



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

REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA EU for Inclusion

Action summary

The Action aims at reducing poverty in the country through improving the social, educational and economic inclusion of people belonging to the most vulnerable groups. It will invest in upgrading the housing, education, and economic opportunities for Roma and people living in deep poverty. The Action will also improve the accessibility of educational facilities for persons with disabilities by adaptation of schools and universities to the needs of boys and girls, women and men with disabilities. Finally, the access to community-based social services for vulnerable groups of people will be significantly enlarged by the establishment of one (or more) centre providing high quality community based social services. In the focus of the action will be primarily the underdeveloped regions (North-East Region, South-West Region+Prespa, and Polog Region).

| Action Identification | |
|---|--|
| Action Programme Title | IPA 2019 Action Programme |
| Action Title | “EU for Inclusion” |
| Action ID | IPA 2019/041-263/07.04/MK/Inclusion |
| Sector Information | |
| IPA II Sector | Education, Employment and Social Policies |
| DAC Sector | 16010 Social protection |
| Budget | |
| Total cost | 7 350 000 EUR |
| EU contribution | 6 500 000 EUR |
| Budget line(s) | 22.02.01.02 |
| Management and Implementation | |
| Method of implementation | Direct management |
| <i>Direct management:</i> EU Delegation | EU Delegation to Republic of North Macedonia |
| Implementation responsibilities | EU Delegation to the Republic of North Macedonia |
| Location | |
| Zone benefiting from the action | Republic of North Macedonia |
| Specific implementation area(s) | Country wide with a focus on 3 under-developed regions: North-East, South-West, Polog Regions and Prespa. |
| Timeline | |
| Final date for concluding Financing Agreement(s) with IPA II beneficiary | At the latest by 31 December 2020 |
| Final date for concluding contribution/delegation agreements, procurement and grant contracts | 3 years following the date of conclusion of the Financing Agreement, with the exception of cases listed under Article 114(2) of the Financial Regulation |
| Indicative operational implementation period | 6 years following the conclusion of the Financing Agreement |
| Final date for implementing the Financing Agreement (date by which this programme should be de-committed and closed) | 12 years following the conclusion of the Financing Agreement |
| 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"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | x |
| Trade Development | x | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Reproductive, Maternal, New born and child health | <input type="checkbox"/> | x | <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"/> |

LIST OF ACRONYMS:

| | |
|---------|---|
| AD | Action Document |
| AP | Action Programme |
| DDPELMC | Directorate for Development and Promotion of Education in Languages of the Members of the Communities |
| ESA | Employment Services Agency |
| ESRP | Employment and Social Reform Programme |
| ILO | International Labour Organisation |
| IPA | Pre-Accession Assistance |
| ISA | Institute for Social Affairs |
| MoLSP | Ministry of Labour and Social Policy |
| MoES | Ministry of Education and Science |
| MoF | Ministry of Finance |
| MTC | Ministry of Transport and Communication |
| NES | National Employment Strategy |
| NIPAC | National IPA Coordinator |
| NQF | National Qualifications Framework |
| PAF | Performance Assessment Framework |
| SAA | Stabilisation and Association Agreement |
| SEE | South East Europe |
| SSO | State Statistical Office |
| SWG | Sector Working Group |
| TA | Technical Assistance |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| WB | World Bank |

1. RATIONALE

PROBLEM AND STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

The country has progressed in addressing poverty and social inclusion in the last years. Yet, the poverty and inequality rates remain high, even if the last years show some slight improvement (by 0.5 percentage point per year). In 2017¹, the at-risk-of-poverty rate was still 22.2%, while the Gini coefficient (measure of inequality of income distribution) reached 32.5%².

Unemployment remains the main vector of poverty. The 2018 World Bank country diagnostics³ outlines that only 50 percent of working-age citizens is employed while the productive human capital is severely underutilized. As a result, over the lifetime men lose in average about 25 potential productive years while women lose 30. Among the poor, unemployment is almost triple that of the non-poor. Women, youth, and ethnic minorities are more likely to be out of the labour force, unemployed, or in precarious employment. The rate of activity of population aged 15-64 is 65.3% in 2017, with discrepancy of 26.7 pp. among men and women (78.4% -men, and 51,7% - women). The **female** employment rate is low: 40.3% compared to 60.5% for men. **Youth** unemployment (39.2%) is particularly higher for uneducated or low educated young people compared to those with completed secondary and tertiary education. The **Roma** population is one of the most disadvantaged both in terms of employment and social inclusion. The Roma unemployment rate reached 49% in 2017 and the activity rate is down to 44%. World Bank reports⁴ that only about 20% of Roma (age 15–64) were employed in 2017, compared to 40% of their non-Roma neighbours. The employment rate for Roma women is less than 10% while the Roma male rate reaches 30%. Both rates are the lowest among the different ethnic groups⁵. While the number of Roma youth not in employment, education, or training (NEET) shows some improvement, the gap with non-Roma is widening. The situation is particularly hard on young Roma women, 80% of whom were NEET in 2017 compared to 60% of young Roma men. The significant challenges related to the current labour market are a result of insufficient level of job creation and economic growth along with policy distortions and social norms, which create additional disincentives and barriers to accessing job opportunities.

An important factor with long-term impact on poverty and employment is **education**. While the legal framework ensures equal access to the education system to all children, regardless of their origin and differences, the effective access to quality education for students with disabilities and students from Roma communities⁶ continues to be a significant challenge.

According to the 2017 follow-up UNDP-WB-EC Regional Roma Survey, the country shows some positive trends in the education sector compared to the region. Nevertheless, Roma pre-primary enrolment, which is critical to building both cognitive and social abilities, is less than 15% while for non-Roma community it reaches 29%, forming a gap of 14 pp. between Roma and non-Roma communities. General obligatory education shows similar picture with even a higher gap reaching 20 pp. less among the Roma. In 2017 no Roma were enrolled in tertiary education. Only about 33 % of Roma students complete upper secondary education by the age of 25, compared to 87 % of non-Roma youth. It is thus not surprising that close to 75 % of Roma youth are NEETs (not in

¹ State Statistical Office, Laeken poverty indicators in 2017, No: 4.1.18.94;

<http://www.stat.gov.mk/pdf/2018/4.1.18.94.pdf>

² <http://www.stat.gov.mk/PrikaziSooopstenie.aspx?rbtxt=115>

³ World bank, Country Diagnostics, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/fyrmacedonia/publication/fyr-macedonia-systematic-country-diagnostic-seizing-brighter-future-for-all>

⁴ WB Country Diagnostics 2018

⁵ WB Country Diagnostics 2018

⁶ 2018 OECD

employment, education, or training). The lack of education obviously translates into dramatically lower future employment opportunities for Roma people.

The lack of adapted infrastructures in the education system for students with special needs (SEN) has been also largely recognised as a barrier to regular and quality education and training. In the school year 2017/2018, 78 regular primary schools accommodate 824 SEN students (431 students in 9 specialised schools) while 108 secondary schools educate 285 SEN students (240 in 4 schools). Scattered data suggest that around 14% of the schools have only partially adapted school facilities⁷. In the process of preparation of this action a study was conducted on accessibility of 12 key educational establishments located in the three most underdeveloped regions – Polog, North-East, South-West + Prespa and none of them was considered in line with the legal requirements for accessibility. In 2017, 13 out of 23 faculty buildings of the University “Ss. Cyril and Methodius” do not have any facilities for students/teachers with disabilities⁸.

Precarious living conditions and civil status are among the most important factors of poverty. Persons without documents, persons living in substandard settlements, homeless, those at risk from eviction form the core of the people living in deep poverty. Of particular concern is the situation of Roma in the country. Most of Roma live in socially deprived urban or sub-urban residential areas (ghettos) out of urban planning, with no basic infrastructure and services. Across country, at least one-third of Roma live in dilapidated housing or slums. Around 70% of Roma have no documents of property ownership while 28% live in makeshift, often illegal, homes. Half of the Roma homes have no sanitation and about 61% have no toilet or bathroom inside the home. The precarious housing affects the health and life quality of the Roma people and contributes to their lower opportunities. Moreover, the concentration of individuals and households threatened by poverty in deprived residential areas not only present certain risks to security, order and public health but amplifies the effect of the established structural social, cultural, and economic barriers and feeds a deeper segregation.

Against this background, considerable reforms in the labour relations, social benefits and taxation systems are required to create incentives to work and join labour force as a main way out of poverty. The government has already engaged in a number of areas. The efficiency and relevance of the active labour measures has improved. With EU support, Youth Guarantee will be rolled out in 2019 to support most vulnerable young people who are not in employment, training or education. These measures are coupled with reforms in education, particularly in vocational education, with the objective to address the mismatch between the labour market needs and the education outputs. Significant national, private and donors funds are channelled to business to encourage economic growth, entrepreneurship and job creation.

It is important that these reforms and measures are backed-up with social services reducing the economic and social barriers for poor and ethnic minorities and addressing their systematic exclusion from economic life. With only 1.2% of the GDP spent on direct social assistance, it is of crucial importance to improve the adequacy, effectiveness and the efficiency of the social services.

At present the state remains the main provider of social services, with a very small proportion of limited community services being offered by civil society organisations or business operators. Municipalities are not or are very rarely involved in setting-up social services or engaging with local stakeholders in implementing policies in these areas. The coverage of existing social services rarely meets the needs of the vulnerable citizens and the access to these services is often limited. Service provision generally fails to provide personalized response, thus limiting the user’s development and participation. There is a need to reform the regulatory framework, develop quality standards and quality assurance mechanisms as well as to significantly strengthen the capacity of

⁷ European Semester 2017/2018 country fiche on disability

⁸ Study Report “Inequality in Higher Education: Accessibility and Services for students/teachers with disabilities at the University “Ss. Cyril and Methodius” in Skopje”, Youth Educational Forum 2017

service providers, professionals and key stakeholders. This encompasses introduction of contemporary approaches and working methods, such as person-centered approach, personal planning and case management. These needs have been addressed in the draft Law on Social Protection and Law on Child Protection (both currently in Parliamentary procedure⁹) as well as through trainings of the staff in the Social Work Centers and the ESA in case management.

The development of community-based and particularly personalised services is one of the pillars of the **deinstitutionalisation process**, in addition to the transformation of the residential institutions and resettlement of the users into the community/family. By 2023, all institutions for children (without parents or parental care, children with behavioural problems, children in conflict with the law and children with disabilities, about 117 children altogether) and persons with disabilities (about 310 persons altogether) shall be transformed and the users resettled into the community. Institutions for elderly and persons with mental health problems shall be transformed in the period 2024-2027. It has to be acknowledged that the country has a low institutionalisation rate (1.1 user per 1000 inhabitants compared to the EU average of 2/1000). At present 2,400 users reside in 34 residential institutions offering long-term stay but, according to the estimates, there are about 100,000 people in need of assistance in the community. In the context of a tight budget frame for social aid, the deinstitutionalisation process is considered as a tool for optimisation of the social service costs in respect of improved quality of living from the point of view of the service user (the person with disability living in residential care and receiving social services) as well as more effective and transparent management of funds. Whilst the transitional phase from institutional to community base living incur inevitable bridging costs the transition will allow funds to be re-allocated from maintaining expensive residential care institutions which are run inefficiently and without quality care of residents at present to a more flexible, targeted and efficient community-based services supported also by other players and stakeholders. The Government has already begun earmarking of national budget for the process of deinstitutionalisation to cover some of the costs incurred in the process in support of community-based living and community-based services now underway. The new Law on Social Protection was adopted on 22 May 2019 and provides the legal base for financing of deinstitutionalisation and transition to community-based services. Therefore, the reduction of poverty and enhancing social inclusion is a complex endeavour which requires a wide range of concerted measures and very strong commitment by various stakeholders.

The main players in this process involve:

- **Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MoLSP)**, which is the leading institution in charge of all aspects of employment, social and equal opportunities policy and is responsible for Chapter 2, “Free movement of workers” and Chapter 19 ”Social Policy and Employment”. The MoLSP has the leading role in the deinstitutionalisation of the social protection and together with the Deputy prime minister in charge for Roma affairs, it coordinates the Strategy for the Roma 2014-2020.

⁹ The comprehensive reform of the systems for social and child protection envisages the social financial assistance to be upgraded to guaranteed minimum assistance. The process of preparing the new Social Protection Law was initiated in September 2017. After a series of assessments and alternatives, following a report commissioned from local researchers, the Government has agreed to **introduce guaranteed minimum assistance (GMA)** and to modify the associated rights and services in the social and child protection system. The main new feature in terms of rights is the introduction of GMA. This benefit combines two existing benefits (social financial assistance and permanent financial assistance) and introduces a new (more favourable) equivalence scale based on the “minimum income question” from the Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC). Unlike the current approach, which uses different equivalence scales for different rights, the use of one equivalence scale for all means-tested benefits ensures equal treatment among people in similar circumstances. It also simplifies the administrative procedure, both for applicants and for the Centres for Social Work (CSWs). In addition, this Law removes the current barrier to access for those who are employed, but on low or irregular incomes, as long as their total income per adult equivalent is below the stipulated threshold. The Law reinforces **activation of GMA beneficiaries**, by requiring all unemployed household members to participate in activation measures (not just the GMA right-holder). Finally, it also gives more responsibilities to CSWs in relation to registration of unemployed household beneficiaries, preparation of individual work plans as well as increased cooperation with the Centres for Employment

- **Ministry of Education and Science (MoES)** is the leading institution in charge of all aspects of education policy and is responsible for Chapter 25, “Science and research” and Chapter 26, “Education and culture” of the EU Accession Partnership.
- **Institute for Social Affairs (ISA)**, dependent of the MoLSP, is responsible for research and analyses of social problems, programming of social protection development, licencing of social workers, social services standards setting, supervision of the professional activities in the Social Work Centres and other public welfare institutions.
- **Social Work Centres (SWC)** are the main units for provision of social cash benefits, social services and social work for individuals and families in risk. There are 30 Social Work Centres established as legal entities and reporting to MoLSP. The Roma Information Centers which facilitate Roma access to mainstream services are being integrated into the Social Work Centers and this shift is expected to strengthen the outreach capacity of the SWC with regards to this vulnerable group.
- **Social protection institutions** are providers of care services. There are 7 residential institutions for social care for persons with disabilities and children at risks as well as 5 residential institutions for elderly established by the municipalities. In addition, there are 25 privately owned homes for elderly. Three mental hospitals are supervised by the Ministry of Health. Non-institutional care is provided in 61 day-care centres, half-of them being part of the Social Work Centres under the responsibility of the MoLSP, while the remaining are run by the municipalities or civil society organisations, and 4 mental health centres are responsibility of the Ministry of Health. Other non-institutional service providers include group homes for persons with disabilities and children at risk and foster families. Currently, one collective centre offers temporary accommodation for homeless.
- The **Employment Service Agency** is a public institution providing labour market-related services for employers and unemployed persons (including Roma and other individuals in vulnerable situation) and implementing passive and active employment programmes and measures.
- **The National Coordination Body for Non-discrimination** responsible to monitor the implementation of the National Equality and non-Discrimination Strategy.
- **Civil Sector Organisations (CSOs)** dealing with vulnerable social groups.

OUTLINE OF IPA II ASSISTANCE

The Action aims at reducing poverty in the country through improving the social, educational and economic inclusion of most vulnerable groups of people.

The action will invest in improving the housing, education, and economic opportunities for Roma and people living in deep poverty. This entails the implementation of a set of measures in 3 to 4 settlements aimed at improving the living conditions (sanitation, housing, access to communal services) and legal status of the Roma settlements, in parallel to re-integration of Roma people into the national social protection systems, and enhancing the school enrolment and school graduation rate for children of Roma families and very poor families. Particular focus will be given to integrated early childhood development services and access to integrated education for children of Roma families and families in deep poverty. Motivation and intermediation measures will support Roma and very poor people and encourage their participation in the existing labour market programmes.

The Action will also improve the accessibility of educational facilities by adaptation of 8 to 12 schools and universities to the needs of boys and girls, women and men with disabilities. This phase will cover educational establishments in the most underdeveloped regions in the country (North-

East Region, South-West Region + Prespa, and Polog Region) and the universities in Skopje. The Action is expected to establish solutions that after being piloted in the beneficiary institutions can be further used in the country in other similar facilities.

Finally, the Action will improve access to the community-based social services for vulnerable groups of people through the establishment of at least one centre providing high quality community based social services.

RELEVANCE WITH THE IPA II STRATEGY PAPER AND OTHER KEY REFERENCES

The **Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA)** of March 2001, signed between the EU and the country, reflects an explicit commitment for cooperation in the social and employment sector (article 90), as well as in education and training (article 91).

The **Indicative Strategy Paper (2014-2020)** identifies education, employment and social inclusion as a sector, which will benefit of IPA II. The overall objectives of IPA II assistance are to ensure more inclusive and effective labour market, higher quality of education and a modern and flexible social protection system. The present Action has been designed to address these objectives by improving social protection, enhancing social inclusion and equal participation in education and in the labour market, for most vulnerable and disadvantaged.

The Action responds to the call of the Western Balkan Strategy of the European Commission for further efforts to reinforce the social dimension and social policy in the region.

The North Macedonia **2018 Report** confirms the relevance of the Action. *Chapter 19: Social policy and employment* assesses poverty as a serious problem, in particular for Roma people and persons with disabilities. *Chapter 26: Education and culture* recommends to the country to improve access to quality education for all with a specific focus on pre-school enrolment, children with disabilities and children from Roma communities.

This Action aligns with the targets for social inclusion as included in the **2020 European strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth**, namely to reduce the number of Europeans living below national poverty lines by 25%, lifting 20 million people out of poverty.

The **Southeast Europe Strategy (SEE) 2020** prioritises the Inclusive Growth associated with enhanced labour market participation and better quality of life – both targets of the Action.

The **Economic Reform Programme (ERP) 2018-2020** presents the medium-term macroeconomic and fiscal framework, as well as the sectoral structural reforms for promoting both competitiveness and growth. The Action is relevant to ERP Measure 19 “Enhancement of financial benefits in the field of social protection”.

The **Employment and Social Reform Programme 2020 (ESRP)**, adopted by the Government in August 2017, covers the following priority policy reforms: 1) Labour market and Employment: Improvement of the unemployment situation, especially for the most vulnerable categories (youth, long-term unemployment and others); 2) Human Capital and Skills: Ensuring fully inclusive education and equal access to education for all; 3) Social Inclusion and Social Protection: Improving decentralisation of social protection services and tackling poverty and social exclusion at local level; *Support and improvement of deinstitutionalisation, focusing on persons with disabilities; Further development of social services and pluralisation; Improving social inclusion of Roma.* The Action addresses all of them.

The planned results and interventions are also in line with other key government’s strategic documents, such as the **National Strategy on the Alleviation of Poverty and Social Exclusion**

2010-2020; the Program for development of the social protection 2011-2021; the National Strategy on Deinstitutionalisation 2018-2027, the Education Strategy 2018-2025; and the Strategy for the Roma 2014-2020, identifying legalisation of settlements, housing and social protection as the most crucial challenges for the marginalised Roma Communities.

LESSONS LEARNED AND LINK TO PREVIOUS FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Since 2007, the EU has allocated EUR 82.5 million for the development of the human capital and support for the most vulnerable people in North Macedonia society, turning into the biggest donor for the sector of education, employment and social inclusion in North Macedonia. The IPA Operational Programme "Human Resources Development" 2007-2013 was focused on introduction of active labour measures in the country, improvement in the educational system, enhancing social inclusion. Under IPA 2017 EU support will advance the reform in the system of social services and will enhance the inclusion of Roma and other minorities in the educational system.

The EU support to Roma communities was evaluated¹⁰ in 2018 resulting into several recommendations, notably on enhancing the integrated approach in supporting Roma communities and avoiding support to single persons, improving coordination among key institutions (MoLSP, MoES, ESA, VET Centre) and improving the success indicators used for monitoring progress.

The Action takes into consideration the lessons drawn from previous EU support and the performed evaluations:

- Critical problems require crucial and synchronised solutions. The significant regional disparities in North Macedonia create a fragile and unfavourable socio-economic situation (especially in undeveloped rural and urban areas), which cannot be addressed through partial stand-alone measures. Integrated and systemic approach to social inclusion is necessary to align the various perspectives: the labour market activation (through investments in new and better targeted active labour measures focused on youth, women and ethnic groups) has to be coupled with stronger involvement of local communities in fighting economic backsliding and exclusion and with economic growth-focused measures i.e. investments in agriculture and private sector development, which can create real jobs.
- The social inclusion is first of all a matter of inclusion of the beneficiaries in designing and implementation of any support measure. This is particularly important when Roma people are concerned due to the significant confidence gap, created mistrust and reluctance for participation of the Roma people in inclusion activities. Therefore, it is important to activate beneficiaries since beginning, motivate them to join the support measures and empower them by giving them the right to propose, oppose and decide.
- Holistic approach to disadvantaged groups provides higher chances for success as having a stronger potential to integrate the various interests, balance quick and long-term gains and address simultaneously the various factors impacting the life of people (health, living environment, personal and group behaviours, family, community, culture, religion...). Therefore, it is important to craft complimentary measures which can act on the various elements of the environment in which the people of vulnerable groups live, operate and function. In this context, it is also important to focus more on the promotion of positive models of social inclusions and preparing the leading community for inclusion. Appreciation of cultural values and diversity gains help countering stereotypes and create more acceptance and inclusion.

¹⁰ Thematic evaluation of EU support to Roma communities completed in August 2018 and Roma social mapping completed in May 2019

- Successful interventions require simultaneous work with central and local levels of decision-making and actions reinforcing the collaboration between state and municipal structures and civil society organisations on delivering better community-based social services and expanding other basic and essential social services provisions at a local level. This process passes through developing the institutional capacities of the civil society organisations and establishing sustainable financial mechanism for provision of social and family services as a part of the local community based services.

2. INTERVENTION LOGIC

LOGICAL FRAMEWORK MATRIX

| | | OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS | | | SOURCES & MEANS OF VERIFICATION | |
|--|---|-----------------------------------|-------------|-------------------|---|---|
| OVERALL OBJECTIVE(S)/IMPACT(S) | INDICATOR'S NAME | Baseline (value + year) (2) | Target 2020 | Final Target 2024 | | |
| To reduce poverty in the country | At-risk-of-poverty rate in % of population | 22,2 % (2017) | 19 % (ESRP) | 17% | State Statistical Office, SILC – Survey on Income and Living Conditions | |
| | At-risk-of-poverty rate before social transfers and before pensions in % of population | 22,2 % (2017) | 19% | 16,5% | State Statistical Office, SILC – Survey on Income and Living Conditions | |
| SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE(S)/OUTCOME(S) | OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS | Baseline (value + year) (2) | Target 2020 | Final Target 2024 | SOURCE OF VERIFICATION | ASSUMPTION |
| To improve social, education and economic inclusion of people belonging to most vulnerable groups. | Number of persons employed (Roma and other people living in deep poverty), as a result of the Action, sex disaggregated data | N/A | N/A | 100 | Project-based documentation showing how many Roma people were employed as a result of project activities (Grants contracts) | Steady economic growth allowing natural business development and job creation |
| | Number of Roma and people living in deep poverty, who benefit from social services and housing improvements as a result of the Action, sex disaggregated data | (0) | 1500 | 4000 (Cumulative) | Administrative data of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and Employment Agency | Macroeconomic and political stability and strong commitment of the Government to embark on heavy reforms in the areas of social benefits, labour relations and taxation, education. |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|--|--|
| | Number of students with disabilities with improved access to education sex disaggregated data, | 90 | 90 | 110 | Interim and Final report on the implementation of the Action by the Ministry of Education and Science | |
| | Number of vulnerable citizens, who benefit from social services offered by community based social service (data disaggregated by sex, age, health status) | (0) | 150 | 300 | Administrative data provided by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Institute for Social Affairs | |
| OUTPUTS | OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS | Baseline (value + year) (2) | Target 2020 | Final Target 2024 | SOURCE OF VERIFICATION | ASSUMPTION |
| 1. Improved housing, education, and economic opportunities for Roma and people living in deep poverty | Number of persons (Roma and people living in deep poverty) benefiting from employment-related services, sex disaggregated data | N/A | 20 | 250 | Report on grant project implementation | Local governments and CSOs are motivated and interested to co-operate in provision of community-based social services, including for Roma people and persons in deep poverty |
| | Number of children (of Roma families and families living in deep poverty) involved in educational process, sex disaggregated data; | N/A | 50 | 200 | Report on grant project implementation | |
| | Number of Roma settlements that are legalised | 0 | 0 | 3-4 Roma settlements | Report on grant project implementation | |
| | Number of houses for Roma and families living in deep poverty that are built, refurbished or connected to the municipal sewerage system | 0 | 0 | 200 | Report on grant project implementation | |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|-----------------|-----------------|---|---|
| 2. Improved accessibility of educational facilities to persons with disabilities. | Number of primary and secondary schools and university faculties made accessible to people with disabilities as a result of the Action. | 0 ¹¹ | 0 ¹² | 3 primary 3 secondary 2 university faculties ¹³ | Annual report on the specific indicator elaborated by the MoES. |
| 3. Improved access to community based services for vulnerable groups of people. | Number of community-based social services established as a result of the Action. | 0 ¹⁴ | 0 | 1 ¹⁵ | Database of the social protection institutions in the MoLSP. |

Note on impact indicators

The action is expected to impact also on the following non-binding indicators:

- Completion rate in upper secondary education Baseline: 31 % (2017) Target: 36 %
- Students attending segregated schools (% of population, ages 7 – 15) Baseline: 40 % (2017) Target: 35 %
- Not in education, employment or training (% of population, ages 18 – 24) Baseline: 74 % (2017) Target: 60 %
- Overcrowding rate (% of population) Baseline: 61 % (2017) Target: 20 %

These indicators have been used by the EU-funded Roma survey. At this stage a follow-up of these indicators can only be ensured if the survey involving EU, WB or UNDP is extended in future (2025) when the action is expected to be completed.

¹¹ Out of 23 faculty buildings on Ss. Cyril and Methodius University, 13 do not have any facilities for students with disabilities.

¹² Four primary schools, four secondary schools and four university faculties officially selected and adaption plans are fully developed.

¹³ Fully adapted to students with disabilities.

¹⁴ Currently (2017) there are 7 residential social protection public institutions, which are planned to be transformed into community-based services

¹⁵ Premises and property of social protection residential institution(s) selected by MLSP for transformation into community-based services are put to an alternative use as per the adopted transformation plan (adaptation of the buildings, equipment and services).

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES

Result 1 Improved housing, education, and economic opportunities for Roma and people living in deep poverty

Activity 1 Improving housing conditions and access to community-based social services for Roma and people living in deep poverty.

This activity covers the following measures:

- Improving housing and living conditions – activities may include preparation of detailed urban plans and legalisation of settlements (where necessary), ensuring access to drinking water, sanitation or other related communal infrastructure, adaptation and reconstruction of existing public facilities, social housing including construction of housing facilities and/or adaptation and reconstruction of existing ones.
- Targeted social and health services, allowing Roma and poor people to be re-integrated into the national social protection systems and benefit from the community services. This activity will also support the Roma people in improving family planning and understanding better the consequences of early pregnancy.
- Enhancing the school enrolment and school graduation rate for children of Roma families and very poor families. This would entail support for education programmes, vocational and other soft skills trainings. Particular focus will be given to integrated early childhood development services and access to integrated education for children of Roma families and families in deep poverty.
- Targeted gender sensitive employment-related services, with a special focus on activation services as well as intermediation for inclusion of Roma and poor people in the existing active labour market programmes. The proposed interventions should propose working solutions for addressing the constraints associated with lack of skills and motivation and low social acceptance.

The intervention will be concentrated on the provision of adequate conditions to make a real change in selected settlements (3 to 4 depending on their size). Roma returnees will also be included where possible.

The activity will be implemented through a grant scheme. The selected projects have to propose sustainable models for social inclusion of Roma and poor people based on:

- building local capacities for crafting and implementing effective social integration solutions in an inclusive way uniting various stakeholders; this involves also support to social facilities/centres in the selected settlements that will be in charge of social protection services;
- sensitization of local communities of the risks created by social exclusion and poverty,
- enhanced coordination among stakeholders, namely local authorities, civil society organisations and businesses, in addressing social exclusion,
- liaison/intermediation with active labour market programmes, education programmes, vocational and other soft skills trainings and other gender-sensitive measures for increasing the employability of Roma people and persons in deep poverty,
- sharing lessons learned and best practices through existing networks and cooperation platforms.

The activity will be primarily implemented in the most underdeveloped regions (North-East Region, South-West Region and Prespa and Polog Region), where large groups of disadvantaged are located. However, municipalities which are part of ROMACTED Programme and hosting larger Roma communities, can participate as well.

Results 2 *Improved accessibility of educational facilities for persons with disabilities.*

Activity 2 Adapting the buildings and facilities of primary and secondary schools and university faculties to inclusive education

This is a pilot activity, which will support the adaptation of schools and universities to the needs of boys and girls, women and men with disabilities. The activity involves the adaptation of the buildings and facilities of 8 to 12 public primary and secondary schools in the most underdeveloped regions (North-East Region, South-West Region and Prespa, and Polog Region) and universities in Skopje. The works planned involve accessibility ramps, elevators, toilets, audio and visual equipment, etc. The activity is expected to establish a set of standard solutions that after being piloted in the beneficiary institutions can be further used in the country in other similar facilities.

Result 3 *Improved access to community-based services for vulnerable groups of people.*

Activity 3 Establishment of non-residential community-based social services

This activity extends further efforts of the national authorities to shift from institutionalised to community-based system of social services. It involves refurbishing and equipping one or more centres(s) for community services in order to prepare them for hosting high quality community-based service delivery. This activity is a continuation of IPA 2017 programme, which envisages the establishment of the legal, administrative and institutional set-up for the delivery of community services. With IPA 2019, an experimental and resource centre(s) for social services will be established.

RISKS

As regards Activity 1, there are two main risks. The first relates to the specifics of the Roma communities which in their segregation do not allow outsiders intervene in their lives and can be very resistant even to good willed interventions. This requires Roma community leaders to be attracted and engaged in projects at very early stage and the confidence of the Roma communities to be gained in order to make Roma people performers and not witnesses of what is happening. The second refers to a widespread anti-Roma sentiment of the mainstream, which requires wise communication and visibility policy, as well as full cooperation of the local self-governments for implementation of the Action in the selected areas. This is important in many aspects – creating local support, raising community awareness, integrating the various services and stakeholders for higher impact, obtaining construction permits on time, etc.

As regards Activity 2, attention is required to ensure the adaptations comply with ISO and EU accessibility standards to ensure appropriate adaptations to ensure universal access for persons with disabilities.

As regards Activity 3, the risk relates to some local level resistance to transformation and deinstitutionalisation. To a certain extent this has been mitigated by engaging with the local municipalities and the staff working in institutions in preparation of the National Strategy for Deinstitutionalisation and Action Plan as well as in development of the transformation plans. The local level staff, residents and municipal level actors must continue to be actively engaged.

Planning for the medium and long term financing is foreseen in the Government Action Plan for Deinstitutionalisation but the EU support to address the bridging costs in the transitional phase is very much needed.

CONDITIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

No particular conditions will apply to this Action

3. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Contracting Authority will be the EU Delegation, which will cooperate directly with the **Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy**.

Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy are the policy-making bodies responsible for managing issues in their field of competence as defined in the Law on the organisation the competences of state bodies and related substantive laws. In the context of the management of the EU funds, the established IPA units in both ministries are responsible for programming, as well as planning, implementation and monitoring at contract and action level. The IPA Units will liaise with the other Units in the Ministries as well as in other North Macedonia's administrations.

The ministries are supported in this job by the **Sector Working Group (SWG)** for Education, Employment and Social Policy, which was established in 2016 following the introduction of Sector Approach under IPA II. The SWG is responsible to align the national planning process in the sector with the IPA programming ensuring that all EU funds are properly targeted to achieve synergy with the national and International funds and increase the impact on the sector. The SWG is also mandated with the on-going monitoring of the implementation at the level of the action.

National IPA Coordinator and the Secretariat for European Affairs have the mandate for overall coordination of the programming of the IPA and other foreign assistance, as well as for monitoring of the use of the EU funds at programme level.

The implementation structure also involves the established coordination and monitoring mechanisms, involving both the European Commission and the national authorities. These include coordination meetings, Sector Committee meetings and IPA Committee Meetings.

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

4. PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

METHODOLOGY FOR MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Progress in the implementation of the Action will be monitored through the Performance Assessment Framework (PAF) which is being prepared through a separate EU project and is expected to be put in place in 2019. The PAF is sector-based and integrates macro indicators (outcome and impact levels) and micro indicators (output level) for the sector Competitiveness and Innovation, deriving from the country sector strategic documents. Since the Action

proposes measures relevant to the priorities identified in the national strategic documents, the majority of the formulated indicators are part of PAF. PAF is developed as a web-based application (to be backed up by a Governmental decision on responsibilities and deadlines) allowing regular electronic input of data, data processing and data analytics. The PAF data will be used in the Sector Working Group on Competitiveness and Innovation, which is also the inclusive platform of all stakeholders to monitor the implementation of the sector priorities.

The bilateral dialogue on the implementation of the Action will be channelled through the Sector Monitoring Committee for Education, Employment and Social Inclusion, which meets once per year.

The ongoing monitoring of the specific contracts will be a responsibility of the EU Delegation and the NIPAC office. Project review meetings are usually held at monthly basis and involve the contracting authority (the EU Delegation), the NIPAC office and the beneficiaries.

In addition, the Action might be subject to external monitoring in line with the European Commission rules and procedures set in the Financing Agreement.

The Action envisages a separate contract for a final independent evaluation of the effectiveness and the impact of the Action. The European Commission may carry out additional evaluation for this Action or its components if necessary.

5. SECTOR APPROACH ASSESSMENT

The country has progress in introducing the Sector approach. In 2015 the Government established Sector Working Groups and Sector Approach Roadmaps were developed to define milestones and deadlines for reaching them.

The Sector Working Group (SWG) for Education, Employment and Social Policy is an inter-ministerial co-operation forum enlarged to donors and civil society and chaired by the ministers of both ministries. The SWG is the country sector dialogue platform channelling the discussions on the national sector priorities and their implementation in an inclusive and participatory manner. The SWG embeds the IPA programming but go far beyond the discussions on EU funds: this is the platform to voice also the opinion of the various donors, relevant state institutions and civil society on how the private sector develops, how effective are the current policies, how the various donors contribute to the national sector priorities. For the preparation of the Action Documents three plenary sessions of the SWG were held and several thematic meetings (more than 10).

The strategic framework in the employment, education and social policy includes a number of documents: the **Employment and Social Reform Programme (ESRP) 2020**; the **Comprehensive Education Strategy 2018-2025**, the **National Employment Strategy (NES) 2016-2020** and the **National Strategy for Alleviation of Poverty and Social Exclusion 2010-2020**, the **Strategy for the Roma 2014 – 2020**.¹⁶

The Employment and Social Reform Programme 2020 was adopted in August 2017. The ESRP clearly sets the long-term objectives and priorities in the sector. Thus it aligns all sub-sector national strategies in the area of education, employment, social policies and health protection,

¹⁶ The other documents covering this sector are: the Youth Strategy 2016-2025 and the Action Plan for Youth Employment 2016-2020; the New Strategy for Roma 2015-2020; the National Strategy of Equality and Non-discrimination 2016-2020; the Gender Equality Strategy 2013-2020 and the National Programme for Development of Social Protection 2011-2021.

including the National Employment and the Comprehensive Education Strategy. As described above, the ESRP includes the three main policy reform areas: 1. Labour market and employment; 2. Human Capital and skills, and 3. Social inclusion and social protection. The development of the ESRP was realised by a special Inter-sectoral Working Group composed of representatives from all relevant institutions participating in the creation, implementation and monitoring of the policies covered by the Programme. The Programme identifies 105 measures within 23 specific objectives/results. The Action Plan (AP) includes also a set of indicators, targets for 2020, source of verification, responsible institutions and estimated budget.

The present IPA 2019 Action Document will focus on some aspect of the Action Plan. The choice was made to select a few key results that require to be achieved in the next mid-term period, and which are cornerstones for the improvement of the overall situation in the sector. Specially, the areas in which the IPA 2019 AD will concentrate on **Social Inclusion and Social Protection** (decentralisation of social protection services and poverty and social exclusion at local level; deinstitutionalisation focusing on persons with disabilities; -social services and pluralisation; social inclusion of Roma).

In the **social policy** area, the state fulfils its social function through the network of public institutions for social protection. The system for social protection is comprised by the Social Work Centres (30). Recently, the system for social protection has been mainly oriented towards developing and strengthening the *non-institutional forms of care* for the socially vulnerable groups, through establishing services for daily and temporary care. The new National Strategy for *deinstitutionalization* 2018-2027 maps out the measures for complete de-institutionalisation by 2027, when the last residential intuitions are supposed to be closed and fully replaced by social services delivered in the communities. The capacities of the system for social protection are being improved and strengthened also through *the process of licensing experts within the system for social protection*. The Law on Social Protection enables the process of *pluralisation in providing social services*, but in practice they are mainly obtained by the state. There is a lack of initiative by the municipalities to establish institutions for institutional care or the non-institutional social protection, whereas in the part of private initiative, the same has been significantly improved and gives positive results, mainly in the segment of establishing private homes for elderly. In the present period, there is an intensive work going on *developing and supporting social entrepreneurship*. A draft version of the *Law on social entrepreneurship* has also been prepared. There is also a new *Law on Prevention and Protection against Domestic Violence* prepared and adopted, which has been the first systematic law in this field, providing for an improvement and fully established and coordinated system for prevention, protection from and combating domestic violence. Within the system for *child protection*, the care for preschool children has been provided in kindergartens, as well as financial reimbursement rights in accordance with the provisions of Law on Child Protection. The child kindergartens are being established by the Government, municipalities and the private sector, and the network of kindergartens is constantly expanding, and especially in terms of creating conditions for greater inclusion of children from small municipalities and rural settlements.

As regards the *social inclusion of Roma*, the Constitution acknowledges the Roma population as a nationality with all successive rights, freedoms and protection from discrimination. The country is member of the Decade for inclusion of Roma 2005-2015, as a political engagement of the European governments to improve the socio-economic status and the social inclusion of Roma population. There are more than 15 local (municipal) strategies and action plans that have been developed in the past, for implementation of Roma Decade at local level. The Roma Strategy 2014-2020 has been prepared in accordance with the basic provisions of the EU Strategy “Europe 2020” and it covers the priority fields of employment, education, housing, healthcare and culture.

The *National Employment Strategy 2016-2020* was adopted in October 2015 and elaborated with the support of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the World Bank (WB), and UNDP. The Strategy identifies one main objective: “increasing employment, the quality of jobs and productivity, with a special emphasis on the vulnerable groups of people.” This objective will be achieved by fulfilling the following objectives: 1) Increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the employment policy, with particular support to the vulnerable categories of people; 2) Improve the job creation capacities of the private sector and 3) Education produces knowledge according to the needs of the employers. The implementation of the strategy is the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.

The *Comprehensive Education Strategy 2018-2025* was approved on 31st January 2018, and its development was realised by six Working Groups established by the Ministry of Education and Science and supervised by two National Coordinators. Many experts, scholars and academics, the civil sector and other stakeholders interested in the development of human resources and education policies provided extensive support and contribution to the Strategy. The Strategy will mainly target to the improvement of: 1. Quality of education and its relevance to the society development priorities and the needs of the labour markets, guided towards the expected learning outcomes, as well as acceptance of multiculturalism, interethnic integration, respect for diversity and democratic values; 2. Development of generic and core competences of pupils (and all learners), in order for them to develop into critical thinkers, active and relevant participants in social life; 3. Education system infrastructure, including building facilities, equipment and teaching and supportive technologies in order to ensure appropriate learning environment in general and inclusion of persons with special education needs in particular; 4. Capacities of human resources including managers, teaching and support staff; 5. Quality and results of the educational process by means of improving the assessment/evaluation at all education levels; 6. Autonomy of institutions in the education, particularly of universities, as well as autonomy of entities in the education process; 7. Legislation, Management and Funding.

The Action Plan specifies a large number of measures (133 measures) in order to meet the objectives and priorities of the Strategy, and details the implementation methods, deadlines, responsible institutions, instruments for monitoring and indicators, as well as procedures for reporting and evaluation of effectiveness of planned strategic measures.

The *National Strategy for Alleviation of Poverty and Social Inclusion 2010-2020* was adopted in October 2010. The main strategic objective is to reduce poverty and social exclusion through a better use of disposable human and material resources, improve conditions for living, working and social conditions for all citizens, system and institutional co-activity in the function of accelerated development, and higher standard and better quality life. The following 14 areas of intervention are included in the Strategy: 1. Employment; 2. Informal economy and strengthening entrepreneurship; 3. Labour market; 4. Poverty and social disadvantage; 5. Health protection; 6. Long-term care; 7. Education; 8. Social protection; 9. Transport; 10. Communications; 11. Housing; 12. Child protection; 13. Equal opportunities for men and women; 14. Develop public sensibility for social inclusion. For each of the areas, specific measures and activities are developed. In total, 288 measures are established in order to meet the objective and priorities of the Strategy. The monitoring and implementation of the strategy is based on annual action plans with the indicators mentioned in the strategy itself.

The *Strategy for the Roma 2014 – 2020* was finalised in 2014. It includes five strategic orientations to properly address the problems of the Roma Communities: 1. Improving of the conditions and opportunities for employment and decreasing of the unemployment of the Roma community, and thus its integration into the society in the country; 2. Raising the level of

education of the Roma community; 3.Reducing the gap in the quality of housing between Roma and non-Roma communities in North Macedonia; 4. Continuous improvement of the health status of the Roma community in North Macedonia; 5.Development and promotion of Roma culture, language and tradition.

6. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

GENDER MAINSTREAMING

The country has put in place the legal framework to ensure gender equality through the adoption of the Law on equal opportunities for women and men¹⁷ and the Law on prevention of and protection from discrimination¹⁸ (adopted 2019). The current legal framework prohibits discrimination on the grounds of gender and sexual orientation and prescribes that equal representation of men and women exists when one sex is represented with at least 40% per cent in bodies at all levels (state, municipal levels other institutions). The Strategy on Gender Equality for 2013-2020 complemented by the National Strategy on Equality and non-Discrimination 2016-2020 provide a set of measures to address the gender equality through encouraging girls' education, revision of school textbooks to assure they are reflective of the principles of gender equality and democratic values, and support of women's participation in labour market, including women's entrepreneurship, fighting gender-based violence.

The Action will support the country in implementing its equal opportunity and gender mainstreaming agenda. It will offer targeted gender-sensitive services to associate Roma to the existing active labour measures. Activities are planned to improve the social and health care services, including family planning, where the main beneficiaries remain women and children. Finally, the improvement of the housing and living conditions will have positive impact on the quality of life and health of women and children.

In addition, the Action operates with gender sensitive indicators, which would allow closer vigilance and monitoring of the gender impact of the proposed activities.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

The Action promotes equal opportunities to everybody in practice by creating a perspective for development for those living in the most precarious conditions and having less opportunities for development and participation in the social, economic and cultural life of the country. Poor people and Roma will benefit from the targeted actions for improving living conditions, for raising their employability and for joining the health and social protection systems of the country. The improvement in the community-based services and in the accessibility of schools will benefit girls and boys, women and men with special needs, giving them the chance to develop, educate, improve their health and social conditions.

Moreover, the Action focuses on the most underdeveloped regions of the country, lagging behind in providing equal opportunities for their local communities compared to capital and big regional centres. Poverty reaches 40% in North East and Polog Regions. Addressing the significant regional disparities in North Macedonia will enhance in practice the concept of equal opportunities for citizens independent of their physical location, origin and background.

¹⁷ adopted in 2006 and amended in 2012 - Official Gazette 6/2012

¹⁸ Official Gazette 101 / 22.05.2019

MINORITIES AND VULNERABLE GROUPS

This Action is entirely dedicated to minorities with a focus on Roma, and vulnerable groups, namely people with special needs.

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

The Sector working group has proved as an excellent tool to involve all the relevant stakeholders in the programming of 2019 Action Document for Employment, Education and Social Inclusion. Representatives from different CSOs, active in the area of education, employment and social policies, social and economic partners and the donor community have been actively involved since the beginning, at the very early stage of identifying the priority areas and the activities needed to be financed by IPA. The process of consultations is in details explained in part 5. *Sector approach assessment*.

Substantial efforts are and will be dedicated to the purpose of regular informing and involvement, whenever possible, of the civil society organisations and social partners, as well as any other institution/organisation as parties concerned regarding the monitoring of the programme implementation, outcomes and achieved results.

Representatives of non-governmental organizations and civil society will be also consulted and involved in the future steps for the implementation processes: they will be consulted and invited to actively take part in the different consultation events foreseen during the implementation of the activities envisaged in this Action Document.

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE (AND IF RELEVANT DISASTER RESILIENCE)

This Action does not directly address environment and climate change challenges but will support the achievement of the country's environmental agenda. The activities supporting the Roma communities through the connection of the houses to the municipal sewage system will positively affect the environment by decreasing the pollution levels. Construction activities (community-based non-residential infrastructure for people with disabilities, social housing for Roma, public schools and universities accessibility) will promote sustainable building practices, including design criteria and construction practices that support sustainable building principles.

7. SUSTAINABILITY

The main factors of sustainability involve:

- Improved local capacities for addressing the needs of the Roma communities and very poor people. The action proposes a strong capacity building programme involving various actors – municipal and state services and civil society organisations, including Roma-originated ones.
- Integrated approach linking improved housing conditions with employment, education, health and social support services, which has higher chances to produce an impact on the Roma communities and hence – bigger chance to continue delivering results after the end of the EU supported interventions. Moreover, these services should be coupled with outreach activities for improving the acceptance by the majority of the poor ethnic communities.
- Improved housing conditions and access to public utilities (water, heating, sanitation) and regularisation of property has the potential to create the feeling of ownership and

motivation for further improvement of life style in Roma communities. The targeted improvements involve co-financing and budget allocation to maintenance costs, which is a strong element of ownership and create good sustainability prospects.

- The improvements of the school infrastructure will allow children with special needs to follow the educational process, which is a long-term investment in the human capital of the country.
- Compliance of all community-based social services established with support of this Action with the legal framework in-force. The service providers will be responsible for obtaining all legal licences, permits and other foreseen legal acts by competent authorities to launch and provide services. The service provider must aim at fulfilling all preconditions for sustained public funding of the developed social service beyond the Action's duration.

Moreover, the Action is expected to nourish the sector policy dialogue at central and at local level with the involvement of all actors, local and central structures as well as donors and civil society. The intensified sector policy dialogue is a good driver of the sector reforms and guarantee to a significant extent the public and donor supervision of the measures and the commitment of the Government to progress on alleviating poverty. This is even more important in the perspective of opening of negotiations with North Macedonia when future negotiation process, will also take into considerations the progress achieved in particular in the area of education, employment, social policies and protection of the human rights and the rights of minorities,

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.

Communication and visibility will be given high importance during the implementation of the Action, especially taking into account that the issues addressed by this Action Document are relevant for the entire society. The communication and visibility approach is based on several pillars:

- Promotion of the action through the visibility and communication strategy "EU for YOU", of the EU Delegation, based on sector campaigns, which target the citizens at large outlining the benefits of the EU aid for the country in a communicative, comprehensible and interactive style. In addition, all EU projects are promoted through the Delegation web-site. As of 2018, the EU Delegation together with NIPAC launched the IPA Visualization Map (<https://euprojects.mk>) providing information on all IPA projects in the country.
- Promotion of the EU support at the level of the action – this implies selection of some activities out of the whole Action with very high media potential and creating a media event allowing to promote in general the EU values and principles in a certain specific context. This approach is being piloted under 2016 IPA annual programme and will be extended further. The cooperation with the NIPAC office and the other beneficiaries will be very important to ensure one-voice communication to citizens.
- Promotion of the EU support at the level of each single contract and in line with the EU communication and visibility requirements in force. All contractors have to develop a communication plan, which will be approved by the EU Delegation. The communication and visibility plan should highlight the external communication activities that need to take place. In approving the communication plan the EU

Delegation usually encourages "out-of-the-box" communication solution having the potential to attract the attention of media and citizens and allow passing important messages.

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

All visibility and communication actions shall focus on results and changes achieved and shall demonstrate how the EU support brings the country closer to the EU standards. The objective is to improve the awareness on the EU funding of the general public and not only of target specific audiences. The communication policy applied must ensure that the added value and impact of the EU's interventions are understood by the citizens and that EU funds are managed and used in a transparent, efficient and effective way for the benefit of the country as a whole.