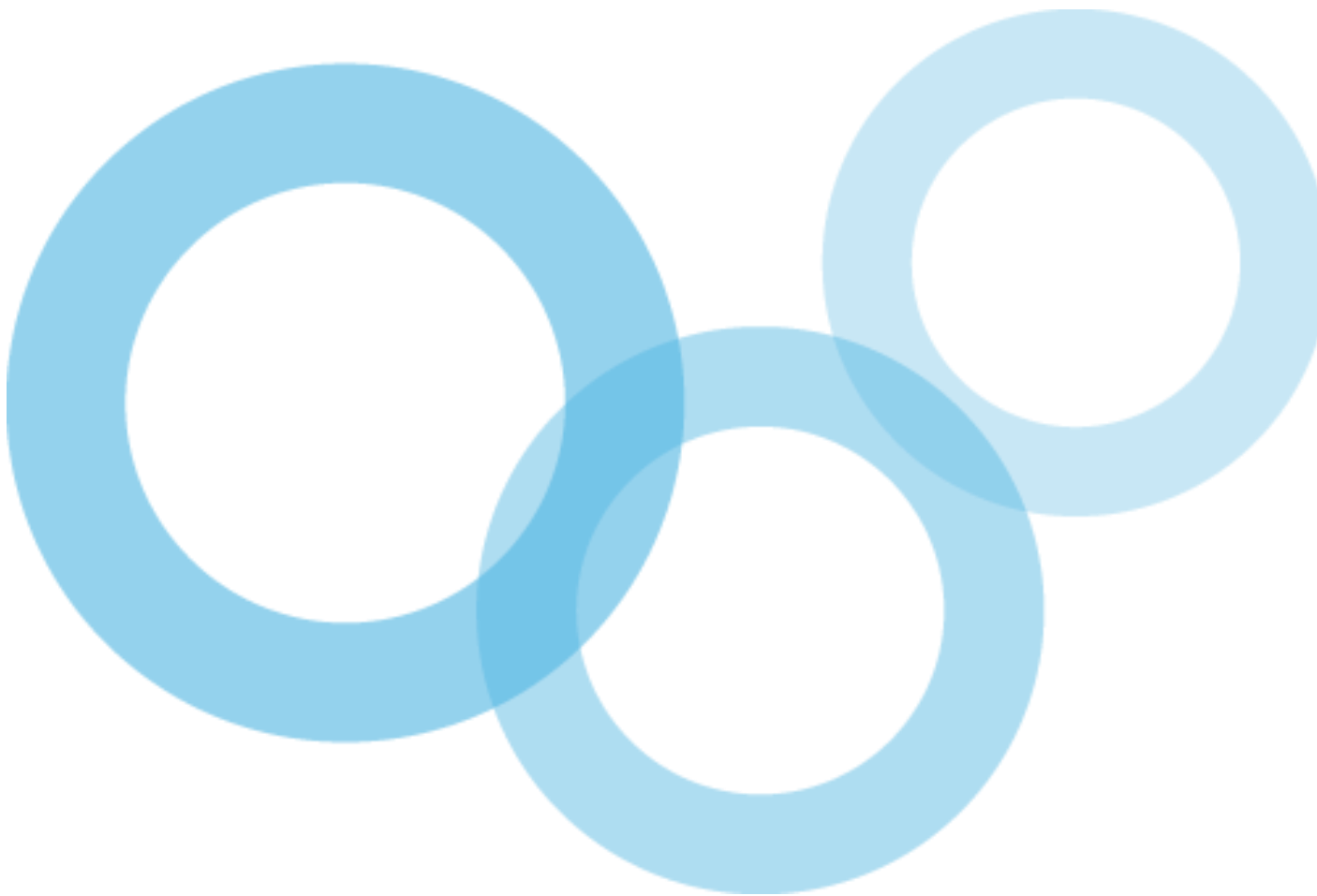




IPA MULTI-COUNTRY PROGRAMMES

ACTIVITY REPORT

JANUARY - JUNE 2020



D.5 WESTERN BALKANS REGIONAL COOPERATION AND PROGRAMMES

*Neighbourhood and
Enlargement
Negotiations*

CONTENTS

List of acronyms	4-11
CHAPTER 1: PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM	12
1.1 Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA)	12
1.2 Statistical Cooperation	14
1.3 Support for improvement in governance and management (SIGMA)	16
1.4 Strengthening accountability and the fiduciary environment (SAFE TF)	18
1.5 Revenue Administration	20
CHAPTER 2: RULE OF LAW AND FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS	<u>26</u>
2.1 Fight against organised crime and corruption	26
2.2 Judicial Reform Result	37
2.3 Roma integration	42
2.4 Regional Housing Programme (RHP)	49
2.5 Migration	50
2.6 Support to Reconciliation in the Western Balkans	58
2.7 Horizontal Facility	60
2.8 Support to the follow-up of Electoral recommendation in the Western Balkans	64
2.9 Security	67
2.10 Regional Programme for South Eastern Europe	71
2.11 Participation in EJTN training activities	73
2.12 Financial investigation	74
2.13 Prevention and countering violent extremism	76
2.14 Accounting for missing persons in the Western Balkans	79
2.15 Regional CSO Activism for regional reconciliation in the former Yugoslavia – RECOM	81
CHAPTER 3: ECONOMIC GOVERNANCE AND PRIVATE SECTOR DEVELOPMENT	85

3.1	Platform for sme Financing and Support in the Western Balkans	85
3.2	European Fund for Southeast Europe (EFSE)	88
3.3	OECD Support to Economic Competitiveness in South East Europe	92
3.4	TRADE - Support to facilitation of trade between CEFTA parties	96
3.5	Competitiveness	101
3.6	Trade	112
3.7	Crisis Response Pack	113
CHAPTER 4: INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT		117
4.1	Western Balkans Investment Framework (WBIF)	117
4.2	WBIF Connectivity Investment Grants	119
4.3	Horizontal support to IFI Coordination (IFICO)	121
4.4	WBIF Infrastructure Projects Facilities (IPF)	123
4.5	Technical Assistance to Connectivity in the Western Balkans (CONNECTA)	127
4.6	Joint Assistance to Support Projects in European Regions (JASPERS)	128
4.7	Energy Efficiency, Green fo Growth Fund (GGF)	130
4.8	Regional Energy Efficiency Programme for the Western Balkans (REEP)	132
CHAPTER 5: ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE		142
5.1	Environment Partnership Programme for Accession (EPPA)	142
5.2	Disaster Risk Management	145
CHAPTER 6: CIVIL SOCIETY AND MEDIA		149
6.1	Action Grants	149
6.2	Long-term grants	152
6.3	CSF 2019 - 2020	154
6.4	Technical Assistance to Civil Society Organizations (TACSO 3) in the WB and Turkey	158
6.5	Regional Programme on Local Democracy in the Western Balkans - ReLOaD	160
6.6	Media	162
6.7	Reporting Diversity	178

6.8	Ending violence against women in the WB Countries and Turkey	183
CHAPTER 7: SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT		187
7.1	Support to Youth	187
7.2	Participation in International Standard Testing	192
7.3	IPA support to Erasmus+	194
7.4	Support to Education	197
7.5	Employment and social affairs	203
7.5	Culture	203
CHAPTER 8: OTHER HORIZONTAL ACTIONS		208
8.1	EU Agencies	208
8.2	Regional Cooperation Council	227
8.3	Cross-border Institution Building CBIB+ Phase II	228
8.4	Regional Action on Animal Disease Eradication in the Western Balkans	230

CONTACT

For any comments or suggestions on this Activity Report, notably on the length of the documents and details provided, please contact us by sending an e-mail to the following general inbox: NEAR-D5@ec.europa.eu or sara.anderlini@ec.europa.eu

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(FF)	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

* 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.

WBIF	Western Balkans Investment Framework
WeBSEDF	Western Balkans Sustainable Energy Direct Financing Facility
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-beneficiary Programme under IPA Transition Assistance and Institution Building Component for the year 2015, IPA 2014/031-603
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 (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

Due to the COVID-19 global pandemic, many of the planned activities has to be cancelled or delivered online. ReSPA In these circumstances ReSPA organised 12 training/networking activities with 271 participants, and 622 participants days.*

During this period ReSPA finalised the methodological Toolkit for the first Public Administration Awards in the Western Balkans organised in partnership with OECD/SIGMA.

* The number of participant days is calculated as follows: the number of registered participants multiplied by number of event days

The application package and the procedures for future assessors and jury members has been also completed and the call for applications launched.

In addition, ReSPA prepared a Ministerial declaration on Digital Transformation of the Public Administration to be endorsed by all Ministers in charge of public administration in the Western Balkans.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

- Established opportunities for better networking of public officials from the Western Balkans and exchange of knowledge and experiences among ReSPA members through the COVID-19 Western Balkans Digital Collaborative platform;
- Ensured and supported faster and better digital transformation of public administrations in the Western Balkan region.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- High-Level Ministerial dialogue meeting (8 September 2020 – online)
- Seminar on Monitoring and reporting of public policies (05-06 October 2020 – online)
- Seasonal School on European Integration (26-30 October 2020 – online)
- Seminar on Evaluation of Public Policies (02-03 December 2020 – online)
- Policy Paper on Coordination of Public Policies (till December 2020)
- Programme Committee meeting (1-2 December 2020 -online)
- Training on remote management and online facilitation (15 and 17 September 2020 - online)
- Workshop on merit-based recruitment (23-24 September 2020 - online)
- Training on agile management/ Leadership (07-08 October 2020 - online)
- Workshop on performance appraisal (14-15 October 2020 - online)
- Training on conducting effective performance appraisal (03-04 November 2020 - online)
- Workshop on competency-based interviews (17-18 November 2020 - online)
- Training on competency-based interviews (24-26 November 2020 - online)
- HRMIS Workshop (08-09 December 2020 - online)
- Publication and Dissemination of the Regional comparative study on Service delivery including translation, editing and printing (November 2020)
- First Phase: Basic training in EFQM - with relevant stakeholders - CAF pilot representatives (20 October 2020 - online)
- Development of Methodology for PA Awards, including consultative meetings with stakeholders and mentoring/coaching (November 2020)

- Seasonal school on rapid innovation lab (17-18 September 2020 and 28 September – 02 October 2020 – online)

1.2 STATISTICAL COOPERATION

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:	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

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 (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

The draft narrative final report of the service contract under **IPA 2015** was checked and commented upon.

The four grant countries (Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Turkey) provided final reports and invoices.

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**.

Due to the outbreak of the covid-19 pandemic, many activities were postponed or cancelled. Physical expert missions were replaced with virtual “missions” in a few cases. Eighteen traineeships were financed from the IPA 2017 service contract from January to April 2020. Of these, seven were hosted by Eurostat and fifteen by NSIs in Member States. Due to the outbreak of the covid-19 pandemic, 11 traineeships were terminated in mid-March, 6 by end of March, while 5 other trainees were stuck in their host countries and had their traineeships extended until they could return to the home country, the last in mid-May 2020.

Implementation of four IPA 2017 grants continued during the period but was affected by the pandemic.

As part of its IPA 2017 grant, IMF planned a workshop in June 2020 on the topic of cross-border position statistics, but it had to be postponed due to the pandemic.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

Until mid-March 2020, missions of experts to beneficiaries took place, financed from **IPA 2017**. Their reports show that statisticians in the partner countries continue to learn more about the EU standards in statistics.

As from mid-March 2020, outputs slowed down. Thanks to advice given during expert missions conducted prior to the pandemic, statisticians in partner countries could continue to work on development of their statistical system, also in the cases where there was a lockdown and staff had to work from home.

Activity reports from participants representing the 3 statistical systems supported under the IPA 2017 service contract (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo) who participated in working group meetings at Eurostat, in 2 pilot project workshops, 1 specific training course and 3 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.

4 countries supported via IPA 2017 grants (Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Turkey) continued providing required deliverables – statistical projects deliverables and reports,

quarterly reports, activity reports from participation in working group meetings at Eurostat, in pilot project workshops, etc.

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.

- 1) Under the **IPA 2015** MBP service contract as well as under the IPA 2015 grants, the final reports will continue to be checked and the corresponding invoices for final payments are expected to be paid.
- 2) Under the **IPA 2017** MBP service contract, the activities will hopefully resume. The second progress report will be commented upon.

Various types of activities will take place, some of them virtually: 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.

Most traineeships planned for autumn 2020 at Eurostat and in statistical offices in selected EU Member States will be postponed to February 2021, with financing from IPA 2017. The reasons are that teleworking would be mandatory, at least for the first month, and this mode of work would not let the trainees be immersed in the hosting institution and thus an important factor in the traineeship would be lacking. The postponement has been coordinated with hosts and the beneficiaries.

- 3) The implementation of **IPA 2017 MBP grants** are expected to continue with experts advising in statistical projects, participation in working group meetings, study visits to EU MS, training events and other.

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 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*. 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 (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

- Fifteen PAR-related strategies/action plans and related monitoring systems supported and generic policy advice on PAR provided (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia).
- Twenty-nine legislative / methodological / guidance documents supported, out of which 2 in the area of strategic framework of PAR, 3 in policy development and co-ordination, 7 in public service and human resource management, 4 in accountability, 1 in service delivery, 3 in PFM, 6 in public procurement, and 3 in external audit (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Turkey).
- Eleven capacity-building activities on PAR-related issues organised, out of which 1 in strategic framework of PAR, 1 in policy development and co-ordination, 1 in public service and human resource management, 2 in accountability, 2 in service delivery, 2 in PFM, 2 in public procurement (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia).
- The publication Western Balkans: Government at a Glance was completed and released.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

- 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 (Kosovo, Montenegro).
- Enhanced capacity of core institutions responsible for implementation of PAR and PFM (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia).

* 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.

- 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 legislative framework on accountability addressing the topics of managerial accountability, administrative disputes, reorganisation of administration, free access to information (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Kosovo, North Macedonia).
- Strengthened policy and legislative framework on public internal financial control (Albania, North Macedonia, Serbia).
- Increased capacity of the SAI (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia).
- Improved public procurement legislation and increased awareness of good practices (Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, Turkey).

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, taking into account the context of COVID-19 and the most urgent needs of the beneficiaries. During the upcoming six-month period, SIGMA is also planning to organise regional webinars based on the need and interest of the beneficiary administrations in different areas of PAR. Preparatory work for the next SIGMA monitoring assessment, planned for 2021, will begin.

1.4 STRENGTHENING ACCOUNTABILITY AND THE FIDUCIARY ENVIRONMENT (SAFE TF)

Programme reference:	Multi-beneficiary Programme, IPA 2015/031-609 – part NEAR
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/ 369-168
Duration of activities:	21/04/2016 to 31/12/2020
Links:	www.worldbank.org/
Contact :	Damien Ruggeri, Damien.RUGGERI@ec.europa.eu

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 (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

Albania - Public Financial Management Technical Assistance: Support to the Ministry of Finance and Economy (MFE) in preparation of i) an updated Public-Private Partnership (PPP) monitoring report with end-2019 data and ii) the first water sector State Owned Enterprises (SOE) monitoring report for Albania.

Kosovo - Strengthening Cash Planning and Execution: A knowledge exchange activity on cash management for 5 Kosovo Treasury officials was conducted through a study visit to the State Treasury of Latvia. The implementation of the cash management module and training treasury officers was completed.

Turkey - Enhancing the Impact of the Turkish Court of Account on Good Public Governance: A training course on digital identity and digital dialogue was conducted. A stakeholder engagement strategy for the Turkish Court of Account (TCA) social media platforms was developed. An intensive 5-day training program including both the conceptual framework of GFS and the practical aspects of data compilation was delivered. The training was attended by 15 professionals.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

Albania - Public Financial Management Technical Assistance: The SOE monitoring report will better inform ongoing dialogue with government officials regarding improvements to the financial monitoring of water utilities going forward. The team prepared a presentation that summarised completed activities, outlined the next steps, and recommendations for the MFE to continue the reform program.

Kosovo - Strengthening Cash Planning and Execution: Through a study tour in a country with developed cash management practices, Kosovo Treasury officials gained further insight into good practices and connected with other technical experts. The cash planning and allocation processes will be optimised through the implementation of cash management module, improved business processes and training. The new system will be used starting from 2021.

Turkey - Enhancing the Impact of the TCA on Good Public Governance: TCA officials are more knowledgeable of good practices in social media and the creation of an impactful engagement strategy. Moreover, 15 TCA officials are better trained on the IMF's Governance Finance Statistics.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

Activities under implementation in early 2020 have been completed. Consequently, proposals were submitted for a continuation of activities in Albania and Serbia, namely the

Albania PFM Technical Assistance activity and the Serbia Public Investment Management activity.

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 – 30/04/2022
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 (JANUARY – JUNE 2020)

Albania

PFM – A remote headquarters (HQ) mission reviewed the two credit guarantee schemes introduced in response to COVID-19. The mission advised the Ministry of Finance and Economy on budgeting, monitoring and reporting for the schemes and provided a tool for assessing their fiscal impact. A further HQ mission worked with the Ministry to support strengthening of its cash management function, enhancing coordination with the central bank, and management of VAT refund arrears.

RA – Capacity development (CD) support assisted in preparing implementation plans for the consolidation of the tax arrears collection function and to operationalise compliance risk management (CRM) processes. The Regional Advisor met frequently (virtually since March 2020) with the executive team verifying reform progress, identifying CD support needs and providing guidance on maintaining operational activities in response to COVID-19 challenges.

Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH)

PFM – An HQ mission in February assessed arrangements for oversight of the State-Owned Enterprise (SOE) sector in Republika Srpska (RS) and Brčko District and made recommendations for strengthening oversight, following a similar mission in the Federation in December 2019. Work started in preparation of the 2021 – 2025 PFM strategies at State level, Federation, RS and Brčko in collaboration with OECD/SIGMA.

Kosovo

RA – An HQ mission reviewed progress with tax administration reforms as defined in their Medium-Term Reform Action Plan (MTRAP) 2019–21 and provided guidance and recommendations to progress the reform agenda. CD support provided remotely by STX and the regional advisor focused on (i) implementing the new information technology (IT) system; (ii) strengthening the management reporting system to improve strategic and operational focus and performance monitoring; (iii) improving tax debt collection function; and (iv) mitigating the impact of the COVID-19 crisis.

North Macedonia

PFM – A Public Investment Management Assessment (PIMA) was undertaken by a FAD team in January. An HQ mission to provide advice to the Ministry of Finance and the Development Bank on design choices for the proposed credit guarantee scheme in response to COVID-19 was completed in May.

RA – CD support was provided to (i) facilitate a workshop on the procurement of a modern revenue administration IT system, (ii) implement compliance risk management processes, (iii) strengthen tax audit operations including improving the annual audit planning and workforce allocation, and (iv) understanding the principles of a quality assurance system for audit casework. The Regional Advisor met frequently (virtually since March 2020) with members of the PRO executive team during this period.

Montenegro

PFM – A STX visit advised the Ministry of Finance on developing a process for assessment of all public investment projects. This visit was followed by a desk review of the respective legal and regulatory framework and recommended amendments to enable a streamlined process, with a particular focus on the PPP regulations and the law on Budget and Fiscal Responsibility.

RA – An HQ mission reviewed reform progress and provided advice on strengthening reform governance, operational planning and performance management. Other CD support activities focused on developing the Large Taxpayer Department and improving audit methodologies. The Regional Advisor met frequently (virtually since March 2020) with members of the administration's executive team during this period

Serbia

PFM – A STX visit in January provided advice and coaching to the public investment management (PIM) unit in the Ministry of Finance. The mission provided a roadmap for development of both the unit and the PIM system over the medium term.

RA – CD support assisted the Serbia Tax Administration (STA) to develop and implement key revenue administration performance indicators and to provide advice on optimising data for strategic and operational risk analysis. The Regional Advisor met frequently (virtually since

March 2020) with members of the executive team providing support and guidance as the STA responded to COVID-19 challenges

Regional

The annual IMF-EC-SECO project steering committee meeting was held (virtually) on May 29, 2020.

PFM – The second PFM advisor assumed office in JVI in early February 2020. A first PFM webinar on the impact of the COVID-19 crisis was delivered to the six SEE countries in April. The webinar presented key recommendations of recent FAD *Special Series on COVID-19* notes on PFM systems and fiscal risks, cash and arrears management that authorities should consider when designing responses to the COVID-19 pandemic.

RA – A regional meeting of heads of revenue administrations of the beneficiary countries was held (virtually) on May 19, 2020. The meeting provided an opportunity for revenue administrations to share their experiences in responding to COVID-19 challenges. The discussion included an overview of the recent IMF Special Series of notes on COVID-19* and highlighted relevant FAD support that was available through HQ, the regional advisors, and STX. One of the two SEE Regional Revenue Administration Advisors (Mr. Pekka Ruuhonen) ceased his engagement on June 30th, 2020. A replacement advisor (Mr. Dmitri Jegorov) commenced in this role on September 14th, 2020.

OUTCOME (JANUARY – JUNE 2020)

Albania

PFM – An Excel-based tool was designed for use by the Debt Management and Fiscal Risks department to enable ongoing monitoring of the fiscal impact of the credit guarantee schemes. Cash forecasts are expected from large budget institutions in the fourth quarter to enable higher quality and more accurate cash forecasts, and less linked to planned budget execution.

RA – Implementation plans for the consolidation of the tax arrears function into three regional sites were prepared and a strategy for addressing compliance risks in the construction industry was developed.

Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH)

PFM – A common framework for the PFM strategies has been agreed with the working groups in the respective entities, and drafting has begun. A roadmap for the development of oversight of public enterprises in the RS and Brčko were developed. Discussions are ongoing regarding support for the implementation of recommendations for oversight of SOEs in RS and the Federation.

RA – An audit manual was developed (RS).

Kosovo

* [COVID-19 notes](#),

PFM – The MTBF was prepared, which included the recommendations on variations and fiscal risks analysis recommended in 2019

RA – A vendor has been selected for the procurement of a new IT system. An IT reform governance and management structure has been established and project implementation has commenced. Strategic and operational key performance indicators (KPIs) have been designed to support the administration’s management reporting system. Eleven regional debt collection offices have been consolidated into a single collection center and more efficient collection processes to address the large debt inventory have been developed and are in the process of being implemented.

North Macedonia

PFM – The PIMA was completed but is not yet published. Work is ongoing to set up the credit guarantee scheme using the advice provided, and an Excel-based tool has been developed and provided to the authorities to enable its monitoring.

RA – Outcomes achieved over this period include improved preparedness for the IT procurement process, improved CRM practices, including the use of risk-based audit case selection, utilising more advanced audit practices, and the implementation of a quality assurance system for audit casework.

Montenegro

PFM – The authorities have agreed to undertake a PIMA.

RA – Progress was made on strengthening risk selection processes for audit and establishing the foundation for comprehensive governance procedures for the development of a new tax administration information system.

Serbia

PFM – In line with the recommendations of the January visit, the PIM Unit has developed a list of ongoing and pipeline projects (approximately 50 percent of investment projects originally budgeted for 2020 will be postponed to 2021-22) and agreed to review the overall PIM framework in the Fall.

RA – A comprehensive suite of key performance indicators has been developed and is in operation. In addition, an action plan to implement the use of data analytics for strategic and operational risk analysis has been agreed.

Regional The webinars conducted in April and May enabled countries to share experiences and stimulated regional information sharing. As a result of the webinars, two requests for FAD CD support to Albania and North Macedonia on management of contingent liabilities were received.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

Due to the COVID-19 travel restrictions, all CD support activities for the next semester will be delivered remotely.

Albania

PFM – A STX will work with the cash management unit to strengthen cash forecasting and coordination. Another mission will support the authorities in managing arrears.

RA – CD support will focus on two key areas: (i) consolidating and modernising the tax arrears debt collection function, and (ii) establishing a team to address the compliance risk of high net worth individuals. A follow-up HQ-led mission is also planned to assist in finalising a Medium-Term Revenue Strategy (MTRS). Guidance will be provided by the regional advisor on preparing for the post-COVID-19 period

Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH)

PFM – Work will be ongoing to support drafting of the entity level PFM strategies. Subject to demand from the RS and the Federation, work will commence in strengthening capacity for analysis and oversight of SOE performance

RA – CD support will focus on improving capacity to manage compliance risks using risk management methodology for the tax administrations in the RS and the Federation and in BiH Customs administration.

Kosovo

PFM – Work will follow up on the budget costing mission completed in 2019, as well as support to the assessment of contingent liabilities and fiscal risks.

RA – CD support will be delivered to progress the CRM program and to support the implementation of the IT system. Continuing support will be provided by the regional advisor on business continuity and preparation for the post-COVID-19 period.

North Macedonia

PFM – Further support will be provided to assist the authorities in assessing fiscal costs of the credit guarantee scheme. Support for implementation of the January PIMA recommendations and the FTE (2018) will be provided, as requested.

RA – CD support will focus on three key areas: (i) strengthening performance monitoring and reporting and enhancing the tax administration management information system, (ii) developing a business continuity plan leveraging recent COVID-19 experiences* and (iii) improving the administration of the VAT. In addition, a TADAT[†] assessment will be undertaken, and a HQ desk mission will review the progress of PRO's reform agenda. Continuing guidance will be provided by the regional advisor on preparing for the post-COVID-19 period.

Montenegro

PFM – Further follow up work is planned on the PIM process, including a PIMA in November.

RA – CD support will be provided to further strengthen the tax audit function and progress the implementation of modern CRM processes. Additional CD support will be delivered to strengthen operational planning and institutional performance management systems.

* Subject to the PRO's Executive agreement

^{† †} 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

Guidance will be provided by the regional advisor on preparing for the post-COVID-19 period.

Serbia

PFM – A remote HQ mission in August will support the Ministry of Finance in assessing the fiscal costs and risks of its COVID-19 related credit guarantee scheme. A STX will provide further support to the PIM unit. The regional advisers will review the draft PEFA assessment.

RA – CD support will focus on three key areas: (i) preparing for IT reform, (ii) establishing a team to address high net worth individuals' compliance risk, and (iii) operationalise the use of data analytics in revenue administration functions. The Regional Advisor will also be assisting STA in developing a next generation reform plan and providing guidance on preparing for the post-COVID-19 period.

Regional

PFM – Three additional webinars are planned for the second half of 2020. The first two to be delivered in July on Public Investment Management and Fiscal Risks arising from measures introduced as a result of COVID-19. A third regional webinar is planned in October as part of the European Regional Network for Infrastructure Governance community of practice, with a focus on the Ministry of Finance's role in the review of project appraisals. The planned regional seminar on Managing Fiscal Risks from SOEs in CEF in December 2020 will also be delivered virtually.

RA – A virtual workshop on how to estimate the VAT Tax Gap using the IMF Revenue Administration Gap Analysis Program (RA-GAP) methodology is scheduled to be held over six sessions commencing on October 19, 2020. Invitations to participate have been sent to the revenue administrations and Ministries of Finance in each of the six beneficiary countries.

CHAPTER 2: RULE OF LAW AND FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS

2.1 FIGHT AGAINST ORGANISED CRIME AND CORRUPTION

Breaking the Silence: Enhancing whistleblowing policies and culture in Western Balkans and Moldova

Programme reference:	Multi-country Programme 2018 (2018/040-113)
Project title:	Breaking the Silence: Enhancing whistleblowing policies and culture in Western Balkans and Moldova
EU contribution:	EUR 1 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Moldova
Type of contract:	Grant Contract with the Regional Anti-Corruption Initiative (RAI)
Contract reference:	IPA/2019/412-374
Duration of activities:	01/04/2020 – 31/03/2023
Links:	https://www.rai-see.org/
Contact :	Eleonora Sconci Eleonora.Sconci@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The project aims to strengthen whistleblowing as an anti-corruption tool in the Western Balkans and Moldova by improving disclosure channels and protection mechanisms for whistle-blowers, strengthening the capacity of civil society to support whistleblowing, and enhancing public awareness and educating the public, especially the youth, about the importance of whistleblowing in the fight against corruption.

ACTIVITIES (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

Many activities focused on setting up the structure of the project, including recruiting staff, as the project started on 1 April 2020. The project laid the groundwork for the implementation of activities through 1) the establishment of partnerships and cooperation with relevant public institutions in beneficiary jurisdictions; 2) mapping out of relevant individual civil society organizations (CSOs) as well as their networks and coalitions; 3) the recruitment of project experts and the development of their terms of reference; and 4) the positioning of the project as a key regional donor project in the field of whistleblowing enhancement relevant to the region's successful fight against corruption.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

- The project is fully operational and all staff have been recruited.
- The beneficiary jurisdictions showed interest in participating in the activities of the project and demonstrated a satisfactory degree of commitment to contribute to its success by sharing relevant legislation, reports and products of earlier work on whistleblowing reform (e.g. assessments, manuals) as well as insights into the challenges related to effective implementation of whistleblower protection legislation.
- The public institutions with which the project will aim to partner through the signing of Memorandum of Understanding and Collaboration on the improvement of whistleblower disclosure channels and protection mechanisms have been identified.
- The list of CSOs involved in whistleblowing advocacy in the beneficiary jurisdictions, which will be invited to participate in future training as well as advocacy efforts, has been produced.
- Regional and international exchanges of experiences and lessons learned about whistleblowing during Covid-19 are carried out through the participation of the project in webinars delivered by OECD and Whistleblowing International Network (WIN).
- The project and its upcoming activities were announced through public outreach activities. PR activities included the development of an infographic on the project and a protective mask with an accompanying leaflet featuring two messages 'Break the Silence: Report Corruption' and 'Protect Whistleblowers = Protect your Interest' (which were distributed via [RAI website](#), [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) pages) and an interview by the Head of RAI Secretariat to the Radio Free Europe (see [link](#)).

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Gap analysis of the existing legal framework on whistle-blower protection in the Western Balkans and Moldova and recommendations for improvements, especially in light of the EU Directive on the Protection of Persons who Report Breaches of the Union Law*;
- The assessment of whistleblowing institutional arrangements in Western Balkans and Moldova, and a needs assessment and action plan relevant to enhancing the capacity of a selected number of public institutions to respond to whistleblowing efficiently and effectively.
- Capacity building event targeting public institutions and NGOs based on the aforementioned assessments, delivered through a number of sessions using virtual meeting/training platforms.
- The commencement of a two-year public information and education campaign on whistleblowing as a means of fighting corruption, targeting the general public, the youth and professional public.

* <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32019L1937&from=EN>

Ending impunity for grand corruption in the Western Balkans and Turkey

Programme reference:	Multi-beneficiary Programme 2018 (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 Agreement with Transparency International (TI)
Contract reference:	2018/401-061
Duration of activities:	01/11/2018 – 31/12/2020
Links:	www.transparency.org/en/projects/grand-corruption-western-balkans-and-turkey
Contact :	Eleonora Sconci, eleonora.sconci@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The project overall objective is to contribute to improved good governance in the Western Balkans and Turkey by tackling corruption as an entry point to addressing state capture. The project seeks to improve transparency and accountability of the judiciary and democratic law-making through the identification of tailor-made laws and cases that maintain and/or enable state capture. This will in turn allow enhancing the understanding on grand corruption and its effects in the Western Balkans and Turkey, enabling the project partners to launch innovative advocacy initiatives. This ongoing work builds on a previous IPA funded action.

ACTIVITIES (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

- Transparency International Secretariat (TI-S) conducted the Mid-Term Review evaluation of the project in the period between February and June 2020. The findings have been validated and recommendations discussed during an online meeting on 19-20 May. TI-S and project partners prepared a detailed response to all recommendations coming out of the review.
- Project partners and TI-S continued to collect and prepare grand corruption cases and tailor-made laws for publication in the databases, including fact-checking, editing, libel-checking and translation. Project partners initiated analysis of collected corruption cases and tailor-made laws to identify shortcomings in the judiciary and legal frameworks.
- Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, TI-S and project partners discussed the redesign of the advocacy strategy and its activities and started utilising online advocacy tools.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

- Project partners and TI-S integrated lessons learnt and recommendations from the Mid-Term Review evaluation into current and future activities.
- Project partners collected at country level 590 potential grand corruption cases and 239 potential tailor-made laws by June 2020. Out of them, 163 grand corruption cases and 84 tailor-made laws were sent to TI-S for review to assess whether they meet the criteria for inclusion in project databases.
- Two databases to provide systematic information on grand corruption cases and tailor-made laws have been designed and their functionality tested.
- Two policy papers on tailor-made laws and legal frameworks published by project partners.
- Regional advocacy and communication strategy has been developed and accepted. The strategy considers the preliminary research findings and the effect of COVID-19 pandemic.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- TI-S will publish two online searchable databases containing grand corruption cases and tailor-made laws to be used for advocacy activities.
- Project partners will continue to identify grand corruption cases and tailor-made laws and publish them in the databases throughout the next semester.
- Project partners and TI-S will publish, launch and disseminate national and regional research reports assessing how shortcomings in the judicial performance in handling grand corruption and in law-making contribute to achieving and maintaining state capture in the Western Balkans and Turkey.
- Project partners and TI-S will implement evidence-based advocacy campaigns in the region by utilising two databases on grand corruption cases and tailor-made laws, organise launch and dissemination of regional and national research reports, produce videos, online tools and conduct other advocacy campaign activities.

Support to Integrative Internal Security Governance (IISG) in the Western Balkans

Programme reference:	Multi-country Programme 2019 (2019/040-826)
Project title:	“Support to Integrative Internal Security Governance (IISG) in the Western Balkans”
EU contribution:	EUR 1,45 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Grant contract with the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC)
Contract reference:	2019/414-918

Duration of activities:	15 May 2020 -14 May 2023
Links:	www.wb-iisg.com (under construction)
Contact :	Olivia Debaveye (Olivia.DEBAVEYE@ec.europa.eu)

PURPOSE

The Action aims to provide targeted assistance to the region of the Western Balkans. It aims to support the Integrative Internal Security Governance (IISG), a regional process supported by the EU, by providing its secretariat.

The purpose of the IISG is to enhance collective efficiency of security actions and actors in the Western Balkans through mapping needs and responses to the threats in three areas: counter terrorism including preventing/countering violent extremism, organised crime and border security.

This ongoing work builds on a previous IPA funded action, in particular the project ‘Support to P/VE in the Western Balkans’ implemented by DCAF Ljubljana which supported the first set-up of the IISG.

ACTIVITIES (JUNE - SEPTEMBER 2020)

Within the reporting period, the action focused on several priorities i.e.:

- Priority 1 – **setting-up the Secretariat** i.e. finalising the recruitment process for the IISG Secretariat staff, setting up the Secretariat offices, enabling all necessary conditions for operability of the Secretariat team;
- Priority 2 – **establishing initial contacts with IISG partners** i.e. 12 online meeting and 3 in-office meetings with stakeholders, including: all Western Balkans beneficiaries, 5 donors, 2 meetings with European Commission and 2 meetings with regional organisations active in the field;
- Priority 3 - **development of working concept for the IISG Secretariat** i.e. drafting all working documents such questionnaires to Western Balkans and EC as part of the initial phase to process of mapping the needs, communications (written) related to defining the contact points for each of beneficiaries for the three Pillars of the IISG, communication with relevant stakeholders, developing draft IISG Annual Work Plan (AWP) for the first 12 months of action implementation starting from June 2020, draft progress report June – August 2020, internal team building / IISG Secretariat, etc.

OUTPUTS (JUNE - SEPTEMBER 2020)

- Operational IISG Secretariat (staff and premises included);
- IISG partners well informed on the start of the new phase of the IISG process;
- IISG annual work plan developed;
- Questionnaires for EC and Western Balkans partners developed and discussed;

- Plan for next quarter developed and discussed with EC.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

Within the next three months, the action will focus on the following priorities:

- Priority 1 - Enabling full operability of the IISG secretariat and its premises;
- Priority 2 - Official set-up of the **IISG Governance structure**, including setting up: the IISG Board, the General Support group and the three Support groups per each of the three IISG pillars;
- Priority 3 – **methodology development** and endorsement of the Terms of References (ToR) for development of the IISG Working Methodology;
- Priority 4 – start with the activities related to development of **needs mapping**;
- Priority 5 – start with the activities related to development of communication strategy;
- Priority 6 – start with the activities related to **development of database** i.e. drafting the necessary technical documentations related to the development of the database.

Promoting rule of law and good governance through targeted border control measures at ports and airports

Programme reference:	Multi Country Programme 2019 (2019/040-826)
Project title:	Regional Programme for South Eastern Europe (XCEU60) – EU and UNODC joint action promoting rule of law and good governance through targeted border control measures at ports and airports
EU contribution:	EUR 4.45 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Contribution agreement with UNODC
Contract reference:	IPA/2019/411-655
Duration of activities:	02/01/2020 – 31/12/2023
Links:	https://www.unodc.org/southeasterneurope/ https://www.unodc.org/brussels/aircop_ccp.html https://www.unodc.org/southeasterneurope/en/border-control-action-resources.html
Contacts :	Olivia Debaveye, olivia.debaveye@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

This project is aimed at enhancing the capacities of the authorities in the Western Balkans to fight organised crime, by supporting more effective and coordinated responses to illicit trafficking by border law enforcement authorities at land and port border crossing points and international airports in the region. The project is a joint action involving the UNODC-World Customs Organization (WCO) Container Control Programme (CCP) and the UNODC-WCO-INTERPOL Airport Communication Project (AIRCOP) under the umbrella of the UNODC Regional Programme for South Eastern Europe.

ACTIVITIES (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

1. Assessment took place in Bosnia and Herzegovina, including technical visit at the Sarajevo International Airport, land border crossing of Gradiška and delivery of online Basic Theoretical Training for the Air Cargo Control Unit (ACCU) and the Port Control Unit (PCU).
2. Four monitoring visits to the PCUs in Bar, Montenegro and Bijača, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Notable seizure by the Unit of firearms and ammunition in Montenegro (3 handguns and 2480 various calibre ammunition).
3. Preparation of the standard training format for the Joint Airport Interdiction Task Forces (JAITFs) to be established in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and North Macedonia.
4. Development of e-learning modules, webinars and pre/post assessment tests aimed at supporting training of the relevant law enforcement officials during the travel restrictions related to the COVID-19 outbreak since March.
5. A technical assessment mission of the Nikola Tesla airport in Belgrade, Serbia and preparation and sharing with the counterparts in Serbia of the related report.
6. Needs assessments regarding the equipment for the PCUs in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro as well as for the ACCU at the Sarajevo International Airport.
7. Donation of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to the Border Police and Customs authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia as part of the COVID-19 response.
8. Eleven web stories produced to reflect the project activities, two quarterly newsletters issued and shared with all stakeholders; design of the project visibility items.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

Capacities in countering cross-border crime in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia increased;

Joint operational activities between Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Customs Administrations of Serbia and Croatia facilitated;

Law enforcement entities supported through online training during the COVID-19 outbreak;

The project beneficiaries better equipped to perform functions aimed at countering illicit trans-border activity;

Cooperation strengthened between UNODC and the beneficiary authorities;

Project visibility continuously increased.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

UNODC will continue coordinating and implementing activities using a mix of (1) eLearning, (2) online trainings and meetings and (3) remote mentoring.

Assessment missions for the establishment of JAITFs in Serbia and North Macedonia planned.

Balkans Act Now (BAN - phase III)

Programme reference:	IPA Multi-country programme 2016 Civil Society Facility and Media Programme for the years 2016-2017 - allocation 2016 (2016 /038-960)
Project title:	Balkans Act Now (BAN - phase III)
EU contribution:	EUR 965,117.64
Beneficiary region:	Serbia, North Macedonia, Albania, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina
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 Ascitti email: emma.ascitti@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The action aims to contribute to enhancing participatory democracies and the EU integration processes in the targeted beneficiaries by strengthening the impact of civil society on the outcomes of victims of human trafficking as well as the capacity and capability of civil society to effectively dialogue with governments. This project is in its 3rd phase and builds upon the successes of phases 1 and 2. Phase 3 focuses on strengthening the cooperation and capacities of relevant institutions in the targeted beneficiaries focusing on the adoption and implementation of a Monitoring tool on Human Trafficking. This tool will support transparent and accountable monitoring, as well as the comparison of regional data and the provision of quality services to victims of human trafficking. The project also supports the establishment of National Rapporteurs.

ACTIVITIES (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

- Finalization of Monitoring Tool pilot reports in five BAN III beneficiaries.
- Evaluation of project implementation and progress in previous two years.

- Regional Conference and presentation of Monitoring Tool pilot reports.
- Extensive communication among BAN III partners regarding the implementation of planned project activities due to Covid-19 pandemic.
- Off and on-line meetings, trainings, panels.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

- Revision, adoption and finalisation of 5 monitoring reports following consultation with the national monitoring working groups.
- External evaluator engaged to conduct desk research on project implementation and progress in 2018 and 2019. Focus groups and interviews with the key actors organised.
- ASTRA organized a Regional conference on “[the Importance of National Rapporteur and Equivalent Mechanisms on Trafficking in Human Beings](#)” in Belgrade. It gathered 39 participants, including local and international experts in the field of combating trafficking in human beings, representatives of national rapporteur mechanism from Finland and North Macedonia, representatives of the Serbian civil sector and partner organizations from Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Albania and the Netherlands, as well as authorities and institutions from all beneficiaries.
- BAN III Steering Committee postponed the study visit to the National Rapporteur in the Netherlands to 8-11 September due to Covid-19. The schedule can undergo further revision, if necessary.
- BAN partners organised several off and on-line events. To name a few: two advocacy trainings in Albania (*National anti-trafficking rapporteur - standards and possibilities* and *The rights of victims of trafficking in human beings (THB) and sexual violence in the criminal proceedings*), one training on THB in media for the members of the Association of professional journalists of Montenegro, and a working group meeting on the monitoring tool in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER (JULY-DECEMBER 2020)

- To conduct meetings of the national monitoring working groups for the finalization of the second monitoring reports based on agreed methodology.
- BAN III Steering Committee will take a decision on the postponed study visit to the National Rapporteur in the Netherlands in light of the pandemic.
- Updating, testing and promoting the Monitoring tool’s online database of indicators and translating the content into Albanian.
- Annual planning meeting in North Macedonia in October, either online or offline.
- Ongoing monitoring and promotion of the project.

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

Programme reference:	Multi-beneficiary Programme – Civil Society Facility and Media Programme 2016-2017- allocation 20017 (2017/038-961)
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 (as coordinator)
Contract reference:	2018/394-123
Duration of activities:	10.05.2018-09.05.2022
Links:	http://seldi.net/home/ , www.mcms.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 (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

- All beneficiaries led by Chapter Coordinators prepared the Regional Anti-Corruption Report (RAR). The Macedonian Centre for International Cooperation (MCIC) and the Centre for the Study of Democracy (CSD) integrated all inputs and an external expert was hired for revisions and improvements of the final version.
- Prepared and published five articles related to public procurements, media and donation in the era of global health crisis.
- MCIC organized and facilitated six monthly skype meetings with partners where the situation on the rule of law and anticorruption as well as ongoing project activities and issues were discussed.
- CSD in cooperation with core partners from each Western Balkans beneficiary prepared six (one/beneficiary) Monitoring Anticorruption Policy Implementation (MACPI) State Capture technical reports (North Macedonia, Albania, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Hercegovina and Kosovo).

- SELDI partners worked on three thematic policy briefs on state capture, hidden economy and judiciary.
- Check of narrative and financial reports received by sub-grantees. Due to Corona pandemic, no-cost project extensions requested by sub-grantees were granted.
- The project established contacts with portals in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro for possible cooperation regarding media articles.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

- Production of three thematic Policy Briefs.
- Preparation and dissemination of SELDI's paper on the new EU methodology: "The New Approach on Enlargement - Good Ideas in Need of a Captain".
- Publication of five editions of SELDI Newsletter.
- Publication of five articles on: "Financing parties and elections in the Western Balkans", "Reforming public procurement crucial for fighting corruption in the Western Balkans", "COVID – 19 donations in the Westerns Balkans transparency needed", "Western Balkans media during COVID – 19: reporting on corruption became even harder"; and "'Ventilators' affair in BiH – fight against corruption or another political quarrel?"

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Preparation of three thematic policy briefs with focus on civil society organizations & anticorruption, anticorruption & regulatory environment and international cooperation.
- Initial preparation of the activities for the implementation of Monitoring Anticorruption Policy Implementation (MACPI) Institutional *by selecting and establishing contacts with state institutions. The MACPI Micro instrument is a tool for assessing anticorruption policy and implementation gaps in specific anticorruption institutions. It comprises five consecutive stages implemented in close collaboration with a public institution's mid- and top- management, as well as with designated employees.
- Finalising and publishing the Regional Anticorruption Report (RAR).
- Organising webinars for presenting the RAR and policy brief findings.
- Organising regular skype monthly meetings.
- Organising annual meeting in person if COVID-19 allows.
- Preparation of articles (at least 3 per month).
- Preparation and dissemination of SELDI monthly newsletters.
- External expert evaluation of project implementation.

* MACPI Micro instrument is a tool for assessing anticorruption policy and implementation gaps in specific anticorruption institutions. The MACPI Institutional identifies and assesses the work of institutions as regards anticorruption.

- Preparation and dissemination of infographics and video.
- Transferring SELDI.net website to a new platform (due to security reasons, hacker attacks, etc.).

2.2 JUDICIAL REFORM RESULTS IN WESTERN BALKANS

Regional Justice Survey – Western Balkans

Programme reference:	Multi-beneficiary Programme 2017 (2017/039-402)
Project title:	Support for the Implementation of a Regional Justice Survey
EU contribution:	EUR 0.8 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Administration Agreement with the World Bank
Contract reference:	IPA/2018/402-958
Duration of activities:	01/01/2019 – 31/12/2020
Links:	www.worldbank.org
Contact :	Catherine Denis, Catherine.DENIS@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The overall objective is to inform justice policy dialogue through the generation, analysis, and dissemination of survey data on justice system performance in Western Balkans beneficiaries. The survey will cover experiences and perceptions of the users of judicial services (general public, business sector and lawyers) as well as providers of judicial services (judges, prosecutors, and court staff).

ACTIVITIES (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

Following the finalization of the survey instrument (questionnaires) the Bank team conducted fieldwork. In the process of finalization of the survey instrument, the Bank team maintained close contact and coordination with the European Commission and EU delegation offices in the respective beneficiaries. Following a series of workshops and in-country meetings in late 2019, the fieldwork and data collection started in January and February 2020.

The Bank team facilitated the preparation of the endorsement letters required by the judges and prosecutors, which would signal that the EU, World Bank and judicial authorities (ministries of justice, president of judicial councils, and chief justices) are supporting their participation in the survey. The letters, both in English and in local languages, have been distributed before the beginning of the fieldwork.

After the initial good start with the data collection and fieldwork, the COVID-19 crisis had a severe negative impact on the pace of implementation. Following the lockdown in all beneficiaries, which occurred between March and June 2020, the Bank team decided to move from the paper-based and self-administered survey to a digital platform and on-line survey. This has helped to ensure a continuation of project implementation. However, it delivered mixed results. In some countries, where digital literacy and utilization of ICT in the justice sector are advanced, the participation of targeted groups has been satisfactory and data collection has been finalized by the end of June (Serbia, Montenegro and North Macedonia). However, in Albania, Kosovo* and Bosnia and Herzegovina, the shift to the on-line survey has not produced the desired results. The Bank team is working on an engagement plan which would help finalize data collection and analysis.

Between March and April 2019, the Bank team organized a series of workshops with the European Commission and EU Delegation offices in the respective beneficiaries to present the preliminary findings from the survey of experiences and perceptions of the general public, business representatives, and lawyers.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

18 Letters of Endorsements – signed by the World Bank and judicial authorities to ensure participation of judges, prosecutors and court staff. The letters were needed to secure access to courts and prosecutors’ offices. All letters have been signed and distributed in January and February 2020.

Data collection in Montenegro, Serbia and North Macedonia completed – More than 1800 judges, 650 prosecutors, and 1500 court staff have participated in the survey. More than 6900 interviews have been conducted with the general public, representatives of the business sector and lawyers.

5 workshop to discuss preliminary findings from the perspective of service users organized in March and April – preliminary results from the survey of users (general public, business representatives, and lawyers) were discussed with DG NEAR, DG JUST and EU Delegations.

On-line survey – As a result of COVID-19 and limited face-to-face interaction, it has been decided to design an on-line platform for the survey. Links to the on-line questionnaires were distributed to judges, prosecutors and court staff in May and June 2020.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

For the incoming period, the plan is to finalize fieldwork and organize discussions with the European Commission to present findings from the survey. Following these discussions, the Bank team will organize a series of in-country consultations with the representatives from the judiciary to get their perspective on the results and secure their endorsement.

Statistical reports will be circulated in October and November 2020, depending on the completion of data collection in Albania, Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Together with the reports, the Bank team will also prepare a set of dissemination packages (infographics, factsheets, etc.) to be used for in-country promotion of the survey results.

iPROCEEDS-2 - Cooperation on cybercrime: Targeting crime proceeds on the internet and securing electronic evidence in South East Europe and Turkey

Programme reference:	Multicounty Programme 2019 (2019/040-826)
Project title:	iPROCEEDS-2 - Project of the European Union and the Council of Europe on targeting crime proceeds on the Internet and securing electronic evidence in South East Europe and Turkey
EU contribution:	EUR 4,450,000
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Delegation Agreement with Council of Europe
Contract reference:	IPA/2019/411-632
Duration of activities:	01.01.2020 – 30.06.2023
Links:	www.coe.int/en/web/cybercrime/iproceeds-2
Contact :	Eleonora Sconci, eleonora.sconci@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

With an overall objective to enhance the capacities of authorities in the Western Balkans to fight organised crime by enhancing cooperation within the region and with the EU, the project aims to further strengthen the capacity of authorities to search, seize and confiscate cybercrime proceeds, prevent money laundering on the Internet and to secure electronic evidence.

ACTIVITIES (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

- Initial project activities such as setting up the project team, establishing the domestic project teams, drafting the iPROCEEDS-2 inception report, holding the first Project Steering Committee in an online environment and approving the Workplan;
- Running assessments of compliance with substantive law provisions of the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime and relevant EU standards for five beneficiaries (Albania, Montenegro, Turkey, Bosnia and Herzegovina and North Macedonia);
- Continuous updating of the online resource of the Octopus Community, drafting and making available country wikis, legal profiles and international cooperation templates for each project area;
- Organising and supporting the participation in a long-distance specialised master programme in Cybercrime Investigation and Computer Forensics for all project beneficiaries;
- Updating the Introductory and Advanced Judicial Training materials and preparing a specialised course on International Cooperation and one on Electronic Evidence;

- Organising and running an International “Workshop on Cooperation with Foreign Service Providers on Cybercrime and Electronic Evidence” and a “Webinar on online child sexual abuse” with the support from international experts on the topic.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

As the period of reference coincides with the launch of the project, some of the main outputs were the nomination of domestic project teams, validation of the generic Work plan through the Project Steering Committee, setting up of the project management team and the inception report.

Reports that comprehensively analyse the current cybercrime legislative framework in order to determine its compliance with substantive law provisions of the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime and relevant EU standards were drafted and shared with the competent authorities including information on necessary amendments.

New outlines were drafted in relation to four training courses that will help increase the training capabilities of the Council of Europe and benefit stakeholders in all beneficiaries.

The vast information made available on the Octopus community allows to gain a thorough understanding of existent capabilities on preventing and countering cybercrime while the webinar organised on online child sexual exploitation raised awareness on the specificity of this type of criminal activity in pandemic times and provided the means to address it.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

Due to the ongoing pandemic, the project will continue to shift its activities to an online environment. Assessments of compliance with the Budapest Convention will be carried out for both substantive and procedural legal frameworks. Further, assessments of the capabilities on collection/handling of electronic evidence will be conducted in all beneficiaries in order to establish a way forward. Reports with recommendations will result.

Multiple domestic workshops on cybersecurity and domestic meetings to support existing public/private initiatives or establish such mechanisms with a focus on cooperation between service providers and criminal justice authorities will be organised. The annual meeting of the 24/7 points of contact is to be organised in November 2020, in an online environment.

The project team will also be involved in the creation of an advanced training course on Electronic Evidence that will be subsequently implemented in many of the Cybercrime Programme Office beneficiaries.

Balkan Tender Watch

Programme reference:	IPA Multicountry programme 2017 - Civil Society Facility and Media Programme for the years 2016-2017 - allocation 2017 (2017 / 038-961)
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
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 to increase the impact of Western Balkans civil society on anti-corruption policies and practices during the public procurement cycle by utilizing the EU integration as a transformative agenda. The project aims to influence authorities to introduce reforms which will enable the establishment of accountable public procurement systems aligned with the EU rules and build alliances with public authorities willing to engage in reforms.

ACTIVITIES (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

- The second round of in-depth monitoring of public procurement cases consisting of setting the sample, searching publicly available information and filing freedom of information (FOI) requests was launched.
- A coalition workshop was organised in Belgrade with the aim of setting the monitoring sample, fine-tuning the benchmarking tool and coordinating support to grassroots organizations receiving sub-grants.
- Regular communication, mentoring and coaching for sub-grantees was maintained in order to secure the effective implementation of the benchmarking tool at the local level.
- Work on advocacy for improving the performance of anti-corruption mechanisms in public procurement was conducted.
- Production of one policy and one media brief (per beneficiary) addressing the most important findings.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

The Balkan Tender Watch Coalition launched the **second round of monitoring of public procurement cases** in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia. A Coalition workshop in Belgrade enabled to fine-tune the benchmarking tool applied in monitoring of public procurement cases, design the sample of public procurement cases that will be monitored in 2020, and coordinate support for 11 grassroots organizations receiving sub-grants. The monitoring sample for 2020 consists of 3 standard groups of public procurement cases: goods, works, and services. A thematic addition on elections-related

public procurement has been included in the sample as all beneficiaries have held or are scheduled to hold elections in the period covered by the monitoring. After the breakout of COVID-19 in the Western Balkans, another thematic addition consisted of COVID-19 related public procurement cases. Over 250 FOI requests have been filed.

A group of 11 organizations awarded with sub-grants received **training to apply the Balkan Tender Watch monitoring methodology and practice monitoring skills**. The group was associated to 18 other organizations supported by the Open Society Foundation in order to apply the tool and strengthen the civil society monitoring mechanism. By doing so, the project managed to stretch its activities to Albania as well.

COVID-19 brought some setbacks in transparency and freedom of information related to public procurement in the region. With the exception of North Macedonia, beneficiaries recorded problems in providing information related to procurement, some of them even suspending the freedom of information legislation. Such undesired change required some shifts in the advocacy agenda and slowed down the pace of gathering information on selected procurements. The most severe shift took place in Serbia making the project focus on freedom of information rather than procurement. A set of policy and media briefs on key public procurement issues is under production and preparation for publication in the next semester.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- To carry out the second round of in-depth monitoring of public procurement cases, in particular processing relevant documents and producing national analyses.
- To publish the Comparative Evaluation Report on the vulnerability of public procurement systems to corruption in five Western Balkans;
- Producing one policy and one media brief per year addressing the most important findings;
- Regular communication, mentoring and coaching for sub-grantees in order to secure effective implementation of the benchmarking tool on the local level;
- To organise four domestic round tables and one regional conference to present ranking results and recommendations and open public debate on the most important issues.
- Advocacy for improving the performance of anti-corruption mechanisms in public procurement.

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 – 31/12/2020
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.

61 municipalities have been implementing the ROMACTED methodology with 75 Community Action Groups (CAG) established that regularly meet with the local authorities. Up to the end of June 2020, activities at the local level have been implemented at a different pace, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. The diversity of contexts at various levels (political and electoral cycles, political will and commitment from authorities, the state of development and organisation of the communities, etc.) contributed to a certain asymmetric pace of the programme implementation.

A second no-cost extension of ROMACTED has been granted to cover the period from 31 August until 31 December 2020. This extension was crucial in order to conclude the cycle of implementation of the local small grants scheme that has been understandably delayed with the COVID-19 crisis.

Since these unprecedented times impose special measures, several activities had to be postponed, cancelled or adapted and, as such, some of the programme elements had to be re-focused in order to provide an urgent and pertinent response. These responses were organised in such a way that the objectives and mission of both the Organisation and the Programme remain clear, especially regarding the prevention of abuses of human rights, the equal distribution of emergency aid, the prevention of discrimination, as well as the risks of politicisation of the crisis, including the use of hate speech and repressive measures against Roma. The main priority during the COVID-19 crisis has been to help the Roma families who are in the most vulnerable situations and excluded from humanitarian protection and assistance. The overall nature and focus of the ROMACTED Programme remains, however, on the promotion of good governance and empowerment of Roma citizens at local level.

The programme mobilised significant financial and human resources in the municipalities to adequately respond to the COVID-19 crisis and to help those most in need in the communities.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY – JUNE 2020)

Over €60 000 were immediately allocated in close to 40 beneficiary municipalities reaching out to approximately 2 000 families. These actions include the distribution of essential food packages and vouchers, as well as hygiene kits and products. Generally, in all 61 municipalities of the programme, actions on raising awareness about preventive measures

were, or are still being, conducted by local members of the CAGs and the ROMACTED teams are also involved in the following type of actions, which are more difficult to quantify:

- Maintaining contact with the local and central authorities to remind them of the precarious situation that their fellow Roma citizens find themselves in which has been our central approach to this pandemic;
- Distribution of information on preventive measures;
- Participation in crisis management teams and other similar actions at local level, co-ordination of actions at national level, and initiation and implementation of actions by the respective support organisations jointly with other relevant stakeholders and actors.

Through the top-up of the local small grants and of the grants to the support organisations, close to €165 000 (an average of €2 700 per municipality/community) are being channelled for the provision of emergency responses to the impact of COVID-19. In several cases, this also implies a redefinition and adaptation of the initial projects prepared to be implemented by local authorities and Roma NGOs under the small grants scheme. In total it is estimated that from €250 000 to €300 000 from ROMACTED Phase I will be devoted to direct actions supporting responses to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in the communities.

A significant number of Local Action Plans were adopted and revised as a result of the implementation of the ROMACTED methodology. Thematic training was held 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.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Continuation of the implementation of the small grants scheme in 48 municipalities including the to-up for COVID-19 emergency relief (in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia and Serbia), July-December
- Organisation of training on Roma responsive budgeting in all seven municipalities in Albania alongside the local budgetary cycle, July-December
- In all seven ROMACTED beneficiaries, targeted and "safe" local interventions and visits to the municipalities will be organised, depending on the specific local restrictions, July-December
- (Online) Fourth Advisory Group Meeting in Albania, on 20 July;
- In co-operation with the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees and the Roma Board of the Council of Ministers, ROMACTED will organise a preparatory workshop, which includes Interdepartmental Working Groups and Expert Thematic Working Groups in the fields of civil registration of Roma, anti-discrimination and anti-Gypsyism, housing, employment, health, and education, in view of the new Action Plan for Roma Inclusion 2021-2025 for BiH, July-October;
- Three online workshops will take place with the CAG members from 11 partner cities and municipalities in Serbia.

During this period the ROMACTED Team is also finalising several publications:

- Baseline overview on the capacities and needs of the Roma communities in the ROMACTED municipalities in Kosovo (in Albanian, Serbian, and Romani);
- “Identifying and mapping relevant challenges faced by Roma and Egyptian community in Montenegro” (EN and MNE) and “Analysis of Legal and Institutional Mechanisms for the Provision of Roma and Egyptian Social Integration Services in Montenegro, with Analysis of Lacking Competences and Support Services” (EN and MNE);
- “Systematic barriers for Social Inclusion of Roma men and women at local level in Serbia”;
- “Guidelines for the Institutional Working Groups in the 11 cities and municipalities in Serbia”;
- “Pilot Guidelines for Roma responsive budgeting at local level in Albania” and “Seven Roma local action plans” produced under ROMACTED in Albania;
- ROMACTED Handbook for North Macedonia, Albania and Serbia (the English, Turkish and Bosnian versions were produced earlier and are already available both in printed versions and online).

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 (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

The Roma Integration 2020 co-organized a Regional Conference on Roma Youth Participation in February 2020, in cooperation with the Regional Youth Cooperation Office. The conference aimed to strengthen the role of Roma youth for participation in regional policymaking, through initiating a framework for regional cooperation, capacity building, and action planning.

The project also piloted the methodology to map Roma settlements in the Western Balkans in two municipalities per country. The piloting process combines existing data at the national and local level and contributes to identifying precise locations of Roma settlements while also assessing the possibilities for legalisation of informal settlements.

The Roma Integration 2020 also facilitated a broad societal dialogue regarding the government responses to the Covid-19 crisis and its consequences on the Roma community in order to ensure broad needs assessment, proper short, medium and long term response, and adequate consideration of Roma in the mainstream measures. The project engaged in gathering information about the situation of vulnerable Roma communities throughout the Western Balkans (WB) in cooperation with the NRCs, various CSOs and IOs. In particular, the action organized 18 online coordination meetings (3 per economy) to discuss the needs for technical assistance in coordinating, preparing plans, gathering information, preparing budgets based on Roma Responsive Budgeting principles. The project monitored the situation with regards to COVID-19 and its impact on Roma and provided policy advice to governments on how to adapt their response measures to address the specific needs of Roma.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

- Produced policy recommendation papers based on the discussions during the COVID-19 emergency response meetings on immediate needs in Roma communities;
- Prepared medium and long term plans to respond to the crisis within the Roma communities;
- Facilitated dialogue between line ministries and CSOs on immediate needs in Roma communities and budget reprogramming requirements.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Meetings at technical level in all Western Balkans beneficiaries in order to finalize the deliverables for Roma Integration for the Leaders' Summit in the framework of the Berlin Process (September, October 2020);
- Western Balkans Ministerial Meeting on Roma Integration in Tirana (October 2020);
- National Platforms on Roma Integration in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, the Republic of North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey (November, December 2020);
- 5th Task Force meeting of the Roma Integration 2020 (December 2020).

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 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 (JANUARY – JUNE 2020)

- **Project management:** Regular project team meetings were organized. Capacity building training of RARE Country Facilitators was organized to unify the approaches to grant management and reporting. Second quarterly reports submitted by IPOs were checked and the interim instalments transferred to all organizations. Call for kindergarten staff trainings were announced, and the service provider selected. First year country factsheets were redesigned. The 2nd Interim report and audit report have been prepared. The request for addendum was prepared and submitted.
- **Early childhood development (ECD) and primary education (PED):** The IPOs were collaborating with kindergartens and schools, identifying the potential needs and obstacles for Roma students, and providing necessary support to children and their parents. The activities included regular monitoring of children's attendance, work with parents, kindergartens, primary schools and relevant institutions. Baseline data for IDELA assessment was collected and the baseline report produced.
- **Increasing performance and employability of Roma secondary (SEC) and tertiary (TER) students:** SEC and TER students were supported through scholarships, mentoring, tutoring, soft skills trainings and internship placements. During the COVID-19 lock down, students were supported in following online education, they were provided with online mentoring

and tutoring. A number of students were provided with tablets and internet connection through emergency reallocations.

- **Emergency response to COVID-19 pandemic:** The IPOs prepared response plans to meet the specific needs of the Roma beneficiaries. The emergency response included distribution of humanitarian aid, increased educational support, and emergency services in the communities.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY – JUNE 2020)

- **Early childhood and primary education:** 408 children enrolled in kindergartens; nine toy libraries established; 12 parenting clubs established; 572 children enrolled in first and 39 enrolled in second grade of primary schools; 29 tutors engaged and 400 children benefited from tutoring support; five Roma mediators and five learning assistants were engaged.
- **Secondary and tertiary education and transition to employment:** Secondary: 423 secondary school beneficiaries supported; 371 scholarships awarded – 250 through RARE project and 121 through the national scholarship schemes (Montenegro and North Macedonia); 70 students benefited from tutoring and 366 from mentoring support; 23 tutors and 89 mentors were engaged; up to 71 students included in professional development and soft skills training. Tertiary: 70 students received scholarships; 13 students benefited from tutoring and 30 students from mentoring support; 38 students were included in professional development and soft skills training.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- **Project level:** Networking event with IPOs; Regional conference on SEC and TER education and transition to employment; Regional conference for ECD and PED level, Regional camp for leadership; National policy event in Turkey; Training for kindergarten staff, Monitoring visits to the IPOs. Closure of the IPO's 2nd year and contracting of the 3rd year IPO's projects.
- **Early childhood and primary education:** Development and delivery of country trainings for kindergarten staff; Toy libraries; Empowerment of parents; Tutoring and mentoring to primary school students. Call for proposal for ECD/PED IPO in Turkey;
- **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; Call for proposal for SEC and TER IPO in Turkey and TER IPO in Serbia.
- **Policy development/regional knowledge exchange:** Preparation of regional policy analysis reports followed up by the regional conferences for ECD and PED education and desegregation, and for SEC and TER education and employment. Regular advocacy meetings.

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 (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

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 (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

RHP figures as at end June 2020 (cumulative):

- 21 000 people rehoused.
- 7 093 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.
- 1 850 central and local government staff received formal training.
- Over 160 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 950 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

Regional support to Protection-Sensitive Migration Management in the Western Balkans and Turkey – phase II

Programme reference:	Multi-country Action Programme 2017 (2017/039-402)
Project title:	Regional support to protection-sensitive migration management in the Western Balkans and Turkey - Phase II
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:	CN 2018/404-218
Duration of activities:	01/07/2019 – 30/06/2021
Contact :	Emma Asciutti, emma.asciutti@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

This project forms part of the Regional support to protection-sensitive migration management systems in the Western Balkans and Turkey programme, which brings together the European Border and Coast Guard Agency- Frontex, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR). The programme aims to strengthen the beneficiaries' systems for the identification, registration, and referral of mixed migration flows, as well as asylum procedures and return mechanisms, by aligning them with EU standards.

ACTIVITIES (JANUARY – JUNE 2020)

The project finalised needs assessments in order to develop new EASO Roadmaps for strengthening asylum and reception systems in line with EU standards for Albania, Bosnia, Serbia and North Macedonia.

Based on consultations with authorities, additional support was provided to Albania on the revision of the draft law on asylum and temporary protection and to North Macedonia on the finalisation of the Standard Operating Procedures on the asylum registration and examination procedure. In addition, EASO continued facilitating the participation of Serbia in the EU+ Reception Networks as an observer.

The project has been engaged in further strengthening a regional operational pool of national trainers on EASO core Modules with the organization of the first Regional Train the Trainer (TtT) module on Inclusion. It facilitated the participation of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Serbia in EASO advanced modules to consolidate competencies in certain aspects of the asylum procedure. In light of the COVID-19 situation, EASO has also given the opportunity to Western Balkans partners to participate in two different webinars on the provision of information to asylum seekers in the context of COVID-19 and on remote personal interviews.

Lastly, the project followed up on its cooperation with the Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative (MARRI) with a work visit to EASO, where the EASO - MARRI pilot work plan on training planned for 2020-2021 was discussed.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY – JUNE 2020)

- Formulation of Roadmaps for cooperation with Serbia, North Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina concluded to ensure alignment of their asylum and reception systems with the EU standards.
- Draft law on Asylum and Temporary Protection in Albania revised to ensure alignment with the *EU acquis*.
- Finalization of the Standard Operating Procedures on registration and examination of asylum applications in North Macedonia. Formal adoption of the SOPs are expected in the upcoming period.
- Continuous support was provided to Serbia's participation in the EASO reception networks which allow for regular exchange of best practice.
- Asylum officers increased their skills and knowledge on the qualification for international protection and a pool of national trainers was created to deliver this EASO training.
- Asylum officers improved or acquired new skills in the areas of: gender, gender identity and sexual orientation, interviewing vulnerable persons, remote personal interviews and provision of information to asylum seekers in the context of COVID-19.
- Continuous support was provided to the Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative in view of establishing a Western Balkans' regional asylum training function. A pilot work plan for training 2020-2021 was developed in close consultation with partners in the region.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Formal agreement of the Roadmaps for cooperation with Serbia, North Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania.
- Regional Western Balkans Train the Trainers on Interview Techniques and Interviewing Vulnerable Persons.
- A regional workshop on age assessment for the Western Balkans and Turkey.
- Support the establishment of a regional practitioners' network on Country of Origin Information.
- Workshop on the access to asylum procedure in Albania and Serbia.
- Workshop on EASO training methodology to MARRI.

Programme reference:	Multi-country Action Programme 2017 (2017/039-402)
Project title:	Regional support to protection-sensitive migration management in the Western Balkans and Turkey – Phase II
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 ASCIUTTI, emma.asciutti@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

This project forms part of the Regional support to protection-sensitive migration management systems in the Western Balkans and Turkey programme, which brings together the European Border and Coast Guard Agency- Frontex, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR). The programme aims to strengthen the beneficiaries' systems for the identification, registration, and referral of mixed migration flows, as well as asylum procedures and return mechanisms, by aligning them with EU standards.

ACTIVITIES (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

While the project implementation continued as planned in January-February 2020, its management and activities were significantly affected by the outbreak of COVID-19 from March to June. During the first 6 months of 2020, particular focus was put on the coordination within the project as well as on the adaptation of the project work plan and logical framework to the state of emergency.

Although the training component of the project suffered a setback due to the pandemic, the preparatory work for the launch of the *“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”* was concluded with draft Terms of Reference for the assessment produced. This will allow the study to be launched in the forthcoming reporting period. The aim of this exercise is to develop National Masterplans facilitating the future integration of the relevant national databases for identification and registration of mixed migration flows with existing EU information Systems.

UNHCR activities that do not require physical staff presence or interaction continued as planned. These mostly included research as well as contributions to legislative and policy developments in the Beneficiaries.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

- Terms of Reference for the procurement of National Masterplans for North Macedonia and Montenegro concluded.
- Revised project work plan to ensure adaptation of the project to the COVID-19 crisis.
- Procurement of Smart Positive Identification licenses to Bosnia and Herzegovina launched.
- UNHCR-led contributions to new or revised legislation and policy documents in the Beneficiaries.
- UNHCR-led provision of legal aid to refugees and asylum seekers, and cooperation with legal clinics in selected beneficiaries.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Launching of study on the preparedness of Montenegro and North Macedonia to join the EU Information Systems (National Masterplans).
- Regional Steering Committee meeting (online) with participants from Beneficiaries and all key stakeholders.
- National Steering Committee meetings with participation of high-level representatives of Beneficiaries to be complemented by bi-monthly coordination meetings between the Implementing Partners and the Beneficiaries.
- Online rollout of profiling trainings for two Western Balkans beneficiaries, regional online training on fundamental rights for border guards.
- Regional workshops on operational practices in the field of return and readmission, and return policies and practices of selected countries of origin.
- UNHCR-led provision of assistance to guardians of asylum seekers and refugees.
- UNHCR-led provision of advice to authorities on the use of specific Country of Origin Information.
- Trainings for judges, prosecutors, Bar associations and civil society on asylum and refugee rights and legislation (UNHCR-led).

Programme reference:	Multi-country Action Programme 2017 (2017/039-402)
Project title:	Regional support to protection-sensitive migration management in the Western Balkans and Turkey Phase 2
EU contribution:	EUR 1.6 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Grant Agreement for Pillar Assessed Organisations with the International Organization for Migration
Contract reference:	IPA/2018/404-216
Duration of activities:	24/06/2019 – 24/06/2021
Contact:	Emma Ascitti, emma.ascitti@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

This project forms part of the Regional support to protection-sensitive migration management systems in the Western Balkans and Turkey programme, which brings together the European Border and Coast Guard Agency- Frontex, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR). The programme aims to strengthen the beneficiaries' systems for the identification, registration, and referral of mixed migration flows, as well as asylum procedures and return mechanisms, by aligning them with EU standards.

ACTIVITIES (JANUARY – JUNE 2020)

- Successfully updating the previously developed app Migration Translation Application (MiTA herein after) for use by border police during first contact with migrants, by introducing a specialised section on COVID-19 as well as displaying key features by developing an instructional video for MiTA in all the languages of the beneficiaries.
- Supporting the roll out of the developed Curriculum for cultural mediation competencies in Montenegro and North Macedonia, through the organization of two domestic trainings.
- Supporting the development of Roadmaps for migration statistics in six Western Balkans beneficiaries.
- Successfully launching an Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR hereinafter) information campaign: posters, leaflets and brochures were produced in 6 languages, and regular posts on Facebook and Instagram were used for outreach purposes.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY – JUNE 2020)

- Updating the MITA app facilitates a basic form of communication in different languages between border officials and migrants in first contact situations, especially in detecting potential COVID-19 symptoms of migrants entering the territory.
- The development of the curriculum for cultural mediation ensures effective communication between migrants and social workers, asylum officials, and border police officials 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 to EU regulation 862/2007.
- Continuous outreach and assistance in Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR hereinafter) allows migrants to return and reintegrate to their country of origin in line with a human rights approach, and the information campaign provides all necessary information in the context of COVID-19.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Continuing to support knowledge sharing of Best Interest Determination (BID) and Best Interest Analysis (BIA) practices in the EU context by organizing one additional regional event on the subject, thus contributing to mainstream protection of migrants in situations of vulnerability.
- Finalisation of the roadmaps for migration statistics in all six beneficiaries in the Western Balkans, thus contributing to the alignment to EU regulation 862/2007.
- Roll out of the on-line e-learning curriculum on cultural mediation to be used primarily by caseworkers and field practitioners. This will also be available to all interested stakeholders.
- Continuing to support migrants interested to return home through the AVRR programme under the assumption that airlines will remain operable. The project will also continue providing outreach to all interested migrants and authorities, while simultaneously organizing bilateral meetings and consultations with relevant Consular and Diplomatic Missions (CDMs) of migrants' top counties of origin.

Civil Society Facility and Media Programme 2016-2017 - IRIS NETWORKing - CSOs for protection sensitive migration

Programme reference:	Multi-Beneficiary Programme 2016 - Civil Society Facility and Media Programme 2016-2017 - allocation 2016 (2016/038-960)
Project title:	IRIS NETWORKing - CSOs for protection sensitive migration
EU contribution:	EUR 978,957.00
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey

Type of contract:	Grant Contract with Initiative for development and cooperation (as coordinator)
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

The project has a two-fold purpose: (1) strengthen capacities of CSO service providers for actively engaging in protection sensitive migration management and (2) engage in structured civic dialogue with governments at all levels promoting CSOs' involvement in public decision-making and reform processes in order to improve service delivery for migrant populations. It is run by an experienced consortium of five local social service provider organisations in the Western Balkans and one EU-based organisation and includes a vast network of Civil Society Organisations. It contributes to better service delivery for migrants and the policy framework on migration management in the Western Balkans. The network promotes also a culture of tolerance and intercultural dialogue between local populations and migrants.

ACTIVITIES (JANUARY – JUNE 2020)

Pillar I – 25 Grants were awarded to Network members in January – June 2019 and the implementation of more has been completed during the reporting period.

Monitoring of grants was conducted through on-site visits in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and partly in Montenegro, and online for North Macedonia and Albania.

Assistance for acquirement of licenses for provision of social services (fulfilment of quality standards) and mentoring in overall strategic development is being provided to 25 Network members.

Mentoring for Network members has been completed in Albania, North Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Initiative for Social Change ARSIS (Albania) is communicating with the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) for conducting Training of Trainers (ToT). La Strada (North Macedonia) established cooperation with the Faculty of Philosophy (University of Skopje) for contributing to the same activity. Network members from five CSOs attended the International Week 2020 Innovation in Humanities and Social Science.

Pillar II – the **Gap Assessment** for Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro has been completed and for North Macedonia and Albania this will be completed during the second half of 2020 and later compiled into a Regional GAP Assessment

The **Terms of Reference for Country Shadow Reports (CSR) and Regional Shadow Report (RSR)** have been developed and submitted to partners for review and the final version prepared. In the region, the migration situation remains unchanged with the biggest crises still in Bosnia and Herzegovina on the border with Croatia, in the city of Bihac. The camps have insufficient capacities and many migrants are in the fields and abandoned buildings. As

Network members have been facing unprecedented challenges posed by the COVID-19 and the strain on the services and resources they provide has been tremendous, the Network took a proactive step to support the ongoing activities of its members and assist them coping with the current hardships within the capacities and scope of the project.

In April 2020, Iris Network **conducted a survey “Social Services During Coronavirus Pandemic in Western Balkans”** in order to assess the current state caused by the pandemic and its repercussions on social services provided by 86 Network members in the local communities. The results of the survey were consolidated into a report that highlighted how ongoing support provided by the IRIS Network has been instrumental for all members of the network to exchange experience on how to handle the pandemic, suggesting solutions to overcome the challenges posed by COVID-19, and helping to overcome a feeling of helplessness and loneliness of its members. The survey thus demonstrated a strong unity among Network members and a common vision on how to work with stakeholders – beneficiary institutions, donors and other decision makers supporting CSOs and their beneficiaries.

Pillar III – IRIS Network is promoting tolerance and intercultural dialogue between dwellers and migrants, through regular posts on social media and information equally distributed through various channels in the region. A Newsletter dedicated to Covid-19 success stories was prepared and distributed to relevant stakeholders. IRIS Network supported EU visibility actions by presenting related success stories through its channels of communication on weekly and monthly basis in the period April – July 2020.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

- More than half of the **Grants** completed;
- **5 Peer Review Reports** prepared;
- **5 National Shadow Reports** and **1 Regional Shadow Report** under preparation;
- Citizens and migrants in local communities have an **increased knowledge and understanding** of the importance of intercultural dialogue;
- **Raised public awareness** thanks to the publication of IRIS Network Covid-19 related stories, Newsletter, and survey ‘Social Services during Coronavirus Pandemic in Western Balkans’.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Supporting capacity building, policy influencing and raising awareness through GAP Assessment presentation, mentoring, Shadow Report presentation, Public hearings, Balkan Briefing, Regional Social Academy, Train the Trainers, advocacy and media awareness raising campaign.
- IRIS members from Montenegro will complete the process of mentoring.

2.6 SUPPORT TO RECONCILIATION IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

Programme reference:	Multi-beneficiary Programme 2018 (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:	Contribution Agreement with the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (IRMCT)
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. This action aims to reduce 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 (JANUARY – JUNE 2020)

Component A: Domestic War Crimes Accountability Program

- The Office of the Prosecutor (OTP) of the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (IRMCT) handled 7 direct assistance requests from war crimes prosecutor's offices to assist them in specific cases. This required: conducting searches of OTP evidence collection, reviewing OTP's internal work product, analysing evidence of crimes and potential suspects as well as preparing and transmitting the required information to the concerned authorities.
- The OTP continued to conduct an extensive review of the Tribunal's prosecutions in support of tackling notable accountability gaps for well-established crimes committed in the former Yugoslavia (Category II *bis* cases), including judicially-confirmed factual findings on the crimes and those responsible. The OTP prepared an initial list of relevant suspects, and began a detailed factual and legal analysis as to the foundation for the dossier to be handed over. The OTP prepared a situation report and individual suspect dossiers as well as list of material and evidence, which will be transferred to the concerned authorities.

- To support Peer-to-Peer Mentoring, an online forum has been created to provide expert legal advice and support on international criminal law topics to domestic prosecutors.

Component B: Affected Communities Information Program

- The IRMCT produced content, branding, targeted posting and distribution for 1 social media campaign, including videos, social media posts, media information packages;
- The IRMCT completed 1st cycle of Inter-University Video Lectures Programme.
- The IRMCT held 4 workshops on use of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY)/IRMCT archive in history teaching.
- The IRMCT held 5 presentations and trainings on the use of the ICTY/IRMCT archives for stakeholders in the targeted IPA II beneficiaries.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY – JUNE 2020)

Component A: Domestic War Crimes Accountability Program

- 7 requests for direct assistance in specific cases received; 6,105 documents (122,836 pages) and 75 audio/video files provided to the domestic prosecuting authorities.
- 1 Category II *bis* situation report prepared, 15 individual suspect dossiers prepared.

Component B: Affected Communities Information Program

- 1 social media campaign commemorating the shelling of the Markale market in Sarajevo in 1994 – “[Remember Markale Victims](#)”.
- A digital exhibition: “Srebrenica: Timeline of a Genocide” prepared. The exhibition tracks what happened before, during, and after the genocide, as established in the ICTY’s and IRMCT’s judgements.
- Approx. 100 postgraduate law students from 6 universities from the targeted beneficiaries participated in 4 inter university lectures on prosecution of wartime sexual violence; destruction of cultural heritage; safeguarding the rights of the accused; and work of the IRMCT.
- More than 70 high-school history teachers and educators from two targeted beneficiaries trained in the use of the ICTY/IRMCT archives.
- More than 1,200 members of general public from the targeted beneficiaries reached through participation in on-line public discussions and webinars covering topics related to the crimes committed in the former Yugoslavia.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

Component A: Domestic War Crimes Accountability Program

- Continue to provide assistance to domestic prosecutors’ offices by responding to Direct Case Assistance requests.
- Commencement of transfer of Category II *bis* cases.

- Peer-to-Peer mentoring through online forum becomes operational. Domestic prosecutors will be able to submit questions in the Bosnian-Serb-Croat language and receive responses in the same language from experienced staff of the OTP. Posts about cross-cutting international criminal topics that are relevant to national prosecutions will be also shared.

Component B: Affected Communities Information Program

- Production of content for 6 social media campaigns and post-production and launch of a digital exhibition: “Srebrenica: Timeline of a Genocide” – featuring 39 videos.
- Delivering 8 inter-university video lectures to law students from 8 universities on ICTY legacy and judicially established facts about past crimes.
- Holding online follow up workshop on the use of the ICTY/IRMCT archives for high-school history teachers in Serbia.
- Delivering a presentation at the EUROCLIO Annual Conference 2020 on the use of the ICTY and IRMCT archival material in teaching history of the 1990s’ conflict.
- Producing new online features, including ICTY Legacy podcasts, online exhibition, and online training tools on the use of the ICTY archives.

2.7 HORIZONTAL FACILITY

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

Programme reference:	Multicountry Programme 2018 (2018/040-113)
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 a pillar assessed organisation 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 the Western Balkans and Turkey, in addressing the recommendations of the 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 and contributing to the implementation of the EU's Western Balkans Strategy.

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 freedom of the media, as well as Beneficiary-specific interventions for Turkey. In addition, the regional dimension has been enhanced aiming to increase regional co-operation, the sharing of good practices and support networking and peer-to-peer exchanges.

ACTIVITIES (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

Theme I – Ensuring justice, 14 Beneficiary-specific and 6 regional actions:

Albania - Three Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals on line courses on access to justice for women, fair trial in a criminal proceeding and respect for private and family life adapted to the local context. - Analysis of results of the assessment on data collection for the Integrated Case Management Information System implementation. - First ever survey initiated for prisoners.

Bosnia and Herzegovina - Procurement of hardware equipment and software for entity governments' prison data centres.

Kosovo* - Online training needs assessment survey in collaboration with the Academy of Justice.

Montenegro - Recommendations provided for addressing the shortcomings of the existing legal aid legislative framework and practices.

North Macedonia - Drafting of the national Strategy for the development of the penitentiary system (2021-2025).

Serbia - Consultations held with the Ministry of Interior to improve the independent police complaint mechanism. - Support provided to the State Prosecutorial Council regarding the final draft of the new Code of Ethics.

Turkey - Field visits and online stakeholder consultations carried out for the preparation of the forthcoming second National Action Plan on Human Rights.

Regional - Finalisation of a sustainable methodology with detailed recommendations for the evaluation and impact assessment of human rights training and dissemination to the judicial training centres of Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia. - Launch of nine Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals (HELP) online courses for around 300 legal professionals. - Webinars on human rights challenges related to the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. – Presentation of the Handbook "National parliaments as guarantors of

human rights in Europe" in local languages to the members of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) national delegations.

Theme II – Fighting corruption, economic crime and organised crime, 3 Beneficiary-specific and 1 regional action:

Montenegro - Workshop on the Corruption Prevention Agency's methodology for collecting, processing data on financial management and activities.

North Macedonia - Support to the State Commission for Prevention of Corruption to conduct monitoring of the financing of political parties and electoral campaigns based on detailed needs assessment. - Guidance and recommendations to the working group to draft amendments to the Anti- Money Laundering (AML)/ Combatting the Funding of Terrorism (CFT) legislation in order to align it with the EU 5th Anti-Money Laundering Directive.

Regional - Initiated the development of methodologies to conduct regional assessments of corruption risks in public procurement and of terrorist financing risks in the non-profit organisations sectors of the Western Balkans and Turkey. - Recommendations on how to improve the draft Law on Public Procurement in Albania were provided and the rulebook setting up the beneficial ownership registry in Montenegro was reviewed.

Theme III – Promoting anti-discrimination and the protection of the rights of vulnerable groups, 14 Beneficiary-specific and 1 regional action:

Albania - Series of activities during the "Week against Discrimination" and International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia (IDAHOT) 2020 throughout Albania and online.

Bosnia and Herzegovina - Awarded grants to CSOs tackling gender-based violence of Roma women and raising awareness against hate speech targeting vulnerable groups. -Work on awareness-raising campaigns on trafficking in human beings (THB hereafter) for the purpose of labour exploitation. - Training for pilot schools on the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC hereafter). - Preparation of a manual on teaching Competences for Democratic Culture online.

Kosovo - Analysis of equality bodies' capacities to respond to hate speech.

Montenegro - Seminar on education fraud. - Conference "Fostering a democratic culture through a whole-school approach" attended by 85 pilot school members. - New engagement with Civil Society Organisations working on Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex (LGBTI) issues and the Parliament, resulting in a constructive debate on the draft Law on Civil Partnerships hosted by the Human Rights Committee.

North Macedonia - Adjustment of some activities following the decision of the Constitutional Court to repeal for technical reasons the Law on Prevention and Protection from Discrimination. - Comparative analysis of the existing legal instruments in other Beneficiaries shared with the authorities for the finalisation of the draft Law on Legal Gender Recognition.

Serbia - Organisation of the first tailor-made capacity building training for all six staff members from the Shelter for the victims of THB. - Manual for teachers on how to incorporate the RFCDC into the online environment, lesson plans on cyber-bullying, fake news, and tolerance. - In co-operation with actions in Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina, first training session organised for teachers from eleven schools to provide a conceptual overview of the RFCDC.

Turkey - Preparatory work to conduct a gaps' analysis of the investigation procedure and the prosecution of THB cases in court. - Preparation of training materials to implement three HELP courses on child friendly justice, prohibition of ill treatment and European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment standards.

Regional - Launching activity gathering police officers and LGBTI CSOs from the region engaged in combating hate crime. - Regional comparative analysis on equality bodies' responses to hate speech.

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

Albania - Development of internal rules and the Action Plan of the “No Hate Alliance”.

Bosnia and Herzegovina - Expertise provided to support the regulator in drawing up a new policy on the protection of minors and the transposition of the new EU Audiovisual Media Services Directive into its rules. - Six grants signed with local training institutions and media associations. **Kosovo** - Cooperation with the Information and Privacy Agency in charge of monitoring legislation pertaining to access to public documents and privacy.

Montenegro - Provision of a legal opinion on the draft Law on Audiovisual Media Services upon request of the Ministry of Culture.

North Macedonia - Study to support the regulators on issues related to the pluralism of media ownership in the new media environment.

Serbia - Signature of the Memorandum of Understanding with the Faculty of Political Sciences establishing the framework for further co-operation.

Regional - Development of two on line courses on freedom of expression and protection of journalists.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

Albania - Three laws on the “Prison Police”, “Probation Service” and “Rights and Treatment of Sentenced and Pre-Trial Prisoners” approved by the Parliament reflecting the majority of the recommendations provided by the Council of Europe. - The draft Law on the Finalisation of Transitional Ownership Processes was adopted by the Parliament. - Amendments to the Law on Electoral Code and the draft Law on Financing of Political Parties and Election Campaigns reflected most recommendations provided under HF.

Bosnia and Herzegovina - The draft of the policing procedural manual was finalised. - The national Strategy for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings for 2020-2023 adopted and signed.

Kosovo - Increased use of the European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ hereafter) tools and methodology to collect judicial statistics. - The Office for Good Governance delivered a re-worked Human Rights Strategy and Action Plan. - A roadmap was agreed with the Independent Media Commission for developing regulation on transparency of media ownership.

Montenegro - The Code of Ethics for Mediators of Montenegro was developed and adopted. - Two methodologies for the implementation of control functions of the Agency for the Prevention of Corruption in the area of electoral campaigns were developed. - Guidelines on effective investigations in cases of ill-treatment and the handbook on case law of the ECtHR

in relation to the right to property were published and distributed to 200 legal professionals. - A consolidated draft analysis on the effect of the legislative reforms related to the anti-discrimination legal framework was devised.

North Macedonia – Adoption of the Rulebook for the Categorisation of Penitentiary Institutions and the Rulebook on the General Competencies of the Prison Police (by-laws). - The national co-ordination body for the implementation of the Law on Free Legal Aid and the local co-ordination body in Bitola were set up to facilitate citizens’ access to free legal aid. - The draft Law on the State Monetary Compensation for victims of violent crimes was finalised and sent for adoption.

Serbia - Trainings on treatment programmes became mandatory for prison treatment staff. - The Parliament adopted the Law on “missing babies”. - The High Judicial Council started revising the gaps in their rules of procedure addressing undue influence on the judiciary - The Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs officially committed to review the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination. - Four publications on media literacy for the youngest were devised and promoted. - The first version of the updated HELP course “Introduction to the ECHR and the ECtHR” was launched for 50 trainees of the Judicial Academy as a compulsory part of the Initial Training Annual Programme.

Regional - Beneficiaries submitted the first and second set of judicial data as part of the yearly report to the European Commission. - The Beneficiaries’ media regulatory authorities created a working group for drafting the next regional publication on media pluralism and media regulatory authorities. - Two working groups endorsed comprehensive assessments with practical suggestions for improvements in the areas of risk and needs assessment, allocation practices and preparation for release and post-released assistance for prisoners.

The Venice Commission - adopted opinions on three Expert Coordination Mechanism requests by written procedure: on the appointment of judges of the Constitutional Court of Albania, on the Law on Audio-visual Media Services of Albania and on the Criminal Procedure Code of Kosovo.

Transversal issues - eight gender analyses were finalised bringing the total number of finalised analyses to ten. This resulted in the revision of the logical frameworks of three out of ten actions (30%) to include gender-sensitive elements.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Preparation of a mid-term evaluation of the programme
- Preparation of the second round of Beneficiary Steering Committee meetings
- Organisation of a meeting with Horizontal Facility Beneficiary Co-ordinators and Triannual Action Plans co-ordinators.

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

Programme reference:	Multi-Country Programme 2016 (2016/039-858)
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 – 31.12.2020
Links:	www.osce.org/odihr/support-to-elections-in-western-balkans
Contact :	Eleonora Sconci, Eleonora.Sconci@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The aim of the project is to assist the beneficiaries in bringing the conduct of elections closer in line with OSCE commitments and other international obligations and standards for democratic elections. The project is implemented by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and provides support to 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 (JANUARY – JUNE 2020)

- The project activities included three in-depth visits (out of 64 to date), participation in 2 workshops and 16 on-line meetings.
- The national workshop on “Participation of Women, National minorities and Persons with Disabilities in Elections and Electoral Follow-up” took place in Tirana and the sub-regional workshop on “Addressing the Electoral Recommendations Related to Voter Registration - Challenges and Good Practices” in Warsaw included participants from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and North Macedonia. ODIHR continues to ensure equal participation of women and men in its thematic workshops.
- The Kosovo mid-term review visit planned for March 2020 was postponed due to the travel restrictions imposed by COVID-19 pandemic.
- As per the project outline, activities were at times placed on hold in North Macedonia and Serbia due to ongoing elections or finalisation and presentation of observation reports.
- To date, the project co-operated and/or interacted with 748 interlocutors including 88 civil society organizations, 44 local institutions, 29 ministries, 28 international organizations and their local offices, 27 embassies, 6 election management bodies, six OSCE field missions and five parliaments.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY - JUNE 2020)

- Albania: the project supported the Political Council mandated to review the Electoral Code. In June, the Council reached compromise agreements on a number of issues under discussion. The amended Code is to be voted by parliament (by mid-July 2020).

- Bosnia and Herzegovina: the project provided informal comments to six regulations of the Central Election Commission and one amendment to the election law in preparation of the 2020 local elections, including on their organization and possible delay in response to COVID-19 challenges.
- Montenegro: the project is preparing a formal opinion on the draft law on elections in co-operation with the Venice Commission, after informally providing its preliminary comments on four laws to the Committee for the Reform of Electoral Legislation.
- North Macedonia: the project supported the Working Group under the Ministry of Justice mandated to review the Electoral Code, co-operated with the OSCE Mission to Skopje for a first-ever gender audit of the State Election Commission, and provided an expert review to the Guide for Ethical Media Coverage of Elections of the Association of Journalists of Macedonia.
- The project published an easy-to-understand version of its “Handbook on Observing and Promoting the Electoral Participation of Persons with Disabilities”.
- The status of implementation of electoral recommendations in Kosovo was updated in the project database – www.paragraph25.odihhr.pl – following the publication of the EU election observation mission report.
- Two (out of 23 so far) news items were published on the ODIHR website.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- The project will translate and publish the easy-to-understand version of its “Handbook on Observing and Promoting the Electoral Participation of Persons with Disabilities” into six languages.
- The project will continue to populate the election recommendations database with updates on the status of implementation of recommendations, as assessed by new observation activities.
- Albania: the project will provide a formal opinion on the amended Electoral Code, upon the request from authorities and continue supporting the parliamentary Ad Hoc Committee on Electoral Reform in addressing the remaining ODIHR recommendations.
- Montenegro: the project will publish a formal opinion on the draft law on elections.
- Serbia: After the publication of the final report of its 2020 special election assessment mission, the project will resume supporting the Working Group on electoral reform established by the Prime-Minister and the Working Group for the Voter List Audit of the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self Governance and the Centre for Research, Transparency and Accountability.
- Regional: the project will organize the regional conference “Addressing electoral recommendations related to media coverage of elections – challenges and good practices” in Tirana in October 2020.
- Regional: the project will organize a regional conference for the closing of the project in Warsaw, November 2020.

2.9 SECURITY

Pilot Project deployment of Liaison Officers in the Western Balkans

Programme reference:	Multi-beneficiary Programme 2017 (2017/039-402)
Project title:	Pilot Project deployment of Liaison Officers in the Western Balkans
EU contribution:	EUR 2 million
Beneficiary region:	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 Debaveye, 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 is available by posting a EUROPOL Liaison officer (ELOs) in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia.

ACTIVITIES (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

- Activities were very much limited due to COVID-19 crisis.
- The ELO BiH participated in the drafting of the **baseline Assessment** for BiH and presentation to the Europol Management Board.
- Regular meetings were held between the ELO BiH, the EU Delegation in Sarajevo and the competent authorities on the state of play in terms of the Joint Contact Point.
- ELO Serbia attended **two coordination meetings** organised by Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF) for coordinating Europol's participation at a regional law enforcement operation in March-April 2020, which however was cancelled due to COVID-19 outbreak.
- ELO Serbia delivered **two workshops to Serbian law enforcement**, focusing on the EU Policy Cycle, EMPACT, Analysis Projects (AP) and international cooperation. In cooperation with Serbian Liaison Bureau at Europol, the ELO coordinated **two Serbian study visits to Europol**.
- The ELO Serbia provided support for the **Serbian training centre of clandestine drug-laboratories**.

- The ELO Albania had **61 different activities/meetings with various international and local stakeholders.**
- The ELO Albania was **involved in four operational meetings** and **engaged in nine different operational support** to Analysis Projects together with Albanian State Police.
- The ELO Albania participated in a number of **workshops and webinars** and **provided 6 awareness sessions** about EUROPOL products and services to the Albania State Police Regional Police Directorate.
- **ELOs** provide weekly updates on COVID impact.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

- During May and June 2020, ELO Albania supported the specific request from the Albanian State Police and the Ministry of Internal Affairs Albania for a **specific software and analytical training.**
- On 15 April 2020, **Albania** established the **position of National EMPACT Coordinator** for better understanding and coordination.
- In March 2020, **Albania became full member of Analysis Project Apate.** In the beginning of 2020, Albanian State Police requested participation in Analysis Project Check the Web.
- About **60 Serbian Law Enforcement officers and prosecutors trained** to use Europol systems, products and services.
- Serbian clandestine (illicit) drugs laboratories training centre has now developed into a facility used by many EU Member States for training their law enforcement.
- **Serbia increased involvement in EMPACT Operational Action Plans** and projects.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- The ELOs will continue to provide awareness sessions about EUROPOL products and services to central, regional and local authorities.
- Continuing ongoing Operational support to several operational activities and EMPACT Operational Action Plans.
- Continuation of participation in and support to regional initiatives and platforms.

Serious organised crimes investigations

Programme reference:	Multi-Country Action Programme 2017 – (2017/039-402)
Project title:	Countering Serious Crime in the Western Balkans
EU contribution:	EUR 13 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Delegation Agreement with GiZ and Ministry of Interior, Italy
Contract reference:	IPA/2017/390-963

Duration of activities:	01/01/2018 – 31/03/2020
Contact :	Olivia Debaveye olivia.debaveye@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The objective of the project is to raise the effectiveness of and the cooperation among regional and domestic 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 realisation of cooperation agreements and the use of communication means to better investigate serious and organised crime across borders.

ACTIVITIES (JANUARY-MARCH 2020)

From January until March 2020, the project provided support to 21 new investigations and in ongoing investigations, in particular on drug trafficking, money laundering and smuggling of migrants (total since January 2018: 115 investigations supported).

OUTPUTS (JANUARY-MARCH 2020)

In March 2020, the newly appointed Liaison Prosecutor for Serbia took up her duties at Eurojust. The project supported technical aspects of the negotiation of the cooperation agreement between Eurojust and Serbia.

Since February 2020, Albania is an observer country to the ENFAST Network. The project supported cooperation between the ENFAST network and select beneficiaries.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

The IPA/2017 Countering Serious Crime in the Western Balkans project ended on 31 March 2020. The IPA/2019 Countering Serious Crime in the Western Balkans project will start on 1 July 2020.

Security for Human Beings and Borders – Combating Smuggling of Migrants in the Western Balkan

Programme reference:	Multicountry programme 2019 Civil Society Facility and Media Programme 2018-2019 - allocation 2019 (2019/040-647)
Project title:	Security for Human Beings and Borders – Combating Smuggling of Migrants in the Western Balkan
EU contribution:	986,984.48 EUR
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Grant contract with GRUPA 484 (Coordinator)
Contract reference:	CN 2020/415-055

Duration of activities: 11/03/2020 – 11/07/2023

Contact: Olivia Debaveye, Olivia.DEBAVEYE@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The Project is a regional response to the smuggling of migrants along the Western Balkans Migration Route with seven CSOs affiliated in the Balkan Refugee and Migration Council (BRMC) and Danish Refugee Council (DRC), in cooperation with relevant authorities. In addition, 90 CSOs will be engaged in developing a legislative and policy framework against migrant smuggling. The Project will contribute to the development of comprehensive regional protection-sensitive migration management, based on a multi-dimensional partnership.

ACTIVITIES (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

The first 4 months (which started in March 2020) of the Project were used for preparatory activities, such as:

- Concluding cooperation agreements between the coordinator and beneficiaries;
- Drafting a detailed semi-annual activity plan;
- Informing relevant authorities about the beginning of the Project;
- Drafting the Communication and Visibility Strategy and the Information Note about the Project;
- Drafting a questionnaire for mapping CSOs and their capacities.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

- All duties and responsibilities of the coordinator and beneficiaries are regulated by cooperation agreements.
- Relevant authorities that are affiliates in the Project were informed about the beginning and main activities of the Project, especially about expected participation of their representatives.
- The draft Communication and Visibility Strategy will be finalised.
- The draft questionnaire for mapping CSOs and their capacities is a solid basis for further development and its finalisation, in cooperation with all partners.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Finishing the Communication and Visibility Strategy and the Information Note about the Project
- Distributing the Information Note to key stakeholders and the media
- Conducting necessary tender procedures
- Finishing the questionnaire for mapping CSOs and their capacities
- Developing the evaluation list

- Interviewing 120 local CSOs and evaluating their capacities
- Selecting 90 local CSOs interested in combating migrant smuggling
- Organising six coordination meetings with CSO representatives and informing them about the Project
- Producing a TOT training handbook
- Organising TOT training courses
- Producing a national training agenda and a handbook

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 2017 (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 **overall objective** is to improve the overall security in the Western Balkans and the EU by combatting organized crime and terrorism. The specific **objective** of this action is two-fold. The **objective** of this action is twofold: (i) **Organized crime and terrorism threats are degraded** due to 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 (JANUARY - JUNE 2020)

1. In February 2020, UNODC initiated the sixth phase of the UNODC Training-of-Trainers (ToT) programme and conducted three quality assurance trainings in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo under UNSCR.
2. In April 2020, the project visibility video was finalised and distributed to the project stakeholders through the quarterly newsletter and published on the UNODC website.
3. In May 2020, UNODC produced and disseminated the last project newsletter in cooperation with CEPOL.
4. The External Quality Assessment of the IISG evaluation, including the related analysis for addressing complexity in projects, programmes and strategies relating to countering organised crime was finalised, published and disseminated. Moreover, in order to further increase utilisation of the results, the evaluation was used as a key stream of information into the [UNODC Meta-Synthesis on Crime Prevention](#) (published in June 2020 on the IES website), which included the assessment and analysis of numerous UNODC as well as other UN entity evaluation reports.

The COVID-19 outbreak severely hampered a number of last project activities foreseen to be conducted in the first quarter 2020.

Activities that were cancelled due to the outbreak:

- Three final trainings in Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia scheduled to be held in March 2020;
- One study visit of Albanian law enforcement officers to a EU Member State by 31 March 2020;
- Organisation of the joint UNODC and CEPOL project closure event in Rome in March 2020.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY - JUNE 2020)

Numbering corresponds to the numbering of activities above.

- 1 - UNODC ensured that the certified national trainers who completed the UNODC ToT programme were delivering the training on financial investigations. In addition, 50 officers addressing money laundering and terrorism financing were trained.
- 2, 3 - The visibility of the EU as the source of funding was continuously raised and reinforced.
- 4 - The coordination complexity in projects, programmes and strategies relating to countering organised crime is better understood allowing to draw on lessons learned.

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

Project completed on 31 March 2020.

2.11 PARTICIPATION OF WESTERN BALKANS JUDICIAL PROFESSIONALS IN EJTN TRAINING ACTIVITIES

Programme reference:	Multi-beneficiary Programme 2017 (2017/039-402)
Project title:	Participation in European Judicial Training Network (EJTN) activities
EU contribution:	EUR 300.000
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Grant to European Judicial Training Network
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 judges, prosecutors, trainees and trainers from EU candidate countries (Albania, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia) and potential candidates (Bosnia and Herzegovina; Kosovo) by giving them access to EJTN trainings in line with EU acquis requirements. EJTN activities are also attended by peers of EU Member States.

ACTIVITIES (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

In the reporting period, judges, prosecutors and trainees from the Western Balkans were invited to attend seminars on the following fields of law: administrative, civil and criminal law, human and fundamental rights, judicial training methods, and linguistics law. In addition, they were invited to take part to EJTN's Exchange Programme for judicial authorities (AIAKOS, General Group, Trainers).

OUTPUTS (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

Western Balkans' participation to EJTN activities in the reporting period has been negatively impacted by the outbreak of COVID-19. The EJTN Steering Committee took measures culminating in the suspension of face-to-face training activities until 31 August 2020.

Although no exchange programme has taken place, EJTN managed to maintain open the training offer by transforming its face-to-face seminars into online trainings (webinars). Nominations and participation numbers remained low.

In total, 10 participants from the Western Balkan countries participated to EJTN activities (exclusively seminars and webinars) and received training on EU civil, criminal and administrative law, human and fundamental rights, judicial training methods and legal English.

Participants may be divided as follows: 6 (2 face to face, 4 online) from North Macedonia, 2 from Serbia (online), and 2 from Kosovo (online).

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

In the next reporting period, EJTN will invite participants from the Western Balkans to take part in numerous activities. The format (face to face or online) will be determined by travel restrictions and the ability of National Training Institutions to host activities. EJTN will also offer participants the possibility to attend its new “hybrid” seminars combining face-to-face and distance/online training as a means to increase and facilitate participation.

Participants will be invited to the THEMIS Competition (initial training) and seminars on administrative, civil and criminal law, human and fundamental rights, judicial training methods, and linguistics law.

Invitations will be extended to prospective participants to the so-called Exchange Programme activities consisting of 2-week exchanges in the courts/prosecution offices of the EU Member States, trainers’ exchanges, and the AIAKOS Programme* (initial training). To note, the upcoming AIAKOS exchanges will take place exclusively online and the rescheduling of certain activities due to the pandemic will have an impact on the participation level for the next reporting period.

2.12 FINANCIAL INVESTIGATION

Programme reference:	Multi-Country Programme 2017 (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:	Grant agreement for pillar assessed organisations with the EU Agency for Law Enforcement Training (CEPOL)
Contract reference:	IPA/2017/393-268
Duration of activities:	21 December 2017 – 31 March 2020
Links:	https://www.cepola.europa.eu/
Contact :	Olivia Debaveye, olivia.debaveye@ec.europa.eu

* The AIAKOS programme offers a unique exchange platform for future and early-career judges and prosecutors to learn and exchange views about different national judicial systems, foster mutual trust and raise their awareness of the European dimension of their (future) work.

PURPOSE

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

ACTIVITIES (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

- From 03 to 07 February 2020, the regional training course “Financial investigations related to public procurement fraud and money laundering” took place in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. The overall aim of the training course was to enhance the skills on investigating public procurement fraud and money laundering, with a particular focus on EU funds. In total, 44 officials (15 women and 29 men) took part in the training.
- 18 officials participated in the project’s Exchange Programme, based on the CEPOL Exchange Programme, addressing police, prosecutors, tax and customs authorities, judiciary officials and any other authority with a law enforcement mandate. The exchanges took place with EU Member States officials.
- Between January and March 2020, the project planned to deliver a conference for the Heads of Western Balkans and EU training institutions related to training activities in the area of financial investigations and the closing conference on 5 March 2020. However, due to the (travel) restrictions related to the Covid-19, these activities were cancelled.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

- In the course of the training activities, a number of competencies were developed on various issues related to financial investigations, including 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 contributed considerably to the promotion of active and sustainable networking between the law enforcement personnel, prosecutors and judiciary officials across the Western Balkans region and with EU Member States.
- The final report of the project was submitted and provided an overview for the implemented activities for **806 participants in total**, corresponding to: 362 participants in nine regional training courses, 157 participants in six national training courses, 160 participants in the CEPOL exchange programme (including participants in nine CEPOL residential courses from the annual CEPOL training catalogue), 127 participants in six webinars.
- CEPOL achieved outstanding training results. Based on participant evaluation, the general level of satisfaction with the training courses was **96%**.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- The project ended on 31 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 2016 (2016 / 039-858)
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 with the Institute for Democratic Control of Armed Forces ('DCAF') Ljubljana (as coordinator)
Contract reference:	2017/386-831
Duration of activities:	03/04/2017- 31/07 /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 supports the concept of the 'Integrative Internal Security Governance' (IISG) in the Western Balkans by providing its secretariat.

ACTIVITIES (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

- The IISG Support Group executed the last of the Europol IRU (Internet Referral Unit) workshops in Podgorica and Skopje in late February, co-organised with local Preventing/Countering Violent Extremism coordination authorities and intended for all relevant authorities.
- DCAF Ljubljana co-executed together with Frontex a workshop on efficient EU-Western Balkans engagement in the field of border and migration management and tackling related serious and organised crime, which included all relevant international and regional actors (IISG Partners) working in the field.
- The e-learning module on P/CVE for the Western Balkans ("P/CVE First Line") was successfully launched at www.dcaf-ljubljana.si.
- The Regional Cooperation Council, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) executed

several events intended for youth leaders and youth at risk, including the OSCE adapted second LIVE training for youth leaders module online.

- UNDP concluded the preparation of an integrated course module on National Referral Mechanisms for P/CVE, and executed the last in the series of Integrative Complexity (MOVIEQ) Workshops in North Macedonia and Kosovo*.

As a result of the COVID-19 restrictions, the foreseen CTI (Counter-Terrorism Network) Meeting was cancelled; the effect of the epidemic was also significant on other activities. For this reason, the project partners delivered in late March a joint COVID-19 contingency plan which helped facilitate later planning and adaptation of activities (transfer online where possible).

OUTPUTS (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

- Presented working processes and tasks of the IRU Unit to further improve the cooperation between Europol and Montenegro and North Macedonia respectively on Terrorist Content Online (TCO); widened application of the SIRIUS platform in Western Balkans beneficiaries with an operational agreement with Europol;
- Delivered IT equipment for the functioning of national P/CVE coordination authorities in Kosovo* and Serbia;
- Facilitated targeted discussion among DCAF, Frontex and other IISG partners resulting in an improved assessment of the state-of-play and a set of burning issues relevant to border security. Joint plan for EU-Western Balkans engagement addressing challenges of migratory flows and organised crime exploiting migratory and vulnerable populations on the Western Balkans routes prepared;
- Delivered e-learning module on P/CVE for the Western Balkans at www.dcaf-ljubljana.si;
- Delivered assessment of current Terms of Reference on Referral Mechanisms in Kosovo* (UNDP);
- Delivered integrated course module on National Referral Mechanisms for P/CVE (UNDP);
- Capacities of youth leaders in BiH and North Macedonia on P/CVE raised as part of the OSCE LIVE Initiative;
- Supported realization of IOM-led community ideas in North Macedonia and Kosovo* involving youth from respective communities as volunteers.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

The project concludes on 31/07/2020 so no activities are planned.

Creation of Preventing/Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) CSO Hub

Programme reference:	Multi-country Programme 2017 – Civil Society Facility and Media Programme 2016-2017 – allocation 2017 (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 (as coordinator)
Contract reference:	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 organisations (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 (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

- Four experts' national workshops/working groups were held – one in Bosnia and Herzegovina, one in Montenegro, one in Kosovo* and one in Serbia.
- 17 trainings 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 were country specific and in line with the current country challenges in addressing the issue of violent extremism. Three trainings were held in Albania, one in Bosnia and Herzegovina, five in Kosovo, two in Montenegro, two in North Macedonia and four in Serbia.
- Launched small grants program to support grassroots organisations and local CSOs in the Western Balkans in their efforts to build and increase community resilience to violent extremism through the creation of local partnerships and joint community-based P/CVE actions with other relevant actors such as authorities, Faith-Based Organisations, cultural institutions, youth associations, media and academia.
- Maintained regular communication between the consortium members.

Most of the capacity building trainings and domestic workshops were held in the period January to early March 2020 i.e. before the Covid19 outbreak in the Western Balkans. Covid19 pandemic has greatly influenced the project pace, especially joint regional activities. Each partner is trying to adapt and continue its work in line with specific situation.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

- Each capacity building programme included approx. 20 participants, which accounts to more than 340 in total across the Western Balkans. Although topics of the trainings are beneficiary specific, they all have the same goal: to empower and enable civil society members to actively engage and contribute to P/CVE efforts in the region.
- Two-day experts' workshops/working groups meetings gathered approx. 30 P/CVE relevant stakeholders in each beneficiary. The topics of the workshops were beneficiary specific but had same goal – development of P/CVE beneficiary action plan for CSOs.
- Cooperation among CSOs at beneficiary level, as well as regional, maintained and continuously enhanced.
- Established connections with relevant domestic and international experts which enabled consortium members to benefit from the best practices and lessons learned.
- Received more than 200 application of grassroots and local CSOs for the small grants program.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

During the upcoming six months, Forum MNE and its partners will continue to support local civil society actors in building community resilience to violent extremism through support and guidance of the small grants program beneficiaries, media campaign, launching of a web portal, and will continue with networking activities when it comes to P/CVE.

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 2018 (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:	Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, Serbia
Type of contract:	Grant contract with the International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP)
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 (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

- The project provided assistance to domestic authorities at two exhumations sites in Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- The project provided continued access to ICMP databases relative to missing persons through the ICMP Online Inquiry Centre;
- The project collected reference samples from missing persons' living relatives. 130 DNA match reports provided to relevant domestic institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia;
- The project held two meetings with authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina to ascertain the degree of political will for national DNA laboratories to assume DNA testing of post-mortem samples with regard to human identification of persons missing as a result of conflicts of the 1990s on the territory of the former Yugoslavia;
- The project published a Call for Proposals for local projects and, as a result, awarded 19 small grants to Associations of families of missing persons from beneficiaries;
- The project completed its monitoring and evaluation activities in Serbia.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

- 96 reference samples from missing persons' living relatives in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo collected;
- DNA match reports to Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia provided. These will enable the domestic authorities to accurately identify 27 missing persons;
- 19 small grants to Associations of families of missing persons awarded;
- Better perspective on the position of relevant authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina 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 and facilitate the reconnaissance and excavation of up to 15 possible clandestine graves in Kosovo and Serbia, as well as in Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- Update assessment of capacity of DNA laboratories in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Serbia to conduct DNA testing of post-mortem samples;
- Provide continued access to ICMP databases relative to missing persons through the ICMP Online Inquiry Centre;
- Collect reference samples from missing persons' living relatives for DNA testing and matching, 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 six meetings with senior authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Serbia to ascertain the degree of political will for domestic DNA laboratories assuming the DNA testing and matching functions with regard to human identification of persons missing as a result of conflicts of the 1990s on the territory of the former Yugoslavia;
- Set up a baseline assessment of family association's advocacy capacities;
- Monitor small grants to Family Associations of Missing Persons to advocate for issues related to missing persons.

2.15 REGIONAL RECONCILIATION IN THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

Programme reference:	Multi-beneficiary Programme 2018 (IPA/2018/041-591)
Project title:	Joint EU and MICT OTP Training project for National Prosecutors and Young Professionals from former Yugoslavia
EU contribution:	EUR 0.2 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Pillar Assessed Grant Agreement with the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (IRMCT)
Contract reference:	CN IPA/2018/404-574
Duration of activities:	01/01/2018 – 30/05/2020
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. Domestic prosecutors for domestic war crimes cases and young professionals with a legal or other relevant background participate in the Action.

ACTIVITIES (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

Visiting National Prosecutors

- One visiting National Prosecutor from Serbia acted as liaison officer between the OTP of the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (IRMCT) and the Serbian War Crimes Prosecutor Office. He continued activities in searching OTP databases for relevant material for the prosecution of war crimes in Serbia. He completed his professional visit on 30 May 2020.
- The OTP supported this Visiting National Prosecutor from Serbia during searches for investigative material, which was used in the investigation and prosecution of war crimes in Serbia.

Visiting Young Professionals component

- Two Visiting Young Professionals, one from Bosnia and Herzegovina and one from Serbia, conducted activities at the OTP between January and May 2020.
- After being trained in the use of the OTP tools, the Visiting Young Professionals participated in the evidence search for the OTP trials and appeals, legal research and attended IRMCT hearings. The feedback from the respective teams and supervisors was positive.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

Visiting National Prosecutors component

- 45 Requests for Assistance from domestic authorities regarding the access to evidentiary material in the possession of the OTP completed. 1.358 documents (32.177 pages) and 13 audio/video material provided to the national prosecuting authorities.

Visiting Young Professionals component

- Two Visiting Young Professionals trained in the use of OTP databases and other available judicial tools.
- Two Visiting Young Professionals actively participated in the preparation of the trials and appeals.

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 with Humanitarian Law Center (as coordinator)
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 strengthen prospects for regional reconciliation in the Western Balkans by establishing the facts on war crimes and human losses and detention sites related to the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s. Its specific objectives are: (1) To provide a solid basis for a nominal regional list of victims of the wars in the former Yugoslavia.; (2) To set-up an inclusive and bottom-up regional civil society network for reconciliation; (3) To facilitate a facts-based regional public dialogue on dealing with the past from the perspectives of the victims.

ACTIVITIES (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

Following its 2019 General Assembly, the Coalition for RECOM was effectively renamed “RECOM Reconciliation Network” with a view to take effective responsibility in drawing up a nominal list of victims of the war that took place in the former Yugoslavia between 1 January 1991 and 31 December 2001.

As a result, the project increased its research activities regarding the list of victims as well as on detention sites, as follows:

- Continued investigation into the circumstances surrounding the murders of Albanian, Bosniak and Ashkali victims in Kosovo and starting investigation into the fates of the missing persons and potential mass graves sites in the Peć municipality (Kosovo).
- Continued research into the circumstances surrounding the deaths of Serbian, Roma, Montenegrin and Bosniak victims, whose families fled to Serbia and Montenegro;
- Uploading previously collected documents into the database and linking these to victims who were killed or went missing during the war in Croatia.
- Continued research into the murders of Serbian victims during and following the Croatian armed forces’ Operation Storm, in August 1995.

- Continued research into civilians and prisoners of war detention sites in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the 1992–1995 period, in Doboj and Travnik; starting research into detention sites of Serbian civilians in the region of Sarajevo.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

- 233 witnesses/family members' statements taken regarding the circumstances of the death and other information relating to 184 victims who died in the municipality of Peć (Kosovo); 118 witnesses contacted in the municipality of Pristina (Kosovo): this completed the information collection regarding 123 victims who died in connection with the war; 195 witnesses/family members contacted in the municipality of Prizren (Kosovo): this contributed to determine the circumstances of the deaths of 245 victims of war; 153 witnesses/family members contacted in connection with abductions and/or disappearances of 119 persons (Albanians, Ashkalis and Bosniaks) in the municipalities of Peć, Orahovac and Vučitrn.
- 141 witnesses/family members contacted in Serbia and Montenegro: this contributed to determine circumstances of the deaths of 141 victims (Serbs, Bosniaks, Montenegrins and Roma) connected to the war in Kosovo.
- Final narratives for 220 victims in Kosovo produced.
- 2,007 documents uploaded into the database, providing confirmation of 1,500 victims by at least three independent sources.
- 145 witnesses/family members contacted and statements taken from 125 Serbian victims killed in August 1995 during and following Croatian armed forces' Operation Storm.
- Finalization of narratives on 75 detention sites during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (municipalities of Doboj, Travnik and Sarajevo).

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Publication of a special edition of the Kosovo Memory Book about (1,653) missing persons in Kosovo.
- Editing and translating into English the narratives about detentions sites in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with a first publication about camps and detention sites for civilians and prisoners of war in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- Through the platform "Voice of victims", preparing at least 30 video events linked to war crimes cases before the International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia.
- Organizing four online debates on remembrance policies and practices in post-Yugoslav countries.

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; 2020/042-808
Project title:	Western Balkan Enterprise Development and Innovation Facility (WB EDIF)
EU contribution:	EUR 192.3 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, aleksandra.kostova@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

WB EDIF is the EU-led private sector platform within the Western Balkans Investment Framework. WB EDIF 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 (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

- Enterprise Innovation Fund (ENIF): ENIF has made 28 investments and invested EUR 26.3 million out of EUR 42 million available, bringing the utilisation of the fund to more than 60%. The investment period of the fund finishes in September 2020.
- Enterprise Expansion Fund (ENEF): during the first half of 2020, ENEF has signed one follow-on investment and 2 new investments. Overall, ENEF remains well on track to deliver on its targets taking into account the core pipeline.
- Guarantee Facility: The Guarantee Facility I and Guarantee Facility II are fully deployed and EIF is now monitoring the portfolio. Under the GF Serbia, EIF has selected five financial intermediaries, which could in total build up an aggregate portfolio of up to EUR 180m, with a leverage – in case of full performance by the intermediaries – well above the initial expectations. The five banks have started the disbursements between December 2018 and June 2019. In total, all the five banks are progressing with the disbursement, reaching in total more than 70% of the entire portfolio as of March 2020. Under the GF Youth, the demand from local intermediaries exceeded the available budget. EIF has selected five intermediaries committed to include youth employment loans for a total portfolio equal to ca. EUR 85m. All guarantee agreements have been signed in H1 2020, and the inclusion period has started during H1 2020.
- 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 25m have been provided to local SMEs. The programme was replenished in May 2020 with additional EUR 15 million as a COVID-19 special measure.
- Support services: the signing of the Administrative Agreement for phase II of the EU REPARIS was delayed but will be processed in H2 2020. 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 for the Western Balkans. EBRD is deploying phase II of the regional Advise for Small Businesses Programme, which was adapted to the COVID-19 circumstances via digital solutions and remote consultancy. The Venture Capital and Investment Readiness Programme of the World Bank Group was also adapted to the situation related to the global pandemic and launched with a small delay but with more attractive training curriculum and improved outreach. The Proof of Concept Scheme was launched, in cooperation with the Joint Research Centre and a service provider.
- Platform communication and visibility activities: SA virtual PAG meeting took place on 10th June 2020.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

The WB EDIF access to finance and technical assistance programmes were to the extent possible adapted to the new challenges COVID-19 brought to the companies in the region: Some financial instruments were further replenished (guarantee and lending schemes), the advisory services became better tailor-made to the circumstances and helped some companies even to take advantage of them.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

ENIF: Following the success of the event organised in Dubrovnik and Budva, SCV will continue with this best practice and organize an event, to be held most probably in October 2020 in Bled, Slovenia, targeted at providing networking and further collaborative opportunities between investee companies and investors also in 2020. This will also contribute to raising further awareness for the Fund itself and WB EDIF more broadly. Workshops and presentations and participation of the investment team members at various events (as jury members, panellists, keynote speakers) will also continue, to the extent possible due to the COVID crisis.

ENEF: The Fund can exceed 70% utilisation by 2020, and exceeds 90% with follow-on and crisis response investments before the fund's closure. Given that ENEF is approaching the end of its investment period, it remains important to proceed with the structuring and fund-raising for ENEF II, with a view to launch it in the first quarter of 2021. The new fund would be very well positioned to continue the work of ENEF and will be improved further, based on the lessons learned, so that it can also serve as a crisis response instrument for as long as necessary. Pipeline development for ENEF II would be one of the core activities in the coming months.

Guarantee Facility: Inclusions of new loans under the GF Youth Employment and GF Serbia will continue with all selected banks. EIF will also monitor the portfolios under the GF I, GF II and GF Serbia and contribute to the visibility and promotion of the facilities among the relevant networks. In addition, EIF is currently discussing with DG NEAR regarding the deployment of a new window of the WB EDIF Guarantee Facility, envisaged by DG NEAR as a regional response to the COVID crisis and to the negative impact of this on the local SMEs. The instrument will be discussed in the June PAG, together with all relevant features currently envisaged

Competitiveness Programme: the programme has started in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia. A replenishment of EUR 15 million was made by DG NEAR in May as a response to the COVID-19 impact on the local economies.

Support services: In autumn, policy roundtables will be organised in the capitals of the Western Balkans (WB), discussing the policy challenges and solutions across the 16 areas. The World Bank has prepared a four-year regional program that will have a greater focus on Small and Medium-Sized Practices. REPARIS for SMEs will start in H2 2020 after the Administrative Agreement is signed by the European Commission and the World Bank. EBRD's ASB will continue supporting SMEs through Advice for Small Businesses across the region, expecting to utilise all available WB EDIF first phase funding in the upcoming months.

The team will work on further developing the Blue Ribbon Programme and closely cooperate on project delivery jointly with ENEF.

Platform Coordination: additional communications efforts are planned for 2020, like regularly updating the events and news on the website, Collecting COVID-19 related case studies and potentially preparing a WB EDIF – company video.

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 30 June 2020 108 loans to 38 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 (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

By 30 June 2020, the outstanding investment portfolio of the EFSE amounted to EUR 916.3 million with 68 PLI, thereof EUR 444.6 million with 38 PLIs in the Western Balkans and

Turkey. During H2 2020, EFSE signed 14 investments totalling EUR 96.4 million, of which EUR 73.0 million with 9 PLIs were in the Western Balkans and Turkey.

In terms of sub-loan portfolio, by 30 June 2020, the outstanding sub-loan portfolio amounted to EUR 1009.9 million, including EUR 468.3 million in the Western Balkans and Turkey. This translates into an on-lending rate of 103% for the total Fund and 105% for the Western Balkans and Turkey by 30 June 2020. Almost 1,027,778 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") had 22 projects approved in H1 2020 for a total budget of 2.6 million. Within the two crisis response framework projects, 17 individual sub-projects were approved for a total budget of EUR 322,931. Also, the DF implements 51 TA projects in the Western Balkan region and Turkey, with a total volume of EUR 7.0 million. Since the Covid-19 outbreak, the DF is focusing on supporting the Fund's strategic partners and end clients in addressing and overcoming the economic and social challenges posed by the crisis. As such, the DF conducted rapid research in selected EFSE countries to capture the impact of the crisis on MSEs and to derive recommended actions for the Fund's and the DF's crisis response.

As one of the results, the DF, in partnership with EFSE PLIs, offers tailored advisory services for MSE in form of online workshops (webinars), one on one mentoring/coaching and support to address key issues, such as HR, cash flow or inventory management, and to adjust their business models, e.g. through digitalisation of sales, products and services. For other businesses and start-ups, the DF partners with strategic ecosystem actors to provide recoverable grants facilities in combination with targeted mentoring and coaching to enable businesses to adapt and respond to the crisis by adjusting their business models, products and services.

Furthermore, the DF provides customised technical assistance for strategic EFSE PLIs who require assistance, capacity and advice in areas such as restructuring, funding, adjustments in lending, deposit management and positioning. In parallel to its crisis response, the DF continues working in areas of strategic focus: driving the Fund's Entrepreneurship Agenda.

The EFSE DF rolled out the Tech Boost Program for impact tech start-ups in partnership with local ecosystem partners and Start-up Wise Guys. This year, the program featured the winner of PODIM, one of Europe's most influential start up and tech conference in the CEE region, demonstrating the strong pipeline and potential of start-ups in the EFSE region. As part of its Responsible Finance Agenda, the DF continues supporting financial literacy projects with the National Bank of Georgia in providing financial education to farmers or with the Association of Serbian Banks on the topic of financial education for journalists.

To promote Financial Technology and Digitalisation, the DF is scaling up its activities to support PLIs in their digital transformation, also as a response to the crisis and beyond. This includes initiatives to increase customer outreach access by creating digital solutions for underserved market segments. For instance, the DF is supporting Denizbank in Turkey in the development of a mobile app for agricultural clients through which the bank will be able to offer digital financial services via integrated data analytics and credit scoring tools to farmers in rural areas.

The Fund was well funded in H1 2020 given the successful mobilization of EUR 54.1 million roll-overs of maturing A-Shares and Notes, and the additional signing of EUR 60 million open A-Share commitments. As of 30 June 2020, private investor funding stood at 24%, compared to 46% donor shares*. In support of the Fund’s role as a strong and reliable partner in the target region during the Covid-19 crisis, the EU internally approved EUR 40.6 million additional donor funding, to be subscribed as EUR 17 million European Eastern Neighbourhood L-Shares, EUR 10 million Western Balkan C Shares and EUR 13.6 million Ukraine C Shares during H2 2020. In addition, the EU approved EUR 16.4 million new funding for the EFSE DF, thereof, EUR 2 million dedicated for Armenia, EUR 1.4 million dedicated for Ukraine, EUR 5 million dedicated for the European Eastern Neighbourhood Region, and EUR 8 million dedicated for the Western Balkans. As an immediate crisis response, the Fund enabled a MFI support package of EUR 36 million to 8 PLIs. Further immediate financial support was lent to strategic partners of the Fund. Overall, the Fund's performance remains very solid with a good risk profile, stable financial performance and continued leveraging of the Fund's C-Shares.

The Fund received high visibility resulting from its timely and well received crisis response package which unleashed even more support from other MIVs. Various initiatives and activities, including the Fund’s “Power of Local Currency” campaign in cooperation with the EU, had to be put on hold or were reduced in scope given the crisis environment. Nevertheless, the Fund continued to support existing clients in the European Eastern Neighbourhood Region by enhancing their ability to extend local currency financing to small businesses – thus protecting the most vulnerable from exchange rate volatility while supporting their ability to access necessary liquidity to continue operations and sustain employment. In H1 2020, local currency disbursements of EUR 16.8 million were realized.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

EFSE investment portfolio figures as at end Q2 2020*	
1. Total Invested Portfolio (Q2 2020 figures)	EUR 916.3 million
2. Number of current Partner Lending Institutions (Q2 2020 figures)	68
3. Type of Partner Lending Institution (Q4 2019 figures)	68% Commercial Banks, 15% Micro-finance Institutions, 17% Non-Bank Financial Institutions
EFSE sub-loan figures as at end Q2 2020*	
4. Active End Borrowers (Q2 2020 figures)	106,957
5. Reached End Borrowers since inception (Q2 2020 figures)	1,027,778

* the remaining 30% is subscribed by IFIs

6. Average sub-loan amount outstanding (Q2 2020 figures)	EUR 7,488
7. Disbursed sub-loans since inception (Q2 2020 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 H2 2020 appears sound and brings the Fund on a good way to reach its business plan target of EUR 970 million at year-end. Besides potential local currency transactions in Georgia, Ukraine, and Armenia, first-time unhedged local currency investments in Moldova, Serbia and North Macedonia are also considered in the investment pipeline for H2 2020.

Given the current crisis environment and social-distancing measures, the Fund's "Power of Local Currency" campaign will need to get adjusted in line with local safety measures. Visibility and communication efforts will remain high where possible. Focus for H2 2020 investments will be the continued support of strategic partners targeted to providing especially small businesses with the crucial liquidity that is needed to overcome the crisis environment.

Furthermore, the Fund will seek to subscribe to the EU's EUR 40.6 million C and L Share contributions targeted to support a sustainable recovery of the target region.

In the second half of 2020, the EFSE DF will continue strengthening the entrepreneurial ecosystem across the EFSE region through its network of business incubation and acceleration partners and dedicated online events where start-ups can pitch their ideas and gain visibility. Investors' platforms and financing for scalable, but early stage businesses, will be further developed and piloted through regional and local DF partners to contribute to access to finance also in times of crisis.

Responsible Finance will continue to be a key topic amid the Covid-19 crisis where the DF will engage both in providing non-financial support to strategic partners and supporting digitalization efforts of PLIs to weather the crisis.

As part of its measures for Core Capacity Building of PLIs, the DF will support projects in loan automation, improvement of business processes and training for PLI staff and Central Bank employees to spur business efficiency, customer satisfaction and customer outreach.

With regards to activities in Turkey, two new investments in strong Turkish PLIs of in total EUR 40 million have been pursued at the end of Q2 2020 in order to prevent a further deleveraging of the Fund's national exposure. Further investment opportunities are considered in the pipeline for H2 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 (JANUARY - JUNE 2020)

Going for Competitiveness: The assessment frameworks for all 16 policy areas covered under the Competitiveness Outlook 2021 have been revised and finalised. The assessment cycle was virtually launched on 3 April 2020 - approx. 2 months earlier than foreseen - kicking off the government assessment phase. All of the assessment materials and complementary materials were shared in an online format for the first time. This virtual launch was followed by around 80 virtual kick-off meetings with dimension & statistical office co-ordinators to acquaint them with the new assessment framework and milestones in the process, and to provide additional clarifications. The team started receiving the first set of completed assessment materials in June, and initiated on their comprehensive review.

SBA Assessment: The OECD team prepared a business survey in close collaboration with the Western Balkans 6 Chamber Investment Forum (CIF) and the national chambers of commerce. It aimed to better understand the COVID-19 impact on businesses and potential policy measures to support their survival and competitiveness. The OECD team continued to attend and contribute to the WBIF/EDIF meetings during this period, by providing updates on the recent activities carried out.

Support to Policy Implementation: In co-operation with the Albanian government, the OECD was planning to hold its first regional policy dialogue meeting on digitalisation policies for businesses in Tirana on 1 April, back-to-back with the 3rd Western Balkans Digital Summit. On 5 March, the Albanian government postponed the Digital Summit to a later date due to developments in the COVID-19 outbreak. On 12 June, the OECD team organised a

regional policy dialogue webinar titled “Supporting the Tourism Sector in the COVID-19 Context”, bringing together 60 participants. The policy measures to support the tourism sector and to facilitate the sector’s progressive resumption in the Western Balkans were discussed, and good practices from EU/OECD member states were shared on how to minimise the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and foster sustainable tourism activities.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY - JUNE 2020)

Going for Competitiveness: The 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 latest developments. Meanwhile, the horizontal and whole-of-government approach of the assessment contributed to increased co-ordination across the different Ministries. It also encouraged the statistical offices and relevant government bodies to produce new or more frequent statistics, thereby improving the economies’ ability to design and implement structural reforms.

SBA Assessment: The business survey findings will guide the efforts on revisiting the SME Policy Index’s assessment framework and methodology to better address the new challenges faced by SMEs in the COVID-19 context. It will also inform policy-makers in the Western Balkans on the most suitable policy designs for private sector’s recovery following the COVID-19 crisis.

Support to Policy Implementation: The regional policy dialogue webinar served as a platform to discuss the challenges faced by the region’s tourism sector in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, by shedding light on the necessary policy solutions. Moreover, it helped the region reflect on joint solutions to foster regional co-operation and integration in the area of tourism.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

Going for Competitiveness: The OECD team will continue reviewing the assessment materials, and will request additional clarification and information throughout July-August. In September, a CO Co-ordinators meeting will be held to provide an update on the state-of-play of the assessment and outline the next steps. In the last quarter, the OECD team will organise a series of stakeholder meetings with the purpose of better understanding the policy landscape, addressing the remaining information gaps. In the last quarter, the team will embark on drafting the country profiles and organise economy-specific meetings to present the preliminary results.

SBA Assessment: The OECD team will analyse the survey results, and use them as a starting point when revising the assessment framework.

Support to Policy Implementation: In October, a regional policy dialogue meeting will be organised on reforming state-owned enterprises in the Western Balkans. It will leverage the existing OECD body of work, and allow for the exchange of knowledge and good practices from peers in OECD and EU members to improve the governance and performance of SOEs. Moreover, the team will be in close touch with the Albanian Government regarding the date of the 3rd Western Balkans Digital Summit to explore another potential regional policy dialogue meeting on the side.

EU Support to Western Balkan Six Chamber Investment Forum

Programme reference:	Multi-Country Annual Action Programme 2018
Project title:	EU support to Western Balkan Six Chamber Investment Forum
EU contribution:	2 500 000 EUR
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Grant
Contract reference:	CN 2019/408-715
Duration of activities:	3 years
Links:	www.wb6cif.eu
Contact :	Youssef Tadros, Youssef.tadros@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The Action seeks to contribute to enhancing competitiveness of the Western Balkans and enabling them to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union. Increase cross-border business cooperation by supporting the improvement of the regional legal and policy framework and facilitating direct cooperation through support services provided by the chambers.

It will also support private sector development by promoting opportunities for access to finance, for the development of businesses/market niches and delivering support services to SMEs.

ACTIVITIES (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

Two webinars for approximately 60 Western Balkans SMEs have been held: ‘Market analysis, Market Potential and Market Entry’ and ‘Digitalization of Trade’ in order to support business community in yielding the benefits of the regional economic integration.

Six online round tables/info days with more than 70 Western Balkan SMEs, from June 22nd – June 30th 2020, focusing on the different building blocks and policy areas relevant to regional economic integration. This activity helped to discuss the views of business community on the priority issues for achieving enhanced regional economic cooperation and integration, summarizing the needs and proposals of the regional business community to be reflected in the Regional Economic Area Roadmap 2021-2024. During these round tables we have disseminated information on potential benefits of the regional economic integration, namely Regional Economic Area.

Four initiatives towards REA governance were presented to various stakeholders (EU and Regional decision makers). They also aim to mitigate the economic impact of the pandemic context.

A new study is under preparation ‘Prospects for Travelling and Tourism Sector in the Western Balkans in 2020 (impact of the coronavirus epidemic)’.

In order to ensure participation of business representatives in the governance structure of the MAP REA, representatives of WB6 CIF took active role in meetings and initiatives related to the MAP REA.

Joint activities have been taken to build capacities of WB6 CIF and its members to promote regional economic integration and the competitiveness of local economies (Secondment programme from the chamber network to support WB6 CIF and one WB6 CIF Managing Board meeting in Skopje has been organised as a support to smooth the functioning of WB6 CIF).

OUTPUTS (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

Improved capacities of targeted SMEs to respond to market needs and requirements including those related to cross-border trade. 60 SMEs received individual, tailor-made support to look for business and funding opportunities across borders, 70 SMEs reached with trade promotion activities.

Improved capacities of WB6 CIF and its members to represent the interest of the business communities within the frameworks of REA (four initiative prepared by WB6 CIF, two accepted).

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

Establishing Platform for EU-WB6 business dialogue - The platform will consist of the representatives of the business communities and decision makers from the Western Balkans and EU. The activity needs to be implemented in coordination with EC.

Four webinars for approximately 120 Western Balkans SMEs will be organised in order to support business community in yielding the benefits of the regional economic integration.

Comments on the final draft of the regional economic cooperation agenda (MAP REA 2021-2024) will be prepared.

Participation of business representatives in the governance structure of the MAP REA, representatives of WB6 CIF will take active role in meetings and initiatives related to the MAP REA.

One joint regional info day will be organized to disseminate information on potential benefits of the regional economic integration (presentation of the MAP REA2 to the business community).

Based on the Study 'Prospects for Travelling and Tourism Sector in the Western Balkans in 2020 (impact of the coronavirus epidemic)' recommendations will be prepared for companies (travelling and tourism sectors) on how to overcome existing obstacles and adapt to international standards and recommendations for REA governance structures/proposals of additional measures to be taken.

Joint activities will be taken to build capacities of WB6 CIF and its members to promote regional economic integration and the competitiveness of local economies (expert support from the chamber network and Support to smooth the functioning of WB6 CIF through organization of at least one WB6 CIF Managing Board meeting).

One joint meeting will be organised in the framework of the dialogue between CCI Serbia and CCI Kosovo.

3.4 TRADE

CEFTA Grant 2020/2021

Programme reference:	Multi-beneficiary Programme, IPA 2019
Project title:	CEFTA Action Grant 2020-2021
EU contribution:	EUR 2,800,000
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Moldova
Type of contract:	Action Grant to CEFTA Secretariat
Contract reference:	CN 2019/412-413
Duration of activities:	01/01/2020 – 31/12/2021
Links:	http://www.cefta.int/
Contact:	Nanna Matsson, nanna.matsson@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The Action will seek to contribute to enhancing competitiveness of the CEFTA Parties (overall objective) by supporting regional economic integration as envisaged in the MAP REA and CEFTA 2006 (specific objective).

ACTIVITIES (JANUARY - JUNE 2020)

The activities accounted for below are adapted to the COVID-19 pandemic. Following the outbreak of the virus COVID-19 in the reporting period, CEFTA Parties introduced measures restricting the movement of people, goods, and other activities. CEFTA focused fully on managing the crisis with a view of maintaining trade between the Parties and enabling a system for efficient trade in goods considered essential in the given context. Due to travel and other restrictions, in-person meetings were replaced by videoconferences (VCs).

The recruitment process for five new posts was fulfilled by the Secretariat that include: Head of Administration, Accountant, and Procurement Officer. The Secondment Programme was implemented with experts engaging in trade facilitation, trade in services, and agriculture.

The study visit to Brussels was held on 27-29 January for the Chairs of the CEFTA bodies. The visit included coordination meetings, meeting with external stakeholders (EC, IFIs) and outreach events. The chairs presented the work programmes for 2020. In February, a Special Joint Committee adopted the Decision on Facilitating Trade in Fruits and Vegetables.

The decision establishing the validation procedure for the mutual recognition of national Authorized Economic Operators (AEO) Programmes entered into force on 1 April. North Macedonia and Serbia applied to start the validation procedures of their programmes.

Albania and Serbia ratified Additional Protocol 6 on trade in services (AP6), and preparations on its implementation are underway. The Parties agreed on the E-commerce Roadmap of Dialogue on Regulatory Issues. Tourism is the sector for Intraregional regulatory

cooperation. Negotiations on Additional Protocol 7 on dispute settlement (AP7) should start in the next reporting period. The Secretariat prepared project fiches for the funding of activities: support to the Secretariat and REA MAP, SEED+, and the CEFTA Customs Risk Management Strategy.

CEFTA Secretariat and Transport Community (TCT) Secretariat collaborated to facilitate the transport and trade of essential goods within the Western Balkans. Green Corridors were established and the exchange of pre-arrival information was expanded to relevant agencies (veterinary, phytosanitary and health) conducive to the uninterrupted flow of priority goods. CEFTA contributed to the consultations on joint regional actions to mitigate the consequences of an outbreak of the pandemic. CEFTA and Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) presented a joint proposal for a Mutual Recognition Agreement on professional qualifications and agreed on a Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation between the two organisations. Cooperation with the RCC was strengthened in the preparation of the MAP REA 2 and extended to the Western Balkans 6 Chamber Investment Forum (WB6 CIF) and the TCT. CEFTA and the TCT are drafting the Post-Covid-19 Action Plan on Border Crossing for the implementation of Green corridors and connectivity with EU.

The Secretariat closely cooperated with the GIZ to prepare for the implementation of AP5 and AP6. The participation of the private sector represented by WB6 CIF to these planning meetings was of the outmost importance.

The CEFTA website was enhanced with information on measures and activities related to COVID-19. CEFTA uses social media to give visibility to their work, news, and achievements. The “Multiple Framework tender for Travel and Event organisation” was awarded. The CEFTA Secretariat also launched two successful tenders - “Legal Expertise” and “Strengthening CEFTA Secretariat” – and contracted capacity building consultants to the Secretariat to maximize its internal control management, among others.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY - JUNE 2020)

- Decision on Facilitating Trade for Fruit and Vegetables adopted
- Joint CEFTA-TCT proposal to facilitate the transport and trade of essential goods within the Western Balkan endorsed by the WB6 Parties
- Decision Establishing the validation procedure for the mutual recognition of CEFTA Parties’ national AEOS Programmes entered into force
- Three Project fiches (Secretariat and MAP REA, SEED+, Customs Risk Management)
- “MAP REA 2.0” – first draft
- List of essential goods to benefit from green lanes adopted
- Pre-arrival information system to support green lanes established
- Recruitment of five new staff in CEFTA Secretariat completed
- 2019 annual reports and 2020 work plans
- Secondment Programme in implementation
- CEFTA communication on social networks and crisis communication increased

- CEFTA recommendations for drivers and transport companies endorsed
- CEFTA-RCC Memorandum of Understanding agreed
- E-commerce Roadmap of Dialogue on Regulatory Issues endorsed
- Intraregional regulatory cooperation in tourism launched

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT PERIOD (JULY-DECEMBER 2020)

- Organisation of CEFTA structural meetings according to calendar of activities for 2020
- Official start of negotiations on AP7
- Continuation of activities regarding the implementation of the Decision on Facilitating Trade in Fruit and Vegetables
- Implementation of the CEFTA Customs Risk Management Strategy
- Adoption of the decisions on mutual recognition of the first two AEO programmes by the Joint Committee
- Adoption of MAP REA 2.0 at Sofia summit
- Commence work on the CEFTA Communication Strategy
- Draft the Post-Covid-19 Action Plan on Border/Common Crossing Facilitation with the TCT Secretariat
- Contract a supplier for CEFTA statistical portal and transparency pack
- Contract a Communication Agency for CEFTA Communication strategy and Action plan
- Set up a partner academic network
- Organise CEFTA week
- Publish info and promo material
- Set up the framework for technical expertise recruitment
- Strengthening the CEFTA Secretariat: Training and knowledge dissemination activities, continuous assistance, monitoring, training, and validation
- Capacity building event for CEFTA Secretariat staff

Systematic Exchange of Electronic Data (SEED+)

Programme reference:	Multi-beneficiary Programme, IPA 2018/403-296
Project title:	SEED +
EU contribution:	EUR 5,300,000
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
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 Systematic Exchange of Electronic Data (SEED+) Project is to enhance trade facilitation and regional economic integration in the context of the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA). The project supports the upgrade of the SEED to SEED+ and establishes regional databases as stipulated by the Additional Protocol 5 (AP5) and its Technical Annexes. The main components of the project are:

Component A - Legal Component: Upgrade and harmonisation of the legislative frameworks and the harmonisation of certificates for the electronic exchange of data (EU acquis).

Component B - IT Component: Upgrade 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: Strengthening the internal capacities of the Secretariat in its internal financial and procurement rules and procedures.

ACTIVITIES (JANUARY – JUNE 2020)

Component A - Legal Component: Italian Customs Agency (ADM) experts participated in the initial SEED+ Workshops organised by the CEFTA Secretariat in Albania in January 2020 and in Bosnia and Herzegovina in February 2020. A questionnaire and templates for data collection were created by ADM experts and distributed to the Parties.

Component B - IT Component: The activities on the Preparations of ToRs for SEED+ started in January with an initial workshop held in Albania in January 2020 and in Bosnia and Herzegovina in February 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic postponed activities on the preparation of design and software requirements specification for CEFTA Secretariat’s data centre, SEED+ (CEFTA TRACES NT) and all CEFTA databases and central services including CEFTA “Transparency pack”.

The SEED preventive maintenance contract was signed in March and the subsequent upgrade of SEED platform was instrumental for the implementation of the Green Corridors initiative amid COVID-19. The SEED platform accelerated the process of clearance of essential goods by sending information about the arrival of consignments of essential goods in advance to all agencies involved in the clearance of goods to enable priority passage.

Component C - Internal strengthening of the CEFTA Secretariat: Remedies in relation to accounting rules and procedures, internal control mechanisms, and procurement and contracting rules and procedures were implemented. Some of the remedial standard operating procedures were already validated and operationalised through the Document Management Information System (DMIS). The maintenance of the DMIS is contracted and improvements to the system will be implemented in the next reporting period.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

- SEED+ Assistant selected and started to work
- Memorandum of Understanding among agencies in clearance of goods assessed
- Contract for the Preparations of ToRs for SEED+ and technical supervision of implementation signed on 13 January and implementation started immediately
- Agreement reached with GIZ for the inclusion of Moldova into SEED+
- Six SEED+ workshops organised on SEED+ data requirement collection
- The current state assessment for SEED+ including legal and policy framework, existing ICT infrastructure and business processes prepared by experts for Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania
- Harmonisation and compliance in requirements with the existing EU software modules and functional components, such as the TRACES NT maintained
- Cost-benefit analysis on required hosting infrastructure done
- SEED preventive maintenance contract signed on March 12 and implemented
- Several CEFTA meetings held on conceptualisation and implementation of electronic exchange of data on essential goods through the Green Corridors
- SEED platform upgraded to share the pre-arrival information on essential goods at Green Corridors with all agencies involved in clearance of goods
- Continued cooperation on regional measures for free movement of goods with CEFTA Parties, DG NEAR, DG TAXUD and other relevant regional initiatives, e.g., TCT and RCC.
- The Action plan agreed with Deloitte implemented and DMIS system fine-tuned

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR JULY -DECEMBER 2020

- Additional workshops related to the missing data for the preparation of current state assessment and legislative situation to be held in July.
- Assess the current legislation as related to the AP5
- Assess the current state of veterinary health certificates, phytosanitary certificates, pharmaceuticals and medicines certificates
- Launch the tender for the SEED+
- Prepare and validate a comprehensive detailed design and software requirements specification for CEFTA Secretariat's data centre, SEED+ and all CEFTA databases and central services including the CEFTA "Transparency pack"
- Estimate costs needed for the CEFTA data centre
- Maintain harmonisation and compliance in requirements with the existing EU software modules and functional components, such as TRACES NT, EUROPHYT, RAPEX
- Organise a regional conference following SEED+ blue print validation

- ToRs for SEED+, AEOs, unsafe/noncompliant products and “CEFTA Transparency” pack prepared, having defined milestones, deliverables, resources needed and timelines for overall SEED+ implementation including development, configuration, deployment, testing, training, documenting, stabilisation, capacity building, and post implementation support and maintenance

3.5 COMPETITIVENESS

Triple P Tourism in SEE: Promotion, Policy, Pilots

Programme reference:	IPA Multi-Country Programme 2017 (2017/39-402)
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 the fragmented tourism offer and the development of internationally competitive regional routes and offers.

ACTIVITIES (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

The COVID-19 pandemic that brought the tourism industry to a halt throughout the Western Balkans as well as worldwide, and the related lockdown(s) and restrictions have disrupted implementation of some of the planned activities.

- Regional public-private dialogue maintained, with 11th Tourism Expert Group (TEG) meeting held online on 3 June 2020.
- Product development for regional routes continued with the focus on governance structure and marketing strategy and plan (Via Dinarica Mega Trail) and marketing tools and promotion (cultural routes).

- The 4th Via Dinarica regional coordination was held online at the end of March 2020.
- Promotion of the regional routes: preparations were made for promotion through international fairs, however all international events were cancelled as of start of March (main trade fair season). The regional routes were promoted through 5 regional events. Familiarization trips (FAMs) for adventure programs have been developed; one ski-touring trip was delivered, while remaining ones have been put on hold.
- COVID-19 impact survey for travel agencies and tour operators realized in April 2020.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

- **Maintained regional cooperation public-private dialogue (RCC Tourism Expert Group - TEG) - 11th TEG online meeting held in June 2020, along with in-between consultations;**
- **Activity 1 – Product Development and Promotion**
 - Regional route **Western Balkans Crossroads of Civilizations**: visual system developed including main logo, 5 sub-logos (key storylines) and the book of standards.
 - Regional route **Balkan Monumental Trail**: marketing strategy (5 years), marketing action plan (2 years) and branding strategy with full visual system developed.
 - Regional route **Illyricum Trail**: three packages for market promotion developed.
 - Regional route **Via Dinarica Mega Trail**: 4th regional meeting held (online) that endorsed marketing strategy (5 years), marketing plan (2 years), brand book and guidelines, and plan of action for the regional governing culture. 10 one-week adventure programs (ski touring, hiking, trekking, cycling/mountain biking, kayaking and rafting) developed. Six regional adventure programs selected for FAM tours implementation. One tour (ski touring) implemented in February 2020 while the remaining were put on hold due to COVID-19 restrictions.
 - Western Balkans as travel destination promoted at/through:
 - FAM tour promoting ski-touring in the Western Balkans with 8 adventure operators participating (Western Balkans regional and international).
 - BMT regional route launched, including presentation of the route and specialised workshop for interested tour operators (30 attendees).
 - Regional routes visibility increased through small grants implementation.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- **Product Development:** consultations on the establishment of management structures to continue for all regional routes. BMT economic impact study to be completed. 5th Via Dinarica regional meeting to be held in October 2020. BMT directional and interpretational signage to be developed and piloted. Illyricum Trail cultural product platform to be established.
- **Promotion:** Total of 11 FAM trips for all routes to be delivered, adjusted as per COVID-19 travel requirements. Western Balkans regional tourism web site under development.

- **Policy:** COVID-19 impact assessment for Western Balkans tourism industry to be completed; Policy proposal for Tourism Industry health and safety protocols to be developed; Policy proposal on Green Border Crossings for Adventure Tourism to be developed.
- **Pilots:** Implementation of the grants of the 2nd and 3rd Call (24 grants) to be completed.
- **Other:** 12th TEG meeting will take place in November 2020.

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 – 30/04/2021
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.

ACTIVITIES (JANUARY – JUNE 2020)

The project's main emphasis was on supporting its beneficiaries by managing the impact of the COVID-19 crisis. This involved a three-pronged approach, including:

- 1) Providing on-time support and flexible assistance to the project's clients by adjusting their strategies, policy priorities, and programmes. This entailed contact with the beneficiaries via e-mails and calls, as well as providing relevant intelligence, data, and exchange of good practices in dealing with the crisis from across the globe.
- 2) Emphasizing support with the timely provision of critical investor aftercare and retention programmes through the region's Investment Agencies to help keep existing investors active in the region.

- 3) Supporting the Investment Agencies in the region to keep the dialogue with potential investors generated through the outreach programs supported by the project, and with adjusting their outreach activities to online / virtual channels.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY – JUNE 2020)

COVID response

A webinar on the potential impact of COVID-19 on FDI flows in the region and discussing possible policy responses informed by good international practice. The webinar was implemented in collaboration with the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) and gathered circa 40 representatives from the economies of the region.

Support to the Investment Agencies of Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro to devise specific COVID-19 programmes to adjust their outreach and aftercare services.

Regional investment promotion

A regional value proposition for the automotive sector, 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.

Continued practical, on-the-ground support, to the Investment Agencies of the region with targeted investor aftercare and outreach programmes. This resulted in two concrete investment leads in targeted sectors and the emergence of a healthy pipeline of 15 additional investor interests that are now being serviced by the Investment Agencies of the region.

Six investment projects in the region were executed as a result of the project's support to the Investment Agencies with investor outreach and aftercare. These projects resulted in a total investment amount of US\$67 million and 1,484 direct jobs. All of these investments are in the automotive components / machinery sectors and the majority come from European / neighboring countries, reflecting the project's target sector and market priorities. Investments are concentrated in North Macedonia and Serbia, which prove to have the strongest value propositions for investors in those sectors.

Regional Investment Reform Agenda

Three comprehensive inventories of investment incentives offered in Albania, Kosovo, and North Macedonia have been published on official government webpages. The production of a comprehensive handbook for the development of bilateral investment treaties (BITs) that governments can refer to in order to develop their model BITs and during the negotiation process.

A detailed assessment of processes and procedures for issuing work permits for expatriate workers in Albania was prepared. Based on the assessment report, the project provides technical assistance to the authorities with streamlining these procedures and aligning them with relevant EU standards and requirements.

A comprehensive stock-take and progress update was done on the implementation of the regional investment reform agenda (RIRA) across the WB6 up until June 2020. The update informed RCC's official reporting on progress with RIRA implementation in the context of MAP REA reporting.

Support with MAP REA 2 development

A draft FDI roadmap outlining a potential FDI agenda under the Multiannual Action Plan for the Regional Economic Area 2 (MAP REA 2). The draft has been consulted with key stakeholders.

A series of webinars took place together with the RCC and the SEEIC JWGI to discuss and brainstorm the development of the FDI roadmap for MAP REA 2.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

In the upcoming reporting period the project will focus on wrapping up its operations and devising its exit strategy. This encompasses:

- Continue to support the process to endorse the regionally accepted standards for negotiating IIAs through the relevant regional platforms;
- Support the development or upgrading of existing model BITs based on the regionally accepted standards in the WB6 economies;
- Deliver capacity building and training programmes to enhance regional capacity for handling ISDS claims;
- Continue support with improving procedures and policies work permits for expats in Albania and aligning them with EU standards;
- Support the WB6 Investment Agencies with adjusting their outreach activities and programs to a post COVID-19 reality as needed;
- Continue support with the implementation of targeted investor aftercare programmes in all WB6 economies;
- Continue to support the development of a reform program and FDI roadmap for potential inclusion in the successor of MAP REA ('MAP REA 2') to be adopted by the WB6 in autumn 2020;
- Validate additional reforms and continue documenting and validating project results and outcomes.

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 (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic had significant implications for the further implementation of the programme. Starting from mid March 2020 all activities had to be postponed.

Overall, during the first half of 2020, the following activities within Component One took place:

- One high-level policy event on ‘Resolution of non-performing loans’ was organised.
- Two training events were organised covering the areas of recovery and resolution as well as financial stability.

Within Component Two, the following activities were conducted:

- One preparatory meeting for the bilateral measure between the Central Bank of Montenegro and Hrvatska narodna banka on Monetary Statistics (Financial accounts);
- One mission to Montenegro within the bilateral measure between the Central Bank of Montenegro and Hrvatska narodna banka on Monetary Statistics (Financial accounts).

One Programme Steering Committee (PSC) meeting took place at the beginning of March 2020 in Ljubljana.

In line with the EU Visibility Guidelines for External Actions, a range of visibility initiatives were implemented, in particular the distribution of produced visibility material during the activities.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

The regulatory convergence and approximation by the Central Banks of the Western Balkans 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 recovery and resolution as well as financial stability, 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

Pending on the further developments with regard to the pandemic and related travel restrictions, the following activities are envisaged to be implemented in the next semester:

- 4 training events on internal audit, recovery and resolution, banking supervision and statistics.
- 1 Internship on Accounting (Controlling) between Banka Slovenije and the Central Bank of Montenegro
- 1 Study visit for the Central bank of Montenegro to Hrvatska narodna banka with regard to 'Monetary statistics'
- 1 Internship on 'Inflation forecasting' between Narodowy Bank Polski and the Central Bank of the Republic of Kosovo
- 1 Mission by Banco de Portugal to the National Bank of the Republic of North Macedonia in the area of 'Data base of accounts'
- 1 Mission by experts of the Bulgarian National Bank to the Central Bank of Kosovo in the area of 'Anti-Money-Laundering'
- 1 Study visit by the Central Bank of Kosovo the Bulgarian National Bank in the area of 'Anti-Money Laundering'
- Two PSC meetings on 8 September and 1 December 2020.

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 (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

To improve the analytical, costing and budgeting skills for designing and implementation of the structural reforms, 11 learning initiatives at regional and country levels were organised;

To strengthen the coordination and ownership over the ERP process by the beneficiary countries ERP teams, 3 respective learning initiatives were implemented;

Furthermore, to enhance the inter-institutional cooperation and personal contacts at the regional level, 2 regional learning events were organised;

Following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the regular implementation of the project activities were interrupted. The national ERP Coordinators, CEF experts and project staff discussed the current developments, captured in a Position paper on the *ERP Guidance note in view of the COVID 19 crisis with a special reference to the fiscal implications of structural reforms*. The elaborated suggestions were reflected in the 2021-2023 ERP Guidance Note.

The Line Ministries Portal served as an important communication and knowledge sharing tool, especially during the lockdown months sharing the relevant learning resources and opportunities as well as presenting monthly thematic highlights.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

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

- Enriched views on how short-term measures introduced to address the impact of the COVID 19 crisis are linked to the ERP reform measures, and how the two policy packages can be aligned;

- More comfortable practices of costing skills, capacities for team work, collaboration and planning in the ERP cycle;
- Further alignment of the costing approach between Ministries of Finance and line Ministries and deepened understanding of the link with the medium-term fiscal frameworks, especially in the area of social services;
- Strengthened costing and expenditure analysis skills in teams and of the individual participants in the ERP process;
- Strengthened the links among ERP team-members across the line ministries and intensified the collaboration especially through country-specific learning activities;
- Further developed training skills of the public officials from the ERP teams, who delivered training sessions to line ministry officials in their respective country, and
- Sharing of additional relevant learning resources through the Line Ministries Portal.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

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

- Launch of the ERP 2021-23 cycle;
- 7 country specific online courses *Coordination Schemes for Costing of Structural Reforms*;
- 7 country specific online courses *Knowledge Sharing on Costing and Budgeting Structural Reforms*;
- 4 Regional online events: Policy Drafting and Negotiation in Line Ministries, Navigating Towards New Normal Economy, Cost Accounting Techniques, and Leadership in Times of Crisis;
- Video guidance on Costing Structural Reforms
- Video knowledge bite on Organisational Culture
- Handbook for ERP teams on learning and facilitation techniques: *How Learning and Knowledge Sharing Can Work for You*
- Creation of a “Library section” of learning materials within the Line Ministries Portal
- Knowledge exchange session for the ERP Coordinators

Support to Smart Specialisation in Enlargement Region

Programme reference:	Multi-Country Annual Action Programme 2018 (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 (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

Due to the circumstances caused by the global COVID-19 pandemic, some of the foreseen activities during this period have experienced a delay and/or adapted to be conducted in the next period.

- Analysis of value chains of Western Balkans within South-East Europe region – the analysis will be subcontracted. The tender documentation has been prepared and an ex-ante publication for the tender was announced in June 2020.
- A high-level international conference ‘Implementing Smart Specialisation Strategies, Technology Transfer and Digital Innovation in South-East Europe’ as a part of the Sofia Process was originally planned to be held in Zagreb on 17 June 2020, under the Croatian presidency of the EU Council. Under the COVID circumstances event was postponed.
- A Training Workshop ‘SCOPE’ (for conducting evidence-based analysis S3 was planned for March 2020 in Ljubljana but cancelled due to the lockdown. It will be replaced with a new training activity.
- Analysis of fast growing priority domains and recommendations for the Entrepreneurial Discovery Process in North Macedonia was initiated.
- Targeted support for the qualitative analysis for S3 in North Macedonia was launched.
- Preparation and update of a dedicated part within the S3 Platform website on Enlargement region.
- Preparation of S3 fiches for each economy.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

Montenegro has started the implementation of their S3 Strategy with project calls announced on a dedicated webpage. The country fulfilled one of the post-assessment commitments – introduction of reliable innovation indicators and participation in European Innovation Scoreboard. Serbia adopted the S3 Strategy in February 2020.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

WP1: Methodological support to the smart specialisation process and implementation advice

- The analysis of value chains in S3 priority domains (activity started in Year 1)
Status: tender documentation prepared, tender to be launched in September 2020
- Workshops: Promotion of thematic regional cooperation in similar S3 priority domains and value chains
Status: planned for May-June 2021
- Publication of S3 guidebook for the region
Status: planned for December 2020

WP 2: Country specific actions in the Western Balkans and Turkey

Group 1: Implementation and monitoring support for Serbia and Montenegro

- The post-assessment activities for Montenegro:
Status: to be launched in December 2020
- Guidance and following targeted expert support on the implementation of planned policy measures (grants, project calls etc.), multi-stakeholder governance of S3, the monitoring and evaluation activities and continued EDP process for Serbia and Montenegro.
Status: to be launched in December 2020

Group 2: EDP focus: preparation and implementation of stakeholder dialogue in Albania and North Macedonia

- Expert support to finalise quantitative and qualitative part of the mapping exercise in North Macedonia and Albania.
Status: North Macedonia in July and Albania in September

Group 3: Towards formalisation and mapping Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Turkey

- Technical meetings on the first modules of the S3 Framework, including proper S3 team appointments, analysis of policy mandates and country-specific context in Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Turkey.
Status: started in August 2020, expected to last until December 2020, training foreseen for November 2020
- Support for necessary data collection.
Status: to be launched in September 2020 for Kosovo, for Bosnia and Herzegovina and Turkey dependent on the country progress in the previous steps.
- Targeted expert support for mapping exercise for Kosovo.
Status: planned for October 2020

WP 3: Information, communication and dissemination activities

- 2 dedicated sessions are planned during European Week of Cities and Regions
Status: planned for October 2020

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 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Moldova (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:	01/01/2017 – 29/02/2020
Links:	http://cefta.int/trade-facilitation/
Contact :	Nanna Matsson, nanna.MATSSON@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 (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

The project activities were carried out until 29 February 2020, and the following key activities were carried out:

- Regional workshop was organised for Sanitary and Phyto-Sanitary (SPS) authorities on 22-23 January in Belgrade, Serbia. Its aims was to assist the SPS officials in implementing the proposal for facilitating trade of fruits and vegetables in line with the new EU regulation on plant health. The proposal was fully aligned with the EU Official Control Regulation 2017/625 that came into force in December 2019.
- A regional workshop on documentary and data harmonisation, in accordance with conclusions of the Regional Business Process Analysis (BPA) study, was held in Tirana, Albania on 18-19 February 2020. The objective of the workshop was to present and discuss the results and ways forward of the data harmonisation mapping. The mapping resulted in national recommendations to comply with best international practices aligned with evolving EU requirements, and regional recommendations to harmonise documents and data requirements.
- The project has been finalised and its closure was celebrated with a conference held on 25 February 2020 in Tivat, Montenegro. The conference was organised in order to present the achievements of the project in the previous three years of

implementation, to go over the lessons learned, as well as to announce the follow-up project and expected reforms in the upcoming period.

- The project website was updated regularly.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

- The SPS officials were better informed and trained in implementing the proposal for facilitating trade of fruits and vegetables in line with the Official Control Regulation 2017/625
- The results of data harmonisation mapping were presented to the national officials, recommendations were made in order to comply with the best international, and EU practices.
- The project was finalised and closed in February 2020, with all the stakeholders from the public and private sectors, as well as international partner organizations and media presented with the results of three-year project activities.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

The project was closed on 29 February 2020.

3.7 CRISIS RESPONSE PACKAGE

Programme reference:	Multi-beneficiary programme, IPA 2009/021-373
Project title:	Private Sector Support Facility (PSSF) for Turkey - Crisis Response Package
EU contribution:	EUR 22.5 million
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 Denacic, 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 2020)

MSME Finance Window – The activities have been limited during the reporting period given the lack of signed sub-projects under the TurWiB (Turkey Women in Business Programme) II Programme. The official website of the Programme (www.kadinisletme.com)’s layout and content were updated with new logos and information. The stakeholders’ logos were incorporated (CGF and The Ministry of Treasury and Finance of Turkey). On 5 March the EBRD organised a conference in Ankara on the International Women’s Day. The conference aimed to disseminate information about the successful results and achievements of the Phase I Programme and introduce the financial and non-financial services to be provided under the Phase II Programme. The audience and participants were broad and included the previous and new donor organisations, potential partner financial institutions (PFIs), stakeholders, consultants and the institutions in the women’s entrepreneurship ecosystem.

Energy Efficiency Window - Prior to the imposition of COVID-19 restrictions in late March 2020, the TurSEFF (Turkish Sustainable Energy Financing Facility) team and respective PFIs met jointly with 42 prospective clients to discuss potential investments and develop the PFI’s specific pipeline of projects. In addition, the team identified and met with over 139 stakeholders, both in-person and later virtually, to identify prospective clients for all PFIs in the Facility. For the four active PFIs, the team continued to assess projects identified for funding (including ten SARs (Simplified Assessment Reports)/FARs (Full Assessment Reports) completed during the period), and provided classroom and on-the-job training activities to Finans Leasing, Garanti Leasing and Isbank. Most notably, Finans Leasing benefited from a ‘Train the Trainer’ session with 6 staff attendees, and Garanti Leasing received the first online training demonstrating ResE(resource efficiency)/RE(renewable energy) potential in the food and beverage industry – attended by the entire sales and marketing staff of the PFI. To build Facility awareness, the FC participated in a total of 10 events and conferences throughout Turkey in the first three months of the year. Participation was later stopped due to the lockdown, and the team instead focused on promoting the Facility through increased web and social media presence. To this end, the team produced multiple marketing materials – case studies, infographics (water), social media and webinar visuals – to be used by for visibility of the Facility as well as the participating PFIs. Finally, the TurSEFF programme celebrated its 10th anniversary in June 2020, which was marked by the production of 10th Anniversary articles, posts and infographics illustrating the great successes of the Facility to date. Advice for Small Business (ASB) Window - During the reporting period the team has started 1 project with international advisors (formerly EGP– Enterprise Growth Programme), and launched 10 projects with local consultants (formerly BAS– Business Advisory Services) – of these, 6 are currently ongoing and 4 are completed.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

MSME Finance Window – An International Women’s Day Conference was held on 5 March 2020 in Ankara. The official programme website (www.kadinisletme.com)’s layout and content was updated with Phase II logos and information.

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, disbursements remained largely

unaffected by the COVID-19 crisis; 158 sub-loans totalling EUR 15.8 million were signed compared to 121 sub-loans totalling EUR 12.5 million in the same period last year. In total, 728 sub-loans for just over EUR 136.5 million have now been on-lent to sub-projects. However, the decrease in marketing activities during H1 2020 may result in slower disbursement in future periods. **Advice for Small Business (ASB) Window** - Since the inception of the Programme, 30 projects with international advisors (formerly EGP) were started under EU PSSF for Turkey. Out of these, 16 projects were completed, 4 projects were cancelled due to insufficient commitment of the company’s management and 10 projects are ongoing. In addition, a total of 274 projects with local consultants (formerly BAS) were launched, 3 of which were cancelled. To date, 211 of the projects have been evaluated one year following completion, 7 projects are currently ongoing, and 53 are completed but not evaluated yet.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

MSME Finance Window – The significant market volatility post August 2018, further downgrades of the sovereign as well as the banks and subsequent sets of local elections in March and June 2019 have delayed the utilisation of the Programme by the PFIs. Additionally, due to the current COVID-19 pandemic, signings of sub-projects are expected to be further delayed by end-2020, after which the Programme Consultant will start working on the Baseline Assessment. Following the first sub-project signing under the Programme, a launch event will be organised, with the participation of various Programme stakeholders and ensuring donor visibility. During the next period, an animated Business Lens video for promotion of Business Lens will be developed and Business Lens promotion materials and overall Programme visibility and promotion materials will be reviewed and refined.

Energy Efficiency Window - The TurSEFF III team will continue business development activities for four active PFIs in the next period, adapting client meetings and events in to online formats in line with COVID-19 related restrictions. The team has planned TurSEFF trainings for manufacturing supply chain companies in the textile sector, as well as webinars for the Food and Beverage Sector, for Organized Industrial Zones (OIZs) and for targeted professional organisations. The team also plans to participate in various online sectoral exhibitions, and in-person events if the situation allows. Finally, infographics (specifically for food and packaging industries), social media visuals, informational videos and case studies to promote the Facility will begin development in H2 2020. **Advice for Small Business (ASB)** – The team also plans to start 11 business advisory projects with local consultants and 2 projects with international advisors 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.

OUTPUTS

There are no outputs to report in 1H 2020.

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 in the Western Balkans through the provision of financing and technical assistance (TA) for strategic investments. The WBIF pools resources from the European Commission's Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) with those of six member financial institutions, 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 overall assistance coordination. It seeks to maximise the impact of grant financing by leveraging loans from member financial institutions for strategic investments identified by the Western Balkan beneficiaries.

Since its launch, the WBIF has developed a pipeline of priority investments of EUR 21 billion. In its efforts to mature, operate and maintain this pipeline, the WBIF Steering Committee has approved EUR 1.3 billion through 340 TA and investment grants (INV). These grants are used for TA for project preparation and implementation as well as for co-financing investments in infrastructure for which financial support is provided by its financial institutions - AFD, CEB, EBRD, EIB, KfW and the World Bank Group.

The WBIF TA grants are implemented by the Infrastructure Project Facility (IPF), an EC-financed facility for the WBIF and currently managed by the EIB, or by the Lead IFIs under Contribution Arrangements with the European Western Balkans Joint Fund (EWBJF), which is managed by the EBRD and the EIB. All WBIF investment grants are implemented by the Lead IFIs under Contribution Arrangements with the EWBJF.

The European Commission is the largest contributor to the WBIF with a total of EUR 1.2 billion channelled through the WBIF, out of which EUR 832.5 million was allocated for the co-financing of transport and energy infrastructure projects under the Connectivity Agenda as well as investments in the environment sector under the IPF Municipal Window. The WBIF bilateral donors have contributed a further EUR 98.7 million to the EWBJF.

PURPOSE

The WBIF has three objectives: 1. To create a one-stop-shop, where grant requests for projects can be presented, screened, assessed and approved; 2. To pool grants, loans, other forms of financing, contributions and expertise from the EC, member financial institutions and bilateral donors to prepare and/or finance priority investment projects; and 3. To

strengthen the strategic and policy coordination of actions of multiple donors and investors that address the socio-economic priorities of the region. These priorities are accession-driven and relate to the alignment of the Western Balkans candidate countries and potential candidates with the EU acquis. The identification of priority projects for financing through the WBIF involves consultations with other relevant DGs (Energy, Environment, Climate Action, Move, Connect, Regional Policy, Economic and Financial Affairs, Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion) thus ensuring coordination with their activities in the region. WBIF activities are supported by the EC-financed IFI Coordination Office (IFICO) – see below for a more detailed description of this project.

ACTIVITIES (JANUARY - JUNE 2020)

The expansion of the WBIF to reintegrate WB EDIF under the WBIF and closer associate other regional funds, such as EFSE, REEP and GGF, in the WBIF in the future was approved at the 21st Steering Committee meeting in December 2019. Key activities in the first half of 2020 concerned the implementation of the recommendations of the 21st Steering Committee to ensure that the WBIF is fit for the next Multiannual Financial Framework and IPA III. At the 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 instrument level, the governance structures of the different instruments supporting investments in the Western Balkans are being streamlined and, to the extent possible, managed by a reinforced central WBIF Secretariat.

Two rounds for projects proposals, TA Round 23 and INV Round 05, were screened and assessed during this reporting period, and 8 grants for EUR 8.3 million were approved under TA Round 23 at the Steering Committee in June. Two new calls for proposals, TA Round 24 and INV Round 06 Part 1 for energy and transport projects, were launched as well in June.

Because of Covid-19 pandemic, all meetings and consultations were organised as virtual conferences starting from March, including the Project Financiers' Group (PFG) in May and the Steering Committee meeting in June.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

The indicative work programme for the second half of 2020 includes the screening and assessment of TA Round 24 and the approval of INV Round 05 and TA Round 24 at the Steering Committee in December. Also, two new calls for proposals are planned to be launched in December: INV Round 06 Part 2 for environment, social and digital sectors and TA Round 25.

Discussions for the advancement and evolution of WBIF to be fit purpose for the IPA III will continue during the next semester, including preparation of recommendations for adoption at the 23rd WBIF Steering Committee.

During autumn 2020, a new Western Balkans Economic and Investment plan is expected to be adopted.

Meetings and consultations will be held as virtual conferences, or if possible, physical meetings. The next PFG meeting will be take place in November, while the 23rd Steering Committee meeting will be organised in December.

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) IPA II Multi-country Programme Connectivity 2019-2020 (DN 2019/041-953 and 2020/042-275)
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 2019-2020: EUR 184 600 000
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 2019-2020: CN 2020/415-367
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: 28.05.2019 – 28.11.2027

2019-2020: 16.06.2020 – 26.11.2028

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 (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

- 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 that will be included in the 6th Connectivity package and presented under round 5 are expected to be approved at the Steering Committee in December 2020. Round 5 was launched June 2019, and the screening and assessment of the applications took place in the first half of 2020.
- In total, up to June 2020, 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. As of now, construction works started on 14 connectivity projects (3 energy and 11 transport projects).
- Furthermore, design-build contracts have been signed for 2 projects and construction works are being tendered for other 6 projects.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

- Initiation/continuation of construction activities in IPA II beneficiaries, construction works ongoing on 14 projects (3 energy connectivity projects and 11 transport projects).
- Completion of the Svilaj Bridge (in April) and start of construction works on border crossing facilities (in May), both components of the project *Mediterranean Corridor*:

Bosnia and Herzegovina – Croatia Vc Road Interconnection, Svilaj – Odžak and Svilaj Bridge.

- Start of construction works on 4 projects:
 - *Mediterranean Corridor: Bosnia and Herzegovina – Croatia Vc Road Interconnection II, Zenica Tunnel – Donja Gračanica Segment in Bosnia and Herzegovina* in January;
 - *Orient/East-Med Corridor: North Macedonia – Bulgaria VIII Road Interconnection, Kriva Palanka – Deve Bair Section in North Macedonia* in February;
 - *Mediterranean Corridor: Bosnia and Herzegovina – Croatia Vc Road Interconnection, Tarčin – Ivan Subsection II in Bosnia and Herzegovina* in March;
 - *Trans-Balkan Electricity Corridor (II): Grid Section in Serbia (Kragujevac – Kraljevo)* in June
- 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 June 2020. Preparation of the Financing Decision of IPA II Multi-country Programme Connectivity 2020 to be adopted by the Commission in September 2020.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Adoption of the Commission Decision Connectivity 2020 to finance the 6th Connectivity Agenda package in October.
- Political endorsement of the 6th Connectivity package, and approval of projects selected in round 5 by the WBIF Screening Committee in December.
- Completion of the project *Mediterranean Corridor: Bosnia and Herzegovina – Croatia CVc Road Interconnection, Buna – Počitelj Subsection in Bosnia and Herzegovina*.
- Start of construction works on 3 new connectivity transport projects.

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 (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

- Overall support to the WBIF Secretariat.
- Support to the WBIF Secretariat in the organisation and follow-up of the WBIF Project Financiers' Group (PFG) and Steering Committee (SC) meetings; both were organised as virtual meetings (due to the pandemic).
- Support to the WBIF Secretariat in the screening and assessment of TA Round 23 and INV Round 05, launch of TA Round 24 and INV Round 06 Part 1 (transport and energy sectors).
- Support to beneficiaries with the preparation and submission of grant applications for TA Round 23.
- Assistance in organising workshops and written exchanges of the WBIF 3.0 Working Group; implementation of remaining recommendations of the 22nd WBIF SC meeting.
- Assistance to beneficiaries in updating the NIC qualitative assessment and elaboration of individual Action Plans.
- Update the WBIF portfolio funding needs assessment and production of various spin-off reports, e.g. Corridor and Beneficiary overviews, together with a robustness assessment of the WBIF pipeline of infrastructure projects for the upcoming period.
- Preparation of Terms of Reference for IPF TA projects, regular and ad-hoc monitoring reports on WBIF projects.
- Further Covid-19 related updates and implementation of the WBIF 2020-2021 Communication and Visibility Plan.
- Support to WBIF stakeholders with the organisation of (virtual) visibility events on projects, production of communication and visibility materials and regular reports.
- Maintain and further upgrade the WBIF MIS and website, including the first round of proposals for the Western Balkans Guarantee and planned accommodation of WB EDIF.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

- Organisation and follow-up of WBIF related meetings, in particular Paris Group, PFG and WBIF SC meetings. Minutes of meetings, agendas, background papers, presentations were drafted and finalised.
- Supported the WBIF Secretariat in the screening and assessment of TA Round 23 and INV Round 05.
- Assisted the beneficiaries with the preparation of grant applications for TA Round 23.
- Drafted and implemented remaining recommendations of the WBIF 2.0 Working Group / 22nd WBIF SC meeting, i.e. recommendations pertaining to the IPFs. The WBIF 3.0 Working Group was established and operationalised, virtual meetings and written exchanges took place.
- The NIC framework qualitative assessment was updated and submitted.
- Submitted a comprehensive update of the Funding Needs Analysis and various spin-off reports and analyses.
- Finalised 9 Terms for Reference (ToR) and continued/initiated the preparation of 15 ToR.
- Produced the WBIF Monitoring Report (May 2020) and two WBIF IPF bimonthly reports.
- Prepared and published the WBIF Annual Report for 2019.
- Prepared, published and disseminated communication and visibility materials, including a video on the WBIF energy sector, a factsheet on Corridor Vc in Bosnia and Herzegovina, brochures, project summaries.
- Further developed and maintained the WBIF MIS for incorporation of WBIF EDIF and the Western Balkans Guarantee.
- Maintained and regularly updated the WBIF website.

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

Programme reference:	IPA II Multi-country Programme 2019 (DN 2019/040-826)
Project title:	EU Support to the Western Balkans Investment Framework – Infrastructure Project Facilities – IPF 10
EU contribution:	EUR 25.5 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Specific Grant Agreement with the European Investment Bank
Contract reference:	CN 2019/413-011
Duration of activities:	17.12.2019 – 30.16.2025
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 (JANUARY–JUNE 2020)

IPF 5 has in previous reporting periods completed the preparation of four Terms of Reference and recruited the Country Managers for a two year period. The main tasks allocated, however, have been the implementation of 15 WBIF sub-projects TAs and 2 Ad-hoc Advisory assignments. These are distributed across all IPA II beneficiaries of the Western Balkans and had a sector distribution as follows: 5 Environment; 1 Energy; 6 Social; and 7 Transport. Progress during the current period has seen 2 TAs completed, both the Advisory assignments and one TA being undertaken for Zadar University being put on hold by the EIB/EC. The contract end date is currently 31 December 2020 and all the remaining ongoing assignments are planned to complete by that date.

IPF6 has been assigned 14 sub-projects: 9 in the Transport sector, 2 in the Energy sector (one of which has 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 effectively completed, pending formal closure by the Contracting Authority. The remaining 12 sub-projects are at various stages of implementation, of which 7 are more than 80% complete. A no-cost time extension to 28 August 2021 was granted in late 2019.

IPF7 has currently 26 assigned sub-projects, out of which 20 are ongoing: 11 in the Transport sector, 2 in the Environment sector, 4 in the Energy sector (two of which have a regional dimension) and 1 in the Social Sector. Two additional sub-projects in the Energy sector were formally assigned to IPF7 during this period. Three Transport sub-projects (all three in North Macedonia) have been effectively completed, formal closing procedures are ongoing. The Social sector sub-project in Zadar University was placed “on hold” in March 2020; while discussions are ongoing between WBIF, DG NEAR and EIB that may lead to resumption of work later in the year. On 18 May, IPF7’s first contract addendum was signed and increased the contract value to €34,560,000. From mid-March, IPF7 has been operating under COVID-19 pandemic conditions. Measures were deployed to maintain activity and keep the main office open, while protecting staff and partners. New work practices have been developed in the process. At this stage, IPF7 can foresee some delays due to field work and travel restrictions but no major delay or extra costs.

IPF 8 has currently 11 assigned sub-projects: 4 in the Environment sector, 2 in the Digital sector, 2 in Social sector and 3 in the Transport sector. Out of these only seven were active between January and June 2020. Three will be initiated in July 2020 and one later. One subproject in the Digital sector is nearing completion. The approval of 4 almost completed TORs (3 in the Transport sector and 1 in Digital sector) is delayed because of different

reasons pertaining to the beneficiaries’ and lead IFIs’ competence. Up to 2 additional sub-projects might be assigned to IPF8 owing to budget availability at the end of June 2020.

IPF9 got so far 7 sub-projects assigned, 1 in the Energy sector, 4 in the Transport Sector and 2 in the Environment sector. Out of these 2 sub-projects are under implementation: 1 in the Energy sector in Albania and 1 in the Transport sector (Rail) in Montenegro. 2 proposals in the Environment sector in Albania are under preparation, and 1 in the Transport sector in Serbia is in process to receive “no objection” from the contracting authority. One sub-project in the Transport sector (Rail) in Serbia should be initiated in July 2020 and both Environment sub-projects in Albania should be initiated in October 2020.

IPF10 will commence in mid-January 2021.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY–JUNE 2019)

- 2 ad-hoc assignment completed
- 5 sub-projects 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 (if requested as well Digital) 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 (JANUARY–JUNE 2020)

To date, CONNECTA has been assigned a total of 20 sub-projects spread over all of the Western Balkans and covering both transport and energy. No sub-projects were completed in this reporting period. There are ten 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 and supporting activities for gas interconnectors in Serbia, North Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The remaining seven sub-projects are in transport and cover two regional sub-projects on road safety and on border crossings and five on transport infrastructure on both road and rail in North Macedonia, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY–JUNE 2019)

- No sub-projects have been completed, but progress reports have been submitted on all sub-projects.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

Completion of four transport infrastructure sub-projects of which two are in Serbia and the rest in North Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Completion of the energy sub-projects in Bosnia and Serbia. Commencement of one new sub-project related to transport infrastructure on a motorway in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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 (JANUARY–JUNE 2020)

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 first half of 2020, JASPERS continued to offer its services to IPA II beneficiaries, against the constraints imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. To the extent possible, missions were replaced by video conferences (VC) or similar arrangements. Whilst this worked generally better than had been expected, it remains a second-best solution notably in situations, where complex documentations are to be discussed and initial trust-building with new counterparties is important.

As of 30 June 2020, JASPERS had 29 active assignments (11 in Montenegro, 10 in the Republic of North Macedonia, 6 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 Digital sectors since early 2019, including two new assignments in the reporting period. Following the signing of JASPERS' Working Arrangements with Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2019, a first project-related assignment (gas interconnector with Croatia) was included in the country's action plan in the reporting period, whilst further assignments are still under scoping.

As JASPERS' IPA II Specific Grant Agreement is nearing its contractual end on 31 December 2020, and related resources are depleting, DG NEAR and JASPERS have advanced during the reporting period on discussions to put in place a new agreement in order to bridge the gap towards IPA III and allow a continuation of JASPERS' activities in the IPA beneficiaries in 2021 and 2022.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY–JUNE 2020)

- 1 assignment completed in Bosnia and Herzegovina
- 7 missions, sometimes with more than one JASPERS staff (3 each to Albania and the Republic of North Macedonia, and 1 to Bosnia and Herzegovina)
- Participation by VC on 12 May and 9 June 2020 in the 29th WBIF Project Financiers Group (PFG) and the 22nd WBIF Steering Committee meeting, respectively.

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-Pawlic, 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 (JANUARY – JUNE 2020)

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 first half of 2020, the GGF approved and signed two new investments in Turkey, one related to a large bank in the amount of EUR 25 million (fully disbursed) and one to leasing company in the amount of EUR 20 million. In Serbia, the GGF approved an EUR 20 million facility to a large bank, and further disbursed committed investments related to one large bank in the amount of EUR 10 million and in the amount of EUR 1.8 million to one RE Project. Finally, in Montenegro the Fund disbursed the last tranche to a microcredit organisation in the amount of EUR 0.5 million. 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 732 million in SEE and EUR 1.1 billion in total by the end of Q2.

On the funding side during 1H2020, the Fund rolled-over EUR 20 million A Shares from EBRD, subscribed EUR 10 million ENR L Shares from EC (both via KfW as trustee) and successfully rolled-over maturing Notes in the amount of EUR 22 million from a private investor. Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 crisis, major fund raising efforts concentrated on additional first-loss capital to support a green recovery of the target regions. In that regard, following internal approval by the Commission in May 2020, KfW in conjunction with the Advisor commenced documentation of EUR 75.5 million C/L Shares (incl. TA in the total amount of EUR 5.0 million) for all regions. An additional EUR 10 million in Southeast Europe C Shares, earmarked for the Western Balkans, are being finalized with EIF as the trustee. The Fund is faced with continued interest of private investors, demonstrated through a Note subscription in the amount of EUR 30.0 million, planned for Q4 2020.

The TA Facility had 124 projects under management with a budget of EUR 6.4 million as per 30 June 2020. The current funding of the TA Facility benefited from the execution of the extension of the EC Donation Addendum until end of 2021 (earmarked for projects in ENR-East). In addition, new EC donations earmarked for ENR East and ENR South, with funding of EUR 2.5 million and EUR 3 million respectively, are being finalized and will provide incoming funding during H2. Furthermore, an additional donation earmarked for ENR South from the CAMENA climate action envelope is being finalized and will provide EUR 0.5 million of additional funding during H2 as well. With these contributions, the TA Facility is well funded in the near-term.

Out of 71 projects which are actively being implemented (excluding on hold and closed), 24 are now located in the SEE

OUTPUTS (JANUARY – JUNE 2020)

GGF figures as at end Q2 (aggregate for the region of SEE):

- Total cumulative investment portfolio since inception: EUR 566.5 million.
- Number of active Partner Institutions: 29.
- Number of active target countries: 8.
- CO₂ Savings / CO₂ Reduction: 576,968 tons of CO₂/year (61%).

- Energy Savings: 2,088,263 MWh/year (59%).

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

The Fund will enter 2H2020 with a strong approved pipeline of EUR 40.0 million, with investments under consideration in Turkey and Serbia.

The Fund will subscribe the Commission's EUR 80.0 million C/L Share contributions targeted to support a green recovery of the target region. In regard to SEE, this refers to EUR 10 million C Shares. To further leverage the investments of the donors the Fund is seeking additional capital and is planning to subscribe a EUR 30 million Note investments from a private investor in Q4 2020. The first L Shares from the EC, subscribed in April 2020 are planned to be strengthened further by the conversion of supra-regional C Shares from BMZ into cross-regional L Shares in Q3 2020, subject to relevant shareholders' consent. Therefore, with EUR 40 million L Shares available by end of Q3 2020, the Fund is in a comfortable position to enable a good local currency pipeline in the target regions.

Moreover, the Board of Directors is contemplating about supra-regionalizing regional C Shares, which would support a more robust first-loss buffer as a basis for the Fund's envisaged medium-term growth.

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").

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-leep.org
Contact :	Anna Soltysik, anna.soltysik@ec.europa.eu Michael Voegele, michael.voegele@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 (JANUARY - JUNE 2020)

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 particular in North Macedonia. No policy assignment is active in the current reporting period. North Macedonia has formally adopted the ESCO contract template in February 2020 and organized a signing ceremony for the first two street lighting ESCO projects contracted in the country.

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 and have been completed.

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 0.77 million in sub-loans to 5 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 23 sub-projects during the period and verified 10 projects (6 on-site and 4 desk-based), and continued to promote the WebSEFF credit line to both public and private sector.

During the reporting period, the PC presented at one major marketing event – the 9th International Energy and Investment Days in Novi Sad 27-28 Feb 2020. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, however, all major events for WebSEFF were cancelled. The WebSEFF team used this period to strengthen their relationship with the relevant stakeholders to benefit project origination in the upcoming period. As a result, Memorandums of Understanding outline

future activities for cooperation were signed with the Chamber of Commerce of Vojvodina and with the NGO “Social and Economic Development Movement of Serbia”. The PC also participated at several relevant webinars during the second quarter of the year, including ‘Resilient-low carbon district energy in the age of Covid-19’, organized by the EBRD.

Window 3 Sustainable Energy Direct Financing Facility

With regards to the existing portfolio of projects, there have been no more incentive payments made during the period, as all eligible active projects have received their incentive payments already.

On the subject of the identification of new projects, the team did not make any progress in identifying suitable projects during the first half of 2020 and given the current situation induced by the Covid-19 pandemic it is unlikely that progress will be made in the next few months. Thus, there were no approvals or signings during this reporting period.

It is also worth mentioning that given the approaching end to the implementation period, there is not enough time for a new project to fulfil the conditions for receiving an incentive payment in time and thus, the remaining funding from the EC is likely not to be utilised (at least for the needs of Window 3).

OUTPUTS (JANUARY - JUNE 2020)

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. During the reporting period North Macedonia has formally adopted the Energy Performance Contract template.

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 in 3Q 2020.

Window 2 Sustainable Energy Credit Lines

EUR 107 million of the EUR 117 million funding available is allocated to PFIs, of which EUR 101.4 million has been drawn down to finance eligible sub-projects as of 30 June 2020.

In total, 336 sub-loans have been signed for a total of EUR 84.7 million by the end of the reporting period. Five of these were signed during H1 2020 for EUR 0.77 million, 4 of which were public sector municipal infrastructure projects (street lighting and street maintenance vehicle modernisation) worth EUR 0.73 million. Banca Intesa has built a strong pipeline of 23 projects for EUR 13.7 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 6.29 million has been paid in investment incentives to sub-borrowers of which EUR 0.35 million was paid out in H1 2020. As of end of June 2020 the total (equivalent) primary energy savings is 563,900 (MWh/y), with CO2 emissions saving of 125,319 (tonnes/y).

Window 3 Sustainable Energy Direct Financing Facility

As at 30 June 2020, the EBRD had approved 7 projects under the second phase of the WeBSEDF: 4 small hydropower plant projects in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Montenegro, 1 biomass project in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and 2 biogas projects in Serbia. The amount of finance allocated is EUR 31.9 million (of which EUR 6.0 million is still not committed and as it stands unlikely to be committed as the SHPP project in Bosnia and Herzegovina is facing significant hurdles). The implementation of the six projects added 21.2 MW of electricity generation capacity, with annual production of 233.9 GWh and estimated CO₂ emission reductions of 325,974 tonnes per year on average. In total, the six projects qualified for EUR 2.14 million worth of incentive payments.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT REPORTING PERIOD

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 Rationale Use of Energy, which also includes the ESCO contracts.

A ceremony event of signing the first EPC street lighting projects in North Macedonia has taken place in February 2020 at the presence of the Minister of Economy. On this occasion, the Minister confirmed that the EPC model developed under REEP will be used as a part of secondary EE legislation.

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

With the Covid-19 pandemic still raging in the region and globally, the PC will continue adjusting its' approach to securing inflow of potential projects and implementation of the credit facility. This will include focus on social media to reach a wide audience, preparing new case studies for the website and attending upcoming conferences, virtual meetings and other events that have been identified as key WebSEFF audiences. The PC has also been cooperating with EBRD's Renewable District Energy in the Western Balkans (ReDEWeB)

Programme to highlight WebSEFF II as potential viable financing vehicle for district heating projects.

The PC will also continue communication with Banca Intesa headquarters, regional centres and branch offices for any new opportunities and inquiries, but will also focus on its own origination of technically eligible sub-projects to be presented to Banca Intesa for their consideration. The general elections in Serbia concluded in at the end of June and it is anticipated that more public sub-projects will be identified and prioritised for financing under the facility.

Lastly, due to the pandemic Intesa expressed that it will be unable to commit the last EUR 10m available under the facility this year. Currently the PFI indicated Q1-2021 for signing, which means very tight deadline for identification, signing, implementation and verification of sub-projects by the current grant deadline of 31/12/2021. As a result and to the extent possible a one year extension of the current grant deadline and additional TC budget from incentive savings is explored internally and expected to be sought in the next reporting period.

Window 3 Sustainable Energy Direct Financing Facility

Given the approaching deadline for utilising the REEP funding for incentive payments, it is not feasible to finance any further projects under this window, if they are also to qualify for incentive payments. So, while the efforts to identify suitable projects will continue (regardless of whether they end up under this programme or not), it seems very likely that the remainder of the REEP funding would not be utilised for the needs of this window and absent any reallocation, it should be returned to the EC.

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 Michael Voegele, michael.voegele@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 (JANUARY – JUNE 2020)

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, Serbia and Montenegro.

Theme 2 Energy Efficiency Policy Dialogue: In this reporting period:

- Six policy assignments have been under implementation
 - Albania: secondary legislation implementing EPBD
 - Albania: review for EED compliance and update of Primary Energy Efficiency Law
 - 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
 - Serbia: secondary legislation implementing EPBD.
 - Regional: preparation of Policy Guidelines on centralised energy efficiency financing schemes
- Three assignments were completed:
 - Bosnia and Hercegovina (Republika Srpska): three draft regulations implementing EPBD; formal *Letter of Approval* of REEP deliverables was submitted by the beneficiary (Ministry of Spatial Planning) on 18 March 2020.
 - Bosnia and Hercegovina (Federation): tailoring of energy calculation software and trainings of licensed assessors and other experts; formal *Letter of Approval* of REEP deliverables was -submitted by the beneficiary (Ministry of Physical Planning, Civil Engineering, and Ecology) on 11 February 2020.
 - North Macedonia: drafting of primary Energy Efficiency Law and support with adoption process. The Law was adopted by Parliament on 5 February 2020.
- One new assignment kicked off
 - North Macedonia - support for EED Article 7 compliance and the development of an Energy Efficiency Obligation scheme for North Macedonia.
- Discussions for three new assignments were initiated with beneficiaries:
 - North Macedonia - Secondary legislation implementing the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (including 6 work packages). Formal *Expression of Interest* by the beneficiary (Ministry of Economy) was submitted on 26 June 2020.

- Bosnia and Herzegovina (Federation) - Secondary legislation implementing the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (including 9 work packages). Formal *Expression of Interest* by the beneficiary (Federal Ministry of Energy, Mining, and Industry) was submitted on 09 June 2020.
- Bosnia and Herzegovina (state level, both entities) – support for transposition and implementation of Ecodesign and Energy Labelling regulations. Expression of Interest received 10 April 2020; online meeting on 18 June 2020 held with MOFTER and representatives of the Federal Ministry of Energy, Mining and Industry and the Ministry of Energy and Mining of Republika Srpska to finalize TOR. Formal waiver letter expected in Q3'2020.

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

Due to the Covid-19 crisis and the partial lockdown of the business/financial sector since March 2020, the volume of sub-loan disbursements and verifications fell significantly during the period. The drop in activity can be attributed to uncertainty and shifted priorities amongst PFIs and sub-borrowers, as well as reduced capacity for physical meetings/site visits which were not permitted for business purposes. Despite the difficult situation under WBGEFF, however, the 15 PFIs were able to continue activities at a slower pace and eventually resume signing of sub-loans at close to pre-covid levels by the end of the period. Prior to the crisis, the GEFF team had the opportunity to present at the 11th Construction Fair in Kragujevac (28 Feb – 1 March, Serbia) - a leasing fair in the civil engineering industry visited by both experts and general population. From March onwards, the team was no longer able to attend events due to Covid-19 restrictions and instead focused on promotion of the Facility through online marketing activities – such as the publication of PR articles on local websites and posts on the Facility Facebook page. In addition, the consultants continued to collaborate with PFIs in targeted marketing, specifically ProCredit Macedonia's Q2 campaign of leaflets, green loan website banners, print ads in magazines, newsletters, and radio commercials.

Window 3 Sustainable Energy Direct Financing Facility

The team identified a wind power project in North Macedonia during the period. It is also exploring a potential intervention in relation to facilitating auction-based solar PV projects in Kosovo and North Macedonia, among other opportunities.

Window 4 Direct Lending to Municipalities

The activities on pipeline development and implementation of the signed transaction (Zenica Hospital) during the reporting period have been significantly impacted by the Covid-19 outbreak and general elections held in most WB countries. However, the Bank has earmarked the remaining grant funds (EUR 1 million) for a potential project which should be confirmed in 3Q 2020.

With respect to Zenica Hospital which was signed in 2019, the financing agreements (Loan Agreement and Grant Agreement) were approved by the parliament in January 2020. However, due to an outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, subsequent activities on finalisation of effectiveness of the loan and grant proceeds, as well as launching of tenders, were postponed to H2 2020.

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. Out of the five municipalities, two municipalities (Makedonska Kamenica and Chesinovo Obleshevo) have contracted the first two Energy Performance Contracts (EnPC) for street lighting in North Macedonia.
- 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.
- Engagements in Albania, Bosnia, Kosovo, Montenegro are on-going. The recent earthquake in Albania have slowdown 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: while final deliverables were submitted to the beneficiary in the previous reporting period, the REEP team made themselves available and responded to additional queries about a calculation software and examples.
- Albania EED: while final deliverables were submitted to the beneficiary in the previous reporting period, the REEP team made themselves available and responded to additional queries after the public consultation and following changes to the draft law, to ensure alignment with the EU Directives.
- North Macedonia EED Article 7 compliance: Online kick-off event (14 May 2020) and Inception Report submitted (29 May 2020).
- Kosovo BRS: second draft BRS was delivered to the Energy Efficiency Agency for review (5 March 2020).
- Kosovo Article 7: Workshop with Energy Efficiency Agency (29 January 2020).
- Serbia (EPBD): final NCM delivered to the beneficiary; kick-off of task to draft legislative amendments.

Furthermore, TORs were drafted and (remote) meetings held to discuss and finalize the scope of work of the three new assignments listed in the previous section. Formal kick-offs of these three assignments are planned for 3Q2020.

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

The total signing amount under the Facility now reached EUR 68.5million with 15 PFIs in Bosnia and Hercegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Serbia and Albania. During H1 2020, the 15 active PFIs verified a total of 1,088 sub-loans with a combined value of EUR 6.08 million.

In addition, EUR 1.19 million of incentives payments were disbursed to sub-borrowers with successfully verified sub-projects.

As of end of June 2020 a total of EUR 22.84 million has been disbursed in 4,317 sub-loans, and EUR 3.821 million has been disbursed as incentives to sub-borrowers. As of end of June 2020 the total (equivalent) primary energy savings is 18,618 (MWh/y), with GHG emissions saving of 6,407 (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

Due to the Covid-19 outbreak, the outputs envisaged originally for the reporting period have been postponed to H2 2020.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT REPORTING PERIOD

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 has taken place in February 2020 at the presence of the Minister of Economy. On this occasion, the Minister confirmed 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. More information about this event are reported in this article: <http://www.wb-reep.org/news=54>

Theme 2 Energy Efficiency Policy Dialogue

Implementation of the current assignments will continue in the next semester as per the respective Terms of Reference. Formal kick-offs of three new assignments are planned for 3Q 2020:

- North Macedonia - Secondary legislation implementing the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive;
- Bosnia and Hercegovina (Federation) - Secondary legislation implementing the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive;
- Bosnia and Herzegovina (state level, both entities) – support for transposition and implementation of Ecodesign and Energy Labelling regulations.
- Publication of policy guidelines on centralised energy efficiency financing schemes on Energy Community Secretariat website.

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

In the next period, WBGEFF activities will continue in alignment with the situation related to the Covid-19 crisis. The team will support the PFIs in on-lending with the same intensity as usual but with limited in-person contact, and will continue to promote and market the Facility across the regions through on-line and other methods as the situation permits. Webinar presentations will be prepared in lieu of in-branch trainings for the PFIs and clients.

Finally, EBRD will aim to sign the remaining EUR 16.5 million in WBGEFF financing to PFIs by the end of 2020.

Window 3 Sustainable Energy Direct Financing Facility

During the second 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 key activities are planned for the next period:

- Implementation: Tender for the Zenica Hospital Project (Hospital Main Work) is expected to be launched in H1 2021 alongside the Works Supervision tender;
- Pipeline development: Confirmation of grant allocation for the final remaining project under Window 4 is expected in H2 2020 following constitution of new governments in the region.

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 proceed 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 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

Programme reference:	IPA Multi-country Programme 2017(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 – 19/12/2021
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 the Western Balkans region, by improving disaster risk informed decision-making at regional level, strengthening domestic capacity for the prioritization of risk-informed investments, and improving regional and domestic capacity to conduct post-disaster needs assessments (PDNA) and formulate resilient recovery frameworks.

ACTIVITIES (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

The implementation of activities commenced in April 2018. During the reporting period under review, despite delays caused by the current Covid-19 situation, activities have continued and focused on (i) enhancing regional cooperation for understanding and sharing risk information; (ii) developing domestic DRM plans; and on (iii) preparing technical assistance activities for post-disaster response and resilient recovery. For (i), moving beyond the exchange of data and information, the Program is supporting the development of operational hydrological models for the Vrbas and Vardar river basins to demonstrate harmonized flood forecasting and early warnings with improved lead-time. The objective is to develop an approach that can be adapted for use in all other river catchments across the region and can be scaled up. For (ii) the Program has started supporting an update of the 2014 Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) Protection & Rescue Plan (phase 1) as well as entity level plans for the Federation of BiH, Republika Srpska, and an update of the Brčko District sectoral plan and Standard Operating Procedures to consolidate these into a formal entity level plan (phase 2). The Program has also started supporting an update of the 2009 National Strategy for Protection and Rescue in North Macedonia and developed an Action Plan to help ensure effective dissemination and implementation of the strategy across all stakeholder groups. For (iii), PDNA reports for 22 municipalities in Serbia, which were affected by floods in July 2019 were completed. Also, a regional PDNA workshop took place in Sarajevo on February 3-7, 2020, in coordination with the EU Delegation, UNDP and Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Initiative (DPPI). Finally, the Program started a region wide assessment on emergency preparedness and response. The desk review was completed in February 2020 and the field work in Bosnia and Herzegovina was completed March 2020. All other field work was conducted remotely during the period of April-July 2020.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

In the frame of the support in developing a pilot version of a Virtual Centralized Observational Database, the program has conducted an assessment of available data and information as well as flood forecasting and early warning capacities of the National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHSs) in Albania, BiH, Montenegro and North Macedonia. Moreover, and as mentioned above, the Program delivered a PDNA workshop in Sarajevo, on February 3-7 that was attended by 25 representatives from 5 Western Balkans beneficiaries. Finally, PDNA reports for 22 municipalities in Serbia, following the July 2019 floods, and the desk report for the region-wide assessment on emergency preparedness and response, covering Albania, BiH, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Kosovo, were completed.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

During the next reporting period, the team will work on the following activities and outputs:

- Enhancing regional cooperation for understanding and sharing risk information: Development of Flood Models for the Vrbas River Basin (Bosnia and Herzegovina) and Vardar River Basin (North Macedonia); enhancement of nowcasting focused on

the Vrbas River Basin; and Design of a Common Information Platform (front-end and back-end);

- Continue activities on updating of the 2014 National Protection & Rescue Plan of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Update of the North Macedonia National Strategy for Protection and Rescue;
- Development of Local DRM Plans in Serbia;
- Finalizing the Emergency Preparedness and Response Assessment and preparing Emergency Preparedness and Response Investment Plans.

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.

SIGN Up for Impact: Philanthropy Development for Stronger Civil Society (2018/395-435)

In Serbia, Trag Foundation presented the Instructions for obtaining tax incentives for donors to the companies and corporate foundations at several public events and prepared digested manuals for donors and recipients of donations. In Montenegro, Kosovo and North Macedonia, SIGN partners engaged in several meetings with relevant stakeholders presenting them with prepared policy analysis and proposals and securing their support in further advocacy efforts. Trag (Serbia) and HORUS (North Macedonia) conducted their National Philanthropy Awards calls for nominations, and while Trag managed to present the awardees in an exhaustive PR and digital campaign, HORUS postponed their ceremony for Autumn 2020. Other SIGN partners promoted Sustainability Academy success stories, local philanthropists and philanthropy actions in a form of videos, blog posts and short inspiring

stories through online and traditional media channels. All thirty-nine CSOs from 5 countries supported within the Sustainability Academy programme successfully completed their projects and reported on their activities. CSOs from Serbia received a third training module where they shared their experiences and lessons learned during their fundraising campaigns.

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. The focus of the consortium partners was a) establishment of the Social Innovation Hubs across the region, b) production of GAP Assessment reports for social innovators and entrepreneurs, d) production of Labour Market Analysis, e) signature of nine memorandum of understandings with municipalities in Kosovo for project cooperation and co-funding of activities, f) identification of the new implementation partner for Bosnia and Herzegovina and g) identification of 203 social innovation and young entrepreneurship entities across the region. During the reporting period, series of in-person coordination meetings took place between the project consortium members and with the relevant stakeholders at country level as well as regional level followed by online coordination meetings during the pandemic (Covid-19) period from middle of March until middle of June 2020.

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

During the period January–June 2020 (the third project year), implementation of planned activities was challenged due to the Covid-19 virus pandemic, but due to mitigation measures implementation is continued and planned outputs achieved. After the Interregional Commission selected 18 projects (involving 36 CSOs from WB in total) for financial support, most of the implementation of project activities was in the reporting period when a pandemic has been declared. The creativity and flexibility of the grantees, with the help and guidance of the WeB4YES team, allowed harmonisation of the methodology of work in new circumstances. After numerous consultations and support, most of the activities were modified and implemented online which in some situations proved to be even a better solution, allowing a greater number of project beneficiaries to be included. All projects continued with implementation and without significant difficulties. Numerous training for young people have been organised, interventions in local policies have been launched, research and publications have been published.

During the reporting period, advocacy campaigns at the national level were also continued although conditions were quite difficult. The progress in the campaigns were achieved due to the effort that was necessary to invest in the new situation. The campaigns are covering the following topics: improving the 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 Bosnia and Herzegovina; improving the conditions for youth-led start-ups in North Macedonia; improving the framework for active labour market measures and traineeships in Montenegro, and establishing a co-operation body that would include all stakeholders responsible for providing career guidance services in the territory of Kosovo*.

The portal WEB4JOBS was launched on March 16th, 2020 in order to offer a comprehensive regional e-service platform for employment and labour mobility. During the reporting period, the portal had over 24,000 visits. A monthly newsletter has been created in order to better promote projects' activities and inform local communities in the Western Balkans and wider. In addition, all information about the achieved results, training announcements, publications created by the grantees is now available on the official web4yes site in the news section.

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. In the period January – June 2020, the main focus of the work of RYCE team was Youth Fund “We Have a Say”. In January, the open call for proposals was officially launched with the overall objective of improvement and development of participatory youth policies in the WB through support the local youth organizations fostering active citizenship and participation of young people at the local level. Until June, 64 received applications were in the evaluation process. Due to the Covid-19 crisis, the team started "working remotely" from middle of March. The project team held a few meetings in order to discuss how to adapt activities to the current situation and how to make a switch from the real world into cyberspace - webinars, campaigns, online conferences, blogs and vlogs. The team created a special social media campaign which persists in reminding citizens of European values, calls for solidarity with the most vulnerable and especially show an important role of youths in their communities.

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.

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

Implemented by an alliance of six rural development networks from the Western Balkans and one from EU, all acting jointly through the Balkan Rural Development Network (BRDN), the project aims 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. In the course of the reporting period, the ToT acquired knowledge on Green Economy and Entrepreneurship was transferred to grassroots CSOs from WB through 10 national trainings. Call for proposals from local CSOs was published, evaluation of proposals, and award of 36 green entrepreneurship sub-grants was finalized. Additionally, a study providing analysis of the national agriculture and rural development programs and measures of the WB countries in comparison to Croatia (and EU CAP) with emphasis on green economy was completed. In the upcoming period, the partners will be providing coaching to and supervising of supported CSOs, boost awareness raising through organization of Green entrepreneurship caravans and journalist contests to promote green economy and rural business practices, and work on preparation of a study on the importance of cross-cutting and green economy issue to the overall sustainability and rural development for WB beneficiaries.

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

Based on [research findings](#) on gender-based discrimination and labour, partners launched an online awareness campaign with regulars posts and boosts. Some were tailored to address rights abuses resulting from COVID-19. Fourteen diverse CSOs across the WB received sub-grants through the Kosovo Women’s Fund for awareness-raising, advocacy, legal aid, and court monitoring. Partners and sub-grant recipients conducted Organisational and Advocacy Capacity Assessments to identify CSOs’ needs and created Capacity Development Plans. They adjusted initiatives amid COVID-19. Partners and sub-grantees held an online regional networking meeting for joint strategizing. Advocacy for research recommendations, including legal amendments, continued. Upcoming activities: continue monitoring subgrant implementation; support CSOs’ capacity development; continue awareness campaign, advocacy, and legal aid.

6.2 LONG-TERM GRANTS

Western Balkan Civil Society Empowerment for a Reformed Public Administration – WeBER 2.0

Programme reference:	EuropeAid/162473/DH/ACT/Multi
Project title:	Western Balkan Civil Society Empowerment for a Reformed Public Administration – WeBER 2.0
EU contribution:	68,88% (1 000 000 EUR)
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Grant Contract
Contract reference:	2019/413-806

Duration of activities:	24/12/2019 – 23/12/2022
Links:	https://www.par-monitor.org/
Contact :	Milena Lazarevic, milena.lazarevic@cep.org.rs

PURPOSE

The overall objective of the WeBER 2.0 is to empower civil society organisations in the WB to engage in the design and implementation of public administration reform in line with EU requirements in the accession process. WeBER 2.0 builds directly upon the previous WeBER project’s foundations and results, by further utilising, promoting and strengthening its main results: the regional WeBER Platform for state-civil society dialogue and PAR Monitor.

ACTIVITIES (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

The project organisational structure was established in January 2020 followed by the kick-off meeting of the Project Core Team and the PAR Monitor Methodology finetuning workshop. Collection of data, research and analytical work as well as the indicators calculation for the PAR Monitor 2019/2020 cycle was the key activity implemented by the Research and Monitoring Team in the reporting period. The Regional PAR Scoreboard was finetuned and optimised for better responsiveness and user experience. With purpose to innovate and facilitate the work of the regional WeBER Platform, the online consultation tool was launched during the last semester. The online consultation tool allowed the members of the WeBER Platform and its National Working Groups to communicate more efficiently, but also contributed to improving the quality of consultations. Regional Train-the-trainers Workshop on Citizen Engagement was implemented with aim to create a pool of CSO and civil servant trainers who will be able to further disseminate knowledge on citizens consultations locally. One regional meeting of the WeBER Platform took place.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

The project has improved the capacity of CSOs in the region to participate in PAR activities through strengthening the WeBER Platform and improving the process of PAR consultations at regional and national level. The online consultation tool was developed. PAR Monitor Methodology was finetuned based on lessons-learned from the first monitoring cycle. CSO-government partnerships on PAR were promoted through the joint workshop on citizen engagement through “citizen consultations”, in line with EU-level good practice.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

Implementation of the following key activities of the project is planned for the next semester: production of the PAR Monitor 2019/2020 reports, organisation of the National PAR Working Group meetings, publishing of the Call for Proposals of the Local Civil Society PAR Enabling Small Grant Facility, development of the online platform for regional citizen campaign, preparation of the Second “Citizens First” Regional Conference.

CN 2019/413-758 “Romani women POWER OF CHANGE in the Western Balkans and Turkey” The project “Romani women POWER of CHANGE in the Western Balkans and Turkey” is built upon the experiences of the “Joint Initiative to Empower Roma Civil Society in the Western Balkans and Turkey” and the “EU Award for Roma Integration 2019, Unknown Heroes”. The aim is to empower Roma women to increase their participation in local and national policy and decision making processes through constructive dialogue with the national and local governments in order to reach significant changes towards Roma integration, non-discrimination and citizens’ rights. Grassroots organizations in Albania, Serbia, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, The Republic of North Macedonia, and Turkey are setting up a facilitating structure managed by national CSOs that came together in National Coalitions of Roma Grassroots Organizations, which will support participating Roma women and Roma women CSOs, to develop and implement advocacy strategies. This structure will provide for the capacity building of Roma women and CSOs will strengthen their confidence, knowledge, skills and leadership. This will enhance their position vis-à-vis public authorities and other stakeholders. Insight on the impact of Covid-19 was gathered from localities in Albania, Serbia, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, The Republic of North Macedonia, and Turkey, and partners provided information from the Roma communities in the respective countries, sharing on the local situation and challenges, and attracting the attention of local governments and other international actors on the most vulnerable Roma communities. Local visits; for assessment of key indicators in the competencies and women participation of Roma women at grassroots level, are being conducted in Albania, Serbia, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, where the conditions allow it, under measures described in the health protocol for protection from Covid - 19, and also online meetings are organized in the respective countries.

Furthering Gender Equality through the EU Accession Process (2019/414-028)

The action aims to enhance and broaden existing regional cooperation of women’s civil society organisations (WCSOs), to strengthen participatory democracies and to bring about an inclusive gender-sensitive EU Approximation process. The start of the action was in March 2020, coinciding with the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic. Within the period March – June 2020, the project activities were in line with the action plan for implementation of the action. Initial online kick-off meeting was held with the implementing partners to plan the action activities for 2020. Besides producing the draft action’s Communication and Visibility Plan (2020-2024), two advocacy actions were undertaken on EU, regional and national level: 1) Advocating for gender mainstreaming for the EU support to the Western Balkans in response to coronavirus pandemic (April, 2020); and 2) Addressing the missing gender perspective at the 2020 Western Balkans Summit (May, 2020). For the first advocacy action, implementing partners prepared advocacy letter with information on the initial and expected impact of the pandemic on women in men in the region, providing recommendations and elaborating the need for gender mainstreaming and gender analysis to inform planning and realisation of the EU support to the Western Balkans in response to coronavirus pandemic. This document was addressed to high EU officials (European Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement, European Commissioner for Equality) and was further distributed to the respective EU Delegations/Office in the Western Balkans.

The letter mobilized and was signed by more than 250 women’s rights civil society organisations from the Western Balkans and it received official response from the Commissioners with commitment “to promote gender equality and women’s and girls’ empowerment during the pandemic” in the region. The second advocacy action was a result of the missing gender perspective in the 2020 Western Balkan Summit and the Summit’s concluding Zagreb Declaration. Advocacy document was prepared providing information and recommendations for national governments and European Commission on the importance and the commitments for gender mainstreaming in the EU Accession process, including recommendations on how national gender equality mechanisms and WCSOs can be utilized and consulted in these processes. This document mobilized and was signed by more than 200 women’s rights civil society organisations from the Western Balkans and it was addressed to high EU officials (President of the European Commission, President of the European Council, Prime Minister of Croatia, European Commissioner for Equality, European Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement) and respective EU Delegations/Office in WBs. It received official response from the officials with commitments in line with the recommendations provided in the document.

Youth Employment

Project title:	WB&T for EmploYouth, CN 414-560
Duration:	16/03/2020 - 15/03/2024 (48 months)
EU contribution:	EUR 1,069,367.78
Beneficiary region:	Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey

PURPOSE

The aim of the WB&T for EmploYouth project is to contribute to strengthened regional collaboration, participatory democracies and the EU approximation process in the Western Balkans and Turkey in the area of youth employment with focus on creating informed and constituency-based solutions for improved youth employment policies; increasing capacity of CSOs to pilot innovative solutions for improved employment of NEET youth, and increasing engagement and influence of CSOs in raising public awareness on youth employment.

ACTIVITIES (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

Starting from March 16, Youth Bank Hub for WB&T (YBHWBT) Network prepared the grounds for successful collaboration and implementation of the project by being actively involved in communication with the key stakeholders, and members of the YBHWBT network:

- 1) Partners’ Meetings have been organised including a 2-day kick-off meeting with the project partners, 2 Finance Department Meetings, and 3 monthly meetings of National Coordinators discussing the progress of the project and the upcoming activities;

- 2) Research component of the project has been launched including collection of data for the database of relevant actors, initiation of coordinated national baseline studies in and the collection of data on examples of good practice in employment of young people from vulnerable categories;
- 3) More than 30 meetings with relevant stakeholders have been organized including: EU delegations in each relevant IPA beneficiary, ministries for youth and employment, offices of statistics, Youth Councils. A meeting with five regional CSF projects was also organised. The project and the legacy of the YBHWBT project network was also presented at the online conference organized by the youth department of OSCE Serbia and TACSO project;
- 4) Two bi-monthly newsletters have been published;
- 5) Provided emergency support for young people, including workshops regarding well-being, mental health and violence; and undertook social media campaign in order to provide possibilities for active youth participation during quarantine and social distancing.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

1. A stakeholders` databases for the advocacy component of the project have been created, the methodology of the baseline research, agreeing on the main issues and indicators to be measured within the study has been adopted; and structure for the Best Practices Youth Business and Employment models Manual have been agreed.
2. Information about the start of the project, and possible cooperation was provided to the key stakeholders. Joint initiative of regional CSF projects have been launched in order to provide better coordination and to avoid the overlaps.
3. Joint PR and Communication plan of the project has been designed and program and condition for the regional PR Agency have been created.
4. Over 15000 young persons have been reached and supported through Facebook and Instagram during the time of Covid-19 pandemic.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

In the following period, national baseline studies, Youth Participation Index Report, five policy briefs, and Manual of Good Practices will be published. Additionally, 10 public events with the key stakeholders in relevant IPA beneficiaries will be organized on youth policies.

Project title:	<i>My career from zero to hero” - Strengthening networks of Western Balkan CSOs to implement the one-stop-shop youth employability model for future jobs of 4.0. digital revolution, CN 2019/414-531</i>
EU contribution:	EUR 999.999,42
Beneficiary region:	Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia
Duration of activities:	01/04/2020 – 31/07/2023

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Action is to strengthen national consortiums and regional thematic networks targeting grass root CSOs in Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina for networking, merging resources and expertise in order to develop and pilot sustainable innovative youth employability model, focused on education for 4.0. digital revolution (digital, entrepreneurship and transferable skills), respecting "one-stop-shop" methodology and cross-sector cooperation.

ACTIVITIES (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

Due to COVID-19 pandemic the Action has been suspended for one month, from 1 April – 1 May. The first two months of the Action implementation have been dedicated to contractual work, project documentation and preparation of the upcoming phases of the project. This included dedication to **Activity 1.1. "Conducting 5 Mapping studies in 5 WB IPA Beneficiaries"**, for which *Tender preparations for the research expert* has been conducted in five IPA beneficiaries in order to create baseline for developing the youth employment model which will be implemented in following phases of the Action implementation.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

Signed 4 Contract agreements with following annexes defining mutual roles and responsibilities between the Coordinator (Centre for Youth Work, Serbia) and 4 co-beneficiaries (Youth for Social Changes, Albania; Center for youth education, Bosnia and Herzegovina; TOKA, Kosovo; Forum MNE, Montenegro).

Tenders for the research expert prepared in 5 IPA beneficiaries in order to create baseline for developing the youth employment model in 5 WB economies.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Raised awareness of 350 CSOs on importance of new skills for 4.0. revolution, networking and creating quality cross sector youth employment models, from which up to 30 CSOs will gain capacities to implement it;
- Conducting 5 mapping studies in 5 WB IPA beneficiaries and promotion of results;
- Sub-granting open call, selection mentorship & monitoring of up to 30 grass root CSOs in 5 WB IPA beneficiaries.

Project title:	Balkans Youth: Linking Education, Abilities and Partnership Potential in Regional Employment Practice (BY LEAP), CN 2020/413-829
EU contribution:	EUR 1,079,781.45
Beneficiary region:	Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey
Duration of activities:	27/02/2020 – 26/02/2023 (36 months)

PURPOSE

The purpose of the project is to contribute to youth entrepreneurship opportunities and strengthen employment perspectives of youth in the Western Balkans by enhancing regional entrepreneurship education network, supporting growth of innovative youth entrepreneurship initiatives and their transformation into sustainable youth SMEs. The project aims to foster youth employment and entrepreneurship opportunities.

ACTIVITIES (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

A two-day project kick-off meeting was organised online due to COVID-19 pandemic, as well as a Steering Committee meeting. The Communication and Dissemination Plan, visual identity and the website have been created. Project partners researched the local data needed for the baseline study, as well as the Financial and Management Toolkit.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

Project logo, project website, and Communication and Dissemination Plan

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

Organisation of National Entrepreneurial Conferences in 6 IPA beneficiaries, capacity building trainings for NGOs, webinars on fundraising and strategic planning, TOT for teachers, student company competitions, job shadowing for NGO representatives.

6.4 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 (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

- Organized Regional Civil Society Forum 21-23 January, 2020 with 108 representatives of CSOs, public and EU institutions and other stakeholders to discuss the state of civil society and the new EU framework of support for the period 2021-2027;
- Prepared three reports: (1) Regional Civil Society Needs Assessment Reports, including the assessment of the state of civil society and enabling environment for 2018-2019 against the EU Guidelines for Support to Civil Society in Enlargement Region (EU Civil Society Guidelines); (2) Mapping and Needs Assessment of Regional Networks and Regional Projects Funded by CSF; and (3) Study on Sustainability of Professional Journalism in the Media Business Environment of the Western Balkans, accompanied with six-country National Data Overviews;
- Developed Capacity Development (CD) and P2P Programme with a concrete Action plan for organizing 70 regional and country events, incl. mitigations measures for CSOs during Coronavirus/COVID-19 pandemic;
- Preparation and launch of P2P On-demand on-line tool that enables CSOs to seek and receive support for their exchange activities;
- Organized two regional and five country-based trainings, providing benefit to over 195 CSOs and other stakeholders from the WBT region, of which 51 male, 143 female and one other participant. The topics covered included digital and ICT tools to be used by CSOs for remote work and webinar on preparation of proposals for EU grants;
- Organization of first on-line regional meet up on emergency response to COVID-19 by CSOs with participations of 85 representatives of CSOs and other stakeholders;
- Facilitated on-line and off-line IPA 3 civil society consultations and prepared Consultation Feedback Report with analysis of 54 contributions by CSOs and stakeholders;
- Prepared and approved mandate for the EU Civil Society Guidelines review;
- Supported the update of the CSF and media programming for 2020;
- Improved project website (tacso.eu) and publication of 21 success stories of CSOs' response to the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Conduct of mapping of existing relevant databases of EU or CSF projects/grants.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

- Regional Civil Society Forum 21-23 January, 2020;
- Regional Civil Society Needs Assessment Reports, including the assessment of the state of civil society and enabling environment for 2018-2019 against the EU Civil Society Guidelines;
- Mapping and Needs Assessment of the Regional Networks and Regional Projects Funded within CSF Report;

- Executive Report on the Study on Sustainability of Professional Journalism in the Media Business Environment of the WB, accompanied with six-county National Data Overviews;
- Capacity Development (CD) and P2P Programme with a concrete Action plan for organizing 70 regional and country events;
- P2P On-demand on-line tool and internal procedure, templates for its implementation;
- Two regional and five country-based trainings on digital and ICT tools, webinar on preparation of proposals for EU grants and one on-line Regional Meet up on the topic of emergency response to COVID-19 by CSOs;
- Consultation Feedback Report with analysis of 54 contributions by CSOs and stakeholders;
- Mandate of the EU Civil Society Guidelines review;
- 21 success stories of CSOs' response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Publication and promotion of the three reports;
- Preparation of calendar of capacity development and exchange events, incl. addressing mitigations measures for CSOs due to COVID-19 pandemics and its timely implementation;
- Facilitation and support to CSO exchange activities vis-à-vis P2P On-demand on-line tool;
- Operationalization of an integrated system of management, monitoring and reporting on events via utilizing the CiviCRM system;
- Preparation of the first draft EU Civil Society Guidelines, 2021-2027 and facilitation of the in-country, thematic off-line and online consultations as well as support to review and development of the EU Media Guidelines for WBT;
- Finalization of the CSF MIS/database architecture approach.

6.5 REGIONAL PROGRAMME ON LOCAL DEMOCRACY IN THE WESTERN BALKANS (RELOAD)

Programme reference:	Civil Society Facility and Media Programme IPA 2016/038-960
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 – 31/12/2020

Links: https://www.ba.undp.org/content/bosnia_and_herzegovina/en/home/development-impact/ReLOaD.html

Contact: Victor Dragutan, Victor.DRAGUTAN@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

ReLOaD aims to strengthen partnerships between local governments and civil society by scaling-up a successful model of transparent and project-based funding of CSOs. The Western Balkan (WB) IPA beneficiaries 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. The ReLOaD will, as support to these efforts, expand LG - CSO relations, facilitating dialogue among them, and improve quality of CSO services, by focusing on needs of 50 LGs, and supporting implementation of 200 CSOs' projects, for the benefit of 38,000 people.

ACTIVITIES (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

- Continuous awareness raising and familiarisation of partner local governments (LGs) with the Methodology for CSO funds disbursement after stall caused by COVID19 pandemic,
- Continued support to implementation of CSOs projects in targeted localities provided to **216 active CSO projects**,
- Monitoring of all active CSOs projects in partner LGs and continuous on-the-job support to CSOs provided through **373 monitoring visits** (extensive utilisation of IT tools applied during the outbreak),
- Comprehensive analysis of marginalised groups needs in 53 LGs with purpose of potential CSOs assistance during COVID19. Data collected from all 53 partner LGs and in consultation with over 400 CSOs,
- In cooperation with EC, all unutilized balance from the ReLOaD's grant scheme assigned towards fast-track CSO projects to contribute improvement of marginalised groups in partner localities. **59 CSO projects were identified and 27 were initiated** (estimated value over 300,000 EUR),
- LGs champions – best practices in cooperation with civil society identified in three (3) out of five (5) IPA beneficiaries,
- Facilitation of knowledge sharing, advocacy and communication and regional networking,
- BiH specific activities (6.1) - implementation of local (community) initiatives identified through civic forums in partner localities. **6 civic initiatives (actions) implemented.**

** For the European Union, 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. For UNDP, references to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of UN Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).*

- BiH specific activity (6.2) – continuation of the process of developing an ICT tool as a result of selection of the best IT solution, focused on environment protection (Go Green), that had been recognised on a Hackathon organised in Sarajevo. Software (IT application) development commenced.

OUTPUT (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

- Partner LGs learnt in practice how to maintain transparent process of Public calls for CSOs and monitor awarded CSO projects for the benefit of citizens,
- Grassroot CSOs increased their skills in project cycle management to better respond to public calls for CSOs as well as to efficiently manage funds,
- Increased transparency and accountability of partner municipalities and improvement of relationship with civil society,
- Awarded CSOs projects provided services to citizens in partner LGs through addressing needs of local population,
- Best practice LGs identified in line with predetermined criteria,
- Local (community) initiatives executed, demonstrating benefits of such cooperation between governments and citizens/CSOs. Forward-looking perspective for IT solutions related to improvement of civic engagement and local decision making initiated.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Discuss and formalise a methodology and accompanying tools, as well as 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 LG,
- Monitoring of CSO projects' implementation through combined monitoring teams,
- Enhance interactive platform facilitating virtual knowledge sharing, advocacy and communication,
- Increase the transparency of local governments through utilization of 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 (JANUARY- JUNE 2020)

- 5 meetings with Ministries and local duty-bearers to pilot MIL in formal education in Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- Social media campaign about MIL skills to counter disinformation related to the Covid-19 pandemic (production of 40 infographics in 4 languages, more than 120 posts).
- Direct support to 5 press and media councils (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Serbia and Kosovo* under UNSCR 1244) to strengthen media accountability and respect for journalistic codes of ethics, notably in light of the Covid-19 pandemic of disinformation.
- Visibility event with the EUD in Tirana to relaunch the Albanian Media Council with 19 media outlets committing to self-regulation.
- Coaching of selected media outlets in Albania and Serbia to perform transparency ethical audits.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY- JUNE 2020)

- Commitment of the authorities in Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina (Canton Sarajevo) to pilot MIL in formal education and first steps towards MIL curricula adaptation.
- Increased visibility and authority of media self-regulation mechanisms in South East Europe (through new journalistic guidelines to cover the pandemic, competition to reward ethical journalism, etc).
- Improved MIL capacities of citizens to counter disinformation through outreach of social media posts and campaign.
- 6 media outlets in Albania and Serbia coached and undertaking ethical audits to increase transparency of their news outlet (in link with the Journalism Trust Initiative).

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Adaptation and launching of a Massive Open Online Course on MIL for stakeholders in the region, in particular youth organizations.
- MIL Social media campaign to address disinformation and conspiracy theories.
- Online regional webinars for media organizations to strengthen journalists labour rights.
- Fact-checking seminars in Turkey.
- MIL webinar/event as part of the UNESCO MIL Global Week.

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 Western Balkans
EU contribution:	3,000,000 Euros
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Service Contract with IFJ
Contract reference:	2020/417-797 - EuropeAid/135382/DH/SER/MULTI
Duration of activities:	01/02/2018 – 31/07/2022
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 in order to produce increasingly pluralistic, independent and accountable content. Key components of the project are: introducing European model of public service media funding and governance, assistance in building broadcasters' internal capacities and support for content development.

ACTIVITIES (JANUARY- JUNE 2020)

- Organized regional round table in Belgrade on Models of Governance, Regulation and Funding of Public Service Media (PSM) in the Western Balkans and national round table on PSM funding in North Macedonia.
- Organized two online conferences and joint work with members of national assessment groups for PSM funding and governance.
- Organized 4 training and consultancies aimed at reviewing existing organization models, and actively using HR techniques as tools in management change process
- Supporting broadcasters to develop and/or update existing strategic documents
- Coaching to develop a sustainable platform for the exchange of PSM archive-content

- Two teleconference meetings with project beneficiaries organized during the Covid-19 crisis to address issues of urgent concern affecting PSM output.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY- JUNE 2020)

- Completed regional report on *Financing of PSM in Western Balkans* for 6 countries.
- Document *Common Principles of Governance and Regulation of Public Service Media in Western Balkans* and *Guidelines for Implementation of Common Principles of PSM Funding* agreed at regional conference in Belgrade.
- National assessment groups for PSM funding and governance established in each beneficiary country. Six assessment reports on PSM governance and supervision and 6 national reports on PSM funding delivered after joint work with national assessment groups, established at the January 2020 regional meeting in Belgrade.
- 32 HR staff and front-line managers of 4 public broadcasters, received training and increased their professional capacities and skills to review existing organization models, and actively use HR techniques as tools in management change process.
- Development strategy document for Bosnian public broadcaster (BHRT) finalized, to be presented for approval to the broadcaster's governing body.
- Metadata for 884 hours of archive content, representing 1302 items, prepared for regional platform for exchange of digitized archive material.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Establish mechanisms for monitoring progress towards alignment with the funding and governance principles, carrying out regular assessments, to be followed by public presentations of reports and legislative changes proposals in 6 countries.
- Providing expert advice on optimization of budgets and operations in case of limited resources for the six broadcasters.
- Consultation on public diplomacy campaigns around the importance of stable PSM funding and independent governance
- Creation of a joint online platform for distribution of research, briefings and project documents in support of PSM public diplomacy efforts
- Providing assistance and support in reviewing management changes road maps for six broadcasters and continuing in-house training aimed at increasing management capacities
- Online workshops for journalists, board members and managers, on applying and improving ethical standards, editorial guidelines and ways of dealing with audience complaints
- Regional online workshop for PSM staff in the use of modern audience measurement and engagement tools
- Assistance in creating two cross-border investigative teams.

- Organizing three-day training workshops for coproduction and cross border production of documentary style investigative programs for 24 participants
- National (online) workshops, covering set/costume design, graphic design/editing, screenplay writing, acting/filming, tailored to suit each PSM in preparation for children/youth program production
- Launching of the platform for the exchange of PSM archive-content

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
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 (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

- Online EED grant giving facility available to the applicants from the Western Balkans improved: <https://www.democracyendowment.eu/support/>
- Organised outreach missions to WB countries and Turkey;
- Continuous assessment of received applications, contracting, review of reports and monitoring;

- Ongoing management of 100 grants awarded since the beginning of the grant (Turkey – 32, Serbia – 20, Bosnia and Herzegovina – 14, North Macedonia – 8, Montenegro – 10, Kosovo – 10, Albania – 6, Western Balkans Region - 1);
- Continuous hands-on coaching and mentoring provided to applicants and grantees;
- Promotion, networking and coordination with donors and stakeholders in the region and international level.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

- Potential applicants across the Western Balkans and Turkey are well informed about EED funding opportunities;
- 515 applications from Western Balkans and Turkey received since the beginning of the project (191 in 2020);
- 100 grant contracts were awarded from EC grant with total 5,6 million euro allocated (approx. 3.2 million in Western Balkans and 2,4 million in Turkey);
- The awarded initiatives focus on the following main areas:
 - Support to independent media and innovative media products that promote high ethical standards and quality journalism thus supporting critical thinking;
 - Empowerment of independent media outlets (including up-to-date technologies, new ways of reaching audiences and generating income, etc.), as a key to safeguarding media freedom in the region, especially in light of Covid-19 crisis;
 - Support to journalist associations in promotion of safety of journalists;
 - Support to democratic initiatives that return to the core of citizens' activism, approaching issues in innovative, thematic, inter-sectoral and multi-disciplinary ways;
 - Grass-roots initiatives and voluntarism;
 - Support to various youth led initiatives; and
 - Emergency and bridge funding to rights-based civil society actors in crisis due their political environment.
- Coordination with EU Delegations, EC services and other donors and stakeholders in the beneficiary countries maintained.
- Coaching and rapid response provided to enable adaptation to Covid-19 crisis for EED grantees
- Strategic reflection meeting on EED's work in the Western Balkans and Turkey organized
- 1 mission to Turkey organized
- Roundtable on the situation on the situation of academic freedom and its effects on civil society in Turkey (with participation of EC, EP and MS representatives)
- Online-workshop for EED grantees and EUD representatives on challenges and opportunities for civil society in Turkey during Covid-19

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 and communication 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 during challenges of Covid-19 pandemic
- Supporting grantees in networking at country, regional and EU level.
- Providing (online) platforms for grantees to make their voices heard and share their knowledge and experience
- Organising Project Steering Committee

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
Contract reference:	2017/393-744
Duration of activities:	01/01/2018 – 31/12/2020
Links:	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 (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

- BIRN team of journalists extensively covered ongoing war crime trials before the IRMCT and courts in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Croatia, Kosovo and Serbia, as well as other important transitional justice topics in the region.
- BIRN Kosovo produced episodes of Justice in Kosovo TV programme, 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 Balkans who received grants to produce in-depth stories on transitional justice issues in the region.
- BIRN Updated focus page dedicated to the coverage of the Specialist Chambers and Specialist Office for Kosovo.
- BIRN published one cross-border investigation and updated the existing one.
- Impunity Watch finalised interviews and initial research for the second policy paper with recommendations about conflict prevention.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

- BIRN produced [243 articles in English language](#) and all of them were translated to local languages. The total number of international and regional republications of BTJ articles was over 1.500. All articles were promoted on BTJ [Twitter](#) and Facebook pages on [BCMS](#), [Macedonian](#), [Albanian](#) and [English](#).
- [Four episodes](#) of Justice in Kosovo TV programme were produced and published by BIRN Kosovo, while BIRN Bosnia and Herzegovina produced [six episodes](#) of TV Justice.
- [Focus page](#) dedicated to the coverage of the Specialist Chambers and Specialist Prosecutor's Office for Kosovo was timely updated with 17 new articles on the topic.
- One cross-border investigation about [compensation costs](#) that Bosnia and Serbia have paid out to defendants who have been acquitted of war crimes was published and followed with a [promotional video](#) for BIRN's social media channels. Additionally, [The Last Despatches](#) series about journalists killed during the 1990s wars in the former Yugoslavia was updated with four new profiles.
- BIRN team published 3 in-depth articles written by local journalists who received grants to produce stories related to revisionism and denial, unprosecuted crimes and reconciliation initiatives. All three articles were translated to local languages.
- Impunity Watch finalised the research for the policy paper about conflict prevention that will be published in October 2020, followed by promotional event and workshop.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

In this reporting period, BIRN faced certain obstacles due to the coronavirus pandemic. The new situation affected several activities: research for the policy paper about archives by the Impunity Watch, publishing and promoting the policy paper about conflict prevention by the Impunity Watch, as well as the regional workshop about conflict prevention. Therefore, BIRN was forced to move these activities to July-December 2020, hoping that the current situation will allow carrying out all activities envisaged in the description of the action. BIRN will continue to report on war crime trials and transitional justice topics in the Balkans and to publish remaining grantees' stories and investigations. BIRN will also produce and publish the Mass Grave database and update the War Crimes Map with new verdicts.

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 (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

- BIRN launched its resource platform for investigative journalists that aims to provide users with tools and services that will help them breach their tech gap between their skills and investigative story. This platform was launched in January 2020, under the name [BIRN Investigative Resource Desk](#).
- Online trainings developed by Thomson Media for all six Western Balkan Countries. The trainings initially planned for offline will be also shifted to online platforms due to COVID-19 situation.
- The Call for Applications for Emergency Media Fund was set up by BIRN, and opened on June 20. The newly set up-fund is to help freelance and staff journalists, as well as media outlets to mitigate the damages caused by COVID-19, and to support them in reporting about relevant issues happening in the background of the pandemic of COVID-19.
- Calls for Applications for the EU Award were published in North Macedonia and Montenegro, however the calls were postponed to the fall due to the COVID-19.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

- Over 400.000 public documents uploaded and available to journalists on BIRD (Digital resource lab)

- A total of 3 stories were produced by a public service broadcaster in North Macedonia. MRT has produced stories on issues faced by those who are most vulnerable to the virus. First story is related to people diagnosed with diabetes: [Diabetes is the second highest risk for coronavirus](#); second story reflects on healthcare providers for women in labour: [Healthcare service providers for new mothers during a pandemic](#); and finally people who are fighting to survive in the midst of pandemics: [The battle for food is stronger than the fear of COVID-19](#)
- Three pieces were produced under the cross-border cooperation. BIRN awarded grants for long-reads to journalists investigating minority issues, environment, workers' rights and impact COVID-19 has had on the Balkans citizens. [First piece](#) is referring to increased number of cases in North Macedonia in June, [Second piece](#) brings a story of Croatian island and its residents struggle with coronavirus, which they were hoping to escape but failed, finally [third piece](#) is about the dangers of inadequate protection for medical workers in Romania.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Emergency Media Fund will be awarded in three categories: Emergency Content Fund, Equipment fund and Investigative fund.
- The Call for Applications for EU Awards for Investigative Journalism for 2020 will be open and the EU Awards will be presented in six WB countries in the second half of 2020.
- Two-day offline training will be organized by CEU-CDMS, followed by an online training course
- Second phase of ToT has been postponed for September. Furthermore, individual trainings to be held by journalists that attended ToTs will be held in the fall as well.
- Thomson Media will launch all courses in September/October.
- A total of 13 more COVID-19 related cross-border investigations are expected in the following period.

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 active role in developing and promoting MIL policies and practices in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia.

ACTIVITIES (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

Informed advocacy and facilitating national multi stakeholder coalitions. National coalitions promoting MIL continued to holding regular meetings, adapted to some extent to online collaboration methods, and effects of Covid-19 pandemic to education practices. **11 events** were held across the region engaging over **100 stakeholders**, including public bodies, academic experts, primary and secondary education representatives, media, CSOs, international and inter-governmental organizations in dialogue on media and information literacy advancements, policy development. As of March 2020, Covid-19 pandemic somewhat halted strategical considerations within education sector relevant for advancements of MIL, having partners seek ways to support stakeholders in meeting challenges of online education. This was done by mobilizing expertise and capacities of the MIL national coalitions in activities such as: integrating MIL curriculum in national online learning platforms (Montenegro), conducting analysis of digital competences of teachers needed for online education, analysis of PSB based education initiative (BiH), gathering lessons learned from online schooling by teachers, children and parents (Serbia).

Capacity building and networking for CSOs at regional and local level. 8 workshops across the region were held with 101 participants from CSOs active in the field of human rights, working with different target groups (youth, children, persons with disabilities, public sector, and other), with training methodology successfully adapted to online environment with beginning of the Covid -19 pandemic. Workshops covered topics under MIL umbrella: media education for high-school students (North Macedonia); media literacy and children (B&H); security and privacy, youth and social media (Montenegro).

CSO engagement in promoting MIL. 33 sub-granted projects have been implemented across the region, mobilizing local civil society organisations, grass roots organisations, in promoting media education, advancing policies and practices in MIL, yielding hundreds of outputs (educative events, multi-media outputs serving outreach, education and advocacy such as videos, radio shows, documentaries, gifs, songs, exhibition, websites, chrome extension etc, learning resources, public campaigns, researches. Given the nature of the projects (many targeting school aged children, events planned across the region), intensive efforts were invested in supporting sub-grantees in project adaptations to pandemic, ensuring smooth implementation in challenging circumstances.

Media engagement in awareness raising campaigns for citizens. 23 exchange sessions between journalist and primary and secondary school students were organized across the region (18 visiting sessions and 5 webinars) reaching over 600 students, teachers and parents. **Coordinated regional public campaign aired in 5 countries, with** participation of 80 journalists, public figures, activists, in the support of professional journalism, reaching over 4 million citizens.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

Work with national coalitions has placed partners in the very centre of MIL advancements in all beneficiary countries, creating opportunities for learning, exchange of knowledge and experiences, influencing attitudes, policies and practices related to MIL. Awareness among over 100 public bodies representatives, media and education workers, academia, is raised on importance of MIL. Opportunities and obstacles for advancement of MIL are identified in all countries. Cross- sectoral approach and regional exchange enable policy considerations and improvements responding to vibrant media environment.

Competences to develop and deliver MIL programs for over 80 CSOs in the region are enhanced, enabling sustainable knowledge within civil society sector to advance learning about media among different groups. CSOs are encouraged to consider how they can develop activities towards increasing MIL skills among their target group.

33 local CSOs directly engaged in design and implementation of MIL programs, reaching thousands with variety of outputs, exercising different forms of CSO engagement in promoting and advancing MIL – from public campaigning, organisation of community events, engaging youth in media production, enhancing cooperation between media and education sector etc. Each of these projects has its own results, inciting positive developments in communities across the region.

Over 600 primary and secondary school students, teachers and parents increased knowledge about the different aspects of media environment, while engaging with local journalist through organised school visits, visits to media organisations, webinars.

“Professional journalism matters” regional public campaign, yielded over 170 communication outputs, engaged over 80 journalists, citizens, CSOs representatives, promoted over 20 valuable messages, reached more than 4 million people and sparked almost 8000 engagements across different platforms, contributing to raising awareness of citizens on the values of professional journalism vs. disinformation, sensationalism and propaganda.

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.
- Supporting engagement of media community in teaching MIL in schools across the region
- Continue with capacity building of local CSOs in promoting MIL

- Organisation of webinars to enhance regional exchange of practices on MIL
- Regional production to capture advancements in MIL
- Monitoring and evaluation

RESILIENCE: Civil society action to reaffirm media freedom and counter disinformation and hateful propaganda in Western Balkans and Turkey

Programme reference:	Multi-beneficiary Programme under IPA Transition Assistance and Institution Building Component for the year 2015, IPA 2014/031-603
Project title:	RESILIENCE: Civil society action to reaffirm media freedom and counter disinformation and hateful propaganda in Western Balkans and Turkey
EU contribution:	EUR 999,999.00
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Grant contract
Contract reference:	CN IPA/2019/414-111
Duration of activities:	01/02/2020 – 31/01/2023
Links:	www.seenpm.org
Contact :	Victor Dragutan, Victor.DRAGUTAN@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

Nine CSOs work to strengthen media freedoms through research of disinformation models and narratives, media trust and media-gender issues, followed by disinformation countering activities, including the production of TV shows on media issues, a scheme to revive media criticism and close cooperation with editors. In addition, a substantial sub-granting scheme will help grassroots to promote media literacy in small towns and rural areas.

ACTIVITIES (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

Research into political-economic basis of hate, disinformation and propaganda models, with a research team of seven national researchers and regional research coordinator formed and equipped to conduct research on political-economic basis of hate, disinformation and propaganda models of media and communication. Seven national studies were drafted by researchers in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey. They were guided by a common research methodology with 40 typical elements of hate and propaganda models elaborated by the regional research coordinator for a) ownership patterns, b) financial patterns, c) organisational and operational modalities, d) editors and journalists, and e) content. The draft reports also tackled gender dimensions of hate and propaganda media models and included policy recommendations.

Promoting MIL in Balkan small towns and rural areas, with a sub-granting scheme prepared in five beneficiary countries. National sub-granting teams were formed, with sub-granting coordinators, mentors and financial managers appointed. A regional sub-granting coordinator organised the preparations for the launch and implementation of the sub-granting scheme, which is aimed at capacity building of grassroots organisations in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia to promote media and information literacy in small towns and rural areas that may be particularly vulnerable to disinformation and propaganda. Common operating guidelines for launching and administering of the sub-granting scheme were drafted by the regional coordinator. The draft Sub-granting Manual features 33 annexes with templates for efficient and unified administration of the scheme.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

- Seven national researchers empowered to conduct analysis of political-economic basis of hate, disinformation and propaganda models of media and communication
- Increased knowledge and capabilities of seven partner organisations in the beneficiary countries to effectively respond to the spread of hate, propaganda and disinformation by learning from the findings of draft national research reports on political-economic basis of hate and propaganda model of media and communication in their countries
- Sub-granting teams in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia formed and empowered for launching and administering the sub-granting scheme aimed at capacity building of grassroots organisations in five beneficiary countries to engage in promotion of media literacy in small towns and rural areas that may be particularly vulnerable to disinformation and propaganda.
- A sub-granting manual drafted

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- **Research activities** will include an analysis of hate and disinformation narratives conducted in each beneficiary country, focusing largely on digital media, as well as research on media trust and media-gender issues in the Western Balkans based on an opinion poll carried out by external pollsters on a representative sample of 1000 citizens.
- Disinformation and hate speech **countering activities** will start with the development of a common regional strategy for online counter narrative campaign, with a regional workshop organised for 11 participants from the partner CSOs and assistance and mentoring from an experienced EU expert. The production of counter narrative materials will ensue. Extensive preparations for the production of a series of six TV shows dedicated to media issues will be completed. In parallel, creative teams will be formed to produce other types of counter narrative materials, such as memes, gifs and videos. First stories based on the principles of constructive journalism as well as media criticism pieces will be commissioned and produced.

- **Sub-granting scheme** will be launched, with concept notes received and processed in accordance with the manual. The partners will then provide support to applicants to develop full proposals. The full proposals will be received and assessed.

Safe Journalists

Programme reference:	Civil Society Facility and Media Programme, IPA 2019/414-122
Project title:	safejournalists.net
EU contribution:	EUR 997.770,43
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Grant contract
Contract reference:	CN IPA 2019/414-122
Duration of activities:	01/02/2020 – 01/02/2023
Links:	safejournalists.net
Contact :	Victor Dragutan, Victor.DRAGUTAN@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The Action's goal is to contribute to strengthening participatory democracy in the WB countries through regional cooperation of reliable journalists' organisations and their engagement in the process of policy development and monitoring of their implementation. It will be done so by monitoring of violation of journalists' rights, alarming the relevant stakeholders, producing advocacy-based annual reports about media freedom and journalists' safety and empowering journalists.

ACTIVITIES (FEBRUARY-JULY 2020)

First six month of the project implementation were marked by Covid-19 crisis and lockdowns in all WB countries. The first meeting with partners and signing of the contracts with them luckily was done in February. Lockdown didn't influence the first part of the project because our activities were not endangered. Oppositely we had much more work to do because the Covid-19 crisis and parliamentary elections in almost all WB countries in the previous six months caused journalists to be much more endangered and their rights have been violated in those circumstances.

Systematisation of research tools – Successful tendering procedure, selection and contracting of the Head Researcher (HR) were done. Updated Indicators Methodology (IM), prepared by the HR, commented within the project partners and final version is available to the researchers.

Journalists Safety Index development and implementation - Based on the timeline proposed by the HR, and approved by the project coordinators, the working version of the toolkit, including the Journalists Safety Index (JSI) is foreseen for the period August- October 2020. Preparation activities are in progress and on-going.

Database update and maintenance – Database safejournalists.net is regularly updated and maintained but the reconstruction is not yet done. The tendering procedure for the website reconstruction and maintenance is underway. During the reporting period 87 new cases were put in the database (SRB – 48, BIH – 10, KS – 14, MNG – 3, NM – 8, CRO – 4). The cases from Albania are not yet introduced into database, but the researcher ALB was selected and contracted in May 2020.

Monitoring and Evaluation guidelines and matrix - An updated Monitoring and Evaluation guidelines and matrix was provided by IJAS. Activities related to preparation of the annual reports as per the provided guidelines are in progress.

National SEWP mechanism – All partners organisations updated their national SEWP mechanisms and are implementing it on national level. Partners publically reacted on abuses of journalists rights or regarding abuses of media legislation at the national level more than 150 times.

Regional SEWP mechanism implementation - The network reacted 33 times, informing national and international stakeholders urging them to act. In this period actual attacks on journalists were increased and the most of public reactions and alerts to the relevant national and international stakeholders were sent because of physical and death threats to journalists.

Collaboration with national and international stakeholders – All partners have continued collaboration with the decision-makers in their respective countries. Most of them are part of state working groups for changing media laws and other relevant laws for media freedom and journalists' safety. More than 100 meetings were held in the previous six months. Most of the meetings were held via different online platforms.

OUTPUTS (FEBRUARY-JULY 2020)

Op 1.1 *Tool-kit for measuring progress in the field of media freedoms and safety of journalists (database, Indicators report, Journalists' Safety Index, Action plan alternative reports, case studies):*

- 12 staff members trained - 5 staff members (researchers) trained at individual training sessions with the Head researcher about new updated Indicators report methodology.
- Tool-kit for measuring progress including Journalists Safety Index – the part of the tool kit is up to date but the Index for Safety of Journalists is underway.
- [www.safejournalists.net database is functional](http://www.safejournalists.net) – database is functional but not yet reconstructed and cases from Albania are not publically available.

Op 1.2 *NJA meets the needs of their members:*

- 6 National SEWP Mechanism are up to date – 6 National SEWP mechanism are up to date

Op 1.3 *The Regional Network is fully functional, visible and yielding results:*

- Number of incidents recorded on safetjournalists.net, tbc. – 87 new cases are recorded in the safejournalists.net database
- Number of Regional SEWP alerts cases, tbc – 33 regional SEWP alerts published and letters of concern were sent to the relevant national and international institutions.
- Number of WBP alerts for WB cases feature on the CoE platform – 14 cases featured on the Coe platform
- Number of WBP alerts for WB cases that elicit stakeholders reactions - seven answers were received from national institutions regarding our alerts

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

In the next six months period, the website safejournalists.net will be reconstructed and maintaining will continue, Safety journalists index will be produced, annual reports regarding media freedom and journalists safety will be produced for seven different countries, monitoring on violation of journalist rights will continue, new services for members will start with an introduction, first monitoring and evaluation reports will be produced, production of the WBP Network strategy will start, small grants scheme will start with the implementation, advocacy action of the partners will continue and collaboration with national and international stakeholders will continue.

6.7 REPORTING DIVERSITY NETWORK 2.0 - NEAR-CIVIL SOCIETY FUND, GROUP 3

Programme reference:	EuropeAid/162473/DH/ACT/Multi NEAR-Civil Society Fund
Project title:	Reporting Diversity Network 2.0
EU contribution:	EUR 997.041
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Grant contract
Contract reference:	IPA/2020/415-019
Duration of activities:	01/04/2020 – 30/03/2024
Links:	https://www.media-diversity.org/?s=reporting+diversity+network+2.0
Contact :	Milica Pesic, milica.pesic@media-diversity.org

PURPOSE

The RDN2.0 project answers to the pressing need of innovative and effective approach to dismissing divisive narratives. The purpose is to empower a regional network of CSOs to work together with the aim to influence the quality of media messages affecting perceptions of social diversity, particularly ethnicity, religion and gender as pressing thematic areas relevant for overall levels of understanding and tolerance in the Western Balkans.

ACTIVITIES (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

The RDN 2.0 project started April, 1st 2020, thus the reporting period includes only the first two months of project implementation which were mainly focused on setting up the project, organising partners kick off meeting and defining key guidelines for future activities. The kick off meeting was held 18-19 May online because by the time project started many countries were already under lockdown and travel was to be avoided. During the reporting period the following activities were done: contracts with project partners signed; Line of Responsibilities agreed; basic clarifications related to reporting towards the Applicant and the donor made; remaining clarification questions agreed and sent to the donor ahead of the NEAR kick-off conference; key project visibility guidelines established, and the project logo designed as a precondition to full development of the Communication and Visibility Strategy which will lead to the development of the project website and social media pages. Finally, project team selected a media expert to produce media monitoring methodology for the monitoring that will be one of the key activities from the year two. Towards the end of this period, Media Monitoring Methodology development was already in progress and the preparations for the capacity building trainings started: Media Monitoring workshop, Responding to divisive narratives workshop and Reporting Diversity Curriculum development workshop for journalism academics.

OUTPUTS (APRIL-JUNE 2020)

As mentioned above, the reporting period covers only three months of RDN project implementation, thus following outputs are on the way to be completed (but not yet fully completed by June 2020):

- Monitoring methodology designed
- 3 workshops (Media monitoring; Responding to divisive narratives and Reporting diversity curriculum development) held
- Web-site and social networks designed

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

Key outputs planned for the next semester:

- Three workshops held: Media monitoring; Responding to divisive narratives and Reporting diversity curriculum development
- Media monitoring methodology designed
- Partners monitors trained and ready to start monitoring media in their respective countries
- Web-site and social networks designed
- One public event organised (online or offline)

Programme reference: Civil Society Facility and Media Action Programme 2018-2019

Project title:	Strengthening independent media and civil society in the Western Balkans and Turkey
EU contribution:	EUR 9,000,000 (100%)
Beneficiary region:	Turkey and Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia).
Type of contract:	Grant contract
Contract reference:	2019/408-691
Duration of activities:	13/12/2019 – 12/12/2023
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 Turkey and the Western Balkans. 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 (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

- Online EED grant giving facility available to the applicants from the Western Balkans improved: <https://www.democracyendowment.eu/support/>
- Organised outreach missions to WB countries and Turkey;
- Continuous assessment of received applications, contracting, review of reports and monitoring;
- Ongoing management of 50 grants awarded since the beginning of the grant (Turkey – 26, Serbia – 3, Bosnia and Herzegovina – 12, North Macedonia – 1, Montenegro – 4, Kosovo – 3, Albania – 1,);
- Continuous hands-on coaching and mentoring provided to applicants and grantees;
- Promotion, networking and coordination with donors and stakeholders in the region and international level.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

- Potential applicants across the Western Balkans and Turkey are well informed about EED funding opportunities;
- 515 applications from Western Balkans and Turkey received since the beginning of the project (191 in 2020);
- 50 grant contracts were awarded from EC grant with total 3,6 million euro allocated (approx. 1 million in Western Balkans and 2,6 million in Turkey);

- The awarded initiatives focus on the following main areas:
 - Support to independent media and innovative media products that promote high ethical standards and quality journalism thus supporting critical thinking;
 - Empowerment of independent media outlets (including up-to-date technologies, new ways of reaching audiences and generating income, etc.), as a key to safeguarding media freedom in the region;
 - Support to journalist associations in promotion of safety of journalists;
 - Support to democratic initiatives that return to the core of citizens' activism, approaching issues in innovative, thematic, inter-sectoral and multi-disciplinary ways;
 - Grass-roots initiatives and voluntarism;
 - Support to various youth led initiatives; and
 - Emergency and bridge funding to rights-based civil society actors in crisis due their political environment.
- Coordination with EU Delegations, EC services and other donors and stakeholders in the beneficiary countries maintained.
- Coaching and rapid response provided to enable adaptation to Covid-19 crisis for EED grantees
- Strategic reflection meeting on EED's work in the Western Balkans and Turkey organized
- 1 mission to Turkey organized
- Roundtable on the situation on the situation of academic freedom and its effects on civil society in Turkey (with participation of EC, EP and MS representatives)
- Online-workshop for EED grantees and EUD representatives on challenges and opportunities for civil society in Turkey during Covid-19

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 and communication 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 during challenges of Covid-19 pandemic
- Supporting grantees in networking at country, regional and EU level.

- Providing (online) platforms for grantees to make their voices heard and share their knowledge and experience
- Organising Project Steering Committee

Increasing Civic Engagement in the Digital Agenda – ICEDA

Programme reference:	Civil Society Facility and Media Programme 2018-2019
Project title:	Increasing Civic Engagement in the Digital Agenda – ICEDA
EU contribution:	EUR 997,394.00
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkan
Type of contract:	Grant Contract
Contract reference:	IPA/2019/414-059
Duration of activities:	01/02/2020 – 31/01/2023
Links:	https://cutt.ly/Mfkmee0 ; https://twitter.com/ICEDAprject
Contact :	Victor Dragutan, Victor.DRAGUTAN@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

As there is little knowledge and information in the WB about the Digital Agenda (DA) of the EU, [ICEDA](#) aims to increase the engagement and capacities of the CSOs and media in the promotion, shaping and implementation of the DA in the WB, through establishing a regional network of CSOs and media. ICEDA will also work on increasing the usage of the existent e-services and advocating for new quality e-services to be introduced from institutions at all levels.

ACTIVITIES (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

The project began with an [Inception meeting](#) where partners discussed the project dynamics, financial and administrative procedures, the establishment of the regional core of the network, as well as potential challenges and good practices from each country. The meeting was followed by establishing of a **Steering Committee** as a decision-making body and an **Advisory Group of Experts** as a regional multi-stakeholder body created for providing advice on the project's general strategy. A **Communication and Visibility Plan** was created together with the accompanying templates, factsheets and visual identity, followed by the creation of [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) profiles of the project. On the partners' initiative, **2 educational and informative articles** were created for promotion of the benefits of the DA and raising awareness on the need for digitalization as a way of improving people's lives.

One of the core activities, the **Digital Agenda Observatory (DAO)**, was created for the purpose of conducting a **research of state of e-government development and digital literacy in the 5 targeted WB countries**, based on a tailor-made methodology. The output of the DAO were **5 DA Country reports and Roadmaps** while the regional Baseline research is in its final phase of creation. During the research, the partners established a **contact with the local EU Delegation offices** sharing information about the project and issuing an

invitation for a potential cooperation and synergies, whereas some also had separate **advocacy meetings** for presenting the project and discussing the potential for a more substantial cooperation on the project.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

- **5 Online surveys** in 5 WB countries: **156 respondents (81 CSOs, 47 state institutions, 28 media representatives)** familiarized with the project objectives and the DA;
- **43 Interviews** in 5 WB countries: **44 stakeholders (15 CSOs, 15 state institutions, 13 media representatives)** familiarized with the project objectives and the DA;
- **6 Focus groups** in 5 WB countries: **29 stakeholders (14 CSOs, 15 state institutions)** with a better understanding of the project, increased mutual understanding on how the DA is reflected in administrative reforms and how the CSOs could play a significant and more effective role in shaping and implementing the DA in the WB;
- A **DAO** tailor-made methodology was developed for conducting the research whose primary outputs are **5 DA Country reports and Roadmaps**. The methodology will be improved for the following 2 years based on the results of the baseline research, for the purpose of receiving more substantial results, based on which the partners will provide recommendations for a better implementation of the DA in their countries;
- **2 educational and informational articles** ([*Increasing Civic Engagement in the Digital Agenda – ICEDA*](#) and [*COVID-19 and the digitalization of the Western Balkan*](#)) that were created and disseminated for promotion of the benefits of the DA and raising awareness on the need for digitalization as a way of improving people’s lives.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- **1 Training for the partners** on the DA who would later on deliver **5 Trainings for the media** and **5 Trainings for the decision-makers** in their respective countries;
- **Presentation and dissemination of the research** results on national and regional level through **public events, advocacy meetings, multimedia outputs, media briefings, investigative articles, online promotion, etc.**;
- **Awarding of sub-grants for the establishment e-Government Support Centers in 5 WB countries**, establishment of the **National advocacy networks in the 5 WB countries**, and **capacity building** and **coaching** of the sub-grantees;
- Commencing the **long-term external project evaluation**.

6.8 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 Phase II
EU contribution:	EUR 2.500.000,00

Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Contribution Agreement (for pillar assessed organisations) with UN Women
Contract reference:	IPA 2019/413-716
Duration of activities:	01/02/2020 – 31/07/2021
Links:	http://eca.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/regional-programme-in-the-western-balkans-and-turkey
Contact:	Kristina Vujic, kristina.vujic@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

Phase II of the programme “Implementing Norms, Changing Minds” (1 February 2020 - 31 July 2021) 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.

ACTIVITIES (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

Phase II of the programme kicked off on the 8th of March – International Women’s Day – through an on- and offline campaign across the Western Balkans and Turkey. The campaign reached millions of people through an animated video and prominently displayed billboards in airports, transportation hubs, shopping malls, and cinemas across the region and on social media calling for “Zero tolerance for violence against women” and inviting stakeholders in the region to join Phase II of the programme.

Following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, a rapid assessment was conducted in May 2020 to understand how the availability of services provided by civil society organizations (CSOs) for women survivors of violence was affected, how women’s access to such services and help-seeking from formal and informal sources was impacted, and what new and short- and medium-term needs were arising.

In this regard, **21 partner agreements with CSOs have been rolled out** to ensure that the activities initially planned were relevant to address the challenges for women and girls posed by COVID-19. Among others, Albanian Disability Rights Foundation will ensure access to services free from prejudice and discrimination for women from marginalized communities and will support their needs in the face of COVID-19; Roma Women’s Association Bolja Buducnost in Bosnia and Herzegovina will work on building trust between marginalized communities and local service providers in four new municipalities; Kosovo Women’s Network will work with shelters for counselling and to support the referral of domestic violence cases; and Support to Life in Turkey will prepare a comprehensive information and awareness-raising module to be disseminated to Syrian women via community volunteers on civil rights, rights to be protected from violence, the legal framework on marriage and divorce, reproductive health rights and economic rights.

At regional level, the programme **renewed its partnership with WAVE network**, which leads the Civil Society Strengthening Platform (CSSP), the only civil society platform working on EVAW, developed during Phase I and covering programme countries. In Phase II, the CSSP will focus on improving and raising awareness on specialist support services for women survivors of sexual violence.

The programme also **renewed its partnership with Center for Women's Rights (CWR)** to work with the police, social protection and judiciary institutions on gaps in the protection system in the Western Balkans and Turkey. The work will be built on the recommendations of the research *"Is justice failing women survivors of violence? Action oriented recommendations for effective prevention, protection and prosecution in the Western Balkans and Turkey"* drafted during Phase I.

In terms of communications and visibility, **two e-newsletters were widely circulated**, covering 19 stories and articles that brought to the forefront the voices of women and partner organizations largely impacted by the crisis, as well as successful initiatives across the region to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on women and girls.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

- **More than 80 representatives** of the European Commission, European Union delegations in Western Balkans and in Turkey, the Council of Europe, the European Institute for Gender Equality, CSOs and UN Women gained a better understanding of the impact of the COVID-19 on women's support specialist services provision in the region, as well as beneficiaries' needs through the launch of the rapid assessment "Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on specialist services for victims and survivors of violence in The Western Balkans and Turkey: a proposal for addressing the needs". Short- and mid-term recommendations to address gaps identified in the rapid assessment and proposal were widely disseminated and constitute a roadmap for further UN Women actions.
- Across the region, **partnerships with 21 CSOs were fostered** to contribute to address the old and new challenges posed by the dual pandemic – VAWG and the COVID-19.
- **Over 150 stakeholders** – national governments and services providers – from the Western Balkans and Turkey were provided with a set of guidelines to better support women and girl victims of violence during COVID-19 and in times of crisis.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

During the second semester of 2020 a number of activities will take place, *inter alia*:

- CWR-led **online seminars on the marginalization of the issue of VAWG** in the context of emergency circumstances, forced isolation and restrictive measures will take place with representatives of police, social protection and judiciary institutions. **Regional guidelines for risk assessment and risk management** to prevent the recurrence and escalation of violence against women will be drafted.

- **A series of 4 webinars “A thousand ways to solve our problems: Preventing and responding to violence against women from an intersectional perspective”** aiming to support minority and marginalized women to advise on and advocate for intersectional approaches to EVAW throughout the region.
- **Regional communication initiative.** To address some of the findings of the programme baseline survey: “Public perceptions of gender equality and violence against women” (2018).
- **Capacity building programme for CSO partners on communications and visibility.** The programme will consist of a series of virtual capacity building sessions on communications and visibility, aiming to provide more technical skills on how to better communicate for a higher impact, managing social media and on the EU and UN Women visibility guidelines.

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:	34 months (01/03/2019 – 31/12/2021)
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. The project focuses on increasing levels of youth participation in informing priorities of RYCO work, raising awareness of young people about opportunities for youth cooperation across the region, and strengthening capacities of the CSOs in the Western Balkans for implementation of regional youth projects in light of the Covid-19 pandemics.

ACTIVITIES (JANUARY - JUNE 2020)

As part of the Action, RYCO launched the most extensive consultative process since its establishment. It directly engaged young people to guide which types of projects and approaches to intercultural learning they would favour in the future RYCO's work.

- The **Regional Youth Survey** was launched on 23 January 2020 with a purpose to look into the motivation of young people to apply for and participate in youth mobility programs but also to identify existing obstacles to their participation in such projects. In total, 1038 young persons across the region responded to the survey. The results of the survey were analysed and incorporated in designing of the RYCO's 4th Open Call for Proposals.
- The Regional Youth Survey was a good foundation for a series of twelve complementary **consultative meetings** that RYCO Local Branch Offices organized during February 2020 across the Western Balkans. The meetings brought together 308 young people from

different backgrounds. The consultative meetings gave young people in the region another possibility to directly guide RYCO's programs.

- Drafted and revised documents package relating to RYCO's **4th Open Call for Project Proposals**. Considering Covid-19 pandemic and circumstances on the ground, the Call needed to be adapted to the new strategic outlook on how to overcome risks caused by the pandemic.
- Prepared and published three tenders relating to different elements of the project.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY - JUNE 2020)

- **Regional Youth Survey** filled out by 1038 young persons from the region;
- **12 Consultative Meetings** with young people;
- Design and draft of the 4th Open Call – reflecting obtained inputs from young people;
- Publishing of three tenders relating to the production of promotional video materials, branded visibility materials, and an external expert to further develop and improve RYCO grant management procedures.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

Key activities and outputs planned for the next reporting period are the following:

- Launch of the **4th Open Call for Project Proposals**. Evaluate, select and contract the projects with the aim to start the implementation of selected projects in January 2021;
- Organise a series of info sessions for potential applicants in mid-September.

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 – 14/08/2020
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 (JANUARY – JUNE 2020)

- Readjusted the project implementation strategy to address the challenges of the situation created by COVID 19 pandemic. As a result, the contract was amended to reflect the implementation changes and extend the project time frame.
- Supported implementation and finalisation of two wider alumni projects:
 - *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.*
- Supported regional research policy analysis on “Creating Enabling Environment for Creating New Leadership in Public Administration of the WB Countries” and on “Retention policy in Public Administrations of the WB6”.
- Implemented three online trainings: (1) Strategic Planning, 16-17 May 2020; Lobbying and Advocacy, 6-7 June 2020; and Enhancing the Capacities of Cross-Border Project Management and Organizational & Functional Connectivity in the Western Balkans, 13-14 June 2020.
- Developing Western Balkans Young Leaders Platform, an intranet part within the WBAA web page which will be utilized by the young professional alumni who are members of the WBAA to coordinate, communicate and share information.
- Supported alumni of the programme to join the WBAA network.
- Organised final project evaluation, and supported the implementation of ROM mission.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY – JUNE 2020)

- Two regional alumni projects strengthening regional cooperation and supporting capacities of the alumni were successfully completed (produced two regional policy papers with concrete recommendations);
- 30 young professionals became members of the WBAA;
- 1 joint project developed by the young professionals approved for funding by the WBAA;
- Around 50 alumni improved their skills on strategic planning, lobbying and advocacy and cross-border project management;
- Beta version of the intranet part of WBAA handed over to the WBAA project.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Final narrative and financial reporting;
- Project closure.

Western Balkans Youth Lab (WBYL)

Programme reference:	IPA Multi-beneficiary Programme 2019/040-826
Project title:	Western Balkan Youth Lab (WBYL)
EU contribution:	EUR 1.5 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Grant contract
Contract reference:	CN 2019/409-790
Duration of activities:	36 months (01/01/2020 to 31/12/2022)
Links:	www.rcc.int/youthlab
Contact:	Karolina Buzaljko, karolina.buzaljko@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The overall objective of the Western Balkan Youth Lab project is to provide opportunities for youth in six economies of the Western Balkans to participate in decision making. The WBYL project will contribute towards strengthening of formal and informal mechanisms of youth participation with the goal of increasing mobilization of youth in policymaking and co-creation of policies with youth.

ACTIVITIES (JANUARY – JUNE 2020)

During reporting period WBYL Team has been established and Project office has been set up and became fully operational. During the Inception phase, the Project team held consultations with relevant stakeholders (representatives of both national administrations and youth organizations) through organization of numerous individual and joint meetings organized in-person and online (involving more than 70 people in total) in order to present the project to key stakeholders, conduct initial needs assessment, discuss main elements of the Project and consult over the first thematic priority for the regional Youth Policy Lab. In order to raise awareness about the Project, the WBYL presented its work through Kick-Off Video, European Youth Forum Newsletter, press releases in regional media, articles and RCC's social media channels.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY – JUNE 2020)

- Each of six administrations in the Western Balkans nominated a point of contact to be engaged in regular communication and coordination with the WBYL. The WBYL established regular communication and working relationship with National Youth

Councils, youth umbrella organizations, youth organizations, donors, and other relevant stakeholders in the region.

- Based on extensive consultation process and a wide consensus among the actors, the youth unemployment has been identified as the first thematic priority for the Youth Policy Lab to be organized. In addition to consultations conducted during the Inception phase, the WBYL created and conducted comprehensive needs assessment exercise which will be used as a base for creation of capacity development actions to be implemented throughout the Project.
- At the end of the Inception phase clear structure of the activities, timelines and actors to be involved during Project lifetime has been defined and agreed upon with beneficiaries, reflecting Covid-19 pandemic influence on the project implementation.
- Activities have also contributed towards awareness raising among the general public and other stakeholders over importance of youth as a group which can provide solutions to different problems of society as well as to echo opinions and needs of youth.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- The First Thematic Regional Youth Policy Lab dedicated to youth unemployment will be organised. The Youth Policy Lab will be organized in line with a Methodology which will provide guidance in deploying a new approach in youth policymaking which will be tailored for the purpose of this project. In order to strengthen knowledge of the upcoming Regional Youth Policy Lab participants a webinar on youth unemployment will be organized, which among other issues will elaborate Youth Guarantee.
- Coordinate closely with organizers, participants, and other stakeholders of important political processes concerning Western Balkans regarding youth participation, including but not limited to the Berlin Process Summit and German EU Presidency initiatives.
- Conduct Mapping of Youth Policies and Identification of Existing Support and Gaps in financing of Youth Actions in the Western Balkans. This activity will contribute towards better understanding of the context in the area of youth policy and practice and towards setting up the informal donor coordination mechanism, including a donor coordination meeting.
- Support Administrations and National Youth Councils/Youth Umbrella Organizations in advancing their modus operandi and capacities will be ensured through Technical Assistance and Capacity Building instruments to be deployed within the Project.
- Conduct consultations with key stakeholders in order to identify the Second Thematic Priority to be covered within the Project.
- Promotion of the WBYL Project will be ensured during Project lifetime in line with tailor-made Communication Strategy and Visual Identity of the Project.

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 extensive array of policy-relevant information, which enables countries to make evidence-based decisions in order to improve reading education.

ACTIVITIES (JANUARY – JUNE 2020)

The activities in this period focused on preparing and conveying field testing within all participating countries. The 4th PIRLS 2021 National Research Coordinators (NRC) Meeting included the field test scoring training in Belgrade, Serbia from 1- 6 March 2020.

The PIRLS 2021 Field Test was scheduled to start on March 1. Due to the epidemiological situation and the consequent school closures around the world, there were only a few countries that managed to administer the Field Test. From the group of the Western Balkan beneficiaries, only Serbia managed to collect some data prior to schools closures.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY – JUNE 2020)

- The TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center (ISC) posted field test scoring materials, released the parts of standard operating procedures and achievement data codebooks for the field tests to participants.
- IEA Hamburg provided the Data Management Expert (DME) software and context questionnaire data codebooks for the field testing.

- The Serbian team submitted their data and filled in the Survey Activities Questionnaire in May.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- TIMSS & PIRLS ISC will post updated storyboards and paper format in order to review and finalize materials for the PIRLS 2021 data collection. Subsequent standard operating procedures will be released.
- Due to the school closures, it will be possible to re-open Field Test window in the fall 2020 for testing study instruments and operation procedures.

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 (JANUARY – JUNE 2020)

The beginning of this year was dedicated to reviewing the collected achievements and background (questionnaires) data leading towards sampling adjudication, and working on Encyclopaedia chapters that will provide context to the achievement results that will be released in December 2020.

In March, the Western Balkan participating IPA beneficiaries and the IEA team met in Belgrade, Serbia in order to finalize the analytical plan for the regional (Dinaric Perspectives) report on TIMSS 2019.

In June, the TIMSS & PIRLS ISC posted the International Report (text and exhibits) for review at the National Research Coordinators (NRC) meeting. The specific regional meeting dedicated to the Western Balkan (Dinaric Perspectives) regional report and national plans for reporting was also held online in addition to the international meeting agenda.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY – JUNE 2020)

NRCs from the Western Balkans and the IEA team prepared timelines, agreed on authorship and drafted outlines of the chapters to be included in the regional report. This outline was accepted for the publication proposal to IEA Publication and Editorial Committee and SPRINGER.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- TIMSS & PIRLS ISC will post International Report exhibits in August, and begin the online publication process for the International Report. At the same time, IEA Hamburg will post the draft International Database for TIMSS 2019.
- In November, the TIMSS & PIRLS ISC will publish the Encyclopaedia online.
- TIMSS 2019 International Report and Methods and Procedures will be published in December 2020. The release event is planned for December 9 focusing on EU member countries and the Western Balkans planned in collaboration with DG EAC.

7.3 IPA SUPPORT TO ERASMUS+

International Credit Mobility (ICM)

Programme reference:	Annual IPA Multi-beneficiary Programme and Erasmus+
Project title:	International Credit Mobility to cooperate with the Western Balkans
EU contribution:	2015: EUR 17.8 million 2016: EUR 20.7 million 2017: EUR 23 million 2018: EUR 25.7 million 2019: EUR 30.4 million 2020: EUR 28.1 million
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

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 (JANUARY-JUNE 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 (JANUARY-JUNE 2019)

The 2020 call was launched in October 2019 with a deadline in February 2020. The overall budget for the action was around EUR 197 million for the 2020 call. 15% of these funds are allocated to the Western Balkans through IPA funding (30.4 m EUR).

After the deadline, the Higher Education Institutions from Programme Countries presented applications to work with the Western Balkans for a total value of 55 million EUR, which would imply a total number of **requested mobilities of 17,529 coming to and from the region** in only one academic year.

Data on the 2020 selection is still unavailable and will be unveiled in October 2020. Thanks to ICM, 1,313 projects for bilateral partnerships that organise mobility for over 27,000 students, researchers and staff have been approved since 2015.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

Publication of the results in October and start of the actual mobilities as of October/November 2020.

Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees

Programme reference:	Annual IPA Multi-beneficiary Programme and Erasmus+
Project title:	Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees (EMJMD)
EU contribution:	EUR 5 million (2019), EUR 5 million (2020)
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 (JANUARY – JUNE 2020)

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. Students are awarded Erasmus Mundus scholarships.

The 2020 selection of EMJMD projects has been implemented between mid-February and mid-July 2020.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY – JUNE 2020)

- Out of the master projects selected in 2019 and 2020, four include 11 partners and associated partners from Region 1 (Western Balkans): five from Bosnia and Herzegovina, three from Albania, two from Montenegro, and one from Kosovo.
- IPA II funds allocated to 32 EMJMDs selected in 2019 (out of 48) and to 33 EMJMDs selected in 2020 (out of 40). This translates into 210 scholarships for students originating

from the Western Balkans. The scholarships (average value of 47.000 EUR each) are awarded to students directly by the consortia running the EMJMDs in the course of four consecutive master intakes, the first ones having already started in August-September 2019. The selected master programmes will award the Western Balkan scholarships until the last funded intake in August-September 2024.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- The second wave of scholarship holders from Western Balkans will start their master course in August-September 2020.
- The coordinators' kick-off meeting for the EMJMDs selected in 2020 will take place in November 2020.

7.4 SUPPORT TO EDUCATION

Capacity Building in Higher Education (CBHE)

Programme reference:	Annual IPA Multi-beneficiary Programme and Erasmus+
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 (JANUARY - JUNE 2020)

- **Grant holders Meeting:** More than 400 participants from 80 countries representing four continents were brought together at the Square Conference Centre in Brussels on 27/28 January 2020. Overall, 163 projects were selected under the 'Capacity Building Higher Education' action. More than 40 institutions from the Western Balkans are involved.

- **HEREs activities:** Due to Covid-19 pandemic situation other alternative ways were required to carry out the activities provided by HEREs and to ensure, also, the widest possible dissemination of information. One of the ways applied by the Albanian HEREs was to conduct the seminar on “Social dimension of HE in Albania” through the TV show "Auditor Arsimi" broadcasting it on RTSH channel, thus significantly increasing the possibility of watching it.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY - JUNE 2020)

- **Selection 2020:** 20 applications are proposed for EU funding. The number of applications received for the Region has **increased by 27%** in comparison to last year (108 in 2020 and 78 in 2019). Albania and Bosnia Herzegovina have submitted the highest number of proposals. The overall quality of the proposals has slightly increased in relation to the previous year: 65% of the applications have passed the threshold for funding (total score 60 and Relevance 15). 55% of the applications proposed for funding are very good (score 75 and higher).
- Western Balkans Partners confirm their willingness and readiness to coordinate CBHE projects in the 2020 selection (55% of the proposals). This is in line with previous years selections. In this context, proposals coordinated by newcomer institutions have been selected: International Burch University and University of Mostar for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mediterranean University of Albania (Qendra Mesdheu) for Albania, the latter being recently established.
- 20% of selected projects are projects aiming at reforming higher education system, ensuring the involvement of the four Partners: 3 national projects and 1 regional.
- **A range of new topics can be seen:** Innovating quality assessment tools for pharmacy studies; Risk Management of Non-native Aquatic Species; Inclusive tertiary Education; Health and well-being in communities. Some of the topics linked to actual reforms are: Strengthening university autonomy and increasing accountability and transparency, Development of part-time and short cycle studies in higher education, Entrepreneurial skills for a modern education, Dual Education.
- **To be mentioned that in 2020 selection digitalisation is the predominant component; the vast majority of the selected projects foresees digital components like online courses and modules, smart classrooms, digital practices and more.**
- Seminar on Social dimension of Higher Education in Albania: the seminar reached a number of conclusions and recommendations. For example: the implementation of the provisions for the ‘Social dimension in HE’ is no longer an optional issue but it constitutes a key commitment of Albania within the Bologna Process; considering the COVID-19 emergency situation which is associated with financial problems for students and their families, a more efficient and effective HE system and its management is required.
- “Reforms Inside”. The publication has been created in close cooperation of Montenegrin Higher Education Reform Experts Team with the National Erasmus+ Office in Montenegro. The publication includes reflections on Montenegrin higher education system issues, but it also includes essays written by other prominent representatives of the academic community in Montenegro, that are related to several projects selected under the KA2 of the Erasmus+ programme, CBHE. <http://www.erasmusplus.ac.me/?p=21027&lang=en>

- Capacity building and quality assurance of doctoral studies: Kosovo Erasmus+ Office in cooperation with the EU Delegation in Kosovo, organized the Technical Assistance Mission (TAM), which took place at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Prishtina premises.
- Response of WB HE institutions to COVID 19: The impact of Covid-19 on higher education showed that one of the key challenges encountered by higher education institutions was the sudden shift to distance learning. This challenge comes with different dimensions, most particularly the technical infrastructure, the support tools to use for distance learning, assimilating online teaching pedagogies etc. The CBHE projects products and equipment provided have clearly supported the HEIs to face the COVID challenges

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- National Erasmus+ Offices (NEOs)/ICP meeting;
- two/three activities for Higher Education Experts reforms are foreseen in each of the Western Balkan Partners.

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 (JANUARY – JUNE 2020)

Following the publication of the Capacity Building Youth (CBY) 2020 call for proposal EAC/A02/2019 on 05/11/2019 (European Union N° C 373/06), 127 applications for the Western Balkans Window were received by the deadline of 05/02/2020. This represents an increase of 15% as compared to the 2019 call. The evaluation Committee concluded its work on 11 June with a proposal to fund 28 projects (success rate of 22%) and to keep 2 proposals on a reserve list

In parallel to the 2020 selection, EACEA received and processed 20 final reports submitted by CBY-WB projects funded under the 2017 and 2018 calls.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY – JUNE 2020)

In relation to the 2020 CBY-WB selection, the following observations can be made: all four eligible countries have submitted applications with Albania as the most active one with 52 proposals followed by Bosnia and Herzegovina (30), Kosovo (26) and Montenegro (19); in terms of participation of Programme Countries it is not surprising to find Serbia as first partner country followed by Italy, Romania, Greece and Croatia; in terms of thematic coverage, career guidance and youth unemployment appear as the most frequent topic followed by entrepreneurship education, culture/creativity, environment, climate change and ICT.

Not including the newly selected projects, EACEA manages a total of 44 on-going CBY-WB projects.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

EACEA is currently launching the contracting phase that should be concluded before the end of the year.

An info session on CBY Grant Management will be organised for all beneficiaries by the end of the year.

Western Balkans Alumni Association (WBAA)

Programme reference:	Erasmus+
Project title:	Support to Western Balkan Alumni Association
EU contribution:	EUR 0.5 million 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 01/02/2020 – 31/01/2022
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 (JANUARY – JUNE 2020)

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

During the first half of the year, three newsletters have been sent, and WBAA launched the 3rd Call for Proposals in June. The Call for Proposals is only for online projects.

A number of online meetings took place, including the Board meetings. There was also a coordination meeting with the representatives of the Young Professionals in the Western Balkans project in order to include the alumni into WBAA.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY - JUNE 2020)

- WBAA research team finalised the draft questionnaire for the tracer study;
- WBAA focused on content development, visibility and outreach – visibility improved on Facebook & Instagram;
- As of June 2020, WBAA has 715 members as follows: 106 from Albania, 193 from Bosnia and Herzegovina, 131 from Kosovo, 58 from Montenegro, 87 from North Macedonia, and 140 from Serbia.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Regional Board Meeting and WBAA II General Assembly (which was postponed in March 2020 due to the Covid-19 outbreak);
- Finalisation of the new online community platform;
- Discussion on the 4th call for project proposals.

VET Mobility

Programme reference:	IPA Multi-beneficiary Programme 2018/040-822 and 2019/040-826
Project title:	1 st Call: Pilot VET mobility scheme for the Western Balkans 6 + Turkey 2 nd Call: Pilot VET mobility scheme for the Western Balkans
EU contribution:	1 st Call: EUR 2 million 2 nd Call: EUR 4 million

Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Co-delegated to EAC.
Contact:	Albert Sesé, 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.

The first call (EUR 2m) was launched in 2019 and one project was selected in December 2019 whereas the second call (EUR 4m) was launched in April 2020 and four projects are expected to be selected.

ACTIVITIES (JANUARY – JUNE 2020)

During this period, the winning consortia of the 1st Call – INTERVET held the kick-off meeting in March, and thematic team meeting in June 2020.

First training assignment also took place in June.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY – JUNE 2020)

For the 1st call

Due to the outbreak of Covid-19, the activities foreseen in the first 6 months of the project could not be implemented as planned. According to the risk management strategy set out in the application, the partnership has analysed the problems and debated the possibility of asking for a suspension due to Force Majeure or implementing some management and capacity building activities online. All the partners agreed not to freeze the project but to use this forced stop to convert contents usually delivered in person to online activities, provided that the quality would still remain the same. The main goal of this decision was to prepare the VET systems in Western Balkans and to make them aware of the project and of the possibilities offered and get ready to implement the activities as soon as possible.

For the 2nd call

The Call for Proposals was published in April 2020. In total, 31 applications were submitted. Based on the expert assessment, the overall quality of the applications was satisfactory with 60% of the applications scoring 60 points or above (threshold for funding), and nearly 25% of applications scoring 80 points or above. In total, organisations from 26 different Programme Countries were involved in the proposals. Out of the 31 applicants, 12 come from Italy, 4 from Greece, 3 from Bulgaria and Spain and one from Slovenia, Germany, Croatia, Hungary, Austria, Portugal, Romania, Ireland and Denmark. The size of partnerships varied from the maximum permitted (10 partnerships of 12) down to the minimum size required by the eligibility criteria (4 partnerships of 7).

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

For the 1st Call

- The project will be amended in order to accommodate realisation of online activities instead of physical ones due to the Covid19 pandemic.
- First external calls for learners mobility, and for staff mobility are planned.

For the 2nd Call

- Evaluation and selection of projects.

7.5 EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS

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/2019/0326 (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 (JANUARY – JUNE 2020)

ILO

- Launching event of ESAP 2 (jointly with RCC)
- Consultation with Labour Inspectorates in six Western Balkan economies on informal and undeclared work
- Field missions in Albania and Montenegro consulting with all potential stakeholders to get buy-in for all three ESAP II components.
- Field missions in Bosnia and Herzegovina consulting Labour Inspectorate of Bosnia and Herzegovina Federation and Agency for Amicable Settlement of Labour Disputes of Republic of Srpska.
- Preparations for a regional webinar of Labour Inspectorates and social partners in Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia on safe and healthy return to work during the COVID-19 pandemic in Western Balkan countries.

- Terms of the reference developed for the updated website of ESAP 2 (jointly with RCC)

RCC

- Launching event of ESAP 2 (jointly with ILO).
- Regional online meeting "Tackling Undeclared Work in the Western Balkans through Structured Regional Cooperation", 12 June 2020.
- Regional roadmap for tackling undeclared work details regional cooperation activities in the Western Balkans for the coming 2 years.
- Regional analysis on 'COVID-19 and undeclared work in the Western Balkans – impacts, challenges and policy responses'.
- Update of 6 reports on the performance of each Western Balkan economy regarding the European Pillar of Social Rights and production of a regional comparative overview.
- Concept note developed on supporting knowledge sharing on experiences with the implementation of the youth guarantee and developing feasibility and readiness analysis
- 3 technical assistance interventions to support the work of the State Labour Inspectorate in Albania, National Agency for Employment and Skills in Albania and Employment Agency in Kosovo.
- Terms of the reference developed for the updated website of ESAP 2 (jointly with ILO).

OUTPUTS (JANUARY – JUNE 2020)

ILO

- Key national stakeholders in Albania (Ministry of Economy in charge of labour issues, social dialogue [Economic and Social Council] and amicable settlement of labour disputes; Labour Inspectorate; Central Tax Administration; National Institute of Statistics; Employers' Organization, and two main trade unions) and Montenegro (Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, Labour Inspectorate, National Employment Agency; Employers' Association; two trade unions; the National Institute of Statistics (MONSTAT), Tax Administration; Social Council and Agency for Amicable Settlement of Labour Dispute) interested and committed to cooperate with ESAP II regarding all three components.
- Labour Inspectorates of Albania, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina committed to fully and actively participate in Component II
- A list of potential intervention packages aiming at reducing undeclared work identified and under discussion with stakeholders in Albania and Montenegro.

RCC

- Regional roadmap for tackling undeclared work discussed with and accepted by representatives of Ministries of Labour, Labour Inspectorates and Tax Authorities of the Western Balkan economies.
- Beneficiary institutions familiarized with their respective national performances regarding the implementation of the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

ILO

- Regional webinar of Labour Inspectorates and social partners in Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia on safe and healthy return to work during the COVID-19 pandemic in Western Balkan countries. (July 21, 2020)
- Consultation with North Macedonian national actors to identify intervention packages aiming at reducing undeclared work to be tested. (August -September 2020)
- Consultation with Labour Inspectorates at regional and/or national levels to determine the scope of the peer-review. (July - September 2020)
- Draft a protocol to guide the implementation of the peer-reviews of the function and effectiveness of the labour inspectorates in detecting undeclared work. (October – December 2020)
- Consultation with Economic and Social Partners in the region to determine the scope of regional ESC monitoring mechanisms. (September – October 2020)
- In-person or online regional tripartite preparatory workshop (30 participants) to assess the state of and promote collective bargaining in selected sectors. (October – December 2020)

RCC

- Regional online seminar on ' Preventative Approaches Towards Undeclared Work', October 2020
- Regional online meeting on PES bench learning, October 2020
- ESAP 2 Western Balkan Network Tackling Undeclared Work Plenary meeting, November 2020
- Regional Labour Market Analysis 2019-2020, November 2020
- 6 analyses on youth employment (1 for each Western Balkan economy), November 2020
- Regional online meeting on 'Rethinking the Objectives, Roles and Competencies of Inspectorates and Inspectors in Tackling Undeclared Work', December 2020.

7.6 CULTURE

Creative Europe Window for the Western Balkans

Programme reference:	IPA II Multi-country Action Programme 2019
Project title:	Creative Europe Window for the Western Balkans
EU contribution:	EUR 5 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Grants managed by EU's Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA)
Contract reference:	Call for Proposals EACEA 39/2019
Duration of activities:	06/11/2019 – 31/12/2025

Contact :

Helene Skikos; helene.skikos@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The action aims to (i) increase cultural cooperation within the region and with EU Members States and (ii) strengthen the competitiveness of the cultural and creative industries in the Western Balkans region. It consists of increasing the financial support to Western Balkans cultural organizations through the launch of a dedicated call for proposals for the Western Balkans under the EU's Creative Europe programme. The call for proposals which was launched in 2019 had two primary objectives: (i) strengthening the competitiveness of the cultural and creative industries in the Western Balkans and (ii) increasing their capacity for international cooperation. The call parameters were tailor-made in consultation with stakeholders, EU Delegations and DG NEAR to address identified needs of the region and to benefit primarily Western Balkans participants. The co-funding rate was raised to 85% (compared to 50% and 60% for the standard Creative Europe Cooperation Projects) and the grant amount ranged from EUR 200,000 to 500,000, allowing flexibility for project scope. The minimum consortium size required five organisations with at least two based in the Western Balkans.

ACTIVITIES (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

After its publication on 17 December 2019, the deadline of the call for proposals was extended twice (due to the COVID-19 crisis), and the Call closed on 28 April. A great deal of promotion was made by DGs EAC, NEAR, the Creative Europe Desks and in particular by Commissioner Gabriel. The Call was well received and generated much interest, both in the Western Balkans and EU.

A total of 349 applications were received with the total grant amount requested of EUR 127 million. Impressively, 113 applications were submitted by a Western Balkan coordinator (covering all 6 Western Balkans beneficiaries), demonstrating the capacity of the region to take charge in the Call.

The proposals involved 1,620 different cultural organisations, 761 of which are based in the Western Balkans. The highest participation came from Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and North Macedonia in the region and from neighbouring EU countries with established connections to the region. It is important to note that Western Balkans organisations worked side by side with 859 of their counterparts in the EU to prepare the 349 proposals. In so doing, they established or enhanced their network with the EU.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

- Call for proposal closed with 349 applications received.
- Evaluation by external experts conducted

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Project selection committee to decide on projects to be funded and a reserve list

- Preparation and signature of grant agreements for selected projects before 31 December 2020

Fighting illicit trafficking of cultural property in the Western Balkans

Programme reference:	IPA II Multi-country Action Programme 2019
Project title:	Fighting illicit trafficking of cultural property in the Western Balkans
EU contribution:	EUR 2,8 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans
Type of contract:	Contribution agreement with UNESCO
Contract reference:	EAC-2020-0264
Duration of activities:	04/05/2020 – 03/05/2023
Links:	https://en.unesco.org/fighttrafficking/eu-cooperation
Contact :	Zsolt Szokolai, zsolt.szokolai@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The objective of the action is to improve the legal, technical and institutional frameworks for protecting cultural heritage goods by reinforcing the fight against their illicit trafficking in the Western Balkans. The project will assess the state of play in the Western Balkans of the legal, institutional and policy frameworks; conduct capacity-building and awareness-raising activities; improve security at selected cultural sites and enhance cooperation at domestic, regional and international levels. Based on the outcome of the baseline needs assessment, specific activities will be identified and fine-tuned.

ACTIVITIES (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

The contract was signed with UNESCO on 4 May 2020 and the preparatory inception phase started.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

- Signed contract between DG EAC and UNESCO

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Inception meetings organised by UNESCO online with the relevant WB authorities;
- Kick-off meeting(s) in the beneficiaries to raise awareness of the action.
- Launch of the needs assessment.

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:	Laurent Guirkinger, laurent.guirkinger@ec.europa.eu

List of Agencies, duration of activities and total amounts:

CN	Agency	Duration	Amount in EUR
2018/402-940	European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound)	12/01/2019 – 11/07/2021	550.000
2019 / 409-781	European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC)	01/01/2020-31/12/2022	1.000.000
2018/402-854 2019/414-064	European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE)	01/01/2019 – 31/12/2022	928.950
2019/406–479.1	European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA)	01/07/2019 – 30/06/2022	1.000.000
2018/403-813	European Chemicals Agency (ECHA)	01/04/2019 – 30/06/2020	785.000
2019 / 405-828	European Food Safety Authority (EFSA)	01/06/2019 – 31/05/2020	750.000
2017/391-240	European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA)	01/05/2018 – 30/04/2020	200.000

2019 / 410-478	European Environment Agency (EEA)	01/02/2020 – 31/01/2022	1.275.000
2019/410-086	European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA)	01/05/2020 – 31/12/2022	625.000
2019 / 412-828	European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA)	01/01/2020- 31/12/2022	399.584
2019/410-319	European Railway Agency (ERA)	01/01/2020 – 31/12/2022	450.000

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 (JANUARY–JUNE 2020)

EUROFOUND

Fieldwork of the 7th European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS) started in February 2020 in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey.

Due to the emergence of the Covid19 pandemic, it was first suspended and then stopped in March 2020.

EIGE

- In January 2020, Albania and Montenegro together with EIGE have launched their first National Gender Equality Indices and related national Reports. The two launch events organised in Tirana and Podgorica, have gathered key stakeholders, including national ministries, parliament, local municipalities, civil society and international community. The launch events have been promoted on EIGE's social media and their national Reports published online.
- Throughout the reporting period, EIGE has continued its support to the development of the first Gender Equality Index for Kosovo and Serbia has started the process of calculating its third Index release.

- As of 2020, EIGE started a new cycle of data collection on women and men in Decision Making Database for all 7 IPA beneficiaries, which is expected to be completed by the end of the year.
- In May, EIGE has hosted virtual annual meeting of the Informal Network of EU Agencies implementing IPA and ENP projects. It was the first virtual meeting organised after coronavirus pandemic.
- EIGE has started with the activity of supporting translations of Glossary and Thesaurus in Albanian, Bosnian, Macedonian and Serbian language. The process is expected to last till 2021.
- UNFPA Regional Office together with EIGE has published its Policy Brief entitled: “Violence against Women living with Disabilities in South-East and Eastern Europe”, available online.
- EIGE has also started developing its project-related web landing page, which is expected to be published in Q4.

EMSA

(2017/391-240)

The activities kicked off with Training on Ship and Port Facility Security for Enlargement Countries which took place from 21 to 22 January 2020 at EMSA premises in Lisbon. The training was aimed at officials working at maritime administrations who are performing functions related to control of compliance of security measures on board ships and ports.

At the beginning of the year 2020 however the implementation of the project has been negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in Europe. The lockdown measures led to last-minute cancellation of four events of the action:

Activity	Description of the action	Date
A1.5	Paris MoU Specialist Training (Gijon, Spain)	March 2020
A1.4	CleanSeaNet User Meeting (Lisbon, Portugal)	March 2020
A1.1	Training on passenger ship safety (Lisbon, Portugal)	March 2020
A1.2	In-country training on the Sulphur Directive for Turkey, joint event with the Black and Caspian Sea Project	February 2020

(2019/410-086)

Before the beginning of the action, EMSA planned to conduct coordination missions in the IPA II beneficiaries. These missions were to be conducted to each of the targeted IPA II

beneficiaries in the initial phase of the action as a tool to support identification of gaps and needs to be addressed. The coordination missions were to be prepared and carried out by taking into consideration the experience of the Agency with the implementation of similar actions within the context of other EU financed projects as well as the specificity of each beneficiary, the magnitude of the maritime transport in the country and, where relevant, the existing Association Agreements as well as gaps identified by previous actions/projects.

However, COVID-19 pandemic lockdown measures led to last-minute adjustments that needed to be made in the initial planning.

In order to ensure continuity of the capacity building services offered to the beneficiaries by the Agency, the project team changed the planned 'coordination missions' to the IPA II beneficiaries to 'coordination meetings' held via Internet platforms.

Accordingly, in the onset of the action, the Agency contacted the nominated focal points in the IPA II beneficiaries and asked them to confirm the points of contact for each beneficiary's administration. Following that the beneficiaries were provided with a questionnaire which aimed to evaluate the transposition of the European maritime acquis into the national legislative systems in accordance with the political and legislative priorities of the respective countries.

Following the consolidation of the received input, the EMSA Project team prepared a draft list of actions to be discussed with each of the beneficiaries during the coordination meetings.

As such the meetings with the Maritime Administrations of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia were held successfully during the reporting period. The meeting with the Ministry of Transport of Turkey is scheduled to take place on the 03 July 2020.*

ERA

At the EU Agency for Railways (ERA), the year 2020 began with the commencement of the new action and the hand-over to a new project manager. Internally, the project is now called "IPA and Western Balkans", as the cooperation with the recently established Transport Community Permanent Secretariat in Belgrade is an important element of this action.

On 02/03 March 2020, ERA organized a seminar on Transport of Dangerous Goods and Risk Management Framework in Belgrade. As not all beneficiaries could participate, ERA arranged an additional dedicated session related to Transport of Dangerous Goods by rail on 04 March 2020 at the beginning of the Transport Community's 4th Technical Committee for Railways, in which all beneficiaries (except Turkey) were represented. At the same time, the planning for all other activities scheduled for 2020 was presented and discussed with the beneficiaries of the Western Balkans. However, project activities came to a stop due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

* To date the authorities of republic of North Macedonia did not respond to the numerous contact attempts by the EMSA project team and did not participate in any of the activities of the Project. DG NEAR has been informed about this shortfall and is making effort to encourage participation from this beneficiary country.

Starting May 2020, ERA has offered a series of Webinars dedicated to railway-topics. The first two webinars "Introduction to the European Railway Safety Culture Model" and "Certification Authorisation Approval" are now translated to Albanian, Serbian and Turkish in order to make them available to IPA II beneficiaries. Further online-activities, including e-learning will follow in the second half of 2020.

Despite lengthy internal discussions, IPA II beneficiaries were not admitted to participate in the Meeting of National Railway Safety Authorities ("NSA-Network") hosted by ERA in May 2020 and held online.

ERA selected a dedicated project assistant, who will start working for the action during the second half of 2020.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY–JUNE 2020)

EUROFOUND

Due to the emergence of the Covid19 pandemic, the 7th European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS) was first suspended and then stopped in March 2020.

Between 17% in Montenegro and 40% in Serbia had been collected at this stage. These data are not representative of the full country.

EIGE

- Main output in the reporting period is the launching of the two national Gender Equality Indices for Albania and Montenegro.
- Cooperation with the Western Balkans and state institutions progressed to certain extent, having in mind the existing coronavirus pandemic. Throughout this period, EIGE focused on the implementation of activities, which can be done remotely and do not require mission travel.
- 11th Regional Meeting of EU candidate countries and potential candidates, previously scheduled for May, was postponed to December and will take place virtually. Moreover, the Regional thematic event on gender-sensitive communication planned to take place in June, has been postponed for 2021.
- EIGE's publications and other tangible work outcomes have been regularly shared with key partners in each IPA beneficiary via stakeholders' emails.

EMSA

(2017/391-240)

Despite the challenges imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic and the related reduction of the planned actions, the implemented activities have enabled IPA II beneficiaries to strengthen their administrative and organisational capacity needed for the implementation and enforcement of international and EU maritime legislation.

The Training on Ship and Port Facility Security had an overall objective to ensure that participants are provided with a combined knowledge on the main elements of ISPS Code

and auditing procedures at international and EU level and develop a practical approach to the interpretation and application of the ISPS Code both for ship and port facility related aspects.

EMSA's tool RuleCheck assists 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 the IPA II beneficiaries to meetings or trainings usually organised for EU Member States, such as the CleanSeaNet meeting, allows participants to share experiences and to use the systems in the most efficient way.

(2019/410-086)

The implemented activities have enabled IPA II beneficiaries to strengthen their administrative capacity and organisation capability needed for the implementation and enforcement of international and EU maritime legislation. Most of the beneficiaries have evaluated their legislative priorities in the maritime domain and have responded swiftly with sound proposals for future actions to be implemented with the support of EMSA.

Following the coordination meetings, an updated version of the Action plan will be developed, taking into consideration the proposals from the beneficiaries. This updated version will be communicated to the beneficiaries and to DG NEAR and will serve as a roadmap for the implementation of the action.

ERA

NSTR

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

EUROFOUND

In view of the uncertainty surrounding a resumption using face-to-face interviewing, Eurofound will use telephone interviews to carry out a modified-EWCS in March to June 2021. Changing to this mode is in line with other similar surveys. It will allow Eurofound to provide comparable and representative information on job quality at a time when working lives have undergone considerable changes and the capacity of people at work to contribute to the recovery is critical. The survey will cover all IPA countries except for Turkey as funds are not available to cover all countries. Work in the second semester of 2020 focused on the adaptation of the survey to these new conditions. The questionnaire is being revised and adapted to the new methodology. Fieldwork is being prepared. A pilot test is due to take place in December.

EIGE

- In Q4, EIGE is planning a remote workshop on violence against women, which is to be the first step towards supporting IPA beneficiaries in their development of the first composite indicators for measuring violence against women.

- 11th Regional Meeting of EU candidate countries and potential candidates will take place remotely on December 2-3.
- Support to the IPA beneficiaries in gender statistics (Women and Men in Decision Making database and Gender Equality Indices) will continue as planned.
- Work with civil society, academia and media will also be continued, as well as invitation of IPA beneficiaries to participate in EIGE's events in 2020, mostly organised remotely.

EMSA

To further enhance and harmonise the standards in the Mediterranean region, the riparian beneficiary countries signing the "Condition of Use" will be provided with CSN images and SAT-AIS information with the aim of building capacity and enabling them to quickly identify and respond as appropriate to oil spills at sea as well as to identify potential polluters. In this regard, during the next quarter of the project implementation period several trainings and meetings have been planned to be held by EMSA virtually, including topics such as: CleanSeaNet Training for Enlargement Countries (Albania and Montenegro) - 6 October 2020, Participation of Montenegro at the 15th IMS User Consultation Meeting (22 October 2020), Participation of Montenegro at the SSN Meeting on 21 October 2020.

Additionally, support to draft national procedures such as professional development schemes for ship inspectors, procedures to monitor the performance of the fleet or the performance of the maritime administration will be provided to beneficiaries which have made a commitment to implement such procedures.

RuleCheck is a web-based decision supporting tool originally designed for the Port State Control (PSC) competent authorities in the Paris MoU domain. The targeted IPA II beneficiaries were given access to RuleCheck as an activity under the previous action. Contact points were designated and trained on the tool. The provision of RuleCheck was extended also under this action and EMSA will follow-up on the use and continue promoting the tool in the next quarter of the project.

The Maritime Knowledge Centre (MaKCs) is a web-based e-Learning platform, providing a cost-effective and efficient way of ensuring the distribution of up-to-date training material to a large number of users. The targeted IPA II beneficiaries were given access to MaKCs as an activity under the previous action. Contact points were designated and trained on the tool. The provision will be extended also under this action and EMSA will follow-up on the use and continue promoting the tool in the next quarter of the project.

ERA

ERA plans to publish two electronic newsletters dedicated to IPA II beneficiaries, covering latest developments of the action and cooperation with the beneficiaries. Additionally, there will be a Webinar about Innovation in Railways in cooperation with the Shift2Rail Joint Undertaking, targeting Western Balkans and Turkey. This Webinar will cover automated train operation and alternative fuels and will allow beneficiaries' experts to question those EU-colleagues who are in charge of developing the specifications. Additionally, there will be a workshop about the Fourth Railway Package. The training courses on risk management and safety management will be prepared. The participation in NSA- and NIB-meetings on site is

planned. However, due to the pandemic it is not yet clear if the aforementioned trainings and the partition in meetings can be guaranteed.

For the second half of 2020, IPA-beneficiaries will be invited to nominate observers for the monitoring of national railway safety authorities (NSAs).

The newly recruited project assistant will take up duty in autumn 2020 and the online learning-platform for the IPA II beneficiaries will go live.

Participation of Western Balkans and Turkey in the network of EU-OSHA

Programme reference:	IPA IPA/2019/412-828.04/MC/EU Agencies
Project title:	Preparatory measures for the participation of the IPA II beneficiaries in the network of the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work
EU contribution:	EUR 399.584
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	PA Grant Agreement
Contract reference:	2019/412-828
Duration of activities:	16/04/2020 – 30/1/2022
Links:	http://osha.europa.eu
Contact :	Daniel Hurtado Domingues, Daniel.HURTADO-DOMINGUEZ@ec.europa.eu

PROJECT PURPOSE

The purpose of the project is to ensure that IPA II beneficiaries (herein after referred also as “IPAs”) have the capacity to participate effectively in the network and activities of EU-OSHA, to further developing their occupational safety and health structures and approaches, including an adequate risk prevention culture and suitable awareness raising strategies, in preparation for EU accession.

IPAs would be included as observers to the EU OSHA network and represented by Focal Points (“FOPs”) appointed by the domestic authorities among their civil servants.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES (APRIL – JUNE 2020)

The present Activity Report and its annexes refer to the first three months of the project implementation period and it covers the months between April and June 2020.

The main milestone achieved was the start of the new **Contribution Agreement implementation** that took place on 16 April 2020, with the recruitment of a new EU OSHA agent. The implementation period lasts until 30 November 2022, for **31 months** in total.

The spread of the **pandemic SARS-CoV-2** marked the current reporting period. EU OSHA and national authorities, including IPAs, were obliged to adopt restrictive measures. For this reason, while knowledge sharing and information exchange have continued through regular distance communication, contributing to maintain good relations with IPAs, other activities, such as field visits, organisation of capacity building activities and awareness raising events have been cancelled and postponed. All the activities initially identified in the Project Logical Framework and Activity Matrix (Annex I to the Contribution Agreement) will be implemented at a later date.

At the beginning of the new contract implementation, EU OSHA took contact with the appointed IPA FOPs to follow up from the previous IPA-2018 activities. All IPAs FOPs maintained their role. Only North Macedonia appointed a new FOP with whom the communication is excellent. FOPs of Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey shared with EU OSHA their current OSH national strategies and action plans. On 3 July 2020, EU OSHA addressed an **official letter** to the **Minister of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina**, asking for the nomination of an OSH FOP. On 14 October 2020, the Ministry of Civil Affairs responded by appointing a Focal Point.

Moreover, since April 2020, IPA FOPs took part on monthly basis to the EU OSHA – EUMSs informal FOPs virtual meetings.

EU OSHA liaised with the **EU Delegations** to IPAs to inform colleagues about the role of the Agency, the actions foreseen under the new IPA contract as well as to strengthen collaboration and avoid duplication of operational and financial efforts. EU OSHA took also contact with ILO offices in Albania, North Macedonia and Serbia.

EU OSHA took actively part to the following on-line **meetings**. 1) Informal network of agencies IPA/ENI organised by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), on 14 and 15 May 2020; 2) Workshop on Health and Safety at the Border organised by FRONTEX, on 10 June 2020; and 3) Workshops on Economic and Social Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic in the Eastern Partnership Countries organised by the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, on 17 June and on 1 July 2020.

PROJECT OUTPUTS AND DEGREE OF ACHIEVEMENT (APRIL – JUNE 2020)

- Letter to the Minister of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina for the nomination of a national OSH Focal Point (ref. ARES (2020) 3499218) and Ministry reply with appointment of a FOP (ref. ARES (2020) 5484574).
- EU Guidance “Covid-19: back to the workplace”, distributed to IPA FOPs.
- HWC material translated into IPAs languages.

EU OSHA continued sharing relevant OSH information and material with IPA FOPs. To this extent, all IPA FOPs* received the English version of the **EU Guidance “Covid-19: back to the workplace”**. IPA FOPs took part to the virtual kick-off meeting of the **2020-2022 Healthy Workplaces Campaign (“HWC”) “Lighten the Load”**, on 9 and 10 September 2020. In July 2020, EU OSHA launched public procurements to provide IPA FOPs with the HWC material translated into IPAs national languages. IPA FOPs took part to the **EU OSHA – EUMSs FOP virtual meeting** on 15 and 16 September 2020.

In consideration of the current **SARS-CoV-2** pandemic scenario, it is still not possible to plan field visits and organise visibility events and institutional capacity building activities in the IPAs. EU OSHA will continue implementing activities and knowledge sharing remotely and through virtual meetings.

EU OSHA is planning to organise in November a **regional on-line event for IPA beneficiaries** on Covid-19 or on another topic under the agency work plan. The aim of the event would be to share knowledge in the region on the chosen topic and it foresees the possibility to include also speakers from IPAs.

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
Project title:	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 ^{**}
EU contribution:	EUR 785 000
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Contribution agreement
Contract reference:	2018/403-813
Duration of activities:	01/03/2019-30/06/2022
Links:	www.echa.europa.eu
Contact :	Laurent Guirkinge, laurent.guirkinge@ec.europa.eu

* The English and Croatian versions of the EU Guidance were attached to the letter addressed to the Minister of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

[†] Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals Regulation

[‡] Classification, Labelling and Packaging of Chemicals Regulation

[§] Biocidal Products Regulation

^{**} Prior Informed Consent Regulation

PURPOSE

The objective of the action is to support beneficiary authorities in their efforts to implement the EU chemical *acquis* by involving them actively in preparing to be part of the work of the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA). The project implements assessments of the state of play of *acquis* alignment, capacities and needs in the beneficiaries and provides for capacity building targeting competent authorities and relevant institutions responsible for the management of chemicals in the beneficiaries.

ACTIVITIES (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

The project focused on capacity building activities in the form of dedicated discussions and events. The translation of two targeted communication documents was finalised during the reporting period. In addition, the work on the in-depth study to assess the capacity and readiness to implement and enforce REACH, CLP, BPR and PIC in Montenegro and Serbia, procured in 2019, has continued. A call for tender was launched to sub-contract a second study to assess the capacity and readiness to implement and enforce REACH, CLP, BPR, PIC and POPs* in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, North Macedonia and Turkey.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

In the context of developing more targeted activities based on identified needs, work on the in-depth study to assess the capacity and readiness to implement and enforce REACH, CLP, BPR and PIC in Montenegro and Serbia has progressed according to schedule. ECHA undertook missions to Serbia and Montenegro in January 2020 as part of the execution on the ongoing study to support interviews with authorities, private companies, industry organisation and NGO. The first two (out of six) work packages (WP) of the study have been delivered and approved. The review of WP 3 and 4 relating to institutional capacity for implementation and enforcement including information technology (IT) aspects is still ongoing.

A call for tender was published on 13 June for a 2nd study in the remaining beneficiaries through an open call. The objective of the study is to assess the status and needs of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, North Macedonia, and Turkey in the practical implementation of the EU chemicals *acquis*. Tenders were submitted by 22 July and the study is foreseen to be finalised by January 2022.

Four EU level events were planned during the reporting period: 1) IPA Workshop dedicated to IT tools (April); 2) ECHA's 15th HelpNet Steering Group Meeting, ECHA (April); 3) ECHA Conference (Stakeholder Day in June); 4) Helsinki Chemical Forum (June). Due to the COVID-19 situation these events were held virtually (15th HelpNet Steering Group Meeting; ECHA Conference)/ postponed (Helsinki Chemical Forum)/ cancelled (IPA Workshop dedicated to IT tools).

A number of virtual bilateral meetings with the IPA beneficiaries were organised to discuss progress and the impact of COVID-19 on the project. Remote meetings were organised with

* Persistent organic pollutants Regulation

Montenegro, Albania, Kosovo and Turkey. The remaining beneficiaries could not attend due to issues with or lack of knowledge and support with the proposed communication platforms. During the discussions, ECHA took the opportunity to inform about the status of the ongoing study, and the upcoming new study.

The translation of ECHA's [Hazard pictograms postcard*](#), and the [Chemical safety and your business leaflet†](#) was also finalised during the reporting period.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

All physical events planned until March 2021 were suspended due to the COVID-19 crisis. To ensure continuous support to the beneficiaries, remote meetings will continue to be organised when possible.

The in-depth study focusing on Montenegro and Serbia will be finalised by the end of 2020. The final workshops foreseen to conclude the study will be held remotely due to COVID-19 related restrictions. The contract for the second study focusing on the remaining five beneficiaries is planned to be awarded in September 2020.

European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC)

ACTIVITIES (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

Western Balkan IPA beneficiaries received individual ENLabCap reports in the beginning of 2020 following their participation in the annual ENLabCap survey for 2018 at the end of 2019. Overall, good efforts have been made in the Western Balkan region on antimicrobial susceptibility testing, even if still below the EU/EEA averages. However, the beneficiary reports indicate that molecular surveillance needs urgent attention. ECDC anticipates that these annual assessments will help national stakeholders to prioritise areas for action and to evaluate the impact of health system reforms over time, including lessons learned and lab capacity reality check after Covid-19 pandemic.

Due to developments with COVID-19 pandemic, all planned ECDC meetings with IPA beneficiaries have been rescheduled, cancelled, or transformed into virtual meetings. The discussions with DG NEAR on reprioritising activities for the Western Balkans have taken place. Planned annual meeting of National ECDC Correspondents has been transformed into monthly virtual meetings to exchange updates on latest developments, changes in ongoing cooperation due to COVID-19 response activities, and to reflect how ECDC could enhance participation of Western Balkans similar to those of EU Member States. Four virtual sessions with National ECDC Correspondents have taken place.

Observer National Focal Points (NFPs) for Preparedness and Response and Observer NFPs for Threat Detection from IPA beneficiaries have participated in regular virtual sessions on selected topics that replaced the previously planned Joint Annual ECDC meeting of NFP for Threat Detection and NFP for Preparedness and Response.

* https://echa.europa.eu/documents/10162/13562/hazard_pictograms_endefr_en.pdf

† https://echa.europa.eu/documents/10162/21332507/sme_leaflet_en.pdf

OUTPUTS (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

All IPA beneficiaries have sent their Letters of Intent thereby expressing interest, willingness and commitment to jointly implement ECDC Action described in the Contribution Agreement 2019/409-781 (ECDC-IPA6) for 2020-2022. However, due to evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic that is heavily affecting IPA beneficiaries and ECDC, the implementation of ECDC-IPA6 project activities will be significantly delayed.

ECDC has been regularly updating key counterparts in Western Balkans and Turkey on COVID-19 developments and technical guidance documents. ECDC has also invited beneficiaries to participate in ECDC EQA for SARS-COV-19 molecular detection.

ECDC Management Board in its June 2020 meeting has approved the revised Work Programme 2020: COVID-19 expanding its scope to the Western Balkan partners. It was primarily designed to address the current ECDC priority to reduce the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on EU/EEA and the UK, however acknowledging the importance of support for Western Balkans, ECDC has enhanced its technical work on COVID-19 to Western Balkan IPA beneficiaries. As a result of ongoing discussions and exchange of technical information and to facilitate data visualisation service for Western Balkans, ECDC included Western Balkan region into refined ECDC dashboard with ECDC EI data on Covid-19. In addition, Rapid Risk Assessment: Resurgence of reported cases of COVID 19 in the EU/EEA, the UK and EU candidate and potential candidate countries has been published with contributions from National ECDC Correspondents in Western Balkans and Turkey.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

COVID-19 emergency is heavily affecting the EU and its neighbourhood, as well as ECDC. Thus, ECDC is revising its planned priorities and re-directing emphasis of working into needed support from national authorities. In this regard, ECDC-IPA6 project will be revised to add ECDC COVID-19 package for Western Balkans. Thus, ECDC will propose the amendment of current ECDC-IPA6 contract with additional work stream on COVID-19 and the revised relevant resources, after the activities of the work stream are agreed with public health authorities in the Western Balkans and with WHO/Europe to avoid duplication and ensure synergies among key actors and donors in the region.

Virtual meetings of National ECDC Correspondents in the Western Balkans and Turkey are planned for the next semester. Observers will be invited to participate in ECDC virtual meetings of NFP for Microbiology, NFP for Surveillance, NFP for Preparedness and Response, and NFP for Threat Detection.

European Food Safety Authority (EFSA)

ACTIVITIES (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, EFSA introduced the Teleworking regime as of 24 February 2020 and all meetings involving travelling were cancelled or converted to tele-meetings. In order to ensure the implementation of the activities, EFSA is organising on a biweekly basis -

coordination meetings with the IPA ACs via TEAMS platform. IPA beneficiary experts continued to participate in EFSA's strategic, cooperation and scientific network meetings organised virtually.

Considering the scientific relevance of the population and surveillance data from the IPA beneficiaries and their manifest interest in the SIGMA approach, the Framework Contract OC/EFSA/ALPHA/2018/01 'Technical support to improve and automatize data collection and reporting on animal disease outbreaks and surveillance (SIGMA)' has been amended. With the amendment the original list of target countries has been extended from EU MSs to the IPA beneficiaries.

In order to further support data reporting process and risk assessment capacity building in the IPA beneficiaries, within the reporting period, EFSA planned to conduct 2 two EFSA expert visits to the IPA beneficiaries. However, these missions are postponed due to the COVID-19 restrictive measures. Nevertheless, EFSA organised 3 web-trainings on the data collection and reporting for the IPA beneficiaries. The trainings were organised based on the need and expressed interest by the IPA beneficiaries for specific trainings on data collection methodologies, analysis and reporting to EFSA.

- Zoonoses data reporting training for Bosnia and Herzegovina
- AMR data reporting training for North Macedonia
- VMDR and pesticide residues data reporting for Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia

Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia submitted 2019 BSE/TSE data to EFSA. Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia submitted zoonoses 2019 data.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

- 65 candidates from the IPA beneficiaries applied to participate at the 5th edition of the Parma Summer School "One health" 9-10 June 2020. EFSA, the School of Advanced Studies on Food and Nutrition of the University of Parma, with the collaboration of the Catholic University Sacro Cuore of Piacenza, organised for early-career researchers. Due to the COVID-19 outbreak the Parma Summer School was held as virtual event on 9-10 June.
- February 2020 EFSA's [fourth status report on lumpy skin disease in south-east Europe](#) shows that there were no new outbreaks in the region in 2019. The mass vaccination campaign supported by the EU Commission continued throughout the year, covering more than 1.8 million cattle.
- EFSA performed the Mapping of the 'data sources' on animal diseases, in each IPA beneficiary. The aim of this activity was to identify the central competent authorities responsible for managing the data on animal diseases and animal populations in each of them. Initially EFSA is focusing on three diseases: African swine fever, avian influenza and lumpy skin disease. The Technical Reports of the Country Cards are published on EFSA Journal as a virtual issue. The Country Cards make this information easily available and retrievable in order: to enhance communication and cooperation among the different organisations and authorities; to facilitate the search of the competent authorities

dealing with specific types of data; and to understand the complexity of the data source networks within the countries.

1. Albania <https://efsa.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.2903/sp.efsa.2020.EN-1898>
2. Bosnia and Herzegovina <https://efsa.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.2903/sp.efsa.2020.EN-1848>
3. Kosovo <https://efsa.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.2903/sp.efsa.2020.EN-1840>
4. Montenegro <https://efsa.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.2903/sp.efsa.2020.EN-1820>
5. North Macedonia <https://efsa.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.2903/sp.efsa.2020.EN-1833>
6. Serbia <https://efsa.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.2903/sp.efsa.2020.EN-1851>
7. Turkey <https://efsa.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.2903/sp.efsa.2020.EN-1839>

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

As a follow up of a [risk assessment of African swine fever in south-eastern Europe](#), later this year EFSA will join forces with the EC and relevant national authorities, to launch a communication campaign on African swine fever (ASF). The overall objective of the communication campaign is to help prevent the spread of ASF in South-East (SE) Europe. The campaign aims to increase awareness of ASF as a devastating infectious disease in domestic pigs and wild boar and the reporting procedures to follow in case of suspected ASF infections. This will be achieved by engaging and educating the key populations and stakeholders who come into contact with domestic pigs and wild boar.

IPA beneficiaries will be invited (one representative per country) to the Plant Health Plenary meeting (8-9 July). Two IPA representatives will deliver a short presentation (15 minutes) to present key plant health risk assessment issues. This will be for the first time that we have the IPA intervention in one of the EFSA's plenary meetings and all 7 beneficiaries present.

With the aim to increase preparedness on how to respond to possible emergency situations and how to work with the IPA beneficiaries in case of emergencies, EFSA will invite the relevant IPA representatives to take part in EFSA's web-training which will take place in the context of EFSA's Focal Points meeting in September 2020.

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 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 (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

Given the global developments of the COVID-19 pandemic, some of the activities which were planned to take place during the first semester of 2020 had to be postponed to a later stage. All on-site visits to the beneficiaries were cancelled, including the signing ceremony of the Working Arrangement with Serbia. The following activities were organised remotely and/or online:

- After the call for interest for participation in the next round of the European Web Survey on Drugs, launched among the beneficiaries in January, the contractual procedures with all six beneficiaries were concluded. Specific training sessions regarding cognitive interviews and an online survey platform took place. Data collection is foreseen for early 2021.
- In the context of the Trendspotter on the impact of COVID-19 on drug services and drugs users in the Western Balkans, a series of web-surveys and online expert meetings, with a limited number of drug professionals, coordinators, researchers and other professionals, from around the region, were organised.
- The celebration of the ‘*International day against drug abuse and illicit trafficking*’ (26 June) gathered representatives of the EC, the Permanent Missions of the beneficiaries in Brussels, the Delegations of the EU in the region and the IPA project national correspondents. The virtual gathering focussed on lessons learned regarding the [impact of COVID-19 on the drug situation in Europe](#), presented by the EMCDDA Director.
- The annual meeting of the EMCDDA Key Indicator ‘Prevalence and patterns of drug use among the general population’ (GPS), including the specific satellite meeting for IPA beneficiaries; and the 2020 edition of the European Drugs Summer School (EDSS) - which this year welcomed participants from the Western Balkans thanks to EMCDDA-IPA7 bursaries - were both organised on-line.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

- Roadmaps for participation in the EMCDDA (update of January 2020)
- Inventory / mapping of health and security-related data sources (February 2020)

In line with the Project's communication and visibility plan, the following communication outputs were produced:

- The first edition of the IPA7 project newsletter was released in March, through mailchimp, and included a promotional video where several domestic experts from the beneficiaries expressed their views on working with the EMCDDA.
- The IPA project and its specific objectives and activities were referenced in the general EMCDDA DrugNet Europe newsletter of January.
- Three promotional roll ups were created and delivered.
- The [EMCDDA-IPA7 project webpage](#) and the partners' webpages have been updated, including references on social media.
- Specific news items included: 1) celebration of the 'International day against drug abuse and illicit trafficking' with the IPA7 community; 2) bursaries offered to the IPA beneficiaries for participation in the 2020 EDSS; 3) EMCDDA international cooperation activities in the framework of the 25 years of drug monitoring.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

The EMCDDA plans to conclude a Working Arrangement with Kosovo to be signed by exchange of letters between the EMCDDA Director and the concerned Ministers.

The following meetings / training activities with IPA7 partners are currently being organised:

- Annual expert meetings on drug related deaths (DRD), Drug related infectious diseases (DRID) and treatment demand indicator (TDI) in October and November.
- Training on the 'European Prevention Curriculum (EUPC)' in October.
- The ESPAD general assembly meeting in October.
- The Reitox Extended Network meeting on 24 November.
- An online Trendspotter training for IPA experts before the end of the year.
- CEPOL-EMCDDA training course on 'Drug crime and markets - strategic analysis' in November.
- Online focus groups on methamphetamine production and smuggling in November.
- A Workshop on 'drug policy evaluation' targeted at the beneficiaries is also expected to take place before the end of the year.

European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA)

Programme reference:	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IP A II), Multi-country Action Programme for 2018- part NEAR
Project title:	EU support on transposition and implementation of the EU aviation acquis (EASA IPA 5)

EU contribution:	EUR 840.000
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Contribution agreement
Contract reference:	2019/410-481
Duration of activities:	01/02/2020 – 31/01/2023
Links:	https://www.easa.europa.eu/domains/international-cooperation/technical-cooperation-projects/easa-ipa-5-eu-support

PURPOSE

The overall objective of the action is to increase project beneficiary countries compliance with the EU aviation acquis. The specific objective of the action is to increase capability for transposition of EU aviation acquis.

ACTIVITIES (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

Inception missions in: Albania, Kosovo*, North Macedonia and Serbia. Missions to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Turkey could not be performed due to COVID-19 travel restrictions, therefore consultations were performed online. Kick off and 1st steering committee meeting was cancelled.

Project work plan (May 2020 – Feb 2021) consultations and drafting.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

Project work plan (May 2020 – Feb 2021) prepared and agreed.

European Medicines Agency (EMA)

Programme reference:	Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance 2014-2020 (IPA II)
Project title:	Participation of Candidate Countries and Potential Candidates in EMA Trainings and Meetings
EU contribution:	EUR 254,219
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	European Union Contribution Agreement
Contract reference:	IPA/2019/413-383
Duration of activities:	01/01/2020 – 31/12/2022
Links:	https://www.ema.europa.eu/en
Contact:	Riccardo Luigetti, riccardo.luigetti@ema.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The main purpose of the project is to allow delegates from candidate countries and potential candidates to participate in trainings organised by EMA to facilitate aligning standards in these countries to those established in the EU in the area of medicines. Budget permitting, the delegates may be invited to a few EMA scientific and regulatory meetings where non-confidential matters are discussed.

ACTIVITIES (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

- Contact points at all the agencies involved in candidate countries and potential candidates were established, for both human and veterinary products agencies where 2 separate agencies exist.
- Regular 3-monthly TCs are used for exchange of information on matters of common interest between EMA and candidate countries and potential candidates, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, in addition to matters related to the project (2 TCs were organised in 1st semester 2020).
- Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the training foreseen in Amsterdam in 2020 will be replaced by 2 virtual trainings, to be held on 19-20 October (basic level) and by 1Q 2021 (advanced level). This has the advantage of allowing more participants to attend.
 - A draft program was developed by EMA and discussed with the contact points
 - Draft learning objectives were developed by EMA to be discussed with the contact points
 - Speakers at EMA and European Commission have been contacted
 - A programme for the advanced training to be organised by 1Q 2021 was developed by EMA and agreed with the contact points.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

The establishment of contact points and the regular TCs between EMA and contact points provided a platform for exchange of information. In addition this allowed an exchange on COVID-19 pandemic. The platform will continue to be used for exchanging information and ideas on matters of common interest.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Main activity is the virtual training to be held on 19-20 October.
- Regular teleconferences (every 3 months) between EMA and contact points in candidate countries and potential candidates will continue (next planned on 9 Sept).

8.2 REGIONAL COOPERATION COUNCIL

Programme reference:	Multi-country Action Programme for 2019, IPA 2019/412-489
Project title:	EU support to strengthening regional cooperation and the development of a competitive Regional Economic Area (REA)
EU contribution:	EUR 12.5 million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans and Turkey
Type of contract:	Grant agreement with RCC
Contract reference:	2019/412-489
Duration of activities:	01/01/2020 – 31/12/2022
Links:	www.rcc.int
Contact :	Sara Meic, sara.meic1@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The objective of the Action is to facilitate the implementation of the measures under the investment, mobility and digital integration components of the Multi-Annual Action Plan for a Regional Economic Area (MAP REA), as well as its successor.

ACTIVITIES (JANUARY – JUNE 2020)

- South East Europe (SEE) 2020 Monitoring Committee meeting; Regular coordination meetings of Multi-annual Action Plan for a Regional Economic Area (MAP REA);
- Digital Component Contact Points meeting; Meeting of Digital Summit (DS) Steering Committee;
- SEE Cooperation Process (SEECPP) Summit and high-level meetings; Two RCC Board meetings;
- Support to the organisation of the 16th COSAP conference;
- Extended communications, reinforcing the presence of RCC and promoting the EU.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY – JUNE 2020)

- Progress on a framework beyond MAP REA;
- Concluded protocol on Open Access to Research Infrastructure;
- Contribution to the preparation of the Zagreb Summit;
- Maintained regional dialogue on the implementation of Digital Agenda for WB; Progressed in the preparations for DS 2020; Defined deliverables for DS 2020;
- New promotional campaigns rolled out (Regional Roaming Agreement); Awareness-raising activities conducted;

- France re-joined RCC Board; IISG transferred under RCC; Meetings: Annual, Board, SEE Mediators networks, SEECP high-level held online.
- Progress in development of the post-2020 Strategy;
- Finalisation and launch of Balkan Barometer 2020.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Meetings: SEECP Coordination meeting, RCC Board meeting; Coordination meetings of MAP REA to finalise a strategic framework and Action Plan beyond MAP REA;
- Launch of the Joint Information System; finalization of the Regional Recognition Database.
- Preparations for establishment of the Western Balkans Network of Women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM)
- Regional coordination meetings on Roaming Policy, cybersecurity, broadband, interoperability; 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 meeting focused on Green Agenda for WB;
- Digital Summit in Tirana (hybrid);
- 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 (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
Duration of activities:	01/01/2019 – 31/12/2021
Links:	www.cbibplus.eu
Contact :	Laurent Guirkinger, Laurent.Guirkinger@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The overall objective of the action is to enhance regional coordination and harmonisation of mechanisms in the field of cross-border cooperation (CBC) at intra-Western Balkans (WB) borders. The action specifically supports networking, best practice sharing, and capacity development of Cross-Border Cooperation (CBC) management structures to plan, implement and report on CBC as well as the quality and visibility of project operations.

ACTIVITIES (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

- Direct support provided to beneficiaries upon justified request (e.g. development of a methodology for assessment of strategic ideas, experience with VAT exemption procedures for II CBC programmes in the Western Balkans, etc.)
- Technical capacity of the programme managers strengthened through the provision of training sessions, development of guiding documents and advice
- Identification and sharing of good practices and lessons learnt through analyses, surveys and constant monitoring of CBC programmes
- Capitalisation process on CBC programmes relevant to environment launched
- Support provided to beneficiaries relating to IPA III CBC programming process: identification of programming experts and approval of a strategy development and formulation trainer; preparation of necessary documents and mechanism for the upcoming process. Several online sessions with all the programmes discussing the preparatory steps and needs took place
- Regular cooperation with initiatives similar to CBIB+ (Interact, TESIM) and contribution to initiatives targeting the same beneficiaries: IPA II CBC mid-term evaluation and ROM monitoring teams
- Regular update of online tools providing information on IPA CBC programmes and project activities and promotion/sharing of best practice (monthly e-bulletins of flash news, website, Facebook, KEEP database, etc.).

OUTPUTS (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

- Improved accountability of CBC programmes through a streamlined performance measurement methodology and regular use of the improved regional monitoring system
- Methodology for the assessment of strategic project ideas for the MK-AL IPA II programme developed
- Two user manuals for the Western Balkans CBC monitoring system (one for programme managers and another for grant beneficiaries) and the IPA III CBC programming advice (guiding document for programming experts and stakeholders) prepared
- Different surveys and analyses (e.g. analytical report on cooperation, coordination and management of CBC programmes, performance analysis reports MK-AL, BA-ME and

AL-KS programmes) conducted and constant monitoring of CBC programmes progress (absorption of funds, projects contracted, etc.)

- Best practice culture and sharing of experience promoted (events, project newsletter Yellow&Blue, KEEP database, on-line tools, etc.).
- Enhanced visibility and promotion of the CBC programmes and their achievements (monthly e-bulletins of flash news, promotion of programmes and the project on website, Facebook, etc.)

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Organisation of a regional forum for national authorities on the development of IPA III CBC programmes
- With the support of programming experts, facilitate the compilation of the first draft of IPA III CBC programme documents
- Facilitating the proceedings of technical working groups and providing the necessary technical inputs
- Organisation of an online workshop, together with INTERACT, under the 2020 European Week of Regions and Cities
- IPA III CBC programming process: contracting of programming experts, training on strategy development and formulation, performing analyses, supporting the preparation of the first drafts of the programme documents, etc.
- Delivering training sessions and provision of demand-driven technical assistance
- Regular updates and further improvements of the regional monitoring system
- Progress with drafting a capitalisation report on environment
- Constant promotion of CBC programmes: upgraded website, monthly e-bulletins of flash news, updated electronic tools, preparation of the second issue under this contract of the project's newsletter.

8.4 REGIONAL ACTION ON ANIMAL DISEASE ERADICATION IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

Programme reference:	IPA II Multi Country 2018
Project title:	Regional Action on Animal Disease Eradication in the Western Balkans
Contribution:	EUR 1.5million
Beneficiary region:	Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Kosovo*)
Type of contract:	Service contract with Agriconsulting
Contract reference:	SANTE/2018-G-046 EU

Duration of activities:	01/01/2020 – 31/12/2021
Contact :	Susanne Dittmann Rasmussen (DG SANTE), Susanne-Dittmann.RASMUSSEN@ec.europa.eu

PURPOSE

The objective of the project is to ensure that the technical capacity of the beneficiary competent veterinary authorities is upgraded to safeguard a favourable animal health status for the whole region in the long term, and at the time of accession enable full access of products of animal origin from the beneficiaries to the EU markets. The action will also enable the Western Balkans to become familiar and implement the One Health approach, in line with the EU's *acquis* and best practices in this field.

ACTIVITIES (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

Due to the outbreak of Covid 19 almost all the physical meetings, missions and workshops had to be postponed and activities rescheduled.

The main tasks were focused on organizing the work, visiting the veterinary authorities in the beneficiaries and preparation of the different activities and reports.

Main specific activities during this period were related to the strengthening of the laboratory network, including the safe collection and transport of samples, and preparing an overview of ongoing projects in the beneficiaries. Another activity was the review of existing legislation in the beneficiaries to ensure alignment with the new EU legal framework on animal health.

OUTPUTS (JANUARY-JUNE 2020)

- Overall work plan prepared;
- Kick-off meeting held in Brussels on 30th January 2020;
- Project office established;
- Project key persons appointed (Program Steering Committee members, project contact points);
- Veterinary authorities of beneficiaries and EU Delegations visited by the contractor (mission reports prepared);
- 1st Project Steering Committee meeting held online on 20 July 2020;
- Rescheduling of work as a result of the Covid-19 outbreak and related restrictions;
- Project brochure prepared;
- Inception report prepared.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS PLANNED FOR NEXT SEMESTER

In line with the Terms of Reference, the planned activities for 2nd Semester are:

- Set up a common system for procurement of vaccines;
- Strengthen the regional laboratory network in cooperation with the EU reference laboratories;
- Conduct an assessment of the specific domestic strategies for the control of the concerned diseases and identify gaps in cooperation;
- To establish cooperation with ongoing projects in the beneficiaries, where appropriate and possible;
- To organise a workshop for sharing best practices and lessons learned in the control of animal diseases, between competent authorities in the EU and in the beneficiaries;
- To review existing legislation in the relevant beneficiaries and suggest recommendations so the existing legislation will conform with the EU legislation on animal health, with a special focus on the Animal Health Law;
- Design a strategy for vaccination;
- Develop a strategy to deal with emerging diseases;
- Create an action plan toward establishing a secure system for handling of dead animals as well as other animal by-products, to minimize the risk of spreading disease;
- Create an action plan for establishing procedures to ensure cleanliness and disinfection of lorries after transporting live animals across borders;
- Design and develop a tool to create future simulation exercises at strategic level as well as on partial level.

* 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.