmus+ Western Balkans Youth Window will offer young people with fewer opportunities the possibility to take part in transnational activities. The involvement of young people with fewer opportunities will be taken into account in the award criteria of the respective Calls for Projects. Specific training related to the involvement of young people with fewer opportunities will be provided. Funding provisions will allow covering additional costs related to young people with fewer opportunities and also, more specifically, to participants with disabilities.

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

Non-profit or non-governmental organisations are the largest group of eligible applicants. These may be organisations of young people, organisations concerned with policies and initiatives relevant to young people, or a combination of the two.

As projects are based upon partnerships this means that non-profit or non-governmental organisations from different eligible beneficiaries are engaged in joint discussions and activities. Projects should stimulate young people and their organisations, including organisations that act as advocates for young people, to reflect on the essential characteristics of European society and, above all, encourage them to play an active role in their communities. To feel European, young people must become aware of the fact that they play a role in the construction of the current and future Europe. Therefore, a project with a European dimension should not only 'discover' Europe, but also - and most importantly - aim to build it through increased civil society action.

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE (AND IF RELEVANT DISASTER RESILIENCE)

Issues on Environment and Climate Change are by the nature of this activity not directly applicable. However, since the activity is covering youth and several sectors it could be considered secured that environment and climate change will be duly addressed.

Climate action relevant budget allocation: EUR 0
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6. SUSTAINABILITY

The interest from youth organisations of the Western Balkans in applying for youth projects reflects their needs to enhance their capacity through participation in cooperation projects and activities with other European and Western Balkans. In addition, the skills and knowledge acquired and developed by young people through their participation in cooperation projects and activities will have a positive impact on their personal and social development also in the mid- and long-term.

7. COMMUNICATION AND VISIBILITY

Communication and visibility will be given high importance during the implementation of the action. The implementation of communication activities will be the joint responsibility of the beneficiaries, and 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 of the action for the general public. Actions shall be aimed at strengthening general public awareness and support of interventions financed and the objectives pursued. The actions shall aim at highlighting to the relevant target audiences the added value and impact of the EU's interventions and will promote transparency and accountability on the use of funds.

Visibility and communication aspects shall be complementary to the activities implemented by the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations and the EU Delegations in the field. The European Commission and the EU Delegations should be fully informed of the planning and implementation of the specific visibility and communication activities.

All projects funded under the Erasmus+ Programme must develop measures aimed at ensuring the visibility of their project and of the Programme. Visibility consists in spreading information about the project, its objectives and attained results, as well as in promoting the contribution of the EU Erasmus+ Programme to the realisation of the project. Beneficiaries must clearly acknowledge the European Union's support in all communications or publications, in whatever form or whatever medium, including the Internet, or on the occasion of activities for which the grant is used.

The implementing agency will, if relevant, develop a consolidated communication and visibility plan for the action based on an agreed communication narrative and master messages customised for the different target audiences (stakeholders, business community, civil society, general public, etc.).

Effectiveness of communication activities will be measured inter alia through public surveys, if relevant, in the relevant IPA II beneficiaries on awareness about the action and its objectives, as well as the fact that it is funded by the EU.