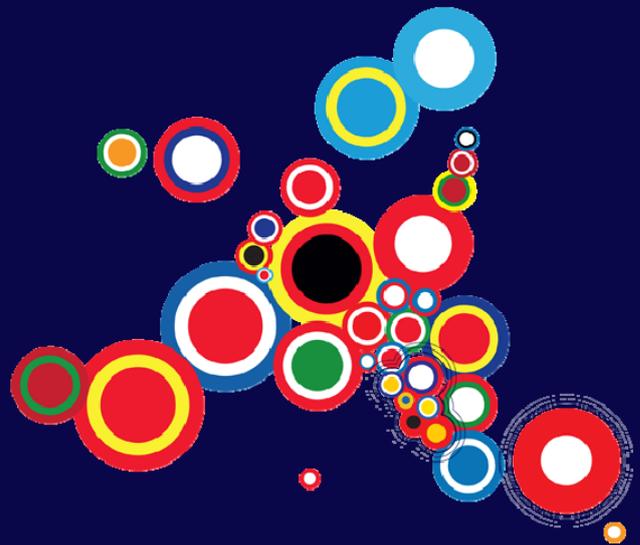




INSTRUMENT FOR PRE-ACCESSION ASSISTANCE (IPA II) 2014-2020

MULTI-COUNTRY

EU support to improving
education and skills
capabilities in the Western
Balkans and Turkey



Action summary

As candidate countries and potential candidates, the IPA II beneficiaries need to align with the EU *acquis*. In the area of education and training, this implies cooperation with Member States for convergence on policy reforms and participation in the EU's programme in the field of education. In addition the IPA II beneficiaries should follow the latest developments in EU standards and strive to meet the targets that the EU Member States have set for themselves in improving education and training.

The action comprises two interventions that intend to reduce the gap between the IPA II beneficiaries and the rest of Europe in these fields.

Action Identification			
Action Programme Title	IPA II Multi-country Action Programme 2018		
Action Title	EU support to improving education and skills capabilities in the Western Balkans and Turkey		
Action ID	IPA 2018/040-822.03/MC/Improving education and skills capabilities		
Sector Information			
IPA II Sector	9. Regional and territorial cooperation		
DAC Sector	11220 – primary education 11330 – vocational training		
Budget			
Total cost	EUR 3.5 million		
EU contribution	EUR 3.5 million		
Budget line(s)	22.020401-- Multi-country programmes, regional integration and territorial cooperation		
Management and Implementation			
Management mode	Direct management		
<i>Direct management:</i> European Commission	Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, Unit C3 (in cross sub-delegation with Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations)		
Implementation responsibilities	Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, Unit C3 (in cross sub-delegation with Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations)		
Location			
Zone benefiting from the action	Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo*, Montenegro, Serbia) and Turkey		
Specific implementation area(s)	N/A		
Timeline			
Final date for contracting including the conclusion of delegation agreements	At the latest by 31 December 2019		
Final date for operational implementation	At the latest by 31 December 2022		
Policy objectives / Markers (DAC form)			
General policy objective	Not targeted	Significant objective	Main objective
Participation development/good governance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X

* 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.

Aid to environment	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gender equality (including Women In Development)	<input type="checkbox"/>	X	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trade Development	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reproductive, Maternal, New born and child health	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
RIO Convention markers	Not targeted	Significant objective	Main objective
Biological diversity	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Combat desertification	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Climate change mitigation	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Climate change adaptation	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

1. RATIONALE

PROBLEM AND STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

The IPA II beneficiaries should follow the latest developments in EU standards and strive to meet the targets that the EU Member States have set for themselves in improving education and training.

The Economic Reform Programme recognises the importance of vocational educational and training (VET) in underpinning industry and propelling economic growth. VET graduates are also job creators. Skills acquisition must be adopted and recognised in all types of training, be it formal, informal or non-formal as most of the training is happening in the informal sector. VET must be a coherent system whose purpose is to meet the demand of socio-economic development in terms of quality-skilled human resources, in coherence with the 2016 Torino Process¹ Regional Report, where the Western Balkans and Turkey have VET's responsiveness to the economy high on their reform agenda in a context of sluggish employment and high youth unemployment. Currently, in Western Balkans and Turkey, the relevance of VET to employment is limited, training is costly and investments by governments challenging. Though enrolment levels have increased the access of girls to VET remains challenging.

The main objective of the proposed pilot scheme is to promote skills acquisition and capacity building actions through VET training focused on the demand of the social economic environment; to increase reading literacy in the region and also to build capacities for both learner sand staff to create and innovate, anchored on a spirit of entrepreneurship and inventiveness.

Collaboration with key stakeholders (productive sectors, social partners, training institutions and professional associations, etc.) is crucial. The Ministers in charge of VET in the candidate countries together with the EU Member States and European Economic Area have committed themselves to implement the 2015 Riga Conclusions² to raise the overall quality and status of VET in order to meet the Education and Training (ET) 2020 strategic objectives. The European Training Foundation (ETF) has been entrusted to accompany the candidate countries in this journey.

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey (as Programme Countries of the Erasmus+ programme³) can already participate in the intra VET mobility scheme in an equal footing with other Programme Countries. With the launch of the new pilot scheme, the institutions, staff, and VET learners from the Western Balkans and Turkey will be able to cooperate more with the other Programme Countries. It is worth to mention though, that the candidate countries have joined the European Alliance for Apprenticeship, that Western Balkans and Turkey are part of the European Qualifications Framework Advisory Group, and that the relevant IPA II beneficiaries are progressing with Qualification Framework's implementation that also supports mobility.

The ET 2020 strategic framework includes a very important qualitative benchmark of fewer than 15% of 15 year-olds being under-skilled in reading, mathematics, and science as measured by PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment). The Western Balkans are far below this benchmark, far below the current EU or OECD average. The objective of this action is to fund participation in the *Progress in International Reading Literacy Study* (PIRLS) international test so that remedial measures can be taken in time to improve the pupils learning outcomes before they reach secondary level where PISA is applied. PIRLS provides internationally comparative data on how well children read by assessing students' reading achievements. It

¹ Torino Process 2016 Regional Report: South Eastern Europe and Turkey: European Training Foundation.

² Riga conclusions 2015 on a new set of medium-term deliverables in the field of vet for the period 2015-2020, as a result of the review of short-term deliverables defined in the 2010 Bruges communiqué.

³ Erasmus+ Programme Countries: 28 EU Member States, Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein.

also collects considerable background information on how education systems provide educational opportunities to their students, as well as the factors that influence how students use these opportunities. These background data include information about the following: national curriculum policies in reading; how the education system is organized to facilitate learning; students' home environment for learning; school climate and resources; and how instruction actually occurs in classrooms. This study has a 5-year cycle and the related activities build up on the capacity developed for and by TIMSS 2019. Following the same procedures PIRLS 2021 is recognized as a global metrics of reading achievement, it collects information on the broad context of education, and provides data from the crucial educational point when learning to read turns into reading to learn (4th year of schooling).

In preparation to the European path, the IPA II beneficiaries need to align their laws and policies with the EU *acquis* and demonstrate fulfilment of the Copenhagen criteria. The three basic criteria set out in recent years under the Enlargement strategy, under the heading, the Fundamentals First, are rule of law, public administration reform and economic governance and competitiveness. Better education and skills are the backbone for improving the above sectors and the engine for economic growth. There is now empirical evidence that there is a correlation between the level of education and a country's economic state, that improving education will increase GDP and that maintaining poor levels of education cost at the personal, social, political, cultural and economic level⁴. This is the common opinion in the EU and why three⁵ of the seven Flagship initiatives are directly or indirectly related to improving education, why the Erasmus+ programme received a 70% increase in the current EU budget and why the Member States have agreed on EU⁶ and national targets to meet by 2020 in the area of education and training. In addition, in these troubled times of extreme acts of violence and intolerance, quality education including tolerance and inter-cultural values is recognised as the imperative.

The Western Balkans are engaged in policy dialogue in the area of education on a bilateral and regional level with the European Commission. They are all making efforts to voluntarily converge with EU standards in the field of education and training but do not have the economic and at times the human resources needed. Their efforts are reviewed at the annual sub-committees and since 2014 they are involved in a reporting system (European Semester Light) under the regional cooperation of the Western Balkans Platform on Education and Training (WB PET) – an initiative by the Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture and Directorate General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations at the region's request. Also as of 2014, there has been increased participation in the Erasmus+ programme beyond cooperation in higher education to including the Western Balkans in the networks and working groups of the Open method of coordination (OMC). The latter has greatly strengthened the capacity of the Ministry staff and given them a window by which to cooperate bilaterally with their counterparts in the Member States. However, as high as their interest is in converging with EU standards and their intentions to reform their education systems, they are faced with restricted, often reduced central budgets to spread over many and varied needs.

As with the EU Member States, improving the quality of educational provision is of vital importance to the Western Balkans. Among the ET 2020 benchmarks set for the EU, a key measurement is PISA results of student skills in reading, mathematics and science. Not all of the Western Balkans have participated in the same PISA round until now and there is therefore no "official", comparable data on the level of these skills in their 15-year-olds. Others have participated sporadically claiming participation costs as too high. The PISA results for the relevant beneficiaries which have participated in PISA 2012 (Albania, Montenegro and Serbia) showed that they are far below EU average and even further from the ET 2020 target. A World Bank study, which analysed Serbia's 2012 results (the best in the region, in 43rd place out of 65 countries) claimed that 50-70% of the student population is functionally illiterate. This is most probably higher in Montenegro and Albania that came in 54th and 57th place respectively. It is therefore extremely important to have all of the Western Balkans participate in PISA so as to track their own progress over time and to be able to make comparisons among them and with the EU Member States. In PISA 2015 round, with results published in

2016, four relevant IPA II beneficiaries participated: Albania, Kosovo, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro. For those with enough comparable data to set the trend (Albania and Montenegro) their performances had slightly improved in mathematics, science and reading. The next round of PISA will be tested in 2018 with results foreseen in 2019. On this occasion, the Western Balkans 6 have engaged in the participation under their own costs, which shows that the commitment to carry on with such important international-based tests keeps growing in the region.

Besides PISA, there are other well-known international assessments of pupil and student achievements. The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) tests primary students in 4th and 8th grade on maths and sciences under the *Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study* (TIMSS). The IEA also carries on the PIRLS examination, which targets students in the grade that represents four years of schooling, counting from the first year of ISCED Level 1, which corresponds to the fourth grade in most countries. To better match the assessment to the achievement level of students, countries have the option of administering PIRLS or PIRLS Literacy at the fifth or sixth grade. PIRLS has monitored trends in reading achievement at the fourth grade since 2001. PIRLS is administered every five years, making 2021 the fifth assessment of PIRLS.

OUTLINE OF IPA II ASSISTANCE

Improving the educational provision is crucial to improving the economy but also society at large, ranging from increased capacity in various professions to better civic participation and civil society.

- Armed with their results in PIRLS, the Western Balkans can proceed to analyse them, and make policy and programme changes in order to improve students' skills. This will tie in well with one of the overarching topics of the regional policy dialogue under the WB PET, which is the education and training of teachers for primary and secondary schools. The results from PIRLS will also help prepare the participation and results of PISA testing later at secondary level. The key activities under this action are the participation of the Western Balkans in the international assessment described above. The participation costs for this assessment are twofold. One part are the international costs, which have a fixed price tag and the other part are the costs at beneficiary level, which vary depending on the salaries and capacities of available staff in the relevant IPA II beneficiaries. With this intervention, the EU will assist the Western Balkans in obtaining valuable data and information of their pupils by supporting the international costs of PIRLS while the IPA II beneficiaries themselves bear the costs at beneficiary level in terms of staff and other resources needed to conduct the testing.
- On VET Mobility, IPA assistance will be crucial to cover support to the area of Vocational Education and Training. These efforts will help the relevant IPA II beneficiaries to converge with the EU standards in three particular areas of concern for the region: the training of VET teachers with key competences and transversal skills, the modernisation of VET curricula for learning outcomes, and finally the reinforced links with the labour market that will ultimately improve the employability of VET learners. The mobility of VET learners and teachers is expected to be both incoming and outgoing while for learners the only envisaged mobility will be incoming. Quotas on the percentage of possible incoming VET learners and teachers from the Western Balkans will be applicable at a later stage but the idea is that this pilot scheme could benefit both Programme and Partner Countries, as defined under the Erasmus+ programme. Mobility of VET learners is envisaged to be from 2 weeks to 3 months, while mobility of staff will range from 2 to 60 days.

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	Learners	Staff
Incoming	Yes	Yes
Outgoing	No	Yes

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

Improvement of the quality of education in the Western Balkans is a high priority, which is found in all strategic documents, either directly or indirectly. The revised Multi-country Indicative Strategy Paper 2014-2020⁷ stresses that education has an impact on various facets of social and economic development and is a key driver of sustainable development. In order to track improvement statistics (including baseline figures) in international and widely recognised assessments, it is absolutely necessary to have an objective evaluation of progress on the path to improving educational outcomes.

Besides clear importance of education, training, and skills development for the Enlargement strategy, the South East Europe (SEE) 2020 strategy developed with the region's governments under the coordination of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) mirrors to a great extent the Europe 2020 strategy. One of the main pillars in the SEE 2020 strategy is Smart Growth and quality education is at its foundation. Furthermore, the flagships of *Skills and Mobility* and *Competitiveness* under the SEE 2020 strategy are directly linked to improving the quality and relevance of education in the region as stated in the SEE 2020 Programming Document 2016-2018: *Flagship "Skills and Mobility" is developed on a premise that the development of education and the improvement of labour force skills is a key factor that will underpin future economic recovery, growth of SEE economies and the restructuring towards knowledge driven economies.* The Flagship for Competitiveness recognises the need related policies in human capital development through education and employment and that productivity growth is strongly related to the capacity to innovate. The development of this capacity starts with education.

The Western Balkans also took part of the Trieste Summit in July 2017. They all have agreed to its subsequent conclusions, together with the Multi-Annual Action Plan (2020) for the Economic Area and committed to the implementation of the Mobility Agenda in complementarity to the trade, investment and digital agendas. Later on, in September 2017, the Ministers of Education had welcomed VET Mobility and the importance of quality education overall as well as mutual recognition of qualifications in the WB PET. Finally, the bi-lateral IPA VET reform programmes in the Western Balkans and Turkey together with the mutual benefit of bilateral and regional initiatives for mainstream reforms enhanced their willingness to cooperate in the VET sector.

The Western Balkans have been asked to develop Economic Reform Programmes starting in 2015 and to list their priorities. Among the recommendations, *inter alia* Bosnia and Herzegovina was asked to *improve the co-operation between the education system and labour market institutions*; Kosovo to *set up an action plan for tackling youth unemployment based on an assessment of the challenges and focussing on improving education outcomes including through improved teacher training and supporting school-to-work transitions*; and Montenegro to *implement strategies to align education and skills policies with labour market needs*.

LESSONS LEARNED AND LINK TO PREVIOUS FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Links to similar financial assistance can be made to the reimbursement of entry tickets for the participation of the Western Balkans in EU programmes. This type of assistance has proven to be problem-free with only

⁷ C(2018) 3442, 31.05.2018

the odd delay encountered in the payment of some of the relevant IPA II beneficiaries before they receive IPA support. However, as the PIRLS action is centralised and payments will be made directly by the EU to the responsible organisation conducting the testing, i.e. the IEA, no such problems are foreseen.

In the TIMSS 2019 exercise some difficulties have appeared when requesting the political engagement to carry on the tests in institutions responsible for its deployment. Most of them were late in nominating the key staff who will start the preparatory measures for the tests. This issue has been highlighted during the 6th WB PET Ministerial meeting in September 2017, requesting the explicit support for this kind of regional activities which had been considered a priority in 2015.

Erasmus+ offers training and learning opportunities for VET learners and staff and sector skills alliances only in the Erasmus+ Programme Countries. European VET systems have an excellent reputation abroad, which in some countries is due to the integrated links between education and the labour market and their relatively low level of youth unemployment, particularly among VET graduates. A move to internationalise the VET sector is taking place in the EU and a number of partner countries are asking for an international opening of the VET actions under Erasmus+, to benefit from the good experience, which has been accumulated in the framework of Erasmus+ and predecessor programmes. This has been a recurring issue highlighted during the Western Balkans Platform on Education and Training.

These current Erasmus+ actions in VET are not open to the EU's partner countries, but this pilot initiative will be using the existing good practice. This initiative is complementary to the VET facility, which will provide high-level expertise to national stakeholders to support transition processes towards more demand-driven VET systems adapted to the need and opportunities of the labour market and will pilot approaches to increase access to VET of women and disadvantaged groups. Turkey and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, as current Programme Countries of the programme could use their own experience to minimise the risks of the pilot scheme.

Relevant Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) need to be consulted and involved in the process (e.g. research, data gathering, awareness raising, sharing information on education policies, promoting equal access to educational services, especially for marginalized groups etc.). The possible relevant CSOs could be: parent associations, teacher unions, CSOs providing formal and informal education services, women's organisations advocating for right of women and girls in education, CSOs specialising in providing services and/or representing marginalised communities, universities and think tanks and research institutes working on evidence-based advocacy in public services.

2. INTERVENTION LOGIC

LOGICAL FRAMEWORK MATRIX

OVERALL OBJECTIVE	OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS (*)	SOURCES OF VERIFICATION	
<p>To improve the educational provision in reading in primary schools, capacity building in VET and VET-related skills in the Western Balkans</p> <p>Improved results in PIRLS (primary school level) and PISA (secondary level) over time</p> <p>The employability of VET learners has improved</p>	<p>Reading literacy specific</p> <p>Progress in pupils' reading outcomes in the Western Balkans at each IPA II beneficiary level</p> <p>Comparison of IPA II beneficiary performance within the region</p> <p>Comparison of IPA II beneficiary performance to the EU's ET 2020 benchmarks</p> <p>VET specific</p> <p>Extent to which the overall quality and status of VET has improved in the Western Balkans and Turkey</p>	<p>Reading literacy specific</p> <p>Results of PIRLS and PISA assessments over coming years</p> <p>VET specific</p> <p>Status given to VET and level of recognition and interest in VET qualifications and institutions by employers and (future) students</p>	
SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE	OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS (*)	SOURCES OF VERIFICATION	ASSUMPTIONS
<p>Reading literacy specific</p> <p>Participation in PIRLS' testing of 4th graders' reading literacy leads to (1) more evidence-based policy-making and to (2) changes in practices in the educational system</p> <p>VET specific</p> <p>Promotion of skills and capacity building actions through VET training focused on the demand of the social economic environment; enhancement of capacities for both learners and staff reinforce the links between VET and the labour market</p>	<p>Reading literacy specific</p> <p>Level of appropriation of the PIRLS process and results amongst stakeholders</p> <p>Extent to which PIRLS results have been used inform changes in policy and practice in the educational system</p> <p>Number, types and quality of changes in policy and practice in the educational system which ensued, e.g. change in teaching in the classrooms; in curricula; increased development needs analysis, in teacher training etc.</p> <p>Number of times reading literacy and VET are discussed during the Regional policy dialogue, and extent to which PIRLS results and the VET mobility scheme are mentioned</p> <p>VET specific</p> <p>Extent to which VET curricula has been modernised</p> <p>Extent to which the links VET meets labour market needs more</p> <p>Extent to which VET learners and providers are closer to labour market actors</p>	<p>Reading literacy specific</p> <p>PIRLS scores in reports published by IEA after next rounds of PIRLS assessment.</p> <p>VET specific</p> <p>Feedback from apprentices, trainers, and employers who benefitted from the VET mobility scheme, e.g. questionnaires</p> <p>Progress and final report</p> <p>Documents on Regional policy dialogue</p>	<p>The Western Balkans will actively engage in the international assessments and will dedicate the human and other resources needed at national level</p> <p>Lack of institutional resistance / Appropriate support a various levels to participation in PIRLS and in the VET mobility scheme</p> <p>Proper ownership of the processes</p> <p>Balanced interest – across countries and beneficiary countries - in participating in the VET mobility scheme</p>
RESULTS	OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS (*)	SOURCES OF VERIFICATION	ASSUMPTIONS
<p>Reading literacy specific</p> <p>Result 1:</p> <p>Ministry of education staff and primary and secondary school teachers are trained in PIRLS</p> <p>Result 2</p> <p>Ministry of education staff, teacher and directors are more aware of how to measure reading literacy, what contributes to it, via participation and training in this international assessment</p> <p>Result 3:</p> <p>Information on 4th graders' reading literacy is available and provided according to international standards;</p>	<p>Reading literacy specific</p> <p>Number of reports per relevant IPA II beneficiary on pupils' performance in PIRLS, including scores and analysis</p> <p>Extent to which the capacity of Ministry of education staff, school staff (teachers and directors) has been strengthened via their participation to and training on PIRLS</p> <p>VET specific</p> <p>Level and types of improvements in the skills, competences and knowledge of apprentices, students, trainers, and staff who</p>	<p>Reading literacy specific</p> <p>PIRLS reports produced after the testing</p> <p>Evidence of changes in educational strategies, curricula and teacher training in reading literacy</p> <p>Results of participation questionnaires from persons trained in conducting the PIRLS</p> <p>VET specific</p>	<p>The Western Balkans will want to continue their participation in international assessments, and apply lessons learned from experience</p> <p>Interest of capable VET providers in both regions in taking part in the scheme</p> <p>Manageable administrative burden including VISA procedures</p> <p>Support from EU Delegations, "National</p>

<p>comparisons of performance with that of other participants is possible</p> <p>VET specific</p> <p>Result 3:</p> <p>The skills, competences and knowledge of apprentices, students, trainers, and staff that participated in the VET mobility scheme have improved</p>	<p>participated in the VET mobility scheme</p> <p>Level of satisfaction with the VET scheme</p>	<p>Evidence of improvements in the skills, competences and knowledge of apprentices, students, trainers, and staff who participated in the VET mobility scheme, e.g. questionnaires to participants to the VET mobility scheme</p> <p>Progress and final report</p>	<p>Erasmus+ Offices" and local stakeholders in communicating on major the VET mobility scheme</p>

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES

The following actions will take place:

- With PIRLS intervention, the IEA will test pupils in the Western Balkans in 4th grade of elementary school on reading literacy. This participation will be organised directly between the relevant IPA II beneficiaries and the IEA which will inform and train the beneficiaries for their tasks. Participation in the testing of reading capabilities as measured by PIRLS in 4th grade will provide the following results: knowledge of pupil attainment at primary school level according to international standards and comparisons with other countries; baseline information for comparisons to PISA results at secondary level; data to diagnose the transition from primary to secondary education in terms of teaching and learning; experience with international testing which expects more analytical skills from students, not usually the case with home-made exams. Expected impact is: repeated participation in international assessment will focus on efforts to improve teaching and learning (this has been the case for PISA), improvements in terms of what is taught and how, and improved results in PIRLS and PISA over time (a decade). It is worth to mention that while the action seeks to tackle only the Western Balkans, Tukey has already participated in previous assessment rounds of PIRLS.
- **The tasks described further are performed at the IPA II beneficiary level under the auspice and support of IEA and the ISC as noted below.**
 - Stage 1: Preparing school sample (school sample usually is selected at the same time for the field test and for the main data collection), contacting schools, and sampling classes for the field test and then for the assessment administration
 - Stage 2: Preparing the field test instruments and then the assessment instruments for the data collection
 - Stage 3: Administering the field test and then the assessment at the "National Study Center" (NSC) and at the participating schools
 - Stage 4: Scoring student responses to the constructed-response items (for the field test and then again for the main data collection)
 - Stage 5: Creating the data files and reviewing the data (for the field test and then again for the main data collection)
 - Stage 6: Preparing reports at relevant IPA II beneficiary
- The VET pilot mobility scheme will aim to support learners in the acquisition of knowledge, skills and competences in order to improve their employability, and their personal development; improve the training offer (curriculum and placement experience) in VET institutes; improving the quality of VET teaching and training across the relevant IPA II beneficiary; raise participants' awareness and understanding of other cultures and countries, offering them the opportunity to build networks of international contacts; increase the capacities and international opening of VET providers in the relevant IPA II beneficiaries; reinforce synergies and transitions between formal and informal VET, employment and entrepreneurship and ensure better recognition of competences gained through learning periods abroad and finally prepare the Western Balkans Partner countries to become Erasmus + Programme Countries.
- VET mobility of staff will aim to build up their capacities to review and modernise curricula and teaching methods in their institutes of origin (contents and pedagogical methods). Mobility is also foreseen for managers, with a view to opening them up to different practices. Mobility of VET learners will put in practice a programme, which will build up the sectorial knowledge and the entrepreneurial

skills of students. It will form part of a "contract" that students will have with their teachers, with agreed upon follow-up training and support upon returning to home institutions. The mobility and capacity building will be organised by a consortium of VET providers from both regions: EU Member States on the one hand and the Western Balkans and Turkey on the other. The VET providers in the Member States will offer training for staff and students of VET institutions in the Western Balkans and Turkey, either in an educational organisation or in an enterprise. Capacity building missions will also be undertaken by EU staff in the region (firstly the colleagues from the EU Delegations and the National Agency in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and later one, once their legal basis will be amended, also the NEOs) to collaborate and modernise the training offer in VET institutions. Former VET learners themselves can also act as "ambassadors" for promoting and outreach of the VET Mobility Pilot Scheme.

RISKS

The main risk for the VET mobility scheme is indeed its pilot nature. However, Erasmus+ already offers a similar scheme for Programme Countries called "Mobility project for VET learners and staff" and most of the architecture of the pilot programme has been taken from there. A pilot scheme is always limited in its process and organisational scope, so it is important to design it to be able to test the most contentious risk areas on a regular basis. The rather small amount allocated is in fact an investment to a scheme that if successful can be mainstreamed later on. It is important that a thorough risk evaluation can be carried on after the end of the pilot phase in order to be confident with the risk that will be carried forward to a full implementation project in the future. Selecting a capable consortium of VET providers in both regions is a crucial aspect of the pilot scheme's success. The administrative burden, the age of the learners (minors) and the need to request specific VISA permissions in certain IPA II beneficiaries can also be an obstacle for the smooth running of the scheme.

A major information campaign should be carried out by EU Delegations, National Erasmus+ Offices and local stakeholders in order to ensure optimal budget absorption. The language barrier of VET learners could be a potential additional risk, as they tend to show a slightly lower performance of foreign languages compared to those enrolled into Higher Education Institutions. The more traditional mentality of VET schools in general, with the lack of initiative, experience or confidence needed for internationalization might request further support mechanisms such as permanent contacts persons, language courses or free of charge insurances. Finally, if learner mobilities are arranged at individual level, there is also a greater risk of smaller number of potential participants and greater hesitation. Group flows would be much easier to be organised and more attractive to participants since they imply more support and feeling of security.

As the IEA carries out PIRLS assessments since 2001, there is no risk foreseen at the organisational level. The only possible risk would be the capacity from the beneficiary side to dedicate the needed resources to run the tests and correct them. As the Ministers of Education themselves gave their engagement during the 5th Ministerial meeting of the WB PET in Vlorë, Albania in July 2015, this risk seems to be minimal. In addition, the relevant Ministry departments seem to be very keen on participating in the exercise, which is very similar to the one they are currently undergoing for TIMSS 2019 (they can use the same key staff within the Ministry for both assessments).

CONDITIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

For PIRLS, the Ministries, agencies or other relevant institutions need to send a letter to the IEA informing them of their commitment to participate in PIRLS and to complete the necessary registration. The EU needs to be informed of this by IEA before it can transfer the funds.

Failure to comply with the requirements set above may lead to a recovery of funds under this programme and/or the re-allocation of future funding.

3. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The action will be cross sub-delegated to the Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture for contracting and implementation.

IMPLEMENTATION METHOD(S) AND TYPE(S) OF FINANCING

The EU's support to the international costs of PIRLS, of a value of EUR 1.5 million EUR, will be directly managed by Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, which is responsible for the managing payments, reporting and monitoring of the activities. A grant with the IEA to be signed in Q3 2018. The EU grant will cover 100% of the total international costs. The direct award is based on Article 190 (1)(f) of the Rules of Application, since a particular type of body on account of its technical competence and its high degree of specialisation is required. The IEA carries out PIRLS assessments since 2001. Therefore its knowledge of the methodology and its mandate, strengths and valuable previous technical expertise on this specific type of activity constitutes an extremely valuable advantage for the implementation of the action. The Ministries, agencies or other relevant institutions responsible for education need to be involved for the management of the implementation of the PIRLS assessment in their schools.

Firstly, instruments are developed and field tested using procedures that are the same as those planned for the assessment administration. After the field test is conducted, scored, and the results analysed, the final instruments are selected for the assessment. Then, the assessment is conducted and the data are again scored, analysed, reviewed, and the results are reported.

The VET pilot mobility scheme with a support of EUR 2 million will be directly managed by Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture. DG EAC will be responsible for the selection of the consortium of VET providers and the implementation of the pilot scheme. The mobilities will be selected and managed by a consortium of VET providers from Erasmus+ Programme Countries with their counterparts in the Western Balkans and Turkey which will be selected through a Call for Proposals. The VET providers will offer mobilities for staff and students of VET institutions, either in an educational organisation or in an enterprise.

4. PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

METHODOLOGY FOR MONITORING (AND EVALUATION)

The European Commission may carry out a mid-term, a final or an ex-post evaluation for this action or its components via independent consultants, through a joint mission or via an implementing partner. In case a mid-term or final evaluation is not foreseen, the European Commission may, during implementation, decide to undertake such an evaluation for duly justified reasons either on its own decision or on the initiative of the partner. The evaluations will be carried out as prescribed by the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations guidelines on linking planning/programming, monitoring and evaluation. In addition, the action might be subject to external monitoring in line with the European Commission rules and procedures.

The Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, as well as the European Training Foundation and the concerned EU Delegations on the ground will contribute to the monitoring of the action.

INDICATOR MEASUREMENT

This table is to present the indicators listed in the logframe – so to enable the measurement of progress, starting from a baseline value (pre-intervention) to achieving targets, and specifying which sources of information exist to score them

Indicator	Baseline (2018)	Target (2021)	Final Target (2025)	Source of information																								
<p>A. Student performance in reading (mean score) as measured by PISA</p> <p>B. Education and Training 2020 benchmarks, including the qualitative benchmark of fewer than 15% of 15 year-olds being under-skilled in reading, also measured in PISA tests.</p>	<p>A, Pisa 2015 Mean score for Indicator "Student performance in reading (mean score)" :</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="622 486 1243 895"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2">Albania</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Reading</td> <td>405</td> </tr> <tr> <th colspan="2">Bosnia and Herzegovina (never participated)</th> </tr> <tr> <td>Reading</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <th colspan="2">Kosovo</th> </tr> <tr> <td>Reading</td> <td>347</td> </tr> <tr> <th colspan="2">the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia</th> </tr> <tr> <td>Reading</td> <td>352</td> </tr> <tr> <th colspan="2">Montenegro</th> </tr> <tr> <td>Reading</td> <td>427</td> </tr> <tr> <th colspan="2">Serbia (figures of 2012; no participation in 2015)</th> </tr> <tr> <td>Reading</td> <td>446</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Average OECD PISA mean score 2015 Reading 493</p> <p>B. % of PISA low performers in Reading 2015</p> <p>Albania: Male: 62.9% Female: 37.7% Total: 50.3%</p> <p>Bosnia and Herzegovina No indicators available</p>	Albania		Reading	405	Bosnia and Herzegovina (never participated)		Reading	0	Kosovo		Reading	347	the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia		Reading	352	Montenegro		Reading	427	Serbia (figures of 2012; no participation in 2015)		Reading	446	<p>A, Based on PISA 2018 results</p> <p>Albania Reading achievement (RA): 410</p> <p>Bosnia and Herzegovina RA: 360</p> <p>Kosovo RA:360</p> <p>the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia RA: 370</p> <p>Montenegro RA: 435</p> <p>Serbia RA: 460</p> <p>B. Improvement of the EU target</p>	<p>A. Based on PISA 2021 results</p> <p>Albania Reading achievement (RA): 425</p> <p>Bosnia and Herzegovina RA: 380</p> <p>Kosovo RA: 380</p> <p>the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia RA: 400</p> <p>Montenegro RA: 450</p> <p>Serbia RA: 480</p> <p>B. Improvement of the EU target</p>	<p>A. PISA Scores</p> <p>B. PISA measurements (share of 15 year-olds failing to reach level 2 in OECD's PISA for reading).</p>
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	<p>Kosovo Male: 83.2% Female: 70.3% Total: 76.9%</p> <p>the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia Male: 78.1% Female: 62.4% Total: 70.7%</p> <p>Montenegro Male: 49.0% Female: 34.4% Total: 41.9%</p> <p>Serbia No indicators available</p> <p>OECD average Male: 24.4% Female: 15.5% Total: 20.0%</p>	<p>based on proficiency below Level 2 (fewer than 15% of 15 year-olds being under-skilled) by at least 2%</p> <p>Albania: Male: 55% Female: 32%</p> <p>Bosnia and Herzegovina Male: 60% Female: 60%</p> <p>Kosovo Male: 76% Female: 65%</p> <p>the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia Male: 72% Female: 58%</p> <p>Montenegro Male: 43% Female: 31%</p> <p>Serbia Male: 35% Female: 35%</p>	<p>based on proficiency below Level 2 (fewer than 15% of 15 year-olds being under-skilled) by an additional 2%</p> <p>Albania: Male: 45% Female: 25%</p> <p>Bosnia and Herzegovina Male: 50% Female: 50%</p> <p>Kosovo Male: 69% Female: 58%</p> <p>the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia Male: 65% Female: 52%</p> <p>Montenegro Male: 40% Female: 28%</p> <p>Serbia Male: 27% Female: 27%</p>	
Individuals in VET mobility	0	More than 200 (2019)	More than 400 (2021)	Reports

5. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

GENDER MAINSTREAMING

This action will strive to promote gender equality as well to take measures to achieve equal opportunities for male and female in all aspects regarding the implementation of the action. Special attention on this regard will be given to VET learners and staff, since the gender gap is still very high in this type of formal education.

Gender equality incentives will also be incorporated in the activities concerning PIRLS, where the same percentage of girls and boys will participate in the assessments as the gender distribution found in the schools. The results of the assessment are broken down by gender as it is useful for the teachers, directors and policy maker to analyse them and develop appropriate gender-sensitive policy/practices in response to them.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Equal participation of women and men will be secured through appropriate information and publicity material, in the design of actions and accessibility to the opportunities they offer. An appropriate men/women balance will be sought on all the managing bodies and activities of the action.

MINORITIES⁸ AND VULNERABLE GROUPS

In these troubled times of extreme acts of violence and intolerance, education, mobility and skills development is recognised as crucial in combating hate crime, hate speech, intolerance and discrimination. Improving and modernising education in the Western Balkans will include the component of teaching inter-cultural values and tolerance.

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

This action helps to ensure an inclusive and transparent dialogue, consultation and communication with all relevant stakeholders in the respective sectors.

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE (AND IF RELEVANT DISASTER RESILIENCE)

Participation of students, staff, and learners will contribute to their knowledge of other fields of study according to international standards and comparisons with other countries. Therefore, the action has an indirect link to issues on environment and climate change, as its objective is to improve what is taught and how in order to improve educational provision also in these areas.

Climate action relevant budget allocation: EUR 0 million
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⁸ According to the Turkish legal system the word minorities encompasses only group of people defined and recognized as such on the basis of multilateral and bilateral instruments to which Turkey is a party.

6. SUSTAINABILITY

PIRLS is carried out in five-year cycles. In order to benefit from it, the Western Balkans should participate regularly to receive analysis and see their development. For the EU it is important to be able to compare progress by each relevant IPA II beneficiary over time and to compare results within the region.

VET mobility scheme is a pilot scheme.

7. COMMUNICATION AND VISIBILITY

Communication and visibility will be given high importance during the implementation of the action. The implementation of the communication activities shall be funded from the amounts allocated to the action.

All necessary measures will be taken to publicise the fact that the Action has received funding from the EU in line with the EU communication and visibility requirements in force. All stakeholders and implementing partners shall ensure the visibility of EU Financial assistance provided through IPA II throughout all phases of the programme cycle

Visibility and communication actions shall demonstrate how the intervention contributes to the agreed programme objectives and the accession process, as well as the benefits of the action for the general public. Actions shall be aimed at strengthening general public awareness and support of interventions financed and the objectives pursued. The actions shall aim at highlighting to the relevant target audiences the added value and impact of the EU's interventions and will promote transparency and accountability on the use of funds. Visibility and communication aspects shall be complementary to the activities implemented by the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations and the EU Delegations in the field. The European Commission and the EU Delegations should be fully informed of the planning and implementation of the specific visibility and communication activities

The Erasmus+ VET channels (Erasmus+ projects, EQAVET Network, National teams of ECVET experts, National agencies etc.) together with the National Erasmus+ Offices in the respective countries of the region will be used to disseminate a call across the EU Member States and in the region inviting applications for the initiative.