



EN

THIS ACTION IS FUNDED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION

ANNEX VI

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

Action Document for EU for Youth

ANNUAL ACTION PLAN

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

1. SYNOPSIS

1.1. Action Summary Table

Title	EU for Youth Annual Action Plan in favour of Albania for 2022
OPSYS	ACT-61341, JAD.1030030
Basic Act	Financed under the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA III)
Team Europe Initiative	No
Zone benefiting from the action	The action shall be carried out in Albania
Programming document	IPA III Programming Framework
PRIORITY AREAS AND SECTOR INFORMATION	
Window and thematic priority	Window 4: Competitiveness and inclusive growth Thematic Priority 1: Education Policies, employment, social protection, inclusive policies and health
Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	Main: SDG 4 - Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Other significant: SDG 5 – Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls; SDG 8 - Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all, SDG 16 - Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels, SDG 17 – Partnership for the goals.

DAC code(s) ¹	110 Education 11231 Basic life skills for youth 16015 Social services (incl. youth development and women+ children) 16020 Employment creation			
Main Delivery Channel @	42001 - European Commission - Development Share of Budget			
Markers (from DAC form)	General policy objective @	Not targeted	Significant objective	Principal objective
	Participation development/good governance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Aid to environment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Gender equality and women's and girl's empowerment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Trade development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Reproductive, maternal, new-born and child health	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Disaster Risk Reduction	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Inclusion of persons with Disabilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Nutrition	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	RIO Convention markers @	Not targeted	Significant objective	Principal objective
	Biological diversity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Combat desertification	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Climate change mitigation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Climate change adaptation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Internal markers	Policy objectives	Not targeted	Significant objective
Connectivity		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Digitalisation		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Migration		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
COVID-19		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
BUDGET INFORMATION				

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

Amounts concerned	Budget line: 15.020201 Total estimated cost: EUR 5 000 000 Total amount of EU budget contribution EUR 5 000 000 of which EUR 3 000 000 for indirect management with IPA III beneficiary.
MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION	
Implementation modalities (type of financing and management mode)	Project Modality Indirect management with the entity(ies) to be selected in accordance with the criteria set out in section 4.3.1 Indirect management with Albania
Relevant priorities and flagships from Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans [only for the Western Balkans]	Priorities: “Green Agenda”, “Digital Transition”, “Innovation Agenda”, “Human Capital Development”, Flagships: “VIII Digital Infrastructure”, “X Youth Guarantee”
Final Date for conclusion of Financing Agreement	At the latest by 31 December 2023
Final date for concluding contribution / delegation agreements, procurement and grant contracts	3 years following the date of conclusion of the Financing Agreement, with the exception of cases listed under Article 114(2) of the Financial Regulation
Indicative operational implementation period	72 months following the conclusion of the Financing Agreement
Final date for implementing the Financing Agreement	12 years following the conclusion of the Financing Agreement

1.2. Summary of the Action

The Action EU for Youth shall support the participation and empowerment of youth in the political, economic and social life of Albania. Youth in Albania faces major challenges such as the risk of poverty, high unemployment and long-term unemployment rates, high rates of youth Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) and underrepresentation in political life. This Action will address these challenges through three main strands of actions. Firstly, it will enhance youth **civic participation** through promoting inclusive, gender-responsive and structured dialogue, engagement in local community development as well as youth participation in culture and team sports, including supporting sport activities for disabled youth as well as foster and consolidate youth human rights and youth volunteerism. The Action will also increase the **employability** of youth through the implementation of qualitative and labour market relevant education and training or vulnerable youth Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs) through a pilot action for a Youth Guarantee as well as support the Albanian institutions in the coordination, institutional capacity building, implementation and monitoring mechanisms for the Youth Guarantee in alignment with the Youth Guarantee flagship roadmap and the

Youth Guarantee national action plan. The third strand is directed to providing 21st century **youth life skills**, through their integration in secondary education curricula and the provision of school careers guidance.

The Action is designed under the participation development/good governance and gender equality and women's and girl's empowerment general policy objectives (principle objectives under the DAC markers) and will contribute to several SDGs, in particular SDG 4 - Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all; SDG 5 – Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls; and SDG 8 - Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.

2. RATIONALE

2.1. Context

The EU Youth Strategy 2022-2029² recognises that young people have a specific role in society and face specific challenges. It affirms that “young people are keen to take control of their lives and engage with and support others. When taking control, they experience several typical transitions in their personal life and environment, from education to work, living on their own, partnerships or starting a family life. Many face uncertainties about their future, as a result of globalisation and climate change, technological change, demographic and socioeconomic trends, populism, discrimination, social exclusion and fake news with yet unknown effects on jobs, skills or the way our democracies work. Special attention should be given to youth risking marginalisation based on potential sources of discrimination, such as their ethnic origin, sex, sexual orientation, disability, religion, belief or political opinion. Socioeconomic exclusion and democratic exclusion go hand in hand. Youth struggling with disadvantages are generally less active citizens and have less trust in institutions. Europe cannot afford wasted talent, social exclusion or disengagement among its youth. Young people should not only be architects of their own lives, but also contribute to positive change in society. For young people to reap the full benefits of EU actions, these need to reflect their aspirations, creativity and talents, and respond to their needs. In turn, young people enrich the EU's ambitions: according to the latest EU Youth Report, this generation is the best educated ever and especially skilled in using Information and Communication Technologies and social media”.

This Action supports the Albanian Government in achieving key objectives of National Strategy on Employment and Skills 2019-2022, regarding youth employment, education and skills development. These objectives take into account the specific issues faced by young women and young vulnerable persons, including those belonging to minority groups and the youth living in remote or less economically developed regions and peripheral rural areas. The Action is fully coherent with the IPA III objectives under the IPA III Programming Framework, Thematic Priority 1: Education, employment, social protection and inclusion policies, and health that encompasses the following aims specifically relevant for this Action:

- Ensuring equal opportunities, access to the labour market, fair working conditions, social protection and inclusion, and a high level of human health protection.
- Supporting the quality, effectiveness and labour market relevance of education, including vocational education, and training systems in order to provide people with skills adjusted to digitalisation, sustainability and green transition, technological change, innovation and economic change.

² <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:C:2018:456:FULL&from=EN>

- Building strong links to the education sector and in developing a broad range of active labour market measures, for increasing labour market participation and employment in particular for youth, women and people further away from the labour market.
- Enhancing employment opportunities for women, youth and persons with disabilities, in addition to addressing social and employment issues for minorities, including Roma communities.
- Supporting implementation of the Western Balkans Agenda on Innovation, Research, Education, Culture, Youth and Sport³.

The Law on Youth No. 75/2019 aims to determine the activities, mechanisms and public authorities responsible for the protection and promotion of the rights of young people in Albania and the diaspora and provides the reference for all national policies and strategies regarding youth, including youth civic participation, education, training and employment responsibilities. The Minister of State for Youth and Children, established for the first time in September 2021, targets directly youth policy and is responsible for the coordination of youth policy implementation by the line Ministries. The Law on the Academy of Sciences, adopted in September 2019, also regulates the functioning of the Youth Academy. The effectiveness of the “National Action Plan for Youth 2015-2020” was evaluated in August 2021. The National Action Plan contained 6 main pillars: inclusion of youth in decision making and democratic processes; increasing youth employment through effective labour policies; health, environment and empowerment of sport culture; education of youth; social protection, culture and volunteering. The main recommendations deriving from its evaluation include the following: limiting the transfer of responsibilities among institutions, ensuring a strategic coherence between local and central government, creating a specific budgetary programme for youth, increasing accountability and transparency, and ensuring periodic monitoring of the implementation of the Action Plan to ensure better accountability. Currently, the Minister of State for Youth and Children is heading the process of drafting the new National Youth Strategy 2022-2029. The preliminary consultation process has started with youngsters from all high schools and universities in Albania, by selecting representatives for each educational institution. The Minister of State for Youth and Children has conducted 22 meetings, and the consultation process with youngsters aged 15-29 years old is expected to be finalised in December 2021. Additionally, consultations will be performed with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and the donor community, to ensure close alignment with the youth needs and priorities. At the same time, a working group has been established with representatives from all line Ministries and relevant institutions to revise the current policies and draft the new National Youth Strategy. The National Youth Strategy 2022-2029 is scheduled to be approved within 2022.

The objectives of the National Strategy on Employment and Skills (NESS) 2019 – 2022 are fully in line with the IPA III Programming Framework objectives for fostering quality employment, vocational education and access to the labour market. The NESS sets a priority on youth employment through active labour measures and a youth guarantee scheme. The Government confirms its full commitment to implement the Economic and Investment Plan Flagship Programme⁴ on the Western Balkans Youth Guarantee in Albania as envisaged in the NESS. Unlike previous strategic documents, the NESS emphasises the needs and inclusion opportunities of NEETS (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) as a specific category of youth.

The National Social Protection Strategy (NSPS) 2020–2023 is closely aligned with the IPA III Programming Framework priorities, aiming at better social care coverage of poor and extremely poor families, children and at-risk individuals, thereby enhancing transparency and avoiding abuses in the

³<https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/22b8829d-b786-11eb-8aca-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-233221374>

⁴ An Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans-
https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_1811

Economic Aid scheme, as well as linking aid to employment schemes for faster social reintegration. The NSPS is focused on supporting the reform of social care services by supporting local governments to establish local social plans and social care services for different categories in need, such as: children, women, elderly people, people with disabilities. The reform will aim at establishing an adequate financing mechanism and support to more community-based services and reintegration through the labour market.

2.2. Problem Analysis

The activities planned to be implemented within the Action shall focus on three areas of support concerning youth in Albania in line with the “EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027” goals and the “Council of Europe Youth Strategy 2020-2030”. On 1st January 2021, 643,059 Albanians were classified as ‘young people (15-29)’⁵, with a percentage of young people compared to the overall population of the country of 22.73%, the largest proportion of the population, and despite this, youth participation in decision-making processes and economic and social life remains very low. Youth can be identified as a vulnerable group facing major challenges such as risk of poverty, high unemployment, long-term unemployment and inactivity rates, high NEET rates and underrepresentation in political life. According to the Economic Reform Programme 2022-2024, the NEET rate for Albania in 2020 was 27.9, up from 26.6 in 2019 (INSTAT), more than double the EU-27 average (12.6%). In this group, 36.5% are classified as unemployed (INSTAT 2020)⁶. The youth unemployment rate was 21.5% in 2019, one of the lowest in the region. However only about 18,000 NEET youth – out of a total of over 190,000 - are registered with the National Agency for Employment and Skills (NAES) and outreach needs to extend beyond this group representing less than 10% of NEET youth.

The evaluation of the effectiveness of the National Action Plan for Youth 2015-2020 conducted in August 2021 found that of 161 indicators, 40% were fully achieved, and 16% were partially achieved. The large discrepancy between the current and targeted values should trigger changes in this field. Cooperation between all the stakeholders is vital in order to establish the different measures targeting actual needs of young people. Coordination of Youth Policy is crucial given the cross-sectorial dimension of the policy, encompassing the education attainment level, youth participation in decision-making including within the local communities, human rights advocacy, youth employment, youth participation in sports, migration, entrepreneurship, innovation and culture, environmental protection, and the green economy, and justice (juvenile offenders).

AREA OF SUPPORT #1: Youth civic participation, youth human rights and youth volunteerism and participation in local community development, culture and sports.

Youth inclusion and political youth participation are essential to foster young people’s active citizenship, enhance their integration and build a more democratic, more inclusive and more prosperous society. One of the challenges is the so-called paradox of youth participation, whereby there is a lack of trust in policy making institutions on the one hand, and the perception by government representatives of low level of youth engagement on the other. Assistance is needed to support the role of the newly-established National Youth Council and Local Youth Councils as part of more inclusive, participatory processes for decision and policy-making in practice in order to achieve a co-responsibility culture, building a sense of ownership, and fostering positive attitudes towards a renewed governance style.

Furthermore, youth-led and youth-focused CSOs play a vital role in representing and promoting youth interests as well as providing the vehicle for youth volunteerism and activism at national and local level. Through support for youth activism, youth empowerment and human rights can be promoted, as seen in campaigns such as the Council of Europe No Hate Speech Youth Campaign.

⁵ <http://www.instat.gov.al/media/8305/population-on-1-january-2021.pdf>

⁶ The other part is outside the workforce either as discouraged workers (12.7%), or fulfilling domestic and family responsibilities (18.1%) or inactive for other reasons (32.7%) INSTAT 2020.

CSOs in Albania face several challenges and their organisational capacities are often weak. With insecure funding, staff turnover is also high. Absorption capacities of CSOs in rural and remote areas remain limited. According to the 2019 Mapping and assessment of civil society organisations' networks in Albania Report by Partners Albania for Change and Development, discussions with different stakeholders and CSO partners reveal that public trust in civil society is relatively low and CSOs often have weak connections with the grassroots and support base. There is often a lack of representativeness and limited public relations capacity. A further shortcoming is the low level of youth-led CSOs in Albania.

Sport plays a major role for youth health and social inclusion and is important for social and personal development, building team skills and personal development and providing opportunities to unite youth. Youth who plays competitive sports in high school demonstrates more confidence, leadership and self-respect. It is a useful tool for empowering young people and promoting key EU interests of good governance, democracy, rule of law, and human rights.

The main stakeholders are:

The Minister of State for Youth and Children has been established as of September 2021 to target youth policy directly and is responsible for the coordination of youth policy implementation by the line Ministries. The National Youth Agency (NYA), reporting directly to the minister responsible for youth policies, is responsible for assuring support and the inclusion of youth in all areas of social and public activity. Regional youth centres are established for the provision of direct services to young people.

The Ministry of Health and Social Protection (MoHSP) is in charge of policy design and oversight of social protection policies and guaranteeing the constitutional rights to social protection and inclusion, social care and equal opportunities as well as coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the National Strategy for Gender Equality 2021-2030. The Ministry of Education and Sports is responsible for policy in education (all levels) and sports.

Other stakeholders include Youth Civil Society Organisations. Some youth civil society organisations operating in Albania are grouped under umbrella organisations such as the National Youth Congress which groups around 60 youth CSOs⁷, the Youth Voice Network of Associations which groups about 20 Youth CSOs⁸ and the Albanian National Youth Network⁹ which groups 32 Youth CSOs.

The Albanian Federation of School Sports (FSHSSH) is an NGO, established in Tirana, Albania on 14 April 2016, and it exercises its activity based on Law no. 105/2020 On some additions and amendments to law No. 79/2017 "On Sports", Law no. 8788, dated 07.05.2001 "On non-profit organisations", as well as on the principles of the European Charter of Sport and recommendations in this field¹⁰.

AREA OF SUPPORT #2: Vulnerable Youth Education and Employment

In 2020, youth labour participation rate (15-29 years) continued to be lower than the rest of the adult population (51% with a gender gap of 14.5%). The unemployment rate for the category 15-29 age range in 2020 stood at 20.9%, down from 21.5% in 2019 but the share of young people neither in employment, nor in education or training increased from 26.6% in 2019 to 27.9% in 2020, indicating a particularly difficult transition of young people to the labour market, further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. However only about 18,000 NEET youth – out of a total of over 190,000 - are registered with the NAES. According to the Youth Participation Index 2019, the rate of young people enrolled in tertiary education was 59.5% and the rate of young people graduated from tertiary education was 26.7%, the highest in the WB6. Albania saw a

⁷ <http://krk.al/>

⁸ <https://www.facebook.com/ZeriteRinjve>

⁹ www.anyn.al

¹⁰ <https://fshssh.al/en/fshssh/federata-shqiptare-e-sportit-shkollor/>

remarkable shift in higher education levels between 2010 and 2019 with the share of university graduates (age 30-34) increasing from 11.4% to 31.3% and reaching 40.8% for the age group 25-29. The group with the highest share of NEETs was that of upper secondary graduates (28.9%), followed by university graduates (26.5%), while young people with only lower secondary education fared the best (24.4%)¹¹. This is evidence that enterprises are not yet able to absorb the increased number of university graduates. However, these trends started to change during 2020-2021 and will be closely monitored. Low Foreign Direct Investment (FDI attraction (particularly for sectors which are not relevant for employment), lack of career guidance, and structural labour market constraints are part of the causes for this. Facing these constraints, Albanian youth often accept temporary employment positions for which they are over-qualified as an alternative to scarce job positions in their respective areas of specialisation. There is a clear need for additional actions to channel the increasingly skilled young workforce into entrepreneurship and the social economy, as well as to focus on NEET youth from vulnerable groups. On one side, enterprises are facing shortages of skilled labour. On the other side, the analysis of enterprises absorption capacities would need to consider that the key issue are skills mismatches and problems with the supervision and quality of higher secondary education institutions. Furthermore, considering high levels of migration, the programme could help the youth and the institutions to reflect on the expectations, challenges and return options regarding working or training abroad.

The Economic and Investment Plan (EIP) for the Western Balkans, published by the European Commission in October 2020, proposes the implementation of Youth Guarantee schemes in the Western Balkans in four phases throughout the 2021-27 period. Currently, Albania is being supported for Phase 1 – Implementation Plans, by a Technical Assistance to Support the Reform on Employment Policies and Vocational Education and Training financed under IPA 2015 until the end of 2022. The technical assistance (TA) which will support the design of the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan and include a small-scale testing action. Key challenges identified for the implementation of the Youth Guarantee include the need for an integrated information system allowing the tracking of youth from education, training and employment and enhanced monitoring and evaluation. Outreach and awareness-raising are also critical conditions for the successful roll-out of the Youth Guarantee. Finally, the public employment offices need to work more closely with business partners on a permanent basis.

To ensure the success of the scheme, it will be paramount to ensure the coordinated engagement of stakeholders, including employment centres/social work centres, employers and employers' organisations, trade unions, local authorities and employment and training sector bodies, civil society organizations and youth organisations, education and training institutions, and social services.

The identified activities for the Youth Guarantee under Phase 2 – Preparatory Work and Phase 3 – Pilot phase, envisage further capacity building of public authorities and stakeholders, staffing/infrastructure, legal framework, monitoring and evaluation systems. A scaled-up pilot youth guarantee scheme (full package), focused on a specific territory, and evidence-based monitoring and evaluation will require support from 2023, enabling the deployment phase to go ahead in 2024-2025. Given the small number of NEET youth currently registered with the NAES, significant efforts will be needed for outreach activities. The establishment of a mechanism to monitor youth drop out from the education system as part of the overall monitoring mechanism is also needed.

The main stakeholders, in addition to the Minister of State for Youth and Children and the Ministry of Education and Sports cited above, are the Ministry of Finance and Economy, the NAES and the National Agency for Vocational Education, Training and Qualifications, and the Public Employment Service.

The Ministry of Finance and Economy is the key institution that defines and monitors the policies in the employment and VET sector on behalf of the Albanian Government. The NAES develops and supports the Albanian workforce through the provision of Vocational Education, Training, Vocational Guidance and

¹¹ http://databaza.instat.gov.al/pxweb/en/DST/START_TP_LFS_LFSV/NewLFSY004/

Employment Services and is responsible for the implementation of employment and skills development related public policies.

The National Agency for Vocational Education, Training and Qualifications is one of the key institutions in the development of a VET system based on the Albanian Qualifications framework, through learning outcome-based programmes, and supports the orientation of the VET system towards the competences needed in the labour market.

AREA OF SUPPORT #3: 21st century skills and careers guidance for school students

21st century skills have become an increasing area of focus in the international education discourse, with more and more countries across the globe striving to ensure that their education systems equip young people with these transversal skills related to critical thinking, decision making, digital proficiency, creativity and innovation, green skills and environmental awareness, as well as personal and social responsibility (including cultural awareness and competence). These skills shall help bridge the digital divide and the gender gap and engage youth at risk of being left behind in a digitalised society, empower young people to actively and creatively involve themselves in digital society, make informed and reasoned decisions and take responsibility and control of their digital identity. Introducing these skills into secondary schools shall enable Albanian youth to become active, engaged and productive members of their community, country and the globalised world more broadly.

Although young people are making more decisions than before as they stay in education longer, the increasing dynamism of the labour market, the rapidly changing demand for skills and the growing diversification and fragmentation of education and training provision is making decision-making more difficult. Career aspirations are often narrow, unrealistic and distorted by social background and frequently youth have limited awareness of their own potential and needs and low access to impartial information about learning and funding possibilities, becoming demotivated with education and training. Many occupations and learning routes, such as apprenticeships, are poorly understood or stereotyped, contributing to skills shortages and leading, in some cases, to educational disengagement and dropout. Participation in career guidance activities is associated with educational and particularly economic gains, but far too few young people have sufficient access to the information they need.

Currently, Albania has no careers guidance in place in secondary schools. Among the key policy principles of the Youth Guarantee (as set out by the Council's Recommendation) is policy coherence and policy coordination, as well as a mix of prevention and remedial actions. From the educational perspective, the overarching objective is to increase the quality of education and make educational outcomes more relevant and responsive to the needs of the labour market: among the identified activities is the provision of career education and guidance during education pathways to prepare for rapidly changing labour markets and address the structural causes of youth unemployment.

The main stakeholders are the Ministry of Education and Sports, Minister of State for Youth and Children in their policy mandates related to education and youth, National Employment and Skills Agency and Albanian secondary schools.

3. DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION

3.1. Intervention Logic

Based on the above context and the priorities in the Economic and Investment Plan (EIP) for the Western Balkans, and the IPA III Programming Framework, the action will empower youth and enable them to reach their full potential and participate fully in civic life, to contribute to economic and social development and cohesion in Albania and in line with IPA III regulation.

The overall objective of the action is *“to contribute to youth political, economic and social participation in society through increased quality youth employment and youth active citizenship”*.

The specific objectives (outcomes) of the action, corresponding to the three areas of support identified in the rationale are:

- **Outcome 1:** *Youth civic participation consolidated through inclusive, gender responsive and structured dialogue, youth human rights consolidated and youth volunteerism and participation in local community development, culture and sports fostered.*
- **Outcome 2:** *The employability of young boys and girls not in education and employment improved through the implementation of qualitative and labour market relevant education and training.*
- **Outcome 3:** *Life skills improved through their integration in secondary education curricula and careers guidance introduced in the school system.*

The Outputs to be delivered by this action to contribute to the corresponding Specific Objectives (Outcomes) 1, 2 and 3 are:

Outputs contributing to Outcome 1 (or Specific Objective 1):

Output 1.1 (related to outcome 1): *The capacities of the operationalised National and Local Youth Councils as implementers to enable the engagement of youth in local and central decision making enhanced.*

Output 1.2 (related to outcome 1): *Youth activism and volunteering for improving resilience and ensuring gender responsive and social inclusiveness of local communities supported, including for vulnerable youth, minorities and disabled youth.*

Output 1.3 (related to outcome 1): *Youth team sports supported and the participation of female and disabled youth in sports fostered.*

Support to enhancing the capacities of the National and Local Youth Councils as implementers for youth civic engagement and active participation in multi-level governance mechanisms will ensure youth political and civic participation through inclusive, structured and gender-responsive processes. By building capacities for grassroots youth involvement and activism, particularly in rural areas and among vulnerable youth, social inclusiveness shall be enhanced. Specific support to CSOs working in the field of youth sport, also in conjunction with other CSOs representing the interests of vulnerable youth, will foster access and participation in team sports, building team skills and community spirit.

Outputs contributing to Outcome 2 (or Specific Objective 2):

Output 2.1 (related to outcome 2): *Institutional capacities for the implementation of the Youth Guarantee (YG) Implementation Plan in place.*

Output 2.2 (related to outcome 2): *Pilot action for vulnerable Youth NEET for a good quality offer of employment or further education / training within 4 months of leaving formal education and/or registering as unemployed implemented.*

Output 2.3: *Dedicated and systemic support to apprenticeship and traineeship in green economy sectors having high potential in Albania is established and implemented*

Output 2.4 (related to outcome 2): *Mechanisms and systems for the Youth Guarantee (YG) Implementation Plan established /enhanced.*

Support for institutional coordination and capacity-building shall provide a solid basis for the implementation of the Youth Guarantee, while a pilot action will be focused on vulnerable NEET covering all aspects of the future Youth Guarantee, and allow for field testing of all mechanisms and systems set up. These activities shall all support the Albanian stakeholders to prepare for the implementation of the Youth Guarantee in Albania, in the light of its deployment from 2024/2025.

Outputs contributing to Outcome 3 (or Specific Objective 3):

Output 3.1 (related to outcome 3): *Improved '21st century skills' (critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity) of adolescents with a pilot in small cities.*

Output 3.2 (related to outcome 3): *Career guidance model approved with training materials developed.*

These shall provide Albania youth with the abilities and skills to participate fully in economic and social life and become valued members of their communities, able to embrace fully the new opportunities offered in the 21st century.

3.2. Indicative Activities

Activities related to Output 1.1:

Activity 1.1.1: Assistance and support to the National Youth Council and the Local Youth Councils to develop their capacities in contributing to policy-making and monitoring and participatory in inclusive political and civic dialogue processes as well as ensuring representativeness. Support will also be provided for networking and peer exchange.

Activity 1.1.2: Preparation and implementation of an outreach and awareness-raising campaign targeting youth and youth-led and youth focused CSOs to support political participation and increase trust in the institutions.

Activity 1.1.3: Capacity building of Ministries responsible for youth and local administrations to ensure a meaningful and sustainable dialogue with Youth Councils and Youth CSOs.

Activities related to Output 1.2:

Activity 1.2.1: Youth-led and youth-focused CSOs community-based projects including for vulnerable youth, youth from minorities and youth with disabilities, the promotion of human rights, gender equality, no hate speech initiatives, and sexuality education through a competitive call for proposals.

Activity 1.2.2: Technical assistance to support the grant-scheme implementation and build the capacities of youth CSOs for grassroots youth involvement and activism, particularly in rural areas and among vulnerable youth.

Activities related to Output 1.3:

Activity 1.3.1: Support for activities of CSOs working in the field of youth sport, also in conjunction with other CSOs representing the interests of vulnerable youth to foster their participation, equality and inclusion in team sports through a competitive call for proposals. The technical assistance to the grant scheme under activity 1.2.2 shall also support this grant scheme.

Activities related to Output 2.1:

Activity 2.1.1: Technical assistance to build the capacities of all the involved authorities and stakeholders in the preparation, piloting and initial deployment of the Youth Guarantee, building on the IPA II 2015 technical assistance.

Activity 2.1.2: Support the authorities to establish a monitoring mechanism for school drop out as a prevention and early detection tool.

Activities related to Output 2.2:

Activity 2.2.1: Design and implementation of a Pilot Action in a specific territory in Albania including a rural area, where vulnerable NEETs are identified, directed at providing employment, continued education, apprenticeship and traineeship. It shall include support for youth entrepreneurship and youth involvement in social enterprises as well as supporting the collaboration between welfare centers/social workers and employment offices by piloting activation strategies addressing the specific labour market disadvantage that certain categories of NEET youth may face. This may include piloting personalised activation plans developed with youth social workers and employment advisors and individualised labour market integration measures targeting young persons with disabilities, such as combining disability benefits with employment services and active programmes.

Activity 2.2.2: Communication and outreach campaign in the pilot area to ensure take up and success of the scheme

Activity 2.2.3: On-going monitoring and evaluation of the pilot to feed into the fine-tuning of the Youth Guarantee in view of its national deployment.

Activity 2.2.4: Design and implementation of training and apprenticeship in the green economy field in the field of organic farming, energy efficiency, renewable energy, sustainable buildings, water management, circular economy, sustainable tourism, management of protected areas and biodiversity restoration, carbon-offsetting and any other related area that may emerge during design and implementation of this activity

Activities related to Output 2.3:

Activity 2.3.1: Provision of technical assistance for the establishment and updating of inter-institutional processes for the coordination and management of Youth Guarantee in Albania, including the collection of accessible monitoring data through IT systems, building on the outputs of the IPA II 2015 Technical Assistance including the field testing of the monitoring and evaluation system during the pilot activity 2.2.1.

Activities related to Output 3.1:

Activity 3.1.1: Development of digital modules on 21st skills and guidance on their delivery through e-learning support materials.

Activity 3.1.2: Implementation of a pilot addressed to at least 20 secondary schools in small cities in Albania, through an expression of interest, through the development and delivery of a blended/e-learning training of educational staff in the pilot.

Activities related to Output 3.2:

Activity 3.2.1: Drafting of a Policy Paper for the Ministry responsible for education analysing the career guidance models in place in EU Member States for careers education and guidance in secondary schools and proposing a model for Albania, taking into consideration the eventual role of the NAES.

Activity 3.2.2: Design of training materials for career guidance professionals in schools.

Activity 3.2.3: Subject to approval of the proposed career guidance model, a study tour to an EU Member State with a similar model to enable peer exchange on its deployment and roll-out in secondary schools.

3.3. Mainstreaming

Environmental Protection, Climate Change and Biodiversity

Youth activism in environmental issues and opportunities for youth employment in line with the circular economy and green growth shall be fostered through the activities in this project. As seen worldwide, youth have been driving the efforts for radical societal change and political commitments in this field. Furthermore, through the Youth Guarantee, new opportunities for employment in line with the Green Agenda can be experimented and tested, while life skills and careers guidance in schools will also be driven by environmental concerns.

Gender equality and empowerment of women and girls

Gender equality and the empowerment of young women and girls, is in line with the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025¹² and with the EU Gender Action Plan III for external actions (2021-2025)¹³. Reaching the target where women and men are free to follow their selected path in life and have equal opportunities is a long-term process that requires a constant engagement. Such engagement is also expressed in the National Strategy on Gender Equality 2021-2030 and National Strategy for Youth in Albania 2022-2030 where empowerment of girls and women are core elements underpinning this Action. The activities shall consider a baseline gender needs assessment which should propose the methodology and concrete recommendations for gender actions to ensure proper gender mainstreaming across capacity building activities, pilots, communication campaigns, policies, assessments and evaluations, as well as well as disaggregation of data by gender, as applicable. Specific activities have been identified to foster the political, economic and social participation of girls and young women aged 15-29 and ensure equal

¹² [EUR-Lex - 52020DC0152 - EN - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](#)

¹³ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_20_2184

opportunities. The impact of this Action on promoting gender quality and empowerment of young women and girls will be considered as part of its evaluation.

Human Rights

Minorities and vulnerable youth, including the youth with disabilities and youth in the Roma and Egyptian communities are also key targets for the support envisaged by this Action to foster their political, economic and social participation. In the case of youth with disabilities, this includes a targeted activity aimed at fostering their participation in sports activities, as well as designing and experimenting mechanisms and measures for disabled NEET youth. In the case of Roma and Egyptian youth and LGTBIQ youth, their political, economic and social participation shall be fostered through the Action activities. Furthermore, the Ministry responsible for youth shall be encouraged to collect data and information on vulnerable youth, not only through this Action, but in conjunction with INSTAT. The monitoring indicators will be segregated by ethnicity and vulnerability wherever possible for the purposes of action monitoring.

Democracy

Democracy shall be specifically fostered through support for youth civic engagement and participation as well as support to youth-led and youth-focused civil society organisations. Outreach to youth in the community is embedded into this action. Civil society representatives are a key interlocutor to promote and mobilise the youth community and local institutions but they also need support for grassroots outreach, especially amongst vulnerable youth and to include youth in leadership roles. Furthermore, enhanced dialogue and cooperation between youth CSOs and the Albanian public authorities shall be supported throughout this action.

The specific activities envisaged within the Action shall provide support to youth participation in democratic processes in active partnership with both central and local level public administrations as well as support youth-led and youth focused civil society organisations to foster a thriving, credible, and sustainable youth civil society.

3.4. Risks and Lessons Learned

Category	Risks	Likelihood (High/Medium/Low)	Impact (High/Medium/Low)	Mitigating measures
3-People and the organisation	Risk 1. Human resources bottlenecks, variable capacities and high fluctuation of staff in stakeholder institutions hampers smooth absorption of the intervention under the Action.	M	M	Detailed planning of the Action allowing all Actors to participate in the activities. Induction capacity building measures are activated flexibly under the Action for newcomers to the system.
2-Planning, processes and systems	Risk 2. Lack of effective inter-institutional coordination.	L	L	The Action has been designed in close cooperation with all the institutional stakeholders who are already working together under the EIP-WB Flagship 10 and have committed the relevant

				political buy-in and coordination mechanisms through inter-ministerial task forces involving relevant stakeholders. The Action shall build on this to ensure effective inter-institutional coordination.
5-Communication and information	Risk 3: Low interest in youth in civic participation due to lack of trust in political institutions.	M	M	Proactive engagement of youth CSOs and youth community leaders and enhanced dialogue with CSOs and public administrations supported through the Action to increase trust. Specific focus on representativeness of CSOs and members of Youth Councils.
5-Communication and information	Risk 4: Low proportion of NEET youth registered in the Public Employment Service or aware of the opportunities of the Youth Guarantee.	M	M	Awareness-raising and outreach activities planned in the pilot geographical area. Possible incentives (not specifically) financial for the young people to register in PES
2-Planning, processes and systems	Risk 5: Slow establishment of functional Local Youth Councils.	M	L	Support to provide good practice models and encourage networking and peer exchange between Youth Councils to facilitate and foster their operationalisation.

Lessons Learned:

The preparation and implementation of the IPA 2019 Action on Social Inclusion has highlighted the need to ensure policy coherence and policy coordination between the relevant line Ministries, as well as the need to have a mix of prevention and remedial actions.

The IPA 2015 Technical Assistance to Support the Reform on Employment Policies and Vocational Education and Training has identified several lessons which apply to this action:

- The absorption capacity of beneficiary institutions needs to be improved being hindered by long procedures for hiring new staff and also staff turnover.
- Parallel to greater role given to local actors, ongoing development of local consulting market is key to effective aid absorption.
- The application of the principle of subsidiarity is critical to ensure a better cohesion and effectiveness of interventions.

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) funded Skills for jobs (S4J) (2019 – 2023)¹⁴ has identified the following lessons which apply to this Action:

- Institutional commitment and ownership are critical for efficiency in implementation and sustainable capacity building;
- Good monitoring is critical for accountability in a complex institutional arrangement;
- Coordination of external support is crucial in a sector which is financed by various actors.

3.5. Logical Framework (next page)

¹⁴https://info.undp.org/docs/pdc/Documents/ALB/SD4E_Semi-AnnualReport_Jan_June_2019_after%20technical%20meeting.pdf

Results	Results chain: Main expected results	Indicators	Baselines	Target (2027)	Sources of data	Assumptions
Impact	To contribute to youth political, economic and social participation in society through increased quality youth employment and youth active citizenship.	1 Youth employment rate 2 Civic youth councils actively contributing to national/local policy-making	1 - 42.2% (2020) 2 – 16 (2021)	1 – 46% 2 – 62	1 - INSTAT, LFS 2 – MYCH, Ministry responsible for local government	<i>Not applicable</i>
Outcome 1	Youth civic participation consolidated through inclusive, gender responsive and structured dialogue, youth human rights consolidated and youth volunteerism and participation in local community development, culture and sports fostered.	1.1 % of policy recommendations implemented 1.2. # of youth actively participating in volunteerism, community activities and sport (disaggregated by gender)	1.1 - n/a 1.2 n/a	25% 50% increase compared to 2023	MYCH – annual reports Ministry responsible for local government MYCH (baseline and final survey)	Youth are motivated to volunteer and participate in civic life. Cultural and sports facilities are available in communities and schools.
Outcome 2	The employability of young boys and girls not in education and employment improved through the implementation of qualitative and labour market relevant education and training.	2.1. Share of Youth NEET	27.9% overall F: 30.0% M: 25.8%	27.7	INSTAT, LFS	Engagement of all Albanian Stakeholders for the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan. Sufficient human resources made available/retained
Outcome 3	Life skills improved through their integration in secondary education curricula and careers guidance introduced in the school system.	3.1 Number of secondary schools implementing life skills programmes 3.2 # of secondary schools in which career guidance is introduced.	0 0	80 (2027) 20% (2027)	MES – annual reports MES	Secondary schools interested in offering extra-curricular activities. Political commitment to

						introducing careers guidance in secondary schools. Appropriate medium term budget planning for the secondary education system to finance extra-curricular activities and careers guidance.
Output 1.1 related to Outcome 1	The capacities of the operationalised National and Local Youth Councils as implementers to enable the engagement of youth in local and central decision making enhanced.	1.1.1. Capacities built at National and Local Youth Councils to engage with youth and prepare policy recommendations 1.1.2. # of youth inclusive and gender sensitive awareness raising/ youth engagement activities carried out	n/a 0	National Youth Council and Local Youth Councils presenting regular policy recommendations to the relevant public administrations 6 youth awareness raising/youth engagement activities	MYCH, Ministry responsible for local government Technical Assistance Project Reports	The National Youth Council is established and is supported. Local Youth Councils are established/their establishment is fostered by the MESY. Youth are motivated to engage in activism.
Output 1.2 related to Outcome 1	Youth activism and volunteering for improving resilience and ensuring gender responsive and social inclusiveness of local communities supported, including for vulnerable youth, minorities and disabled youth.	1.2.1. # of youth newly involved in volunteerism and activism through youth-led and youth-focused CSO community projects (disaggregated by gender) 1.2.2. # of CSOs receiving a grant (disaggregated by number of grants to support vulnerable youth, young girls, minorities and disabled youth)	0 0	280 youth involved in volunteerism and activism (at least 50% female) 35-40 CSOs receiving a grant	Action Monitoring Reports Technical Assistance to the Grant Scheme Reports	Youth are motivated to engage in activism.

Output 1.3 related to Outcome 1	Youth team sports supported and the participation of female and disabled youth in sports fostered.	1.3.1. # of schools sports teams supported by the project, disaggregated also by gender (male/female/mixed) 1.3.2. # of disabled youth supported to play sport disaggregated also by gender (male/female/mixed)	0 0	20 school teams (at least 50% female) 80 disabled youth	MES MYCH	School sports facilities are available and adequately equipped. Facilities and support are available to foster youth with disabilities' participation in sport.
Output 2.1 related to Outcome 2	Institutional capacities for the implementation of the Youth Guarantee (YG) Implementation Plan in place.	2.1.1. # of capacity building activities oriented towards the institutions responsible for the YG Implementation Plan 2.1.2. % of employees in the above-mentioned institutions whose capacities are built for designing, implementation and monitoring of YG Implementation Plan (disaggregated by gender) 2.1.3 Percentage of PES that received training for profiling/ personalised counselling and CSOs and in particular youth organisations and social workers trained for the implementation of the YG.	Baseline: 0 Baseline: 0 Baseline: 0	Target: 30 Target: 50% Target: 50%	Action Monitoring Reports Training reports Monitoring reports	Engagement of all Albanian Stakeholders for the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan. Sufficient human resources made available/retained.
Output 2.2 related to Outcome 2	Pilot action for vulnerable Youth NEET for a good quality offer of employment or further education / training within 4 months of leaving formal education and/or registering as unemployed implemented.	2.2.1. Pilot action for Youth NEET covering all elements of the planned YG Implementation Plan Comment: Include also the number of existing and future education/ training programme	n/a n/a	Pilot action successfully concluded 50% of NEETs in the pilot action area effectively	Pilot YG monitoring reports MFE, survey reports	Engagement of all Albanian Stakeholders for the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan.

		2.2.2. Outreach to NEETs in the pilot action area (disaggregated by gender)		reached (at least 50% female) Rate of beneficiary of Youth Guarantee, employed		
Output 2.3 related to Outcome 2	Mechanisms and systems for the Youth Guarantee (YG) Implementation Plan established /enhanced.	2.3.1. YG monitoring system in place 2.3.2. Coordination mechanism in place	n/a n/a	Monitoring system functional and in use in all relevant institutions Coordination formally established and all inter-institutional procedures approved	Action Monitoring Reports MEF and all institutional stakeholders	Engagement of all Albanian Stakeholders for the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan. Sufficient human resources made available/retained.
Output 3.1 related to Outcome 3	Improved '21st century skills' (critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity) of adolescents with a pilot in small cities.	3.1.1. Digital modules for 21st century skills developed and tested in pilot scheme	n/a	20 schools participating in the pilot scheme utilising the digital modules for '21 century skills'	MES MYCH	Secondary schools interested in offering extra-curricular activities.
Output 3.2 related to Outcome 3	Output 3.2 (related to outcome 3): Career guidance model approved with training materials developed.	3.2.1. Career guidance model prepared and agreed with the Ministry and other Albanian institutional stakeholders. 3.2.2. Training programme for careers guidance professionals developed.	n/a n/a	Career Guidance Model Policy Paper adopted. Training programme approved.	MES MYCH	Political commitment to introducing careers guidance in secondary schools.

4. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

4.1. Financing Agreement

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

4.2. Indicative Implementation Period

The indicative operational implementation period of this action, during which the activities described in section 3 will be carried out and the corresponding contracts and agreements implemented, is 72 months from the date of entry into force of the financing agreement.

Extensions of the implementation period may be agreed by the Commission's responsible authorising officer by amending this Financing Decision and the relevant contracts and agreements.

4.3. Methods of implementation

The Commission will ensure that the EU appropriate rules and procedures for providing financing to third parties are respected, including review procedures, where appropriate, and compliance of the action with EU restrictive measures¹⁵.

4.3.1. Indirect Management with an entrusted entity

A part of this action may be implemented in indirect management with an entity, which will be selected by the Commission's services using the following criteria:

- Demonstrated experience in the field of design and implementation of qualitative and labour market relevant education and training particularly addressing the NEET youth,
- operational capacity or technical expertise in the implementation of qualitative and labour market relevant education and training particularly addressing the NEET,
- synergy with ongoing or planned projects or assistance in the same field in Albania where the entity is in the lead or co-financing,
- absence of conflict of interest,
- experience as delegated entity in the use of EU funds;
- capacity of the entity for providing co-financing to the action.

This implementation entails Outputs 2.1-2.2-2.3 under the Outcome 2 of the action. The entrusted entity to be selected may be a Member State organisation, third donor country agency, EU specialised agency, or international organisation. Any entity selected will have to be pillar-assessed or undergoing an ex-ante assessment including the complementary pillar assessment.

4.3.2. Indirect Management with an IPA III beneficiary

A part of this action will be implemented under indirect management by Albania.

¹⁵ www.sanctionsmap.eu Please note that the sanctions map is an IT tool for identifying the sanctions regimes. The source of the sanctions stems from legal acts published in the Official Journal (OJ). In case of discrepancy between the published legal acts and the updates on the website it is the OJ version that prevails.

The managing authority responsible for the execution of the action is the State Agency for Strategic Planning and Assistance Coordination. The managing authority shall be responsible for legality and regularity of expenditure, sound financial management, programming, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, information, visibility and reporting of IPA III activities.

The managing authority shall rely on sectoral expertise and technical competence of the following intermediate bodies for policy management:

- Minister of State for Youth and Children (Lead Institution)
- Ministry of Education and Sports (Outcomes 1 and 3)

They shall ensure sound financial management of the action.

Budget implementation tasks such as calls for tenders, calls for proposals, contracting, contract management, payments and revenue operations, shall be entrusted to the following intermediate body for financial management: Ministry of Finance and Economy, General Directorate for Financing and Contracting of EU, World Bank and Other Donors' Funds (CFCU). It shall ensure legality and regularity of expenditure.

4.4. Scope of geographical eligibility for procurement and grants

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

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

4.5. Indicative Budget

Indicative Budget components	EU contribution (amount in EUR)	Indicative third-party contribution in currency identified (EUR)
Methods of implementation – cf. section 4.3		
Component 1: Outcome 1: Youth civic participation consolidated through inclusive, gender responsive and structured dialogue, youth human rights consolidated and youth volunteerism and participation in local community development, culture and sports fostered. - Outputs 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 composed of		
Indirect Management with Albania – cf. section 4.3.2	2 000 000	N/A
Component 2: Outcome 2: The employability of young boys and girls not in education and employment improved through the implementation of qualitative and labour market relevant education and training. – Outputs 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 composed of:		
Indirect Management with an entrusted entity – cf. section 4.3.1	2 000 000	N/A
Evaluation – cf. section 5.2 Audit – cf. section 5.3	will be covered by another Decision	N.A.

Communication and visibility – cf. section 6	will be covered by another Decision	N.A.
Contingencies	N.A.	N.A.
Indirect Management with Albania – cf. section 4.3.2	1 000 000	N/A
Totals	5 000 000	N/A

4.6. Organisational Set-up and Responsibilities

The Lead Beneficiaries for the Action shall be the **Minister of State for Youth and Children and Ministry of Education and Sports (Outcomes 1 and 3)**, and the **Ministry of Finance and Economy (Outcome 2)** as the Lead Beneficiaries of the Action. Due to the close involvement of other national stakeholders, such as the National Agency for Employment and Skills (NAES), National Youth Agency (NYA), and local municipalities, the Lead Beneficiaries shall closely coordinate with them during the implementation of the activities.

For overall policy and assistance coordination, the Government of Albania has an inter-institutional and operational organisational structure in place for managing the implementation of a broad sectoral/cross-sectoral approach through the Integrated Planning System (IPS), which acts as the main system that sets the tools and mechanisms for integrated public policy planning. The Prime Minister Order (No 157) on 22 October 2018 revised the Integrated Policy Management Groups (IPMGs) and associated sectoral steering committees' structures for implementation of a broad sectoral/cross-sectoral approach to manage and coordinate policies of priority areas and sectors of special importance, as well as inter-sectoral programming through the formation of a sectoral / cross-sectoral management mechanism. The IPMG "Employment and Skills" is chaired by the Deputy Minister assigned to this area of responsibility and its Technical Secretariat is established within the Directorate of Employment and Vocational Training Policies at the Ministry of Finance and Economy. An Employment and Training Thematic Group provides for cooperation at technical level including with development partners, within the specific sectors of the respective priority area.

A **Project Steering Committee (PSC)** will be established that will steer the project implementation. The PSC shall involve representatives from the main stakeholders, as well as from the National IPA Coordinator (NIPAC) and EUD. The PSC shall closely monitor the fulfilment of the project objective and the project results. The NIPAC shall have the role of monitoring the fulfilment of the objectives at the level of the Action and shall coordinate its monitoring in the context of the Sectoral Monitoring Committee on Employment and Skills.

As part of its prerogative of budget implementation and to safeguard the financial interests of the Union, the European Commission may participate in the above governance structures set up for governing the implementation of the action.

4.7. Pre-conditions

- Establishment and staffing of the newly appointed Minister of State for Youth and Children.
- Establishment of 10 local youth councils in different municipalities.
- A Youth Guarantee Plan (YGP) is designed.

5. PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

5.1. Monitoring and Reporting

The day-to-day technical and financial monitoring of the implementation of this action will be a continuous process, and part of the implementing partner's responsibilities. To this aim, the implementing partner shall establish a permanent internal, technical and financial monitoring system for the action and elaborate regular progress reports (not less than annual) and final reports. Every report shall provide an accurate account of implementation of the action, difficulties encountered, changes introduced, as well as the degree of

achievement of its results (Outputs and direct Outcomes) as measured by corresponding indicators, using as reference the logframe matrix (for project modality) and the partner's strategy, policy or reform action plan list (for budget support). The Commission may undertake additional project monitoring visits both through its own staff and through independent consultants recruited directly by the Commission for independent monitoring reviews (or recruited by the responsible agent contracted by the Commission for implementing such reviews).

Roles and responsibilities for data collection, analysis and monitoring:

The implementing entities for the action shall monitor the action indicators at their respective components / outputs level. The responsible Ministries, as lead beneficiaries will follow the achievement of indicators and outputs and outcomes defined within the action. They shall have the responsibility to collect the data concerning the indicators and timely to report to NIPAC, regularly inform NIPAC and the relevant stakeholders on the implementation of the indicators, and follow the implementation of the respective activities and alert on any delays and the reasons that caused such delays. As described in section 4.6 above, the overall monitoring of the implementation of the action will be performed at the level of the **Sector Monitoring Committee for Employment and Skills** and at the level of the Project Steering Committee. The respective institutions shall use the Results-Oriented Monitoring tool in reporting on performance and results, referring to criteria of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability, and provide basic information that can be exploited to orient future monitoring/evaluation/audit and management decision at the action level. In accordance with the European Code for Conduct on Partnership, specific coordination will be conducted with partners and stakeholders to ensure policy dialogue and knowledge management between the central and sub-national levels of government, and the relevant Civil Society Organisations.

The NIPAC shall be responsible at national level to monitor, review and evaluate the progress on the implementation of the indicators established within the action's Log-frame Matrix and to communicate the information with the European Commission services.

The statistical and monitoring systems as well as the quality of official data in the policy field covered have been assessed. This assessment had fed into the design of the action as follows:

5.2. Evaluation

Having regard to the importance of the action, mid-term evaluation(s) will be carried out for this action or areas of support via the implementing partners. It will be carried out for learning purposes, for assessing effectiveness, sustainability and impact, and provide basis for revising implementation strategies and activities if needed, as well as for planning further potential future activities in the sector in Albania under IPA III.

The Commission may, during implementation, decide to undertake a final or ex-post evaluation for duly justified reasons either on its own decision or on the initiative of the partner. In case a final or ex-post evaluation is envisaged, it will be carried out for accountability and learning purposes at various levels (including for policy revision), considering the implementation of national youth policy and its alignment with the EU *acquis*, in particular in reference to the Youth Guarantee.

The Commission or relevant implementation entities shall inform the implementing partners at least two months in advance of the dates foreseen for evaluation missions. The implementing partners shall collaborate efficiently and effectively with the evaluation experts, and inter alia provide them with all necessary information and documentation, as well as access to the project premises and activities.

The evaluation reports shall be shared with the partner country and other key stakeholders following the best practice of evaluation dissemination¹⁶. The implementing partners and the Commission shall analyse the conclusions and recommendations of the evaluations and, where appropriate, in agreement with the partner

¹⁶ See best [practice of evaluation dissemination](#)

country, jointly decide on the follow-up actions to be taken and any adjustments necessary, including, if indicated, the reorientation of the project.

Evaluation services may be contracted under a Framework Contract.

5.3. Audit and Verifications

Without prejudice to the obligations applicable to contracts concluded for the implementation of this action, the Commission may, on the basis of a risk assessment, contract independent audit or verification assignments for one or several contracts or agreements.

6. COMMUNICATION AND VISIBILITY

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

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

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

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

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

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

7. SUSTAINABILITY

An important precondition for the sustainability of the Action outputs is the good cooperation between the Project Teams and the direct beneficiaries during implementation of the action. Considering the multi-sector nature of the Action, it is vital that ownership over the results to be achieved is ensured which should contribute to securing sustainable results that shall be maintained in the long run.

Sustainability of the results is incorporated throughout the Action's implementation approach of targeting sustainability at the institutional and financial level.

The Ministry in charge of youth shall be responsible for ensuring participation and coordination between the Ministry and local government units for the improvement of systems, policies and procedures introduced, consequent to the Law on Youth, as well as ensuring the constant and enhanced dialogue with youth CSOs.

The high-level inter-institutional coordination mechanism set up for the set-up and implementation of the Youth Guarantee will ensure the full involvement of the relevant government and public entities to assure the

institutional sustainability of the action. The proper maintenance and further upgrading as necessary of all IT and monitoring systems must be ensured.

Key to ensuring the sustainability of the Action is the capacity building of staff at all beneficiary institutions so that the processes can be maintained in the future.

Furthermore, key to ensuring the sustainability of the Action in general is the institutional capacity building which is a central element of the support to be provided for all beneficiary institutions so that the processes initiated can be rolled out and maintained in the future.

The Albanian beneficiary institutions shall ensure that the staffing of all relevant institutions and maintenance of systems set up, including monitoring systems are properly planned and budgeted through the Multi-Annual Budget Programme for each institution.

Finally, horizontal support provided to youth-led and youth-focused CSOs shall also aim to ensure their future sustainability, through capacity-building, support for increased activism and volunteerism and enhanced dialogue with public administrations.