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ANNEX 12

to the Commission Implementing Decision on the financing of the multi-country multiannual action plan in favour of the Western Balkans and Turkey for 2021-2022

Action Document for “Strengthening employment, labour and social protection systems and policies in the Western Balkans with SOCIEUX+”

1. SYNOPSIS

1.1. Action Summary Table

Title	Strengthening employment, labour and social protection systems and policies in the Western Balkans with SOCIEUX+ Multi-country multiannual action programme in favour of the Western Balkans and Turkey for 2021-2022
CRIS/OPSYS number	IPA III/2021/NEAR>INTPA/12
Basic Act	Financed under the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA III)
Team Europe Initiative	No
Zone benefiting from the action	Western Balkans (Republic of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, Republic of North Macedonia, and Republic of Serbia)
Programming document	IPA III Programming Framework
PRIORITY AREAS AND SECTOR INFORMATION	
Window and thematic priority	Window 4 - Competitiveness and Inclusive growth Thematic Priority 1 - Education, employment, social protection and inclusion policies, and health
Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	Main SDG: SDG 01: No Poverty Other significant SDGs: SDG 08: Decent Work and Economic Growth SDG 10: Reduced Inequality SDG 03: Good Health and Well-being SDG 05: Gender Equality
DAC code(s)	16020 - Employment creation – 50% 16010 - Social protection – 50%
Main Delivery	Public sector institut – 10000

* 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.

Channel @				
Markers (from DAC form)	General policy objective @	Not targeted	Significant objective	Principal objective
	Participation development/good governance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Aid to environment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Gender equality and women's and girl's empowerment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Trade development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Reproductive, maternal, new-born and child health	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Disaster Risk Reduction	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Inclusion of persons with Disabilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Nutrition	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	RIO Convention markers @	Not targeted	Significant objective	Principal objective
	Biological diversity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Combat desertification	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Climate change mitigation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Climate change adaptation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Internal markers	Policy objectives	Not targeted	Significant objective
Digitalisation		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Migration		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
COVID-19		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
BUDGET INFORMATION				
Amounts concerned	Budget line: 15 02 02 01.02 Total estimated cost: EUR 3 000 000 Total amount of EU budget contribution: EUR 3 000 000 - year 2021			
MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION				
Type of financing and method(s) of implementation	Project Modality Indirect management with the Consortium of Member State Agencies comprised of Lead contractor, Agence Française d'Expertise Technique Internationale (AFETI), and partners: Fundación Internacional y para Iberoamérica de Administración y Políticas Públicas (FIIAPP) and Belgium Technical Cooperation (Enabel).			

	The action will be co-delegated to the Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA)
Relevant priorities and flagships from Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans	Priorities: Human Capital Development Flagships: X Youth Guarantee
Final date for concluding contribution / delegation agreements, procurement and grant contracts	At the latest by 31 December 2022
Indicative operational implementation period	72 months following the adoption of the Financing Decision

1.2. Summary of the Action

The action will give the Western Balkans **access to the European Union Expert Facility on Employment, Labour and Social Protection (SOCIEUX+)**, a demand-driven facility which provides short-term, peer-to-peer technical assistance. The action will support the Western Balkans in developing **employment, labour and social protection strategies, systems and policies that are more inclusive, effective, responsive, resilient and sustainable**. These are critical areas of support to the populations, in particular in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and in its aftermath.

The action will include two areas of support: 1) Labour and employment and 2) Social protection.

SOCIEUX+ actions are micro-projects (actions) implemented through single or several short-term technical assistance (TA) interventions (activities) addressing needs and/or shortcomings in the areas covered by the SOCIEUX+ scope of work. Activities are in general implemented through TA missions onsite, but these may be complemented by distance-support.

The activities will have a strong component of knowledge development and might take the form of trainings, knowledge creation and other formal events, elaboration of knowledge-based products (information systems, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for instance), including thematic briefs and knowledge sharing activities, etc.

2. RATIONALE

2.1. Context Analysis

The action will support the Western Balkans to strengthen employment, labour and social protection systems and policies. These areas are critical to support the populations of the region in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and in its aftermath. Enhancing Human Capital Development in the Western Balkans is also essential for socio-economic development and to improve the region's competitiveness and job creation. Access to social protection, health and employment are rights and conditions for a decent life. The COVID-19 pandemic has also highlighted the necessity to strengthen the preparedness, response capacities and resilience of health and social protection systems in the Western Balkans.

The action will help the Western Balkans to meet the Copenhagen criteria by addressing the key challenges and weaknesses identified in the **Economic Reform Programmes (ERP)** in the areas of employment, social protection and health and by supporting the implementation of priority reforms and the policy guidance jointly agreed with each

partner beneficiary in the ERP process. It will also contribute to the alignment on Chapters 19 and 28 of the EU *acquis*.

The action is also in line with the **Economic and Investment Plan (EIP)¹ for the Western Balkans** and in particular to its priority area 6 on enhancing support to human capital development and the flagship 10 on supporting the establishment of Youth Guarantee schemes in the Western Balkans.

The main objectives are the following:

- **Overall objective:** To expand and improve access to better employment opportunities and inclusive social protection systems in the Western Balkans.
- **Specific objective:** To support the Western Balkans in developing and implementing employment and social protection policies, strategies, systems, measures and schemes that are more inclusive, effective and sustainable.

2.2. Problem analysis by areas of support

AREA OF SUPPORT #1: Labour and employment

In the context and aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, **employment systems and policies** have become critical areas of urgent action in the Western Balkans. The employment sectors in the region are in need of improved policies and a better match between labour supply and labour demand, improved quality of existing jobs in terms of income and working conditions, and a better access to decent jobs through skills development and effective policies. The existing socio-economic disparity gap between the Western Balkans and the EU deepens even further when it comes to the most vulnerable and marginalised groups of the population, including Roma and other minority groups.

Public authorities and mandated bodies at central, regional and local levels in the Western Balkans with responsibilities in the fields of labour and employment are facing challenges to implement policies and systems that are more inclusive, resilient and sustainable. The shortcomings identified in the Western Balkans' ERPs reveal the need for a demanding policy scheme in terms to tackle *inter alia* informality and long-term unemployment. Also the high rates of young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs) cause concerns, due to notably the detrimental short- and long-term impacts on human capital development and the economy. In addition to this, the slow socio-economic recovery following the effects of the pandemic will expectedly take further toll on the Western Balkans' labour markets.

AREA OF SUPPORT #2: Social protection

The importance of social protection in the Western Balkans has been further highlighted against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic. In this scenario, the Western Balkans' strategies on social inclusion, health insurance, income support and poverty alleviation have become urgent axes of policy work from central authorities. Improvements around the public expenditure on social protection, the articulation of clearly defined objectives and the coordination of mitigating measures to extend social protection coverage are needed in order to remedy the fundamental challenges. In some cases, the domestic social dialogue is very weak, leading to a poor policy impact.

Technical action is required in order to increase the coverage of population by social protection in the Western Balkans, as well as to contribute to the internal institutional strengthening for better monitoring and implementation. More inclusive, effective and shock responsive strategies will help the region to address its policy weaknesses and increase awareness and knowledge on social protection.

2.3. Relevance and complementarity with strategies supported by key stakeholders

The EU Expert facility will target institutions concerned with labour market strategy, including central governments, ministries, government bodies, public employment services and labour inspectorates. Regional or local authorities in charge of the provision of employment will also be part of the main beneficiaries of the actions undertaken in the framework of the programme. In addition, social partners, such as the representative organisations of employers and workers, and similar organisations may also benefit from the activities too in some cases. The strategies of central stakeholders will be duly taken into account when designing activities under this action in order to ensure relevance

¹ COM(2020) 641, 6.10.2020.

and complementarity.

The activities funded under this action will be complementary to ongoing and future actions funded under IPA II and IPA III and other sources.. The Strategic Responses submitted by the Western Balkans for IPA III outline and ensure compatibility with sectoral strategies, including those relevant for Thematic Priority 1 of Window 4, such as multi-annual strategies on employment and the social inclusion of vulnerable groups. Strategies of key stakeholders are therefore central for identifying activities under IPA III as well as under this Facility.

2.4. Relevance and complementarity with EU policy and EU and other donors' assistance

This action will contribute to improving Human Capital Development in the region as envisaged under priority area 6 of the European Investment Plan (EIP), adopted by the Commission in October 2020². The EIP flagship initiative under this priority area is to support partner beneficiaries to establish and implement Youth Guarantee schemes in the region based on the model of the EU Youth Guarantee.

The action will support the Western Balkans in aligning with EU social standards and policies, as foreseen by the [European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan](#) adopted by the Commission in March 2021 in order to implement the principles of [European Pillar of Social Rights](#). This is broadly in line with the 2020 [Roadmap for Recovery – Towards a more resilient, sustainable and fair Europe](#) of the Commission and the Council as well as the [Recovery Plan for Europe](#) first put forward by the Commission in May 2020.

During the programming period 2021-27, the EIP is an integral part of the support to the Western Balkans. It is built on the foundations of the proposal for IPA III as well as reinforced instruments to foster public and private-sector investment and a stronger focus on green economy and digital transition. Activities under this Facility will also be compatible with the Commission assessments and joint policy guidance formulated as part of the annual Economic Reform Programmes (ERP). The action will also be aligned with the work conducted by the Employment and Social Affairs Platform (ESAP), managed by the Regional Cooperation Council and the International Labour Organisation.

The EU Delegations and NEAR's geographic and thematic units will be systematically consulted whenever a request is received in order to ensure, inter alia, the non-duplication of activities as well as coherence with bilateral programmes as, for example, the Sweden funded "Integrated Private Employment Services" action, including from the International Financial Institutions and strategies. At programme level, the Facility has set up information exchanges with other existing facilities and peer-to-peer support mechanisms, including TAIEX, Twinnings and the activities of the European Training Foundation (in the skills/ human capital development sector). This will ensure complementarity of activities.

2.5. Lessons learned and links with previous financial assistance

A key lesson is that strong political commitment by the regional structures is necessary. Therefore, the proposed activities are in line with the Economic Investment Plan (EIP), which was welcomed by the Western Balkans leaders at the [Sofia Summit in November 2020](#), and the Western Balkans reform priorities and joint policy guidance formulated as part of the annual Economic Reform Programmes (ERP). In addition, in July 2021 in Slovenia, the Ministers and the Representatives of the Western Balkans responsible for employment endorsed a Declaration on ensuring sustainable labour market integration of young people, with concrete steps to gradually establish, implement and enhance, respectively, Youth Guarantee schemes.

Engagements to ensure inclusion and commitment of the political level will continue in the future.

3. DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION

3.1. Planned results and intervention logic (describing causal links between impact, outcome(s) and output(s) and including assumptions)

The action will provide the Western Balkans **access to the European Union Expert Facility on Employment, Labour and Social Protection (SOCIEUX+)**, a demand-driven facility which provides short-term, peer-to-peer technical assistance in support of the Western Balkans efforts to set up effective and inclusive employment, labour and social protection strategies. Thus, institutional capacities of employment, labour and social protection institutions are

² COM (2020) 641 final, 6.10.2020

strengthened and reinforced. As a result, better design and implementation of policies in these areas, assuming the effective utilisation of gained capacities in the Western Balkans, will allow to address the problems identified in section 2.2 by *inter alia* improving access to social protection, health insurance and employment.

SOCIEUX+ covers a niche market for technical cooperation that would otherwise be neglected by standard international cooperation mechanisms. Expertise is drawn mostly from public or mandated bodies of EU Member States to take full advantage of the European experiences, as well as of relevant civil-society organisations and international specialised organisations. It can also take a triangular cooperation to respond to the needs of partner institutions by mobilising practitioners from partner beneficiaries in combination to EU Member States' experts. The ability to trigger joint implementation and complementarity with international specialised agencies adds to the appropriateness and effectiveness of SOCIEUX+ actions.

Institutional capacities of employment, labour and social protection institutions will be strengthened and reinforced (**Output 1**); Public capacities for improving access to employment and social protection will be enhanced and expanded to poor and vulnerable groups (**Output 2**); and awareness and knowledge on social protection and decent work will be increased (**Output 3**), jointly leading to the achievement of more inclusive, effective and sustainable employment and social protection policies, strategies and systems (**Outcome 1**), in turn contributing to achieving expanded and improved access to better employment opportunities and inclusive social protection systems in the Western Balkans (**Impact**).

3.2. Indicative type of activities

SOCIEUX+ actions are micro-projects implemented through single or several short-term technical assistance (TA) interventions addressing needs and/or shortcomings on the areas covered by the SOCIEUX+ scope of work. Activities are in general implemented through TA missions onsite, but these may be complemented by distance-support.

The key activities implemented by SOCIEUX+ will be **demand-driven**. Based on the beneficiaries requests and once the request is jointly fine-tuned with the SOCIEUX+ implementation team (in NEAR HQ and EU Delegations/Office) and approved, the EU experts contracted by the facility will provide **high quality expertise and short term TA in response to specific requests in the employment, labour and social protection sectors formulated by the Western Balkans**.

Peer-to-peer approaches are prioritised, working with experts from EU Member States will take full advantage of the European experiences, ensuring the expertise is adapted to the beneficiaries' context and needs. The activities guarantee ownership and commitment of the beneficiaries.

The activities have a strong component of **knowledge development** and might take the form of trainings, knowledge creation and other formal events, elaboration of knowledge-based products (information systems, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for instance), including thematic briefs and knowledge sharing activities.

AREA OF SUPPORT #1: Labour and employment

SOCIEUX+ focuses its efforts in the area of labour & employment on supporting eligible Partners Institutions, in particular ministries of labour and related agencies, which face serious challenges in the design and implementation of effective employment strategies and labour market policies, such as, but not limited to:

- Comprehensive employment strategies, including tailored implementation plans;
- Labour market information systems and other intelligence and operational research;
- Active and passive labour market policies, including policies targeted at certain groups;
- Compliance with international labour standards;
- Informal labour and its economic transition policies and strategies;
- Employment of migrant populations;
- Employment and participation of persons with disabilities or illnesses;
- Vocational education and training (VET) and skills development;
- Labour intensive [public] work programmes;
- Labour market intermediation;
- Inclusive labour markets;
- Social dialogue;
- Circular migration; and
- Bilateral employment agreements and intra-regional migration.

AREA OF SUPPORT #2: Social protection

SOCIEUX+ addresses main challenges in partner beneficiaries on the design and operationalisation of social protection systems and programmes that have better coverage, are more equitable and inclusive, efficient, appropriate, and fiscally feasible and sustainable. Such support covers, but is not limited to:

- Legal and institutional frameworks for the provision of effective and efficient social protection coverage;
- Individual and organisational capacities for policy-making;
- Capacity building for social protection programmes, systems and policy implementation;
- Advocacy and capacity building for mainstreaming and cross-sectorial policies and issues related to social protection;
- Advocacy and capacity building for sustainability of domestically funded social protection systems and programmes;
- Portability of social benefits and rights at central and regional levels;
- Social protection coverage and inclusion of migrant workers and their dependents; and,
- Empowering of civil society and social partners on social protection.

3.3. Risks and assumptions

Risks	Risk level (H/M/L)	Mitigating measures
Risk 1 Insufficient flow of demands from the Western Balkans	M	A strategic coordination will be set up with INTPA and NEAR thematic and geographic units, involving EU Delegations/Office in Western Balkans . This strengthened coordination will aim at disseminating targeted knowledge and communication materials, raising the profile of the Facility by organising prospecting missions or regional events.
Risk 2 Unwillingness of EU Member States to make available qualified experts for short-term missions and within short deadlines.	M	The Facility operates since 2013 and several measures have been initiated during Phase 2 of the project in order to mitigate this risk: (i) reinforced communication strategy towards relevant ministries and agencies in EU Member States; (ii) enlarging the expert database and the network of focal points in EU Member States' ministries and agencies (including networks such as the European Network of Public Employment Services, the Senior Labour Inspectors' Committee, etc.); (iii) increased flexibility to mobilise experts from civil society organisations (CSOs) or the private sector when appropriate.
Risk 3. Resistance/limitations/lack of capacity, skills and knowledge from EU Member States to adopt and mainstream gender responsive rights based approach to address decent work, employment and social protection issue. The main risk is to have gender and vulnerability blind approaches (unavailability of sex desegregated data, gender analysis, lack of priorities on gender issues related to employment, etc.).	L	The Facility will mobilise human rights and gender expertise and provide with ad hoc technical assistance to make sure gender responsive rights based approach is coherently integrated into all the supports to partner beneficiaries efforts to set up effective employment, labour and social protection strategies and systems. There is good track-record of gender responsive and rights based approach in the the work of the Facility since 2013.
Assumptions (to be reflected in the Logical Framework Matrix above) – grouped by outputs and outcomes		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Western Balkans are willing to engage operationally in cooperation in the field of employment, labour and social protection with the support scheme put in place by the programme. ➤ Experts in the public administrations of EU Member States and emerging and developing beneficiaries are 		

willing to be mobilised for providing expertise in requesting partners and sending ministries and agencies are prepared to make their staff available.

- The project's management team can rapidly adapt to the extension of the Facility and face the increasing demand for intervention.

3.4 Mainstreaming

Cross-cutting issues will be duly taken into account in the assessment of requests, design and implementation of activities.

This mainstreaming is immediately ensured by the action team, which applies the Rights Based Approach from a gender perspective when designing the actions together with the requesting institutions. Despite the demand-driven nature of the action, the approach taken by the action team ensures an effective impact on impact on issues such as gender, governance and social inclusion. Cross-cutting issues such as gender, human rights, social inclusion and equality are being inherently addressed through the thematic nature of the activities (most of the activities implemented address issues that directly or indirectly benefit groups in vulnerable situation). Gender equality and disability are checked ex-ante during the assessment of requests, and an additional level of quality control takes place when INTPA reviews the interventions and consults appropriate services for reviewing purposes. Nonetheless, a more pro-active approach will be taken where possible when designing and formulating requests with institutions in the Western Balkans to ensure both direct and indirect impact on cross-cutting issues.

The complementarity with other technical assistance facilities reinforces the mainstreaming; this is especially the case for the rights of persons with disabilities, given the complementarity with Bridging the Gap and the Support Desk on RBA and Gender Mainstreaming to INTPA.

Gender mainstreaming also takes place in the mobilisation of the experts. The Facility tries to ensure that a balanced number of male and female experts are mobilised.

3.5. Conditions for implementation

There are no particular conditions required for the start of the implementation of this action.

3.6. Logical Framework for PROJECT MODALITY (3 levels of results / indicators / Baselines / Targets / Source of Data / Assumptions - no activities)

Results	Results chain: Main expected results (maximum 10)	Indicators (at least one indicator per expected result)	Baselines (year)	Targets (year)	Sources of data (1 per indicator)	Assumptions
Impact	To achieve expanded and improved access to better employment opportunities and inclusive social protection systems in the Western Balkans	<p>IMP1: Proportion of population covered by Social Protection floors/systems, by sex, in the Western Balkans</p> <p>IMP2: Unemployment rate by sex and persons with disabilities, in the Western Balkans</p>			<p>Reports of International organisations (mainly ILO databases)</p> <p>National statistical offices or employment services in the Western Balkans</p> <p>SDG annual progress reports and statistical annexes</p> <p>SOCIEUX+ knowledge- based products /expert reports</p>	<i>Not applicable</i>
Outcome 1	More inclusive, effective and sustainable employment and social protection policies, strategies and systems are achieved	<p>OC1: Number of regulatory adjustments and policy reforms in the areas of employment, labour and social protection moved forward with SOCIEUX+ interventions</p> <p>OC2: Number of SOCIEUX+ Actions leading to internal institutional strengthening, such as internal plans and reorganisations to enhance capacity of the social protection and employment institutions</p>			<p>PMT – Common Indicators Framework</p> <p>Final/interim project reports and evaluations</p> <p>Beneficiary policies official documents</p> <p>External evaluations reports</p> <p>Ex-post evaluation and survey on outcomes of beneficiaries conducted before final</p>	<p>Employment, labour and social protection issues remain a priority in the Western Balkans securing sufficient demand for support through SOCIEUX+</p> <p>Funding is available for the implementation of policies that SOCIEUX+ experts help design/revise.</p> <p>Economic conditions do not deteriorate to the point where employment</p>

					reporting	and social protection programmes cannot cope with demand. Willingness of Partner institutions to engage operationally in the fields of employment, labour and social protection with the support scheme put in place by the programme Other relevant actions implemented in the partner do not negatively impact on SOCIEUX+ interventions
Output 1 related to Outcome 1	<i>Institutional capacities of employment, labour and social protection institutions are strengthened and reinforced</i>	OP1: Number of actions by type of assistance (disaggregated by area of work, geographic region and relevance for gender and people living with disabilities). OP2: Number of institutions directly benefiting from SOCIEUX+ technical assistance (multiple counts of same institution possible)			SOCIEUX+ database of beneficiaries Reports on results of pre- and post-training tests SOCIEUX Intermediary and final reports	Political stability in the Western Balkans, without excessive changes of government and allowing continuous implementation of employment and social protection programmes. Western Balkans, international organisations, development partners and other stakeholders appoint relevant staff with necessary authority to participate in global
Output 2 related to Outcome 1	<i>Public capacities for improving access to employment and social protection are enhanced and expanded to poor and vulnerable groups</i>	OP3: Percentage of participants in SOCIEUX+ events who reported an enhancement of their knowledge on employment and social protection for poor and vulnerable groups			SOCIEUX+ database of event participants Feedback and	

<p>Output 3 related to Outcome 1</p>	<p><i>Awareness and knowledge on social protection and decent work is increased</i></p>	<p>OP4: Number of representatives of social protection and employment institutions participating in SOCIEUX+ events (disaggregated by sex and Western Balkan)</p> <p>OP5: Percentage participants reporting satisfaction with and adequacy of knowledge development events' (disaggregated by sex)</p>			<p>satisfaction questionnaires of participants to knowledge development events</p> <p>Feedback questionnaires from partner institutions on SOCIEUX+ activities</p>	<p>and regional events.</p> <p>Western Balkans, international organisations, development partners and other stakeholders engage in contributing, using and disseminating recommendations/ operational guidance/lessons learnt on the basis of the supported actions</p> <p>Civil servants whose capacities are strengthened by SOCIEUX+ remain in their posts and in the beneficiaries , and they have an opportunity to apply what they have learned in their jobs.</p>
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4. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

4.1. Financing agreement

In order to implement this action, it is not foreseen to conclude financing agreements with the relevant IPA beneficiaries.

4.2. Implementation modalities

The Commission will ensure that the EU appropriate rules and procedures for providing financing to third parties are respected, including review procedures, where appropriate, and compliance of the action with EU restrictive measures³.

4.2.1. Indirect management with Member State Organisations

This action may be implemented in indirect management with a partnership of EU Member States: Agence Française d'Expertise Technique Internationale, acting as a Lead entity of the implementation Partnership, the Fundación Internacional y para Iberoamérica de Administración y Políticas Públicas (FIIAPP) and Belgium Technical Cooperation (Enabel).

This implementation entails implementation of all aspects of the action, including management, coordination and provision of expertise contributing to the outcome, and all outputs specified under section 3. This implementation will result in expanded and improved access to better employment opportunities and inclusive social protection systems in the Western Balkans by mobilising experts from EU Member States' administrations.

The envisaged entities have been selected using the following criteria: The selected partnership of EU Member State agencies already provides Socioux support (since 2013, currently implementing the third phase of the project) to partners in Africa, Latin America and Caribbean, Asia, Pacific and Neighbourhood countries. The partnership provides access to experts through their established networks. Furthermore, the partnership has an extended knowledge on institutional needs and gaps, and secures institutional linkages beyond project implementation. Each entity fulfills the criteria separately.

In case the envisaged entities mentioned above would need to be (partially) replaced, the Commission's services may select another replacement entity using the same criteria. If the entity is (partially) replaced, the decision to replace it needs to be justified.

4.3. Scope of geographical eligibility for procurement and grants

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

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

4.4. Indicative budget

	EU contribution (amount in EUR) 2021	Indicative third party contribution, in currency identified 2021
Outcome 1, and Outputs 1, 2 and 3		
Indirect management with Expertise France, acting as lead entity of the implementation partnership	3 000 000	N/A
Totals	3 000 000	N/A

³ www.sanctionsmap.eu Please note that the sanctions map is an IT tool for identifying the sanctions regimes. The source of the sanctions stems from legal acts published in the Official Journal (OJ). In case of discrepancy between the published legal acts and the updates on the website it is the OJ version that prevails.

4.5. Organisational set-up and responsibilities

The Facility Management Team (FMT) is responsible for the daily management and implementation of SOCIEUX+.

The Programme Steering Committee (PSC) is the governing body of SOCIEUX+. The PSC areas of decision-making relate to the overall steering and strategic guidance. The PSC ensures close co-operation between the FMT, the Partnership members and European Commission relevant services. It provides a forum for discussion and decision-making on inputs and outputs of the Facility. Its contributions and decisions ascertain high-level commitment of all stakeholders for the achievement of SOCIEUX+ objectives and its smooth implementation. On the European Commission side, DG INTPA, DG NEAR and DG EMPL participate.

The Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) is the independent technical body responsible for the quality control in the formulation of actions. It is composed of permanent members that review and provide recommendations on the formulation of actions authorised (non-objected) by DG INTPA/DG NEAR.

In addition to the above-described governance and quality control structures, SOCIEUX+ also relies on the feedback of DG INTPA and DG NEAR to assess the relevance of requests and possible actions. Based on the eligibility and recommendations for the implementation of an action from the FMT (through their own background assessment of the context of the request, eventually by means of fact-finding missions) the FMT seeks the feedback of DG INTPA/DG NEAR for a 'non-objection' to proceed to the formulation of an action. DG INTPA/DG NEAR may consult for their decision with EU staff in headquarters and in EU Delegations/Office or other relevant stakeholders outside of the European Commission.

5. PERFORMANCE/RESULTS MONITORING AND REPORTING

5.1. Internal monitoring

The day-to-day technical and financial monitoring of the implementation of this action will be a continuous process, and part of the implementing partner's responsibilities. To this aim, the implementing partner shall establish a permanent internal, technical and financial monitoring system for the action and elaborate regular progress reports (not less than annual) and final reports.

Every report shall provide an accurate account of implementation of the action, difficulties encountered, changes introduced, as well as the degree of achievement of its results (outputs and direct outcomes) as measured by corresponding indicators, using as reference the Logframe matrix (for project modality).

SDGs indicators and, if applicable, any jointly agreed indicators as for instance per Joint Programming document should be taken into account.

The Commission may undertake additional project monitoring visits both through its own staff. In addition, the action might be subject to external monitoring in line with the European Commission rules and procedures.

5.2. Roles & responsibilities for data collection, analysis & reporting

The implementing partner will be requested to continuously capture, record and track key statistical information on the implementation of activities. Particular emphasis will be placed on systematic collection of data required to track progress on indicators identified in the logical framework.

5.3. Evaluation

Having regard to the nature of the action, a final evaluation will be carried out for this action or part of it via independent consultants contracted by the implementing partner.

The final evaluation will be carried out for accountability and learning purposes at various levels (including for policy revision), taking into account in particular, the fact that the action can provide valuable information and lessons learnt on the importance and complementarity of technical assistance facilities.

The evaluation reports shall be shared with the Western Balkans and other key stakeholders. The implementing partner and the Commission shall analyse the conclusions and recommendations of the evaluations and, where appropriate, in agreement with the Western Balkans, jointly decide on the follow-up actions to be taken and any adjustments necessary, including, if indicated, the reorientation of the action.

6. AUDIT

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

The financing of the audit shall be covered by another measure constituting a financing decision.

7. COMMUNICATION AND VISIBILITY

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

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

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

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

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

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

Communication on this Action should also take into consideration the risks from misinformation and disinformation, and the ways of countering these in order to avoid undermining the Union's efforts and image in the Western Balkans.

8. SUSTAINABILITY

The activities will have a good likelihood of sustainability firstly as they will be based on demands from the Western Balkans. Furthermore, they will be embedded in their relevant strategic frameworks, and each "mission" will be of a sufficient length to enable genuine capacity building. Furthermore, activities will be focussed on concrete outputs, policies etc., embedded in the policy frameworks of targeted institutions.