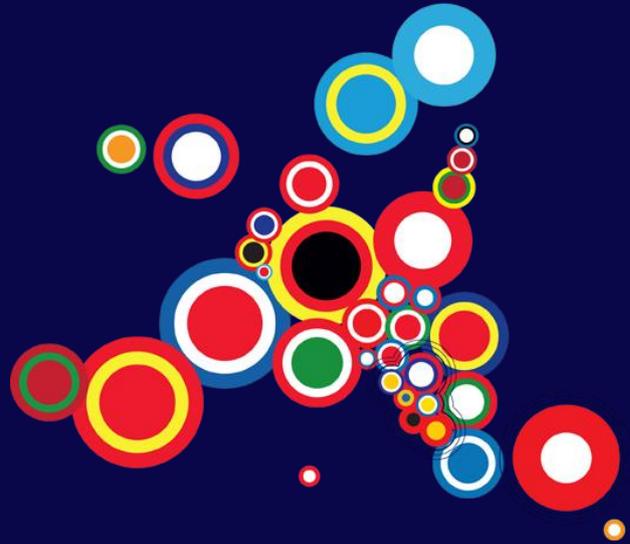




## INSTRUMENT FOR PRE-ACCESSION ASSISTANCE (IPA II) 2014-2020

### MULTI-COUNTRY

### Western Balkans Youth Window under Erasmus+



#### **Action summary**

##### *Western Balkans Youth Window under Erasmus +*

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 Western Balkans in Erasmus+ in a twofold way:

- 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 Western Balkans;
- By allowing organisations from Western Balkans to be project coordinators and apply directly for an EU grant under the framework of Erasmus+.

The Programme is implemented by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Aims and objectives of the Western Balkans Youth Window take into account the challenges in the region which also the newly established Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO) addresses.

<b>Action Identification</b>			
<b>Action Programme Title</b>	IPA II Annual Multi-Country Action Programme 2017		
<b>Action Title</b>	Western Balkans Youth Window under Erasmus+		
<b>Action ID</b>	IPA 2017/ SI2.757504.02/MC/Youth		
<b>Sector Information</b>			
<b>IPA II Sector</b>	9. Regional and territorial cooperation		
<b>DAC Sector</b>	11420 – Higher education (Youth)		
<b>Budget</b>			
<b>Total cost</b>	EUR 3.6 million		
<b>EU contribution</b>	EUR 3.0 million		
<b>Budget line(s)</b>	22.020401 – Multi-country programmes, regional integration and territorial cooperation		
<b>Management and Implementation</b>			
<b>Management mode</b>	Direct management		
<i>Direct management:</i> <b>Implementing Agency</b>	The Programme will be implemented by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA)		
<b>Implementation responsibilities</b>	N/A		
<b>Location</b>			
<b>Zone benefiting from the action</b>	Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, Serbia)		
<b>Specific implementation area(s)</b>	N/A		
<b>Timeline</b>			
<b>Final date for contracting including the conclusion of delegation agreements</b>	31 December 2018		
<b>Final date for operational implementation</b>	31 December 2021		
<b>Policy objectives / Markers (DAC form)</b>			
<b>General policy objective</b>	<b>Not targeted</b>	<b>Significant objective</b>	<b>Main objective</b>
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)	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trade Development	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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\* 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"/>
<b>RIO Convention markers</b>	<b>Not targeted</b>	<b>Significant objective</b>	<b>Main objective</b>
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 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. Such investments can yield even better returns when they are focused on the young generation, which has to be equipped with the skills it needs to succeed in an increasingly complex and fast-changing social and economic reality and which has to get the opportunity to share a feeling of appropriation and belonging to a common project to which it can contribute.

In this context, Europe and 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. Today the effectiveness of traditional education is challenged and learning pathways are no longer for everyone alike. Learning can take place everywhere, in schools, but also in associations, on social media or in social life. Many young people are actively engaged and take leadership roles in youth organisations. This helps them acquire transversal skills which allow them to be fit to adapt to the rapidly evolving change in the demands for jobs and skills, even for jobs and skills that do not yet exist.

Moreover, the European Union aims at encouraging people-to-people contacts, in particular among the young generation, 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 particularly important when promoted at an early stage so as to instil a culture of dialogue and understanding in the young generations.

The main challenge of the education and training systems in the Western Balkans and in the EU nowadays is to equip citizens, and in particular young people, with the competences that will prepare them for a demanding and rapidly changing labour market. In this challenging social and economic context, young people are confronted with rising levels of knowledge and multiple skills requirements, a need that cannot be satisfied by the formal education sector alone. "School-based learning and apprenticeship are no longer sufficient to "last" the whole life-course. Human capital is more than ever before about learning to learn, social skills, adaptability, etc. A survey of more than 500 business leaders from across Europe found that most (54%) think young people lack 'soft skills' such as confidence, teamwork, self-motivation, networking and presentation skills. Furthermore, living in diverse and ageing societies requires more intercultural, inter-community and intergenerational dialogue as well as the development of a culture of solidarity, care and understanding among citizens, especially the youngest generations.

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 much less likely to vote than adults, their voices are much less heard in political debates. Insufficient opportunities for participation, limited awareness of the importance to participate, mistrust in the institutions, low interest in politics, insufficient youth-targeted information, inadequate tools to reach out to young people are among the causes of such disaffection and the significant decline in participation in society and democratic life. On the other hand, new forms of involvement are emerging through the new media and social networks, which young people have embraced.

The following groups can be distinguished as the most affected groups:

- **Young people** (and in particular the most disadvantaged ones): Youth is a period of transition, generally agreed as the passage from a dependent childhood to independent, autonomous adulthood. These transitions have lost their linear nature, are less predictable and more diversified, which reflects the diversity of opportunities available to youth today but also introduces new risks and challenges, especially for the most vulnerable.
- **Youth workers:** professionals who work with young people in a wide variety of non-formal and informal contexts (e.g. within youth organisations, municipalities, youth centres, etc.).

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

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 includes a youth dimension which offers opportunities for young people and youth workers in the area of non-formal learning. This youth dimension is also open to young people, youth workers and youth organisations from the Western Balkans. However, resources do not cope with the growing demand of actors from the region.

Therefore, the Western Balkans Youth Window reinforces the levels of participation of the Western Balkans in Erasmus + in a twofold way:

- 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 Western Balkans;
- By allowing organisations from Western Balkans to be project coordinators and apply directly for an EU grant under the framework of Erasmus+.

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.

The Erasmus+ Programme aims also at promoting equity and inclusion by facilitating the access to learners with disadvantaged backgrounds and fewer opportunities compared to their peers. 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).

As a further important instrument to strengthen youth cooperation in the Western Balkans, the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO) has been established.

The Agreement establishing RYCO was officially signed during the Western Balkans Summit in Paris on 4 July 2016 which was held within the framework of the Berlin Process and, linked to it, the Positive Agenda for Youth, launched at the Foreign Affairs Ministers meeting in Brdo, Slovenia, on 23 April 2015. The Paris Summit 2016 followed the Berlin Summit in 2014 and the Vienna Summit in 2015, where the governments of the Western-Balkans–Six signed a Joint Declaration expressing their will to create RYCO.

RYCO aims to further encourage youth cooperation, mutual understanding and exchange of experiences, with a view to strengthening stability, sustainable development and progress in the Western Balkan region. This initiative has brought together civil society and government representatives of all the Western Balkans, laying the framework for the future RYCO. It is based on the youth cooperation model and on the

mechanisms for reconciliation and cooperation between France and Germany. The Franco-German Youth Office provides technical assistance to the Working Group on Regional Youth Cooperation, specially created for RYCO's establishment.

The unique approach of the foundation process of RYCO is marked by the different levels of cooperation. It is first and foremost cooperation between different beneficiaries in the region and their young people. The WB6 participants are cooperating with international stakeholders to find common grounds and are looking for synergy effects and reciprocal support at the same time. Moreover is the equal participation of civil society and government a modern approach to ensure inclusiveness and create a promising youth office for the region.

All the legal documents have been completed and RYCO will be functional in the first half of 2017. The project envisages the reconciliation of young people in the Western Balkans through the development of cross-border activities and the usage of RYCO's facilities for regional events at the SEE level.

RYCO - with its focus mainly on youth cooperation within the Western Balkan region – shares ambitions for cooperation and exchange involving young people with Erasmus+ and can thus work in synergy with the relevant National Agencies implementing Erasmus+ and notably their resource centre SALTO Youth South East Europe (SEE), which aims more specifically at enhancing youth cooperation between Erasmus+ Programme Countries and the Western Balkans.

#### **OUTLINE OF IPA II ASSISTANCE**

The action will further increase participation of young people and youth workers from the Western Balkans in Erasmus+ non-formal learning projects, reinforcing capacity building in the field of youth and allowing organisations from Western Balkans to act as project coordinators and apply directly for an EU grant under the framework of the Erasmus+ programme. To this end, organisational development and capacity building projects in the field of youth will be implemented with the aim to strengthening youth cooperation between Erasmus+ Programme countries and the Western Balkans, as well as cross-border cooperation within the Western Balkan region.

The objective of the Erasmus+ Programme's youth strand is *inter alia* to enhance the international dimension of youth activities through youth mobility projects (young people and youth workers). It aims also at promoting transnational initiatives fostering entrepreneurial mind-sets and skills and to encourage active citizenship. Aiming at cross-border cooperation with the Western Balkan region, a regional programme angle makes fully sense. Without such a programme many young people from the region would not have the chance to travel, learn and share and to "meet the world". Lastly, the whole action fits into the Commission's priority to promote the youth dimension in the context of the Western Balkans Berlin process.

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

In accordance to the Multi-Country Indicative Strategy Paper (MCSP) 2014-2020<sup>1</sup>, IPA II will provide financial support for capacity building projects in the field of youth non-formal learning - including a flexible range of activities such as mobility activities for young people and youth workers - to foster youth cooperation between Erasmus+ Programme Countries and the Western Balkans. The action is also within the SEE 2020 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 Youth programme (2000–2006).

In 2005, the European Commission launched a pilot initiative aimed at reinforcing the level of participation of organisations from the region in the Youth programme. By such means, organisations from the Western Balkans were granted the opportunity to become coordinating organisations for youth projects and to apply

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<sup>1</sup> C(2014) 4293, 30.06.2014

directly to the European Commission for a project grant. Despite the limited resources, the results of the pilot phase were successful both in terms of the number of applications received and the quality of the projects submitted. These results showed that there was a demand for greater opportunities to participate in youth projects in the region.

The modalities of participation for Western Balkan organisations introduced in 2005 were confirmed under the Youth in Action programme covering the period 2007–2013. The EU was called upon to increase its actions and instruments supporting non-formal education of young people in the region. In line with this perceived need, the European Commission Communication “the Western Balkans on the road to the EU: consolidating stability and raising prosperity”<sup>2</sup>, reaffirms the commitment made by the European Union to reinforce cooperation with the Western Balkans in the area of youth and emphasises that the European Commission will create new opportunities. In this context, the establishment of a Western Balkans Youth Window, funded by IPA within the Youth in Action programme, reflected the commitments made in the Communication by allowing for more projects submitted by Western Balkan organisations to be supported.

The Western Balkans Youth Window's over-riding aim is to support young people's transnational non-formal learning mobility through cooperation projects and activities. Actions supported by the Window aim at promoting active citizenship, social inclusion and solidarity amongst young people and the society they live in. The Window fosters key skills and competences of young people, notably contributing to their employability, civic participation and intercultural understanding.

The first Western Balkans Window within the Youth in Action programme was implemented in 2008 with an amount of EUR 1 million. In 2009, 2010 and 2011, the Western Balkan Youth Window dedicated to the Youth in Action programme amounted to EUR 1.5 million per year and was further increased to EUR 3 million in 2012 and EUR 4.5 million in 2013. The amounts allocated to the Western Balkan Youth Window allowed involving between 2008 and 2013 an additional 18,000 young people and youth workers from Western Balkans and the EU into joint activities.

In 2015, the Western Balkans Youth Window involved about 5,200 young people from Erasmus+ Programme Countries and Western Balkans in joint youth projects.

In comparison, the Erasmus+ youth strand (without including the figures of the Western Balkans Youth Window) allowed involving in 2015 in total about 18,500 young people and youth workers in joint projects between Erasmus+ Programme Countries and Western Balkans, most of them mobility projects for young people and youth workers (Youth exchanges, European Voluntary Service, Youth workers' training and networking).

Although funds for Western Balkan Youth Window were increased over the years, the demand (in terms of good quality applications) still exceeds the combined budget available from Erasmus+ and the Western Balkans Youth Window by far.

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<sup>2</sup> COM(2006)27, 27.01.2006

## 2. INTERVENTION LOGIC

### LOGICAL FRAMEWORK MATRIX

OVERALL OBJECTIVE	OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS (*)	SOURCES OF VERIFICATION	
To improve the level of key competences and skills of young people, including those with fewer opportunities, facilitating young people's active participation in democratic life and on the labour market, by means of international non-formal learning activities, capacity building and policy cooperation.	Youth participating in democratic life and on labour market.	Official statistics of central administrations, surveys of professional evaluation organisations and reports from beneficiaries of joint projects.	
SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE	OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS (*)	SOURCES OF VERIFICATION	ASSUMPTIONS
To promote youth non-formal education and youth work in the region by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1. Fostering international non-formal learning activities that increase young peoples' employability or self-employment prospects, foster their active participation in society and reinforce their mutual understanding;</li> <li>• 2. Supporting youth exchanges (including school exchanges) and the participation of young people in the European Voluntary Service (with a special attention paid to the involvement of young people with fewer opportunities due to physical, mental, health or economic disadvantages) and the mobility of youth workers between Programme countries and all Western Balkans in a balanced way;</li> <li>• 3. Supporting professional development activities for youth workers<sup>1</sup>, that raise the quality, the international dimension and recognition of their work;</li> <li>• 4. Cooperation activities that foster networking between civil society organisations, public authorities and institutions active in youth in all Western Balkans to strengthen their capacities and to establish or reinforce their cooperation with organisations with Erasmus+ programme countries.</li> </ul>	1. and 4. Number of youth and other organisations from the Western Balkans in joint activities under this Window with organisations from Erasmus+ Programme countries which aim at increasing young people's employability and active participation in society. About 150 organisations participating from the Western Balkans in a balanced way during two years of project implementation.  2. and 3. Number of young people, in particular young people with fewer opportunities, and youth workers from all Western Balkans in a balanced way in joint projects with organisations from the Erasmus+ Programme countries. About 4000 young people and youth workers could be involved in joint projects during the project implementation phase of two years.	Official statistics of central administrations, surveys of professional evaluation organisations and reports from beneficiaries of joint projects.	Involvement of youth organisations, youth workers and young people in joint activities will allow young people to better understand and participate more actively in democratic life and civil society. The special emphasis on young people with fewer opportunities will improve their inclusion into society.
RESULTS	OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS (*)	SOURCES OF VERIFICATION	ASSUMPTIONS
<b>Result 1:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthened cooperation between youth organisations from all Western Balkans 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;</li> </ul> <b>Result 2:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved involvement of young people from Western Balkans in international youth cooperation to acquire socio-economical skills which could facilitate young people's employability and their integration in society.</li> <li>• 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),</li> </ul>	<b>Result 1:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) the number of joint projects supported annually under the Western Balkans Youth Window;</li> <li>(ii) the number of meetings, seminars and events between youth organisations from the Western Balkans and the Erasmus+ Programme countries.</li> </ul> <b>Result 2:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) the total number of young people and the number of young people with fewer opportunities participating in youth exchanges and the total number of volunteers and the number of volunteers with fewer opportunities participating in the European Voluntary Service;</li> <li>(ii) young peoples' assessment of their employability, their</li> </ul>	General statistics on the implementation of the programme by EACEA;  official statistics of central governments;  surveys by specialised organisations;  use of Youthpass for the personal development of young people and youth workers.	See above.

<sup>1</sup> Participation of youth workers in international seminars, training courses, contact-making events, study visits, job shadowing, and related activities.

<p>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)<sup>2</sup>.</p> <p><b>Result 3:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased involvement of Western Balkans youth workers in joint projects with youth organisations from Erasmus+ programme countries.</li> </ul> <p><b>Result 4:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improvement of the operational capacity of organisations established in the Western Balkans, notably youth organisations, NGOs and "National Youth Councils", in particular with regard to the management of international cooperation projects supported by European Union funds.</li> </ul>	<p>skills and competences before and after having participated in a joint activity.</p> <p><b>Result 3:</b></p> <p>(i) the number of youth workers from Western Balkans participating in joint projects with organisations from Erasmus+ programme countries;</p> <p>(ii) youth workers' assessment of their skills and competences before and after having participated in joint projects.</p> <p><b>Result 4:</b></p> <p>the number of joint projects managed by youth organisations from Western Balkans.</p>		
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<sup>2</sup> Further explanation on the inclusion dimension of the Erasmus+ Programme, its youth dimension and the Western Balkans Youth Window is available in the Erasmus+ Programme+ Programme Guide ([http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/documents/erasmus-plus-programme-guide\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/documents/erasmus-plus-programme-guide_en.pdf)). In addition, the "Erasmus+ Inclusion and Diversity Strategy in the field of Youth" can be downloaded at [http://ec.europa.eu/youth/news/2015/0130-youth-inclusion-diversity-strategy\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/youth/news/2015/0130-youth-inclusion-diversity-strategy_en.htm)

## **DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES**

### **Main activities**

In order to reach the Western Balkans Youth Window's objectives, 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 Western Balkans, as well as cross-border cooperation within the Western Balkan region. Activities to be supported will include encouraging cooperation, networking and exchanges of practices in the field of youth, seminars, conferences, workshops, meetings, training courses, study visits and job-shadowing and, for example,

- Promoting 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 (including school exchanges) and the participation of young people in the European Voluntary Service (with a special attention paid to the involvement of young people with fewer opportunities) and the mobility of youth workers;
- Enhancing the management, governance and internationalisation of youth organisations in the Western Balkans.

Project promoters will be expected to plan, organise and evaluate the results of a linked set of these activities. Emphasis will be placed upon the development of the capacities of young people, youth workers and youth organisations.

Operationalisation of the "Western Balkan window" of the European Youth Portal<sup>5</sup> will also be supported through translation of the relevant information for the young people in the Western Balkans.

### **Expected results**

- Strengthened cooperation between youth organisations from all Western Balkans 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 Western Balkans in international youth cooperation to acquire socio-economical skills which could facilitate young people's employability and their integration in society;
- 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);
- Increased involvement of Western Balkans youth workers in joint projects with youth organisations from Erasmus+ programme countries;
- Improvement of the operational capacity of organisations established in the Western Balkans, notably youth organisations, NGOs and "National Youth Councils", in particular with regard to the management of international cooperation projects supported by European Union funds.

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<sup>5</sup> [https://europa.eu/youth/western-balkans\\_en](https://europa.eu/youth/western-balkans_en)

## **RISKS**

*Risk 1. Uneven delivery of the grant scheme across the region and within the Western Balkans:* 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 the Western Balkans or 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 does not participate in organised activities. Furthermore, in the case of certain disadvantaged groups, a considerable degree of isolation from mainstream social engagement can be seen, and this affects the information flow to these young people, and their ability to make their voices heard. There is, accordingly, 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**

EACEA is already responsible for the management of parts of the EU's funding programmes in the fields of education, culture, audiovisual, sport, citizenship and volunteering. Consequently EACEA has built up relevant institutional framework, structures and knowledge in order to successfully implement this Programme.

## **3. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS**

### **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Western Balkans Window will be implemented by the EACEA under the supervision of the European Commission (EAC and NEAR). Regular meetings between the Agency and the European Commission will allow the fixing of the conditions of the implementation (Guidelines for Applicants and Administrative and Financial Handbook) after consultation of the Member States in the relevant support groups. Likewise 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;
- Gives support concerning the diffusion of good practice.

The SALTO<sup>6</sup> South East Europe (SEE) Resource Centre, a support structure which is part of a National Agency implementing the Erasmus+ Programme, will share 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 Western Balkans. SALTO SEE may also offer trainings and partner finding activities as appropriate, for youth leaders and youth workers and contributes to the training of EVS 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

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<sup>6</sup> SALTO stands for "Support, Advanced Learning and Training Opportunities".

activities are complemented by Contact Points in the Western Balkans which ensure proximity of support for those interested in organising or carrying out youth projects under Erasmus+.

The calls for proposals should also specifically take into account the priorities of RYCO, and thus help young people and youth organisations in the Western Balkans implement actions which have been identified as shared priority needs in consensus with RYCO.

#### **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 will correspond to Erasmus+, 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.

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 established in Brussels.

Organisations from the Western Balkans can submit applications under Key Action 2, in accordance with the deadlines for submission of applications set out in the Erasmus+ Programme Guide. Western Balkans Youth Window activities have to include at least one mobility activity.

The financial planning prepared by the Executive Agency allows involving annually about 4,000 – 5,000 young people and youth workers from Western Balkans and the EU into joint activities. The selection processes are organised in such a way that the notification of results intervenes normally two months before the beginning of the eligibility period. The payment of the pre-financing of the projects is initiated after signature of the grant agreement by both contractual parties (i.e. beneficiary organisation and the EACEA).

## **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 on linking planning/programming, monitoring and evaluation. In addition, the action might be subject to external monitoring in line with the European Commission rules and procedures.

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. In 2010 and 2011, the European Commission launched two surveys - reaching out a sample of more than 4,500 participants - on the qualitative impact of the past programme in the youth field. The results of these surveys confirm the contribution of these activities to fostering active citizenship, promoting the acquisition of skills leading to personal, social and professional development of young people as well as supporting capacity-building and competence development of youth workers and youth organisations. The detailed results can be found online:

2011 survey:

[http://ec.europa.eu/youth/focus/doc/monitoring\\_survey/main\\_results\\_monitoring\\_survey\\_2011.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/youth/focus/doc/monitoring_survey/main_results_monitoring_survey_2011.pdf) (main results)

[http://ec.europa.eu/youth/focus/doc/monitoring\\_survey/report\\_monitoring\\_survey\\_2011.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/youth/focus/doc/monitoring_survey/report_monitoring_survey_2011.pdf) (full report)

2010 survey:

[http://ec.europa.eu/youth/focus/doc/monitoring\\_survey/main\\_results\\_monitoring\\_survey.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/youth/focus/doc/monitoring_survey/main_results_monitoring_survey.pdf) (main results)

The data will be monitored on an annual basis and checked against the targets set. Baseline figures refer to 2014 being the first year of the Erasmus+ Programme. Target figures refer to projects selected in the target year (2017).

## INDICATOR MEASUREMENT

Indicator	Baseline (2010)	Target 2020	Final Target (2020)	Source of information
Number of organisations (youth and other) from the Western Balkans participating in joint activities under this Window with organisations from Erasmus+ Programme countries.	0 organisations	(2017) 300 organisations (2018) 300 organisations Consequently total target for the period 2016–2018, 900 organisations	End implementation of is 2019	Official statistics of central governments, surveys of professional evaluation organisations and reports from beneficiaries of joint projects.
Number of young people (disaggregated by sex at final report level), in particular - Number of young people with fewer opportunities, - Number of youth workers from all Western Balkans involved in a balanced way in joint projects with organisations from the Erasmus+ Programme countries.	0 individuals	(2017) 4000 (2018) 4000	End implementation of is 2019	Official statistics of central governments, surveys of professional evaluation organisations and reports from beneficiaries of joint projects.

## **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 to the activities supported through the programme. These actions are open to all young people, not having regard of their educational background or their status. As regards group activities as youth exchanges and cooperation activities for youth workers, the balance of the groups in terms of gender is one of the award criteria.

### **MINORITIES AND VULNERABLE GROUPS**

The Erasmus+ Programme aims at promoting equity and inclusion by facilitating the access to learners with disadvantaged backgrounds and fewer opportunities compared to their peers. 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).

The projects supported under 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 make up by far 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 which 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 million
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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 the communication activities shall be funded from the amounts allocated to the action.

All necessary measures will be taken to publicise the fact that the action has received funding from the EU in line with the Communication and Visibility Manual for EU External Actions. Additional Visibility Guidelines developed by the European Commission (DG NEAR) will have to be followed.

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.

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 attended results, as well as in promoting the contribution of the EU Erasmus+ Programme to the realisation of the project.

Visibility and communication actions shall demonstrate how the intervention contributes to the agreed programme objectives and the accession process. Actions shall be undertaken to strengthen general public awareness and promote transparency and accountability on the use of funds.

The European Commission shall be fully informed of the planning and implementation of the specific visibility and communication activities. Such measures can be for example: developing information or promotional material; issuing 'press releases' or writing articles for newspapers, magazines, websites or newsletters; creating an e-group, a web space, a photo-gallery or blog on the Internet, etc.

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.