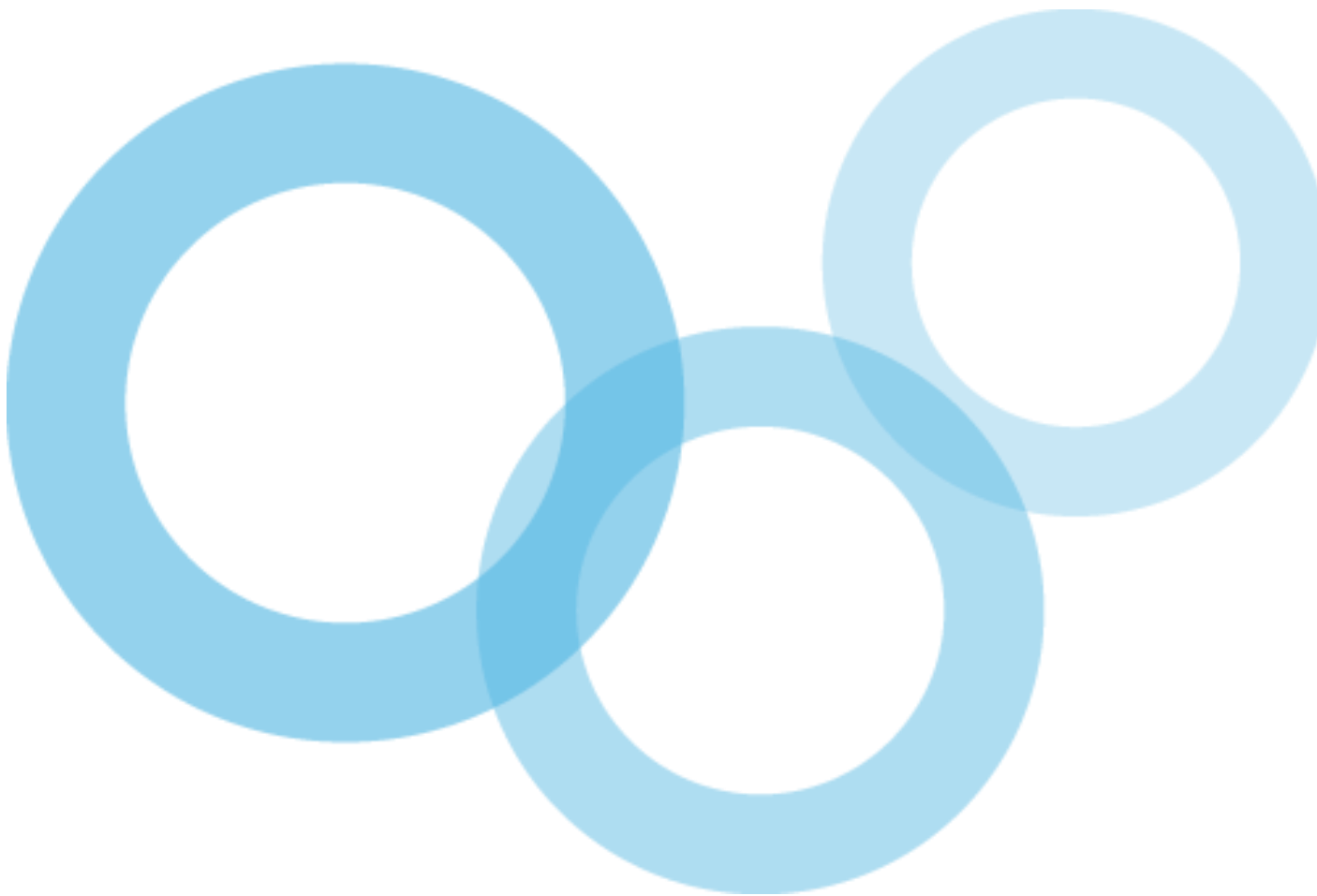




IPA MULTI-COUNTRY PROGRAMMES

ACTIVITY REPORT

JULY - DECEMBER 2019



D.5 WESTERN BALKANS REGIONAL COOPERATION AND PROGRAMMES

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CONTACT

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For any additional information on specific projects, contact us via the same address and your e-mail will be forwarded to the relevant Task Manager in DG NEAR unit D.5 – Western Balkans Regional Cooperation and Programmes.

We have followed the usual practice for Kosovo*.

* 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.

LINK

http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/instruments/multi-beneficiary-programme/index_en.htm

LIST OF ACRONYMS

AEI	Agency for European Integration
ATA	Administrative and Technical Assistance Facility
BAS	Business Advisory Services
BIRN	Balkan Investigative Reporting Network
BKA	Bundeskriminalamt/Federal Criminal Police Office Germany
BPR	Biocidal Products Regulation
CAB	Conformity Assessment Bodies
CAN	Capacity Needs Assessment
CBC	Cross-Border Cooperation
CBIB	Cross-border Institution Building
CC	Climate Change
CCW	Climate Change Window
CEB	Council of Europe Development Bank
CEECIS	Central and Eastern Europe and Commonwealth of Independent states
CEFTA	Central European Free Trade Agreement
CEN	Comité Européen de Normalisation
CFR	Country Feasibility Report
CHP	Country Housing Projects
CHU	Central Harmonisation Unit
CIRCA	Communication & Information Resource Centre Administrator
CLP	Classification, labelling and packaging
CN	Contract
CO	Coordination Office
CoE	Council of Europe
CoP	Community of Practice
CSF	Civil Society Facility
CSF	Classical Swine Fever
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CSP	Country strategy paper
CSR	Country Strategy Report

CVO	Chief Veterinary Officers
DG	Directorate General
DRR	Disaster risk reduction
EACEA	Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency
EAMLA	European Accreditation multilateral agreement
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EBU	European Broadcasting Union
EC	European Commission
ECAS	European Citizen Action Service
ECENA	Environmental Compliance and Enforcement Network for Accession
ECS	Energy Community Secretariat
ECT(S)	European credit transfer (System)
EDIF	Enterprise Development and Innovation Facility
EE(FE)	Energy Efficiency Finance Facility
EEA	European Economic Area
EESC	European Economic and Social Committee
EETF	Energy Efficiency Task Force
EFSE	European Fund for Southeast Europe
EGP	Enterprise Growth Programme
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EIB	European Investment Bank
EIDHR	European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights
EIF	European Investment Fund
EJN	European Judicial Network
EMMA	European Multi-services Meteorological Awareness
ENEF	Enterprise Expansion Fund
ENER	Energy
ENIF	Enterprise Innovation Fund
ENIF	Enterprise Innovation Fund
EPPA	Environmental Partnership Programme for Accession
ESENER	European Survey of Enterprises on New and Emerging Risks
ETF	European training Foundation

EU	European Union
EUBEC	EU Platform for Blending in External Cooperation
EUD	European Union Delegation
EUI	European University Institute
EUMETNET	European National Meteorological network
EURAMET	European Association of National Metrology Institutes
FAD	Fiscal Affairs Department
FPA	Framework Partnership Agreement
GB	Governing board
GF	Guarantee Facility
GGF	Green for Growth Fund
GHG	Green House Gases
GIS	Geo Information System
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HEREs	Higher Education Reform Experts
HFA	Hyogo Framework for Action
HLC	Humanitarian Law Centre
HOT	Hands-on training
HRM	Human resource Management
IACS	Integrated Administration and Control System
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IBM	Integrated Border Management
IC	Investment Committee
ICJ	International Court of Justice
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
ICTY	International Criminal Tribunal of the former Yugoslavia
IFC	International Finance Cooperation
IFI	International Financial Institution
IFICO	International Financial Institution Coordination Office
ILECU	International Law Enforcement Coordination Units
IMO	International Maritime Organisation
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance

IPF	Infrastructure Projects Facility
IPSAS	International Public Sector Accounting Standards
ISCED	International standard classification of education
IT	Information technology
ITC-ILO	International Training Centre of the International Labour Organization
JCM	Joint committee meetings
JIT	Joint Investigation Teams
KfW	Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau – banking group
KLA	Kosovo*Liberation Army
LLEL	Life Long Entrepreneurial Learning
LLL	Life Long Learning
LPIS	Land Parcel Identification System
LSEE	Research unit established within the London School of Economics and Political Science's European Institute
MB	Multi-beneficiary
MCSP	Multi-country strategy paper
MDAS	Market development activities
MFF	Multi-annual financial framework
MIDWEB	Migration for Development in the Western Balkans
MIPD	Multi-Annual Indicative Planning Document
MMF	Multilateral monitoring framework
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MSC	Migrant Service Centres
MSME	Micro and small enterprise
MWh	Megawatt hours
NATURA EU	Nature & biodiversity policy
NCTS	National computerized transit system
NEEAP	National Energy Efficiency Action Plan
NEAR	Directorate General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations
NICO	Northern Ireland Cooperation Overseas
NIPAC	National IPA Coordinator
NSI	National Statistics Institute

NTB	Non-Tariff Barriers
NTOs	National Tempus Offices
ODIHR	Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
OTP	Office of the Prosecutor
P2P	People to People
PADOR	Potential Applicant Data Online Registration
PAG	Platform Advisory Group
PAR	Public Administration Reform
PB	Partner bank
PC	Partner country
PCA	Post clearance audit
PEFA	Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability
PEM	Pan-Euro-Mediterranean
PEMPAL	Public Expenditure Management Peer Assisted Learning
PFG	Project Financiers Group
PFI	Participating Financial Institution
PFM	Public Financial Management
PGSC	Policy Group for Statistical Cooperation
PIFC	Public Internal Financial Control
PIU	Project Implementation Unit
PMU	Project Management Unit
PoW	Programme of Work
PP	Public Procurement
PPA	Public Procurement Authority
PPF	Project Preparation Facility
PPP	Public-private partnership
PSSF	Private Sector Support Facility
PV	Photovoltaic
QA	Qualitative Assurance
R&D	Research and Development
RCC	Regional Cooperation Council

RCI	Regional Competitiveness Initiative
RE	Renewable energy
RECOM	Regional Coalition for the establishment of a Regional Commission for Establishing the Facts about War Crimes and Other Gross Violations of Human Rights Committed on the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia
REEP	Regional Energy Efficiency Programme
REG	Regional
REACH	Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals
RENA	Regional Environmental Network for Accession
ReSPA	Regional school of public administration
RHP	Regional Housing Programme
RIPA	Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act
SAA	Stabilisation and Association Agreement
SAI	Supreme Audit Institution
SBA	Small Business Act
SBS	Small Business Support Programme
SC	Steering Committee
SEE	South East Europe
SEECCEL	South East European Centre for Entrepreneurial Learning
SEED	Systematic Electronic Exchange of Data
SEEIC	Southeast Europe Investment Committee
SEETO	South East Europe Transport Observatory
SEI	Strengthening European Integration
SELEC	Southeast European Law Enforcement Centre
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SIGMA	Support for Improvement in Governance and Management
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprise
SMECSF SME	Competitiveness Support Window
SPS	Sanitary and phyto-sanitary issues
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats
SWP	Strategic work programme
TA	Technical Assistance

TAC	Travel, accommodation and conference facility
TACSO	Technical Assistance to Civil Society Organisations
TADAT	Tax Administration Diagnostic Assessment Tool
TAXUD	Directorate General Taxation and Customs Union
TBC	To be confirmed
TBT	Technical Barriers to Trade
T-CY	Cybercrime Convention Committee
TFCS	Task Force for Culture and Society
TGNA	Turkish Grand National Assembly
TNA	Training needs assessment
TOR	Terms of Reference
ToT	Training of trainers
TVR	Temporary and Virtual Return
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNISDR	United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction
UNMIK	United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo*
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UNPROFOR	United Nations Protection Force
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
USKOK	Office for the Prevention of Corruption and Organized Crime
VAC	Violence against Children
VAT	Value Added Tax
VIND	Vinca Institute Nuclear Decommissioning
WB	Western Balkan
WBG	World Bank Group
WBIF	Western Balkans Investment Framework
WeBSEDF	Western Balkans Sustainable Energy Direct Financing Facility

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244/99 and the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on Kosovo's declaration of independence.

WeBSEFF	Western Balkans Sustainable Energy Financing Facility
WELMEC	European cooperation in the field of legal metrology
WG	Working group
WINPRO	Witness Protection in the Fight against Serious Crime and Terrorism
WMO	World Meteorological Organization
WPU	Witness Protection Unit
WSSD	World Summit on Sustainable Development

CHAPTER 1: PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM

1.1 REGIONAL SCHOOL OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION (RESPA)

Programme reference:	Multi-country Programme, IPA II 2018/040-113
Project title:	Support to the Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA)
EU contribution:	EUR 4,35 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Grant contract
Contract reference:	CN 2019/405 139
Duration of activities:	01/05/2019 – 30/04/2022
Links:	http://www.respaweb.eu
Contact :	Inma Perez-Rocha, perez-rocha.maria-inmaculada@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The main aim is to support the public administrations in the Western Balkans to provide better services for citizens and businesses. All the actions under this programme focus on improving the professionalism of the public service, building capacity of senior civil servants at the central level and improving efficiency of service delivery. The activities are in line with the Commission's approach to public administration reform (PAR) in the Western Balkans and are organised/implemented following the reference framework given by the Principles of Public Administration.

ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

During the reporting period, ReSPA organised twelve networking activities that gathered four hundred and three participants. The two main activities have been the following:

- First Western Balkans high-level policy dialogue on PAR hosted by the Slovenian Ministry of Public Administration. The experience shared by Slovenia highlighted a clear difference in managerial culture of an EU Member State for over 15 years. The dialogue also underlined that the modernisation of public administration does not end with EU accession but remains a key priority, including under the European Semester process.

- First meeting of its new regional Programme Committee. The essential role of Programme Committee is to exchange experiences and practices in coordination of reforming activities in PAR, European integration and Public Finance Management.

OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

- Implementation of the *ReSPA Summer School on the Challenges for Further Enlargement of the European Union*, which brought together, in the first week of July, representatives of governmental institutions and senior to mid-level professionals from the Western Balkan countries.
- Joint ReSPA-SIGMA Regional Conference on Public Internal Financial Control for EU candidate countries and potential candidates. During the Conference ReSPA organised a panel discussion on particular experiences in ReSPA Members on coordination of strategic and financial planning.
- Ministerial Conference of ReSPA devoted to the Digitalisation, organised in Skopje, North Macedonia. The conference had the overall objective to discuss and identify lessons learned in the domain of digital transformation in public administration.
- Seasonal school on digital transformation that provided an opportunity for practitioners and experts to share experiences and methodologies, and to re-invent and optimise public services.
- In partnership with OECD/SIGMA, RESPA initiated the design of a methodology for public administration Awards for Western Balkans (categories and criteria design, application process, engagement of assessors and judges, organisation of the awards event).

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Peer mission to Sarajevo of the Better Regulation working group on public consultations;
- Workshop on monitoring and evaluation;
- Translation, publication and dissemination of the study on merit-based recruitment;
- Translation, publication and dissemination of the study on performance appraisal of civil servants;
- Publication and dissemination of the Regional Comparative Study on Service Delivery including translation, and printing;
- Development of a paper on policy coordination;
- Development of the Guidelines for conducting performance appraisal of civil servants,
- Development of the manual on how to make merit-based recruitment work;
- Development of the zero open data guideline;
- Development of the methodology for public administration awards;

- Workshop on performance appraisal for the human resources management working group;
- Digital Summit in Tirana;
- The first Seminar on strategic planning, monitoring and reporting;
- Organisation of the ReSPA panel on NISPAcee annual conference 2020.

1.2 STATISTICAL COOPERATION

Support for Improvement in Statistics

Programme reference:	Multi-country Programme, IPA 2015/031-898
Project title:	Statistical cooperation with the Western Balkans and Turkey
EU contribution:	EUR 16 million (of which 15.8 million contracted)
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Service contract and grants to 4 national statistical offices
Contract reference:	Service contract with GOPA Consultants, EUR 9.8 m Grant to Statistical Office of Montenegro (MONSTAT), EUR 1.34 m Grant to State Statistical Office (SSO) of North Macedonia, EUR 1.73 m Grant to Statistical Office of Serbia, EUR 1.50 m Grant to Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat), EUR 1.38 m
Duration of activities:	Service contract 01/04/2017 – 31/12/2019 Grants to 4 statistical offices 01/07/2017 – 31/10/2019
Links:	http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/about/our-partners/cooperation
Contact :	Torbioern Carlquist, Torbioern.Carlquist@ec.europa.eu

Statistical cooperation with the Western Balkans and Turkey

Programme reference:	Multi-country Programme, IPA 2017/039-873
Project title:	Statistical cooperation with the Western Balkans and Turkey
EU contribution:	EUR 14 million (of which 13.4 million contracted)
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Service contract and grants to 4 national statistical offices
Contract reference:	Service contract with GOPA Consultants, EUR 7.5 m Grant to Statistical Office of Montenegro (MONSTAT), EUR 1.32 m Grant to State Statistical Office (SSO) of North Macedonia,

	EUR 1.55 m Grant to Statistical Office of Serbia, EUR 1.48 m Grant to Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat), EUR 1.29 m Grant to IMF, EUR 0.20 m
Duration of activities:	Service contract 01/01/2019 – 31/12/2021 Grants to 4 statistical offices 01/05/2019 – 31/10/2021 Grant to IMF 03/12/2018 – 02/06/2021
Links:	http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/about/our-partners/cooperation
Contact :	Torbioern Carlquist, Torbioern.Carlquist@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The overall objective is to prepare the statistical authorities in the partner countries for future EU membership by aligning their present statistical methodologies and practices with the EU acquis in statistics and integrating them into the European Statistical System (ESS).

ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

- 1) Regular activities were financed from the service contract under **IPA 2015** such as participation in working group meetings, expert missions to the partner countries, study visits to EU Member States (MS), training events. A total of **31 pilot projects** on various statistical topics was **finalised**.

The service contract was extended for 2 months until the end of December 2019. This made it possible to conduct additional ad hoc activities as requested by the national statistical institutes (NSI). Examples of ad hoc activities include specific technical preparation for the upcoming 2020/2021 population census, consultancy on non-observed economy, assistance to draft a quality assurance plan, assistance to help Bosnia and Herzegovina with the master sample as frame for statistical surveys, and several others.

The draft final report was submitted at the beginning of December 2019 and the final meeting was held also during that month.

The four grant countries (Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Turkey) have finalised the activities under their respective IPA 2015 grants during the period. These activities consist in the implementation of the statistical projects, participation in working group meetings, study visits to EU MS, training events, etc. Final deliverables were provided and final pilot project reports were submitted.

- 2) The service contract under **IPA 2017** has been implemented with a number of workshops and expert missions to partner countries in a total of **26 statistical areas**.

Eighteen traineeships were financed from the IPA 2017 service contract from September to December 2019. Of these, ten were hosted by Eurostat and eight by NSIs in Member States. In addition, two shorter traineeships, lasting 2 months, were organised in cooperation with one Member State NSI.

Implementation of four IPA 2017 grants continued during the period.

As part of its IPA 2017 grant, IMF reported on a workshop held in Montenegro in May 2019 on the topic of external sector statistics.

OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

During the second half of 2019, 21 missions of experts to beneficiaries took place, financed from **IPA 2015**. Their reports show that statisticians in the partner countries continue to learn more about the EU standards in statistics.

Activity reports from participants representing the 3 statistical systems supported under the IPA 2015 service contract (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*) who participated in working group meetings at Eurostat, in 4 pilot project workshops, 2 specific training courses and 11 study visits organised by the contractor. A total of 18 ad hoc consultancies were organised during the period. The participants from the countries benefitting from a grant (Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Turkey) also took part in these activities and described their experiences in mission reports.

Documentation by NSIs of statistical sources and methods continued with the help of European experts. Quality reports and metadata documents were produced.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

Regular activities to support the statistical offices in the candidate countries and potential candidates are financed from the IPA 2017 service contract and grants. The IPA 2015 service contract and grants will be closed with the final reporting.

- 1) Under the **IPA 2015** MBP service contract as well as under the IPA 2015 grants, the final reports will be submitted and the corresponding invoices for final payments are expected. Final grant reports have to be submitted in the first quarter of 2020.
- 2) Under the **IPA 2017** MBP service contract, the first progress report will be commented upon.

Various types of activities will take place: participation in Eurostat working groups and workshops, training events, expert missions to the national statistical offices, study visits, beneficiaries' work in different areas of statistics under the 26 statistical projects in cooperation with the corresponding Eurostat units.

A total of 22 statisticians from partner countries will participate in traineeships at Eurostat and in statistical offices in selected EU Member States from January to April 2020, with financing from IPA 2017. Planning for traineeships in the second semester of 2020 has started.

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244/99 and the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on Kosovo's declaration of independence.

- 3) The work of a **task force**, comprising Eurostat and all 7 national statistical offices, will continue drafting a strategy on statistical cooperation for the period 2021-2027.

1.3 SUPPORT FOR IMPROVEMENT IN GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT (SIGMA)

Programme reference:	Multi-beneficiary Programme, 2017 / 039-402
Project title:	Support for Improvement in Governance and Management (SIGMA) in the Western Balkans and Turkey
EU contribution:	EUR 15 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Contribution agreement with OECD
Contract reference:	CN 2018/394-970
Duration of activities:	01/07/2018 – 30/06/2021
Links:	http://www.sigmaweb.org
Contact :	Vilde Renman, vilde.renman@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

SIGMA supports the public administration reform (PAR) in the Western Balkans and Turkey, providing the beneficiaries with assistance to strengthen their legal frameworks, administrative capacities and processes for sound implementation of national policies and harmonisation and implementation of the EU *acquis*. The areas of intervention include: (1) strategic framework of PAR, (2) policy development and co-ordination, (3) civil service and human resource management, (4) accountability, (5) service delivery, (6) public financial management (PFM) including public procurement (PP) and external audit.

ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

- Fourteen PAR-related strategies and/or action plans and corresponding monitoring systems were supported alongside the provision of generic policy advice on PAR in the Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia).
- Seventy-seven legislative, methodological- and guidance documents were supported. Out of these, 2 were in the area of strategic framework of PAR, 23 in policy development and co-ordination, 19 in public service and human resource management, 11 in accountability, 2 in service delivery, 7 in PFM, 8 in public procurement, and 5 in external audit (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, multi-country).
- Fifty-two capacity-building activities on PAR-related issues were organised, out of which 4 focused on the strategic framework of PAR, 24 on policy development and

co-ordination, 5 on public service and human resource management, 4 on accountability, 1 on service delivery, 1 on PFM, 10 on public procurement, and 3 on external audit (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia).

- Three PAR Special Group meetings and three Policy Dialogue meetings (the total amount of this type of meetings that took place during the reporting period) were supported in their preparation, discussions and follow-up (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia).
- Three events were organised to disseminate the 2019 SIGMA Monitoring Reports and to discuss the way forward (one in Albania, two in Serbia).
- Eight new Action Plans (seven country-specific and one multi-country) covering the period January 2020-June 2021 were agreed with the European Commission.
- One regional conference on public internal financial control (PIFC) was organised in North Macedonia in September 2019.
- One regional Supreme Audit Institution Network meeting was organised in North Macedonia in November 2019.

OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

- Improved planning, monitoring, reporting and evaluation systems for PAR and PFM (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia).
- Strengthened capacities and skills for policy development and policy co-ordination (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, Montenegro, Kosovo, North Macedonia).
- Enhanced capacity of core institutions responsible for implementation of PAR and PFM (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia).
- Active ongoing discussions on merit-based civil service, from strategic thinking and improving legislation to supporting the implementation of reforms (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Kosovo).
- Advancement in conceptualising and preparing policy in the area of senior civil service in order to strengthen professionalism and merit-based recruitment (North Macedonia, Serbia).
- Strengthened legislative framework on accountability, addressing the topics of managerial accountability, administrative disputes, reorganisation of administration, transparency of public sector institutions, free access to information and law on ombudsman (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo, North Macedonia).
- Strengthened policy and legislative framework on PIFC (Albania, Montenegro, Serbia).
- Clearer legislative framework for capital investment management (Serbia).

- Increased capacity of the supreme audit institutions (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, North Macedonia).
- Improved public procurement legislation and increased awareness of good practices (Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, Kosovo*, Turkey).
- Better-informed policy dialogues between the European Commission and the beneficiary administration (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia).
- Increased awareness and preparation of CHUs and senior managers contributing to the implementation of good practices on PIFC in the IPA region.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

SIGMA will continue to provide country-specific assistance to strengthen the functioning of public administration in all of the beneficiaries according to the agreed and approved Action Plans for the upcoming period. A Ministerial conference on “Good public governance for competitive economies” will be organised in June 2020 in Montenegro. The first Government at a Glance report for the Western Balkans will be presented at the conference.

1.4 STRENGTHENING ACCOUNTABILITY AND THE FIDUCIARY ENVIRONMENT (SAFE TF)

Programme reference:	Multi-beneficiary Programme part ELARG, 2014/031-603
Project title:	Strengthening Accountability and the Fiduciary Environment (SAFE), EU Single-Donor Trust Fund
EU contribution:	EUR 3 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Administration Agreement with the World Bank
Contract reference:	IPA 2015/358-797 IPA 2015/369-168
Duration of activities:	10/06/2015 to 30/06/2020
Links:	www.worldbank.org/
Contact:	Damien Ruggeri, damien.ruggeri@ec.europa.eu

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244/99 and the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on Kosovo’s declaration of independence.

PURPOSE

The overall objective is to improve public financial management (PFM) in beneficiary countries by supporting the design, implementation, and management of PFM reforms and by building capacity for reforms effectiveness.

ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

Albania - PFM Technical Assistance: Technical support to the Ministry of Finance and Economy (MFE) in preparation of annual Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) monitoring report outline. The MFE has finalised a draft subnational solvency guideline. A technical assistance report with recommendations on establishing an SOE monitoring report was completed.

Kosovo*- Strengthening Cash Planning and Execution: A cash management expert appointed and thereafter assessed the current practices applied in Kosovo*for cash and allocations management. Consultations with various internal and external stakeholders conducted. Data collection and discussion of the preliminary findings with the Kosovo*Treasury took place. Procurement of cash management system completed.

Kosovo*- Strengthening Office of the Auditor General capacities in procurement audits:

Finalise audit report on Value for Money audits and continued mentoring auditors. Conducted final training courses for IT auditors and staff on IT audits and security-related topics. A roundtable with civil society and professional audit associations was organised with the aim of identifying and discussing relevant and priority topics that will be included in the Annual Performance Audit Plan.

Montenegro PEFA 2019: The final draft was shared for peer review with the Ministry of Finance, the PEFA Secretariat, the World Bank (WB) and the EU in September 2019. The report received the PEFA check. The final Report Dissemination Workshop was held on February 13, 2020 in Podgorica.

Serbia - Supporting implementation of Public Investment Management (PIM) reforms: Completed specifications for a PIM information system as well as a PIM capacity assessment.

Turkey - Enhancing the Impact of the Turkish Court of Account (TCA) on Good Public Governance: Conducted an intensive five-day course on the Government Finance Statistics (GFS). The course included both the conceptual framework of GFS and the practical aspects of data compilation.

Regional - Strengthening Legislative Scrutiny of Internal Audits in Western Balkans Countries: Organized Network of Parliamentary Committees on Economy, Finance, and European Integration of Western Balkans (NPC) Annual Conference on November 12-14, 2019.

The NPC leadership and technical staff updated the individual jurisdiction Action Plans drafted during the Tirana Seminar in May and worked jointly to identify potential just-in-time support for countries that would help their complete implementation.

OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

Albania - Public Financial Management Technical Assistance: Completed pilots for the subnational solvency bylaw in two local governments. Completed technical assistance report on establishing a State-Owned Enterprises monitoring framework.

Kosovo*- Strengthening Cash Planning and Execution: The ICT team drafted technical requirements for the customisation of the cash management module. Improved workflow and business process, the enhanced definition of functional requirements and technical specifications based on team recommendations.

Kosovo*- Strengthening Office of the Auditor General capacities in procurement audits: Increased auditors' skills and knowledge in auditing information technology systems. Increased auditors' skills in auditing donor-funded projects and a better understanding of rules and regulations of the EU and WB. Increased audit skills in the procurement area and detection of fraud in procurement. Moreover, the benefits for civil society were maximized by receiving inputs for shortcoming and risks in the procurement area and in the public sector in general.

Serbia - Supporting implementation of PIM reforms: The Government of Serbia adopted a PIM decree and a final PIM methodology were facilitated and the quality of documents enhanced. Knowledge of government officials on international good practices and main decision points and design options for PIM information systems has increased.

Montenegro PEFA 2019: Government officials better informed on the PEFA methodology, PEFA framework and objectives of the assessment. Government officials' awareness raised regarding the areas of the PFM system needing improvement.

Turkey - Enhancing the Impact of the TCoA on Good Public Governance: Twenty professionals from the TCA are better informed in the evaluation of GFS including theoretical and practical aspects.

Regional - Strengthening Legislative Scrutiny of Internal Audits in Western Balkans Countries: Progress made in the operating relationship between supreme audit institutions (SAIs) and parliamentary oversight committees because of the development and ongoing implementation of the Action Plans. Consensus achieved between SAI and parliamentary communities in the Western Balkans as to the principles that should guide the relationship between stakeholders.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

Albania - PFM Technical Assistance: Support to the MFE in preparing a first PPP monitoring report and contracting authorities in applying the monitoring framework for PPPs. Upon adoption of the draft subnational solvency guideline by the government, the team to monitor implementation of the guideline and provide technical support.

Kosovo* - Strengthening Cash Planning and Execution: Conduct capacity building activities following a training of trainers approach.

Turkey - Enhancing the Impact of the TCoA on Good Public Governance: Knowledge sharing activity including a SAI that is experienced in audits of state aid as well as technical assistance to develop procedures and methodologies for cold reviews, i.e. the quality controls executed after completion of audit works, to enhance the TCA’s quality assurance systems. A citizen engagement workshop with high-level participation of TCA management.

1.5 REVENUE ADMINISTRATION AND PUBLIC FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT IN SOUTHEAST EUROPE

Programme reference:	Multi-beneficiary Programme 2018– PART NEAR 2018/040-113
Project title:	Revenue Administration and Public Financial Management in Southeast Europe
EU contribution:	EUR 10 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	PAGODA with the International Monetary Fund (IMF)
Contract reference:	CN 2018/401-658
Duration of activities:	06/12/2018 – 06/12/2021
Links:	http://www.imf.org
Contact:	Damien Ruggeri, damien.ruggeri@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The purpose of this IMF-led project is to support the implementation of the relevant parts of the partners' Economic Reform Programmes and the preparation and implementation of their national revenue administration (RA) and public financial management (PFM) reform plans.

ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

Albania – for PFM, activities focused on supporting development of regulations and the amendments to the public private partnership (PPP) Law. A short-term expert (STX) visit focused on strengthening and streamlining processes for public investment planning and PPP, based on mission recommendations made in the previous semester. RA capacity

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244/99 and the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on Kosovo’s declaration of independence.

development (CD) activities focused on (i) expanding the use of the compliance risk management (CRM) methodology; (ii) improving the tax audit function and (iii) strengthening the operation of the large taxpayer office (LTO). A headquarters (HQ) led medium-term reform strategy (MTRS) mission was also undertaken in November 2019.

Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) – for PFM, two HQ-led missions were delivered in the period. The first focused on improving cash management in the Federation Ministry of Finance (FMoF), particularly cash forecasting and strengthening the links with borrowing plans. The second provided support to strengthening the oversight of public enterprises (PE), and managing related fiscal risks and the PE arrears of the Federation government. On RA*, a TADAT† assessment of the Republika Srpska Tax Administration (RSTA) was undertaken in September 2019. Furthermore, a HQ-led mission supported the Indirect Taxation Authority (ITA) on human resource management (HRM) reforms and modernisation of customs administration, identifying a significant potential for improving performance levels through HRM reforms and stronger procedures for customs risk management. Feedback on the final draft for the new Tax Administration Law was also provided. Assistance with improving audit efficiency, CRM capacity building, and arrears management was provided by the resident advisor and short-term experts to ITA, RSTA and the Federation of BiH (FBiH).

Kosovo*– for PFM, CD support focused on further strengthening the costing of policies in the annual budget and medium-term budget framework (MTBF) and improving fiscal risks oversight, reporting and monitoring. RA CD support focused on phasing in of the use of the CRM methodology. Support was also provided for improving the tax audit function and consolidating debt collection activities. Advice was also provided to the new executive team on leadership and the organisation of a modern tax administration.

North Macedonia – for PFM, in preparation for the Public Investment Management Assessment (PIMA), two presentations were made in Skopje to explain the PIMA framework to both Ministry of Finance and line ministry staff, to prepare them for collecting the required data. Inputs were also made into the PFM dialogue meeting. RA CD activities focused on strengthening the operations of the LTO and implementing the CRM methodology. A draft compliance management plan was also developed. Additional support was provided for the planning of an information technology (IT) reform program. The VAT refunds process was also reviewed.

Montenegro – for PFM, comments were provided on drafts of the PPP law, building on the training provided on the P-FRAM‡ model, particularly to enhance the alignment with the budget process and to improve identification and management of risks related to PPP contracts. RA CD support focused on expanding the use the CRM methodology and strengthening the tax audit function. Assistance was also provided to improve the administration's HRM system.

* Most RA CD efforts in Bosnia and Herzegovina are being financed by a separate Netherlands program that commenced in June 2017 and will finish in 2020.

† Tax Administration Diagnostic Assessment Tool. TADAT provides a framework for assessing the health of key components of a county's tax administration system and its level of maturity in the context of international good practice.

‡ The P-FRAM is an analytical tool to assess the potential fiscal costs and risks arising from PPP projects.

Serbia – for PFM, a HQ-led mission provided support to the MoF on the development of the fiscal risks function, focusing on building capacity of the new MoF team in assessing macro-economic, PE, public investments, and PPP related risks. RA CD support to progress the IT reform program continued. Assistance was given to develop key performance indicators (KPIs) and to implement VAT anti-fraud strategies. A HQ-led mission focusing on the progress of the reform agenda was undertaken in October 2019.

Regional - for PFM, a workshop on Strengthening the Governance of Public Infrastructure was delivered at the Center of Excellence in Finance (CEF) in Ljubljana with participation of all beneficiary countries under the project, four EU member states and Georgia. On RA, a two-and-a-half-day workshop on the application of CRM methodology was delivered at the CEF in December 2019. All six tax administrations participated with relevant managers and staff.

OUTCOME (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

Albania – for PFM, draft revised PPP regulations, designed to align the PPP project selection process with that of traditionally financed public investments were produced, but no further progress in approval of revised draft regulations has been made. Regarding RA, three CRM compliance projects are underway (tourism industry, café and restaurant sector, construction industry), although tangible results will take at least 12 months to be realized. A cadre of staff has been trained in the application of the CRM methodology. The LTO is progressing the implementation of the risk differentiation framework methodology with comprehensive risk profiles developed for over 80 taxpayers. An LTO risk unit has been established and all transfer pricing activities across the administration have been consolidated into one team.

Bosnia and Herzegovina – for PFM, a draft manual for cash management was produced for the FBiH as well as a set of recommendations and roadmap for the development of oversight of public enterprises in the Federation. Concerning RA, a new Tax Administration Law that brings together under one piece of legislation the provisions that deal with tax procedures and aligns as much as possible the administration of the different taxes for RS has been tabled in Parliament. Following the TADAT assessment, the RS Ministry of Finance (MoF) has approved the establishment of an RSTA cross-organisational risk management unit reporting directly to the Director. Following a HQ-led mission, recommendations on HRM and customs reforms were submitted by the ITA to the Governing Board (comprising the three BiH Ministers of Finance) with approval given to proceed with the reforms. New procedures have been implemented in ITA to reduce the burden of mandated audits.

Kosovo – for PFM, changes to the existing policy costing template to allow for more quantitative and qualitative information and to make it more user friendly were provided to the authorities. On RA, a new function-based HQ structure that facilitates a sharper focus on core activities and improves overall governance is now in place. A CRM project for the construction industry has been developed and is underway. Most audits are now risk-based and audit case selection is managed by the administration's HQ with improved results expected to be reported at the end of this year. The modernized VAT refund processes have resulted in improvements to the timeliness of refunds and better targeting of high-risk cases.

North Macedonia – for PFM, data to support the PIMA analysis was produced and relevant officials were provided with an overview of the assessment’s purpose, analytical basis and outputs. Comments were provided on the 2019 mid-year PFM progress report. On RA, a risk management team has been established which will facilitate a stronger focus on identifying, assessing and ranking compliance risks. To date, two industry-based compliance programs have been developed.

Montenegro – for PFM, comments and suggestions for improving the PPP law were produced, some of which were incorporated into the final draft and the approved law. Regarding RA, a compliance risk register has been developed and compliance improvement projects for the construction and tourism sectors have been designed and underway with material results expected over the next 12-month period. An HRM strategy that supports a more methodical and integrated approach to recruitment, training and individual performance assessment has been developed.

Serbia – for PFM, tools for assessing specific fiscal risks arising from SOEs and PPPs, as well as macroeconomic risks, were provided to the new team in the MoF along with a broader understanding of the context of fiscal risk. On RA, a new compliance program using third party data has been designed and the process to develop a data warehouse capability has commenced. VAT refunds processing has been partially automated, and timeliness of refunds has improved.

Regional – for PFM, the proposal to create a public investment management community of practice was well received by the participants of the workshop on Strengthening the Governance of Public Infrastructure.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

Albania – for PFM, support will focus on drafting the PIM regulations and aligning them with PPP regulations, and cash management, in particular enhancing cash forecasts and strengthening the links with borrowing and investment plans. On RA, support will be provided to consolidate and modernise the debt collection function. There will be ongoing support for the use of CRM in developing compliance improvement plans and improving the tax audit function. A follow-up to the HQ-led mission will also take place to provide support in the formulation of the MTRS.

Bosnia and Herzegovina – for PFM, a HQ-led mission will review PEs and make recommendations for enhancing their oversight and governance in the Republika Srpska and Brcko District. Further assistance will be provided to enhance cash forecasting in the Federation government, if requested. Regarding RA, a HQ-led mission will support ITA with a proposal for amending the Law on Indirect Taxation Procedures to design an improved framework for VAT and excise administration including safeguarding taxpayer rights. Resident advisor and STX assistance will mainly focus on CRM, audit efficiency, and arrears management.

Kosovo – for PFM, follow-up support building on fiscal risks work in the previous period will be undertaken, in particular strengthening the underlying analysis and disclosure of fiscal risk in the medium term expenditure framework documents. On RA, support will be provided to finalise the consolidation of the debt collection function and modernise associated business processes. Assistance will also be provided to design key performance

targets and measures and to strengthen the application of the CRM methodology. A HQ-led mission on reviewing reform progress visited the administration in January 2020.

North Macedonia – for PFM, a PIMA was undertaken in January 2020. Follow-up on its recommendations as well as the results of the fiscal transparency evaluation will be the main focus for this period. Regarding RA, a HQ TADAT mission is scheduled to take place in March 2020. Support to the leadership team on how to drive and manage change will continue. A workshop to accelerate IT reform was held in January 2020. Further assistance to improve the audit function will also be provided.

Montenegro – PFM CD assistance supporting the development of the PPP framework and containing related fiscal risks will be provided. RA CD support will continue to be provided to strengthen the operations of the LTO and the tax audit function. Ongoing support in taking a more modern governance and leadership approach to meet the challenges of managing a substantial reform agenda in parallel to the day-to-day operations will be provided. A HQ-led mission focusing on reform progress is scheduled to take place in February 2020.

Serbia - PFM CD delivery will be provided to the Fiscal Risk Unit on assessing and reporting fiscal risks, to the Public Investment Management Unit on project assessment and monitoring and on the alignment of public investment processes with the budget process. A roadmap for the development of the PIM function will be drafted. RA CD support will be provided on the use of data analytics for compliance risk identification and assessment. In conjunction with new legislation on “origin of assets”, CD assistance will be provided on the use of indirect audit methods, the development of new procedures, and establishing a new team with a specific focus on unexplained wealth.

Regional - The annual IMF-EC-SECO project coordination meeting will take place on May 28-29, 2020. For PFM, follow-up on the regional workshop and discussion to launch the community of practice on public investment management. On RA, a workshop to assist beneficiary countries to estimate their own VAT – Tax Gap using the IMF Revenue Administration Gap Analysis Program (RA-GAP) methodology is scheduled to take place at the CEF in June 2020.

1.6 WESTERN BALKANS ALUMNI ASSOCIATION (WBAA)

Programme reference:	Annual IPA Multi-beneficiary Programme
Project title:	Support to Western Balkan Alumni Association
EU contribution:	EUR 1.75 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Service contract to a consortium (composed of GIZ, MOSAIC, HIS Institute for Advanced Studies, and Pietzpluswild), managed by EAC
Duration of activities:	15/09/2018 – 31/12/2019
Links:	https://www.western-balkans-alumni.eu

Contact :Albert Sesé Ballart, albert.sese-ballart@ec.europa.eu**PURPOSE**

The aim of the WBAA is to establish a strong union of alumni originating from the Western Balkans in order to advocate for modernization and improve the quality of higher education in the region. In addition, WBAA aims to ease collaboration and exchanges in the Western Balkans and empower young people of the region in academic and career development.

ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

The main types of WBAA activities are the internal meetings, participation in external meetings and WBAA projects realised by the volunteers.

The WBAA Team Meeting took place in Sarajevo on 17-18 October 2019, with around 35 WBAA team members. It was followed by the WBAA Board Meeting on 18-19 October 2019 with 12 board members.

During the first half of the year, the Service Provider (SP) prepared the application documents for the first calls for WBAA Projects. Before the first open Call for Projects the WBAA board decided to launch first a pilot project for each National Chapter. Maximum budget for each pilot project was 1.500 €. Some of them took place during the second half of the year.

The first Call was launched in May 2019. 18 projects were selected. This aimed to use the larger part of the annual WBAA project budget. The second Call was launched in September 2019 and 10 projects were selected.

OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

- WBAA Team Meeting and Board Meeting in Sarajevo 17-19 October;
- Launch of the 2nd Call for projects in September, 2019;
- As of 31/11/2019, WBAA has 112 members in Albania, 164 members in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 163 members in Kosovo*, 38 members in Montenegro, 79 members in North Macedonia, and 150 members in Serbia.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Regional Board Meeting in Pristina, Kosovo* 13 March 2020;
- WBAA II General Assembly in Pristina, Kosovo* 14-15 March 2020;

Launch of the 3rd call for projects, spring 2020

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244/99 and the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on Kosovo's declaration of independence.

CHAPTER 2: RULE OF LAW AND FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS

2.1 FIGHT AGAINST ORGANISED CRIME AND CORRUPTION

Ending impunity for grand corruption in the Western Balkans and Turkey

Programme reference:	Multi-beneficiary Programme IPA/2018/040-113
Project title:	Ending impunity for grand corruption in the Western Balkans and Turkey
EU contribution:	EUR 999.998
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Grant Agreements with Transparency International (TI)
Contract reference:	CN 2018/401-061
Duration of activities:	01/11/2018 – 31/12/2020
Contact :	Eleonora Sconci, eleonora.sconci@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The project’s overall objective is to contribute to the improved good governance in the Western Balkans and Turkey. It tackles corruption as an entry point to addressing state capture. The project seeks to improve transparency and accountability of the judiciary and democratic law-making. It looks at tailor-made laws that enable and maintain state capture and ensure a better understanding of grand corruption cases and its effects in the society. Based on the research findings, project partners will use illustrative case studies and launch innovative advocacy initiatives. This ongoing work builds on a previous IPA funded action.

ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

- Transparency International Secretariat (TI-S) brought together project partners for the **second regional project meeting** in Belgrade on 24-26 September 2019. The partners discussed the research progress, the application of the new definition of grand corruption to the project, database development, and the use of online communication tools in evidence-based advocacy campaigns.
- Project partners continued to **collect cases of grand corruption and tailor-made laws**. TI-S provided continuous support and feedback on the gathered material of the ongoing research. Further, TI-S prepared the process of fact-checking, proofreading, libel-checking and translation of cases and laws for publication in the databases.
- TI-S and project partners worked on developing **online searchable databases** of grand corruption cases and tailor-made laws. The databases will provide structured

information for journalists, civil society organisations, academics, public officials, citizens and the broader public on grand corruption cases and tailor-made laws.

OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

- Project partners learned how to build advocacy strategies with common messaging and utilise videos and online tools in campaigns.
- Project partners collected and reviewed potential 131 grand corruption cases and 77 tailor-made laws by December 2019.
- Project partners agreed on the design and structure of the online searchable databases.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Project partners will continue to identify grand corruption cases and tailor-made laws and prepare them for publication in the databases throughout the next semester.
- TI-S will publish two online searchable databases containing grand corruption cases and tailor-made laws in March 2020.
- TI-S will conduct an external mid-term review of the project and organise the mid-term regional meeting in April 2020.
- Project partners and TI-S will initiate the analysis of the research material and start to prepare the country and regional research reports.
- Project partners and TI-S will start making videos, utilising online tools and organising evidence-based advocacy campaigns in the region.

Programme reference:	IPA Multi-Country Programme 2014/031-603
Project title:	Measuring and assessing organized crime in the Western Balkans: Supporting evidence-based policy making (MACRO)
EU contribution:	EUR 2 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Grant agreement for a pillar assessed organisation United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Research and Trends Analysis Branch
Contract reference:	CN 2015/358-127
Duration of activities:	01/04/2016 – 31/12/2019
Links:	https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/toc.html
Contact :	Olivia Debaveye, olivia.debaveye@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The overall objective of the action is to implement a statistical framework for quantifying and analysing organised crime in the Western Balkans, to establish mechanisms to monitor it and to produce an evidence-based analytical report on organised crime (OC) in the Western Balkans. The statistical framework will include various components, such as criminal activities perpetrated by organised crime groups, the response by the criminal justice system and on ways of operating.

ACTIVITIES (JULY- DECEMBER 2019)

In the second half of 2019, many key activities were implemented under the MACRO project. From 18-19 July 2019, an expert group meeting was organized at which a draft of the final report was shared with academics, government and civil society experts from the Western Balkans and outside. Discussions focused on summarizing the key findings of the data collection and the evidence-based policy advice emanating from these.

From 17-18 September 2019, MACRO organized a second regional training activity in Montenegro, which was attended by over 80 representatives from national statistical offices, police, prosecutors, judges and prison officials, all who collect and analyze crime data. The training included a description of how MACRO maximized organized crime data collection, the main findings of the MACRO project, a panel on ICCS implementation, as well as a panel on organized crime threat assessments, and civil society engagement in crime data collection.

In December, the ToRs for the evaluation of the project (the final objective of the project) were drafted, and a main evaluator was recruited.

The remainder of the year was devoted to analysing and drafting the final report, which is expected to be published shortly.

OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

The second regional training elicited overall positive responses from the feedback survey, with participants agreeing that the panels were relevant to their work and interesting.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

In February 2020, MACRO project will participate in a conference on organised crime in the Western Balkans at Wilton Park in the UK. UNODC will co-organize the conference together with the Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime, Siracusa Institute, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Home Office of the UK government. The conference is expected to discuss three regional projects that look at organized crime from different perspectives to find common themes and possible policy interventions to help support the rule of law.

In addition, MACRO has registered an ancillary meeting to present the project and its main findings at the 14th Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in Kyoto, Japan on 21 April 2020.

As noted above, the final report of the project will be published shortly (expected Q2 2020) and the evaluation of the project is ongoing. An evaluation report will be presented in mid-2020.

Balkans Act Now (BAN - phase III)

Programme reference:	Europe Aid/154870/DH/ACT/Multi
Project title:	Balkans Act Now (BAN - phase III)
EU contribution:	EUR 965,117.64
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Grant agreement
Contract reference:	2017/394348
Duration of activities:	01/01/2018 – 31/12/2021
Links:	http://www.astra.rs
Contact :	Emma Asciutti, emma.asciutti@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The Western Balkan region needs to respond to the judicial reform and fight against organized crime, specifically human trafficking (THB) under the EU accession negotiation processes. An instrument to develop the judiciary is enhancing and strengthening regional cooperation by improving capacities and the influence of civil society organisations (CSO) in debating and monitoring on human rights and rule of law. This project is in its 3rd phase and it builds upon the successes of the phases 1 and 2. Phase 3 focuses primarily on strengthening of the cooperation and capacities of the Western Balkans (WB) relevant institutions on the adoption and implementation of the Monitoring tool on Human Trafficking. This tool will ensure a transparent and accountable monitoring as well as the comparison of regional data and quality services provided to victims of human trafficking. The project also supports the establishment of the future National Rapporteur's offices.

ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

- Selection of sub-grantees and implementation of selected projects.
- Finalisation of Monitoring Tool specific national indicators and preparation of 5 comparative Monitoring Tool Pilot national reports.

OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

- The sub-granting component of the project awarded 11 sub-grants: Bosnia and Herzegovina (2) Macedonia (2), Albania (2), Serbia (4) and Montenegro (1). Call for the selection of second sub-grantee, Montenegro will organize at the end of January 2020
- In October, a workshop on analysis skills and monitoring tool gathered 18 participants including national coordinators of working groups (WG) on the national specific indicators to exchange their experiences and prepare, together with an international consultant, a common framework for the development of national pilot monitoring reports.
- BAN III Steering Committee based on the workshop inputs and consultants' recommendation made decision to postpone the Regional Conference for March 2020
- Two partners meetings have been organized in Belgrade with the aim to overview the process so far in order to identify the required steps for key activities and overcome eventual problems and challenges with the purpose of making common activity and financial plan for 2020.
- The smartphone application on the fight against THB created for raising awareness of young people on dangers of trafficking was renewed through the introduction of Albanian language and placed in application stores (Apple, Google play and Windows phone stores) for free download.
- On International Day for the Elimination of Slavery, BAN III partners organized in Belgrade the Media conference that provided an overview and a brief analysis of the situation in the field of combating THB in the region, focusing on common and specific trends and challenges in this area. Particular attention was given to the importance of introduction of a National Rapporteur institution.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- CSO collection of data
- Project Audit
- Progress Evaluation
- National Working Groups for institutional review of MT indicators
- Regional Conference and presentation of pilot monitoring reports
- Study visit to Netherlands National Rapporteur

Civil Society for Good Governance and Anticorruption in Southeast Europe: Capacity Building for Monitoring, Advocacy and Awareness Raising (SELDI)

Programme reference: IPA Civil Society Facility and Media Programme 2016-2017 (2016-038-960, 2017-038-931)

Project title:	Civil Society for Good Governance and Anticorruption in Southeast Europe: Capacity Building for Monitoring, Advocacy and Awareness Raising (SELDI)
EU contribution:	EUR 1,135,257
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Grant Agreement with the Macedonian Center for International Cooperation
Contract reference:	2018/394-123 EuropeAid/154870/DH/ACT/Multi
Duration of activities:	10.05.2018-09.05.2022
Links:	http://seldi.net/home/ , www.mcic.mk
Contact:	Eleonora Sconci, eleonora.sconci@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The overall objective of the action is to enhance the impact of civil society in public decision-making and reform processes in the Western Balkans in the area of good governance and anti-corruption through evidence-based advocacy, watchdog and policy monitoring, and dialogue with the governments.

ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

- The grant beneficiaries awarded under the **SELDI Small Grants Programme** started implementing the grants' scheme on 1 September 2019. First progress reports were submitted to the Coordinator, the Center for Civic Initiatives, in December 2019.
- All core partners from the six beneficiaries **finalized the implementation of the Monitoring Anticorruption Policy Implementation (MACPI) State Capture Survey**. The fieldwork was completed in the remaining four countries, securing the necessary larger sample of respondents. The draft report will be prepared in January 2020, when all beneficiaries will be asked to analyze the data.
- All beneficiaries led by Chapter Coordinators prepared inputs for the **preparation of the Regional Anti-Corruption Report (RAR)**. The coordinators integrated all inputs and the draft text of RAR Chapters was shared with all beneficiaries for comments and additions.
- Centre for the Study of Democracy (CSD) organised a **round table discussion about the Russian Influence in the South-East Europe**. The Macedonian Center for International Cooperation (MCIC) and other SELDI Partners participated.

- MCIC representatives attended the **8th Session of the Conference of the State Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption** in Abu Dhabi on 16-20 December 2019. MCIC representative participated as a panelist on a side event about good practice on the involvement and engagement of non-state actors in the fight against corruption.
- **SELDI Regional Policy Forum:** Delivering on the Promise of EU Enlargement: 30 Years of Governance and Anticorruption Reforms in Central and Eastern Europe took place on 13 December 2019 in Skopje. The Regional Forum discussed solutions to move on with enlargement, while delivering on the governance reforms eagerly expected by the citizens in the Western Balkans. The event was organized by SELDI organisations in cooperation with the North Macedonian CSO Anti-Corruption Platform. More than 100 representatives from CSOs, institutions, international organisations and other stakeholders from North Macedonia and the region contributed to the discussion.
- **Publications** of the articles: “Corruption pressure in the rise in the Western Balkans since 2016”, “Interview with Mr. Milićević: Fight against corruption is not sufficiently supported by the public”, “The Fallen Anti-Corruption Heroine Katica Janeva”, and “Vetting Process in Albania: the Marching Failure”.

OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

- Thematic Policy Briefs “Anti-Corruption Agencies in the Western Balkan Countries: Delivering on the Promise” and “Corruption in the Western Balkans: Trends and Policy Options”;
- Two editions of SELDI Newsletter (#47 - #48);
- Four media/ journalist articles prepared and published.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Preparation of the third Thematic Policy Brief on corruption and the hidden economy coordinated, and publication of the 4th Policy Brief on the judiciary in anticorruption;
- Preparing MACPI State Capture Report, the Policy Brief on MACPI State Capture results, and the Regional Anticorruption Report (RAR);
- Organisation of policy event in Brussels for presenting the RAR findings;
- Initial Preparations for the MACPI Micro Survey (selecting and establishing initial contacts with national state institution);
- Organizing fourth Steering Committee meeting;
- Preparation of articles (at least 2 per month) and dissemination of SELDI newsletters.

Regional Justice Survey – Western Balkans

Programme reference:	Multi-beneficiary Programme under IPA Transition Assistance and Institution Building Component for the year 2015, IPA 2014/031-603
Project title:	Regional Justice Survey Western Balkan
EU contribution:	EUR 0.8 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Administration agreement with World Bank
Contract reference:	IPA/2018/402-958
Duration of activities:	01/01/2019 – 30/06/2020
Links:	www.worldbank.org
Contact :	Srdjan Svircev, Senior Public Sector Specialist, World Bank

PURPOSE

The overall objective is to inform the justice policy dialogue through the generation, analysis, and dissemination of survey data on justice system performance in Western Balkan countries.

ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

To implement the survey fieldwork (face to face interviews with citizens, business representatives and lawyers; and self-administer survey with judges, prosecutors, and administrative staff), the World Bank organize international competitive bidding and signed contract with selected company in August 2019.

The World Bank project team, in partnership with the EU delegation offices in respective countries, organized a series of missions to the Western Balkan countries in period July-December 2019 to present project purpose and methodology to key judicial stakeholders. Aim of the missions were to ensure support for the fieldwork and discuss country-specific issues that should be included in the questionnaires.

The World Bank team maintained close supervision of the survey company to ensure implementation is on track and to provide additional support if needed. The central workshops for project managers and professionals working on the survey in each country was organized in September to ensure quality. Following this workshop, team organized a series of in-country meetings with survey implementation teams.

To test questionnaires pilots were organized in each country. By end of December, the pilots were completed in Serbia, Montenegro and North Macedonia. Pilots are in progress in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo*Main filed work started in Serbia for all target groups and in Montenegro for users.

OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

Signed contract with the survey company – the World Bank conducted an international competitive survey and signed the contract with survey company in August 2019.

National questionnaires – based on the master questionnaires prepared together with the DG JUST the World Bank team prepared national questionnaires for each target group and adjuste to country specific legal terminology.

Country specific questions – in addition to the master questionnaire that it same for all countries the World Bank jointly with the survey company prepared country-specific questions for each country to include topics relevant for specific country.

Missions – Mission to Kosovo*was organized on July 15-16, 2019. Mission to Albania was organized on December 18-19, 2019 to ensure that judicial stakeholders are informed about the regional survey and methodology. The purpose of the mission was to ensure support of the High Judicial Council and High Prosecutorial Council in the implementation of the survey. Mission to Montenegro was organized on December 20, 2019, to ensure support of the judicial institutions in the implementation of the survey and signing of support letters.

Pilots with target groups – Pilots with all target groups were finalized in Serbia, Montenegro, and North Macedonia. The purpose of the pilots was to test the questions.

Main fieldwork – Main fieldwork started in Serbia for all target groups and in Montenegro for citizens, businesses and lawyers.

Support letters – The World Bank team works with national judicial stakeholders to ensure support letters to enter to courts and prosecutors' offices. Support letters signed by judicial stakeholders are ensured in Serbia, Kosovo, North Macedonia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The signing of support letters is pending in Montenegro. Support letters for Albania should be signed by the end of January.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

Pilot survey – Pilot surveys are planned to be finalized in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*and Albania.

Filed work – Filed work is planned to be finalized by the end of April 2020.

Preliminary results – First preliminary results should be available by May 2020 for all countries. However, preliminary results from countries where the main filed work started earlier should be available by the end of March 2020 and will be presented at the workshop in Brussels.

Targeting crime proceeds on the internet in South Eastern Europe and Turkey (iPROCEEDS)

Programme reference:	Multi-country Programme, IPA 2014/031-603
Project title:	Project iPROCEEDS - Cooperation on Cybercrime under the Instrument of Pre-accession (IPA): Project on targeting crime proceeds on the Internet in South-eastern Europe and Turkey
EU contribution:	EUR 5 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Grant agreement for a pillar assessed organisation with the Council of Europe
Contract reference:	CN 2015/367-971
Duration of activities:	01/01/2016 – 31/12/2019
Links:	https://www.coe.int/en/web/cybercrime/iproceeds
Contact :	Olivia Debayeve, olivia.debaveye@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The main objective of the action is that the beneficiaries will comply with relevant standards regarding cybercrime and crime proceeds including the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime (CETS 185)* and the Convention on Laundering, Search, Seizure and Confiscation of the Proceeds from Crime and on the Financing of Terrorism (CETS 198)[†] of the Council of Europe (CoE). Both treaties and the related assessment or monitoring mechanisms are most relevant for countries covered by this Action. In fact, the beneficiaries are expected to comply with the *EU acquis* and relevant Council of Europe conventions and standards.

ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

- First Meeting of National Judicial Trainers on Cybercrime and Electronic Evidence was held on 11-13 July 2019 in Strasbourg, France.
- Introductory Training Courses on cybercrime, electronic evidence and online crime proceeds continued to be delivered at the national level in North Macedonia (21 -22 and 28 -29 October) and Serbia (25 – 28 November).
- Support the participation of law enforcement officers in a long-distance master programme: MSc Forensic Computing and Cybercrime Investigation, Dublin, Ireland.

* Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, North Macedonia and Turkey are Parties. The Cybercrime Convention Committee (T-CY) assesses implementation of this treaty (www.coe.int/tcy).

[†] Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and North Macedonia and Turkey are Parties. These States are monitored by MONEYVAL (www.coe.int/moneyval).

- Delivery of three specialised training courses for law enforcement authorities: Undercover Online Investigations (17 – 20 September 2019); basic training course on Open Source Intelligence (21 – 25 October 2019) and Pilot Training on Cryptocurrency and Dark web Investigation (2 – 26 December 2019), organised in Bucharest, Romania.
- Assessment of the Kosovo* Draft Law on Cyber Security to determine the level of its compliance with the EU acquis and the Budapest Convention (October 2019).
- FIU Albania with the support of the iPROCEEDS project organised a one-day training on 22 November 2019 in Tirana, on the application of indicators for financial sector to prevent money laundering the online environment.
- Seven Performance Review Workshops in each project country/areas (Serbia, 14 October 2019; Montenegro, 15 October 2019; Bosnia and Herzegovina, 17 October 2019; Albania, 19 November 2019; North Macedonia, 21 November 2019; Kosovo, 26 November 2019; and Turkey, 28 November) were organised with the scope to review and measure progress made in achieving results in each seven project areas, from 2016 to 2019. The progress, but also the outcomes, challenges and the success achieved during the 48 months of the project were reviewed and discussed at the Closing Conference of the project, organised in Strasbourg, France, on 9 – 10 December 2019.

OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

- Judges, prosecutors, legal associates and candidates increased their skills and knowledge on cybercrime trends and threats, technology, electronic evidence, financial investigations of cybercrime proceeds, including the relevant substantive and procedural laws, money laundering typologies related to the online environment, as well as channels and avenues of international co-operation which can be taken in the search, seizure and confiscation of online crime proceeds.
- Criminal justice authorities strengthened their capacities with respect to international cooperation for the investigation and prosecution of cybercrime, collection of electronic evidence and search, seizure and confiscation of online crime proceeds.
- Law Enforcement Authorities strengthened their skills and knowledge on how to effectively use the Internet, social media and other digital resources, detect, identify, collect intelligence and evidence in order to prosecute all kind of criminal activities on the Dark Web and/or using cryptocurrencies.
- Banks and remittance companies in Albania increased their awareness on trends and criminal money flows on the Internet, money laundering threats, typologies and red flags related to online fraud and other types of cybercrime.

Balkan Tender Watch

Programme reference:	EuropeAid/154870/DH/ACT/Multi
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Project title:	Balkan Tender Watch
EU contribution:	EUR 966,349.80
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans (Serbia, North Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina)
Type of contract:	Grant Contract with Open Society Foundation Serbia
Contract reference:	2017/393-763
Duration of activities:	20/12/2017 – 20/12/2021
Links:	http://www.balkantenderwatch.eu
Contact :	Eleonora Sconci, Eleonora.Sconci@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The purpose of the project is increasing the Western Balkans civil society impact on anti-corruption policies and practices during the public procurement (PP) cycle by utilizing the EU integration as a transformative agenda. The project aims to influence the governments to introduce reforms, which will enable establishing accountable PP systems aligned with the EU rules and building alliances with public authorities willing to engage in reforms.

ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

- In-depth **monitoring of 50 comparative public procurement (PP) cases** by applying produced benchmarking tool on documents obtained through freedom of information (FOI) requests;
- **Workshops for 50 grassroots organizations** (candidates for sub-grants) – training for application of the benchmarking tool;
- Ranking of Western Balkans PP systems based on the results of the application of the benchmarking tool for identifying corruption vulnerable spots in PP system;
- Production of the **Comparative Evaluation Report (CER)** on the corruption vulnerable spots within PP systems in 5 Western Balkans partners with concrete findings from the analyses and with recommendations for improvement of national PP systems;
- Production of 5 policy brief and 5 media brief;
- National roundtables and **regional conference in Podgorica** to present monitoring results and recommendations;
- Providing **sub-grants to selected grassroots organizations** trained to apply benchmarking tool through restrictive call for proposals;
- **Advocacy efforts** for improving the performance of anti-corruption mechanisms in PP;
- Coalition experience **sharing-working visit to Brussels**.

OUTPUTS (JULY - DECEMBER 2019)

- After a period of preparation and research, the project entered a **new phase** that relies on the findings based on the full application of the developed benchmarking tool. Over 50 civil society organisations (CSOs) have been trained to apply the tool, thus being able to undertake independent monitoring of PP in their respective domain. The ability of the CSOs has been tested through the restricted call for proposals for their own projects through which they would apply the benchmarking tool and thus contribute to the transparency and accountability of PP in the contexts they operate in. A total of 11 grants has been distributed to the selected trained organizations and their coalitions (two per beneficiary), thereby making the monitoring widespread across the region. The Open Society Foundation contributed with additional EUR 200.000 to attribute grants to grassroots organizations in the region for applying the benchmarking tool in the areas of health and education. Additional efforts have been put in Albania, although it is not covered under the current project.
- The **Comparative Evaluation Report (CER)** has been produced and widely shared in the beneficiaries. The Report includes PP systems with high vulnerability to corruption. It also illustrates the weak spots through presented PP cases and analyses the way forward. The Report also reflects the dedication of the members of the Balkan Tender Watch Coalition to promote and share best regional practices when dealing with corruption risks.
- Under the auspices of the project, a regular **Annual Western Balkans Conference** was held. The conference took place in Podgorica, bringing together relevant stakeholders from across the region with trained grassroots CSOs to discuss current issues and developments related to the fight against corruption in PP. The Coalition partnered with the PP administration of the city of Ghent on tackling corruption and accountability risks in PP, since the harmonization of the Western Balkans systems with the acquis and the EU member states legislation and practices is among the priorities of the project.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- The second round of in-depth monitoring of public procurement (PP) cases will be run by setting the sample, searching publicly available information and filing freedom of information requests;
- Coalition workshop in Belgrade will be organised for setting the monitoring sample, fine tuning the benchmarking tool and coordinating support to the grassroots organizations that recipients of the sub-grants;
- Regular communication, mentoring and coaching for sub-grantees will continue in order to secure effective implementation of the benchmarking tool on the local level;
- Advocacy for improving the performance of anti-corruption mechanisms in PP will continue;

The production of one policy and one media brief per beneficiary is envisioned

2.3 ROMA INTEGRATION

Programme reference:	Multi-country Action Programme IPA 2016/037-900
Project title:	ROMACTED – Promoting good governance and Roma Empowerment at local level
EU contribution:	EUR 3 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Grant Agreement with the Council of Europe
Contract reference:	CN 2017/384-651
Duration of activities:	01/05/2017 – 30/04/2020
Contact:	Kristina Vujic, kristina.vujic@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

To build up political will and sustained policy engagement of local authorities to enhance democratic local governance, build up capacity and stimulate the empowerment of local Roma communities; contribute to the design, implementation and monitoring of plans and projects concerning them. The project targets 50 municipalities (local administrations, elected representatives and officials) and Roma communities in the Western Balkans and Turkey.

The main activities held between July and December 2019 at beneficiary level and regional level were the following (please note that this list does not include the local interventions in the 61 participating municipalities):

- Coordination meeting with DG NEAR, World Bank, UNDP and ROMACTED, 8 August, Brussels, and participation in the Western Balkans Roma Integration Declaration at the Western Balkans Summit, 5 July, Poznan, Poland
- Summer School on the Political Participation and Empowerment of Roma Women, 21-24 August 2019, Veles, North Macedonia
- Launch of the ROMACTED small grants scheme, 6 September
- Joint monitoring visit with DG NEAR and EU Delegation in Skopje, 17 September, Veles and Vinica, North Macedonia
- ROMACTED Summer School for Roma youth, 19 -22 September 2019, Novi Sad, Serbia
- Second Advisory Group Meeting and induction of the new ROMACTED staff in the CoE Programme Office in Podgorica, 11 October, Montenegro
- Second ROMACTED National Workshop, 1-4 October, Tetovo, North Macedonia
- Third ROMACTED Advisory Group Meeting, 14 November, Tirana, Albania
- ROMACTED Training on the Promotion and Protection of Women’s Rights in Kosovo, 18 November, Pristina, Kosovo

- Second ROMACTED Advisory Group Meeting, 19 November, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina
- ROMACTED Workshop on IPA Funding and Implementation of Projects, 2-3 December 2019, Petrovac, Montenegro
- Consultative Session on ROMACTED Guidelines on Local Roma Responsive Budgeting, 17 December, Tirana, Albania
- National ROMACTED Workshop for the Development of Local Strategies, Ankara, 18-19 December, Ankara, Turkey

OUTPUTS (JULY – DECEMBER 2019)

The main outputs of this period were:

- Local interventions with the communities and the local administrations running at a good pace in most of the beneficiaries, with 75 Community Action Groups (CAG) established in 61 municipalities and regular meetings with the municipalities
- A significant number of Local Action Plans adopted and revised as a result of the implementation of the ROMACTED methodology
- Thematic training was initiated in various beneficiaries on different priorities such as Roma youth participation, Roma women's empowerment, Roma sensitive budgeting, etc.
- The results achieved so far are satisfactory and provide a good perspective. ROMACTED is currently in STEP 4, the period in which the small grants scheme will be implemented in five beneficiaries in a total of 48 municipalities, as an integral part of the ROMACTED methodology, with the exception of Montenegro and Turkey.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Implementation of the small grants scheme in 48 municipalities (in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia and Serbia)
- Workshop with local authorities on the EU Instrument for the Pre-Accession Assistance, Pristina, 28-30 January
- Workshop on Roma Responsive Budgeting, Elbasan, Albania, 12-13 February
- Workshops on IPA Funds (2 workshops), Belgrade, 27-28 February, and 5-6 March tbc
- Third Advisory Group Meeting in Skopje, North Macedonia and monitoring visit to municipality/ies, 3-4 March
- Regional Coordination Meeting with Project Officers and Focal Points, Strasbourg, 11-12 March
- Consultation workshop with Local Authorities for the new Roma Action Plan in Bosnia and Herzegovina, March tbc
- Advisory Group Meeting in Turkey, 1st week of April tbc

- Second Advisory Group Meeting in Belgrade, Serbia, and Workshop on CAG Sustainability, 11-15 May tbc
- Second Advisory Group Meeting in Pristina, Kosovo, and monitoring visit, May tbc
- Fourth Advisory Group Meeting in Albania, May/June tbc
- Third Advisory Group Meeting in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, June tbc
- Third Steering Committee Meeting, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 16 June

Programme reference:	Multi-country Action Programme for the year 2018, IPA 2018/040-113
Project title:	Roma Integration 2020
EU contribution:	EUR 2.0 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Grant Agreement with RCC
Contract reference:	CN 2018/400-736
Duration of activities:	01/01/2019 – 31/12/2021
Links:	http://www.rcc.int/romaintegration2020/home
Contact :	Kristina VUJIC, kristina.vujic@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The Roma Integration 2020 (RI2020) contributes to reducing the socio-economic gap between the Roma and non-Roma population in the Western Balkans and Turkey. The action is assisting governments in reaching concrete targets in the areas of education, employment, housing and health. The action further focuses on the areas of civil registration, gender equality and fight against discrimination. The governments are supported as part of their national reforms and the EU integration efforts.

ACTIVITIES (JULY- DECEMBER 2019)

The RI2020 project organised annual National Platforms on Roma Integration in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, the Republic of North Macedonia, and Serbia. The National Platforms discussed the Roma Integration 2019-2021 Roadmaps and the possibilities to improve housing and employment of Roma through legalisation of settlements and formalisation of undeclared work.

On the issue of housing, the Action Team developed a methodology to map all Roma settlements in the Western Balkans. The methodology was presented in Sarajevo as part of the Regional Conference "[Regional Methodology for Mapping Housing of Roma](#)". The methodology will combine existing data at the national and local level and will contribute to identifying precise locations of Roma settlements while also assessing the possibilities for

legalisation of informal settlements. Once the mapping is complete, concrete housing interventions in the upcoming years will be implemented.

On Roma responsive budgeting, the Roma Integration 2020 assisted the National Roma Contact Points to prepare 2020 annual budget submissions in selected policy areas and prepared corresponding budget briefs. The budget briefs provide overview and analysis of the 2020 budget allocations and contain recommendations for future improvements of the public budgeting process. The aim is to continue improving the position of Roma by making informed decisions about the amount and purpose of expenditure.

The Roma Integration 2020 provided inputs to the post-2020 EU Framework for Roma Integration Strategies at the Workshop on Future Policies for Roma, organised by DG JUST in Brussels on 1 October 2019. The National Roma Contact Points (NRCPs) from the enlargement region also participated in the event, providing inputs about issues that this new framework should cover.

The Task Force of the Roma Integration 2020 action met on 12-13 December 2019. The meeting took stock of implemented activities and achievements while also announcing upcoming activities. As novelties, it was decided to pilot the methodology for mapping Roma houses in two municipalities in each economy during 2020, and to promote the initiative for data collection on the situation of Roma. The latter is a methodology developed in the Republic of North Macedonia that should be mirrored in the region. The methodology will serve to establish a monitoring mechanism to follow the achievements of the Declaration of Western Balkans Partners on Roma Integration within the EU Enlargement Process.

OUTPUTS (JULY- DECEMBER 2019)

- Produced four policy recommendation papers based on the discussions of the National Platforms on Roma Integration in Pristina, Sarajevo, Skopje and Belgrade on the implementation of the Roma integration Action Plans in 2018, the Roma Seminar operational conclusions as well as the measures to be prioritized and budgeted for 2020;
- Developed a methodology for mapping of Roma houses, to be piloted in 2020 in two municipalities per economy;
- Developed six budget briefs and submitted them for consideration to the governments;
- Provided inputs to the post-2020 EU Roma policy discussions, expressing the views and opinions of the enlargement region.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Regional conference on Roma Youth Participation (February 2020)
- Regional conference on security in housing in Roma neighbourhoods (April 2020)
- Regional conference on mainstreaming Roma integration policy and how to make use of ongoing sector reforms (May 2019).

- Technical assistance for support in employment and housing (according to the roadmaps).

Programme reference:	Multi-country Action Programme, IPA 2016/ 037-900
Project title:	Supporting the Effective Reintegration of Roma Returnees in the Western Balkans
EU contribution:	EUR 1.25 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Grant Agreement with the World Bank
Contract reference:	CN 2017/384-989
Duration of activities:	01/04/2017 - 01/07/2019
Contact:	Kristina Vujic, kristina.vujic@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

While migration from the Western Balkans to member states of the European Union remains substantial, several European states have decided to return migrants to their countries of origin. Data estimates suggest a substantial number of return migrants belong to the Roma minority. The World Bank is developing identify evidence based relevant policy responses and implementation pathways for the effective reintegration of returnees in the Western Balkans – with a focus on Roma returnees - based on their reintegration experiences.

ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

Supporting Government with the management and monitoring and evaluation of returnees and returnee programs through the development of Management Information Systems (MIS): (i) North Macedonia: Design of software architecture of MIS for North Macedonia: Consultations with North Macedonian Government on hosting arrangements for a Management Information System, agreement to finalize decision after elections in April 2020 (ii) Serbia: Consultations with Ministries of Labor and Interior on development of MIS for returnees.

OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

The following outputs were produced:

- North Macedonia: software architecture for MIS
- Serbia: agreement to proceed with MIS development as part of the broader social protection data management under Phase II

Programme reference:	IPA II Annual Multi-Country Action Programme 2017
Project title:	Increased education opportunities for Roma students and Roma youth in Western Balkans and Turkey
EU contribution:	EUR 3 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Grant agreement with Roma Education Fund (REF)
Contract reference:	CN 2018/396-125
Duration of activities:	10/04/2018 – 09/07/2021
Links:	https://www.romaeducationfund.org/news/ref/news-and-events/ref-and-eu-dg-near-partner-roma-education-western-balkans-and-turkey
Contact :	Kristina Vujic, kristina.vujic@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The EU Regional Action for Roma Education: Increased Education Opportunities for Roma Students and Roma Youth in the Western Balkans and Turkey seeks to reduce the gap between Roma and non-Roma in participation and completion of quality education through gender-sensitive programming, to improve Roma students' transition between education and employment and to promote durable systemic change and desegregation of education systems.

ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

- Early childhood development (ECD) and primary education (PRI): Implementation of the primary education component started in addition to ongoing early childhood development activities. Identification of potential beneficiaries, visiting families to identify potential obstacles for enrolment and later providing necessary support and encouraging parents to enroll their children; as well as communication with kindergartens and primary schools to set the basis for collaboration within the project and identify the potential needs and obstacles for Roma students. Enrolment of children in kindergarten, pre-school and primary schools for 2019/2020 was facilitated and supported. Regular monitoring of children's attendance as well as work with parents, kindergartens, primary schools and relevant institutions. Parental clubs' meetings. Country trainings on tutoring took place. Tutors, learning assistants are engaged. Calls for IDELA assessment and trainings for kindergarten staff concluded. Regional training of trainers on mentoring is organised.
- Increasing performance and employability of Roma secondary (SEC) and tertiary (TER) students: Calls for scholarships published, national selection committees established, scholarships disbursed, calls for mentors and tutors published, mentoring and tutoring support provided.

OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

- Early childhood and primary education: Nine toy libraries are operational; Local enumerators collected and processed the International Development and Early Learning Assessment (IDELA) data from the field; 469 children are participating in early childhood development activities (kindergarten, preschool or/and toy library); 363 children are enrolled in primary schools and tutoring support is provided.
- Secondary and tertiary education and transition to employment: Facilitated internships for 83 secondary and 34 tertiary education beneficiaries; Summer camps for tertiary and secondary students took place in Albania, North Macedonia and Turkey; Granted scholarships to 371 secondary education and 70 university students for 2019/2020 academic year.
- Policy development/regional knowledge exchange: Agreed actions to advance internships and employment opportunities resulted with 60 employment placements;

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Early childhood and primary education: Development and delivery of country trainings for kindergarten staff; Baseline IDELA assessment report; Toy libraries; Empowerment of parents; Tutoring and mentoring to primary school students.
- Secondary and tertiary education and transition to employment: Mentoring and tutoring; Trainings on soft skills; Info sessions for students and with companies; Visits to the partnering employers; Facilitating internship opportunities; Participation in employment fairs;
- Policy development/regional knowledge exchange: Regional policy analysis reports followed up by regional conference for early childhood and primary education and desegregation or secondary and tertiary education and employment. Regular advocacy meetings. Policy round table.

2.4 REGIONAL HOUSING PROGRAMME (RHP)

Programme reference:	Multi-beneficiary Programmes: IPA 2018/040-113, IPA 2017/039-402, IPA 2014/031-603, IPA 2014/024-133, IPA 2014/024-134, IPA 2012/023-537
Project title:	Regional Housing Programme
EU contribution:	EUR 234 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Contribution and Delegation Agreements with Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB) and UNHCR, grant contract with Igman Initiative

Contract reference:	CN 2018/402-988, CN 2017/394-290, CN 2017/394-876, CN 2017/394-875, CN 2015/369-230, CN2013/325-470, CN2013/325-468, CN 2013/314-991, CN 2012/297-405, CN 2012/307-562, CN 2012/305-516
Duration of activities:	01/07/2015 – 30/06/2021
Links:	www.regionalhousingprogramme.org
Contact :	Daniel Hurtado Dominguez daniel.hurtado-dominguez@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The Regional Housing Programme (RHP) addresses in a regional framework the housing needs of the most vulnerable refugees and internally displaced persons (IDP) from the armed conflicts in the 1990s in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia. The European Union is the biggest donor to this multi-donor financed programme (over 80%), having committed EUR 234 million that should benefit an estimated 11 800 families.

ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

Continuation of beneficiary selection, construction/purchase and handing-over of housing solutions (apartments, houses, residences for the elderly, building materials), capacity building, communication and visibility.

OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

RHP figures as at end December 2019 (cumulative):

- 18 500 people rehoused.
- 6 283 housing solutions handed over.
- Over 200 municipalities involved in the implementation, in all four Partner Countries.
- Over 120 Personnel involved in RHP implementation benefit from continuous on-the job training.
- 18 500 central and local government staff received formal training.
- Over 150 local companies engaged for provision of services, supplies and works.
- Intensive Cooperation between the four Partner Countries and improved neighbourly relations.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

Over 1 350 additional housing solutions will be delivered during the semester. There will also be a strong focus on monitoring, reinforcing sustainability, as well as visibility.

2.5 MIGRATION

Programme reference:	Multi-country Action Programme, IPA 2017/039-402.07/MC/migration
Project title:	Regional support to protection-sensitive migration management in the Western Balkans and Turkey – Phase II, Contract 1
EU contribution:	EUR 3.4 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Grant agreement with the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex)
Contract reference:	CN IPA/2018/404-200
Duration of activities:	01/07/2019 – 30/06/2021
Contact :	Emma Ascitti, emma.ascitti@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The overall objective of the IPA II Project Phase II led by Frontex in partnership with European Asylum Support Office (EASO), IOM and UNHCR is to develop and operationalize a comprehensive migration management system in the IPA II beneficiaries focused on protection, resilience and human rights promotion building upon the results achieved in Phase I.

ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

As part of the launching of Phase II, six national steering committee meetings and related consultations were held between August and October 2019 with government institutions of the Western Balkans. Frontex finalized in October the **Feasibility Study** “*Assessment of the IT and communication infrastructure to support the Identification and Registration process of mixed migration flows in the IPA II Western Balkan Beneficiaries*”, aimed at identifying the existing gaps and development needs in terms of IT infrastructure, procedures and legal basis required for the integration of the relevant national databases with the existing EU information Systems (EURODAC, VIS, SIS II). Furthermore, the relaunching of the project **training activities** started with a European Course for Advanced Profiles Trainers, followed by a regional refresher training for multipliers on detection of falsified documents and a regional refresher training for national multipliers on escort officers trainings.

OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

The project activities in the July-December 2019 period led to the following outputs:

- A significantly increased number of qualified officers (67 persons) in a number of key border guard competence areas.
- Improved or new skills of border guards and other beneficiaries' officers in the areas of screening, debriefing and interviewing, fighting document fraud, return escorts training, and readmission negotiations with countries of origin.
- Formal conclusion of a Feasibility Study on EU Information Systems and launching of consultations on the follow-up process to be implemented in the first quarter of 2021. The process allowed for an increased understanding of the existing needs in the EU-information systems domain in the Western Balkans and better definition of the EU medium-long run strategy in this regard.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

The following activities and events are planned for the next semester:

- Regional Steering Committee meeting with participation of high-level representatives of the 7 beneficiaries - in Brussels.
- Launching of a follow-up study on the preparedness of the selected beneficiaries to join the European Asylum Dactyloscopy Database (EURODAC) at the moment of EU accession. The first semester will include the selection of the contractor working with Frontex as well as the formal launching of the assessment activities in the selected beneficiaries.
- Two modules of training on course design and effective training methods for graduates of the "European course for advanced profiles trainers" will take place. This training will improve the trainers' skills before the planned national roll-outs.
- Regional training for escort leaders in return operations by air will take place in June.
- National roll-outs of training on screening, debriefing and interviewing by the graduates of the "European course for advanced profiles trainers".

Regional support to Protection-sensitive migration management in the Western Balkans and Turkey component 2

Programme reference:	IPA 2014/031-603.08/MC/migration CN 2015/369-495
Project title:	Regional support to protection-sensitive migration management in the Western Balkans and Turkey component 2 (International Organization for Migration-IOM)
EU contribution:	EUR 1.778 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Grant Agreement
Contract reference:	CN 2016/404-216

Duration of activities: 24/06/2019 – 24/06/2021

Contact : Emma Asciutti, emma.asciutti@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The overall objective of the action is to develop and operationalise a comprehensive migration management system in seven Western Balkans (WB) beneficiary countries, in line with EU standards. Its aim is to facilitate and strengthen some of the key areas of a migration management system, focusing on enhancing the exchange of non-personal information in the region, and contribute to establishment of assisted voluntary mechanism in the beneficiary countries.

ACTIVITIES (JULY – DECEMBER 2019)

- Organization of a workshop for social workers from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina on the topic of Best Interest Analysis (BIA) / Best Interest Determination (BID) including transfer of EU practice.
- Supporting the national rollout of the developed Curriculum for cultural mediation competencies in Montenegro North Macedonia, by organizing two trainings per country for service providers who work directly with migrants.
- Initiation of the development of National roadmaps for migration statistics in all six IPA II beneficiaries.
- Continuing to provide assistance in voluntary return and reintegration of stranded migrants who wish to return to their country of origin.

OUTPUTS (JULY – DECEMBER 2019)

- Social workers have increased knowledge of BID/BIA practices in the EU context, thus contributing the mainstream protection of migrants in situations of vulnerability.
- The development of the curriculum for cultural mediation ensures effective communication between migrants and migration management authorities across the Western Balkans.
- Development of National roadmaps for migration statistics ensures that Western Balkans authorities have the skills and knowledge to align their systems the EU regulation 862/2007.
- Continuous assistance in Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR) allows migrants to return and reintegrate to their country of origin in line with human rights approach.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Continuing to support knowledge sharing of BID/BIA practices in the EU context by organization of workshops in Albania as the third beneficiary, thus contributing the mainstream protection of migrants in situations of vulnerability.

- Finalization of the National roadmaps for migration statistics in all six IPA II beneficiaries in the Western Balkans, thus contributing to the alignment of the WB systems to the EU regulation 862/2007.
- Providing assistance in voluntary return and reintegration while delivering interpretation and cultural mediation services to migrants and organizing two round tables.

Regional support to Protection-sensitive migration management in the Western Balkans and Turkey contract 3

Programme reference:	Multi-country Action Programme, Multi-country Action Programme, IPA 2017/039-402.07/MC/migration
Project title:	Regional support to protection-sensitive migration management in the Western Balkans and Turkey - Phase 2, contract 3
EU contribution:	EUR 1,475 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Grant agreement with the European Asylum Support Office
Contract reference:	IPA 2018/404-218
Duration of activities:	01/07/2019 – 30/06/2021
Contact :	Emma Asciutti, emma.asciutti@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The aim of the Phase II project led by Frontex in partnership with European Asylum Support Office (EASO), IOM and UNHCR, is to support the target countries in developing a protection-sensitive response to mixed migration flows, by strengthening their systems for identification, registration, and referral, as well as asylum procedures and return mechanisms, by aligning them with EU standards. The project consists of 5 interventions, and EASO is active in Intervention 1 and 2.

ACTIVITIES (JULY – JANUARY 2019)

The project is implemented well in line with its objective. It started the second Phase in July 2019, as a follow up to Phase I. Phase II, the same project partners namely, Frontex, EASO, IOM and UNHCR, aim to build upon the outcomes of Phase I. A number of steering and coordination meetings took place amongst project partners and the six Western Balkans (WB) beneficiaries. In parallel, the partners planned the follow up of the recommendations given in the *external evaluation Phase I* (2016-2019). EASO was active in the implementation of activities under **Interventions 2**, which relates to asylum procedures and reception systems, taking two aspects into consideration: vulnerabilities and alignment to EU standards. Particular emphasis is put on Country of Origin Information (COI) at regional level.

EASO organized 1 workshop for WB Courts and Tribunals, and 1 workshop for caseworkers and COI researchers on Iraq and Pakistan to improve quality of examination of asylum applications.

In addition, EASO followed up its cooperation with the Migration Asylum Regional Refugee Initiative (MARRI) regarding the transfer of knowledge and has facilitated the participation of MARRI representatives in a EASO training Module. At national level, EASO is reviewing **two Roadmap** documents with **Serbia and North Macedonia** developed and validated over Phase I and II, aiming at further aligning the national asylum and reception systems with the EU acquis and EU practices, under Chapter 24 “Justice, freedom and security” and the accession process.

Furthermore, EASO is working on two new Roadmap documents with **Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina** (Phase II, 2020-2022) following the beneficiaries` request. In view of the formulation of all Roadmaps, EASO carried out also a detailed needs assessment exercise, consulting the national authorities and relevant stakeholders from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Serbia.

Furthermore, in line with the needs assessments, EASO continued to provide additional training sessions for Albania, North Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, to consolidate their competencies in particular aspects of the asylum procedure, i.e. EASO train the trainers (ToT) in Trafficking in Human Beings, Module for Manager and Gender, Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation.

An additional activity was implemented to strengthen the methodology of the Serbian COI Unit through their participation to the EASO ACCORD conference attended also by COI representatives from EU+countries. As during Phase I, Serbia continued joining to the EU+ Reception Network organised by EASO as an observer, and the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (SCRM) attended a thematic workshop / training on information provision.

OUTPUTS (JULY – DECEMBER 2019)

Project activities implemented in the reporting period contributed to the following outputs:

- Given 5 trainings to: 1) WB judges to improve their knowledge on the COI and the quality of the appeal decisions of asylum applications; 2) North Macedonian caseworkers on Trafficking in Human Beings; 3) Bosnia and Herzegovina caseworkers on Gender, Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation; 4) Head of Asylum Office in Albania to improve the managerial skills through the participation in the EASO Module of Managers;
- Participation of Serbian reception officials to the EASO reception network and deepened their knowledge on good practices on reception of asylum seekers;
- Organised 1 regional workshop on COI (specific focused on Iraq and Pakistan) with WB caseworkers;
- Initial knowledge transferred to MARRI Regional Center on the EASO training methodology through their participation in an EASO Training.

- 7 meetings organized with the main stakeholders in the following countries 1) Serbia (September and December); 2) North Macedonia (September and October); 3) Bosnia and Herzegovina (October and December) and Albania (October) to discuss the future Roadmaps
- Needs assessment carried out in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania and North Macedonia in order to better define the priorities areas that will be covered through the new Roadmaps.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

Under **Intervention 1** which relates to the identification, registration and referral of mixed migration flows at first and second points of contact, EASO will organize 2 of the 4 Regional ToT planned for 2020 on the core EASO modules (notably, Inclusion and Interviewing Techniques). These activities increase the knowledge acquired during Phase I, in light of the national rollouts, where the newly formed trainers will disseminate the skills obtained to their colleagues in the national entities. Also, EASO plans a regional workshop (WB+Turkey) on Age Assessment following EU law and best practices explained by EU Member state experts.

Under **Interventions 2**, EASO aims at transferring to MARRI its Training Curriculum methodology know-how. MARRI representatives participated in a working visit to EASO to discuss how to frame future cooperation and better define the next steps on the possibility to establish WB regional asylum training function. At national level, EASO is planning 4 ad hoc training, with the participation also of EU member states officials. These training modules have been selected in line with the need assessment carried out for the development of four Roadmaps with EASO and Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Serbia.

In line with the needs assessment in Serbia, EASO will support the participation of the Asylum Commission (as an Appeal body) to the EASO Judicial support initiatives. In addition, bilateral meetings will take place to agree on the EASO support as part of the four Roadmaps with the relevant WB countries.

Civil Society Facility and Media Programme 2016-2017 - Iris networking – CSOs for protection sensitive migration management

Programme reference:	EuropeAid/154870/DH/ACT/Multi-5 Consolidating Regional Thematic Networks of Civil Society Organisations
Project title:	IRIS NETWORKing - CSOs for protection sensitive migration
EU contribution:	EUR 1 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Grant Contract
Contract reference:	CN 2017/394-311

Duration of activities: 20/12/2017 – 20/04/2021

Links: <https://iris-see.eu/>

Contact : Emma Asciutti, emma.asciutti@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

IRIS NETWORKing – Civil society organisations (CSOs) for protection sensitive migration management is a regional initiative developed by the Initiative for Development and Cooperation (Serbia) and its partners from Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund, Deutschland e.V. (Germany), SOS Telephone for women and children victims of violence Podgorica (Montenegro), Local Initiative for Development Civil Society (Bosnia and Herzegovina), La Strada (North Macedonia) and Initiative for Social Change ARSIS (Albania).

The Project contributes to the improvement of service delivery and policy framework related to the migration phenomenon in the Western Balkans.

ACTIVITIES (JULY – DECEMBER 2019)

Pillar I – Capacity Building of CSOs in Western Balkans through IRIS Network - Through the Call for Small Grants Scheme (SGS), aimed at increasing capacities of IRIS Network members, the project awarded 25 Grants. They are on implementation, and will end in July 2020. Assistance for acquirement of licenses for provision of social services (fulfillment of quality standards) and mentoring in overall strategic development is being provided to 25 IRIS Network members selected through a Call for Proposals. Mentoring is progressing slightly behind plan and will be completed during 2020 in all countries except in Serbia where it is finalised for 5 CSOs. An additional EU Traineeship Programme was realized in EU based CSOs for 1 staff member from IRIS Network in Humana Nova (Croatia). It lasted one month, the trainee increased her working methods to provide tailored social services to vulnerable groups. Cooperation between IRIS Network and The Future of the Welfare State in the Western Balkans, a network of regional think tanks in the area of social policy, has been developed. This Network invited IRIS Network members to participate in the Western Balkans Policy Analysis Laboratory School in Montenegro, organized by the regional think tanks. IRIS Network used the opportunity of participating in this event to facilitate the preparation of peer review reports. In total 10 Reports were prepared.

Pillar II - Country Shadow Reports (CSR) and Regional Shadow Report (RSR) have been completed and presented at the round table in Brussels on November 20, 2019. CSR provides a comprehensive overview of Chapter 19 – Social Policy and Employment and Chapter 24 – Justice, Freedom and Security, which are the focus areas of the IRIS Networking project. At Round table in Brussels the findings and recommendations from the Regional Shadow Report were present to EU decision makers among civil society organizations, Brussels based networks, DG Employment, representatives from Western Balkan embassies / missions, EU practitioners and researcher both from Western Balkan and EU.

Pillar III – Raising awareness – IRIS Network is continuously promoting tolerance and intercultural dialogue between local population and migrants through regular posts on social

media and information equally distributed through various channels and throughout the region aimed at sensibilizing vulnerable groups. During the reporting period Media Caravan was organized in North Macedonia, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, where the journalists had an opportunity to visit migrant camps and get a better understanding of their situation their journey toward the EU and their motivations behind the decision to travel to Europe. The Media Caravan gathered 20 journalists from the region while they were to prepare 15 media outputs, however the number of reports has exceeded the expected, and is around 20.

OUTPUTS (JULY – DECEMBER 2019)

- Small Grants Scheme – 25 grants awarded to IRIS members in 5 SEE countries;
- Mentoring – 5 IRIS members from Serbia have completed the mentoring process;
- EU Traineeship Programme - 1 IRIS Network member increased capacity for provision of social services to vulnerable groups;
- Peer Review Reports – 10 Reports prepared;
- Round Table in Brussels – 1 organized;
- 5 National Shadow Reports and 1 Regional Shadow Report prepared and presented;
- Raising awareness – citizens and migrants in local communities have increased knowledge and understanding of the importance of intercultural dialogue.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

Planned activities supporting capacity building and policy influencing and raising awareness: presentation of gap assessment, monitoring of Small Grants Scheme; mentoring process and EU traineeship Programme; preparation of peer review reports; shadow report, public hearings, Balkan briefing, continuation of the advocacy and media raising awareness campaign.

2.6 SUPPORT TO RECONCILIATION IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

Programme reference:	Multi-beneficiary Programme IPA/2018/404-574
Project title:	Joint EU and MICT OTP Training project for National Prosecutors and Young Professionals from the former Yugoslavia
EU contribution:	EUR 0.2 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Grant Agreement with the Mechanism OTP
Contract reference:	CN 2018/404-574
Duration of activities:	01/01/2018 – 31/03/2020

Links: <http://www.irmct.org/en>

Contact: Catherine Denis, Catherine.DENIS@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The objective is to strengthen the capacity of judicial authorities in the countries of the former Yugoslavia to effectively investigate and prosecute war crimes. National prosecutors for domestic war crimes cases and young professionals with a legal or other relevant background participate in the Action.

ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

Visiting National Prosecutors

- Visiting National Prosecutor from Bosnia and Herzegovina continued activities and completed his professional visit at the Office of the Prosecutor (“OTP”) on 31 December 2019.
- Visiting National Prosecutor from Serbia started his participation in the Project on 1 September 2019.
- The OTP supported the Visiting National Prosecutors from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia during searches for investigative material, which was used in the investigation and prosecution of war crimes in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia.

Visiting Young Professionals component

- This component of the Project was inactive in this period.

OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

Visiting National Prosecutors component

- 91 Requests for Assistance completed. 972 documents (20,503 pages) and 116 audio/video material provided to the national prosecuting authorities.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Visiting Young Professionals from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia will arrive and start activities in January 2020.

Regional CSO activism for Regional Reconciliation in the former Yugoslavia – in support of RECOM

Programme reference: IPA Multi-Country Programme 2017/038-961

Project title: Regional CSO Activism for Regional Reconciliation in the Former Yugoslavia - In Support of RECOM

EU contribution: EUR 920.00,00

Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Grant agreement
Contract reference:	CN 2017/394-747
Duration of activities:	01/03/2018-28/02/2021
Links:	http://recom.link/
Contact :	Catherine Denis, Catherine.DENIS@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The overall objective of the action is to promote the establishment of a Regional Commission for the facts about war crimes and other serious human rights violations committed in the former Yugoslavia (so-called "RECOM"). This action is supported by the Coalition for RECOM, which brings together about 2,050 civil society organizations from post-Yugoslav countries. In 2011, 580 000 citizens signed a petition for the establishment of an inter-State commission with the task of naming all war victims and the circumstances of their deaths / disappearances. RECOM is conceived as a victim-centred, truth-seeking body. It will contribute to curb the negative public perception of the other victims, to stimulate solidarity, and bring closer opposing positions of the same events.

ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

- Collecting documentation on victims killed or missing in the municipalities of Djakovica, Prizren, Priština between January 1999 and December 2000, including conducting investigations in the municipalities of Podujevo and Peć;
- Continuously collecting documentation on crime scenes related to the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- Collecting and recording documentation on the victims killed or missing during the war in Croatia, in the Šibenik-Knin region, and linking them to victims and incidents already registered into the database of the project;
- Implementation of the civil society organization project "Strengthening the network for reconciliation";
- Preparation and organization of the 9th Assembly of the Coalition for RECOM and the 12th Forum for Transitional Justice in Post-Yugoslav Countries.

OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

- Statements taken from 845 family members or witnesses about 701 victims killed or missing in the municipalities of Djakovica, Prizren, Priština and Podujevo, between January 1999 and December 2000. As a result, 124 persons recorded by multiple sources as victims of war, were identified as not having lost their lives in connection with the war (natural causes, non-existent persons, found alive).

- Writing of draft narratives on 252 victims of war in the municipalities of Prizren and Podujevo, and final narratives on 276 victims of war in the municipalities of Djakovica, Prizren and Podujevo.
- Preparation of instructions for the verification of data and additional investigation into 950 victims in the municipalities of Peć, Podujevo, Orahovac and Vučitrn.
- Documents on 103 crime sites and writing of final narratives about them. As a result, 22 detention sites that are listed in the records of the detainee associations were determined not to have been used for detention; the buildings of 10 primary and secondary schools were found to be used to detain soldiers and civilians.
- Statements taken from 189 family members/witnesses of 189 victims killed or missing in the Šibenik-Knin region.
- Implementation of various sub-granted projects by civil society.
- At its 9th Session, held on 15 December 2019 in Zagreb, the Assembly of the Coalition for RECOM decided to restructure the Initiative for RECOM and accordingly:
 - i) To step up the process of documenting war victims by increasing the number of investigator and analyst teams, involving academic institutions and drawing more public attention to the victims' perspective;
 - ii) To strengthen the network for reconciliation; and
 - iii) To provide expert support to civil society organisations in their opposition to untrue depictions of facts established by the courts.
- 250 persons participated to the Forum for Transitional Justice.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Continuation of the human losses and detention sites research. A presentation of the results of the investigation will be organized in early May 2020 in Zagreb, ahead of the summit of the Berlin Process for the Western Balkans.
- Creation of a platform for a regional network for reconciliation.
- Organizing three debates on remembrance policies and practices in the Western Balkans.
- Organizing three press conferences in local communities on the progress of the process of listing the victims.
- Creating 30 short video stories about survivors who have testified before the International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia.

Programme reference: Multi-country Action Programme, IPA/2018/040-113

Project title: Supporting Domestic Accountability for War Crimes and Informing Affected Communities about the Recent Past

EU contribution:	EUR 2 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Grant Agreement
Contract reference:	CN 2018/403-513
Duration of activities:	01/01/2019 – 31/12/2020
Links:	http://www.irmct.org/en
Contact:	Catherine Denis, catherine.denis@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The overall objective of the action is to contribute to reconciliation and good neighbourly relations and strengthening the rule of law in the Western Balkans region. More specifically, this action implemented by the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (“IRMCT”) seeks to contribute to reducing the backlog of war crimes cases at the domestic level (Component A); and increase public awareness and understanding of the crimes committed during the conflicts on the territory of the former Yugoslavia since 1991 (Component B).

ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

Component A: Domestic War Crimes Accountability Program

Direct Case Assistance Program

- At concerned authorities’ request, the IRMCT Office of the Prosecutor (“OTP”) conducted searches of its evidence collection, reviewed internal work product, analysed evidence of crimes and potential suspects and prepared information. The OTP transmitted information and relevant evidence to domestic war crimes prosecutor’s offices. The OTP further hosted 2 visits by domestic prosecutors to discuss ongoing investigations at the domestic level and prosecutorial strategies for significant crime bases.

Category II bis Program

- The OTP identified its first crime base for the Category II bis program. IT conducted an extensive review of the Tribunal’s prosecutions for this crime base, including judicially confirmed factual findings on the crimes and those responsible. The OTP further commenced in-depth searches of its evidence collection and a review of its internal work product. The OTP prepared an initial list of relevant suspects, and

began a detailed factual and legal analysis as the foundation for the dossier to be handed over to domestic authorities.

Peer-to-Peer Mentoring Program

- This component of the Project has been inactive in this period due to other components being prioritized.

Component B: Affected Communities Information Program

- The IRMCT produced content, branding and targeted posting and distribution plan for 8 social media campaigns, including videos, social media posts, media information packages.
- The IRMCT delivered 4 inter-university video lectures.
- The IRMCT held 4 workshops on use of the ICTY/IRMCT archive in history teaching.
- The IRMCT held 7 presentations and trainings on the use of the ICTY/IRMCT archives for stakeholders in the targeted IPA II beneficiaries.

OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

Component A: Domestic War Crimes Accountability Program

- 6 Requests for Assistance received; 2,030 documents (55,531 pages) and 52 audio/video files provided to the national prosecuting authorities.
- 5 visits of the prosecutors dealing with cases regarding DCA, with discussion providing direct expert assistance regarding investigation of those cases.

Component B: Affected Communities Information Program

- 8 social media campaigns implemented, reaching 1.2 million users.
- Approx. 100 postgraduate law students from 6 universities from the targeted IPA II beneficiaries participated in 4 inter university lectures.
- More than 140 high-school history teachers and educators from four targeted countries trained in the use of the ICTY/IRMCT archive.
- More than 150 stakeholders reached through presentations and trainings on the use of the ICTY/IRMCT archives held at different locations.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

Component A: Domestic War Crimes Accountability Program

Direct Case Assistance Program

- Continue to provide assistance to prosecutors' offices in the targeted IPA II beneficiaries.

Category II bis Program

- Commencement of transfer of Category II *bis* cases.

Peer-to-Peer Mentoring Program

- Initiation of the online forum.

Component B: Affected Communities Information Program

- Production of content for 7 social media campaigns.
- Delivering 4 inter-university video lectures to law students from 6 universities in the region.
- Holding 6 workshops on the use of the ICTY/IRMCT archive for high-school history teachers in 5 targeted countries including follow up workshops.
- Delivering a presentation at the EUROCLIO Annual Conference 2020, Belgrade, Serbia.
- Producing new online features, including ICTY Legacy podcasts, online exhibitions, and online training tools on the use of the ICTY archive.

2.7 HORIZONTAL FACILITY

European Union/Council of Europe Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Turkey

Programme reference:	Multi-beneficiary Programme, IPA 2018/040-113.05/MC/EU-CoE Horizontal Facility
Project title:	European Union/Council of Europe Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Turkey – Phase II
EU contribution:	EUR 35 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Grant agreement with the Council of Europe
Contract reference:	CN 2019/406-962
Duration of activities:	24/05/2019 - 23/05/2022
Links:	https://pip-eu.coe.int/en/web/horizontal-facility/home?desktop=true
Contact:	Emma Asciutti, emma.asciutti@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Turkey (Horizontal Facility II) 2019-2022 supports beneficiary-tailored reform processes in the fields of human rights, rule of law and democracy. It provides programmatic support to beneficiaries in the Western Balkans and Turkey in addressing the recommendations of Council of Europe monitoring bodies in the areas of justice, fight against corruption, organised crime and economic crime, anti-discrimination and protection of the rights of vulnerable groups, and freedom of expression and the media, linked where relevant with EU accession priorities.

The programme builds upon the results achieved under the first phase (2016-2019), and the majority of the interventions are a continuation of these actions, which have been re-prioritised in line with the state of play of enlargement negotiations of the European Union. Phase II incorporates new elements including the theme Freedom of expression and information, which was previously covered by the EU/CoE Joint Programme “Reinforcing Judicial Expertise on Freedom of Expression and the Media in South-East Europe” - JUFREX (CN 2016/372-924). It includes beneficiary-specific interventions for Turkey. In addition, there are two novelties: enhanced regional dimension, which aims at increasing regional co-operation, sharing of good practices, and at supporting networking and peer-to-peer exchanges as well as three country actions in Turkey.

ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

Theme I – Ensuring justice, 15 bilateral and 4 regional actions:

Albania

- Follow-up analysis to the latest draft Law on Probation, September 2019; -Training provided to state advocates on the efficiency of the execution of the Courts’ judgments in Albania, and on legal writing and reasoning skills (Korçë, 19 November 2019);

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- Training sessions for law enforcement trainers on human rights-based training; meetings of the working group to introduce electronic exchange of prison-related data;

Kosovo*

- Co-ordination group of international experts from the Norwegian-funded Case Management Informative System / Information and communication technology (CMIS/ICT) project, USAID and the European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ here in after) was established, October 2019;

Montenegro

- Assessment of the current operating procedures on carrying out an arrest and or detaining a person,
- Placement of two legal advisers from the Supreme Court and the Constitutional Court of Montenegro were placed to the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR here in after), September to October 2019;

- Court trial simulation at the ECtHR for students of law faculties of all Montenegrin universities and students of the University of Strasbourg, 9 December 2019;
- Preparation of the revision of the code of ethics in co-operation with the Chamber of Bailiffs;

North Macedonia

- Preparations started for a gender gap analysis as well as for a baseline study to collect evaluation data;

Serbia

- First school on the execution of judgements of the ECtHR, course provided to 24 young professionals;

Turkey

- High-level conference with Council of Europe Secretary General Marija Pejčinović Burić and the Ministers of Justice and Foreign Affairs of Turkey, 9 December 2019;

Regional

- Launching conferences of 2 regional actions, meetings on screening, risk and needs assessment, rehabilitation, and disengagement from violence;
- Meeting of prison and probation practitioners from the region in Tirana on 11-12 December 2019;
- Development of a questionnaire in close consultation with DG NEAR and DG JUST and the relevant Council of Europe bodies to measure the results of judicial reforms.

Theme II – Fighting corruption, economic crime and organised crime, 3 bilateral and 1 regional action:

Albania

- Two workshops on the effective implementation of Risk Based approach measures for the Non-financial Sector, gathering lawyers, notaries, and relevant institutional bodies of the area; 16-17 December 2019;

Montenegro

- Recommendations for the improvement of the draft National Risk Assessment of Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing, November 2019;

North Macedonia

- Training provided to representatives of institutions to the National Co-ordination Centre within the Ministry of Interior on the use of software to facilitate the analysis of intelligence data, 28 October - 1 November 2019.

Theme III – Promoting anti-discrimination and the protection of the rights of vulnerable groups, 12 bilateral and 1 regional action:

Albania

- Public discussion on how to combat hate speech and discrimination, Elbasan, 7 November 2019;

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- First meeting of the co-ordination board for national minorities, 27 November 2019;
- First meeting of the working group for the development of the LGBTI Action Plan, Jahorina, 18 December 2019;

Kosovo

- Assessment mission on the main human rights institutions, the Office for Good Governance and the Ombudsman, 21-23 October 2019;

North Macedonia

- Training of labour inspectors and mobile teams on trafficking of human beings for the purpose of labour exploitation;
- Simulation training on trafficking in human beings for the purpose of labour exploitation, Ohrid, 16-18 December 2019;

Serbia

- Ministerial peer exchange between Bosnia and Herzegovina to share experiences on the implementation of the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture as well as on the inclusion of migrant children in the education system in Serbia, 14 November 2019;
- A high-level conference on anti-discrimination was organised in Belgrade gathering the Deputy Prime Minister, ambassadors of the EU and France to Serbia as well as representatives of the Council of Europe Office and ECRI;-Training provided to mentors who will be guiding 40 schools in their work on the implementation of the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture, 6-7 December 2019;

Theme IV – Freedom of expression and freedom of the media, 6 bilateral and 1 regional action:

Albania

- An informal and confidential expert opinion was prepared upon request by the EU to analyse the amendments to media law;
- The Council of Europe participated in a public hearing organised by the Parliamentary Committee to discuss the amendments initiated by the Prime Minister and which were contested by local media and international organisations, 25 November 2019;

Kosovo*

- Media literacy workshops were organised with high school students in two municipalities;

Montenegro

- The Council of Europe provided a legal opinion on three draft laws – on the Audio-Visual Media Services, the Media and the National Public Broadcaster – and participated in the public debate;

North Macedonia

- Fact-finding mission to provide inputs for the revision of the activities to better reflect the needs of the Beneficiaries;
- A regional Co-ordination meeting was held to ensure the link between regional and Beneficiary-specific actions;
- Round table on media ownership, 8 December 2019.

OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

Albania

- The follow-up analysis to the latest draft Law on Probation provided recommendations on legal, practical, and structural aspects to strengthen both detailed and general aspects of the draft law;- The Parliament adopted the Law on international restrictive measures on 17 October 2019;
- The amendments to the media law initiated by the Prime Minister were contested by local media and international organisations being considered as a step towards a strengthened regulation of the online media contents: **The Venice Commission (VC here in after)** opinion on the draft Law on the finalisation of the transitional processes of property was adopted in October 2019. A parliamentary working group began revising the draft law.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- Co-ordination modalities were put in place to ensure the communication and the commitment of all the relevant authorities in the field of police and prisons;
- A documentary on national minorities produced during the first phase of the HF was screened at the Sarajevo film Festival in August 2019 and followed by an interactive discussion with the audience.
- In December 2019, a call for grants was launched by the Council of Europe to co-fund two regional projects aimed at raising awareness among general public and in particular people at risk of human trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation.
- The Ministry of Civil Affairs took steps to adopt two education policy documents (the Action Plan for Inclusive Education and the Policy recommendation with a roadmap to address ethnic segregation in education).

Kosovo

- The Ministry of Justice was assisted in collecting and analysing data from 2018 to evaluate the efficiency of the judiciary to produce a new assessment of the justice system; The VC adopted the legal opinion on the draft law on legal acts in October 2019.

Montenegro

- A gender analysis was completed for the action on improved procedural safeguards, and the work plan revised accordingly;
- Priorities were agreed with the EU funded project EUROL 2 to ensure their direct contribution to the implementation of the Judicial Reform Strategy 2019-2020 and the Action Plan for Montenegro's accession to the European Union;

- A set of detailed recommendations for the improvement of the draft National Risk Assessment of Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing was delivered to the beneficiaries in November 2019.
- The Council of Europe provided a legal opinion on three draft laws – on the Audio-Visual Media Services, the Media and the National Public Broadcaster. The two latter ones are aligned with European standards and ready for adoption;
- The VC advised the parliamentary committee on electoral reform in Montenegro on the draft code of ethics for political parties' electoral campaigns. The draft code of ethical conduct was revised;

North Macedonia

- The authorities were supported in drawing up the draft law on state compensation fund for victims of violent crimes. The draft law was finalised and opened for public consultations; - Determination was shown by the national authorities to reform the media sector, and the new plan to combat misinformation was announced;
- The VC opinion on the law on the use of languages requested by the Prime Minister of North Macedonia was adopted in December 2019;
- The gender perspective was integrated in the training activities for labour inspectors.

Serbia

- The draft law on the prohibition of discrimination was withdrawn from the adoption process because of complaints about the lack of a proper consultation; - The Serbian Ministry of Education published a public call and selected 40 schools in September 2019 to take part in the action on quality education.

Turkey

- Negotiations between the authorities, the European Union and the Council of Europe on the action in Turkey on Strengthening the human rights protection of asylum seekers, migrants and victims of human trafficking were finalised.

Transversal issues

- 15 gender analyses are being carried out or were already finalised in all thematic areas;
- Steps were taken towards better integrating the civil society organisation in the actions. Various civil society organisations and institutions from the private sector have been included as observers to actions' Steering Committees.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

Launch of the action in Turkey on strengthening the human rights protection of asylum seekers, migrants and victims of human trafficking in January 2020;- Beneficiary Steering Committee meetings in each of the seven Beneficiaries during the period from February to March 2020.

2.8 SUPPORT TO THE FOLLOW-UP OF ELECTORAL RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE WB/ BRANDING “SUPPORT TO ELECTIONS IN THE WESTERN BALKANS”

Programme reference:	IPA II Annual Multi-Country Action Programme 2016
Project title:	Support to the follow-up of electoral recommendations in the Western Balkans (Support to Elections in the Western Balkans)
EU contribution:	EUR 1 400 000
Beneficiary region:	Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia), as well as Kosovo*
Type of contract:	Grant agreement with ODIHR
Contract reference:	CN 2017/386-276
Duration of activities:	26/06/2017 – 26/06/2020
Links:	www.osce.org/odihr/support-to-elections-in-western-balkans
Contact :	Eleonora Sconci, Eleonora.Sconci@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) is implementing the project to support institutions and civil society in their efforts to follow up on election observation recommendations in areas related to election management, voter registration and the role and work of the media during election campaigns.

ACTIVITIES (JULY – DECEMBER 2019)

- 25 in-depth visits were conducted and participation to 21 workshops out of 33 was ensured;
- Topical workshops on “Addressing Electoral Recommendations from a Gender Perspective”, “Reform of Electoral Legislation Related to the Administration of Elections”, and “Defining Hate Speech in the Electoral Legal Framework” were organized in Sarajevo;
- Two national workshops under the project activity “Gender Assessment of the State Election Commission and its activities” including 21 participants were held in Skopje;
- The project undertook the mid-term review visits to Albania, North Macedonia and Montenegro;
- To date the project co-operated and/or interacted with 77 civil society organizations, 26 ministries, 41 local institutions, 5 parliaments, 22 embassies, 6 election management bodies, 6 OSCE field missions and 24 international organizations and their local offices. This included 726 local counterparts (472 men and 254 women).
- ODIHR developed accessibility features of the project database of recommendations (www.paragraph25.odihr.pl) for visually impaired persons.

- As per the project outline, the activities were at times put on hold in Albania, Kosovo* and North Macedonia due to ongoing elections or finalization and presentation of observation reports.

OUTPUTS (JULY – DECEMBER 2019)

- **Montenegro:** ODIHR supported the Committee for the Reform of Electoral Legislation with in-depth expertise, informal comments to the draft laws on Elections of Councilors and Members of the Parliament, on Representation of Political Entities during Election Campaigns and on Financing Political Entities and Campaign, and to the draft Code of Ethical Conduct in Election Campaigns, as well as with a Comparative Review of Legal Frameworks and Practices in Publishing and Correcting the Voter Register and Lists.
- **Serbia:** ODIHR provided to the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self Governance (MPALSG) informal comments on the Law of the Central Population Register; in-depth support to the governmental Working Group for Co-operation with ODIHR on the Co-ordination and Follow-up to the Implementation of Electoral Recommendations, including with Comparative Reviews on Maintaining and Publishing Voter Registers and Lists, on Separation of State and Party and on Media Sanctions during Campaigns; comparative analysis “Prospects and Consideration for Applying E-learning to Election Staff Training” to the National Academy of Public Administration which intended to develop a training programme for polling station committees; expert support to the Working Group for the Verification of the Single Electoral Roll formed by MPALSG. ODIHR also supported the Republican Electoral Commission on analyzing the creation of an election management IT architecture.
- Following the publication of ODIHR election observation reports, the status of implementation of recommendations in Albania and North Macedonia was updated in the project database.
- One (out of 21 so far) news items was published on ODIHR website.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- **Albania:** continue to support the Parliamentary Ad Hoc Committee on Electoral Reform and the newly established Political Council mandated to review the Electoral Code.
- **Bosnia and Herzegovina:** ODIHR will provide informal comments to the Central Election Commission’s analysis of the election law on the chapters related to election administration, voter registration and hate speech in media coverage during elections.
- **Kosovo:** ODIHR will undertake the mid-term review visit after the presentation of the EUEOM final report for the 6 October early legislative elections.
- **Montenegro:** upon request, ODIHR will formally review the amendments to the legal framework of elections, should they be tabled in the parliament.
- **North Macedonia:** in February 2020, ODIHR will finalize the report on the gender audit of the State Election Commission and will review the Guide for Ethical Media Coverage of Elections of the Association of Journalists of Macedonia.

- **Regional:** on 28-29 January 2020, ODIHR will organize a sub-regional conference “Addressing the Electoral Recommendations Related to Voter Registration – Challenges and Good Practices” in Warsaw. The participants will come from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and North Macedonia.
- ODIHR will publish or update the status of implementation of recommendations on the project database following the publication of observation reports for the upcoming elections in Kosovo, North Macedonia and Serbia.
- ODIHR will prepare the Handbook on Observing and Promoting the Electoral Participation of Persons with Disabilities in accessible formats for persons with visual impairments.
- ODIHR will organize a regional event for the closing of the project in June 2019.

2.9 SECURITY

Pilot Project deployment of Liaison Officers in the Western Balkans

Programme reference:	Multi-beneficiary Programme under IPA 2017/039-402
Project title:	Pilot Project deployment of Liaison Officers in the Western Balkans
EU contribution:	EUR 2 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans i.p. Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia
Type of contract:	Grant agreement for a pillar assessed organisation with the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation
Contract reference:	CN 2018/395-549
Duration of activities:	01/04/2018 – 31/03/2021
Contact :	Olivia Debayeve, olivia.debaveye@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The objective of the action is to counter serious crime and terrorism by contributing to better information exchange, and linking investigations in the EU with investigations in hosting Third States, ensuring that relevant data are available by posting a EUROPOL Liaison officer (ELOs) in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia.

ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

- Monitoring the status of signature and ratification of the Liaison agreement in Serbia.

- Initiation of accreditation process to deploy the Liaison Officer to Serbia.
- Drafting of baseline Assessments for Albania and Serbia.
- Planning and execution of a relevant Internet Referral Unit (IRU) workshop for the Albanian authorities in Tirana in December.
- Several **fact finding missions** carried out by the ELOs in **Bosnia and Herzegovina (5) and Serbia (3)** where they met with relevant law enforcement, political and prosecutorial authorities
- Regular meetings between the ELO to Bosnia and Herzegovina, the EU Delegation in Sarajevo and competent authorities on the state of play in terms of the Joint Contact Point.
- ELO Albania & Serbia & Bosnia and Herzegovina participation in several meetings at Europol: EMPACT meetings, operational meetings, experts' meeting and meetings with liaison officers at Europol
- ELO Albania & Serbia & Bosnia and Herzegovina participation in various CEPOL, OSCE, IPA 2017, PAMECA V, SEA GATE, SEPICA, UNDOC meetings, courses, workshop, trainings, **seminars (11)** in order to promote EUROPOL and to deliver awareness sessions about EUROPOL products and services in the region.
- The ELO Albania & Bosnia and Herzegovina prepared an initial country report for the upcoming base line assessment.
- Establishment of a new dedicated chapter for the update Liaison officers WB at the regional country reports.
- Relevant meetings between Bosnia and Herzegovina's authorities and the European Counterterrorist Centre in Sarajevo on Foreign Terrorist Fighters and TFTP (Terrorist Finance Tracking Programme).

OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

- Ratification of the agreement by the Serbian Parliament.
- Increased visibility and communication activities after the deployment of ELO in Tirana who is now regularly meeting with the Minister of Interior and Police Directorate.
- Translation of Europol Catalogue of Products and Services into the three country languages, in coordination with LBs and national competent authorities.
- Increase in the overall engagement of the Albanian authorities, both at strategic and operational level. Messages exchanged grew from 95 in the first semester to 419 in the second half of 2019.
- Increase in the overall information exchange with Bosnia and Herzegovina's authorities by 90%.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Presentation of baseline Assessments for Bosnia and Herzegovina to Management Board

- Accreditation of the Europol Liaison Officer to Serbia and physical deployment of the ELO to Belgrade.
- Scouting of new premises for the National Contact Point at the Ministry of Security.
- Accreditation of the Europol Liaison Officer and physical deployment of the ELO to Sarajevo.
- Relevant ILO Conference in Tirana with participation of all three ELOs in March.
- Update Heads of Europol National Units and Management Board of the latest state of play
- Visibility and communication activities are foreseen after the deployment of ELO in Belgrade and Sarajevo.
- Conduct a progress report and provision of narrative on Q2.
- Enhancing further opportunities for strategic and operational cooperation in accordance with existing cooperation agreements in the hosting countries, depending on MS and hosting countries' needs.

Serious organised crimes investigations

Programme reference:	IPA II Annual Multi-Country Action Programme 2017 - Support to the Western Balkan Integrative Internal Security Governance
Project title:	Countering Serious Crime in the Western Balkans
EU contribution:	EUR 13 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Delegation Agreement
Contract reference:	IPA/2017/390-963
Duration of activities:	01/01/2018 – 31/12/2019
Contact :	Olivia Debaveye, olivia.debaveye@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The project's objective is to raise the effectiveness of and the cooperation among regional and national institutions in fighting serious and organised crime. Cooperation among investigation institutions of the countries, of the region and of the EU is crucial to improve overall security. Therefore, the project supports the conclusion and realization of cooperation agreements and enhance the use of communication means to better investigate serious and organised crime across borders.

ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

- From July until December 2019, 57 measures were supported in 17 new investigations and in ongoing investigations, in particular on drug trafficking, money

laundering and smuggling of migrants have been supported (total since January 2018: 94 investigations with 186 measures), including an intensive support to a JIT between Albania and Italy.

- 1 Regional study visit to to the Educational Centre “Mitrovo Polje” (Serbia) on dismantling clandestine synth drug labs;
- 1 Technical workshop on ballistics between the EU Members and the Western Balkan countries, in cooperation with EMPACT (European multidisciplinary platform against criminal threats) Firearms;
- 1 Regional study visit to France on firearms investigations in cooperation with EMPACT Firearms;
- 1 Regional forum on judicial cooperation;
- Several trainings on nature protection and waste management, in executing cross-border crime-targeted activities (IMPEL network - European Union Network for the Implementation and Enforcement of Environmental Law), on border security, undercover investigations, Police Cooperation Convention for Southeast Europe Secretariat (PCC SEE) awareness raising (DCAF - Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance);
- Support to Western Balkans "ENFAST"- European Network Fugitive Active Search Teams: participation of the members of the FAST units present in the Balkans as "observers" in several operational meetings and training courses in the various Member States;
- Donation agreement with handover ceremony of the Italy criminalistics briefcases for crime scene inspection at the Ministries of Interior and the Law Enforcement Agencies of the beneficiaries.

OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

- Draft Law on International Legal/Judicial Cooperation in Criminal Matters ready in Albania;
- The knowledge and the capacities for ca. 339 prosecutors or police officers increased
- 213 representatives of the beneficiary institutions trained on Police Cooperation Convention for Southeast Europe (PCC SEE), 162 representatives of the beneficiary institutions raised their awareness on how better and in coordination with others to effectively combat environmental (organised) crime;
- Signing a Memorandum of Understanding between the Serbian Republic Public Prosecutor’s Office (RPPO) and European Investment Bank;
- Signing of 3 agreements on Mutual Legal Assistance between Serbia and Argentina;
- Cooperation Agreement between EUROJUST and Albania (1. November 2019);
- Cooperation Agreement between EUROJUST and Serbia (11. December 2019).

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Ongoing support to (pre-) investigations;
- Joint Action Days Western Balkans” Debriefing Meeting on Firearms in Sarajevo in cooperation with EMPACT (Guardia Civil), 26th/27th March 2020;
- Deployment of Serbian Liaison Prosecutor from Serbia to EUROJUST as of 1 March 2020.

2.10 REGIONAL PROGRAMME FOR SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE (XCEU60) – BUILDING REGIONAL ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING AND COUNTER-FINANCING OF TERRORISM CAPACITY IN SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE

Programme reference:	Multi-country Programme, IPA 2017/039-402
Project title:	Regional Programme for South Eastern Europe (XCEU60) – Building Regional Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Financing of Terrorism Capacity in South Eastern Europe
EU contribution:	EUR 2.5 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Grant agreement for a pillar assessed organisation with UNODC
Contract reference:	IPA/2017/393-994
Duration of activities:	23/12/2017 – 31/03/2020
Links:	https://www.unodc.org/southeasterneurope/ https://www.unodc.org/brussels/en/aml_cft.html http://wb-iisg.com/
Contact :	Olivia Debaveye, olivia.debaveye@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The objective of this action is twofold:

- (i) Organized crime and terrorism threats are degraded due to the addressed jurisdictions’ enhanced ability to detect, deter and prosecute money laundering, financing of terrorism, including foreign terrorist fighters, and
- (ii) Regional threats of transnational organized crime and terrorism are reduced due to addressed jurisdictions’ enhanced ability for interagency and international cooperation on anti-money

laundering, combating terrorism financing and asset recovery. This project is carried out as a joint UNODC/CEPOL collaborative action.

ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

1. In September 2019, UNODC, in cooperation with CEPOL, organized a technical coordination meeting of 12 national UNODC and CEPOL project focal points from six Western Balkan jurisdictions to discuss the project results to date. The meeting also discussed the workplan for 2019 and Q1 2020 for the participants' feedback.
2. In December 2019, UNODC in cooperation with CEPOL, organized a regional conference (fourth UNODC ToT phase) of the national trainers on financial investigations at the UNODC HQ in Vienna, Austria. The event brought together 75 participants from the law enforcement and judiciary institutions of the entire Western Balkan region.
3. In July-December 2019, UNODC completed the 5th phase of the Training of Trainers programme with the organization of four national trainings on financial investigations for the law enforcement and judiciary from Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Kosovo. The training was fully delivered by the group of the UNODC certified national trainers. In total, 90 experts participated in the four trainings.
4. In July, October and December 2019, UNODC organized three study visits for high-ranking delegations from Kosovo, North Macedonia and Montenegro to Austria, Spain and Portugal respectively to study the best practices, exchange experiences and to enhance the bilateral operational cooperation on financial and serious and organized crime investigations. In total, 34 officials participated in these three study visits.
5. UNODC issued two quarterly e-newsletters for the project in cooperation with CEPOL to reflect the activities conducted in the framework of the project, project achievements, highlight upcoming activities and also provide feedback from the participants regarding the delivery of the programme.
6. UNODC's Independent Evaluation Section (IES) participated in the IISG Board Meeting in Skopje, North Macedonia, where the revised IISG ToR, which considered the IES's recommendations, was approved.

OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

Numbering corresponds to the numbering of activities above.

1. The participants exchanged the lessons learned during the project and agreed on the way forward for a mutual and coherent direction among all stakeholders involved in the implementation of the project and to better coordination of the efforts on the ground.
2. As a result of the conference, the participants exchanged the best practices and lessons learned regarding the application of financial investigations into serious and organized crime and drug trafficking matters.
3. The 5th phase of the ToT was completed and fully delivered by the national trainers to 138 participants in the 5th phase, bringing the total number of trained officers in the Western Balkans to over 400 experts who enhanced their knowledge and skills on how to conduct financial investigations related to money laundering.

4. As a result of the study visits, the operational exchange of information and collaboration between the law enforcement authorities in the Western Balkans and the European Union was reinforced, in particular in the areas of anti-money laundering and terrorism financing, drugs and arms trafficking, corruption and tax fraud, crypto-currencies, and financial investigations at the outset of serious and organized crime investigations and other criminal and money laundering cases.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER (JANUARY-MARCH 2020)

Financial Investigations Component:

- Completion of the last (VI) phase of the UNODC ToT programme on financial investigations by conducting six national quality assurance (follow-up) trainings on financial investigations based on the institutionalized curricula on financial investigations by 31 March;
- Organization of one study visit of Albanian law enforcement officers to one of the EU countries by 31 March;
- Finalization of the video for the project activities and distribution of two e-project newsletters by 31 March.

2.11 PARTICIPATION IN EJTN TRAINING ACTIVITIES

Programme reference:	Multi-beneficiary Programme under IPA Transition Assistance and Institution Building Component for the year 2017/393-779
Project title:	Participation in EJTN activities
EU contribution:	EUR 300,000
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Grant to the European Judicial Training Network EJTN
Contract reference:	2017/393-779
Duration of activities:	20/12/2017 – 19/12/2020
Links:	http://www.ejtn.eu
Contact :	Eleonora Sconci, Eleonora.SCONCI@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The overall objective of the project is to increase the capacities of the judges, prosecutors, trainees and trainers from the Western Balkans by giving them access to EJTN trainings in line with EU acquis requirements. Such activities are also attended by peers of EU Member States.

ACTIVITIES (JANUARY-JUNE 2019)

- Judges, prosecutors and trainees from the Western Balkans continued to be invited as attendees of the seminars on the following fields of law: Linguistic, Criminal, Civil, Administrative, Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, Judicial Training Methods. Additionally, they were also invited to take part to EJTN's Exchange Programme for judicial authorities (AIKOS, General Group, Trainers).

OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

- For a consecutive reporting period, EJTN maintained the engagement of the institutions and participants from the Western Balkan in its activities. Participation was stabilised at the same levels of the previous reporting period and it exceeded that of the entire 2018.
- 24 participants attended EJTN Seminars: 5 from Albania, 10 from Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2 from Montenegro, 6 from Serbia, 1 from Kosovo*. They received training on EU civil, administrative and criminal law, human and fundamental rights and legal English.
- 15 participants attended the Exchange Programme activities (9 from Albania, 2 from Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1 from Montenegro, 3 from North Macedonia) and enhanced their practical knowledge of the judicial systems of EU member states.
- 27 future/early career judges attended Initial Training Activities (9 from Albania, 3 from Bosnia and Herzegovina, 3 from Montenegro, 6 from North Macedonia, 6 from Serbia) enhancing their practical knowledge of the judicial systems of EU states, and developing beneficial contacts for their careers with EU member state counterparts.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

The EJTN will invite participants from the Western Balkans to take part in numerous activities on topics such as:

- EU Antitrust Law
- EU Public Procurement
- Service of documents & taking of evidence abroad
- Brussels I Regulation - Jurisdiction and the Recognition and Enforcement of Judgments in civil matters (introductory level)
- Cybercrime and E-evidence (Basic)
- Economic Crimes: asset recovery and confiscation (Specialized)

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244/99 and the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on Kosovo's declaration of independence.

- Rule of Law Training for Judges: Independent Judges as a Cornerstone of the Rule of Law
- Conflicts of Norms / Multi level of Protection in the Application of Fundamental Rights
- On the job training
- Change Management
- Legal language training in cooperation in civil matters
- Legal language training in cooperation in criminal matters

Exchange Programme: 2-week exchanges in the courts/prosecution offices of the EU MS and trainers' exchanges and the AIAKOS Programme will also be organised.

2.12 FINANCIAL INVESTIGATION

Programme reference:	Multi-Country Programme, IPA 2017/393-268
Project title:	Financial Investigation In-Service Training Programme, Western Balkans 2017-2019
EU contribution:	EUR 2.5 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	PA Grant to the EU Agency for Law Enforcement Training (CEPOL)
Contract reference:	393-268
Duration of activities:	21 December 2017 – 31 March 2020
Links:	https://www.cepol.europa.eu/
Contact :	Olivia Debaveye, olivia.debaveye@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The main objective of the project is to develop and sustain the institutional capacity of the law enforcement agencies of the beneficiaries through training in order to prevent, investigate and prosecute transnational organised crime and financing terrorism in the context of the effective use of financing investigations. It also centres on supporting the creation of sustainable professional networks building upon practical exchange of professional experience across the region and with the EU Member States.

ACTIVITIES (JULY - DECEMBER 2019)

- CEPOL has implemented four residential training courses during the course of second half of 2019. Amongst these courses, two joint regional trainings were dedicated to facilitate networking and exchange of good practices between Western Balkans and EU MS officials, while two regional trainings (mock trials) were dedicated only to WB participants. All in all,

161 law enforcement and judicial officials participated in residential trainings during the time period in question. This colourful training portfolio focused on financial investigation in the context of money laundering, crypto currencies, corruption, economic crime, public procurement fraud as well as simulation of financial investigation and court trial. Multiagency and international cooperation, as well as fundamental rights, were also part of the training.

- Following the methodology of the Erasmus inspired CEPOL Exchange Programme, during the second half of the year, 36 Western Balkans and EU participants travelled to their counterparts. With Europol engagement in the Exchange Programme, a crucial novelty was introduced which may potentially directly increase cooperation between Europol and the Western Balkans. Besides, 20 Western Balkans participants participated in regular CEPOL residential courses covering MTIC, facilitation of irregular migration, money laundering and operational intelligence analysis.
- The Project delivered a tailor-made online webinar related to national training in North Macedonia.

OUTPUTS (JULY – DECEMBER 2019)

In the course of the training activities, competencies were developed on various issues related to financial investigations; including knowledge on relevant legal instruments, good practices and lessons learned. Furthermore, the participants witnessed the benefits of interagency and international cooperation, both in the EU and in the region.

The regional trainings and the exchange programme also considerably contributed to the promotion of active and sustainable networking between the law enforcement personnel, prosecutors and judiciary officials across the Western Balkans region and with the EU Member States.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Between January and March 2020, the project will deliver a regional training course covering financial investigation related to public procurement fraud and money laundering, as well as a conference for the Heads of WB and EU training institutions related to training activities in the area of financial investigations.
- The organisation of exchanges will continue for 18 participants in total.
- Closing conference of the project will be held on 5th March 2020 in Rome.
- Project is due to end on 31st March 2020.

2.13 PREVENTION AND COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM

Support to Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) in the Western Balkans (WB)

Programme reference:	Multi-beneficiary Programme under IPA II, IPA II 2016 / 039-858
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Project title:	Support to Prevention and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) in the Western Balkans
EU contribution:	EUR 3 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Grant Contract
Contract reference:	CN 2017/386-831 (Addendum 1 in force as of 19/03/2019)
Duration of activities:	03/04/2017- 02/04/2020
Links:	http://www.wb-iisg.com
Contact :	Olivia Debaveye, olivia.debaveye@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The main objective of the action is to contribute towards efficient capacity-building and improved policymaking on Prevention and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) in the Western Balkans. In addition, the action efficiently utilizes the concept of the 'Integrative Internal Security Governance' (IISG) in the Western Balkans in order to achieve greater sustainability, alignment, coordination and inclusiveness of the action's outputs as well as overall reform and EU-Western Balkan cooperation in this policy field.

ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

- The process of preparing an e-learning Module on P-CVE for the Western Balkans (WB) reached the final revision phase; the online platform has been prepared.
- DCAF Ljubljana (Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance) launched the procurement procedure of IT equipment for the WB6 beneficiaries; the handovers of equipment to support the functioning of national P-CVE authorities took place in BiH, Montenegro and Albania.
- 4 sets of IISG-supported national coordination meetings on P-CVE (P-CVE stakeholders and donors, respectively) were executed in Sarajevo, Podgorica, Tirana and Skopje.
- The 4th IISG Board Meeting was organised in Skopje in November 2019 and the board endorsed the revised IISG Terms of Reference.
- The Counter-Terrorism Initiative (CTI) Network Meeting focused on the exchange of operational experience on returning Foreign Terrorist Fighters; a joint meeting between the CTI Network and Frontex WB Network was held on its margins.
- The 4th Meeting of the Regional Network of WB National P-CVE Coordinators (RNNC) discussed topics related to P-CVE, based on the conclusions and needs identified;
- The IISG Conference Panel on the Western Balkans Counter Terrorism Initiative (WBCTI) with a specific focus on youth radicalisation was executed within an RCC conference on CT and P-CVE.

- The first national Internet Referral Unit (IRU) Workshop was executed in Albania by Europol and supported by the IISG, intended to further raise capacities to utilise IRU tools.

OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

Delivery of IT equipment for BiH, Montenegro and Albania as technical support for the operation of relevant national P-CVE bodies and inter-agency platforms;

- Continued transfer of EU good practice and experience to WB policy-makers, and continued contributions to EC needs assessments through the RNNC network activities;
- Initiated follow-up to the regional visit to Europol IRU in mid-2019; 1st national workshop delivered in Albania at the Albanian CVE Center;
- Delivered assistance, tools and raised capacities of national authorities for national-level thematic coordination in the field of P-CVE supported by IISG in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and North Macedonia; produced conclusions on next steps;
- Delivered revised IISG Terms of Reference and agreed modalities of further development of the IISG; adoption by IISG Board in November 2019;
- Increased level of cooperation among EU agencies and WB authorities on cross-regional border security cooperation, incl. level of operational information exchange.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Delivery of IT equipment for remaining Beneficiaries' P-CVE coordination bodies;
- IISG national coordination meetings on P-CVE (P-CVE stakeholders and donors) in Pristina and Belgrade;
- Development of Youth EX STREAM platform on P-CVE;
- RCC Regional workshop 'New Age Journalism for New Age Security Challenges' in Skopje;
- RCC Workshop 'Community Dialogue with Youth at Risk' in Tirana;
- Expanded CTI Network Meeting on countering online radicalization and cooperation with Europol in Prague;
- IRU national workshops in Belgrade and Skopje.

Creation of P/CVE CSO Hub

Programme reference:	Multi-country Programme, IPA 2017/038-961
Project title:	Communities First: Creation of a civil society hub to address violent extremism – from prevention to reintegration
EU contribution:	EUR 910.350
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans

Type of contract:	Grant agreement with Forum mladi i neformalna edukacija - Forum MNE
Contract reference:	CN 2017/393-759
Duration of activities:	06/03/2018 – 05/03/2021
Links:	http://www.forum-mne.com
Contact:	Olivia Debaveye, olivia.debaveye@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The overall objective is to develop a Western Balkans Civil Society Hub to empower civil society organizations (CSOs) to be more effective and accountable actors and to improve their capacity to implement projects and dialogue with governments, influencing policy and decision-making processes as it relates to preventing and countering violent extremism that leads to terrorism.

ACTIVITIES (JULY–DECEMBER, 2019)

- 24 trainings (out of 42 planned) were organised across the Western Balkan region for grassroots CSOs, women’s organisations, media associations, young people and youth organisations, students associations and professional associations of teachers. Topics of three-day trainings are country specific and in line with the current country challenges in addressing the issue of violent extremism. By the end of December 2019, four trainings were held in Albania, six in Bosnia and Herzegovina, two in Kosovo, five in Montenegro, four in North Macedonia and three in Serbia;
- Four experts’ national workshops/working groups held – one in Bosnia and Herzegovina, one in Montenegro, one in North Macedonia and one in Serbia;
- Fourth partners’ meeting held in Novi Pazar, Serbia;
- Enabled regular consultations between co-applicants and international experts.

OUTPUTS (JULY–DECEMBER, 2019)

- Capacity building programme included more than 450 participants. Although topics of the trainings are country specific they all have the same goal: to empower and enable civil society members to actively engage and contribute to Prevention and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) efforts in the region;
- Two-day experts’ national workshops/working groups meetings held in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia gathered approx. 30 P/CVE relevant stakeholders in each country. The topics of the workshops were country specific but seeking to achieve the same goal – development of P/CVE country action plan for CSOs.

- Cooperation among CSOs at national level, as well as regional maintained and continuously enhanced;
- Established connections with relevant national and international experts which enabled consortium members to benefit from the best practices and lessons learned.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Implementation of 18 three-day trainings across the Western Balkan region;
- The implementation of national workshops/working groups will continue throughout the Western Balkans. Eight experts' national workshops/working groups is expected to be held in the upcoming six months;
- Regional workshop gathering 80 key stakeholders in the field of P/CVE will be held in Montenegro. Main goal of the regional workshop is to convene key national stakeholders from all countries participants and find common ground for regional policies and community actions;
- In order to support the development and piloting of new P/CVE actions small grants, a programme for grassroots and local CSOs will be launched;
- Launching of an online hub – the hub will enable networking of CSOs, cross-countries and cross-sector exchange of information and knowledge. It is envisioned as a significant capacity-building tool primarily for CSOs and local actors where they would be able to find necessary P/CVE related information and documents.
- 5th partners' meeting is planned to be held in North Macedonia.

2.14 ACCOUNTING FOR MISSING PERSONS IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

Strengthening Regional Cooperation in the Western Balkans to Resolve Missing Persons Cases from Conflicts of the 1990s

Programme reference:	Multi-country Action Programme, IPA/2018/040-113
Project title:	Strengthening Regional Cooperation in the Western Balkans to Resolve Missing Persons Cases from Conflicts of the 1990s
EU contribution:	EUR 1.499.166, 30
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Grant Contract
Contract reference:	CN 2019/406-958
Duration of activities:	24/07/2019 – 24/07/2021
Links:	http://www.icmp.int

Contact :Catherine DENIS, Catherine.DENIS@ec.europa.eu**PURPOSE**

The overall objective of this action is to strengthen reconciliation in the Western Balkans through addressing the issue of persons missing as a result of conflicts in the 1990s. This action seeks to strengthen regional cooperation and domestic technical capacities in identification of missing persons, but also to empower the families of the missing to hold authorities accountable and lobby for their rights.

ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

- Assistance at exhumations at various sites in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. No human remains were found;
- Provision of continued access to authorized staff of domestic institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia to ICMP databases relative to missing persons through the ICMP Online Inquiry Centre;
- Preparation of the Call for Proposals for small grants to Family Associations of Missing Persons;
- Meeting with authorities in Serbia and Kosovo*authorities to ascertain the degree of political will for national DNA laboratories assuming the DNA testing and matching functions;
- Monitoring and Evaluation Activities conducted in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*and Montenegro.

OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

- Effective access of domestic institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia to ICMP databases related to missing persons;
- Launch of the Call for Proposals for small grants to Family Associations of Missing Persons;
- Better perspective on the position of Heads of Commissions on Missing Persons of the Governments of Serbia and Kosovo*regarding technical capacities of domestic laboratories to assume the role of post mortem sample testing;
- Better perspective related to the confidence of missing persons' families in the capacity of domestic authorities to locate and identify missing persons and on the authorities' confidence in the capacity of other domestic authorities to locate and identify missing persons.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- At the request of Serbia and Kosovo, organize bilateral meetings, to support exhumations of joint interest;

- Support excavation of clandestine gravesites in Kosovo* and Serbia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- Update ICMP's assessment of the capacity of DNA laboratories in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo* and Serbia to conduct DNA testing of post-mortem samples;
- Provide continued access to domestic institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia authorities to ICMP databases relative to missing persons;
- Collect reference samples from missing persons' living relatives for DNA, profile and match DNA samples, provide DNA match reports and potential human identifications to domestic authorities and, when needed, alert them about necessary follow up actions;
- Organize meetings with senior authorities in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Kosovo;
- Set up a baseline assessment of family association's advocacy capacities;
- Award and monitor small grants to Family Associations of Missing Persons to advocate for issues related to missing persons.

2.15 REGIONAL CSO ACTIVISM FOR REGIONAL RECONCILIATION IN THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA - IN SUPPORT OF RECOM

Programme reference:	Multi-beneficiary Programme IPA/2018/404-574
Project title:	Joint EU and MICT OTP Training project for National Prosecutors and Young Professionals from the former Yugoslavia
EU contribution:	EUR 0.2 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Grant Agreement with the Mechanism OTP
Contract reference:	CN 2018/404-574
Duration of activities:	01/01/2018 – 31/03/2020
Links:	http://www.irmct.org/en
Contact:	Catherine Denis, Catherine.DENIS@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The objective is to strengthen the capacity of judicial authorities in the countries of the former Yugoslavia to effectively investigate and prosecute war crimes. National prosecutors for domestic war crimes cases and young professionals with a legal or other relevant background participate in the Action.

ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

Visiting National Prosecutors

- Visiting National Prosecutor from Bosnia and Herzegovina continued activities and completed his professional visit at the Office of the Prosecutor (“OTP”) on 31 December 2019.
- Visiting National Prosecutor from Serbia started his participation in the Project on 1 September 2019.
- The OTP supported the Visiting National Prosecutors from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia during searches for investigative material, which was used in the investigation and prosecution of war crimes in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia.

Visiting Young Professionals component

- This component of the Project was inactive in this period.

OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

Visiting National Prosecutors component

- 91 Requests for Assistance completed. 972 documents (20,503 pages) and 116 audio/video material provided to the national prosecuting authorities.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Visiting Young Professionals from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia will arrive and start activities in January 2020.

CHAPTER 3: ECONOMIC GOVERNANCE AND PRIVATE SECTOR DEVELOPMENT

Support in the area of private sector development and investments aims to provide access to finance, raise regional competitiveness, increase competence of human capital, attract investments, facilitate trade and establish a business climate conducive to the development of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). Private Sector Support Facilities established under the Crisis Response Package are also included.

3.1 PLATFORM FOR SME FINANCING AND SUPPORT IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

Programme reference:	Multi-beneficiary Programmes, IPA 2011/021-964; IPA 2012/022-966; IPA 2013/024-091; IPA 2015/031-609; IPA 2016/039-919; 2017/039-402; 2018 /040-113; 2019/040-826
Project title:	Western Balkan Enterprise Development and Innovation Facility (WB EDIF)
EU contribution:	EUR 187.3 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Contribution agreements (CA) with OECD and World Bank Group; CA and Delegation Agreements (DGA) with the European Investment Fund (EIF) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD); Trusteeships with the EIF; Administrative Arrangement with JRC; Service contract
Contract reference:	CN 2012/295-825; CN 2012/306-154; CN 2012/306-653; CN 2013/319-472; CN 2012/306-667; CN 2013/333-444; CN 2013/318-776; CN 2013/331-504 ; CN 2014/334-654 05/12/2012 – 30/11/2025/; CN 2016/380-963; CN 2017/393-451; 2017/394-450; 2018/ 401-317; 2019/407-277; 2019/411-623; 2019/412-593
Duration of activities:	05/12/2012 – 21/12/2028;
Links:	www.wbedif.eu
Contact :	Aleksandra Kostova, alexandra.kostova@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

WBEDIF is a joint initiative of the EU, together with EIB, EIF, EBRD, World Bank, OECD as well as other investing FIs such as KfW, OeEB, DEG, Italy, and the Western Balkans Economies themselves. Through the combined efforts, expertise and skillsets of the partners WB EDIF aims to strengthen the competitiveness of the SMEs across the region. The facility is both

improving access to finance and providing advisory services for boosting the entrepreneurial capacity and the business ecosystem.

ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

- Enterprise Innovation Fund: ENIF has made 27 investments and invested EUR 26 million out of EUR 42 million available, bringing the utilisation of the fund to 60%. The investment period of the fund will finish in September 2020.
- Enterprise Expansion Fund: ENEF is developing the existing pipeline and completing the investments as the investment period is finishing in June 2020. One new investment has been signed in Belgrade and three new are in the approval process, which will bring the utilisation of the fund to 60%. ENEF is now moving to the phase of monitoring the portfolio (12 companies).
- Guarantee Facility: The Guarantee Facility I and Guarantee Facility II are fully deployed and EIF is now monitoring the portfolio. Under the GF Serbia, the five selected banks have disbursed ca EUR 71m. Under the GF Youth the call for expression of interest has been published in March 2019, firstly open to the banks which committed to include only youth employment loans. The response has been very positive and the applications received exceed the funding available. Five banks have been selected and may in total build up a potential portfolio of ca EUR 85m.
- Competitiveness Programme: EUR 15m have been deployed under EDIF to generate EUR 70m of lending to local FIs to support SME's competitiveness. EUR 45m have been signed out of EUR 70m target. On-lending is also well advanced, EUR 16m have been provided to local SMEs. There is need to replenish the programme in order to meet the high demand.
- Support services: EU REPARIS, Advice for Small Businesses and Venture Capital and Investment Readiness programmes are already or transiting to their phase II. New Proof of Concept project to be implemented by DG NEAR and DG JRC, together with a service provider will be launched in January 2020 and aims to bridge the gap between research, innovation and industry via capacity building. EIB is finalizing the Prospective analysis of the SMEs sector in the Western Balkans. OECD is having regular policy dialogue and follow-on on policy recommendations (SME Policy Index, launched in Sarajevo May 2019).
- Platform communication and visibility activities: Second WB EDIF regional event took place in May in Sarajevo, organised back to back with the EBRD Annual meeting. EDIF was also showcased at the Western Balkans Summit in Poznan, for which the EIF also launched a social media campaign and prepared a number of new marketing and communication materials.

OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

Access to finance for SMEs: good absorption for the guarantee facility as well as healthy uptake of the equity instruments, WB EDIF's financial outreach to SMEs is always increasing, including the latest lending programme.

Reach of Support Services: through its complementary soft measures, WB EDIF has reached multiple stakeholders.

Platform visibility and communication: increased visibility achieved via a number of outreach activities, including the [WB EDIF Annual Report 2018](#), the new WB EDIF brochure [From nest to sky](#) and the updated [WB EDIF Success Stories booklet](#) including a number of case studies and a new WB EDIF video (<https://youtu.be/sOPv4-YSu6E>).

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

ENIF: Following the success of the event which South Central Ventures organised in Dubrovnik and Budva, SCV will continue with this best practice and organize an event targeted at providing networking and further collaborative opportunities between investee companies and investors also in 2020. Workshops and presentations are planned and participation of the investment team members at various events (as jury members, panellists, keynote speakers).

ENEF: Up until June 2020, at the end of ENEF's investment period, all communication and visibility efforts will focus on a gathering of all ENEF investment companies in one of its beneficiary countries. The ENEF team will continue to conduct one-on-one meetings in its countries of operation and will continue to raise the Fund's visibility through storytelling (including videos and case studies) and social media outreach.

Guarantee Facility: Promoting the GF Serbia and GF Youth employment on the ground, via various thematic events and via networks, such as Chambers of Commerce.

Competitiveness Programme: Press/media activities focused on announcements of signings/launch events with partner financial institutions will target local and international media.

Support services: OECD is planning peer-to-peer dialogues, a new cycle of the Competiveness Outlook and meetings in the capitals of the Western Balkans in spring 2020. The World Bank will launch REPARIS II in Q1/2020 and Investment Readiness in Feb-Mar 2020. EBRD's ASB will continue organising regular visibility events, donor branded Completion Certificates for all advisory projects and regional launch event to promote the platform and showcase WB EDIF's achievements.

Platform Coordination: additional communications efforts are planned for 2020, like regularly updating the events and news on the website, preparing, distributing and promoting the third round of publicly available WB EDIF Annual Report 2019, together with the reprinted Success stories booklet.

3.2 EUROPEAN FUND FOR SOUTHEAST EUROPE (EFSE)

Programme reference:	IPA 2015 / 031-609 - Multi-country Action Programme for 2015, and CARDS 2006/018-264 and Multi-beneficiary Programme IPA 2007/019-344, IPA 2008/020-300, IPA 2009/021-373, IPA 2010/022-028
Project title:	European Fund for Southeast Europe (EFSE)
EU contribution:	EUR 87.6 million <i>(nominal value of C-shares subscribed in the Western Balkans)</i>
Beneficiary region:	14 countries including Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Delegation (Trusteeship) Agreement with the European Investment Fund (EIF) (and previous Contribution agreements)
Contract reference:	CN 2016/381-821 Previous CN 2006/124-240; CN 2008/154-338, CN 2009/201-622, CN 2009/222-012, CN 2011/268-296)
Duration of activities:	04/08/2006 – 31/12/2023
Links:	www.efse.lu
Contact :	Roberto Estellés, roberto.ESTELLES-COLOM@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

EFSE extends loans to selected financial institutions in Southeast Europe (as of 31 December 2019 106 loans to 39 financial institutions in the IPA Region), including the European Eastern Neighbourhood Region, for on-lending to micro and small enterprises and low-income private households with limited access to financial services. EFSE's Partner Lending Institutions (PLI) include commercial banks, microfinance banks, microcredit organisations and non-bank financial institutions.

ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

By 31 December 2019, the outstanding investment portfolio of the EFSE amounted to EUR 904.5 million with 67 PLI, thereof EUR 406.7 million with 39 PLIs in the Western Balkans and Turkey. During H2 2019, EFSE signed 14 investments totalling EUR 120.4 million, of which EUR 82.3 million with 7 PLIs were in the Western Balkans and Turkey.

In terms of sub-loan portfolio, by 31 December 2019, the outstanding sub-loan portfolio amounted to EUR 944.6 million, including EUR 431.1 million in the Western Balkans and Turkey. This translates into an on-lending rate of 104% for the total Fund and 106% for the Western Balkans and Turkey by 31 December 2019. Almost 1,007,450 sub-loans have been

financed since the EFSE’s inception, accounting for EUR 7.8 billion in lending, with a clear focus on microloans below EUR 20,000.

In addition, the EFSE Development Facility (“DF”) implements 48 TA projects in the Western Balkan region and Turkey, with a total volume of EUR 6.7 million. Teaming up with its partners in driving the Fund’s Entrepreneurship Agenda, such as MCF EKI in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the EFSE DF rolled out the Entrepreneurship Academy that offers training for professional business development and consulting services for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). Furthermore, the DF is piloting an early stage finance facility partnering with accelerators of impact tech businesses, such as the Catalyst Foundation from Armenia, to foster regional collaboration and to provide growing start-ups with access to regional markets and growth capital for international market expansion. As part of its Responsible Finance Agenda, the DF assists the National Bank of the Republic of North Macedonia in strengthening its corporate governance standards to ensure effective decision making and compliance. To promote Financial Technology and Digitalisation, the DF supported OMRO, a microfinance company supporting small entrepreneurial initiatives in rural and urban areas of Romania, in the digitalisation of its financial services. As part of the Core Capacity Building for PLIs, the EFSE DF supported Crystal MFO in Georgia in serving its current client base as well as the upper micro client segment through improved sales and performance management techniques related to MSE finance.

The Fund was well funded in H2 2019 and has mobilized EUR 40.0 million of new subscriptions, including EUR 30.0 million new Notes, bringing private investor funding to 23% as of 31 December 2019, compared to 43% donor shares*. The subscription of additional EUR 10.0 million supra-regional L-Shares from BMZ in December adds further leverage to the “EU4Business – EU Local Currency Partnership Initiative” implemented in February 2019 and strengthens the EFSE stakeholder’s commitment to foster local currency lending in the Neighbourhood region. In H2 2019, local currency disbursements of EUR 28.5 million were realized. Overall, the Fund's performance remains very solid with a good risk profile, very good financial performance and continued leveraging of the Fund's C-Shares. The Fund continues to receive high visibility resulting from various initiatives and activities beyond mere investments, such as social business incubation, financial literacy or Fintech projects. It is worth highlighting the Fund’s “Power of Local Currency” campaign in cooperation with the EU aiming to advance the practice of local currency financing in the European Eastern Neighbourhood Region in order to drive sustainable economic growth.

OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

EFSE investment portfolio figures as at end Q4 2019*	
1. Total Invested Portfolio (Q4 2019 figures)	EUR 904.5 million
2. Number of current Partner Lending Institutions (Q4 2019 figures)	67

* the remaining 34% is subscribed by IFIs

3. Type of Partner Lending Institution (Q4 2019 figures)	68% Commercial Banks, 15% Micro-finance Institutions, 18% Non-Bank Financial Institutions
EFSE sub-loan figures as at end Q4 2019*	
4. Active End Borrowers (Q4 2019 figures)	93,058
5. Reached End Borrowers since inception (Q4 2019 figures)	1,007,422
6. Average sub-loan amount outstanding (Q4 2019 figures)	EUR 10,150
7. Disbursed sub-loans since inception (Q4 2019 figures)	EUR 7.8 billion

* Figures shown are aggregate for both, the region of Southeast Europe and the European Eastern Neighbourhood Region

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

The Fund's investment pipeline for H1 2020 appears sound and brings the Fund on a good way to reach its preliminary business plan target of EUR 969 million at year-end (yet to be finally confirmed by the Board in March). After a first full year of using the L-Shares for unhedged local currency lending in the Neighbourhood East in 2019, the partnership for local currency lending is expected to be extended throughout 2020. Besides potential local currency transactions in Georgia, Ukraine, Armenia and Belarus, first-time unhedged local currency investments in Azerbaijan and Moldova are also considered in the investment pipeline for H1 2020. Additionally, the Fund's "Power of Local Currency" campaign will be further rolled out in 2020 with events planned in each of the countries in the European Eastern Neighbourhood Region. Next events will take place in Belarus and Ukraine. Next to local currency lending, agricultural finance will be one of the strategic topics of the Fund. The aim is to outreach to new segments of agricultural clients by promoting "agri know-how" and technology in PLIs and increasing dedicated agriculture investment facilities.

In the first half of 2020, the EFSE DF will scale up regional business acceleration under its Entrepreneurship Academy across the EFSE region to enable scalable businesses to access regional and international markets as well as growth capital. Financial Technology remains an important crosscutting topic in different areas of the DF's work: the EFSE DF will continue to promote an enabling regulatory environment in cooperation with financial sector partners such as Central Banks and banking associations, support PLIs in their digitalisation efforts and identify Fintechs as potential PLIs of the Fund. As part of its measures for Core Capacity Building of PLIs, the EFSE DF will continue supporting a range of individual TA projects with EFSE PLIs, including projects for the digitisation of client services and business processes.

With regards to activities in Turkey, two new syndicated investments in strong Turkish PLIs of in total EUR 30 million have been pursued at the end of 2019 in order to prevent a further

deleveraging of the Fund’s national exposure. Further investment opportunities are already considered in the pipeline for H1 2020 in line with the Fund’s current strategy to keep the Turkey national exposure below 15% of total assets.

3.3 OECD-SUPPORT TO ECONOMIC COMPETITIVENESS IN SOUTH EAST EUROPE

Programme reference:	2019/408-752
Project title:	OECD Support to Economic Competitiveness in South East Europe
EU contribution:	EUR 5.98 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Contribution agreement with OECD
Contract reference:	CN 2019
Duration of activities:	01/10/2019 – 30/09/2022
Contact :	Youssef Tadros, Youssef.tadros@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

Assist the Western Balkan economies and Turkey in reinforcing their economic competitiveness and growth by identifying policies for enhanced competitiveness and long-term growth and by building capacity to further develop and implement these policies.

ACTIVITIES (OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2019)

Going for Competitiveness: The preparations to initiate the third cycle of the Competitiveness Outlook assessment began. The project team was established, which immediately embarked on the refinement of the assessment framework, made up of qualitative and quantitative indicators, with a three-fold objective: (1) To reflect the priorities expressed by the Western Balkan governments (including in their latest Economic Reform Programmes); (2) to include the latest OECD tools and instruments where feasible; (3) to streamline the questionnaires in a way that accentuates the focus on policy implementation, and in particular of the recommendations provided in the 2018 Competitiveness Outlook publication. To that end, extensive co-ordination and collaboration with 16 Divisions across the whole OECD was carried out.

SBA Assessment: *The SME Policy Index 2019: Western Balkans and Turkey* publication and its findings were promoted in different events, such as the *Economic Conference Montenegro* and the Aspen Institute’s Conference titled *Western Balkans Economic Development and Emigration*, both held in Budva, Montenegro in October 2019. The OECD team continued to attend the WB-EDIF meetings during this period, by providing an update on the recent activities carried out and giving their feedback on the WB-EDIF’s priorities for 2020.

Support to Policy Implementation: Initial discussions were held with the Albanian government to explore the possibility of organising a regional policy dialogue event as part of the 3rd Western Balkans Digital Summit on 2 April in Tirana.

OUTPUTS (OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2019)

Going for Competitiveness: The ongoing revision of the assessment frameworks has resulted in better alignment of the Competitiveness Outlook with the priorities and structure of the Economic Reform Programmes, whilst also embedding cutting-edge policy areas and latest developments on, including but not limited to, digitalisation, green deal and future of work. The revisions will allow for better capturing the state-of-play of policies and progress made by the Western Balkan economies in comparison with the EU and OECD member states.

SBA Assessment: The different events, to which the OECD team contributed, provided the opportunity to increase the awareness of the SME Policy Index publication’s findings and recommendations. They served as a platform to discuss the challenges faced by the SMEs in the Western Balkans, by shedding light on the policy-actions that need to be taken by policy-makers to strengthen private sector development and to level the playing field for all enterprises.

Support to Policy Implementation: Holding the regional policy dialogue as part of a Summit will create the unique opportunity to bring the programme’s insights to a broader range of stakeholders, including Ministers of OECD countries and partner economies.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

Going for Competitiveness: The assessment frameworks of all the 16 policy areas covered under the Competitiveness Outlook will be finalised. The assessment cycle will be kicked-off during a regional meeting with National Government Co-ordinators and statistical office representatives in Paris on 8 April 2020 (tbd). It aims to acquaint stakeholders with the new assessment framework and milestones in the assessment process. In the next step, between April and June, in-country kick-off meetings will be held in each Western Balkan economy with the purpose to explain the assessment cycle and questionnaires to all the relevant national stakeholders.

SBA Assessment: No activities are planned for that period.

Support to Policy Implementation: The first regional policy dialogue meeting will be held on 2 April in Tirana as part of the 3rd Western Balkans Digital Summit. It will leverage the Going Digital agenda of the OECD. Its focus is on how the digital transformation affects policymaking across a wider spectrum of policy areas and what Western Balkan economies can learn from peers from the region, OECD and EU members.

3.4 TRADE

Programme reference:	Multi-beneficiary Programme, IPA 2018
Project title:	Support to CEFTA Secretariat 2018-2019

EU contribution:	EUR 200,000
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Moldova
Type of contract:	Operating grant with the CEFTA Secretariat
Contract reference:	CN 2018/399-060
Duration of activities:	01/08/2018 – 31/07/2019
Links:	http://www.cefta.int/
Contact:	Nanna Matsson, Nanna.Matsson@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The overall objective is to enhance economic development through supporting liberalisation and facilitation of intra-regional trade in the context of the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA). The Project supports the operation of the CEFTA Secretariat, which provides technical and administrative support to the CEFTA Structures (Chair in Office – CiO, the CEFTA Joint Committee – JC, the CEFTA Subcommittees, CEFTA Working Groups and CEFTA Committee for Trade Facilitation).

ACTIVITIES (JULY 2019)

The newly recruited CEFTA staff members: a Communication and Coordination Expert, a Senior Trade Facilitation Expert and a Senior Services Expert took up their function in May/June and were fully operational in July 2019. Together with the Director, they assisted the CEFTA Parties in the implementation of priorities outlined in the 2019 Work Programme and facilitated the organisation of programmed meetings of the CEFTA Structures. The CEFTA Secretariat also assisted the Parties with the MAP implementation.

At the Poznan Summit, the CEFTA Secretariat presented the deliverables and outputs from the REA MAP.

During the month of July, the CEFTA Secretariat staff participated in the Annual meeting of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) in Sarajevo. During this mission, several meetings with the Bosnia and Herzegovinan institutions were organised in order to discuss further activities.

The meetings with the institutions in Montenegro and Albania were held during the last week of July and discussions on the planned activities have been held.

The CEFTA Staff has participated at the GIZ event on the recognition of fruits and vegetables on 11 and 12 July.

OUTPUTS (JULY 2019)

- CEFTA staff members participated in the Poznan Summit (4-5 July 2019)

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT PERIOD

Preparation of the final report and expenditure verification.

Programme reference:	Multi-beneficiary Programme, IPA 2014/031-603
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Project title:	Strengthening the CEFTA Structures and their implementation capacities
EU contribution:	EUR 2,579,700.00
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Moldova
Type of contract:	Action grant with the CEFTA Secretariat
Contract reference:	CN 2015/356-738
Duration of activities:	01/05/2015 – 31/12/2019
Links:	http://www.cefta.int
Contact :	Nanna Matsson, Nanna.Matsson@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

To provide the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) Parties with technical assistance related to the priorities identified in the Integrated Growth Pillar of the South East Europe (SEE) Strategy 2020, where specific technical preparations are needed.

ACTIVITIES (JULY -DECEMBER 2019)

The National Experts Programme was successfully implemented and four experts from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania and North Macedonia supported the CEFTA Secretariat in the following committees: customs and rule of origin, non-tariff measures (NTM), services and Agriculture Including Sanitary and Phytosanitary Issues (SPS).

The legal experts under the project “Legal Counsel on CEFTA Negotiations and Implementation” provided comprehensive legal assistance to the CEFTA Secretariat and the CEFTA Parties with regard to the questions asked by the World Trade Organisation (WTO) members and in view of a reform of the CEFTA institutional structures. The experts prepared proposals for a revised Decision on the CEFTA bodies and discussed it with the CEFTA Parties in Brussels in October. Moreover, during the meeting the possibility of extending the CEFTA MIS is planned to be extended to the CEFTA Parties.

The Multiple Framework Contract on “Event and Travel organisation” allowed the organisation of 15 events, meetings, workshops, missions both in Brussels and in the CEFTA region including the CEFTA Week in Tirana in December 2019.

A second workshop was organized under the project “LSEE-CEFTA collaboration on CEFTA Academia Network” with the London School of Economics Enterprise (LSEE) in Skopje in September 2019 and, after the workshop, efforts to encourage submissions intensified, resulting in a highly satisfactory stream of submissions from October 2019 onwards. Three papers were submitted to the series by the end of October 2019 and another four were submitted in November 2019. Of them, three papers were accepted for publication.

The maintenance of the Systematic Exchange of Electronic Data project (SEED) was performed until the availability of funds and the contract has ended in October 2019: that might represent the risk for the further functioning of the SEED system.

An agreement with the World Bank was finalised to report on the Effects of Approximating the EU Common External Tariff (CET) Externally Financed Output (the EFO), and the conclusion was adopted by the Joint Committee (JC)* on 18 December 2019.

The project on “Report on Legislation and policy Measures in the sector of E-commerce in the CEFTA Region” continues to be commented by the Parties and the final version and report were prepared in December 2019. It is agreed that the proposal will be delivered on the 15 of February 2020 by CEFTA Secretariat and the work will continue based on the proposal.

The Working Group on the harmonisation of the certificates continued its work during the September meeting, as well as the preparatory work for the implementation of the SEED+. The SPS certificate was agreed upon, while the work on the veterinary certificates is progressing and it is expected that the work will continue within the 2020. Work started on the draft decision for the implementation of mutual recognition of fruits and vegetables and it is agreed by the Agriculture and SPS SC in October. The minor technical details are expected to be corrected, and the adoption is expected.

The establishment of the document management information system (DMIS) has started in October based on the recommendations provided by Deloitte on the internal functioning of the Secretariat. It delivered the automatization of the Standard operating Procedures and improves the work of the CEFTA Secretariat. The system is implemented in December in the CEFTA Secretariat. Further developments of the system will be performed during the next period, that would enable the participation of the CEFTA Parties in the future.

Moreover, the exploratory talks were held in the area of Competition and State aid, Market Surveillance, while in preparation of the adoption of the AP6 the Interregional regulatory cooperation (IRC) workshops in are of Construction services, tourism and postal services during this reporting period.

The participation of the CEFTA secondees and staff was ensured in the meetings of the JC and the Committees and Working Groups of CEFTA[†], activities performed by the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), the German Cooperation Agency (GIZ), Western Balkan 6 Chamber Investment Forum (WB6CIF), International Finance Cooperation (IFC), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the Transport Community. These activities had led to the preparation of the successful CEFTA week that has been held in

* Joint Committee: The only decision-making body, represented by each Party. Decision making mechanism: The CEFTA Parties manage and advance the implementation of the Agreement through Joint Committee decisions. These decisions have to be taken by consensus.

[†] Committee of Trade Facilitation (cooperation among the Parties with the aim of reducing trade costs and increasing requirements for safety and security measures); and Committee of Contact Points (support the functioning of CEFTA and the fulfilment of the decisions/conclusions of the JC). CEFTA Working Groups: NTMs (dealing with technical measures), Risk Management (facilitate trade while improving the overall quality and deterrence of customs, security, and safety controls and inspections), Electronic Exchange of Information (IT capacities to facilitate trade while improving the overall quality of customs, security and safety controls and inspections), Statistics (improve the quality of trade in services statistics and harmonise statistics with those of the EU), Professional Qualifications (enhancing intraregional trade by facilitating recognition conducive to labour mobility), and Investment and Promotion (support policies that are non-discriminatory, transparent and predictable to enhance the flow).

Tirana in December with the successful Joint Committee meeting held on the 18 of December and adopting several important documents.

OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

- Additional Protocol 6 was adopted by the JC
Risk Management Strategy was adopted by the JC
- Decision on Establishing the validation procedure for the mutual recognition of CEFTA Parties' national Authorised Economic Operators' Programmes with regard to the safety and security adopted by the JC
- Draft Decision on Facilitating Trade in Fruit and Vegetables was drafted
- The conclusions from the IRC workshops were prepared
- The report on the e-commerce was accepted and the Project completed
- The DMIS is developed for CEFTA
- The work on the regulatory database is completed
- The conclusion on EU CET and CEFTA Customs Tariffs (CT) was adopted by the JC
- The time plan of the cooperation of the Market Surveillance authorities was developed
- The conclusion related to the Public Procurement was adopted
- The draft proposal for a revised Decision on the CEFTA bodies was prepared
- The maintenance of the SEED was ensured until the end of October 2019
- The work on e-commerce will continue – awaiting comments on its recommendations.
- In the context of the “LSEE-CEFTA collaboration on CEFTA Academia Network” with London School of Economics Enterprise, three papers are available on <http://www.lse.ac.uk/LSEE-Research-on-SouthEastern-Europe/Research/CEFTA-LSEE-RN/LSEE-CEFTA-Research-Papers>

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

Preparation of the final Report and expenditure verification, considering that the end of implementation is on 31.12.2019.

Programme reference:	Multi-beneficiary Programme, IPA 2018
Project title:	Systematic Exchange of Electronic Data (SEED+)
EU contribution:	EUR 5,300,000
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Moldova
Type of contract:	Action Grant with the CEFTA Secretariat and Italian Customs and Monopoly Agency
Contract reference:	CN 2018/403-296

Duration of activities:	21/12/2018 – 21/12/2022
Links:	http://www.cefta.int/
Contact:	Nanna Matsson, Nanna.MATSSON@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The overall objective of the SEED+ Project is to enhance economic development through supporting liberalisation and facilitation of intra-regional trade in the context of the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA). The Project supports upgrading the current SEED to SEED+ and establishing the regional databases as stipulated by the Additional Protocol 5 (AP5) on Trade Facilitation (AP5). In particular, the project supports upgrading and further development of the current SEED system that is established within the CEFTA Parties (Western Balkans 6 Parties). The main components of the project are:

- **Component A - Legal Component**

Component A will relate to the upgrade and harmonisation of the legislative frameworks and the harmonisation of the certificates needed for the electronic exchange of data in line with the EU acquis.

- **Component B - IT Component**

The IT Component will consist of the upgrade of the current SEED to SEED+, with the upgrades of the IT and communications systems, preparation of the administrative guidelines and operational manuals, and the establishment of the regional databases that are necessary in the implementation of AP5.

- **Component C - Internal strengthening of the CEFTA Secretariat**

This component relates to the strengthening of the internal capacities of the CEFTA Secretariat notably in terms of internal financial and procurement rules and procedures.

ACTIVITIES (JULY – DECEMBER 2019)

- **Component A - Legal Component**

In September 2019, the key expert from the Italian Customs Agency was assigned and started the process of the selection of experts from the Agency.

The kick off meeting was held at the CEFTA Secretariat in October.

MoUs regulating inter-agency cooperation for AP5 implementation needed for the free electronic exchange of information in the Parties have been collected and shared by the CEFTA Secretariat with the Italian Customs Agency for their review.

- **Component B - IT Component**

The selected SEED+ Project Manager started to work in August 2019.

The plan for the implementation of the Component B including procurement planning was revised and shared with the parties at the meeting on “Single Window and Data Sharing in the Western Balkans”, held in Skopje, 4-5 September 2019.

The procurement process for Preparations of ToRs for SEED+ and technical supervision of implementation was launched and finalized in the last quarter of 2019 and the implementation will commence at the beginning of 2020. The purpose of this contract is to provide technical assistance to the CEFTA Secretariat and the Beneficiary Administrations from CEFTA WB6 Parties to prepare a draft ToR and provide assistance during the tender clarification and evaluation stage, and for acceptance of deliverables of the SEED+ project.

After a series of meetings and discussions with the GIZ, the adequate funds have also been secured for the inclusion of Moldova into SEED+, and concrete arrangements will be arranged in the next reporting period.

As the SEED maintenance project closed at the end of October 2019, and in anticipation that the SEED+ project for the actual expansion of the existing SEED system is supposed to start in the last quarter of 2020, the new ToR for preventive SEED maintenance was drafted during this reporting period with the overall objective to secure the sustainability, fault-free operation, maintenance, and slight upgrades of the existing SEED.

Several meetings have been held with the representatives of the World Bank Group and the EC in order to ensure the complementarity between SEED+ project and WBG regional project on the national single windows (NSW).

The SEED+ Project Manager also participated at the several CEFTA meetings, at the Committee of Contact Points, the Subcommittee on Customs and Rules of Origin and at the CEFTA week, presenting the SEED+ concept and the implementation plan and promoting the SEED+ in the framework of the other Regional initiatives.

- **Component C - Internal strengthening of the CEFTA Secretariat**

Deloitte, contracted in April 2019, worked on the identification of gaps and remedies in relation to accounting rules and procedures, internal control mechanisms, and procurement and contracting rules and procedures.

In September 2019, CEFTA Secretariat and Deloitte have agreed on an Action plan composed of measures and deadlines to address identified shortcomings. Following the agreed Action plan, remedial standard operating procedures, manuals, forms, and charts have been reviewed in the reporting period and updated for the most critical issues identified.

The procurement process to provide technical assistance to the CEFTA Secretariat and to reinforce the CEFTA internal processes and procedures, increase efficiency, effectiveness and transparency through the implementation of advanced ICT based solutions - document management information system (DMIS) was launched and finalized. The project started in November and some of the remedial standard operating procedures have already been validated through their automation through DMIS.

OUTPUTS (JULY - DECEMBER 2019)

- SEED+ Project Manager and the Key Legal Expert selected and started to work;
- ToR for SEED+ Project Assistant prepared;
- Kick off Meeting with the Italian Customs Agency held;

- SEED+ presented at the Committee of Contact Points, the Subcommittee on Customs and Rules of Origin and at the CEFTA week;
- The SEED+ procurement plan revised;
- The procurement process for Preparations of ToRs for SEED+ and technical supervision of implementation launched and finalized;
- ToR for Preventive SEED maintenance drafted;
- The adequate funds secured for the inclusion of Moldova into SEED+;
- Coordination with the WBG regional project on the national single windows initiated;
- An Action Plan composed of measures and deadlines to address identified shortcomings for the implementation of the internal restructuring of the Secretariat agreed;
- Remedial standard operating procedures, manuals, forms and charts reviewed and updated for the most critical issues identified and automatized through DMIS.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- SEED+ Assistant selected and operational;
- Signed the contract for the Preparations of ToRs for SEED+ and technical supervision of implementation and commence with the implementation by organizing a kick off meeting;
- Revise a plan for the inclusion of Moldova into SEED+;
- Organize 7 workshops on SEED+ requirements collection;
- Assess the current state of play for SEED+ including legal and policy framework, existing ICT infrastructure, SEED overall architecture, technologies used, data model, data harmonization requirements and alignment with international/EU standards, business functionalities, reporting and other supporting IT systems and their interoperability;
- Prepare a comprehensive detailed design and software requirements specification for CEFTA Secretariat's data centre, SEED+ and all CEFTA databases and central services including CEFTA "Transparency pack";
- Maintain harmonization and compliance in requirements with the existing EU software modules and functional components, such as the TRACES NT, EUROPHYT, RAPEX;
- Participate at the ad-hoc working groups for the harmonisation of the certificates;
- Organize a meeting of the Working group on electronic exchange of information to validate the SEED+ blueprint;
- Set the milestones for overall SEED+ implementation and define concise milestones, deliverables, resources needed and timelines for overall SEED+ implementation including development, configuration, deployment, testing, training, documenting, stabilization, capacity building and post implementation support and maintenance;
- Prepare the ToRs for the SEED+ tenders and start the tender procedures;
- Ensure SEED preventive maintenance in 2020, until the implementation of SEED+ starts;

- Participate at the SCs of CEFTA and work with the authorities on the improvements of the legislation;
- Prepare ToR and select the evaluators for the future IT tenders;
- Complete implementation of the Action plan agreed with the Deloitte and fine-tune the DMIS system;
- Develop cooperation with other relevant regional initiatives e.g. Transport Community;
- Coordination with the WBG regional project on the national single windows maintained.

3.5 COMPETITIVENESS

Support for Regional Investment Policy and Promotion in the WB

Programme reference:	2016 / 037-900 Multi-country Action Programme for 2016
Project title:	Administration Agreement between the European Commission and the International Finance Corporation concerning the Western Balkans Regional Investment Policy and Promotion
EU contribution:	EUR 2.5 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Single Trust Fund with the International Finance Corporation
Contract reference:	CN-2016/379-787
Duration of activities:	18/04/2017 – 31/12/2020
Contact :	Nanna Matsson, nanna.matsson@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The overall objective is to, as part of the overall Western Balkans Regional Investment Policy and Promotion (WB IPP) Program and the Multiannual Action Plan for the Regional Economic Area (MAP REA), contribute to greater convergence of regional investment policies in the Western Balkans and greater alignment with the relevant EU and international standards. This will improve the attractiveness of the region for foreign investors (extra- and intra-regional) and ultimately lead to increased investment.

ACTIVITIES (JULY – DECEMBER 2019)

In the current reporting period the project's main focus was threefold:

A) supporting the Western Balkans six economies (WB6) with the drafting of regionally accepted standards for negotiating international investment agreements (IIAs) that are aligned with the emerging investment policy standards of the EU (in consultation with DG TRADE and FISMA);

B) ramping up regional investment promotion activities to generate investment project leads, including the delivery of targeted investor aftercare programs in the WB6, and the first investor outreach campaign to Germany; and

C) deepening support with the implementation of horizontal investment policy reforms in the WB6 economies, including improving investment entry and establishment policies, mapping of investment incentives policies, and strengthening investor protection mechanisms.

OUTPUTS (JULY – DECEMBER 2019)

The specific outputs delivered as a result of the activities outlined above include:

- A draft document outlining regionally accepted standards for the negotiation of IIAs that is ready for adoption by the WB6 governments. The standards are fully aligned with the emerging investment policy standards of the EU and can become the corner stone for aligning the regional investment policy framework with EU and international best practice standards.
- A comprehensive stock-take and progress update on implementation of the regional investment reform agenda (RIRA) across the WB6 up until December 2019. The update was presented to the South East Europe Investment Committee in Vienna and informed RCC's official reporting on progress with RIRA implementation in the context of MAP REA reporting.
- Strengthened capacity for regional investment promotion and facilitation in the WB6 through the delivery of a series of classroom training courses as well as practical on-the-job training modules for select staff of the Investment Promotion Agencies (IPAs) from the region.
- Strategies and roadmaps for the implementation of targeted investor outreach campaigns in four out of the six economies of the WB6, including identified target sectors and markets and a compelling value proposition.
- A comprehensive results tracking and M&E framework to monitor the results from the investment promotion and aftercare programs. The framework allows for a comprehensive documentation of activities and results achieved, and facilitates reporting for internal and external stakeholders.
- A draft regional value proposition for the automotive sector in the WB6, presenting the region's key competitive advantages to investors and providing a comprehensive overview of existing lead firms and suppliers already operating in the region.
- Increased investor interest and number of investment project leads for the WB6 through supporting the implementation of targeted investor aftercare programs and investor outreach campaigns by the WB6 investment promotion agencies.
- A set of three comprehensive inventories of incentives offered to investors in Albania, Kosovo* and North Macedonia, with inventories in Serbia and Montenegro in the final stages of completion.
- A comprehensive mapping of existing investment entry barriers ('entry gap analysis') in five economies and a manual for removing entry barriers and aligning with good practices for Montenegro.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

In the upcoming reporting period the project will continue to support the economies of the region with the implementation of the investment policy reforms outlined in RIRA and with the implementation of investor promotion activities. Further, the project will continue to support the monitoring and reporting for RIRA implementation, and will contribute to the adoption of the regionally acceptable standards for the negotiation of IIAs in the region. Specifically, this will entail:

- Collect and provide data on investment entry procedures that can be published on a regional webpage portal to enhance access to relevant information for investors;
- Support the publication of incentives inventories in at least two WB6 economies;
- Finalize a methodology for assessing cost and benefits of investment incentives in at least one WB6 economy;
- Support the development or upgrading of existing model bilateral investment treaties (BITs) based on the regionally accepted standards in at least one WB6 economy;
- Implement outreach activities and continue support with targeted investor aftercare programs in all WB6 economies
- Support the adoption of the regionally accepted standards for negotiating IIAs through the relevant regional platforms and continue with the regular monitoring and reporting of progress with RIRA implementation, including the collection of results achieved during the first half of 2020.

Strengthening the Central Bank Capacities in the Western Balkans with a view to the integration to the European System of Central Banks

Programme reference:	Multi-Country Annual Action Programme 2018 (DN 2018/040-113)
Project title:	Programme for Strengthening the Central Bank Capacities in the Western Balkans with a view to the integration to the European System of Central Banks
EU contribution:	EUR 2.0 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Direct Grant
Contract reference:	2018/401-633
Duration of activities:	01/04/2019 – 31/03/2021
Link:	https://www.bundesbank.de/en/press/press-releases/eu-support-programme-783312
Contact:	Vasyl Zubaka, Vasyl.ZUBAKA@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

To improve banking supervision and macro-economic stability by addressing systemic imbalances, the adaptation to international standards, the upgrading of payment systems and the upgrading of the compliance with the *acquis* in central banking statistics. The foreseen results are an improved regulatory convergence and a stepped up preparation for the later integration in the European System of Central Banks.

ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

The Central Bank of Ireland and *Banque Centrale du Luxembourg* formally expressed their willingness to join the project after its start. During the 2nd Steering Committee meeting, with the strong support of the coordinator – *Deutsche Bundesbank* and the European Commission, the members of the Steering Committee unanimously agreed to include the Central Bank of Ireland and *Banque Centrale du Luxembourg* as co-beneficiaries of the project with the same rights and obligations as the rest of the co-beneficiaries. The joining of these two new co-beneficiaries will allow more effective implementation of the project.

With two new institutions, the project unites 21 Central Banks of the European System of Central Banks (ESCB) together with 6 Central Banks from the Western Balkans and two banking supervisory authorities from Bosnia and Herzegovina.

During the second half of 2019, the following activities within Component One took place:

Six training events were organised covering the areas of banking supervision, financial stability, payment systems, EU integration, governance and compliance, and monetary policy.

Within Component Two, the following activities were conducted:

- One internship on Foreign Exchange management between Central Bank of Bosnia and Herzegovina and *De Nederlandsche Bank*;
- One preparatory meeting for the bilateral measure between the National Bank of the Republic of North Macedonia and the Bank of Portugal on Statistics;
- One preparatory meeting for the bilateral measure between the Central Bank of Kosovo* and the Bulgarian National Bank;
- One preparatory meeting and one study visit between the Central Bank of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the *Oesterreichische Nationalbank* on the topic Bank Lending Survey.

Two Programme Steering Committee (PSC) meetings took place, where the details of activities within the two components of the project were further specified.

In line with the EU Visibility Guidelines for External Actions, a range of visibility initiatives were implemented, in particular press releases and produced visibility materials.

OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

The regulatory convergence and approximation by the Central Banks of the Western Blanks to EU standards was upgraded through:

- Improved understanding of the developments and deliberations that have taken place recently in the international financial institutions and the institutions of the European Union;
- Received an up-to-date knowledge in the areas of banking supervision, financial stability, consumer protection, statistics and accounting, which will facilitate the incorporation of the EU *acquis communautaire* into the domestic legislation;
- Enabled exchange of views and opinions and best practices among the participants and strengthened the regional cooperation.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

The following activities are envisaged to be implemented in the next semester:

- 6 Training events on financial stability (2x), EU integration, governance and compliance, recovery and resolution (2x), and statistics.
- 1 high-level policy workshop on Non-performing loans
- 1 Bilateral Measure between (Mission and/or Study visit) National Bank of the Republic of North Macedonia and Bank of Portugal on Statistics;
- 1 preparatory meeting between Banking Agency of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Banking Agency of Republika Srpska, *Oesterreichische Nationalbank* and Austrian Financial Market Authority on Bank Resolution within Component two
- 1 preparatory meeting between *Hrvatska narodna banka* and the Central Bank of Montenegro on Statistics within Component two
- 1 preparatory meeting between *Hrvatska narodna banka* and the National Bank of the Republic of North Macedonia on 'Strengthening the international relations function.'

Strengthening Line Ministries' Capacities to Assess Fiscal Implications of Structural Reforms under the Economic Reform Programmes (ERP)

Programme reference:	Multi-Country Annual Action Programme 2018 (DN 2018/040-113)
Project title:	Strengthening the Line Ministries' Capacities to assess Fiscal Implications of Structural Reforms
EU contribution:	EUR 2.5 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Direct Grant
Contract reference:	2018/402-502
Duration of activities:	01/01/2019 – 31/12/2021
Link:	https://www.cef-see.org/fisr

Contact:Vasyl Zubaka, Vasyl.ZUBAKA@ec.europa.eu**PURPOSE**

Contribute to enhancing beneficiaries' capabilities to submit ERP proposals and their budgets, do the necessary expenditure analysis and fiscal planning of envisaged structural reforms, improve coordination between the Ministry of Finance and line ministries, and to exchange good practices among peers across the beneficiary region and beyond.

ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

To promote peer-to-peer problem solving and practice among the line Ministries and Ministries of Finance, interactive two-day workshops were delivered in the seven beneficiary countries on the use of the [Methodological Guidelines for Costing Structural Reforms](#). Seven country-specific examples and case studies were developed and shared on the [Line Ministries Portal](#). Insights from the workshops were collected and a document with clarifications and frequently asked questions was developed.

For knowledge sharing on complementary topics that reinforce the achievement of the Project's objectives, two regional workshops were organised: Programme and Performance Budgeting, and Financing and Accounting of Projects under the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA).

To make visual documentation and keep the memory of the events closer to participants, [digital stories](#) were developed based on each learning event. To better evaluate and get deeper insight in the results, seven [Value Creating Stories](#) were developed with public officials from the beneficiary countries.

To foresee the general and country specific-risks for achieving the results, a Risk Register of the Action was compiled.

OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

The capacities of line ministries for fiscal impact assessment of structural reforms were strengthened through:

- Aligned approach between Ministries of Finance and line Ministries towards costing of structural reforms, based on common [Methodological Guidelines for Costing Structural Reforms](#);
- Improved appraisal of benefits and methods for integrating structural reforms into the country's budget preparation process and medium-term fiscal framework;
- Better understanding the reasons and steps of shifting from line-item budgeting to programme budgeting and how to link it with policy objectives and key performance indicators;
- Optimizing financing, accounting and internal control structures for the management of projects and programmes funded by the European Union;
- Raised awareness on the importance of coordination in the process of the development of the Economic Reform Programme;

- Improved access to relevant learning resources, peers and other knowledge providers in the wider area of financing and costing of specific structural reforms.

An established network of international and regional experts in measuring fiscal implications of structural reforms has:

- Strengthened the links and intensified the collaboration especially through country-specific workshops;
- Served as a powerful channel of knowledge acceleration: international experts transfer knowledge to public officials and country experts, and also receive inputs on the country-specific state; both groups join forces in transferring the knowledge to line ministries and support the actual costing process for the structural reforms;
- Developed further the training skills of the public officials from the ERP teams, who delivered training sessions to line ministry officials in their respective country;

Further development of the Line Ministries Portal as online platform for regional knowledge exchange among line ministry officials has:

- Supported the peer learning across the beneficiary region (and beyond);
- Permitted the sharing of relevant learning resources;
- Enabled better visibility of Project activities and the partners and donor(s) involved.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

The following activities are envisaged to be implemented in the next semester:

- 1 Annual meeting of the Network of Regional Experts and Expert Advisory Group;
- 14 In-country interactive workshops on the topics: Integration of Structural Reforms into Budgets and Coordination Schemes for Costing of Structural Reforms;
- 4 Regional events: Knowledge sharing on Managing Financing and Costing of Pension System Reforms, Fiscal Programming of Structural Reforms, Ways to Optimize Internal Control of EU Funds, Conducting Financial and Expenditure Analysis in the Public Sector;
- 1 Webinar to improve long-term planning in public sector: Foresight and Scenario Planning Methodologies;
- 1 Workshop for the Coordinators of Economic Reform Programmes on Leadership
- 1 Regional Meeting of the Coordinators of the Economic Reform Programmes (Launch of the process for the programmes 2021-23);
- 1 Update on the Risk Assessment Review for the achievement of the project's results.

Support to Smart Specialisation in Enlargement Region

Programme reference:	Multi-Country Annual Action Programme 2018
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	(DN 2018/040-113)
Project title:	Support to Smart Specialisation in Enlargement Region
EU contribution:	EUR 2 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Administrative Arrangement with JRC
Contract reference:	CN 2019/406-155
Duration of activities:	04/07/2019 – 03/07/2022
Links:	https://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/eu-enlargement
Contact :	Youssef Tadros, Youssef.TADROS@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

This project will provide guidance, methodological support and capacity building to the Western Balkans and Turkey (some regions) to design and consequently implement Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3).

ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

The project regional kick-off meeting was held in Belgrade (Serbia) on 17 October along with bilateral consultation sessions with beneficiaries tailored to identify in which aspects the support is most needed in each beneficiary. The JRC expert team revised the quantitative mapping of economic, research and innovation potentials in two beneficiaries – Albania and North Macedonia

The JRC organised a country dialogue panel with Montenegro to assess their S3 Strategy and revised the first draft of the Serbian S3 strategy. Also, the research and innovation related policy documents from all the beneficiaries were collected and studied in order to identify the relevant aspects of their innovation ecosystems. Furthermore, S3 fiches (of two-pagers) were developed for each beneficiary containing a short overview of their respective S3 processes.

A dedicated website for S3 in the Enlargement region was developed and an interactive map of the region was created to show the progress in each beneficiary. The S3 Community of Practice in the Enlargement region (SCOPE) branding was designed, it will be used for a series of tailored events and a forum that will allow for mutual learning and systematic exchanges through all the S3 training activities related to the beneficiaries.

OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

Montenegro adopted its national S3 Strategy; it is the first non-EU country to develop S3. They successfully fulfilled all the required steps in the S3 Framework for Enlargement.

Following the same framework Serbia prepared and submitted the first draft of its S3 Strategy. A quantitative mapping report was submitted for North Macedonia (and approved) and Albania (not yet approved). Kosovo* and Bosnia and Herzegovina established their S3 Teams in line with the aforementioned JRC S3 Framework for Enlargement region.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

The following events will be organised in the next semester:

- S3 Community of Practice in the EU Enlargement region (SCOPE) - incl. Smart Specialisation events on S3 process/implementation – multibeneficiary – the first event will be held on 31 March – 1-2 April 2020 in Ljubljana (Slovenia) and will be devoted to take stock of the S3 process in all the beneficiaries and develop/update the specific roadmaps with the plans ahead. Also, the outward looking of the S3 process will be addressed by presenting advantages of transnational cooperation and good practices from the networking initiatives across the EU;
- Smart Specialisation single beneficiary events: taking stock events in Albania and North Macedonia before starting with the Entrepreneurial Discovery Process; and the S3 awareness events in Kosovo* and Bosnia and Herzegovina; all of them to be organised between April and July;
- 2 Peer-reviews of the adopted/advanced staged S3 strategies – Montenegro/Serbia – April-May 2020 through joint events with developed networks/S3 members from the EU;
- Participation in specific sessions and promotion of the project’s activities at the High Level Conference “Implementing Smart Specialisation Strategies, Technology Transfer and Digital Innovation in South-East Europe” in Zagreb (Croatia) June 2020.

3.6 TRADE - SUPPORT TO FACILITATION OF TRADE BETWEEN CEFTA PARTIES

Programme reference:	Europe Aid/151895/DH/ACT/Multi
Project title:	Support to Facilitation of Trade between CEFTA Parties
EU contribution:	EUR 3.00 million
Beneficiary region:	CEFTA signatory parties
Type of contract:	PA Grant Agreement with Deutsche Gesellschaft fuer Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH and the International Trade Centre (ITC)
Contract reference:	2016/383-050
Duration of activities:	http://cefta.int/trade-facilitation/
Contact:	cecile.mabilotte@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The overall objective of the project is to improve capacities of the public and private sector in the CEFTA Parties to address the obstacles to deeper trade integration in the CEFTA region. This goal will be pursued by supporting the implementation of the CEFTA Additional Protocol 5 on Trade Facilitation.

ACTIVITIES (AUGUST – DECEMBER 2019)

- The Regional Business Process Analysis (BPA) was presented to CEFTA authorities in October in Skopje. It outlines the redundant documents and procedures in the cross-border trade in the region and the recommendations for improvement on regional and national level.
- Customs and SPS Administrations' officials from CEFTA Parties have participated in a study visit to Riga and Daugavpils in Latvia, 17-19 September 2019. The visit aimed at peer learning and sharing first-hand experience in integrated risk management with practical demonstrations and activities performed on the spot.
- Regional Business Advisory Groups (RBAG) metals and vegetables both agreed on communication options beyond the project end date as the group saw the necessity and value in coordinated advocacy activities, directed towards the removal of non-tariff barriers to trade in the region.
- The Customs Risk Management group met on 8-9 October in North Macedonia to work on a draft Customs Risk Management Strategy and Framework for the forthcoming four-year. The draft Strategy and Action Plan were adopted by the CEFTA Joint Committee on 18 December 2019.
- The fourth pilot validation mission for the Mutual Recognition of (AEOs) was finalized in Montenegro in November 2019. Montenegro's Customs Authority are the first to test the agreed CEFTA procedure for mutual recognition (MR) of AEO program, in line with Additional Protocol 5.
- The representatives of the Regional Business Advisory Group (RBAG) were invited to the CEFTA Subcommittee on NTMs and CEFTA Committee on Trade Facilitation to present the policy paper and the work of the group as the voice of the private sector in the region.
- A detailed in-depth needs assessment of selected testing laboratories from all six Western Balkans CEFTA Parties was conducted in November – December 2019. The aim was to assess the capacities and needs of the selected laboratories to support the private sector in testing of vegetables against EU requirements for pesticides residues and other contaminants.
- A risk management workshop was organized on 10-12 December in Serbia for representatives of the Health and Food Safety Agencies to strengthen regulatory agencies' risk-based import compliance systems.
- The project website is regularly updated and newsletter distributed to all stakeholders.

OUTPUTS (AUGUST – DECEMBER 2019)

- All 6 national and the Regional Business Process Analysis (BPA) were presented to both national and regional decision-makers in the CEFTA parties.
- The Customs and SPS officers who participated to a study visit in Latvia learnt about integrated border management practices of EU countries with external EU land borders.
- Both RBAG groups, for vegetables and metals agreed on the next steps and further cooperation in the future period.
- The Customs Risk Management Strategy and Action Plan was adopted by the CEFTA Joint Committee meeting on 18 December 2019.
- The validation mission for the Mutual Recognition of AEOs was finalized in Montenegro. The AEO Mutual Recognition procedure and guidelines were adopted at the CEFTA Joint Committee on 18 December 2019.
- The representatives of the RBAG presented their work and the policy paper to the CEFTA Subcommittee on NTMs and CEFTA Committee on Trade Facilitation.
- An in-depth analysis of the needs and capacities of selected laboratories to support the private sector in testing of vegetables in accordance with EU requirements for pesticides residues and other contaminants was conducted.
- Knowledge and skills of representatives of the Health and Food Safety Agencies were strengthened at a risk management workshop strengthening their risk-based import compliance systems.
- A Proposal for facilitating trade for fruit and vegetables in the region is now pending final adoption at the CEFTA Joint Committee level.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT PERIOD

Project duration was extended by a contract amendment until February 29, 2020. In this period, the following activities and events are planned:

- Regional workshop for SPS authorities to support the implementation of the Decision for facilitating trade in fruits and vegetables in the CEFTA region in January 2020.
- Regional workshop on documentary and data harmonization, in accordance with conclusions of the Regional BPA study in late January or early February 2020.
- Final event for closing the current project, planned for the last week of February 2020.

Programme reference:	IPA Multi-Country Programme – decision MCP2017/39-402
Project title:	Triple P Tourism in SEE: Promotion, Policy and Pilots
EU contribution:	EUR 5,000,000
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia and North Macedonia)
Type of contract:	Grant to the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC)

Contract reference:	2017/392-591
Duration of activities:	19/12/2017 – 19/12/2020
Links:	https://www.rcc.int/tourism
Contact :	Laurent GUIRKINGER, Laurent.GUIRKINGER@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The objective of the Triple P Tourism in SEE: Promotion, Policy and Pilots (Triple P) project is to contribute to the economic growth and competitiveness of the Western Balkans region. It aims to attract more international tourists, lengthen their stay, increase revenues and contribute to the increase of employment in the industry, and overall economy of the region through the consolidation of fragmented tourism offer and development of internationally competitive regional routes and offers.

ACTIVITIES (JULY – DECEMBER 2019)

- Regional public-private dialogue maintained, with the 10th Tourism Expert Group (TEG) meeting held on 9-10 December 2019.
- Product development for regional tourism routes continued with focus on definition of management models and structure, and marketing. For Via Dinarica, the regional coordination process continues, 3rd regional coordination meeting held on 7-8 November 2019.
- Promotion through presentation at international and regional events undertaken.
- Policy assessment with immediate, mid-term and long-term recommendations for the areas endorsed by TEG: ease of border crossing, workforce skills and mobility, data quality and statistics, and sustainable tourism in Western Balkans conducted.
- The 16 grants of the 2nd Call for proposals awarded and implementation started.

OUTPUTS (JULY - DECEMBER 2019)

- **Maintained regional cooperation public-private dialogue (RCC Tourism Expert Group - TEG)**
 - 10th TEG meeting held in December 2019, along with in-between consultations;
- **Activity 1 – Product Development and Promotion**
 - Western Balkans Crossroads of Civilisations: marketing strategy (5 years), marketing plan (2 years), and branding strategy developed and endorsed by TEG, business model proposed;
 - Balkan Monumental Trail: Art and Design of the WWII Monuments: business model and marketing strategy under development;
 - Illyricum Trail – network building and promotional activities under development;

- Via Dinarica: 3rd regional meeting held with sign in of 3 CLOs as full Via Dinarica Regional Coordination members; national consultations held in North Macedonia; Continued placement of regional routes on <https://www.outdooractive.com>
- Western Balkans as travel destination promoted at/through:
 - Adventure Travel World Summit (ATWS, Goteborg, Sweden, 16-19 September 2019): presentation held within the special session focused on donor coordination for adventure tourism development;
 - Regional conference Synergy – A Key to Success, Budva, 24-25 October 2019 within the session Tourism as a Joint Regional Product;
 - CEFTA Regional Workshop on Tourism, Tirana, 20 November 2019;
 - ERI SEE TO REGOS workshop on development of common occupational standard for hotel and restaurant technician, 17 December 2019.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- **Product Development:** Business and management models and 3 years marketing strategy and immediate action plan to be completed for 2 more regional routes (Balkan Monumental Trail and Via Dinarica); consultations for the establishment of a management body for the routes under way;
- **Promotion:** Promotion of regional routes at three fairs (regional: IFT Belgrade, International: ITB Berlina and Destination Nature, Paris); trade visit to Scandinavia and familiarization trips for international media and operators of adventure travel (6 trips). The selection of FAM attendees and specialised events is driven by marketing strategies currently finalised;
- **Policy:** National consultations will be held to review recommendations from the current assessment and launch development of solutions.
- **Pilots:** 2nd Call for Grant Proposals under implementation (16 grants in total), 3rd Call for grant Proposals grants awarded (February 2020) and implementation under way;
- **Other**
 - 11th TEG meeting will take place in June 2019
 - Continue cooperation with European Institute for Cultural Routes and Routes4U project, EU Strategies for the Adriatic-Ionian Region (EUSAIR) and Danube Region (EUSDR).

3.7 CRISIS RESPONSE PACKAGE

Programme reference:	Multi-beneficiary programme, IPA 2009/021-373
Project title:	Private Sector Support Facility for Turkey (PSSF) - Crisis Response Package
EU contribution:	EUR 22.5 million (IPA only)

Beneficiary region:	Turkey
Type of contract:	Contribution agreement with EBRD
Contract reference:	CN 2009/228-868
Duration of activities:	18/12/2009 – 30/11/2021
Links:	http://www.turseff.org ; http://www.midseff.com ; http://www.ebrdwomeninbusiness.com
Contact :	Domagoj Denačić, Domagoj.DENACIC@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The EU/EBRD programme "Turkey Private Sector Support Facility" (PSSF) assists economic actors in Turkey through loans, grants and technical assistance (TA) in increasing their competitiveness in products and services to face the challenges of the economic and financial crisis in the short and long term. To this end, it provides necessary financial and human resources as well as technical skills.

ACTIVITIES (JANUARY-JUNE 2018)

MSME Finance Window – During the period, a kick-off meeting was conducted with Yapı Kredi Bank (YKB) which is expected to be the first partner financial institution (PFI) to join the TurWiB (Turkey Women in Business Programme) Phase II Programme, in Q1 2020. The Project Consultant (PC) introduced the Programme and all its components, the gender banking concept and explained the baseline assessment process. The baseline assessment will kickstart once YKB signs the EBRD loan agreement. In addition, the PC prepared the script for a video promotion of Business Lens which is intended to be presented at regional seminars, at meetings, on the Programme website and on other stakeholders' online platforms. The video will provide detailed information on how to benefit from Business Lens to improve business activities and managerial skills of the applicants.

Energy Efficiency Window - During H2 2019, the TurSEFF (Turkish Sustainable Energy Financing Facility) III Facility Consultant (FC) was able to accelerate project generation activities due to the increased demand for sub-loans which followed interest rate cuts in the country. The team and respective PFIs met jointly with over 50 prospective clients, and attended 172 stakeholder meetings to develop the pipeline of projects. The Facility's Marketing Action Plan was updated to include the new priorities of the PFIs, mainly Roof-top solar PV (photovoltaic; RSPV), process-machine replacements and ESCO (energy service company) investments which have recently become attractive in the market. For the four active PFIs, the FC (Facility Consultant) continued assessing projects identified for funding (including eleven SARs (Simplified Assessment Reports)/FARs (Full Assessment Reports) completed during the period), and provided training activities at HQ, in branches and on-the-job. To build Facility awareness, the FC participated in a total of 26 events and conferences throughout Turkey – most notably the EIF International Energy Congress and Expo where the team hosted visitors at a TurSEFF stand and spoke about the Facility at a session led by the

Solar Investors Association (GUYAD). Over the course of the 3-day event, the Facility was one of the most visited stands, holding more than 50 business meetings with 83 stakeholders including private companies, business associations, media channels and PFIs. The team is now following up with the many contacts established during the event. Finally, as PFIs have now slowly re-started their marketing activities, the team was able to produce a RSPV leaflet for Isbank's use with potential clients.

Advice for Small Business (ASB) Window - During the reporting period the team has started 3 projects with international advisors (formerly EGP – Enterprise Growth Programme), and launched 10 projects with local consultants (formerly BAS – Business Advisory Services) – of these, 5 are currently ongoing and 5 are completed.

OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

MSME Finance Window – A TurWiB Phase II Programme kick-off meeting was conducted with YKB; the PC started collecting documents and information necessary for the baseline assessment.

Energy Efficiency Window - Under TurSEFF III, EUR 197 million of EUR 400 million funds have been allocated to five PFIs. Vankifbank has fully utilised its funds, and four PFIs continue to actively on-lend funds. During the reporting period, 145 sub-loans totalling EUR 28.6 million were signed, and in total, 555 sub-loans for just over EUR 119.8 million have now been on-lent to sub-projects.

Advice for Small Business (ASB) Window - Since the inception of the Programme, 29 projects with international advisors (formerly EGP) were started under EU PSSF for Turkey. Out of these, 14 projects were completed, 4 projects were cancelled due to insufficient commitment of the company's management and 11 projects are ongoing. In addition, a total of 265 projects with local consultants (formerly BAS) were launched, 3 of which were cancelled. To date, 192 projects have been evaluated one year following completion, 7 projects are currently ongoing, and 63 are completed but not evaluated yet.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

MSME Finance Window – YKB is expected to sign the first Loan Agreement under the TurWiB Phase II Programme in Q1 2020, after which the PC will start working on the baseline assessment. Following the first PFI signing under the Programme, a launch event will be organised, with the participation of various Programme stakeholders and ensuring donor visibility. The launch event is expected to take place in March 2020. The PC will start organising regional Women in Business seminars. Marketing materials and the Programme website will be finalised in line with the communications plan under the Programme.

Energy Efficiency Window - The TurSEFF III Facility Consultant will continue business development activities for four active PFIs in the next period, in part by attending a series of seminars, symposiums, conferences and exhibitions across the country. Client visits and walk-throughs are planned for ESCO, RSPV, RE, and ResE (resource efficiency) projects as identified by PFIs during the H2 2019. Workshops and marketing activities around these types of projects, as well as PPA (Power Purchase Agreement) and textile projects, will be

planned and delivered by the Project Consultant. Finally, several infographics, informational videos and case studies to promote the Facility will begin production in H1 2020.

Advice for Small Business (ASB) – The current pipeline of 3 projects with international advisors (formerly EGP) will be approved and started in the first half of 2020. The team also plans to start 10 business advisory projects with local consultants during the next period.

Programme reference:	Multi-beneficiary programme, IPA 2009/021-373
Project title:	SME Recovery Support Loan for Turkey – Crisis Response Package
EU contribution:	EUR 30 million
Beneficiary region:	Turkey
Type of contract:	Contribution agreement with EIB
Contract reference:	CN 2009/228-929
Duration of activities:	22/12/2009 -21/12/2017
Links:	http://www.eib.org/projects/pipeline/2009/20090580.htm http://www.eib.org/projects/press/2010/2010-131-eib-provides-EUR-150-million-innovative-recovery-support-loan-to-smes-in-turkey.htm
Contact :	Domagoj Denačić, Domagoj.DENACIC@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The overall objective of the SME Recovery Support Loan is to mitigate the crisis impact for SMEs and contribute to the development of the Turkish economy and employment sector. The main objective is to support SMEs with concrete productive investments by providing access to attractive and longer-dated debt financing.

ACTIVITIES

The SME Recovery Support Loan is combined with an EIB loan for SMEs (together, the Facility) and fully disbursed to the two selected financial intermediaries since April 2011.

- Halkbank: their share of the Facility (EUR 74.82 million) is fully allocated to 148 SMEs since the end of 2011. The average size of allocation is EUR 0.51 million.

Akbank: their share of the Facility (EUR 74.82 million) is fully allocated to 89 SMEs since the end of June 2012. The average size of allocation is EUR 0.8 million.

A Steering Committee meeting was held on November 2016 to present the activities implemented in the last 12 months as well as present the proposal for a second round of loans, which was approved. It has been proposed to extend the Contribution Agreement

(CA) for 12 months from 22 December 2016 to 22 December 2017 to allow the EIB to define, approve and deploy the second round.

However, the proposal for the second round has not been approved by the relevant EIB decision-making bodies. Consequently, the Contribution Agreement expired on 22 December 2017 and there were no actions to report in 2019.

OUTPUTS

There are no outputs to report in 2019.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

No further activities are planned in 2020.

CHAPTER 4: INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

One of the priorities of the Credible European Union Perspective for the Western Balkans is to work with the Beneficiaries on increasing competitiveness and investments in infrastructure. Interventions in this sector have the ultimate goal of supporting the modernisation of their economies, also with a view to promote transport and energy networks, energy efficiency and renewable energy as well as environment and social infrastructure. Close coordination with International Financial Institutions (IFIs) is essential, and the EU's technical assistance and investment grants are instrumental for the projects to materialise.

4.1 WESTERN BALKANS INVESTMENT FRAMEWORK (WBIF)

The Western Balkans Investment Framework (WBIF) was established in 2009 as a regional tool for EU enlargement. It supports socio-economic development and EU accession across the Western Balkans through the provision of financing and technical assistance to strategic investments. It pools resources from the European Commission's Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) with those of the involved Financial Institutions (FIs), bilateral donors and the governments of the Western Balkans.

The WBIF increases the region's capacity to finance crucial infrastructure and priority investments in line with accession priorities and enhances the overall coordination of assistance. The WBIF seeks to maximise the impact of grant financing by using it to leverage lending by the involved Financial Institutions to priority strategic investments as identified by the Western Balkan beneficiaries. Since its launch, the WBIF has developed a pipeline of priority investments of approximately EUR 20.8 billion. A grand total of 334 technical assistance (TA) and investment grants (INV) with a cumulative value of EUR 1.27 billion have been awarded to 195 investment projects.

The grants are used for project preparation, implementation, and co-financing of infrastructure investments for which financial support is provided by the partner organisations – AFD, CEB, EBRD, EIB, KfW and the World Bank Group. The grant assignments are implemented by the Lead FIs or the European Commission. The implementation of EU grants is carried out either under Commission awarded TA contracts - the Infrastructure Project Facility (IPF) or under Contribution Arrangements with the European Western Balkans Joint Fund (EWBJF) which is managed by EBRD and EIB. For the co-financing of connectivity projects, the lead FI is implementing projects under Contribution Arrangements with the EWBJF.

The European Commission is the largest contributor to the WBIF with a total of EUR 1.19 billion channelled through the WBIF. EUR 832.5 million was allocated for the co-financing of investments in the energy, transport and environment sectors under the Connectivity Agenda and the Municipal Window in 2009-2019. Between 2009 and 2019, bilateral donors contributed EUR 98.7 million to the EWBJF.

PURPOSE

The WBIF has three objectives: 1. To create a one-stop-shop, where a request for project support can be presented, screened, assessed, and, eventually, provided with the required financing for its implementation; 2. to pool different sources of funding (FIs, EC and bilateral donors) and work out an appropriate blend of grants and loans for various actions; and 3. to strengthen the strategic and policy coordination of actions by multiple donors and investors that addresses the socio-economic priorities for the region. These socioeconomic priorities are accession-driven and relate to the alignment of the Western Balkans candidate countries and potential candidates with the EU acquis. WBIF activities are supported by the EC-financed IFI Coordination Office – see below for a more detailed description of its activities. The identification of priority projects is a result of consultations with other relevant DGs (Environment, Climate Action, Connect, Move, Energy, Regional Policy, Economic and Financial Affairs) thus ensuring coordination with their activities in the region.

ACTIVITIES (JULY - DECEMBER 2019)

Activities during the second half of 2019 included the assessment and approval of TA Round 22 and the approval of Investment Grant Round 04. Six TA projects for a total amount of EUR 5.1 million and twelve Investment grants for a total amount of EUR 189.2 million were approved at the Steering Committee meeting in December in London. In addition, the Steering Committee approved a EUR 3 million investment grant for the rehabilitation of the Port of Brcko, a connectivity project endorsed at the Trieste Summit, and allocated EUR 30 million for the replenishment of the REEP Plus programme in December 2019. Since its establishment in 2009, WBIF has awarded 334 grants for a total of EUR 1.27 billion, out of which EUR 306.2 million is for TA grants, EUR 871.9 million for investment grants and EUR 90.1 million for investment facilities (REEP/REEP Plus and WB EDIF).

The expansion of the WBIF to include EDIF under the WBIF umbrella and closer linking other regional funds like REEP and GGF to the WBIF on the strategic level was approved at the Steering Committee meeting in London in December.

In 2019, the WBIF celebrated its 10-year anniversary with increased communication and visibility activities highlighting results achieved through videos, a photo exhibition and publication of feature stories on the web, as well as updated written material. The autumn Project Financiers' Group meeting took place in Brussels in November 2019, and the winter Steering Committee meeting took place in London in December 2019.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

The indicative work programme for the first half of 2020 includes the assessment and approval of TA Round 23 (environment, digital and social sectors only) and the assessment and political endorsement of projects from Investment Round 5 at the EU Western Balkans Summit in Zagreb in May 2020.

During 2020, further changes will be made to WBIF to make it fit for IPA III starting in 2021. On a strategic level, the aim is that future EU policy aspects will drive more strongly the investment decisions, in particular linked to the Economic Reform Programme (ERP) process,

the Regional Economic Area (REA) and connectivity reform measures. At the instrument level, the governance structures of the different tools supporting investments in the Western Balkans are being streamlined and, to the extent possible, managed by a reinforced central WBIF Secretariat.

The next PFG meeting will be held in Belgrade in March 2020. The next Steering Committee meeting will be hosted by Austria in Vienna in June 2020.

Contact: Stine Andresen, Stine.Andresen@ec.europa.eu and near-wbif@ec.europa.eu

4.2 WBIF CONNECTIVITY INVESTMENT GRANTS

Programme reference:	IPA II Multi-country Programme Connectivity 2015-2016 (DN 2015/038-055 and 2016/038-727) IPA II Multi-country Programme Connectivity 2016 part II (DN 2016/039-401) IPA II Multi-country Programme Connectivity 2017-2018 (DN 2018/039-876 and 2018/040-650) IPA II Multi-country Programme Connectivity 2018-2019 (DN 2018/040-818 and 2019/041-590)
Project title:	Contribution Arrangement with respect to the European Western Balkans Joint Fund under the Western Balkans Investment Framework (WBIF)
EU contribution:	2015-2016: EUR 144 900 000 2016 part II: EUR 145 500 000 2017-2018: EUR 104 873 460 2018-2019: EUR 207 255 727
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Contribution Arrangement with the European Western Balkans Joint Fund managers (EBRD and EIB)
Contract reference:	2015-2016: CN 2016/375-830, 2016/375-855, 2016/380-342 2016 part II: CN 2017/390-295 2017-2018: CN 2018/397-087 and 2018/397-088 2018-2019: CN 2019/406-639 and 2019/406-641
Duration of activities:	2015-2016: 16.06.2016 – 31.12.2024 2016 part II: 04.12.2017 – 31.12.2025 2017-2018: 14.05.2018 – 31.12.2026 2018-2019: 28.05.2018 – 28.11.2027
Links:	www.wbif.eu
Contact:	Judit Andrea GYORI, judit.gyori@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The WBIF connectivity investment grants contribute to improving connectivity within the Western Balkans, as well as between Western Balkans and the European Union, and serve as a driver for economic growth, jobs and new investments in the region. The Western Balkans has made the Connectivity Agenda one of its highest priorities, with a special emphasis on the preparation and financing of major regional infrastructure investment projects. In this context in 2015, the European Commission set aside up to EUR 1 billion in grants, from the EU Pre-Accession Instrument for connectivity investment projects in transport and energy sectors for the 2014-2020 period. The WBIF connectivity grants support the development of infrastructure networks in the Western Balkans not only through technical assistance aimed at project preparation, but most importantly through the financing of a share of the actual investment costs.

ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

- The connectivity investment grants are approved on an annual basis by the WBIF Steering Committee. For the time being, the Steering Committee held four investment rounds (while round 5 is ongoing) and approved 8 grants in December 2015 (“round 0”), 3 grants in December 2016 (“round 1”), 2 grants in December 2017 (“round 2”), 9 grants in December 2018 (“round 3”) and 8 grants in December 2019 (“round 4”). In addition, the Steering Committee approved 3 grants from round 1 in July 2018 and 1 grant from round 1 in December 2019, all politically endorsed at the Trieste Summit in 2017.
- Projects included in the 5th Connectivity package and presented under round 4 were approved at the Steering Committee in December 2019. The round was launched June 2018, and the screening and assessment of the applications took place in the first half of 2019. The 5th Connectivity package was endorsed at the Poznan Summit in early July 2019 and included 6 transport projects and 2 energy investment projects with an overall EU grant value of EUR 180 million.
- In total, up to end of 2019 with the endorsement of the 5th Connectivity package in Poznan, the EU committed EUR 880.7 million for 39 connectivity projects (3 financed from IPA National). These projects are expected to leverage investments with a total cost of EUR 3.2 billion.
- Up to end of 2019, construction works started on 11 connectivity projects (2 energy and 9 transport projects).
- Furthermore, the design is complete for another 8 projects, and the procurement for construction works on 11 projects, including for design-build contracts, was launched by December 2019.

OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

- Initiation/continuation of construction activities in IPA II beneficiaries, construction works ongoing on 11 projects (2 energy connectivity projects and 9 transport projects).
- Start of the construction of works on 6 projects:

- 'Mediterranean Corridor: Bosnia and Herzegovina – Croatia CVC Road Interconnection III, Johovac Interchange – Rudanka Interchange Section in Bosnia and Herzegovina' in July 2019;
- 'Orient/East-Med Corridor: North Macedonia – Kosovo*R10 Rail Interconnection, Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo*Polje – Border with North Macedonia Section in Kosovo*in July 2019;
- 'Extension of TEN-T Core Network: Bosnia and Herzegovina – Croatia R2a Road Interconnection, Banja Luka – Gradiška and Gradiška Bridge' in October 2019;
- 'Mediterranean Corridor: Bosnia and Herzegovina – Croatia CVC Road Interconnection I, Ponirak – Vraca/Zenica Tunnel Segment in Bosnia and Herzegovina' in October 2019;
- 'Mediterranean Corridor: Bosnia and Herzegovina – Croatia CVC Road Interconnection, Tarčin – Ivan Subsection II in Bosnia and Herzegovina' in November 2019;
- 'Supervision of Works for Mediterranean Corridor: Bosnia and Herzegovina – Croatia CVC Road Interconnection, Počitelj – Zvirovići Subsection' in November 2019.
- Contribution arrangement signed with the Fund managers of the European Western Balkans Joint Fund to finance the projects included in the 5th Connectivity package in May 2019. Financing Decision of IPA II Multi-country Programme Connectivity 2019-2020 adopted by the Commission in November 2019.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Screening and assessment of the projects submitted in round 5, followed by their political endorsement at the Western Balkans Summit in Zagreb in May 2020.
- Commencement of works on 4 new connectivity projects (3 transport projects, 1 energy project).
- Completion of the cross-border bridge at Svilaj in April 2020, part of the project 'Mediterranean Corridor (CVC): Bosnia and Herzegovina – Croatia Road interconnection, Svilaj – Odzak and Svilaj Bridge'. The motorway section has been finalised, while the border crossing facilities are expected to be in place by the end of 2020.
- Completion of the project 'Mediterranean Corridor: Bosnia and Herzegovina – Croatia CVC Road Interconnection, Buna – Počitelj Subsection in Bosnia and Herzegovina' in June 2020.
- Signature of contribution arrangement with the Joint Fund Managers covering the EU grants provided by the latest Connectivity Decision adopted in November 2019 covering the Poznan connectivity package (2019 / 041-953 2020/042-275).
- Decision on the revised structure of the WBIF and processes with view to strategic and financial expansion also foreseen in the Western Balkan Strategy.

4.3 HORIZONTAL SUPPORT TO IFI COORDINATION (IFICO)

Programme reference:	IPA II Multi-country Action Programme 2017 - part NEAR (DN 2017/039-402) & Multi-country Action Programme 2019 (2019/040-826)
Project title:	Horizontal support to coordination with International Financial Institutions and bilateral donors in the Western Balkans (i.e. IFICO3)
EU contribution:	EUR 9.02 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Service contract with Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH
Contract reference:	CN 2018/395-656 & 2019/410-278
Duration of activities:	27.02.2018 – 26.02.2022
Link:	www.wbif.eu
Contact:	Antonio García Suárez, Antonio.Garcia-Suarez@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The IFI Coordination Office (IFICO) refers to the consultancy service contract awarded by DG NEAR aiming to ensure better coordination and cooperation between the beneficiaries, the EC, the IFIs and bilateral donors. The IFICO provides a range of technical, management and communication services to support coordination among all WBIF stakeholders. It delivers analytical and operational services to the EC, IFIs and bilateral donors in the main WBIF sectors (Digital, Energy, Environment, Social, Transport) to facilitate better programming and planning of assistance including investments.

IFICO supports the WBIF structures, particularly the WBIF Secretariat and the WBIF Steering Committee, and has developed a range of WBIF related communication activities including the WBIF website and a management information system (MIS).

ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

- Overall support to the WBIF Secretariat.
- Support to the WBIF Secretariat in the organisation and follow-up of the WBIF Project Financiers' Group (PFG) meeting in November in Brussels and the Steering Committee (SC) meeting in December in London.
- Support to the WBIF Secretariat in the screening and assessment of TA Round 22, finalisation of INV Round 04, launch, pre-notification and submission INV Round 05, and launch of TA Round 23.
- Support to beneficiaries with the preparation and submission of grant applications for TA Round 22 and INV Round 05.

- Drafting of Terms of References for approved TA projects and a brief on the Bosnia and Herzegovina WATSAN investment projects approved in December 2019.
- Assistance to beneficiaries to enhance the functioning of the NIC framework and improve the quality of the SPPs.
- Update the WBIF portfolio funding needs assessment, and qualitative assessment of NIC frameworks.
- Assistance in organising workshops and written exchanges of the WBIF 2.0 Working Group; drafting and finalisation of recommendations of the PFG to the WBIF SC.
- Further implementation of the WBIF 2019 Communication and Visibility Plan, including the dedicated 10-year anniversary action plan.
- Production of video on the WBIF transport sector.
- Support to WBIF stakeholders with the organisation of visibility events on projects and preparation of communication and visibility materials.
- Maintain and further upgrade the WBIF website and MIS (accommodation of WB EDIF and Western Balkans Guarantee Instrument).

OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

- Supported the preparation, organisation and follow-up of WBIF related meetings, in particular the PFG meeting in Brussels and the WBIF SC meeting in London. Minutes of meetings, agendas, background papers, presentations were drafted and finalised.
- Supported the WBIF Secretariat in the screening and assessment of TA Round 22, finalisation of INV Round 4.
- Assisted the beneficiaries with the preparation of grant applications for TA Round 22 and INV Round 05.
- Submitted the first findings of the update to the Funding Needs Analysis and of the NIC framework qualitative assessment.
- Drafted and produced final recommendations of the WBIF 2.0 Working Group, i.e. recommendations of the PFG to the WBIF SC on the evolution of WBIF and accompanying explanatory paper.
- Maintained and further developed the WBIF MIS for incorporation of WBIF EDIF and the Western Balkans Guarantee Instrument.
- Maintained and further enhanced WBIF website design and functionalities.
- Finalised 9 Terms for Reference (ToR) and continued/initiated the preparation of 18 ToR.
- Produced the semi-annual WBIF Monitoring Report (November 2019) and bimonthly reports of active WBIF IPF-implemented projects.

- Produced communication and visibility materials, including a video on the WBIF transport sector for the SC meeting in London, brochures, project summaries, construction panels.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Continuation of support to the WBIF and its stakeholders.

4.4 WBIF INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS FACILITIES (IPF)

Programme reference:	IPA I Multi-beneficiary Programmes 2011 (DN 2011/022-964) and 2012 (DN2012/022-966)
Programme reference:	IPA II Multi-country Programme 2014 (DN 2014/031-603)
Project title:	Support to the Western Balkans Investment Framework projects – Infrastructure Project Facility (extension IPF4 and IPF5)
EU contribution:	EUR 35.54 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Specific Grant Agreement with the European Investment Bank
Contract reference:	CN 2015/368-253
Duration of activities:	17.12.2015 – 31.12.2020
Links:	www.wbif.eu
Contact :	Antonio García Suárez, Antonio.Garcia-Suarez@ec.europa.eu

Programme reference:	IPA II Multi-country Programme 2015 (DN 2015/031-609)
Project title:	Support to the Western Balkans Investment Framework projects – Infrastructure Project Facility 2015 (IPF 6)
EU contribution:	EUR 26.12 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Specific Grant Agreement with the European Investment Bank
Contract reference:	CN 2016/379-644
Duration of activities:	23.11.2016 – 31.12.2021
Links:	www.wbif.eu

Contact : Antonio García Suárez, Antonio.Garcia-Suarez@ec.europa.eu

Programme reference: IPA II Multi-country Programme Connectivity 2016 part II (DN 2016/039-401)

Project title: Support to the Western Balkans Investment Framework projects – Infrastructure Project Facility 2016 (IPF7)

EU contribution: EUR 36 million

Beneficiary region: Western Balkans

Type of contract: Specific Grant Agreement with the European Investment Bank

Contract reference: CN 2017/388-401

Duration of activities: 13.09.2017 – 31.12.2022

Links: www.wbif.eu

Contact : Antonio García Suárez, Antonio.Garcia-Suarez@ec.europa.eu

Programme reference: IPA II Multi-country Programme 2018 (DN 2018/040-113)

Project title: EU Support to the Western Balkans Investment Framework – Infrastructure Project Facilities – IPF 8 and IPF 9

EU contribution: EUR 50 million

Beneficiary region: Western Balkans

Type of contract: Specific Grant Agreement with the European Investment Bank

Contract reference: CN 2018/402-850

Duration of activities: 19.12.2018 – 31.12.2025

Links: www.wbif.eu

Contact : Antonio García Suárez, Antonio.Garcia-Suarez@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The Infrastructure Projects Facilities (IPFs) are consultancy services contracts implementing the Western Balkans Infrastructure Framework (WBIF) technical assistance grants for priority infrastructure projects in the Digital, Energy, Environment, Social and Transport sectors.

Technical assistance is most largely requested for pre-feasibility studies, general designs, feasibility studies, preliminary designs, financing plans, cost-benefit analysis, tariffs plans,

environmental impact assessments, detailed designs, etc., that is to say for the preparation of project documentation. Technical assistance may also occasionally be provided during the implementation phase for the preparation of tender dossiers and for the supervision of works, providing therefore support throughout the project cycle. In some exceptional cases, IPFs may be asked to provide ad-hoc advisory and technical assistance, for example for regional sector development studies.

To date, eight IPFs have been deployed. The European Commission has been managing directly the first three facilities, which have all come to an end. To ensure the implementation of WBIF technical assistance grants in the most efficient manner while minimising the administrative weight on the European Commission, it was decided that the EIB would manage the facilities from IPF4 onwards.

ACTIVITIES (JULY–DECEMBER 2019)

IPF5 has currently 16 assigned sub-projects (i.e. TA grants), out of which none has been completed yet, and two ad-hoc assignments (Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency study and updating of the Connectivity Networks Gap Analysis). A no cost time extension of six months was signed in October 2019 extending the contract to 31 December 2020. The activities carried out during the reporting period have been focused almost entirely on project implementation and completing the IPF5 portfolio.

IPF6 has currently 14 assigned sub-projects, all of them ongoing: 9 in the Transport sector, 2 in the Energy sector (out of which one with a regional dimension), 2 in the Environment sector and 1 in the Social sector. One Transport sub-project and one social sub-project (both in Kosovo) have been substantially completed and are pending approval of the final report. The remaining 12 sub-projects are at various stages of implementation. A no cost time extension of six months was signed in late 2019 extending the contract to 27 August 2021.

IPF 7 has currently 24 assigned sub-projects, out of which 16 are ongoing: 12 in the Transport sector, 2 in the Environment sector and 2 in the Energy sector (both with a regional dimension). Two additional sub-projects in the Energy sector might be assigned to IPF7. During this reporting period, the team finalised the preparation of the new edition of WBIF's Clean Energy Publication. The printed versions were distributed at both the Energy Community's Ministerial Meeting on 13 December in Chisinau (Moldova) and the WBIF Steering Committee meeting on 16 December in London.

IPF 8 has currently 6 assigned sub-projects: 4 in the Environment sector, 1 in the Digital sector and 1 in the Transport sector. Out of these only two had started by 31.12.2019. The approval of 5 almost completed TORs (all in the Transport sector) is delayed because of different reasons pertaining to the beneficiaries' and lead IFIs' competence. Up to 9 additional sub-projects might be assigned to IPF8 once the TOR have been completed and approved.

IPF9 started on 2 December 2019 and got 1 sub-project assigned in the Energy sector, whereas the TOR for 1 sub-project in the Transport sector were almost ready. Two additional TOR for major railway sub-projects should be finalised and approved before the end of winter 2019/2020.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY–JUNE 2019)

- 1 ad-hoc assignment completed

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Continuation of the implementation of TA grants (i.e. sub-projects) in the IPA II Western Balkans beneficiaries.

4.5 TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO CONNECTIVITY IN THE WESTERN BALKANS (CONNECTA)

Programme reference:	IPA II Multi-country Action Programme for Connectivity 2015-2016 Part I (DN 2015/038-055) and IPA II Multi-country Programme 2018 - PART NEAR (DN 2018/040-113)
Project title:	Technical Assistance to Connectivity in the Western Balkans (CONNECTA)
EU contribution:	EUR 17.03 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Service contract
Contract reference:	CN 2016/382-382 and 2018/402-907
Duration of activities:	19.12.2016 – 31.12.2022
Contact :	Antonio García Suárez, Antonio.Garcia-Suarez@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The CONNECTA facility:

- contributes to the preparation of high priority Transport and Energy Connectivity infrastructure projects, ensuring their technical and economic viability, in order to bring them to maturity for investment co-financing, and
- provides support for the preparation and implementation of short and medium-term regional connectivity reform measures (CRMs) in the Transport sector, such as road and rail maintenance schemes, rail reform, road safety or Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS).

In the context of lengthy project preparation processes, it contributes to a shorter and more flexible mobilisation of technical assistance by filling gaps in project preparation and/or accelerating project cycles for key transport and energy projects. This results in a more rapid completion of the project documentation, increasing the number of projects mature enough for investment co-financing.

Thus, CONNECTA boosts the Connectivity Agenda and supports the development of Transport and Energy interconnections within the Western Balkans and between this region

and neighbouring EU Member States. It also supports the indicative extension of the Trans-European Transport network (TEN-T) core corridors to the Western Balkans and the alignment with the relevant EU policies of TEN-T standards.

ACTIVITIES (JULY–DECEMBER 2019)

To date, CONNECTA has been assigned a total of 14 sub-projects spread over all of the Western Balkan and covering both transport and energy. Two sub-projects were completed in this reporting period. One of these sub-projects was a road safety audit in Serbia whereas the other one involved the preparation of project documentation for the replacement of road guardrails in North Macedonia. There are four on-going sub-projects, three of which are in the Energy sector. All of these three relate to energy infrastructure assignments covering the preparation of documentation for gas interconnectors in Serbia, North Macedonia and Bosnia. The remaining sub-project is a transport infrastructure assignment, which focus is to prepare the tender documentation for the road network accessing a border crossing in North Macedonia.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY–JUNE 2019)

- 2 sub-projects completed

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

Completion of the transport infrastructure sub-project in North Macedonia. Commencement of three new regional sub-projects related to transport connectivity reform measures, the first covering the design of road safety measures, the second, preparation of measures to reduce waiting times at road border stations and the third sub-project is another road safety audit in Serbia. It is also expected that a new transport infrastructure assignment will start covering the update of an economic analysis for a railway line in Serbia.

4.6 JOINT ASSISTANCE TO SUPPORT PROJECTS IN EUROPEAN REGIONS (JASPERS)

Programme reference:	IPA II Multi-country Programme 2015 (DN 2015/031-609) and Multi-country Programme 2016 (DN 2016/037-900)
Project title:	JASPERS IPA II
EU contribution:	EUR 5 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Specific Grant Agreement with the EIB
Contract reference:	CN 2016/368-304 and CN 2017/390-198
Duration of activities:	01.01.2016 – 31.12.2020
Links:	http://jaspers.eib.org/

Contact :Antonio García Suárez, Antonio.Garcia-Suarez@ec.europa.eu**PURPOSE**

JASPERS is an advisory services partnership between the European Commission and the European Investment Bank (EIB), which provides independent advice to beneficiary countries to help prepare high quality infrastructure projects to be co-financed through the European Regional Development Fund and the Cohesion Fund. Besides, JASPERS is now also supporting the countries eligible for Cohesion Funds in the context of the Connecting Europe Facility. Since 2013, JASPERS has been expanding its services to the IPA countries (initially to North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia, since 2016 to all IPA countries including Turkey).

ACTIVITIES (JULY–DECEMBER 2019)

JASPERS' main role is to contribute to enhancing the quality of infrastructure projects to investment maturity, in line with requirements associated with IPA financing. It supports beneficiaries in scoping and supervising the work of consultants tasked with the preparation of the necessary project documentation. In addition, JASPERS offers assistance to beneficiaries for the preparation of their sector strategies and project pipelines, to improve programming and to foster institutional capacity.

During the second half of 2019, JASPERS continued to offer its services to IPA countries. As of 31 December 2019, JASPERS had 27 active assignments (11 in Montenegro, 10 in the Republic of North Macedonia, 4 in Albania, and 1 each in Kosovo* and Bosnia and Herzegovina). Whilst Albania started relatively late to request JASPERS support, it has quickly built a diverse portfolio of assignments in the transport and telecoms sectors since early 2019. Following the signing of JASPERS' Working Arrangements in August 2019, a first assignment in Bosnia and Herzegovina delivered a multi-sector workshop on infrastructure project preparation in December 2019, which led to the identification of at least three potential advisory assignments in the transport and energy sectors, the scope of which will be defined at the beginning of 2020. The key ongoing assignment in Kosovo* relates to the health sector.

A Results Oriented Monitoring (ROM) - undertaken in 2019 - compiled evidence that on the whole JASPERS work in the IPA countries has been strongly relevant and was carried out both efficiently and effectively, helping beneficiaries to prepare, finance and implement infrastructure projects in line with EU policy. The ROM report also confirmed that there remains a clear need for JASPERS-type of advisory and capacity building support, which cannot be sourced from the commercial consultancy market, to which it is highly complementary.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY–JUNE 2019)

- 6 assignments completed, of which 3 in Turkey, 2 in Montenegro and 1 in the Republic of North Macedonia
- 20 missions, sometimes with more than one JASPERS staff (5 each to Albania and Montenegro, 4 to the Republic of North Macedonia, 3 to Brussels, 2 to Turkey, and 1 to Bosnia and Herzegovina)
- Participation in the 28th WBIF Project Financiers Group meeting in November 2019 in Brussels.

N.B. These figures do not include the activities in Serbia, implemented through a grant agreement between JASPERS and the EUD in Belgrade.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Continuation of the implementation of technical assistance in IPA II beneficiaries.

4.7 ENERGY EFFICIENCY, GREEN FOR GROWTH FUND (GGF)

Programme reference:	IPA 2015 / 031-609 - Multi-country Action Programme for 2015
Project title:	<i>Green for Growth Fund, Southeast Europe (GGF)</i>
EU contribution (IPA only)	EUR 58.6 million - Shares, EUR 10.8 million - Technical Assistance (TA)
Beneficiary region:	19 countries including Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Delegation (Trusteeship) Agreement with the European Investment Fund (EIF)
Contract reference:	CN 2016/381-814. Previous CN 2009/228-008; 2009/228-006; 2011/267-146; 2010/257-202; 2010/257-202
Duration of activities:	17/12/2009 - 31/12/2023
Links:	www.ggf.lu
Contact:	Anna Soltysik, Anna.SOLTYSIK@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The GGF is a public-private partnership that provides refinancing to financial institutions (FIs) to enhance their participation in the energy efficiency (EE), resource efficiency (REff) and renewable energy (RE) sectors and makes direct investments in EE/RE projects in Southeast Europe (SEE), ENR-East and ENR-South. The complementary GGF TA Facility supports the Fund in reducing energy consumption and CO² emissions through capacity building with FIs/projects and awareness raising.

ACTIVITIES (JULY - DECEMBER 2019)

GGF continued to build-up a diversified portfolio and increased impact by transferring best practices across a broad spectrum of Partner Institutions (PIs). During the second half of 2019, the GGF signed and/or disbursed 12 new investments (partially subsequent tranches of previous investments) to financial institutions and direct investments, amounting to EUR 133.8 million. In SEE, these new investments were related to three large banks: in Kosovo* in the amount of EUR 10 million, in Serbia in the amount of EUR 20 million and in Turkey in the amount of EUR 19.8 million. In addition, the Investment Committee approved a EUR 10 million EE/RE facility to a leasing company in Turkey.

GGF continued to build upon its strong momentum, increasing the environmental impact of the Fund through considerable on-lending and outreach. GGF's cumulative sub-loan portfolio reached EUR 719.4 million in SEE and EUR 1 billion in total by the end of Q4.

On the funding side during 2H2019, the Fund subscribed the EUR 22.5 million Supra Regional C-Shares from the BMZ (via KfW), significantly strengthening the first loss buffer for GGF's regions. In addition, EUR 10 million ENR L-Shares and EUR 10 million ENR-South C-Shares (plus EUR 3 million TA) from EC (both via KfW as trustee) are expected to be contracted by 1H2020. The Fund successfully rolled-over EUR 98.9 million from the Fund's initial investors maturing A and B Shares (KfW, EIB, EBRD and IFC) into A-Shares, with IFC topping up their total investment commitment in A Shares by USD 32.5 million by end of the year. Finally, with two private investments in Notes in the amount of EUR 18.0 million and USD 20.0 million respectively, private capital contributes to 27% of total capital of the Fund.

The TA Facility had 122 projects under management with a budget of EUR 6.1 million as per 4Q2019. The current funding of the TA Facility will benefit from the planned execution of the extension of the EC Donation Addendum until end of 2021 (earmarked for projects in ENR-East). Furthermore, a EUR 2 million EC donation for ENR-East was subscribed in 1H2019.

With these contributions, and the approved EUR 3 million donation to the ENR-South region, the TA Facility is sufficiently funded in the near-term. However, to ensure the availability of funding across all of its regions, the Facility will continue to seek further funding, particularly for the ENR-South region.

OUTPUTS (JULY - DECEMBER 2019)

GGF figures as at end Q4 (aggregate for the region of SEE):

- Total cumulative investment portfolio since inception: EUR 521.5 million.
- Number of active Partner Institutions: 29.
- Number of active target countries: 8.
- CO₂ Savings / CO₂ Reduction: 570,014 tons of CO₂/year (61%).
- Energy Savings: 2,066,507 MWh/year (59%).

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

The Fund will enter 1H2020 with a strong approved pipeline of EUR 75 million, with investments under consideration, in particular in Turkey, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Ukraine, Armenia, Tunisia, Palestinian Territories and Egypt.

To further leverage the investments of the donors the Fund is seeking additional capital and is in active discussions with several potential private and public investors.

The Fund is now actively pursuing investments which complement energy savings and/or CO₂ reductions by achieving measurable impact in water, waste and resource efficiency (“nexus investments”). In addition, following shareholder approval of the implementation of L Shares in 2018, the Fund intensified fund raising efforts with potential investors, including the EC and BMZ, with contracting of the first L Shares foreseen in early 2020.

4.8 REGIONAL ENERGY EFFICIENCY PROGRAMME FOR THE WESTERN BALKANS (REEP)

Programme reference :	Multi-beneficiary Programme, IPA 2012/022-966
Project title:	Regional Energy Efficiency Programme for the Western Balkans – REEP
EU contribution:	EUR 20.0 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Contribution agreement with EBRD
Contract reference:	CN2013/311-406
Duration of activities:	24/06/2013 – 31/12/2021
Links:	http://: www.wb-reep.org
Contact :	Anna Soltysik, anna.soltysik@ec.europa.eu Wolfgang Schlaeger, wolfgang.schlaeger@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The overall aim is to establish a sustainable market for energy efficient financing of private and public sector. It will enable the public sector to take leadership in energy efficiency investments and facilitate access to medium and long-term credits for municipalities needed to implement infrastructure investments and improve the investment climate for business development.

ACTIVITIES (JULY - DECEMBER 2019)

Window 1 - Public Sector Energy Efficiency, Policy Dialogue, Institutional Capacity Building and Business Development Programme

Theme 1 ESCO Support

ESCO legislative work (policy dialogue)

ESCO contract templates were prepared and provided to legislatures of all Western Balkan countries in previous periods. REEP is now supporting the legislatures in discussions and adoption of the ESCO contract templates as rulebooks, in particularly in North Macedonia. No policy assignment is active in the current reporting period.

ESCO project preparation work

Since the start of this programme, total investments with a value of EUR 109 million were supported in different ways under REEP and REEP plus, partially by the provision of ESCO contracts, partially by providing technical advice, partially by preparing related ESCO tenders.

One contract was launched in 2019 to conduct a feasibility study aimed at assessing the viability of an ESCO street lighting project for the municipality of Split in Croatia.

Theme 2 Energy Efficiency Policy Dialogue: No REEP policy activities in this reporting period.

All REEP policy deliverables (28 in total) were completed and submitted to the beneficiaries by December 2016. All of them have been adopted or officially accepted by the national authorities, except 4 regulations transposing EPBD in North Macedonia. These have been delayed due to the ongoing reform of the energy legislation in the country, which includes the drafting of a new primary law on energy efficiency (assistance provided under REEP Plus). Once this primary law is adopted (expected Q1'2020), REEP Plus will revise the regulations transposing EPBD accordingly.

Window 2 (part of the WeBSEFF programme) – Sustainable Energy Credit Lines

Banca Intesa signed EUR 2.4 million in sub-loans to 13 sub-borrowers during the reporting period. Banca Intesa is currently the only active PFI under the Facility as all the other Banks have completed their on-lending. The WebSEFF team assessed a total of 16 sub-projects during the period and verified 7 projects (3 on-site and 4 desk-based), and continued to promote the WeBSEFF credit line to both public and private sector by attending and presenting at meetings and events across the regions. As one example, a presentation was made at the “Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Sources Projects Financing” event organized by the Chamber of Commerce of Serbia in the context of EU programme for training energy managers in the industry sector. In August the utilisation period for grant funds supporting this programme was officially extended until 31 December 2021 to support the continuation of programme activities.

Window 3 Sustainable Energy Direct Financing Facility

An incentive payment of EUR 380,000 was made in October 2019 to the last eligible project under this window.

The project team made limited progress in identifying suitable projects during the second half of 2019. The only potential lead (a biogas project in Serbia) is still in early stages of development. Thus, there were no approvals or signings during this reporting period.

OUTPUTS (JULY - DECEMBER 2019)

Window 1 Public Sector Energy Efficiency, Policy Dialogue, Institutional Capacity Building and Business Development Programme

Theme 1 ESCO Support

ESCO legislative work (policy dialogue)

REEP is now supporting the legislatures in discussions and adoption of the ESCO contract templates as rulebooks, in particularly in North Macedonia.

ESCO project preparation work

During the reporting period, the feasibility study assessing the viability of an ESCO street lighting for the municipality of Split in Croatia was completed and identified an investment potential of EUR 7.7 million. The municipality is considering whether to issue a tender by Q2 2020.

Window 2 Sustainable Energy Credit Lines

EUR 107 million of the EUR 117 million funding available is allocated to PFIs, of which EUR 96.4 million has been drawn down to finance eligible sub-projects as of 31 December 2019.

In total, 332 sub-loans have been signed for a total of EUR 84.3 million by the end of the reporting period. Thirteen of these were signed during H2 2019 for EUR 2.4 million, 6 of which were public sector municipal infrastructure projects (street lighting and vehicles and transport) worth EUR 0.8 million. Banca Intesa has built a strong pipeline of 17 projects for EUR 9.1 million, however many may not move to portfolio due to such reasons as competing credit lines, governmental supporting initiatives and negative financial or technical indicators.

To reporting end-date, EUR 5.95 million has been paid in investment incentives to sub-borrowers of which EUR 0.43 million was paid out in H2 2019. As of end of December 2019 the total (equivalent) primary energy savings is 561,626 (MWh/y), with CO₂ emissions saving of 124,622 (tonnes/y).

Window 3 Sustainable Energy Direct Financing Facility

As at 31 December 2019, the EBRD had approved 7 projects under the second phase of the WeBSEDF: 4 small hydropower plant projects in Albania, BiH, North Macedonia and Montenegro, 1 biomass project in BiH, and 2 biogas projects in Serbia. The amount of finance provided is EUR 31.9 million (of which EUR 6.0 million is still not committed). The implementation of these projects will add up to 25.9 MW of electricity generation capacity, with annual production of 253.5 GWh and will lead to estimated CO₂ emission reductions of 339,826 tonnes per year. Of these 7 projects, 6 have been completed and verified, while the last one is still in early stages of implementation. (Note that the latter project may not be fully completed). In total, the 7 projects will qualify for up to EUR 2.14 million worth of incentive payments, if all are completed.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

Window 1 - Public Sector Energy Efficiency, Policy Dialogue, Institutional Capacity Building and Business Development Programme

Theme 1 ESCO Support

ESCO legislative work (policy dialogue)

In all Western Balkan countries, EBRD is planning to implement ESCO contracts in actual projects (i.e. to implement the ESCO related aspects of the EED by means of applying ESCO contracts). In Serbia, the Legislature is still updating bylaw (rulebook) under the Law on Rational Use of Energy, which also includes the ESCO contracts.

A ceremony event of signing the first EPC street lighting projects in North Macedonia is expected to take place in February 2020 at the presence of the Minister of Economy. On this occasion the Minister will confirm that the EPC model developed under REEP will be used as a part of secondary EE legislation and will be uploaded on the REEP official website.

ESCO (project preparation work)

The technical support for preparing ESCO street lighting tenders in North Macedonia, Kosovo, Albania, Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina will continue.

Theme 2 Energy Efficiency Policy Dialogue: There are no planned activities under REEP, as the work transitioned into REEP Plus (please see the REEP Plus section).

Window 2 Sustainable Energy Credit Lines

Activities for next period will focus on continuation of project assessments as well as pipeline and portfolio generation for the active Banca Intesa credit line. In H1 2020, the EBRD will also seek to sign a loan agreement for the last remaining EUR 10 million financing available under the Framework and begin project origination and pipeline development for this PFI.

The PC also plans to continue building relationship with the relevant stakeholders (Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities, Provincial Government of Vojvodina, Serbian Chamber of Commerce, Chamber of Commerce of Vojvodina), which can help in promotion of the WeBSEFF program in a number of ways, in acquisition of eligible projects, etc. The WeBSEFF team anticipates attending selected relevant fairs, forums and conferences during the upcoming period, and will also continue WeBSEFF promotion through website, social media, media advertising and networking.

Window 3 Sustainable Energy Direct Financing Facility

During the period, efforts will be made to progress with the approval of the potential biogas project in Serbia, as well as to identify 1-2 additional projects to fully utilise the remaining EUR 24 million available under the WeBSEFF (EUR 15 million for ESCO projects and EUR 9 million for non-ESCO projects).

Programme reference :	Multi-beneficiary Programme, IPA 2016/039-858
Project title:	Regional Energy Efficiency Programme for the Western Balkans – REEP Plus
EU contribution:	EUR 30 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Contribution Arrangement with the WBIF Joint Fund
Contract reference:	CN 2017/383-636
Duration of activities:	21/06/2017 – 31/12/2023

Links:	http://www.wb-reep.org ; https://ebrdgeff.com/
Contact :	Anna Soltysik, anna.soltysik@ec.europa.eu Wolfgang Schlaeger, wolfgang.schlaeger@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The REEP Plus programme builds on of the success of REEP in its aim to establish a sustainable market for energy efficient financing of private and public sector in the Western Balkans. REEP Plus will allow for the continuation of ongoing activities, scale up investments in sustainable energy opportunities, and expand the scope of support with focus on energy efficiency in buildings and the residential sector.

ACTIVITIES (JULY – DECEMBER 2019)

Window 1 - Policy Dialogue and ESCO development

Theme 1 ESCO Support:

ESCO project preparation work

There are currently two on-going assignments launched in 2019 aimed at supporting the preparation of ESCO project in the region:

- The first assignment (started in January 2019) covers North Macedonia, Kosovo* and Albania.
- The second assignment (started in June 2019) covers Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Serbia and Montenegro.

Theme 2 Energy Efficiency Policy Dialogue: There are 9 policy assignments under implementation in this reporting period:

- Albania: secondary legislation implementing EPBD
- Albania: review for EED compliance and update of Primary Energy Efficiency Law
- Bosnia and Herzegovina: secondary legislation implementing EPBD (Republika Srpska)
- Bosnia and Herzegovina: tailoring of energy calculation software (Federation)
- Kosovo: drafting support for Building Renovation Strategy
- Kosovo: support for Article 7 compliance and for development of EEO scheme
- Montenegro: support for 4th NEEAP and article 7 notification preparation
- North Macedonia: drafting of primary Energy Efficiency Law and support with adoption process.
- Serbia: secondary legislation implementing EPBD.

Window 2 (part of the WB GEF programme) – Sustainable Energy Credit Lines

The EBRD continues to focus on supporting PFIs in sub-loan disbursement as well as verification of sub-projects, as 14 PFIs are now actively signing sub-loans. During the reporting period, the GEF team also had the opportunity to attend several events in order to promote the Facility across the region. In Belgrade, the GEF programme and Technology Selector were presented at the “Energy Efficiency for Us – Public Financing of Energy

Efficiency in Private Buildings” event organised by RES Foundation and the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities. The Programme was also presented at the Kosovo Sustainable Development Week (Pristina) in September, at the Green Festival 2019 (Pristina) in October, and at Expo Energy & Forum by Union bank (Tirana) in October 2019 where the PFI introduced to the public their green loan products and explained the lending procedure.

PR activities continued with an article published in Serbia and BiH entitled “EBRD and EU support investments in green technologies in residential sector through GEF project”.

Window 3 Sustainable Energy Direct Financing Facility

The team is exploring a potential intervention in relation to facilitating auction-based solar PV projects in Kosovo and North Macedonia, among other opportunities. There were, however, no specific projects identified for support under Window 3 during the period.

Window 4 Direct Lending to Municipalities

During the reporting period, the EBRD has progressed with pipeline development under Window 4. Six scoping studies were launched to support the identification, prioritisation and structuring of EE investments in the public sector.

The Bank has also been working on disbursing the first transaction under this window (Zenica Hospital signed in June 2019). The ratification for both LA and GA was approved by both parliaments in January 2020 and is expected to be completed in the first half of the year. Subsequently to the ratification and to conditions precedent to effectiveness being met, legal opinions from the Ministry of Justice of BiH, Ministry of Justice of FBiH, and Ministry of Justice of Canton will be issued.

Tender documentation on the main works (Procurement Contract 1) was prepared and reviewed during 2019, however finalization was suspended due to ongoing political debates over the Land ownership between the City and the Canton. This issue is expected to be clarified within 2020 and no tender can be launched before it is resolved. Work Supervision Contract (Contract 2) has been prepared and is expected to receive no-objection in Q1 2020. The preparation of Procurement Contract 3 (Gas pipeline implementation) was delayed by license-related issues across the city gas network and is still under preparation.

OUTPUTS (JULY - DECEMBER 2019)

Window 1 - Policy Dialogue and ESCO development

Theme 1 ESCO Support:

During the reporting period, the following progress has been achieved:

- In North Macedonia the EBRD has received letter of interest from 20 municipalities seeking support from REEP ESCO project preparation. Of these 20 municipalities, five have issued tenders for EPC street lighting projects with support of the REEP consultants. The tenders were published in November/December 2019 and contracting is expected to occur in Q1 2020.

- In Serbia the EBRD have received interest from 7 municipalities and is in the process of discussing their priorities; of these municipalities, one has received support from REEP to prepare a street lighting tender; the tender is expected to be published by Q1 2020.
- Engagements in Albania, Bosnia, Kosovo, Montenegro are on-going. The recent earthquake in Albania has slowed down the engagement of counterparts due to other priorities currently being pursued country-wide.

Theme 2 Energy Efficiency Policy Dialogue: In this reporting period, the following deliverables were completed and submitted to the beneficiaries:

- Albania EPBD: final drafts of NCM, MEPS, and EPC regulations; auxiliary technical and guidance documents; demonstration of SBEM software was additionally requested by the beneficiary, and delivered during the ‘hand-over workshop’ on 2 December 2019.
- Albania EED: final draft amendments to the EE Law and relevant concordance tables. Draft law was published for public consultations on 12 November 2019 (until 30 January 2020). A public discussion was held on 6 December 2019.
- Bosnia and Herzegovina: final draft amended regulations were submitted to the beneficiary on 8 August 2019: Regulation on energy certification; Regulation on energy performance calculation methodology; Regulation on minimum energy performance requirements for buildings. A methodology for converting MEPS targets (heating demand targets to be converted to heating consumption targets) was submitted upon additional request (Republika Srpska).
- Bosnia and Herzegovina: updated tailored version of SBEM software and relevant databases. An in-depth training session was delivered 28-30 November 2019 to accredited energy auditors and trainers, 32 persons in total (Federation).
- North Macedonia: Final draft Energy Efficiency Law and relevant auxiliary documents, including Regulatory Impact Assessment and concordance tables, were submitted and adopted by the Government on 8 October 2019. Law Proposal was put on the Parliament agenda in December 2019 but has not been adopted yet.
- Kosovo* BRS: first draft BRS was delivered on 5 August 2019, followed by a workshop with beneficiaries on 25 September 2019.
- Kosovo* Article 7: reports “High Level Design and Cost Implications of an EEO scheme” and “Alternative Measures” delivered in July 2019. Workshop with the beneficiary on 13 November 2019.
- Montenegro: Adopted 4th NEEAP

Serbia (EPBD): revised NCM and cost-optimality analysis were delivered and discussed with the beneficiary and the TWG at a workshop in Belgrade on 25 November 2019.

Window 2 (part of the WB GEFF programme) – Sustainable Energy Credit Lines

The Facility now totals EUR 60.5 million in 16 PFI loans to 14 PFIs in BiH, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Serbia and Albania. During H2 2019, the 14 active PFIs verified a total of 1,625 sub-loans with a combined value of EUR 8.08 million. In addition, EUR 1.42 million of

incentives payments were disbursed to sub-borrowers with successfully verified sub-projects.

As of end of December 2019 a total of EUR 16.75 million has been verified in 3,230 sub-loans, and EUR 2.96 has been disbursed as incentives to sub-borrowers. As of end of December 2019 the total (equivalent) primary energy savings is 14,343 (MWh/y), with GHG emissions saving of 5,094 (tonnes/y).

Window 3 Sustainable Energy Direct Financing Facility

No specific outputs under this window during the reporting period.

Window 4 Direct Lending to Municipalities

In this reporting period, the following outputs were delivered:

- Tender documentation for the Zenica Hospital Project reviewed;
- Two public buildings renovation projects in Pristina and Sarajevo were approved by the Board, with expecting signing in Q1 2020;
- Three scoping studies finalised which have identified investments in other municipalities in the region;
- Ongoing discussions are being held with municipalities over priority investments with municipalities.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

Window 1 - Policy Dialogue and ESCO development

Theme 1 ESCO Support

A ceremony event of signing the first EPC street lighting projects in North Macedonia is expected to take place in February 2020 at the presence of the Minister of Economy. On this occasion the Minister will confirm that the EPC model developed under REEP will be used as a part of secondary EE legislation and will be uploaded on the REEP official website.

Theme 2 Energy Efficiency Policy Dialogue

Implementation of the current assignments will continue in the next semester as per the respective Terms of Reference. Policy assignments expected to be completed and/or deliverables adopted in H1 2020 include:

- Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina (Republika Srpska), Serbia - secondary legislation implementing EPBD
- Albania, North Macedonia: Primary Energy Efficiency Law.
- Bosnia and Herzegovina: Software to be adopted as official calculation tool in the entity (Federation)
- Kosovo: finalisation of BRS
- Kosovo* Article 7: finalisation of EEO design, review of alternative measures, and draft Notification.

Montenegro: Drafting support for EED Article 7 Notification

In North Macedonia, discussions with beneficiary have started to define scope of follow-up assistance for secondary regulations.

Furthermore, in Serbia, we will follow progress with the official submission of the Article 7 Notification to the Energy Community Secretariat (still pending). Support for Article 7 compliance and draft notification were delivered and accepted by the Ministry of Mining and Energy on 14 May 2019.

Window 2 (part of the WB GEF programme) – Sustainable Energy Credit Lines

In the next semester, EBRD will continue discussions with PFIs in Montenegro, North Macedonia, Kosovo* and Albania with the aim of signing the remaining EUR 24.5 million in financing by end of 2020. The team will support the PFIs in on-lending and continue to promote and market the Facility across the regions.

Window 3 Sustainable Energy Direct Financing Facility

During the first half of 2020, EBRD will continue efforts to identify additional potential projects for financing and develop a pipeline of suitable projects.

Window 4 Direct Lending to Municipalities

The following activities are planned for the next period:

- Tender for the Zenica Hospital Project (Hospital Main Work) is expected to be launched in H2 2020 along with the Work Supervision tender;
- Procurement Contract 3 is expected to be finalized in H2 2020;
- The EBRD is expecting to progress the identification of investments with various municipalities in 2020 under this window and its extension.

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244/99 and the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on Kosovo's declaration of independence.

CHAPTER 5 : ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

5.1 ENVIRONMENT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMME FOR ACCESSION (EPPA)

Programme reference:	Multi-country Programme, IPA II 2017/039-874
Project title:	EU Environment Partnership Programme for Accession (EPPA) in Western Balkans and Turkey
EU contribution:	EUR 2.246.300
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Service contract
Contract reference:	No 22.020401/2018/794021/SER/ENV.F.2
Duration of activities:	February 2019-February 2022
Links:	https://eppanetwork.eu/
Contact :	Madalina Ivanica, Madalina.IVANICA@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The overall objective of the programme is to strengthen the implementation of the EU environmental acquis in the Western Balkans and Turkey in areas relevant for addressing trans-boundary environmental issues. The purpose of the project is to assist the European Commission in providing the Secretariat of the EU Environment Partnership Programme for Accession (EPPA).

ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

Inception Activities and Project Secretariat – All project inception activities, pending from the previous period, were concluded. In addition, Secretariat’s support work proceeds as planned (project management and governance, expert recruitment, TAIEX cooperation, project visibility and communication, establishment of the project’s steering committee, project environment revision and TNA, etc.).

EU Environmental Policy Working Group – No events took place during the reporting period (preparatory work took place related to the Ministerial Meeting in April 2020 with the focus on biodiversity and other issues).

Waste Management Working Group – A round of 6 national consultations were organized in the WB targeting the implementation of the SEEWA Roadmaps and waste management priorities. The Kosovo* revised Waste Management Strategy and Action Plan until 2021 was reviewed and commented by the project.

Water Management Working Group - Cooperation with EUSDR and EUSAIR continued. The project developed capacity building activities for prevention of marine litter and implementation of the MSFD, water management for landlocked countries (regional and national workshops).

Air Quality Working Group – The project developed capacity building activities for several air quality management related Directives (regional workshops) and provided technical assistance to Albania to develop and report its air emissions inventory.

Nature Working Sub-Groups (includes EU Strategies, illegal logging and wildlife trade) - Work continued on the methodology and field research of four major studies: Green Infrastructure in the WB, setting up of MPAs in Albania, BiH and Montenegro, illegal logging and related trade in the beneficiaries and, finally, study on administrative framework for EUTR compliance and timber control. The project organized a regional conference on biodiversity aiming to align the beneficiaries' positions with that of the EU regarding the post-2020 biodiversity framework. The project also funded the participation of the beneficiaries in an INTERPOL meeting regarding forestry crime.

Compliance Checking component - Compliance checks done for Serbia Ground water, Kosovo* IED.

Civil Society component – The project prepared a civil society component methodology to consistently involve CSOs in project activities, especially capacity building ones. The methodology also identified eligible CSOs to work with the project, in cooperation with the beneficiaries' EUDs. In addition, CSOs were invited to all capacity building events held in the reporting period.

OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

1. Communication outputs (website and social media updates, project's brochure, etc.)
2. Training Needs Assessment for the project beneficiaries (Western Balkans and Turkey)
3. 1st Interim Project Report
4. Six national consultations on SEEWA Roadmaps and waste management concluded in the WB.
5. Review of the Kosovo* Waste Management Strategy and Action Plan until 2021
6. Participation in EUSAIR meeting on "Development of joint management plans for cross-border habitats and ecosystems with particular reference to the large carnivores", Belgrade, 17 December 2019 and input to USAIR TG 3.
7. Organization of one regional workshop on the issue of managing marine litter, September 11-12th, 2019.
8. Organization of a regional workshop on the synergy in the implementation of MSFD and WFD, October 15-16th, 2019.

9. Organization of a national workshop on Marine Protected Areas and the implementation of Marine Strategy Framework Directive for Montenegro, December 5-6th, 2019.
10. Organization of one regional workshop on the issue of the Ambient Air Quality Directive, September 24-25th, 2019.
11. Organization of one regional workshop on the issue of Industrial Emissions Directive, November 19-20th, 2019.
12. Improved capacity to maintain and report air emission inventories in Albania
13. Research for 4 studies on nature issues: green infrastructure, establishment of Marine Protected Areas in the Adriatic, illegal logging, and legal procedures in place for timber trade.
14. Organization of a regional conference on biodiversity, November 19th, 2019.
15. Project and beneficiaries' participation in INTERPOL meeting on Forestry Crime for European Countries, 10-12 December 2019.
16. Compliance checking of draft legislation as requested by the beneficiaries and/or the European Commission: Serbian draft Law on water intended for human consumption, with the requirements of the Council Directive 98/83/EC, Directive 2003/40/EC and the Directive 2009/54/EC.
17. Compliance checking of draft legislation as requested by the beneficiaries and/or the European Commission: transposition of the provisions of Directive 2010/75/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 November 2010 on industrial emissions (integrated pollution prevention and control) (IED) by provisions of the Kosovo*'s draft Administrative Instruction on limitation of pollution into the air from stationary sources.
18. Involvement of CSOs in all project capacity building workshops (regional and national).
19. CSO component methodology and list of suggested NGO's to be involved in the project

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR THE NEXT SEMESTER (JANUARY – JUNE 2020)

1. 2nd Interim Project Report
2. Regional conference on Nature and Biodiversity back-to-back to the informal Ministers of Environment Council Meeting in Split scheduled for April 20-22nd.
3. National consultation on waste management in Turkey.
4. Preparation of the follow-up reports of main waste management needs and priorities in each beneficiary arising from the 7 national consultations.
5. Capacity building subregional workshop (for 3 countries) on the key waste management priorities and the implementation of SEEWA Roadmaps, 12-13 May 2020

6. National workshop on resource efficiency and circular economy in Turkey, 2-3 June 2020 (scope and dates yet to be confirmed)
7. Possible participation of EPPA beneficiaries in the EUSDR and EUSAIR annual forums.
8. National workshop in Albania for MPAs, marine litter and MSFD, 3-4 March 2020
9. National workshop in Bosnia and Herzegovina for MPAs, marine litter and MSFD, 26-27 May 2020
10. Regional workshop on IED, 9-10 June 2020
11. Submission of 1st draft of the study containing an analysis of green infrastructure deployment and ecological connectivity status in WB
12. Regional workshop to discuss the above study contents and recommendations, 24-25 June 2020
13. Submission of 1st draft of the study on illegal logging and timber trade flows and on existing administrative and legislative aspects and relevant stakeholders in the beneficiaries
14. Regional workshop on Exchange of information and best practices on managing illegal timber, 19-20 February 2020
15. Civil Society Regional Consultation Meeting, 4 March 2020
16. Rolling activities such as compliance checks and other ad-hoc beneficiary requests (waste plans revisions, air quality management TA, nature TA, involvement in INTERPOL activities).

5.2 DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT

ex: Disaster Risk Assessment and Mapping

Programme reference:	Multi-country Programme, IPA II 2015/038-052
Project title:	Disaster Risk Assessment and Mapping
EU contribution:	EUR 2,999,250
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Procurement
Contract reference:	ECHO SER/2016/740-641
Duration of activities:	01/12/2016 - 01/12/2019
Links:	http://www.ipadram.eu/
Contact :	Mojca Krisper Figueroa, Mojca.KRISPER-FIGUEROA@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

Improving beneficiary countries' national systems for disaster loss data collection, risk assessment and mapping, and alignment with and integration into the Union Civil Protection Mechanism.

ACTIVITIES (JUNE 2019 – DECEMBER 2019)

- Training of operators for using the Electronic Regional Risk Atlas (ERRA) in November 2019 in Ankara.
- Regional risk working group meeting in October 2019 in Montenegro.
- Evaluation validation & learning workshop in October in North Macedonia.
- Local workshops on Disaster loss data collection, Sep-Nov 2019.
- Final conference in Brussels on 19 November.
- Final steering committee meeting in Brussels on 20 November.

OUTPUTS (JUNE 2019 – DECEMBER 2019)

- Partners have improved the Disaster loss data collection system at national level and aligned to Sendai Framework and in compliance with European commission/JRC Guidelines for Recording and **Sharing Disaster Loss Data**.
 - Civil protection law of Albania that was approved in 2019 includes a specific article that introduce the Disaster Loss Data collecting system in Albania.
 - Bosnia and Herzegovina prepared amendments of current regulation on disaster loss data collection system for the alignment to Sendai requirements.
 - Montenegro developed guidelines-based on Sendai - for collecting disaster loss data. The guidelines, endorsed by the local municipalities, are complemented by data collection forms to be used by local commissions for collecting data in uniform and standard format.
 - Serbia had updated the guidelines on using system and the data collection form aligning to the requirements of Sendai Framework.
 - North Macedonia aligned existing national Disaster loss data collection system with Sendai Framework
 - Turkey developed a new system “ARAS” that includes a module for the registration of disaster loss data collection.
- **Disaster Risk Assessment**
 - Harmonised methodologies in all the partner countries compliant with the EU guidelines.
 - A new methodology in Serbia, Turkey and Bosnia and Herzegovina, new technical guidelines in Montenegro and North Macedonia, amendments in

the new civil protection law in Albania, a new Regulation for Disaster Risk Assessment in Kosovo*

- **Risk mapping and Electronic Regional Risk Atlas**

Electronic Regional Risk Atlas developed containing maps; tools to assess potential impacts of extreme phenomena, build scenarios; historical catalogues – to retrieve data on past disasters and damage and losses; documents - library and ongoing projects that is saved in a centralised base.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Programme came to an end in November 2019.

Programme reference:	Multi-country Programme, IPA II 2017/039-402
Project title:	Western Balkans Disaster Risk Management Programme
EU contribution:	EUR 3 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Trust Fund
Contract reference:	IPA/2018/397-264
Duration of activities:	16/07/2018 – 31/12/2021
Links:	https://understandrisk.org/event/urbalkans2018/
Contact :	Mojca Krisper Figueroa, Mojca.KRISPER-FIGUEROA@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The main objective of the Western Balkans Disaster Risk Management (DRM) Program is to build the capacity of selected beneficiaries in the Western Balkans region. By improving disaster risk informed decision-making at regional level, strengthen national capacity for the prioritization of risk-informed investments, and improve regional and national capacity to conduct post-disaster needs assessments and formulate resilient recovery frameworks.

ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

The implementation of activities commenced in April 2018. During the period under review, and in line with the program's work plan, activities mainly focused on (i) enhancing regional

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cooperation for understanding and sharing risk information and on (ii) preparing technical assistance activities for post-disaster response and resilient recovery. For (i) In partnership with the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the Program developed a data sharing policy agreement for National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHS) in the region, connecting NMHS in the Western Balkans with each other and the wider region. To further facilitate the exchange of data and information between the Western Balkan signatories of the policy agreement, the Program has conducted an assessment of flood forecasting and early warning capacities of the National Meteorological and Hydrological Services in Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, and North Macedonia. For (ii) the project focused on preparing a regional Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) training in Sarajevo (February 2020), doing preparatory work for emergency preparedness and response assessment and support 22 municipalities in Serbia, which were affected by floods in July 2019, to develop local PDNA reports.

OUTPUTS (JULY- DECEMBER 2019)

As mentioned above, the Program developed a data sharing policy agreement for National Meteorological and Hydrological Services in the region, connecting National Meteorological and Hydrological Services in the Western Balkans with each other and the wider region. This policy agreement will facilitate National Meteorological and Hydrological Services to share and gain access to meteorological and hydrological data and information beyond their respective borders which, in turn, will improve their capacity to provide accurate forecasting of extreme weather and floods, and timely early warnings in the event of an emergency. The policy agreement has been completed and the following Western Balkan countries have become formal signatories: Bosnia-Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

During the next reporting period, the team will work on the following deliverables.

- *National DRM Plans:* Bosnia-Herzegovina and North Macedonia have expressed interest in World Bank support for the development of a new national DRM plan. International consultants have been mobilized to work on the development of the plans.
- *Regional Emergency Preparedness and Response (EP & R) Assessment:* The assessment will include up to 6 country-specific EP&R assessments and investment plans. The assessment was advertised on October 29, 2019. Activities are expected to start in December 2019.
- *Regional PDNA Training:* The regional PDNA workshop is planned in Sarajevo during February 3-7, 2020. This training will be provided by the World Bank, EU, UNDP, and Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Initiative (DPPI).
- *Post-Disaster Technical Assistance:* The ongoing PDNA work in Serbia will be completed.

5.3 REGIONAL ELECTRICITY MARKET IN WESTERN BALKANS

Programme reference:	Multi-country Programme, IPA II 2015/038-055
Project title:	Technical Assistance to Connectivity in the Western Balkans Component 2: Regional Energy Market
EU contribution:	EUR 1 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Grant
Contract reference:	IPA/2016/373-263
Duration of activities:	07/06/2016 – 06/12/2019
Links:	https://www.energy-community.org/
Contact:	Anna Soltysik, Anna.SOLTYSIK@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

Assisting the Western Balkans countries to achieve their goal to create a regional energy market by facilitating the implementation of so-called “energy soft measures” that will remove existing legislative and regulatory barriers and enhance the institutional structures necessary for the functioning of this market in line with the Energy Community Treaty and relevant EU acquis.

ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

- Developing a procedure and criteria for selection of a service provider of trading and clearing platform for a day-ahead market operations in North Macedonia and drafting tender documents (activity started in this semester)
- Developing the comprehensive Electricity Law of Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina, including a governing framework for the promotion of energy from renewable energy sources and grid integration of energy from renewable energy sources (RES) (activity started in this semester)
- Organising an event dedicated the closing of Technical Assistance to Connectivity in the Western Balkans Component 2: Regional Energy Market

OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

- A detail set of documents defining a procedure and criteria for selection of a service provider of trading and clearing platform for a day-ahead market operations in North Macedonia and tender documents including:
 - The draft Request for Offer and associated annexes. This Request for Offer contains various defined conditions and procedures regarding the management of the tender process for the selection of a service provider for

a trading and clearing platform for a day-ahead electricity market in North Macedonia. Included within the annexes of the Request for Offer are a list of mandatory criteria and assessment criteria, against which applicants for the tender will be assessed.

- The draft Offer Assessment Table to be used by MEMO as an assessment tool to ensure that all applicants are evaluated in a consistent, non-discriminatory manner. The Offer Assessment Table is based on the information included in the Request for Offer.
- A newly established Market Operator of North Macedonia (MEMO) got a comprehensive knowledge of market operator's tasks related to the management of the tender process for the selection of a service provider for a trading and clearing platform for a day-ahead electricity market and mandatory criteria and assessment criteria, against which applicants to the tender will be assessed, through the two-day workshop held in Skopje on 26 and 27 November 2019.
- The Government's decree on operation of the organized market operator, including the necessary technical, staffing and financial conditions, was developed and adopted on 29 October 2019, fully transposing the Energy Community Regulatory Board recommendation for the designation of a nominated electricity market operator in line with the CACM Regulation the development of which was supported by the project "Technical Assistance to Connectivity in the Western Balkans - Component 2: Regional Energy Market" (finalised in the previous semester)
- The National Electricity Market Operator in North Macedonia (MEMO), established in October 2018, obtained the license and became operational on 1 October 2019 (its setting-up and operationalisation were supported by the project "Technical Assistance to Connectivity in the Western Balkans - Component 2: Regional Energy Market" through the technical assistance projects completed in previous semesters)
- A balancing market in North Macedonia became operational as of 1 January 2020, based on the balancing rules adopted by the transmission system operator of North Macedonia in June 2019, the development of which was supported by the project "Technical Assistance to Connectivity in the Western Balkans - Component 2: Regional Energy Market", namely Technical assistance to establish electricity balancing market in the North Macedonia
- A 3rd Energy Package compliant legal framework for Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina was developed, including:
 - Law on Electricity and
 - Law on Renewable Energy Sources and Efficient Cogeneration for Brčko District
- Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina got better understanding of the 3rd Energy Package requirements related to the electricity market, cross-border trade and renewable energy sources, including the relevant provisions on electricity market and RES integration stemming from the Clean Energy Package.

- The event dedicated to the closing of the project “Technical Assistance to Connectivity in the Western Balkans - Component 2: Regional Energy Market” was held on 5th December in Tivat, Montenegro. The event gathered 80 stakeholders from the project beneficiaries of all WB6 Contracting Parties, including representatives of the Ministries, transmission system operators, distribution system operators, power exchanges, generation companies, regional and EU institutions. Participants took stock of the results achieved through the delivered technical assistance projects, 11 national, one bilateral and five regional projects, which were instrumental in tackling some of the biggest challenges the WB6 were facing in creating a regional electricity market. It was concluded that national projects delivered concrete results, while regional projects, e.g. cross-border balancing, capacity calculation, etc., need follow up to be implemented and reap the full benefits of the technical assistance. It was emphasised that a major obstacle still to be resolved is the relationship between the Contracting Parties and EU Member States. The implementation of the project’s objectives was made more difficult by widening gaps within the energy governance in the pan-European energy market, following the entry into force of Third Energy Package network codes, the Paris Agreement and the Clean energy for all Europeans package.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- The project closes on 6 December 2019

CHAPTER 6: CIVIL SOCIETY AND MEDIA

The overall objective of this support is to strengthen civil society organisations and their role in the political as well as the European integration process of the IPA beneficiaries. This should result in an improved dialogue on legislation and policies between governments and civil society as well as the strengthening of social partnerships underpinning reforms.

This support is mainly being delivered through the Civil Society Facility (CSF) and will ultimately result in a more civil society-friendly environment, a consolidation of the democratic process and good governance.

Media freedom and freedom of expression are also seen as important in this context. In 2014 DG Enlargement has developed two sets of guidelines aiming to support the civil society and media sectors in the region through an inclusive and participative approach with contributions from all relevant stakeholders, CSOs, journalists' and media professional organisations of the region.

"The Guidelines for EU support to civil society in enlargement countries, 2014-2020" complemented by a result framework with clear objectives and indicators to be monitored in the years to come have been finalised and constituted a reference document for the MCSP 2014-2020.

The "Guidelines for EU support to media freedom and media integrity in enlargement countries, 2014-2020" that are built on the policy vision as set out in the Conclusions of the Speak-up! Conferences were finalised in March 2014.

Link to the guidelines:

http://www.tacso.org/documents/otherdoc/?id=9887&template_id=73&langTag=en-US

Civil Society Facility

The CSF is a single facility for the benefit of the whole of the Western Balkan region and Turkey. It is a single programme but financed and implemented separately by the multi-beneficiary IPA programme and the various national IPA programmes.

The CSF consists of three strands of activities which aim at strengthening Western Balkan and Turkish civil society's commitment and involvement in the transformative process in view of their eventual integration into the EU:

- Support/technical assistance (TACSO) for local civic initiatives and capacity building, thereby enforcing the role of civil society at national level;
- Actions to build partnerships and develop networks between CSOs, businesses, trade unions and other beneficiary social partners and their counterparts in the EU to promote transfers of knowledge and experience. The main instruments (implementation modalities) of the action at regional level are the Framework Partnerships Agreements (FPAs), functional to create long-term CSOs coalition building and re-granting schemes for smaller organization;

A "People 2 People" (P2P) programme to bring a variety of organisations in the ELARG region into contact with EU institutions and European-level counterparts. These include CSO

representatives, human rights and minority defence activists, NGOs dealing with *acquis*-related subjects, journalists, young politicians and trade union leaders. TACSO has taken over the management of the third strand, the P2P programme applying a demand driven approach.

6.1 ACTION GRANTS

Programme reference:	Civil Society Facility and Media Programme, IPA 2016/038-960 and IPA 2017 / 038-961
Project title:	Support to regional thematic networks of Civil Society Organisations – Long-term Grants
EU contribution:	EUR ca. 16 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	17 Grants
Duration of activities:	January 2018 – December 2021
Contacts:	Maria ESPOSITO maria.esposito@ec.europa.eu Jlenia DESTITO jlenia.destito@ec.europa.eu Kristina VUJIC kristina.vujic@ec.europa.eu Victor DRAGUTAN victor.dragutan@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The 17 Long-term grants, involving 118 CSOs, were awarded after a Call for proposals launched under the Civil Society Facility and Media Programme 2016-2017 to provide support to regional thematic networks of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), fostering regular networking at regional and EU level, facilitating the exchange of knowledge, skills and connections, and increasing and widening their impact in campaigning and advocacy.

The CSOs networks supported in this framework are active in a number of sectors identified as relevant for the region. The final aim is to strengthen their capacities to advocate and effectively dialogue with Governments in order to influence policy and decision making processes, and to produce lasting change in the society.

The European Union, Innovation & Media Partnerships for Action, Collaboration and Transformation in the Western Balkans - EU-IMPACT-WB (2017/394-404)

The overall objective of the project is for Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), young entrepreneurs and social innovators to work collaboratively to use new media tools more effectively to create new jobs and promote socio-economic reforms issues in the Western Balkans. CREATE Foundation and its partners have made significant progress in the implementation of the EU-IMPACT-WB project. The focus of the consortium partners was a) development of training curricula’s identified during the GAP Assessment, b) production of labour market analysis reports, c) coordination and networking with relevant stakeholders across the Western Balkans, and d) ongoing support in the establishment of social

innovation hubs in North Macedonia and Albania. Outputs: Establishment of the Social Innovations Hub in Serbia, Temerin; GAP Assessment of young social innovators completed in Serbia, North Macedonia and Albania; Production of Labour Market Analysis reports, Serbia, Albania and North Macedonia; and development of training curricula for young social innovators and entrepreneurs. In the following period, the project will focus in assisting the regional partners to establish the social innovation hubs (Albania) and inauguration of hubs in (Kosovo*and North Macedonia). The capacity building/training programme for young social innovators and entrepreneurs will continue. The process to provide business support to young entrepreneurs will be concluded. The labour market analysis will be completed in Kosovo. Both the business process outsourcing and e-learning platforms will be additionally strengthened.

WeB4YES – Western Balkan Civil Society Organization for Youth Employment Support (2017/394-387)

The Project addresses the challenges of insufficient cooperation among the civil society actors and public authorities in Western Balkan in policy processes regarding youth unemployment. During the period July – December 2019, the majority of the project activities were implemented with successes. After the Interregional Commission selected 18 projects (involving 36 CSOs in total) for the financial support, the Advanced Capacity Building Training “Advocacy and project management”, for sub-granted CSOs was organized. During the training, Belgrade Open School also organized a Grant Award Ceremony for 18 small scale civil society organizations from the Western Balkans. Contract with grantees will allow them to implement projects in the field of youth employability and youth entrepreneurship during 2019 and 2020. Contracts were awarded by Mr. Milorad Bjeletic, the Executive Director of Belgrade Open School (BOS) and Mr. Steffen Hudolin, Head of Operations – Section II from the Delegation of the EU in Serbia. Also, a 5-day study visit to Sweden and Denmark, as a part of the capacity building process, was organized. The aim of the visit was to strengthen the capacities of grant-winning Western Balkan organizations through learning about mechanisms and good practice examples in Sweden and Denmark regarding youth employability policies. During the reporting period, BOS developed procedures and tools for monitoring the sub granted actions and divided the roles in monitoring among partners.

During the reporting period policy dialogue activities were continued, and advocacy campaigns at the national level, based on the developed policy recommendations, were conducted: improving legal framework for internships as well as career guidance system in Serbia; adopting Law on Youth that contains articles on youth employment in Albania; financing youth led entrepreneurship initiatives from the budget of local self-governments in B&H; improving the conditions four youth-led start-ups in North Macedonia; improving the framework for active labor market measures and traineeships in Montenegro; and establish a co-operation body that would include all stakeholders responsible for providing career guidance services in Kosovo. National Fora on Youth Employment was organized to support advocacy initiatives, while partners also made an effort to promote policy recommendations in the field of youth employability and entrepreneurship also toward regional and EU parties. In order to offer a comprehensive regional e-service platform for employment and labor mobility the portal WEB4JOBS was further improved. Project website, FB page and Instagram channels were launched and utilized for the purpose of promotion.

Regional Youth Compact for Europe (2018/395-387)

The Project aims to empower CSOs, particularly youth organizations, in the WB and Turkey to effectively participate in policy design and monitoring EU integration process. From July until December 2019 the RYCE network and BNLD (Balkan Network for Local Democracy) capacities continued to be strengthened through several project team meetings and the Training for Network Members. The RYCE actively engaged with youth of the region on the issues covered by the project through the Workshop for the Regional Youth Working Group and the Youth Regional Youth Compact for Europe Network Regional Forum, during which representatives of youth drafted a declaration signed by more than 50 young people which identified crucial issues that they believe need to be addressed. The end of the year saw the start of the RYCE Internship Programme aimed at providing youth from the region with experience about the functioning of CSOs and their work but also in establishing innovative, youth friendly, forms and content of communication, leading to increased youth participation in civil initiatives, policy design and structured dialogue.

The Time is Now: Consolidating Regional Efforts for Advancing LGBTI Rights and Equality in the Western Balkans and Turkey 2017/394-394

The project aims to advocate and improve the protection of human rights of LGBTI people in the Western Balkans and Turkey. Within the reporting period, a number of advocacy activities were conducted by the project partner organizations. In North Macedonia, advocacy for introducing legal gender recognition (LGR) continued with meetings with representatives from relevant ministries, members of Parliament and representatives from the SOGI Unit of the Council of Europe. The project also actively participated in the drafting process of amendments to introduce LGR. On the occasion of the first Pride held in Skopje promotion of freedom of expression and assembly was carried out. Activities in Turkey continued towards training of professionals and service providers for better protection of LGBTI persons in the country. Close cooperation with professionals on LGBTI issues was developed and strengthened in Albania, where continuous legal and psycho-social support to LGBTI people was also provided. In Serbia, advocacy activities continued towards the introduction of a new improved Gender identity law based on self-determination, and continuous support was provided to LGBTI persons. In Montenegro, advocacy activities focused on strengthening cooperation with public authorities and state institutions to work for the approval of the Same Sex Partnership Law, and for the establishment of a working group for drafting the Legal Gender Recognition Law. The activities of mapping and recording of cases of violence and discrimination towards LGBTI people continued.

SIGN Up for Impact (2018/395-435).

In Serbia, Trag Foundation drafted the Manual for Tax Authorities and Donors based on which the Serbian Tax Authority published the binding *Instructions for obtaining tax incentives for donors*. In Kosovo, FIQ developed a concept document that will serve as a basis for the new Draft Law on Philanthropy. SIGN partners published and promoted the regional comparative analysis based on the findings of the Public Opinion Survey on Philanthropy conducted in late 2018. SIGN also organized the *SIGNs of CHANGE event and exhibition* in the Philanthropy House in Brussels to mark its 10th anniversary. In addition to this, grassroots organisations selected to participate in the Sustainability Academy program implemented their fundraising campaigns and managed to raise over EUR 135,000 from local donors in

their communities; these raised funds were then matched by the SIGN partners support. fAKT (Montenegro) and FIQ (Kosovo) held National Awards for Philanthropy gathering more than 150 representatives of business, public and civil sector.

ENV.Net Factoring the Environmental Portfolio for Western Balkans and Turkey in the EU Policy Agenda (2017/394-372).

During the second half of 2019, the project focused its efforts on: a) Submitting IPA beneficiary-specific contributions on the acquis process related to chapters 27 and 15. A regional report gathering all written contributions for the WB and Turkey was also published. b) Concluding successfully the support of 22 local CSOs throughout the region via a sub-grant program. c) Producing 6 monthly newsletters with updates on the most pressuring environmental issues in the region, designing and publishing a series of infographics and clips on the Circular Economy concept. d) Publishing a regional report on the status of Circular Economy in WB and Turkey. In the first half of 2020, the project plans to organise the 2nd regional conference on Circular Economy, which was postponed due to the earthquake of November 26th in Albania, to continue feeding in the ENV.net platform with e-content, to publish IPA beneficiary-focused and regional thematic studies, to conduct site visits, and prepare for the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26).

GEAR – Green Economy for Advanced Region (2017/394-354).

Implemented by FORS Montenegro, SMART Kolektiv, the Centre for Development and Support, EDEN Centre and Eko-Svest and the Association Slap, the project aims to increase the activities and impact of CSOs from the region on environmental protection. During the reporting period the main activities included capacity building of CSOs through training sessions on Studies and Research, an awareness raising campaign including distribution of publications, media activities, round tables on green economy with local and national authorities, award and implementation of 26 sub grants. In the following period, the partners will work mainly on monitoring the sub-granted projects and mentoring the supported CSOs, on continuing the capacity building programme and the campaign to raise awareness on the role of civil society organisations to promote green economy

NAGE – Networking and Advocacy for Green Economy (2018/395-379).

NAGE is implemented by an alliance of six rural development networks from the Western Balkans and one from the EU, all acting jointly through the informal platform Balkan Rural Development Network (BRDN) to enhance the policy and decision-making impact of BRDN members in the agricultural and rural policy reform processes by advocating for and advancing environmental protection and green economy concept. During the reporting period, the acquired knowledge on *Financial Management and Funding Diversification* was distributed to national grassroots CSOs through 6 training sessions. Green entrepreneurship caravans were organized, emphasising the development of green economy in protected areas and the use of green building as a chance to decarbonise the construction sector. Additionally, the project developed a detailed methodology for sub-granting of green entrepreneurship projects. The WB networks and Croatian network, implementers of the NAGE project, organised the Founding Assembly of the BRDN thus transitioning the informal platform into a legal entity representing the rural community of all the Western Balkans. In the coming period, training sessions on *Green Economy and Entrepreneurship* with grassroots

CSOs will continue, the Call for proposals for local CSOs will be published, and the work will commence on a comparative study on programmes and measures for agriculture and rural development related to green economy, put in place by non-EU member states involved in the EU Common Agricultural Policy.

Empowering CSOs in Combatting Discrimination and Furthering Women’s Labour Rights (2018/394-402).

Partners launched a regional comparative report (<https://womensnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/GBD-Labour-WB.pdf>) on gender-based discrimination and labour in Brussels and advocated for implementation of findings at the European Commission, European Parliament and within the WB. Based on findings, partners prepared consolidated input for country reports. They raised awareness about the issue of discrimination in labour, engaged media coverage of it, prepared policy papers, and advocated for related legal amendments. Some partners provided legal aid for women reporting gender-based discrimination at work. Partners organised sub-granting through the Kosovo* Women’s Fund for CSOs to partner in implementing report recommendations. Upcoming activities: sign contracts with subgrant recipients; monitor subgrants implementation; support CSOs’ capacity development; continue awareness campaign, advocacy, and legal aid.

6.2 LONG- TERM GRANTS

ALTER - Active Local Territories for Economic development of Rural Areas (2015/370-371).

The project aim is to strengthen the capacities of CSOs and CSO networks contributing to sustainable socio-economic development of rural areas in the Western Balkans and Turkey, promoting their active participation in policy planning and implementation, and building a strong civil society in rural areas. The project also aims to enhance regional development through networking and cooperation. From 10 to 12 September 2019 the 3rd Rural Policy Forum was organised in cooperation with the Visegrad International Fund. During the Rural Policy Forum, through a simulative environment, participants defined recommendations to improve the position of youth in rural areas, to strengthen the role of CSOs in supporting youth, to improve community answers to the needs of rural youth, and to stimulate youth activism. All themes and recommendations were coordinated with themes and recommendations of the 1st European Rural Youth Parliament held in Candás (Spain) between 4th and 9th November 2019. More information is available at <http://balkan-noborder.com/>

Sustainable agriculture for sustainable Balkans: Strengthening advocacy capacities of CSOs and developing policies in the Western Balkans (2015/370-487).

The project aims to strengthen capacities for sustainability, networking and advocacy of CSOs working on sustainable agriculture in the Western Balkans. During the reporting period, the partnership has successfully finalised activities related to the Grant & Training programme, aimed at strengthening CSOs’ advocacy capacities. The Regional Working Platform for biodiversity conservation in agricultural landscapes of the WB developed the Regional Report on the state of policies and institutional frameworks on biodiversity conservation in the WB. The Regional Working platform, made of experts, national

authorities, and CSOs, identified recommendations for the future development of the High Nature Value Farming Indicator in the region. Finally, the First Regional Conference on biodiversity conservation and animal welfare in agricultural landscapes was organised gathering all relevant stakeholders.

SOCIETIES - Support of CSOs in Empowering Technical skills, Inclusion of people with disabilities and EU standards in South East Europe (2015/370-229).

The reporting period coincides the final six months of project implementation. The second half of 2019 was marked by the National forums on social inclusion that took place in Montenegro and BiH, and the last training modules that were organised for CSOs. The months of October and November were dedicated to the awareness raising campaigns that were used to celebrate the World Mental Health day and the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. The Regional forum held in Belgrade was the closing event of the SOCIETIES project. It gathered more than one hundred people, representatives of public institutions and civil society coming from South-East Europe. All CSOs involved in the action confirmed their willingness to continue promoting jointly social inclusion of persons with disabilities and persons with mental disorders in the future, and to continue advocating for changes that will enable their full inclusion in society. The Regional forum ended with the signing of the Commitment Charter to the SOCIETIES project goals.

Joint Initiative to Empower Roma Civil Society on the Western Balkans and Turkey (2015/370-300).

The action sets up a supporting facilitating structure for (pro) Roma civil society to actively participate in the local and national policy and decision making process. The overall objective is to establish a constructive and systematic dialogue between local and national authorities and Roma CSOs in order to improve policies for Roma integration, social inclusion, non-discrimination, interethnic dialogue, socio-economic development and citizens' rights.

During the reporting period, 28 local advocacy initiatives, implemented by 28 CSOs in Albania, BiH, Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Kosovo, Republic of Serbia and Turkey were supported with small grants and implemented their activities. *Most Roma Friendly Mayor* regional campaign occurred in Western Balkan countries and Turkey; an independent commission in every project countries evaluated the applications; seven mayors selected from 47 competing Municipality were awarded on 19 November 2019 in Brussels. 73 local CSOs, members of national coalitions were actively involved in monitoring the implementation of action plan for Roma inclusion; seven shadow reports were produced in every project country and one local policy score cards report was drafted in Republic of North Macedonia. Two national working meeting, one coalition meeting and several field visits took place in countries where the JIERCSWBT is implemented. Network of pro Roma CSOs at regional functioned regularly.

Youth Banks Hub for Western Balkans and Turkey (2015/370-394).

The main focus of the project was on the raising awareness for improving the position of youth under the campaign #WENEEDMORE. Youth Banks Hub for Western Balkans and Turkey (YBH4WBT) is a network of 20 youth organizations whose objective is to ensure greater involvement of young people in Albania, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and

Turkey. The YBH4WBT* Network organized 17 national public debates and engaged directly more than 500 national stakeholders, along with a regional conference held in Belgrade, where we presented Youth Participation Index 2019 and 5 national researches. The Regional Youth Conference, which was partner-supported by the Ministry of Youth and Sports of Serbia, Tempus Foundation and the National Youth Council of Serbia (18-19 Nov, 2019) was chaired by Serbian Minister for Youth and Sport and Head of Operations, EU Delegation to Serbia. It was one of the biggest regional youth events, gathering over 200 participants, including state representatives from respective countries, key regional stakeholders (Đuro Blanuša, Secretary General of the Regional Youth Cooperation Office, Dr. Gjergj Murra, Executive Director of the Western Balkans Fund, Petričević, Senior Advisor, Regional Cooperation Council and Jovana Majstorović, Board Member, European Youth Forum), youth CSOs, experts and media. An additional high level event was organized in December 2019 in Skopje, gathering the most relevant representatives, including the President of North Macedonia and EU Ambassador, which initiated the process of development of the Strategy for prevention of brain drain.

http://www.tacso.org/documents/otherdoc/?id=9887&template_id=73&langTag=en-US

6.3 TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS (TACSO 3) IN THE WESTERN BALKANS AND TURKEY

Programme reference:	Civil Society Facility and Media Programme 2016-2017 IPA 2016/038-960
Project title:	Technical Assistance to Civil Society Organizations (TACSO 3) in the Western Balkans and Turkey
EU contribution:	EUR 4,679,500.00
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Service contract
Contract reference:	CN 2018/402-893
Duration of activities:	18/12/2018 – 17/12/2021
Links:	http://www.tacso.eu
Contact :	Jlenia Destito, jlenia.destito@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

TACSO 3 is a regional project that improves capacities and strengthens the role of civil society organizations (CSOs). The project assists CSOs to actively take part in democratic processes in the region, and it also stimulates an enabling environment for civil society and pluralistic

media development. The project has a key role in creating coherence in supporting civil society development at multiple levels in the region.

ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

- Regional project office was moved to Skopje, North Macedonia end of September 2019, enabling new and existing team members effective mobilization;
- Based on specific ToR for Country Coordinators (CC) for each of the 7 IPA Beneficiaries, an open call was launched during October-November resulting in selection of 7 candidates, some of which were approved to start effective work in their IPA Beneficiary country as of 2020;
- A concept for Regional Advisory Group (RAG), a new body to offer strategic guidance and steering in close cooperation with stakeholders at both regional and single-Beneficiary level was developed based on the updated Stakeholder analysis report and the Overview of current EU-funded CSF projects and civil society-related structures in the Western Balkans and Turkey related to TACSO 3 mandate;
- Based on the mapping of work programmes of the National Resource Centres (NRCs), a P2P exchange meeting was organised on 5-6 November, 2019 in Podgorica, Montenegro to identify synergies and joint regional activities within TACSO 3 mandate;
- Based on an in-depth quality methodology, draft of the Regional and Country Reports of the Needs Assessment were developed and consulted in 5 countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia);
- Specific research on the needs of regional networks and CSF has been launched;
- Two on-demand consultations were organized, including 2020 CSF and Media Multi-country Programme and Serbia Programme for Serbia;
- The current state of CSF datasets was investigated and the development of appropriate solution that would respond to the specific needs of the CSF database/MIS has been initiated;
- Procedure and template for on-line application to TACSO 3 Capacity Development and P2P Programme activities and P2P On-demand support were drafted and consulted.

OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

- Project team (international and local) consolidated and recruitment of country team members finalized;
- Key inputs (stakeholders, relevant projects, contacts etc.) collected and updated;
- Exchange of expectations with key stakeholders (DFG, EUDs, NRCs etc.) and development of joint plan of priorities;
- A thorough needs assessment of the enabling environment and CSOs organisation, operational and sectorial capacity at regional and country-specific level conducted and consulted in 5 IPA Beneficiaries with more than 220 stakeholders (representatives of CSOs, public institutions, donors etc.);

- Consultation processes on Civil Society Facility programme at regional and in Serbia facilitated;
- Developed basic procedure for equal and easy on-line access of target group to capacity development and P2P activities.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Organizing Regional Civil Society Forum 21-23 January, 2020 to discuss the state of civil society and the new EU framework of support (EU Civil Society Guidelines and IPA III support);
- Finalizing Needs Assessment Reports, their publication and promotion;
- Developing of Capacity Development (CD) and P2P programme with a concrete action plan for regional and single IPA Beneficiary activities and their launch;
- Organizing consultation processes, including IPA III consultation with civil society stakeholders;
- Facilitate the review of the EU Civil Society and Media Guidelines;
- Launch the development of the Civil Society Facility Database/MiS system;
- Improve the Communication Plan and start its implementation.

6.4 ACCOUNTABILITY, TECHNOLOGY AND INSTITUTIONAL OPENNESS NETWORK IN THE SOUTH EAST EUROPE REGION – ACTION SEE

Programme reference:	Civil Society Facility and Media Programme, IPA 2014/031-605
Project title:	Accountability, Technology and Institutional Openness Network in the South East Europe region - ACTION SEE
EU contribution:	EUR 1,090,000 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Grant Contract
Contract reference:	2015/370-251
Duration of activities:	01/01/2016 – 31/12/2019
Links:	https://actionsee.org/
Contact :	Jlenia Destito, Jlenia.Destito@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The purpose of ACTION SEE is twofold: 1) to strengthen the capacities of CSOs to influence the development of policies and laws tackling real needs; 2) to help state institutions become more open and fulfill their roles and responsibilities more effectively. This is

achieved through a range of training, advocacy and networking activities, bringing together CSOs, media, government representatives and other interested parties.

ACTIVITIES (JUNE-DECEMBER 2019)

The 3rd measurement round for the [Regional Openness Index – ROI](#) was successfully conducted in the Western Balkans region, covering 638 institutions from these branches: (1) judiciary, (2) parliament, (3) executive-government institutions and (4) units of local self-government. Visual representations of the results are available [here](#) providing an interactive comparison by country/branch of governance. Based on the results of the ROI, **24 policy papers, 6 National Roadmaps and 1 Regional Roadmap** with precise recommendations and action steps for increasing the institutional openness were prepared and distributed to relevant stakeholders and communicated with the media. The findings were presented and discussed in several bilateral, multilateral, advocacy meetings with institutions' representatives, conferences and public debates, as part of our advocacy/ awareness raising activities. Around **15 infographics** were prepared and shared as part of the online campaign for raising public awareness and promoting good governance principles. The campaign **reached around 200 000** people via websites, [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

The [Educational Online Platform](#) was regularly enriched with freely accessible educational materials for CSOs and media. As a direct result of the advocacy efforts, Metamorphosis Foundation signed a [Memorandum of Cooperation](#) with the Government of North Macedonia to support the consultation process and to create the **Transparency Strategy of the Government**.

9 initiatives were supported and provided with **around 10 capacity building opportunities** through the 3rd Cycle of the Small Grants Scheme. The Project showed that small organizations in cooperation with the media can amplify their impact and visibility, and put into light relevant local issues related to lack of accountability and transparency. The project results were promoted at the [Final Conference](#) on Nov. 27-28, 2019 in Skopje, attended by 250 participants and hosted distinguished speakers from the WB region.

OUTPUTS (JULY- DECEMBER 2019)

- The [Transparency Strategy of the Government of North Macedonia \(2019-2021\)](#), adopted on Nov. 19, 2019, serves as a central policy of the Government to implement the recommendations that were communicated via the Project. *
- The ROI data is a **valuable resource** used by [institutions](#), [CSOs](#) and [media](#) to base their research, advocacy and reporting on evidence-based assessments. A positive example is that different initiatives were developed, through which ODK developed a [digital public](#)

* The recent short report of the European Commission recognizes it as one of the highlights of the Government's actions in public administration reforms: <https://cutt.ly/dteciBR>

[procurement tool](#) that elevated [Pristina](#) as **one of the most transparent capitals in Europe 2019**.*

- The **24 policy papers, 6 National Roadmaps and 1 Regional Roadmap**, demonstrating how the WB institutions function and encouraging them to implement the recommendations to improve their openness, were discussed at meetings with the institutions, namely the **Government and Assembly of North Macedonia**, which have recognized the importance of the ROI and the role of the CSOs and media as watchdogs, emphasizing the value of cross-sectorial cooperation in elevating the institutional openness. In Kosovo, the results were discussed with the **Assembly, Office of the Secretary General and Office for cooperation with Civil Society**, and regular meetings were held on improving their openness through the development of their new website for publishing structured information based on the ROI data. In Bosnia Herzegovina the results were discussed with the **Ministry of Education of Bosnia Herzegovina, Ministry of Economy and Entrepreneurship of Republika Srpska and the Public Administration Reform Coordinator's Office**, while in Serbia the **Ministry of Local-Self Government and Public Administration** relied on the recommendations to improve the legislative framework for the civic initiative mechanism before the **Serbian Parliament and local assemblies**. The results were also discussed at the Regional Conference “Openness of the Executive and Legislative Power in the Region and Montenegro: Form without Content” in Podgorica with the **Montenegrin institutions and media**, where issues of free access to information, lack of transparency in the procurement process and public finances were highlighted in all the WB countries.
- The interactive [Index Visualization Tool](#) for comparative approach for measuring the degree to which state institutions uphold principles and standards of open governance, was updated with data from the 3rd measurement and is freely available online.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

The EU-funded project ACTION SEE ended on Dec. 31, 2019 and the final evaluation is under way, the results of which will be shared with the final report and will serve the network for improving their work and engaging with beneficiaries/ stakeholders in the future. ACTION SEE managed to sustain the continuation of the ROI in 4 of the 6 WB countries covered by the network through diverse sources of funding and [the 4th measurement is underway](#).

6.5 REGIONAL PROGRAMME ON LOCAL DEMOCRACY IN THE WESTERN BALKANS (RELOAD)

Programme reference: Civil Society Facility and Media Programme IPA 2016/038-960

* <http://kdi-kosova.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Access-To-Information-In-European-Capital-Cities-report-FINAL.pdf?fbclid=IwAR0qa-KeRL5hpThBJLgDQPjdK7kY2yDTTCxD42IsNffzX4oNo4CQ9nDiGVE>

Project title:	Regional Programme on Local Democracy in the Western Balkans - ReLOaD
EU contribution:	EUR 8.5 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Grant agreement (for pillar assessed organisations) with UNDP
Contract reference:	2016/382-867
Duration of activities:	01/02/2017 – 31/01/2020
Links:	https://www.ba.undp.org/content/bosnia_and_herzegovina/en/home/development-impact/ReLOaD.html
Contact:	Maria Esposito, maria.esposito@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

ReLOaD aims to strengthen partnerships between local governments (LGs) and civil society (CS) by scaling-up a successful model of transparent and project-based funding of CSOs. The Western Balkans, namely Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro, and Serbia, invest significant efforts to mainstream the EU accession agenda within their socio-political contexts. Supporting these efforts, ReLOaD will expand LG/CS relations facilitating dialogue among them, and improve quality of CSOs' services by focusing on needs of 50 LGs, and supporting implementation of 200 CSOs' projects for the benefit of 38,000 people.

ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

Activities carried out during the reporting period were:

- Continued awareness raising and familiarisation of LGs with the Methodology for CSO funds disbursement and accompanying tools, leading to the adoption of a new regulatory framework at local level. This activity resulted in 47 out of 53 partner LGs having institutionalised the financing mechanism. The model was showcased through the organisation of public calls for CSOs in all six WB IPA beneficiaries.
- 2nd round of public calls for CSOs in partner LGs executed as following:
 - 12 public calls for CSOs in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*and Montenegro,
 - In the reporting period, seven PCM trainings for CSOs, and 35 group mentoring sessions for 106 CSOs during the 12 public calls for CSOs,
 - 107 new CSO projects were awarded as a result of the 12 executed public calls, providing services to the local population (total number of CSO projects since the start of the Action is 433, benefitting in total over 67.000 citizens).
- Continued support to the implementation of CSO projects in the targeted localities provided to 270 active CSO projects within the reporting period;

- Monitoring of all active CSO projects in partner municipalities and constant on-the-job support to CSOs;
- Facilitation of knowledge sharing, advocacy and communication and regional thematic networking through regional platform for knowledge sharing;
- 2nd ReLOaD regional conference organised in Tirana (8 -9 October 2019) with the purpose to continue exchanging practices, experiences and lessons learned on enhancing transparency and accountability related to financing of CSOs at local level; participation of 125 representatives of partner LGs, ministries, and other institutions supporting civil society and other key counterparts from the WB;
- 2nd Project Board Forum organised on October 9, 2019 in Tirana. Key topics: annual reporting, presentation of the final evaluation results and a decision for a no-cost extension of the Action reconfirmed (all WB6 Board of Partners members present at the meeting);
- BiH specific activity 6.1: work on the implementation of civic forums in selected partner localities continued; all 6 forums held fifteen meetings in local communities to define priorities for community engagement and volunteer actions. Five civic initiatives were implemented and one is to be executed in the forthcoming period;
- BiH specific activity 6.2: the process of developing ICT-based ideas had been initiated through two Ideathon sessions (on September 25 and October 3 2019) followed by a Hackathon (12 - 14 October 2019 in Sarajevo). These events aimed at the development of ideas to promote collaboration between the tech community and key stakeholders in local communities around the issue of citizens' participation at local level. The selected idea/solution will be further developed in the forthcoming period.

Note: within the reporting period a final evaluation was conducted (Sep-Nov 2019).

OUTPUT (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

- Partner LGs learnt in practice how to manage transparent public calls for CSOs and prepared to initiate individual Calls for CSOs using the Methodology in practice;
- Grassroot CSOs increased their knowledge in project cycle management to better respond to requirements of public calls for CSOs;
- Partner municipalities increased their level of transparency and accountability, and improvement their relationship with civil society;
- Initiated CSO projects provided direct services to the citizens in partner municipalities. Awarded CSO projects addressed needs of local population;
- Pilots (citizen forum) for improved civic participation in local communities, and the forward-looking perspective for IT solutions (hackaton) related to improvement of civic engagement and local decision making were launched.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Discuss and formalise a methodology and accompanying tools, including a monitoring framework for funding of CSOs by local governments' budgets within all target localities;
- Set a financing mechanism in line with national legislations (i.e. specific municipal budget line(s) to fund CSO activities within each participating local government;
- Monitoring of CSO projects' implementation through combined monitoring teams;
- Regional and multi-pronged exchange of experiences, ideas and good practices, including study trips, among the participating IPA beneficiaries;
- Regional thematic networking;
- Create an online interactive platform facilitating virtual knowledge sharing, advocacy and communication,

Increase the transparency of local governments through creation of civic forums, utilisation of Information Communication Technology (ICT) for citizens and improving capacities of municipal councils (specific for Bosnia and Herzegovina).

6.6 MEDIA

Building Trust in Media in South East Europe and Turkey - Phase 2

Programme reference:	Contribution Agreement IPA/2019/408-578
Project title:	Building Trust in Media in South East Europe and Turkey Phase 2
EU contribution:	EUR 2,000 000
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Contribution Agreement
Contract reference:	IPA/2019/ 408-578
Duration of activities:	07/11/2019 – 06/11/2021
Contact :	Victor Dragutan, Victor.Dragutan@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The project Building Trust in Media in South East Europe and Turkey Phase 2 aims to strengthen free, independent and pluralistic media, while empowering citizens, in particular the youth of the region to think critically about the information they receive through media, especially social media. The project aims in particular to increase youth critical thinking thanks to Media and Information Literacy skills, to improve capacities of media outlets to counter disinformation, and to strengthen media self-regulation.

ACTIVITIES

As the agreement was signed in November 2019, there are no activities covered by the project for the reporting period until end of 2019. Yet, during this inception phase, a dialogue has been initiated with all partners of the project to plan the foreseen activities in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, the North Macedonia, Serbia, Turkey and Kosovo* in 2020. It will include, among others:

- Direct support to press and media councils of the region to strengthen media accountability and respect for journalistic codes of ethics.
- Stakeholders meetings in Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina to adopt national MIL policies.
- Awareness raising and capacities of youth organizations to integrate MIL in daily operations.
- Participation of selected young journalists of the region to the 2020 Youth Newsroom of the World Press Freedom Day in The Hague.
- The piloting of media ethical audits within selected media outlets of the region.

Technical Assistance to Public Service Media in the Western Balkans

Programme reference:	Civil Society Facility and Media Programme 2016-2017
Project title:	Technical Assistance to Public Service Media in the Western Balkans
EU contribution:	EUR 1.5 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Service Contract with IFJ
Contract reference:	EuropeAid/135382/DH/SER/MULTI
Duration of activities:	01/02/2018 – 31/07/2020
Contact :	Victor Dragutan, Victor.Dragutan@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The project aims to contribute to the reform and professional development of Public Service Media (PSM) in the Western Balkans to produce increasingly pluralistic, independent and accountable content. Key components are: introducing the European model of PSM funding and governance, assistance in building broadcasters' internal capacities and support for content development.

ACTIVITIES (JULY - DECEMBER 2019)

- Developing a set of common principles documents on PSM funding and governance

- Organizing nine workshops/consultancies with broadcasters on management reforms and reaching agreements with each of six public broadcasters on further tailor-made assistance
- Organising four national workshops to provide coaching in the establishment of effective complaint mechanisms.
- Holding three national workshops and providing online coaching on newsroom integration.
- Delivering coaching and production support to previously trained investigative reporters in production of their investigative stories, including support to two co-production groups across the six broadcasters.
- Organised three national workshops on preparing and producing pilot formats for children's and youth programmes.
- Coaching on script writing, filming, planning and editing for children & youth programmes provided to two broadcasters.
- Regional workshop about Western Balkans' archives held within FIAT/IFTA 2019 World Conference on TV archives
- Coaching in establishing regional archive platforms carried out with six broadcasters.

OUTPUTS (JULY - DECEMBER 2019)

- Developed document *Common Principles for PSM Governance in Western Balkans*, to be agreed upon by the project stakeholders from six countries
- Developed document *Guidelines for implementation of Common PSM Funding Principles in Western Balkans*.
- Agreement reached with all six public broadcasters on tailor-made support in management reforms.
- More than 30 mid-management personnel from two public broadcasters received consultancy advice and support in implementing new management structure.
- More than 40 media professionals from four public broadcasters engaged in discussion about the establishing of trust-based relationships with the audience, achieving transparency and the development of a complaints mechanism.
- Three action plans on newsroom integration and multi-platform production and distribution were drawn up and agreed.
- Production teams from three national public broadcasters developed pilot formats for investigative, children's and youth programmes and producing trailers and programmes.
- 19 Television and online trailers and two pilot episodes for children's and youth programmes produced by three PSMs.
- 293 hours of content prepared for regional platform for exchange of digitised archive material.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Three-day regional meeting devoted to the implementation of common principles of PSM funding and governance in the region
- Two-day national debate on PSM Funding and Governance in North Macedonia
- Follow up coaching and joint work with six national assessment groups for funding and governance of PSM
- Continuation of coaching and training activities to support implementation of the management reforms in five public broadcasters
- Organisation of three-day regional meeting to launch investigative reports produced within the project and agree on a dissemination plan
- Online coaching sessions will be held to progress development of establishing regional platform for regional archive exchange platform.

The project is run by a consortium led by the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) together with the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ), the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN), the Eurovision News Exchange for South East Europe (ERNO) and the Austrian Public Broadcaster (ORF)

Support to independent media and civil society in the Western Balkans and Turkey

Programme reference:	Civil Society Facility and Media Programme 2016-2017
Project title:	Support to independent media and civil society in the Western Balkans and Turkey
EU contribution:	EUR 6 000 000 (95%)
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia) and Turkey
Type of contract:	Grant contract with the European Endowment for Democracy
Contract reference:	2017/394-375
Duration of activities:	01/01/2018 – 31/12/2021
Links:	https://www.democracyendowment.eu
Contact :	Victor Dragutan, Victor.Dragutan@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The purpose of the action is to enable a continued pluralistic, independent civil society and media environment, as well as high quality journalism in the Western Balkan countries and Turkey. It will be achieved through flexible re-granting that fills the gap not covered by available EU and other donor funding - in terms of actors (individuals, start-ups, etc), type of support (core, emergency) or themes (not covered by current programmes).

ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

- Online EED grant giving facility available to the applicants from the Western Balkans: <https://www.democracyendowment.eu/support/>
- Organised 6 outreach missions to Western Balkans countries and 2 missions to Turkey;
- Continuous assessment of received applications, contracting, review of reports and monitoring;
- Ongoing management of 88 grants awarded under EC grant since the beginning of the project (Turkey – 31, Serbia – 13, Bosnia and Herzegovina 9, North Macedonia – 8, Montenegro – 9, Kosovo*– 10, Albania – 7, Western Balkans Region - 1);
- Continuous hands-on coaching and mentoring provided to applicants and grantees;
- Commissioning of a mapping and needs assessment of independent media in Turkey;
- Promotion, networking and coordination with donors and stakeholders in the region and at international level.

OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

- Potential applicants in all Western Balkan countries and Turkey are better informed about EED funding opportunities which resulted in 400 applications from Western Balkans and Turkey received since the beginning of the project;
- 88 civil society organisations, media and individual activists have benefited from financial support through 88 grant contracts that have been awarded from the EC grant, for a total EC allocation of 5,1 million euro (approx. 2,7 million in Western Balkans and 2,4 million in Turkey) since the beginning of the project;
- Thanks to the awarded initiatives:
 - Independent media and innovative media products that promote high ethical standards and quality journalism have been supported to thrive and develop, towards initiating and strengthening critical thinking;
 - Independent media outlets have been empowered with up-to-date technologies, self-generating income systems and other technical and essential support, in order to safeguard media freedom in the regions;
 - Journalist associations have been supported in the promotion of safety of journalists and provision of legal aid;
 - Democratic initiatives that return to the core of citizens' activism, approaching issues in innovative, thematic, inter-sectoral and multi-disciplinary ways have been supported;
 - Community-based activism has been promoted and strengthened;
 - Emergency and bridge funding has been successfully provided to rights-based civil society actors in crisis due their political environment;

- New democracy and human rights-oriented initiatives and CSOs were able to obtain start-up funding.
- Coordination with EU Delegations, EC services and other donors and stakeholders in the beneficiary countries maintained.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Ongoing grant portfolio management (assessment of received applications, contracting, review of reports, monitoring);
- Providing coaching, mentoring and technical assistance to applicants and grantees;
- Targeted outreach activities to inform potential new applicants about EED grant-giving scheme (missions, participation at events);
- Networking and coordination with donors and stakeholders in the region and international level;
- Supporting grantees in networking at country, regional and EU level;
- Organising Strategic Reflection Meeting for Turkey and Western Balkans (January 2020)

Balkan Transitional Justice Initiative

Programme reference:	EuropeAid/154870/DH/ACT/Multi
Project title:	Balkan Transitional Justice Initiative
EU contribution:	EUR 883,810
Beneficiary region:	Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia
Type of contract:	Grant contract with BIRN
Contract reference:	2017/393-744
Duration of activities:	01/01/2018 – 31/12/2020
Links:	www.balkaninsight.com/balkan-transitional-justice-home
Contact :	Victor Dragutan, Victor.Dragutan@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The overall objective of the project is to increase public knowledge and awareness about transitional justice processes and their impact on reconciliation and intercultural dialogue in post-conflict societies such as Western Balkan countries. It also aims to engage civil society actors and journalists in the promotion of more effective transitional justice strategies.

ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

- Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN) regional team of journalists extensively covered ongoing war crime trials before both national courts and remaining trials before the International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia, and courts in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Croatia, Kosovo* and Serbia. Besides war crimes trials, BIRN journalists also reported about other important transitional justice topics in the region .
- BIRN Kosovo* produced episodes of Justice in Kosovo, while BIRN Bosnia and Herzegovina produced episodes of TV Justice, a monthly 30-minute programme that covers transitional justice topics in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- BIRN published stories written by journalists from the Western Balkans who received grants to produce in-depth stories on transitional justice issues in the region, and selected next group of grantees who will develop their stories in 2020.
- BIRN, in cooperation with the UNDP, held a training for journalists on reporting about war crime trials and other transitional justice topics in the Western Balkans.
- BIRN team organised a three-day study visit to The Hague for journalists who are reporting on transitional justice topics.
- BIRN published an updated and updated War Crimes Verdict Map.
- Impunity Watch published a policy paper on gender and transitional justice and held one workshop in the scope of the promotion of the policy paper.

OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

- The BIRN team produced [328 articles in English](#), and all of them were translated to BCMS, Albanian and Macedonian languages. The total number of international, regional and local republications was over 1800. All articles were extensively shared on BTJ [Twitter](#) and Facebook pages on [BCMS](#), [Macedonian](#), [Albanian](#) and [English](#).
- One TV Justice [episode](#) about unresolved crimes was produced by BIRN BIH. BIRN Kosovo* also aired one [episode](#) of Justice in Kosovo* about social apartments 'misuse.
- BIRN team published 7 in-depth articles written by local journalists who received grants to produce stories related to revisionism and denial, unprosecuted crimes and reconciliation initiatives. BIRN also selected 10 new grantees whose stories will be produced and published in 2020.
- BIRN, in cooperation with the UNDP, held one [training on reporting about war crime trials](#). Twenty five journalists from the different media outlets from the region attended. Ten best participants took part the [study visit to The Hague](#) that was held in December 2019 and received grants to report on transitional justice topics.

- BIRN published a [War Crimes Verdicts Map](#) that contains 468 available war crime verdicts from the ICTY and domestic courts in the WB region. The Map is searchable by defendants' names, units, courts, crime locations and dates.
- Impunity Watch published one [policy paper](#) on gender and transitional justice, and organised one [public debate](#) and one closed workshop with 11 representatives of different CSOs from the region.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

BIRN will continue to report on war crime trials and transitional justice topics in the Balkans and to publish remaining grantees' stories. One regional multimedia investigation will be produced and published, while [the existing one](#) will be updated. The second policy paper by the Impunity Watch will be published and promoted, while research for the third one will be conducted. Impunity Watch will also conduct one workshop in the scope of the promotion of the policy paper. BIRN will finalise the research for the mass grave database.

Strengthening Quality News and Independent Journalism in the Western Balkans and Turkey

Programme reference:	EuropeAid/160680/DH/ACT/Multi
Project title:	Strengthening Quality News and Independent Journalism in the Western Balkans and Turkey
EU contribution:	EUR 1,998,126.00
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Grant contract
Contract reference:	CN IPA 2018/403-819
Duration of activities:	01/01/2019 – 31/12/2021
Links:	www.euwbmedia.com
Contact :	Victor Dragutan, Victor.dragutan@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

BIRN HUB and its partners are implementing a project aiming to contribute to the promotion of free and professional media and providing structural support to media freedom and integrity by enhancing media trust among citizens and creating a safe environment for journalists to produce independent news content through trainings, mentoring, technical and financial support, publishing and recognizing best examples of quality journalism.

ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

- A curriculum for tailor made trainings in six WB countries was developed by Thomson Media after an extensive needs assessment. Trainings will be held in mobile journalism and adapting content for social media platforms.
- Three trainings of trainers were organized by EBU in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo* and North Macedonia where senior journalists were equipped with skills to create their own curricula and organise trainings on their own.
- A two-day offline workshop on investigative journalism was held in Belgrade, Serbia, as well as initiated preparations for an online course of 8 weeks, as the two components of a hybrid training course for regional training on investigative journalism.
- BIRN Hub has begun with the activities of engaging journalists in creating cross-regional multimedia stories. BIRN Hub has announced a Call for applications on Balkan Insight, furthermore it has been incorporated in BIRN Hub's newest platform BIRD as one of the Funding opportunities

OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

- A total of 12 journalists were equipped with the skills to conduct investigations through two-day offline workshop. CEU CDMS has organised a two-day offline training in Belgrade, Serbia.
- A total of 21 EU Awards for Investigative journalism were awarded in six Western Balkans countries and Turkey
- A total of 12 stories have been published by public service broadcasters. RTK (Radio Television of Kosovo) has produced stories about returning ISIS fighters ([link 1](#); [link 2](#)). RTSH (Radio Television of Albania) - [two hydropower plants to be built in a National park](#). RTCG – [Learning about education from Finland](#); furthermore RTCG has published a story about [newborns in Finland](#). Bosnia and Herzegovina – [BHT – Sperm bank and IVF clinic](#), and [RTS – Viking babies are coming to Serbia](#) comparing IVF in BiH and Serbia and presenting Denmark's model. All three televisions have produced and broadcasted stories on environmental issues [RTCG - Old tires are being thrown to garbage or burned](#), [RTS – The happiest nation wants same quality of air in the capital as on the mountains](#), and [BHT – Ecological solutions in Denmark and how to apply them in BiH](#). Serbian journalists have published story about survivors of sexual violence in [Serbia: Women survivors of sexual violence and their struggle to get justice](#). Journalists from Bosnia and Herzegovina have addressed the labor laws and rights in a story (<http://www.bhrt.ba/dnevnik-2-01-05-2019/>) featured in the evening news. Finally BiH journalists have also produced and published a story on BiH diaspora, that can be accessed here: <http://www.bhrt.ba/dnevnik-2-21-04-2019/>.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Call for Applications for EU Awards for Investigative Journalism for 2019 will be open and the EU Awards will be presented in six WB countries in the first half of 2020. Turkey will open CfA in the second half of 2020.
- Six trainings on mobile journalism will be organized for journalists by Thomson Media
- Second phase of ToT will be organized for journalists from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro in March
- Online course following the offline course organized by CEU will be set-up, and the first module is expected to finish in the first half of 2020
- BIRN will launch its digital resource lab - BIRN Investigative Resource Desk
- Two more stories to be published in North Macedonia (MRT) and Serbia (RTS).

Media for Citizens - Citizens for Media; Building capacities of CSOs to advance Media and Information Literacy in Western Balkans

Programme reference:	Civil Society Facility and Media Programme 2016-2017
Project title:	Media for Citizens - Citizens for Media; Building capacities of CSOs to advance Media and Information Literacy in Western Balkans
EU contribution:	EUR 955,362
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Grant contract
Contract reference:	2017/394-130
Duration of activities:	01/02/2018 – 01/02/2021
Links:	http://seenpm.org/category/mccm/
Contact :	Victor Dragutan, Victor.DRAGUTAN@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

Seven media development organizations in the Western Balkans have joined forces to build capacities of CSOs to advance media and information literacy (MIL) in the region through research based advocacy and networking, capacity building actions, public campaigns and supporting CSOs in taking an active role in developing and promoting MIL policies and practices in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia.

ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

Informed advocacy and facilitating national multi stakeholder coalitions; project partners are managing the work of 5 inter-disciplinary national MIL coalitions, gathering over 80 members (and raising) in five countries in pursue of sustainable MIL advancements. Over 250 representatives of key stakeholders across the region gathered under different national advocacy campaigns to work towards improving MIL learning opportunities for citizens within the reporting period.

Capacity building and networking for CSOs at regional and local level; relying on local pools of MIL trainers build within previous project phases, series or workshops were held across the region, enhancing the knowledge of 74 local CSOs on MIL, inciting their engagement in empowering groups they serve with knowledge on media. Learning tools on MIL have been produced and put in use by local trainers CSOs implementing projects under sub-granting scheme.

MIL sub-granting for CSOs. Second cycle of sub-granting scheme was launched and administered. In the second round, 107 project proposals were submitted by CSOs in the five Western Balkan countries aiming to increase their capacities for promotion of media and information literacy (MIL). 21 projects selected for implementation and funding. 5 info sessions on MIL sub-granting scheme held across the region.

Within the reporting period, 37 (4 to begin as of February 2020) media and information literacy initiatives by local, grass root CSOs supported across the region. Supported projects fall in one of two categories: enhancement of citizens' media and information literacy skills or creative innovations - art, media and technology production projects promoting innovation and accessibility in MIL education. Hundreds of outputs produced, thousands reached.

Media engagement in awareness raising campaigns for citizens. Prominent journalists across the region joined the initiative to share knowledge on media among school-aged children, putting in use learning materials developed through project. Over 750 children and teachers reached with the activity, having their understanding on role of media and journalists in societies increased.

Regional public campaign designed and produced with the participation of over 80 journalists, public figures, activists, in the support of professional journalism, raising knowledge on importance of journalism done in public interest and raising awareness on most pressuring issues surrounding journalism in the region (attacks on journalists, (un)equal opportunities for women, pressures from governments etc.)

OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

- Within national advocacy campaigns **20 events** were held across the region, gathering stakeholders; representatives relevant ministries of education, media, civil society and media community: **17 meetings, two round tables, one panel discussion. Three policy papers** developed to steer decision making processes; *Guidelines for introduction of media literacy in the formal education* (North Macedonia), *MIL Overview* listing all key

actors, media supporters of the project, review of legislation, publications, researches on the topic, relevant international and domestic literature review (North Macedonia), *Overview of MIL didactic resources* with potential to be adapted to school curricula in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

- **5 workshops** were held by local trainers in four countries leaving 74 local CSOs engaged in learning on MIL and considering ways they can design activities towards increasing MIL skills among within their communities. Participants report increased knowledge on a variety of MIL aspects.

Projects supported through sub-granting to CSOs yielded hundreds of outputs, reaching hundreds of thousands, having civil society actively contribute to enhancements of MIL among groups they serve, on both local and national level:

- **51** educational/advocacy events (workshops, public debates, conferences, meetups, art exhibitions) raising awareness and knowledge on MIL among different target groups – school aged children, university students, primary school teachers, pre-school teachers, elderly);
- **85** different educational tools/materials on different aspects of MIL (manuals, leaflets, educational videos, articles, documentary features, radio broadcasts, video games, websites, gifs, hip-hop song on fake news etc.);
- **6** public campaigns promoting different aspects of media literacy
- **5** surveys of different kinds to inform activities and advocacy priorities in local communities.
- **31** workshops held for school aged children by prominent journalists
- Public campaign consisting of over 160 communication outputs (videos, photo-statements, animated videos) produced

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Activities to continue the support of national stakeholder groups/coalitions pursuing the identified MIL policy priorities, implementing advocacy campaigns and improving MIL related practices in relevant fields, primarily in media and education.
- Broadcast of public campaign based on participation of journalist to increase understanding of citizens about the media and information literacy and its' importance for safeguarding media freedom and freedom of expression.
- Supporting engagement of media community in teaching MIL in schools across the region – 70 events in 5 countries
- Continue with capacity building of local CSOs in promoting MIL
- MIL summer festival

6.7 ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN THE WESTERN BALKAN COUNTRIES AND TURKEY

Project title:	Ending violence against women in the Western Balkan Countries and Turkey: Implementing Norms, Changing Minds
EU contribution:	EUR 5 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Grant Agreement (for pillar assessed organisations) with UN Women
Contract reference:	2017/380-469
Duration of activities:	01/02/2017 – 31/01/2020
Links:	http://eca.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/regional-programme-in-the-western-balkans-and-turkey

PURPOSE

The three-year programme ‘Implementing Norms, Changing Minds’ aims to end gender-based discrimination and violence against women in the Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia) and Turkey, with a particular focus on the most disadvantaged groups of women. To achieve this goal, the programme strengthens civil society (women’s rights organisations in particular) to advocate for an enabling and effective implementation of normative frameworks; to transform gender-discriminatory stereotypes, perceptions and beliefs; and to empower women and girls who have experienced discrimination or violence (including those from disadvantaged groups) to advocate for and use available, accessible and quality services.

ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

With a view to address obstacles pertaining to strengthening inter-agency actions towards an integrated response to violence against women and improve the implementation of provisions within the Istanbul Convention related to sexual violence, harassment, stalking, and other forms of violence, the Second Regional Forum for the Promotion of the Istanbul Convention in the Western Balkans and Turkey “Integrated policies, inclusive partnerships” took place in Tirana, Albania, on the 9th and 10th of October, 2019. The Regional Forum was convened by the Government of Albania, Council of Europe, European Commission, and UN Women and gathered over 130 representatives of civil society, governments, and regional institutions. The participants developed a series of conclusions and recommendations summarised as: i) Effective inter-agency cooperation should include all sectors at all levels of operation, ii) Education and training must be offered to service providers at all levels of implementation, iii) Specialised and centralised centres for survivors of sexual violence should be established, iv) Gender-sensitive budgeting should inform the sustainable

allocation of resources, and v) Standardised language and definitions of various forms of violence should be applied.

The forum working groups leveraged the information of the "Mapping on Sexual Violence Services in the Western Balkans and Turkey" (<https://eca.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2019/11/mapping-of-sexual-violence-services-in-the-western-balkans-and-turkey>) developed by the Civil Society Strengthening Platform, led by WAVE network, with the support of UN Women. This new mapping report provides a rapid assessment of the availability and implementation of services for survivors of sexual violence in the Western Balkans and Turkey. Although the Istanbul Convention calls on the establishment of these services, they are often missing or poorly implemented. The mapping report is a call for governments to stand against rape and sexual violence by fully and effectively supporting survivors.

Through the support provided by the regional component of the project to the CSO Imkaan, three policy briefs were published: "Funding intersectional violence against women and girls (VAWG) services" (<https://eca.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2019/10/funding-intersectional-violence-against-women-and-girls-vawg-services>). "The value of intersectionality in understanding violence against women and girls" (<https://eca.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2019/10/the-value-of-intersectionality-in-understanding-violence-against-women-and-girls>), and "Data collection by and for minoritized women" (<https://eca.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2019/10/data-collection-by-and-for-minoritized-women>).

Informed by Imkaan's interviews and focus-group discussion with minority women's organizations in the region between September 2017 and April 2018, the policy briefs examine the importance of services and support designed to meet the specific needs of minority women and girls facing violence and discrimination. The content of the policy briefs was further refined through a capacity-building workshop delivered by Imkaan for seventeen 'by and for' activists from the region in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and was leveraged by partner organisations representing minority groups.

The Regional report on discrimination of Roma women in the area of healthcare, child marriages and support and protection in cases of domestic violence (<https://eca.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2019/10/regional-report-on-discrimination-of-roma-women>), launched in September at a regional conference in Belgrade reveals shocking levels of violence and discrimination against Roma women in Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia. The report analyses the discrimination experienced by Roma women in the areas of healthcare, the prevalence of child marriage, and the institutional response to cases of domestic violence.

With an aim to **develop action-oriented recommendations for effective prevention, protection and prosecution in the Western Balkans and Turkey** and present the findings of the research "Is justice failing women survivors of violence?", the Center of Women's Rights - supported by the project - held eight roundtables in the Western Balkans and Turkey on the subject of "Good Practices, Obstacles and Shortcomings in the System of Protection of Women and Girls from Violence". The research provides an extensive examination of the gaps and failures of the institutional response to violence against women in all countries across the region based on an examination of actual cases reported and processed within the system. The conclusions and recommendations from all roundtables have been fully

integrated into the study, and the lack of concrete multisectoral cooperation and exchange was identified as a problem in all countries. These roundtables were a first and exceptional opportunity for conversation and cross-sectoral exchange.

With a view to **change discriminatory gender stereotypes through the programme's GenderLab initiative**, UN Women continued to support the application of innovative Communication for Behavioural Impact (COMBI) approach. In Kosovo*, Kosovo*Gender Studies Centre introduced an innovative campaign, developed using the COMBI approach, to involve the public in preventing violence against women. As a result, reporting rates to the police of incidents of violence against women have increased by 20 percent (<https://eca.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/2/innovative-campaign-contributes-to-increased-reporting-rates-of-violence-in-kosovo>).

In Serbia, UN Women provided technical support to Center of Modern Skills to develop a COMBI plan for reducing violence against girls in high school. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, women survivors of violence are breaking the stigma around violence against women by sharing their experiences with other survivors and the community at large through the Women's Support Chain, an initiative developed by Vive Žene. The Women's Support Chain empowers them to speak publicly – many of them for the first time – about their experiences of violence (<https://eca.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/2/no-longer-hidden-survivors-of-violence-in-bosnia-and-herzegovina-end-their-silence>).

OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

In Albania, 700 service providers increased their capacity to address cases of violence against women and services available for women and girls. Among them, 120 service providers across the country participated in nine information sessions and were equipped with information on dealing with the specific needs and constraints of Roma women, LGBT women, and women with disabilities, as they are often subjected to multiple and intersecting forms of violence and discrimination.

In Bosnia Herzegovina, on 27 September 2019, the National Assembly of Republika Srpska adopted the Law on amendments to the Law on protection against domestic violence, which will enter into force in May 2020. Aligned with the standards of the Istanbul Convention, the law includes significant changes: the act of domestic violence is no longer treated as a minor and a criminal offence, but exclusively as a criminal offence, and the definition of intimate partner violence is expanded to include partners who do not share a household.

In Montenegro, an awareness raising campaign was developed around the first national SOS line for victims of sexual violence – the first service of its kind in the Western Balkans. The number of licensed NGOs supported by the project increased to seven with the licensing of Ikre, a NGO providing specialised psychological support for victims of gender-based violence in Rožaje, north-eastern Montenegro.

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244/99 and the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on Kosovo's declaration of independence.

In Serbia, CSOs increased the capacities of general and specialist service providers and the accessibility services, made available to at least 3,000 vulnerable women. Awareness raising activities conducted with 15 media houses on improving media reporting of violence against women resulted in 192 published articles that fully respect the victim's privacy, reaching over 100,000 readers.

In Turkey, the capacities of 30 women lawyers were strengthened regarding conducting advocacy initiatives at local level to combat violence against women and building effective communication and cooperation. In addition, a review of 140 alimony cases in 11 provinces by the Foundation for Women's Solidarity contributed to the suspension of an amendment to the Turkish Civil Code which would have established a 5-year limit on the right to alimony following divorce.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

Phase I of the programme will end on the 31st of January 2020. The month of January will be devoted to developing final narrative and financial reports for projects implemented by CSOs, as well as setting the foundation for smooth implementation of Phase II of the programme.

CHAPTER 7: SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

7.1 SUPPORT TO YOUTH

Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO)

Programme reference:	IPA Multi-beneficiary Programme 2017/039-402
Project title:	Enhancing youth cooperation and youth exchange in Western Balkans 6
EU contribution:	EUR 500,000
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Grant agreement with the Regional Youth Cooperation Office
Contract reference:	CN 2018/391-015
Duration of activities:	26 months (01/03/2019 – 30/04/2021)
Links:	http://www.rycowb.org
Contact:	Karolina Buzaljko, karolina.buzaljko@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The purpose of the project is to respond to the need to contribute to the process of reconciliation in the Western Balkans by enhancing youth mobility, cooperation and activism, and increasing opportunities for young people to engage in activities in the civic, social, educational, cultural and sport domains within the region.

ACTIVITIES (JULY - DECEMBER 2019)

Project implementation team was hired in September 2019, consisting of project coordinator, finance and accounting officer, project assistant (full time engagement), and six monitoring and evaluation assistants who support the work of RYCO local branch offices in 6 IPA beneficiaries (part-time engagement).

Two tailor-made onboarding trainings were designed and implemented through this reporting period, one on financial management, monitoring and administration (in October 2019), and one on youth participation (first part in Tirana on 25 November, and the second part in Podgorica on 27 November 2019, due to the earthquake that hit Tirana on 26 November).

OUTPUTS (JULY - DECEMBER 2019)

The methodology for consultative meetings and the questionnaire for the regional survey were developed (Work Package 1 – Increased level of youth participation in informing priorities of RYCO work).

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

Key activities and outputs planned for the next reporting period are the following:

- **Regional survey** on the **motivations** of young people to apply and participate in youth mobility programmes and on existing obstacles to their participation will be launched, disseminated and promoted in the WB6; results of the survey analysed and fed into the design of RYCO 4th Open Call (January - February 2020);
- **A series of consultation meetings with WB6 youth** will be organized across the Western Balkans (two meeting per RYCO contracting party) for the purpose of gathering young people's views relevant for the design of the Call for Proposals (February 2020);
- **Preparation activities for the 4th RYCO Open Call**, including: the design of the call in 2 dedicated meetings, and based on the inputs gathered from young people, and the lessons learned by RYCO through its previous 3 open calls; launch of the OC; promotion of the OC through info-sessions organized for potential applicants across the WB6 (February-June 2020).

Young Civil Servants

Programme reference:	IPA Multi-beneficiary Programme 2017/039-402
Project title:	EU Scheme for Young Professionals in the Western Balkans
EU contribution:	EUR 1.8 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Delegation Agreement with British Council
Contract reference:	CN 2017/389-939
Duration of activities:	27/09/2017 - 30/06/2020
Links:	http://eu4wb6.com
Contact:	Karolina Buzaljko, karolina.buzaljko@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The EU Scheme for Young Professionals in the Western Balkans aims to promote regional cooperation, while building professional capacity of next generations of public administrators and policy makers in the Western Balkans.

In order to build the capacity, the action involves 30 young civil servants (5 from each WB beneficiary) per year, who participate in a) a 2-week executive programme at Sciences Po in Paris, France, b) a 2-week executive programme at College of Europe in Bruges, Belgium and c) a 2-week exchange programme in the Western Balkans. The current action supported 60 civil servants.

The action also supports alumni of the EU Scheme for Young Professionals to jointly implement two regional projects, as well as their integration into the regional Western Balkan Alumni Association (WBAA).

ACTIVITIES (JULY – DECMEBER 2019)

- Organised training on Project Cycle Management for around 30 alumni across the region. The objective of the training was to enhance participants' knowledge and support them in preparation of regional project proposals aiming to strengthen regional cooperation;
- Mentored and supported selected civil servants' alumni to finalize two regional project proposal:
 - **Lost in Europeanisation:** Towards sustainable Retention Policy for Young Professionals in Public Administration of the Western Balkans,
 - **New Leadership, New Opportunities** - Young civil servants as future leaders in public administration of the Western Balkans Region;
- Mentored and supported wider group (90) of alumni to organise themselves into project teams who will deliver the above mentioned projects;
- Encouraged alumni of the project to join the WBAA and become active members of this wider EU alumni network in the Western Balkans;
- Organised implementation of both regional projects. Organised meetings and trainings on leadership and communication in Montenegro and Albania.

OUTPUTS (JULY – DECEMBER 2020)

- Two regional project proposals aiming at strengthening regional cooperation and supporting capacities of the alumni;
- Implementation of the regional projects, formation of regional teams and agreement on the shared and individual responsibilities;
- Around 30 alumni, who improved their skills in leadership and communication.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Finalization of two regional projects including: design, conduct and promote policy research; conduct awareness-raising campaigns; design and organise Annual Regional Conferences;
- Organize final project conference;
- Organize final project evaluation and prepare lessons learnt;
- Prepare ROM mission.

7.2 PARTICIPATION IN INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS TESTING

PIRLS – Progress in International Reading Literacy Study

Programme reference:	IPA Multi-beneficiary Programme 2018/040-822
Project title:	Participation of the Western Balkans in the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study – PIRLS 2021
EU contribution:	EUR 1.494.491
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Grant to International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), managed by EAC
Contract reference:	PIRLS EAC-2018-0712
Duration of activities:	2019 - 2022
Links:	https://www.iea.nl/studies/iea/pirls
Contact:	Albert Sesé Ballart, Albert.SESE-BALLART@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

Reading literacy is the foundation for academic success. IEA's PIRLS sets the standard for monitoring and assessing reading comprehension based on a framework. PIRLS 2021 collects detailed information providing an extensive array of policy-relevant information, which enables countries to make evidence-based decisions in order to improve reading education.

ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

The activities in this semester focused on the preparation of the field test instruments and procedures within all the participating countries. The translation and layout verification procedures were launched in September 2019. Until the end of December 2019, countries were supposed to translate and adapt the PIRLS field test instruments into all languages that they foresee being administered in the main data collection in 2021.

On September 18-19, 2019, a regional PIRLS 2021 meeting for Western Balkan countries was held in Brač, Croatia. This meeting provided a well-received platform for sharing experiences with the ongoing national activities related to the PIRLS 2021, implementation of the Field Test phase, as well as allowing for capacity building among the PIRLS 2021 and TIMSS 2019 National Research Coordinators (NRCs).

On October 22-25, 2019, IEA Hamburg held the first Data Management Seminar for PIRLS 2021.

OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

- TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center released the Field Test assessment content;
- Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Serbia finalized their national instruments for the Field Test within the targeted timeframe. (IEA Amsterdam supports the remaining beneficiaries with the finalisation of their field test instruments).

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- On February 4, 2020 IEA Hamburg will make the field test scoring system available to TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center in Boston for testing. On February 20, 2020 the TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center will post the field test scoring training materials for the 4th NRC Meeting, as well as provide SOP *Unit 2C--Scoring the Field Test Constructed-response Items* to participants;
- From March 1 to 6, the 4th PIRLS 2021 NRC Meeting will be held in Belgrade, Serbia to conduct field test scoring training;
- The PIRLS 2021 Field Test is to be administered during the period **from March 1 to April 15, 2020**;
- On March 5, Data Management Expert (DME) software and context questionnaire data codebooks for the field tests will be provided. In addition, the TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center will post SOP: *Unit 2D--Creating and Submitting the Field Test Databases and Documentation*;
- By March 19, final PIRLS Field Test scoring materials will be posted and field test scoring system will be ready;
- On March 26, achievement data codebooks for the field test will be provided;
- From April 1 to May 14, field test data are supposed to be submitted to IEA Hamburg;
- On April 23, the TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center will send the *Survey Activities Questionnaire* for field tests;
- By May 29, the *Survey Activities Questionnaire* for field tests need to be submitted to the TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center;
- On June 25, the TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center will provide SOP: *Unit 3 - Contacting Schools and Sampling Classes for PIRLS 2021 Data Collection (includes School Coordinator Manual)*. This will launch the preparations for the main data collection in 2021.

TIMSS – Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study

Programme reference:	IPA Multi-Beneficiary Programme 2017/040-009
Project title:	Participation of the Western Balkans to the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study – TIMSS 2019
EU contribution:	EUR 1.498.597
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Grant to International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), managed by EAC
Contract reference:	TIMSS EAC/S07/2017
Duration of activities:	2017 – 2020
Links:	https://www.iea.nl/studies/iea/timss
Contact :	Albert Sesé Ballart, Albert.SESE-BALLART@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

TIMSS 2019 reports on the overall achievement at the end of the primary education against international benchmarks. This will be done by major content domains (mathematics and science), as well as by cognitive domains. The study collects detailed information about curricula, curricula implementation, instructional practices, school resources, and other contextual information.

ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

Following the main data collection that occurred in the previous semester, the key activities during this period were related to data processing and cleaning (checking the quality and eliminating inconsistencies). On September 16 and 17, IEA organised a regional meeting for the Western Balkans in Brač, Croatia. The aim of the meeting was to provide additional support on the use of data and prepare for national analysis.

The 7th TIMSS 2019 NRC meeting was held on December 8-13, 2019 in Agadir, Morocco to review draft outlines and exhibits for the *TIMSS 2019 International Mathematics and Science Reports*. Due to circumstances, Albania (natural disaster/earthquake) and Kosovo* (visa issues) did not attend this event.

OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

- All data were submitted to IEA Hamburg by the end of October. The data queries were settled as well (except some pending responses from Kosovo);

- By the end of 2019, all IPA beneficiaries (but Kosovo) submitted their responses to the Survey Activities Questionnaire, the Curriculum Questionnaire, and had completed the Test-Curriculum Matching Analysis (TCMA Spreadsheet);
- NRCs from the Western Balkans and the IEA team prepared timelines, agreed on authorship and drafted an outline of the chapter to be included in the regional report.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

- January 24 is the deadline for submission of data changes to IEA Hamburg, so by February 4, the data can be sent to Statistics Canada for sampling adjudication;
- February 28 is the due date to submit Encyclopedia chapters to the TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center (ISC) for review and editing. The TIMSS & PIRLS ISC completes the review of the background (questionnaire) data and communicates any issues to IEA Hamburg and/or NRCs;
- On March 5, the Western Balkans and the IEA team will meet in Belgrade, Serbia to finalize the analytical plan for the regional (Dinaric) report on TIMSS 2019;
- From March 9 to 13 the TIMSS & PIRLS ISC conducts achievement item review and instructs IEA Hamburg about deleting items and/or recoding additional context data;
- On March 24, IEA Hamburg sends student achievement and context data (including home questionnaire data) to the TIMSS & PIRLS ISC for final scaling and to Statistics Canada for final weighting, so Statistics Canada can finalize sampling weights;
- By April 30, the scaling of achievement data is to be completed, and by May 13, the scaling of background data is to be completed;
- On May 14, the TIMSS & PIRLS ISC will send sampling weights, plausible values, background scale data, derived variables data, and documentation to IEA Hamburg for processing and implementation into the TIMSS 2019 database;
- From June 21 to 26, the 8th TIMSS 2019 NRC meeting reviews the International Report text and exhibits in Prague, Czech Republic. A specific regional meeting dedicated to the Western Balkan (Dinaric) regional report and national plans for reporting will be held here as well.

7.3 IPA SUPPORT TO ERASMUS+

International Credit Mobility (ICM)

Programme reference:	Annual IPA Multi-beneficiary Programme
Project title:	International Credit Mobility to cooperate with the Western Balkans
EU contribution:	EUR 32 million (2019)
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkan Partners (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Montenegro)

Type of contract:	The action is implemented by the National Agencies in Programme Countries of Erasmus+
Links:	https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/resources/documents/erasmus-international-credit-mobility_en
Contact:	Karolina Buzaljko, karolina.buzaljko@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The International Credit Mobility (ICM) supports the mobility of individuals enrolled or employed at a higher education institution (HEI), from an Erasmus+ Programme Country to Western Balkan Partners or vice versa. The traineeship or study period abroad must be part of a student's study programme to complete a degree.

ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

The action comprises four kinds of activities:

- **Student mobility**, open to first cycle (Bachelor or equivalent) or second cycle (Master or equivalent) students, as well as third cycle doctoral candidates. The mobility period can last from 3 months to 12 months.
- **Student mobility for traineeships**, open since the Call 2018 to first cycle (Bachelor or equivalent) or second cycle (Master or equivalent) students, as well as third cycle doctoral candidates. The mobility period can last from 2 to 12 months.
- **Staff mobility for teaching** for academic staff and (since Call 2018) for invited staff from non-academic organisations to teach at a partner higher education institution (HEI) abroad. The mobility period can last from 5 days to 2 months.
- **Staff mobility for training** for teaching and non-teaching staff in the form of training events abroad (excluding conferences), job shadowing, observation periods and/or training at a partner HEI. The mobility period can last from 5 days to 2 months.

OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

The 2019 call had an overall budget of around EUR 188 million. 18% of these funds are allocated to the Western Balkans through IPA funding (i.e., EUR 35.5 million).

The HEI from Programme Countries presented applications to work with the Western Balkans for a total value of EUR 55 million, which would imply a total number of requested mobilities of 19,000 coming to and from the region in one academic year as shown in the table below. Out of these, 10,042 will take place during the academic year 2019-2020 scaling up the overall number of awarded students, researchers and staff mobilities to 37,320 since 2015.

The 2020 Call was launched in October 2019 with an overall budget of around EUR 197 million with a deadline on 5 February 2020. 14% of these funds are allocated to the Western Balkans through IPA funding (EUR 31,6 million EUR).

TOTAL	Applications	Selected Projects	Grant Requested (EUR)	Grant Awarded (EUR)	Participants Requested	Participants Awarded	Participants Incoming (to EU)	Participants Outgoing (from EU)
2015	743	456	34.775.000	17.872.000	11.210	5.282	3.357	1.925
2016	677	500	35.906.000	20.745.000	11.471	6.394	4.154	2.240
2017	796	593	40.579.000	23.027.000	13.236	7.316	4.516	2.800
2018	905	816	50.552.754	25.777.984	16.734	8.286	5.129	3.157
2019	815	721	59.126.929	31.164.076	19.000	10.042	6.177	3.865
TOTAL	3.936	3.086	220.939.683	118.586.060	71.651	37.320	23.333	13.987

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

Closing of the 2020 call on 5 February and evaluation of the received proposals.

Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees

Programme reference:	IPA Multi-Beneficiary Programme
Project title:	Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees (EMJMD)
EU contribution:	EUR 5 million (2019)
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	The action is implemented by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA)
Links:	https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus/actions/joint-master-degrees_en
Contact:	Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, EACEA-EPLUS-JMD@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees (EMJMD) objectives are to foster excellence, innovation, and internationalisation in higher education institutions (HEI), boost the attractiveness of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), and support the EU's external action in the field of higher education, thus contributing to the sustainable development.

ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

The EMJMD action supports high quality joint master courses run by consortia of European and (where relevant) third country HEIs. The action mainly fosters cooperation between HEIs and academic staff in Europe and in the world with a view of creating poles of excellence and providing highly trained human resources. The joint programmes must involve mobility between institutions of the consortium and lead to the award of recognised joint or multiple (at least double) degrees. Participating students are awarded Erasmus Mundus scholarships.

OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

- In 2019, 106 scholarships for students from the Western Balkans have been awarded (or 32 EMJMDs consortia of HEI selected in 2019). The scholarships are awarded to students directly by the consortia running the EMJMDs in the course of four consecutive master intakes, the first ones having started in August-September 2019 (five EMJMDs which have received IPA II funds).
- Out of the five EMJMDs masters selected in 2019, one includes a Western Balkan HEI from Bosnia and Herzegovina, as associated partner. The coordinators' kick-off meeting of the EMJMDs selected in 2019 took place on 16-17 October in Brussels.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- The remaining master programmes will start awarding the Western Balkan scholarships during their first intake starting in August-September 2020.
- The first technical reports on implementation submitted by the EMJMDs that received IPA II funds in 2019 will be assessed.
- The 2020 EMJMD selection will be implemented in February-July 2020. Indicatively, EUR 5 million IPA II funds will be earmarked to this selection, allowing the funding of approximately 100 Western Balkan scholarships.

Capacity Building in Higher Education (CBHE)

Programme reference:	Annual IPA Multi-beneficiary Programme
Project title:	Erasmus+ Capacity Building in Higher Education (CBHE)
EU contribution:	EUR 10.07 million (2014), EUR 13.2 million (2015), EUR 13.5 million (2016), EUR 10.3 million (2017), EUR 12 million (2018), EUR 13.9 million (2019)
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkan Partners (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Montenegro; Serbia until 2019)
Type of contract:	The action is implemented by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA)

Links:	https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus/funding/capacity-building-higher-education-2019_en
Contact :	Karolina Buzaljko, karolina.buzaljko@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The CBHE facilitates the reform of higher education institutions by upgrading the quality and management of academic institutions, in line with changing political, social and economic needs and through voluntary convergence with higher education reform developments in the EU Member States.

ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

- A **regional cluster meeting of the CBHE projects' impact in the Western Balkans** was organised by EACEA, EAC and the National Erasmus+ Office (NEO) Albania in October in Albania. The event gathered 94 participants from CBHE projects, governmental authorities, Western Balkan NEOs, the EU Delegation, DG EAC and EACEA. Participants discussed the impact and sustainability of project results in the higher education sectors in the Western Balkans in the framework of a participatory approach. Workshops and discussions focused on regional cooperation, HEIs' links with society and business, projects' impact and sustainability, as well as modernisation, accessibility, quality and internationalisation of the HEIs in the WB.
- A **cluster meeting on the Curriculum Development projects** was organised on 27 November 2019 in Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina. The event gathered representatives from 12 CBHE projects; it was organised by the NEO in Bosnia Herzegovina. The aim of the meeting was to assess the impact of the 12 selected CBHE projects on the higher education sector, public and private sector and the society at large, as well as to share experiences and provide recommendations for the future.
- A **NEO/ICP meeting** was organised in November 2019 and focused on networking, results achieved and assessment of needs. The event served also to inform both the NEOs and the ICPs about the novelties of the call for proposals and general trends in the higher education policies of the European Union. Finally, a retrospective glance at the international dimension of the Erasmus+ and the future programme was provided.

OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

- A **regional cluster meeting of the CBHE projects' impact in the Western Balkans**. A publication on the conclusions of the workshops is being finalised and a video of the workshop is available at <http://erasmusplus.al>. The main obstacles identified in the project implementation phase are accreditation, tender procedures, administrative burdens and paperwork (a solution suggested by the participants was the creation of a **Regional Agency for Accreditation**). Regional cooperation has been traditionally perceived as "less attractive" than cooperation with EU HEIs. Participants suggested to work towards the creation of a **WB Higher Education Area**, which would facilitate,

among other things, mobilities of staff and students or the development of joint degrees. Participants stressed the significant impact of the CBHE Action in the Western Balkans.

- **Cluster meeting on Curriculum Development projects in Bosnia Herzegovina** – The main outcomes of the event were the identification of main challenges, namely the accreditation of study programmes, which is still an unresolved issue at national level and decreasing number of students’ enrolment, which is jeopardising the sustainability of the curricula being developed or modernised through the CBHE projects. A number of recommendations were identified and collected into a dedicated **report**; this will be circulated among the event participants and uploaded on the NEO web site.
- **NEO/ICP meeting** – A poster competition was used to facilitate communication and better collaboration. NEOs and ICPs produced and exhibited posters showing the impact of the Erasmus+ programme on their higher education sectors, institutions and teachers/students.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- The **2020 CBHE selection** will be carried out in the following months. EACEA received 108 applications involving WB institutions (45 were national, 46 regional and 17 cross regional). There is an increase of project proposals coordinated by the Western Balkans institutions.
- The **CBHE Grantholder’s meeting** in January in Brussels. The event will gather representatives of 163 CBHE projects selected under the 2019 Call for Proposals. The event will gather project representatives, NEOs, National Agencies, EU Delegations, European Commission (EAC, NEAR and DEVCO) and EACEA.
- Two activities for Higher Education Experts reforms are foreseen.

Capacity Building in the field of Youth – Western Balkan window (CBY)

Programme reference:	Annual IPA Multi-beneficiary Programme
Project title:	Erasmus+ Capacity building in the field of youth
EU contribution:	EUR 3 million annually
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	The action is implemented by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA)
Links:	https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus/actions/key-action-2-cooperation-for-innovation-and-exchange-good-practices/capacity_en
Contact:	José Gutierrez, jose.gutierrez@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

Capacity-building projects in the field of youth cover a range of activities that encourage cooperation between organisations active in youth, education, training and other socio-economic sectors in the Erasmus+ Programme Countries and Partners from different regions of the world. The objectives of these projects are to improve the quality and recognition of youth-work, non-formal learning and volunteering and foster synergies with education systems and the labour market, reinforce non-formal learning mobility schemes and programmes, and promote transnational non-formal learning mobility. Further, the projects aim to promote strategic cooperation between youth organisations and public authorities and raise the capacities of youth councils, youth platforms and local, regional and national authorities.

ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

Following the 2019 selection implemented under the Erasmus+ Key-Action 2 “Capacity Building in the field of youth” action (application deadline 24/01/2019) the Award decision for 32 proposals (30% success rate) was signed and notification letters were sent.

OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

All 32 grant agreements were awarded. Within the selected projects, Albania is highly represented (coordinating 14 projects, and participating in 25 projects). Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Montenegro coordinate 9, 6 and 3 projects respectively, while they participate in 23, 19, and 14 projects respectively. In terms of Erasmus+ Programme Countries, 24 countries are represented with an active representation of Serbia, North Macedonia and Croatia. Project descriptions can be found on the [Erasmus+ Project Results Platform](#).

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

Monitoring of newly selected projects and web-streamed Kick-Off session on 03/02/2020. This training session was is still available on the event pages of EACEA website <https://webcast.ec.europa.eu/kick-off-meeting-cby-2019>

7.4 SUPPORT TO EDUCATION

Programme reference:	IPA Multi-beneficiary Programme 2018/040-822
Project title:	Pilot VET mobility scheme for the Western Balkans 6 + Turkey
EU contribution:	EUR 2 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Grant to INTERVET consortium, managed by EAC

Links:	Call page: https://ec.europa.eu/education/resources-and-tools/funding-opportunities/vet-mobility-pilot-2019_en
Contact:	Albert Sesé-Ballart, Albert.SESE-BALLART@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

Erasmus+ offers training, learning and mobility opportunities for VET learners and staff, but this is not open to the international dimension of the programme. Pilot VET mobility scheme enables Partners from the Western Balkans and Turkey to participate and benefit from the rich experience of Erasmus+. The project funds learners and staff mobility.

ACTIVITIES (JULY DECEMBER 2019)

Selection of the consortia of VET providers. A total of 12 applications was received and 9 of them passed the minimum quality threshold. Award Decision was published in December 2019. <https://ec.europa.eu/education/news/vet-mobility-results>

OUTPUTS (JULY DECEMBER 2019)

Intervet consortium – Internationalisation of VET systems in Western Balkans – was selected to implement the project. The consortium is led by the Italian organisation Uniser Societa Cooperativa Sociale Onlus. The rest of the consortia is composed of 14 partners from Belgium, the Netherlands, France, Malta, Spain, Slovenia, Poland, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia. The selected project aims to improve the culture of learning mobility in the field of VET by better informing VET teachers and headmasters about resources and opportunities in learning mobility – thereby increasing their competences in planning and managing mobility projects. The project will implement activities at two levels: mobility of VET learners and competence building of VET staff.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- The start of activities in January; 24 March - Kick-off meeting of the INTERVET project in Bologna, Italy; 15 May – the first open call for VET learners and staff.

7.5 EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS

Programme reference:	Multi-beneficiary Programme under IPA Transition Assistance and Institution Building Component for the year 2015, IPA 2015/038-054.11
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* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244/99 and the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on Kosovo's declaration of independence.

Project title:	Employment and Social Affairs Platform (ESAP)
EU contribution:	EUR 3 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Grant Agreements with the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) and the International Labour Organization (ILO)
Contract reference:	VS/2016/0054 (RCC) and VS/2016/0002 (ILO)
Duration of activities:	01/03/2016 – 31/10/2019 (RCC) 01/04/2016 – 31/10/2019 (ILO)
Contact :	Christiane Westphal, christiane.westphal@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The overall objective of the Employment and Social Affairs Platform is to assist the Western Balkan countries with the employment and social policy reforms in their pre-accession process. The action will help improve the regional cooperation in employment and social policy-making, labour market governance, working conditions and social dialogue.

ACTIVITIES (JULY-OCTOBER 2019)

ILO

- High-level regional meeting of Economic and Social Councils on Fostering Social Dialogue (September 2019);
- Annual update of CEELEX and working paper on “Non-standard Forms of Employment in CEE countries – a comparative overview” finalized (September – October 2019);
- National CEELEX promotion events (October 2019);
- Translation of ESAP website navigation titles and CEELEX database titles into the languages of the region (October 2019);
- Co-organization of sub-regional Conference “Application of Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work in the Western Balkan countries” (October 2019);
- Procurement of IT equipment and upgrade of software used by Montenegrin Labour Inspectorate as a follow-up measure of the implemented Labour Inspection Campaign (September – October 2019).

RCC

- Regional workshop on activation and employment support policies and programmes in the Western Balkans (Montenegro, September 2019);
- Regional workshop on tackling undeclared work in the Western Balkans (BiH, 15 October 2019);

- Co-organization with the BiH Labour and Employment Agency of the annual conference of the Centre of Public Employment Services of Southeast European Countries (BiH, 23 October 2019)

OUTPUTS (JULY-OCTOBER 2019)

ILO

- Functioning of ESAP platform online assessed, ToRs for the revision of ESAP online drafted and recommendations for Webinar delivery made.
- CEELEX tutorial and leaflet produced in English, Macedonian and Serbian; the following graphical elements were created: Voice Over in English language and final animation;
- Ten (10) country papers (Bosnia and Herzegovina, (Republika Srpska and Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina), Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia) on non-standard forms of employment finalised by the CEELEX members;
- Multi-language feature of the regional case database on ESAP platform further developed and used by the Network of Agencies for Amicable Settlement of Labour Disputes (ASLD) for the purpose of peer-learning and exchange of knowledge;
- Ministry of Labour/Labour Inspectorate in Montenegro further upgraded the tools for monitoring and carrying out inspections in the construction sector;
- Software registries of Association of Employers and trade unions and collective agreements installed in the Ministries of Labour and Social Welfare of Montenegro and Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Policy of Serbia.

RCC

- Key national stakeholders (Ministries of Labour, Finance, Labour Inspectorates, Tax Authorities) familiarized with the holistic approach to tackling undeclared work, based on the recommendations of ESAP reports and committed to promote regional cooperation on tackling undeclared work in the Western Balkans;
- Enhanced understanding of good practices in the design and implementation of selected labour market measures by participating officials of Ministries of Labour and Public Employment Services in the Western Balkans;

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

ILO

- N/A

RCC

- N/A

Programme reference: IPA II Multi-country Action Programme 2019

Project title: Employment and Social Affairs Platform (ESAP) 2

EU contribution:	EUR 5 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Grant Agreements with the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) and the International Labour Organization (ILO)
Contract reference:	VS/2019/0348 (RCC) and VS/2016/0002 (ILO)
Duration of activities:	01/11/2019 – 31/10/2022 (RCC) 01/11/2019 – 31/10/2022 (ILO)
Contact :	Bernd Wild, bernd.wild@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The overall objective of the Employment and Social Affairs Platform 2 is to improve employment opportunities and working conditions of women and men in the Western Balkans.

ACTIVITIES (NOVEMBER – DECEMBER 2019)

ILO

- Preparation for launching event of ESAP 2

RCC

- Update of regional labour market databases and collection of information on national follow-up activities based on ESAP 1 interventions
- Consultation with national stakeholders on planned activities of ESAP 2
- Preparation for launching event of ESAP 2

OUTPUTS (NOVEMBER – DECEMBER 2019)

ILO

- Key National Stakeholders (Ministries of Labour, Social Partners further committed to close co-operation in social dialogue and labour inspection.

RCC

- Key national stakeholders (Ministries of Labour, Finance, Labour Inspectorates, Tax Authorities) in the Western Balkans committed to continuing regional cooperation on employment and social affairs in the framework of ESAP 2.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

ILO

- ESAP 2 launching event, organized jointly with RCC (BiH, January 2020)

- Consultation with national actors to identify intervention packages aiming at reducing undeclared work to be tested;
- Initiate development of a peer-review protocol for targeted labour inspectorates and prepare for implementation of peer-reviews with targeted labour inspectorates;
- Initiate development of national and regional ESC monitoring mechanisms.

RCC

- ESAP 2 launching event, organized jointly with ILO (BiH, January 2020)
- National consultations on ESAP 2 activities (Western Balkan capitals, February/March 2020)
- Regional meeting on undeclared work (March 2020)
- Regional workshop on the European Pillar of Social Rights (March/April 2020)
- Regular regional meeting in the framework of ESAP 2 (May/June 2020)

CHAPTER 8: OTHER HORIZONTAL ACTIONS

8.1 EU AGENCIES

Programme reference:	IPA 2016/037-900, 2018/040-113
Project title:	Preparatory measures for the participation of candidates and potential candidates in EU Agencies
EU contribution:	
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Grant contracts
Contract reference:	1 contract signed in 2016, 10 contracts signed in 2017, 3 contracts signed in 2018
Duration of activities:	Q4 2016 – Q3 2021
Contact:	Jutta Pomoell-Segurola jutta.pomoell-segurola@ec.europa.eu

List of Agencies, duration of activities and total amounts:

CN	Agency	Duration	Amount in EUR
2016/377-705	European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound)	12/10/2016 – 11/01/2019	350.000
2018/402-940	European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound)	12/01/2019 – 11/07/2021	550.000
2017/386-267	European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC)	19/08/2017 – 18/08/2019	310.000
2017/389-613	European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE)	01.09.2017 – 30.11.2018	200.000
2018/402-854 2019/414-064	European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE)	01/01/2019 – 31/12/2022	928.950
2017/386-560	European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA)	01/01/2018 – 31/12/2019	290.000
2017/386-550	European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA)	01/07/2017 –	340.000

		30/06/2019	
2017/390-067	European Chemicals Agency (ECHA)	01/03/2018 – 28/02/2019	180.000
2018/403-813	European Chemicals Agency (ECHA)	01/04/2019 – 30/04/2022	785.000
2017/388-568	European Food Safety Authority (EFSA)	01/12/2017 – 31/05/2019	320.000
2017/391-240	European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA)	01/05/2018 – 30/04/2020	200.000
2017/390-035	European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA)	01/12/2017 – 30/11/2019	290.000
2017/391-230	European Railway Agency (ERA)	01/01/2018 – 31/12/2019	200.000
2017/391-249	European Environment Agency (EEA)	01/02/2018 – 31/01/2020	320.000

PURPOSE

The programme supports EU Agencies to carry out preparatory measures with Beneficiaries and stakeholders to ensure that Beneficiaries are able to participate effectively in the activities of EU Agencies as they implement important parts of the EU *acquis*.

Activities are designed to help beneficiaries understand the function and operations of EU Agencies, and more importantly, their role within them. EU support also permits IPA II beneficiaries to involve other relevant national stakeholders in their activities in ways similar to those of EU Member States. This support mainly consists of advice on organisational matters, staff training and participation in stakeholder meetings.

ACTIVITIES (JULY – DECEMBER 2019)

EUROFOUND

The preparations for the 7th European Working Conditions Survey continued. Work on the sampling in the in the IPA beneficiaries was carried out in parallel with the work in the EU-28. The aim is to enlarge and strengthen the number of governmental, employer and employee organisations who will benefit from the survey data and trends.

EIGE

- EIGE has organised several events to which IPA beneficiaries participated (Journalist Thematic Network Meeting in Helsinki, EIGE’s Gender Index Launch Conference and Power up for more Gender Equality Conference, both held in Brussels)
- EIGE has attended several events in IPA beneficiaries (Regional Forum on the implementation of the Istanbul Convention organised by UN WOMEN in Tirana, Albania and Regional Forum on Sexual Violence in Belgrade, Serbia, attended remotely).
- On 1-2 July 2019, the second training on development of Gender Equality Index was delivered for Albania, to which also several statisticians from Montenegro joined. 18 participants, out of which 3 participants from Montenegro, have attended. Commitment of all participants was impressive.
- On 3 October 2019 North Macedonia launched its national Index in a high-level event in Skopje and became the second EU candidate country, after Serbia, to produce a national Gender Equality Index. With its score of 62 points, North Macedonia sits just below the EU average of 66.2 points. 105 participants have attended the event.
- EIGE continued to work with Albania and Montenegro on the finalisation of their Indices calculation and on their national reports. Both launch events are scheduled for first quarter of 2020.
- Direct expert coaching for the Index calculation was given to Turkey and communication has continued with Kosovo on their efforts to develop a partial Index.
- On 16 October, EIGE has organised 10th Regional Coordination Meeting for the EU candidate countries and potential candidates in Brussels, Belgium. The meeting was attended by 33 participants, among which the project national focal points from gender equality machineries, statistical officers, gender focal points from EU Delegations/Office, civil society and international community, including DG NEAR.
- The latest data collection for the Women and Men in Decision Making database in IPA beneficiaries was finalised in December.
- The statistical note “Women in Politics” and the statistical note “Women on Corporate Boards” were published on EIGE’s EUROGENDER Platform.
- Throughout the reporting period, EIGE has finalised the editing of, and published the collected 15 good practices from the Western Balkans and Turkey on EIGE’s EUROGENDER Platform.
- EIGE contributed to the joint Thematic brief on violence against women living with disabilities in the Western Balkans, conducted by the UNFPA Regional Office. It is expected to be published in 2020.

EMSA

The activities kicked off with a training on the Human Element (MLC and STCW) held on 8 – 10 July 2019 in Lisbon, Portugal. The overall objective was to provide further knowledge about the International Conventions related to the Maritime Human Element, integrating relevant content of IMO's International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification

and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW) and Code, and ILO's Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 (MLC).

This training event was followed by an in-country training on ship and port facility security in Turkey. The advanced module took place in Istanbul from 29 to 31 July 2019. The training session was designed for officials of the Turkish maritime administration involved in the implementation and monitoring of legislation related to ship and port facility security, both at the central administration and in the field (as flag state inspectors or duly authorised officers).

Another regional training took place in Montenegro on 4 – 6 September 2019. It was dedicated to Directive (EU) 2016/802 relating to a reduction in the sulphur content of certain liquid fuels and other EU Maritime Environmental Legislation.

A Training on Monitoring Recognised Organisations was held from 19 to 20 November 2019 in Lisbon. It was followed by the training on fishing vessels safety for IPA II beneficiaries held from 26 to 27 November 2019 in Lisbon, which included a practical demonstration of an inspection of a fishing vessel performed through a virtual reality simulator.

Between 3 and 5 December 2019, two training events took place in parallel: a training on ISM Code and Auditing Techniques in Lisbon, and a training on Response to HNS in the Marine Environment at the Emergency Response Centre in Tekirdağ, Turkey (co-organised with REMPEC and IMO).

In addition to the above activities, PSCOs from Montenegro participated in two events arranged by the Paris MoU. Furthermore, Montenegro was represented at four meetings of different User group communities of EMSA tools and platforms held at EMSA HQ in Lisbon.

ERA

Highlight of the activities in the 2nd half of 2019 was the so-called IPA summit in Belgrade, organised in close cooperation with the Directorate of Railways of Serbia. The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Construction, Transportation and Infrastructure of Serbia opened the event, which was attended by more than forty railway CEOs from railway authorities and railway organisations in the Western Balkans. Thirty-five CEOs and the Deputy Prime Minister of Serbia signed the Safety Culture Declaration, promoting the introduction of and support to the establishment of (railway) safety culture. The gathering was a perfect opportunity for EU and Western Balkans railway experts to discuss how to improve rail safety and interoperability.

Other activities:

- In the context of the CCRCC2019 – The ERTMS conference organised by ERA and focusing on the European Transport Control and Signalling system (ETCS), Global System for Mobile Communications – Railway (GSM-R) and digitalisation, experts from the Western Balkans were invited to participate in a separate workshop on ETCS.
- The peer review of the National Investigation Body (NIB) Serbia enabled experts from the EU, the Western Balkans and Turkey to compare processes and reports done by NIB Serbia with European regulations and best practices.

- From September to December 2019, two railway experts from IPA II beneficiaries (from Albania and Serbia) supported ERA’s work through a secondment/traineeship.
- The 2nd meeting of the taskforce on “Cleaning up of national rules” 25-26th of September in Durrës/Albania followed by the 3rd meeting 5th of December 2019 in Skopje supported the further alignment of national technical rules for the authorisation of railway vehicles with the European regulation.
- ERA participated in two meetings of the Transport Community Permanent Secretariat (TCPS) in Belgrade, with whom they signed an MoU in September 2019 to support each other’s activities. ERA will as well participate in the TC’s Railway technical committee, which is chaired by the TCPS.

EU-OSHA

During the period, EU OSHA sent out a mission to Belgrade (Serbia) to attend the Conference: “2019 OSH year in Serbia” and to present the findings of the European Survey of Enterprises on New and Emerging Risks (ESENER). As usual, the conference was well-attended with Governmental and social partner representation.

There has been the translation of OSH publications from English to Serbian, most notably on “occupational safety and health in the wind energy sector”.

Moreover, a continuation programme for 36 extra months and EUR 400 000 was prepared and concluded between the European Commission and EU-OSHA.

OUTPUTS (JULY–DECEMBER 2019)

EUROFOUND

Sampling, cognitive testing and translation of questionnaire for ESENER survey.

EIGE

- Cooperation with the Western Balkans and Turkey progressed as expected and exceeded expectations in the commitment on development of national Gender Equality Indices for North Macedonia, Albania, Montenegro and Turkey. EIGE has maintained good working relationships with the institutions responsible for advancing on gender equality and statistical offices, as well as regular liaison with EU Delegations/Office and the international community.
- Civil society, the media, and the academia have been involved in EIGE’s work, especially in the EIGE’s Gender Equality Index Launch Conference, the Regional Coordination Meeting, the Power up for Gender Equality Conference, and the Journalist Thematic Network Meeting.
- Two Statistical Notes were prepared and the data collection under the work of Women and Men in Decision Making database continued.
- EIGE’s publications and other tangible outputs have been regularly shared with key partners in each IPA beneficiary via stakeholders’ mailing lists.

EMSA

The implemented activities enabled IPA II beneficiaries to strengthen their administrative capacity and organisation capability needed for the implementation and enforcement of international and EU maritime legislation.

EMSA's tool RuleCheck assists them in the harmonised implementation of legislation. The access to the Maritime Knowledge Center and its distance learning training modules enables a larger number of officers to be trained on the many areas included in the catalogue in a cost-efficient manner.

The participation of IPA II beneficiaries in meetings or trainings usually organised for EU Member States, such as the CleanSeaNet meetings, allows participants to share experiences and to use the systems in the most efficient way.

The participation of Port State Control officers from Montenegro to the Paris MoU events was a way to assist the country to move closer to meeting the requirements for membership in the Memorandum.

ERA

The "peer review workshop" and NIB network meeting in May 2019 enabled experts from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Turkey to participate together with experts from Portugal, Norway and Romania in the NIB Serbia peer review. It allowed participants to compare practises, processes and reports of NIB Serbia with the current state of NIB investigations in the EU.

ERA produced a video of the so-called IPA summit in Belgrade, which aims to inform experts and interested parties about the event and the the introduction of modern "railway safety culture" to support Safety Management Systems of railway undertakings in the Western Balkans.

The secondment/traineeship of experts from Albania and Serbia helped exchange experiences between ERA staff and representatives from Western Balkans railway authorities. The two trainees did attend several ERA events, such as the CCRCC2019–The ERTMS conference or meetings of the Committee of railways interoperability and safety (RISC).

EU-OSHA

EU OSHA continued to reach stakeholders dealing with occupational safety issues in the beneficiary countries. Apart from increasing their local OSH capacity and raise awareness on common problems, the participants of the supported events were able to exchange experiences and ideas with their counterparts from the EU Member States. In particular, beneficiary countries participated in the EU OSHA European Week for Safety and Health at work (October – week 43) by holding awareness-raising activities.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

EUROFOUND

Field work for ESENER survey.

EIGE

- EIGE is planning to have Gender Equality Index Launch events in two IPA beneficiaries: Albania and Montenegro in the first quarter of 2020.
- EIGE is planning to continue working on the preparation of a joint Workshop on gender-based violence with several UN Agencies Regional Offices.
- The work on EIGE's Glossary and Thesaurus is expected to intensify.
- The 11th EIGE Regional Coordination Meeting is planned to take place in the second quarter of 2020 in Zagreb, Croatia.
- Data collection for the Women and Men in Decision Making database in IPA beneficiaries will continue in 2020.
- EIGE is preparing an IPA page on its website, to ensure more visibility of the project.

EMSA

Several trainings are planned to be delivered at the EMSA HQ during the last four months of the contract. One of the topics will be maritime security and safety of fishing vessels. In addition, two events are foreseen to be organised under the remit of the PMoU, which would entail participation from Montenegro. Subject to availability of funds, EMSA may support the participation of Montenegro, Albania and Turkey to two CleanSeaNet related events.

ERA

The current contract ends on 31.12.2019, but the new one will start on 01.01.2020. The envisaged activities will be aligned with the planning of the TCPS in Belgrade.

EU-OSHA

The contract started in 2017 ended at the end of November 2019. A new contract started immediately after to give continuation to the most successful activities of previous phases. Participation of IPA countries in the network of OSHA focal points and trainings are the main activities planned for the first semester of 2020.

European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC)

ACTIVITIES (JULY – DECEMBER 2019)

Six ECDC technical and network meetings were organised for Western Balkan countries and Turkey. In total 44 experts attended ECDC events, such as Annual European Legionnaires' Disease Network meeting, Annual meeting for ECDC National Focal Points (NFP) for Surveillance, Annual Emerging and Vector-borne Diseases, 5th meeting of Hepatitis B and C Network, Rapid Risk Assessment training workshop, Competency-based training workshop in

preparedness for managing public health emergencies. In addition, the third round of the annual ENLabCap* survey for 2018 data collection was launched on 27 September 2019.

OUTPUTS (JULY - DECEMBER 2019)

All IPA beneficiaries have been invited to submit their 2018 data to the third round of ECDC ENLabCap survey with the aim to equip public health microbiology with a sound basis to (i) assess public health microbiology vulnerabilities, (ii) see changes from previous years, and (iii) monitor key public health microbiology capabilities and capacity for surveillance and epidemic preparedness in comparison with the EU levels. In addition, IPA beneficiaries (with the exception of Bosnia and Herzegovina) continued to be included into the annual data call to submit their national surveillance data on hepatitis A, gonorrhoea, West Nile Fever, point prevalence surveys on healthcare associated infections to the European Surveillance System, TESSy.

Further to the inclusion of IPA beneficiaries into European surveillance of *Clostridium difficile* infections (CDI), the opportunity for the ECDC microbiological support revealed that none of the laboratories in the Western Balkans had typing facilities, only Turkey had this capacity. Turkey, North Macedonia and Serbia had CDI surveillance programmes and were able to collect epidemiological data and microbiological data, while all IPA beneficiaries expressed the need for training for CDI diagnostics and typing.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

The implementation of project 2017/386-267 ended on 18 November 2019 and the new project 2019/409-781 started in January 2020. It will aim to:

- prepare IPA beneficiaries for participating in all relevant technical activities of ECDC in which also EU/EEA countries are involved, focusing on further enhancement of communicable disease surveillance and control capacities, improvement of their health emergency preparedness capabilities, and supporting public health microbiology laboratory systems development;
- identify gaps and develop country roadmaps, support development of electronic surveillance of antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and raise awareness.

European Chemicals Agency (ECHA)

Programme reference:	IPA II Multi-country Action Programme 2017/2018; EU Integration Facility, including EU support for the participation of IPA II beneficiaries in EU Agencies, IPA 2018/040-113.04/MC/EU Integration Facility-EU Agencies
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EU contribution:	EUR 965 000
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* Laboratory capacity monitoring tool for IPA beneficiaries

Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey; IPA beneficiaries that will benefit from the action are: Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey
Type of contract:	Grant contract 2017, Contribution agreement 2018
Contract reference:	2017/390-067 and 2018/403-813
Duration of activities:	01/03/2018-30/08/2019, 01/03/2019-28/02/2021
Links:	www.echa.europa.eu
Contact :	Jenny Holmqvist, international@echa.europa.eu

PURPOSE

- ECHA has provided capacity building activities on EU chemical legislation for candidate and pre-candidate countries to the EU through two projects:
- 1) 2017/390-067 *Maintaining and enhancing candidate countries' and potential candidates' capability to stay up-to-date with the EU chemical management in the remit of the European Chemicals Agency* (Contribution of EUR 180 000), and
- 2) 2018/403-813 *Preparatory measures of future participation of candidate countries and potential candidates in the work of the European Chemicals Agency in implementing REACH, CLP, BPR and PIC*, (Contribution of EUR 450 000) with addendum to the latter amending the contribution to EUR 785 000).
- Carried out activities have targeted national competent authorities and related institutions responsible for the management of chemicals in the seven beneficiaries.

ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

- The projects listed above focused on capacity building activities in the form of dedicated events or training, and have given the beneficiaries the possibility to take part in several European level events related to chemical management, organised partly or in full by ECHA. In addition, under agreement 2018/403-813, a call for tender was launched to sub-contract an in-depth study to assess the national capacity and readiness to implement and enforce REACH, CLP, BPR and PIC in Montenegro and Serbia. The contract was awarded in August 2019 and the study execution has progressed as planned.

OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

- IPA project **2017/390-067** was finalised in August 2019. A final report describing the actions taken and the related budgetary consumption was submitted to DG NEAR in October 2019.
- Activities carried out under the **2018/703-813** project in the reported period are as follows: ECHA Biocides Conference (29 Oct 2019); Planning meeting for IPA activities 2020 (30 Oct 2019); ECHA's Forum for Exchange of Information on Enforcement - Open session (5 Nov 2019); HelpNet CLP workshop (27 Nov 2019).

- In the context of developing more targeted efforts based on identified needs, an **in-depth study** to assess the national capacity and readiness to implement and enforce REACH, CLP, BPR and PIC in Montenegro and Serbia was launched in August 2019. The work on the agreed work packages (six in total) has progressed as planned and the first two have been delivered.
- The activities were carried out as planned and within schedule, in line with the commitments made in the project description. The main target audience consisted of authorities responsible for chemicals management and, depending on the topic and spectrum of the activity, other relevant stakeholders as well.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- As per the beneficiaries' request, the translation of two documents ([The Hazard pictograms postcard](#)* and the [Chemical safety and your business leaflet](#)†) into the IPA countries' languages has been procured and is expected to be finalised in Q1 2020.
- As part of the extended contract, a procurement of a new (high-level) study will be launched. The objective of such study is to assess the status and needs of five IPA beneficiaries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia, and Turkey) in the practical implementation of the EU chemicals acquis.
- Moreover, the beneficiaries will be given the opportunity to participate in four EU level events: 1) IPA Workshop dedicated to IT tools (April); 2) ECHA's 15th HelpNet Steering Group Meeting, ECHA (April); 3) ECHA Stakeholder Day (June); 4) Helsinki Chemical Forum (June).
- During these events, ECHA will take the opportunity to organise ad-hoc meetings to inform about the progress of the ongoing study, and the upcoming horizontal study outlined above.
- ECHA will also undertake missions in January 2020 to both Serbia and Montenegro as part of the execution on the ongoing study to support interviews with national authorities, private companies, industry organisations and NGO.

European Aviation Safety Authority (EASA)

ACTIVITIES (JULY – DECEMBER 2019)

- In close collaboration with the Food and Veterinary Agency of North Macedonia organised a *National conference on the opportunities and challenges in risk assessment process*.
- In cooperation with the Croatian Agriculture and Food Agency (HAPIH), EASA organised in October 2019 the first Autumn School for 19 participants from IPA beneficiaries: "Exploring fit-for-purpose food safety risk assessment". The training had both practical

* https://echa.europa.eu/documents/10162/13562/hazard_pictograms_endefr_en.pdf

† https://echa.europa.eu/documents/10162/21332507/sme_leaflet_en.pdf

and theoretical elements, with emphasis on the practical part, i.e., Croatian case-studies (based on EFSA scientific opinions).

- IPA representatives were invited to the workshop (5-6 November 2019) on Lumpy Skin Disease (LSD). The workshop brought together scientists of EFSA with representatives from LSD affected countries and countries at risk for LSD in order to:

share the knowledge and experience about LSD,

explain the analysis performed by EFSA and make them applicable to each country situation,

update the data models used so far for the data collection in view of the next EFSA outputs,

provide the participating countries with practical indications about how to do surveys for testing vaccination effectiveness, vaccine monitoring and surveillance for the early detection of the disease and/or for supporting the freedom of the disease.

OUTPUTS (JULY - DECEMBER 2019)

- During the workshop on Focal Point (FP) tasks held in November 2019, a breakout session was organised for the IPA FP observers. The aim of the meeting was to discuss on-going activities and to present the plan for 2020. IPA representatives were invited to identify the possible activities (not covered by the Action) for the next period.
- The European Union One Health 2018 Zoonoses Report - This report of the European Food Safety Authority and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control presents the results of zoonoses monitoring activities carried out in 2018 in 36 European countries (28 Member States (MS), 5 IPA countries and 3 non-MS).
- In November 2019, EFSA published a risk assessment of African swine fever in South-Eastern Europe. It concludes that improved surveillance, communication and collaboration are key to controlling the spread of the disease. The assessment evaluates the possibility of spread among Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Slovenia.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Following the positive feedback at the 2019's FP meeting, a new IPA breakout session will be organised during the FP training on the new tasks that will be held in Vilnius, Lithuania.
- EFSA will launch a communication campaign on African Swine Fever (ASF), in close cooperation with the European Commission and relevant national authorities, following up on the recommendations of its 2019 scientific opinion.
- Following up on a request of the EFSA's Management Board (MB), an overview of the cooperation activities carried out in collaboration with the IPA beneficiaries in the frame of the IPA programme will be provided to the members at the March MB meeting.
- Following the publication of the Eurobarometer on Food Safety in the EU, which covered the (then) 28 EU Member States in 2019, the same study will be completed and

published in February for Albania, Montenegro, Republic of North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey.

- An expert mission to Kosovo* will be organised in April in order to support the data collection and reporting activities in the following domains: zoonoses, VMDR, pesticide. Project manager of the IPA programme and director of the Communications, Engagement & Cooperation Department (COMCO) will participate at the 7th International Food Safety Congress in Istanbul, Turkey, which will be held with the motto "Safe food for now and future".

European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addictions (EMCDDA)

Programme reference:	Multi-beneficiary Programme under IPA II Multi-country Action Programme 2018-2020
Project title:	Stepwise integration of the IPA beneficiaries in the activities of the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) and the Reitox network
EU contribution:	EUR 1 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Contribution Agreement – External Actions of the EU
Contract reference:	2019/406–479.1
Duration of activities:	01/07/2019 – 30/06/2022
Links:	http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/about/partners/cc/ipa7
Contact :	Frédéric Denecker, Frederic.Denecker@emcdda.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The EMCDDA-IPA7 project aims to support the approximation to and adoption of the EU *Acquis* in the IPA II beneficiaries in the area of Rule of Law and in particular in the drug information field; and to increase the evidence on cross-border drug-related health and security threats in EU candidate countries and potential candidates.

• ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

- The EMCDDA Director met several high-level dignitaries working in the drugs field in Montenegro in July to explore the current state of data collection on the drug situation and the possibilities for increased cooperation and capacity building.
- In the margins of the 2019 Lisbon Addictions conference in October, a networking event targeting participants from the Western Balkans was organised, and the participation of an Albanian expert was supported; the new project was presented and the establishment of synergies with several partner organisations encouraged.

- A mapping exercise was carried out to gather information about the existing drug-related data in each IPA beneficiary. This preliminary assessment will serve as a basis for planning of future activities.
- The project funded the participation of experts from Albania, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia in the European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs (ESPAD) Assembly in October. Discussion included an overview of the studies in the participating countries; the project's state of the art; timetable of 2019–2020 activities and future prospects. At the end of 2019, Albania unfortunately dropped out of the ESPAD 2019 data collection exercise.
- The first coordination meeting took place in Lisbon in November at the margins of the 8th Extended Reitox network meeting and received active input and feedback from IPA participants regarding the mapping exercise of their national data sources.
- In November 2019, one EMCDDA staff member participated in the 'Regional meeting on the Global Challenge and Threat to the Safety and Health of Societies – Emergence of New Psychoactive Substances', which was co-organised by the Ministry of Health of Montenegro and the OSCE.
- Three annual expert meetings on the EMCDDA epidemiological key indicators – Drug related infectious diseases (DRID), Drug-related deaths (DRD) and Treatment demand indicator (TDI) were organised with a special session restricted to participants of the IPA beneficiaries, focusing on data availability and national reporting capacity.

OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

- Following the mapping exercise, a brief data country profile was prepared. Four out of the six 'Roadmaps to participation in the EMCDDA' were updated in December, taking into account the input from the IPA7 national correspondents.
- In line with the Project's communication and visibility plan, the EMCDDA embarked on the following outputs: A new project webpage was created on the EMCDDA public website; The national web pages, containing more detailed information per country, were revamped; An IPA7 flyer, informing on the characteristics of the project, has been produced and distributed among different stakeholders and partners; In December 2019, the subscription of the 'IPA7 updates' newsflash has been launched by means of a Mailchimp system.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- The EMCDDA plans further visits to the Beneficiaries to discuss state-of-play of national activities, namely to Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo.
- A first Project Advisory Committee will be organised in Brussels in the presence of the IPA beneficiaries and their Permanent Missions to the EU (date TBC).

- A Working Arrangement will be signed with the Office for Combating Drugs of Serbia on 25 March.
- The project will finance the participation of up to three selected IPA participants in the 2020 European Drugs Summer School (EDSS).
- The first project electronic newsletter will be released.
- Participation of beneficiaries will be ensured in some key EMCDDA expert meetings.
- The following trainings / capacity-building exercises are envisaged: expert meeting on drug-related homicides (March); EMCDDA-CEPOL course on drug markets (May); Supply indicators training (May); Training on Universal Prevention Curriculum (June).
- The second phase of the European Web Survey on Drugs will be opened for the first time to the beneficiaries of the project.
- Updates of the National Drug Situation Reports will be reviewed for Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia and made available on the respective country pages.

European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA)

Programme reference:	Multi-country Action Programme 2016, IPA 2016/037-900
Project title:	EASA - Programme on aviation safety
EU contribution:	EUR 290.000
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Contribution agreement
Contract reference:	IPA 2017/386-560
Duration of activities:	01/01/2018 – 31/12/2019
Links:	https://www.easa.europa.eu/easa-and-you/international-cooperation/technical-cooperation-projects/easa-ipa-4-programme

PURPOSE

To support the sustainable development of civil aviation and civil aviation administration systems in the beneficiary countries. It aimed at upgrading regulations and work practices to reach compliance with the international standards in the field of aviation safety and, specifically for the Western Balkan countries, with the requirements of the European Common Aviation Area Agreement (ECAA) being signed with the EU and its Member States.

ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

Two support missions were performed in:

- Kosovo* on state safety plan development and safety risk management and
- Montenegro on safety system management oversight in air operations domain

Safety management training with a specific focus on aerodromes was provided for 20 participants in Montenegro and training on risk assessment techniques was provided to 2 participants in Cologne. On the job training was provided in EASA for 2 participants from Kosovo* and 3 participants from Serbia on occurrence reporting.

OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

Activity: State safety plan development and Safety risk management support to Kosovo

Output: draft safety plan developed, hazards on state level identified, workshop for staff delivered.

Activity: Support on SMS oversight in Flight operations domain / 2 participants

Output: Increased understanding of SMS oversight concept, applicable requirements and best practices exchanged

Activity: OJT in EASA Kosovo*/2 trainees

Output: increased competence of participants and supported development of sustainable and robust system compliant with EU acquis in their respective NAA's

Activity: OJT in EASA Serbia/ 3 trainees

Output: increased competence of participants and supported development of sustainable and robust system compliant with EU acquis in their respective NAA's

Activity: Safety management training with a specific focus on aerodromes / 20 trainees

Output: knowledge increased, supported better understanding of applicable implementing requirements, best practices exchanged between participants

Activity: Risk assessment techniques training/2 trainees

Output: participants developed the competencies necessary to interpret and challenge risk assessments

8.2 GVFB

Programme reference:	Multi-country Action Programme for 2016, IPA 2016/380-471
Project title:	Enhancing mobility, connectivity and competitiveness in South East Europe – Support to Regional Cooperation Council (RCC)

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244/99 and the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on Kosovo's declaration of independence.

EU contribution:	EUR 7.5 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Grant agreement with RCC
Contract reference:	CN 2016/380-471
Duration of activities:	01/01/2017 – 31/12/2019
Links:	www.rcc.int
Contact :	Laurent Guirkinger, Laurent.Guirkinger@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The overall objective of the project is to support the creation of a dynamic regional investment space in Western Balkans (WB); increase mobility of professionals, researchers and the highly skilled and the integration in the European Research Area; reduce roaming charges, support the Information Communication Technologies (ICT) interoperability and digital integration of the region, and enhance cross-border cooperation among judiciaries.

ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

- South East Europe (SEE) 2020 Monitoring Committee meeting; Regular coordination meetings of Multi-annual Action Plan for a Regional Economic Area (MAP REA); Launch of Balkan Barometer (BB) 2020; Initiation of a post-2020 strategic framework;
- Meetings on Regional Investment Reform Agenda; National consultations on Investment Reform Action Plans and SEE Investment Committee (SEEIC); Capacity building events;
- WB Ministerial Steering Platform on Research and Innovation; Project design workshop for Youth Labs project;
- Digital Component Contact Points meeting; Meeting of Digital Summit (DS) Steering Committee; National consultations to identify 2020 digital priorities;
- SEE Cooperation Process (SEEC) Summit and high-level meetings; WB6 informal working meeting on the margins of United Nations General Assembly; RCC Board meeting;
- SEE National Security Authorities (SEENSA) meeting; Military Intelligence Chiefs (SEEMIC) Conference; Integrative Internal Security Governance (IISG) Board Meeting;
- High-level regional rule of law conference “It’s all about Justice”;
- Extended communications, reinforcing the presence of RCC and promoting the EU.

OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

- SEE 2020 monitoring cycle for 2020 launched; MAP REA Annual report completed and published; MAP REA progress assessed and priorities for 2020 defined; Contribution to Economy Ministerial Meeting and Berlin process Leaders’ Summit on

MAP REA in Poznan; Discussions on a framework beyond MAP REA launched; BB field surveys commenced;

- Regionally accepted investment standards for the negotiation of IIAs; Advanced implementation of Investment Reform Action Plans; Investment Incentives inventory prepared; Business establishment procedures mapped; Comparative review and benchmark of WB6's IIAs; Improved capacities of Investment Promotion Agencies (IPAs);
- Declaration on Recognition of Academic Qualifications endorsed at Poznan Summit; Joint WB Statement on Horizon Europe drafted; Commitment expressed to unblock negotiations on recognition of Professional Qualifications in WB;
- Maintained regional dialogue on the implementation of Digital Agenda for WB; Launched preparations for DS 2020; Defined 2020 priorities in the digital area;
- Completed study on Convergence of Digitalisation and Environmental Sustainability;
- Endorsed SEECP Declaration calling for strengthening RCC role and SEE 2030 Strategy;
- SEENSA reinvigorated; Exchange of know-how in cybersecurity maintained;
- New promotional campaigns rolled out; Awareness-raising activities conducted.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Meetings: SEE 2020 Governing Board, Monitoring Committee, Donor Coordination and Regional Dimension Coordinators; Coordination meetings of MAP REA to prepare a strategic frameworks and Action Plan beyond MAP REA; Finalisation and launch of BB;
- Endorsement of regional investment standards and financial markets agenda; Workshops on Investor-State Dispute Settlement, IIAs; Regional meetings: Financial Markets, Industrial Policy, Investments, Women Economic Empowerment; Economy Ministerial;
- Prepare Protocol on Open Access to Research Infrastructure (RI); Complete Open Access Guidance Document for RI; Deliver training on Open Access to 30 selected RIs; Promote WB Network of Women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM); Secure political and industry commitment for Competitiveness and Innovation Accelerator;
- Regional coordination meetings on Roaming Policy, cybersecurity, broadband, interoperability; Co-organize DS; Launch multi-stakeholders working group (WG) on digital skills; Support preparations of digital skills strategies; Regional networking on General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Digital Economy and Society Index for WB; Targeted capacity-building workshops in consultation with European Commission;
- Operational and Ministerial Meeting focused on Green Agenda for WB;
- France to re-join RCC Board; IISG to come under RCC; Security networks training; Meetings: Annual, Board, SEE Mediators networks, SEECP high-level and SEEMIC WG;

- Conduct promotional awareness-raising activities; Follow up on regional initiatives.

8.3 CROSS-BORDER INSTITUTION BUILDING -CBIB+ PHASE III

Programme reference:	Multi-country Action Programme 2017/039-402
Project title:	Cross-border Institution Building - CBIB+ Phase III
EU contribution:	EUR 2 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans (WB)
Type of contract:	Service contract with GIZ International Services (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH)
Contract reference:	CN 2018/403-501
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Links:	www.cbibplus.eu
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PURPOSE

The overall objective of the action is to enhance regional coordination and harmonisation of approaches and mechanisms in the field of cross-border cooperation (CBC) at intra-Western Balkans (WB) borders, by promoting a culture of best practices and sharing of experience. It also aspires to improve the technical capacity of management structures, as well as the quality of project operations.

ACTIVITIES (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)OUTPUTS (JULY-DECEMBER 2019)

- Technical capacity of the programme managers strengthened thanks to the provision of training and advice.
- Enhanced networking between CBC stakeholders in the WBs through different regional events and the proceedings of technical working groups.
- Improved accountability of the CBC programmes through a streamlined performance measurement methodology and regular use of the regional monitoring system.
- Best practices culture and sharing of experiences promoted (events, project newsletter Yellow&Blue, KEEP database, on-line tools, etc.).
- The establishment of an electronic tool for the use of lessons learnt (capitalisation) was initiated.
- Enhanced visibility and promotion of the CBC programmes and their achievements (monthly e-bulletins of flash news, website, Facebook, promotion of programmes and the project during the 2019 European Week of Regions and Cities, etc.).

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Three regional CBC events: a workshop for communication managers, a workshop on project monitoring for joint technical secretariats' staff and a regional forum for national authorities on the development of the IPA III CBC programmes;
- Facilitating the proceedings of technical working groups and providing the necessary technical inputs;
- Preparation and submission of an application, together with INTERACT, for a workshop under the 2020 European Week of Regions and Cities;
- Paving the way for a successful (efficient and effective) IPA III CBC programming process: recruitment of experts, training on strategy development and formulation, collection of relevant and useful documents for the programming experts, performing initial analysis, etc.;
- Provision of demand-driven technical assistance to the stakeholders;
- Regular update and further improvement of the regional monitoring system;
- Progress with the establishment of a capitalisation network on environment;
- Constant promotion of CBC programmes: upgraded website, monthly e-bulletins of flash news, updated electronic tools, publication of the second issue under this contract of the project's newsletter.