

ANNEX 3

to the Commission Implementing Decision on the financing of the annual action plan in favour of Kosovo* for 2021

Action Document for “EU for Approximation”**1. SYNOPSIS****1.1. Action Summary Table**

Title	Action 03. EU for Approximation IPA III Annual Action Plan in favour of Kosovo* for 2021			
CRIS number	043-659/3			
Basic Act	Financed under the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA III)			
Team Europe Initiative	Yes, the area of support three (3) will be implemented in cooperation with The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), Germany			
Zone benefiting from the action	The action shall be carried out in Kosovo			
Programming document	IPA III Programming Framework			
PRIORITY AREAS AND SECTOR INFORMATION				
Window and thematic priority	Window 2: Good Governance, Acquis Alignment, Good Neighbourly Relations and Strategic Communication Thematic Priority 1: Good Governance Thematic Priority 2: Administrative capacity and EU acquis alignment			
Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	Main SDG (1 only): SDG 16: Peace Justice & Strong Institutions Other significant SDGs (up to 9) and where appropriate, targets: SDG 4 and 8: Quality Education and Decent Work and Economic Growth SDG5: Gender Equality			
DAC code(s)	151 - Government 15110 - Public sector policy and administrative management – 100%			
Main Delivery Channel	Main channel: 12000 – Recipient government			
Markers (from DAC form)	General policy objective	Not targeted	Significant objective	Principal objective
	Participation development/good governance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Aid to environment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Gender equality and women’s and girl’s empowerment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Trade development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

* 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

	Reproductive, maternal, new-born and child health	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Disaster Risk Reduction	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Inclusion of persons with Disabilities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Nutrition	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	RIO Convention markers	Not targeted	Significant objective	Principal objective
	Biological diversity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Combat desertification	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Climate change mitigation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Climate change adaptation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Internal markers	Policy objectives	Not targeted	Significant objective	Principal objective
	Digitalisation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Migration	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Covid-19	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

BUDGET INFORMATION

Amounts concerned	<p>Budget line: 15.020101.01</p> <p>Total estimated cost: EUR 15 360 000</p> <p>Total amount of EU budget contribution EUR 14 360 000</p> <p>This action is co-financed in parallel co-financing by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The government of Kosovo for an amount of EUR 1 000 000
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MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

Type of financing and method(s) of implementation	<p>Direct management through: Grants and Procurement</p> <p>Indirect management with entities selected in accordance with the criteria set out in section 4.2.1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) - United Nations Women (UN Women)
Relevant priorities and flagships from Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans [only for the Western Balkans]	Priorities: Governance, PAR, Digital Transition
Final Date for conclusion of Financing Agreement	At the latest by 31 December N+1
Final date for concluding contribution / delegation agreements, procurement and grant contracts	3 years following the date of conclusion of the Financing Agreement, with the exception of cases listed under Article 114(2) of the Financial Regulation

Indicative operational implementation period	72 months following the conclusion of the Financing Agreement
Final date for implementing the Financing Agreement	12 years following the conclusion of the Financing Agreement

1.2. Summary of the Action

The main aim of the action is to support Kosovo with approximation to the EU *acquis* through strengthening the technical and administrative capacity of the administration and in implementing measures related to urgent political priorities in the framework of Kosovo's European perspective.

More specifically this action will have five Areas of Support:

Area of Support 1: EU *Acquis* Approximation, which will support Kosovo with approximation to the EU *acquis* through strengthening the technical and administrative capacity of the administration. It will support in implementing measures related to urgent political priorities in the framework of Kosovo's European perspective. In addition, the action will support activities related to strategic communication of EU assistance as well as activities related to monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of EU assistance.

Area of Support 2: Pristina – Belgrade dialogue Facility, which will support urgent political priorities that may arise from the EU facilitated Dialogue for the normalisation of relations between Belgrade and Pristina.

Area of Support 3: Administrative Burden Reduction Programme, which will support the implementation of the administrative burden reduction efforts of the government with a special focus on digitalisation of public services and increased transparency of fees and procedures required to get permits and licenses.

Area of Support 4: Young Cell Scheme, which will provide funding and technical assistance for Kosovars to pursue master studies in EU universities, with the aim to assist Kosovo authorities in their efforts to build a professional, accountable and apolitical civil service at all levels of the public administration.

Area of Support 5: Gender Equality Facility, which will enhance the transposition of the EU Gender Equality *acquis* into the Kosovo legal framework and strengthen gender and socially-responsive governance outcomes at central and local levels.

2. RATIONALE

2.1. Context Analysis

The **approximation** of Kosovo's governance, legislation, and infrastructure systems to the EU *acquis* needs to be progressively implemented in order to fulfil the obligations linked with the European perspective. At present, the capacities of Kosovo institutions remain weak and Technical Assistance support and investments are necessary and IPA will contribute to the required progress.

Since July 2017, **Belgrade and Pristina** are working on a comprehensive normalisation of relations in the form of a legally binding agreement. The EU supports the implementation of the agreements reached so far in the context of the dialogue, including through IPA assistance. EU assistance continues to be required for the implementation of existing and future agreements.

Excessive **administrative burdens** stifle economic development and public service delivery dissatisfaction. There is a need to repeal unnecessary procedural-, data- and other requirements. Increasingly this legislative simplifying effort should be combined with digital approaches to service delivery. The government's adoption of the Administrative Burden Reduction Program on 19 October 2020 is a step forward. Reducing the administrative burden will be an important factor in stimulating economic development after the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, as the administrative burden is caused by excessive requests for legally binding information, including secondary legislation at local level.

The Young Cell Scheme project has been providing funding and technical assistance for Kosovars to pursue Master Studies in EU universities, with the aim to assist Kosovo authorities in their efforts to build a professional, accountable and apolitical civil service at all levels of public administration. The Young Cell Scheme selects the fields of study based on the needs assessment done by the Kosovo institutions as the grantees are contractually obliged to return and work in Kosovo's public administration for a minimum period of three consecutive years. With the new Law on Public Officials, their employment is regulated and managed by the Ministry of Internal Affairs' Department for management of public officials. The scheme is highly appreciated and still needed as the capacities of the public administration still has to improve significantly.

Regarding **Gender Equality**, Kosovo has made improvements in advancing the legal, normative and policy framework for gender equality in recent years, yet inequalities still exist. Anchoring gender knowledge and skills within the public administration is key for engaging in governance processes (such as planning, decision-making and budgeting) that adequately respond to the needs of women and men and girls and boys in Kosovo. The Gender capacity of the government is also an essential precondition for coherent absorption of the EU Gender Equality *acquis* over the coming years.

2.2. Problem analysis by areas of support

Area of Support 1: EU Acquis Approximation

Short problem analysis

The Stabilisation and Association Agreement obligations assume that Kosovo's public administration is ready and capable to adopt and implement it in an efficient and effective manner. However, the capacity remains weak in line ministries and government agencies benefiting from IPA. Capacity building programmes for managing EU funds need to be embedded in the training available through the Kosovo Institute for Public Administration with modules that are related to the management of EU funds such as development and use of indicators, intervention logic and empirical analysis, the link with public policy making, Public Administration Reform or Public Finance Management, etc.

Description of main stakeholders

The overall policy planning reform is coordinated by the Prime Minister's Office in close coordination with the Ministry of Finance. The main stakeholder for ensuring effective coordination of, and a strategic approach to, EU related reforms is the Department of Cooperation Office in the Prime Minister's Office.

Area of Support 2: Pristina- Belgrade Dialogue Facility

Short problem analysis

The EU is committed to the EU facilitated Dialogue for the normalisation of relations between Belgrade and Pristina. The dialogue represents a key factor for peace, security and stability in the region, for promotion of cooperation and progress on the European path. The EU is ready to support the implementation of the past and future agreements reached within this framework, including through IPA assistance.

Description of main stakeholders

The present action includes activities related to the dialogue that will be implemented with the involvement of the main stakeholders: the Strategic Planning Office in the Prime Minister's Office, line ministries, local administrations, cultural institutions, civil society and other stakeholders, media community etc.

Area of Support 3: Support to Administrative burden reduction programme

Short problem analysis

Excessive administrative burdens stifle economic development and causes public service delivery dissatisfaction. There is therefore a need to repeal unnecessary procedural-, data- and other requirements. The administrative burden reduction programme will analyse legislation in force for requirements that could be simplified, update the central database for permits and licenses, but also review draft legislation to prevent new unnecessary burdens from being approved. Increasingly this legislative simplification effort should be combined with digital approaches to service delivery as digitalisation would cut the cost and time needed for implementing these requirements properly.

Description of main stakeholders

The mandate to oversee the administrative burden reduction efforts across the government and municipalities lies with the Strategic Planning Office in the Office of the Prime Minister. As the simplification of licences and permits and other burdens are often linked with legislation at different levels, the Legal Office will oversee the activities in

this regard. They will also review draft legislation in order to prevent new unnecessary burdens from being approved. The Ministry of Economy and Environment and the Agency for Information Society will also be important stakeholders, especially with regard to the digitalisation efforts.

Area of Support 4: The Young Cell Scheme

Short problem analysis

One of the many problems in the public administration is a political influence on recruitments of senior civil staff and non-merit-based recruitments. The progress in this area is limited, and more work needs to be done to ensure integrity and transparency in recruitments in the public service. The Young Cell Scheme has been one of the main channels to reform the public administration from within. The process of selection and recruitment of students improved considerably in respect to the principles of non-discrimination and equal treatment of all candidates. Significant efforts are still required to create the conditions for a gender equal and multi-ethnic civil service. The new Law on Public Officials retains the former provision of the 10 per cent employment quota for non-majority communities, which could prove to be a useful tool for the employment of the Roma and Ashkali communities.

Description of main stakeholders

The Office of the Prime Minister, specifically the Development Cooperation Office (NIPAC office), has been closely involved in managing the YCS. The Ministry of Internal Affairs, through the Department for Management of Public Officials, will ensure full implementation of the Law on Public officials. They will ensure timely information on the needs assessment from line ministries, at the beginning of the process and will oversee the post-scholarship placements in the government. Line Ministries and other government agencies will also ensure that the selection process is needs-based.

Area of Support 5: Gender Equality Facility

Short problem analysis

The Kosovo Program for Gender Equality 2020-2024 identifies the lack of gender mainstreaming in strategies and development policies, and the resulting failure to implement gender responsive budgeting among the main problems. Currently, decision making on sectoral public policy rarely prioritises the advancement of gender equality in respective actions, including in IPA processes. The institutional set-up for gender equality (Kosovo gender equality mechanism) remains under-resourced, with weak Gender Equality Officers/Gender Focal Points in line ministries and at local level, weak coordination and limited knowledge of the concrete implication of the EU Gender Equality *acquis* on the design and implementation of their area based development plans and on equitable service provision.

Description of main stakeholders

The Agency for Gender Equality is the central executive unit for drafting the Kosovo gender equality agenda at Kosovo-level and a reference source of gender expertise. It is the lead institution for Kosovo gender mechanisms like the Gender Equality Officers/Gender Focal Points, the Women's Caucus in the Assembly of Kosovo, and the Assembly Committee on Human Rights and Gender. The Ministry of Local Government Administration and specifically the local self government units oversees and monitors the operations of municipalities, including obligations that derive from the process of European integration. The Kosovo Institute for Public Administration is responsible for establishing gender mainstreaming capacity and skills within Kosovo's public administration. Other stakeholders include the Office of the Prime Minister (Department for Cooperation and the Office for Strategic Planning) and civil society organisations that have specific expertise and deep insight into the realities of women and men.

2.3. Relevance and complementarity with strategies supported by key stakeholders

Since the first two areas of support are **facilities (EU Approximation and Dialogue)**, which will support projects which are still to be determined it is difficult to identify strategies that will be complemented by this actions.

Depending on the sectors to be supported the complementarity will be with multiple strategies of the sectors covered under respective thematic priorities of Window I. In addition, the complementarity with all existing strategies will be ensured by default since the support will be directed to the institutions in charge of strategic planning and supervision of EU support.

Administrative Burden Reduction Programme

The action links with **the Kosovo National Development Strategy Road Map 2016-2021: Second Pillar: Good Governance and Rule of Law: Measure 8. Further enhancement of Customer-Focused Service Delivery for businesses and the public. This is further elaborated in the Better Regulation Strategy 2.0 for Kosovo 2017-2021 under the objective to improve the regulatory system in Kosovo and to enhance competitiveness through reforming existing primary and secondary legislation. The action also supports the general objective of the Public Administration**

Modernization Strategy 2015-2020 on “qualitative and accessible public administration services, based on reasonable administrative procedures and applying e-government methods oriented towards citizens and business needs”. **The Economic Reform Programme 2020-2022** highlights the weak business environment as a hurdle to competitiveness and the need for reduction of the informal economy, which currently stands at 30% of Gross Domestic Product. **The European Reform Agenda 2** underlines the need to reduce the regulatory burden to firms, in particular by making transparent the fees and procedures required to get permits and licenses.

Young Cell Scheme

The objective of this area of support is to strengthen the Kosovo administration with the competent and professional group of civil servants that contributed to the fields identified as weak areas of Kosovo administration. This objective addresses the needs identified above, such as the need to eliminate political influence on recruitments of senior civil staff and non-merit-based recruitments. This area of support is linked with the Kosovo **National Development Strategy** Road Map 2016-2021: First Pillar: Human capital: skilled labour force become the engine of development that will ensure higher economic growth rate. The action also supports the general strategic objective of the **Public Administration Modernization Strategy 2015-2020** with regard to a “Transparent, accountable public administration, with a clear system of accountability characterised with a professional civil service, with internal administrative structures that function based on the legislation on public administration and in line with principles of good governance”. **The European Reform Agenda 2** outlines priority actions in the fields of good governance and the rule of law, competitiveness and investment climate, and employment and education.

The Gender Equality Facility

The objective of this area of support is to ensure that the government of Kosovo at central and local levels increasingly complies with global norms and standards of gender equality and women’s empowerment, and implements the EU Gender Equality *acquis*. This objective addresses the needs identified above, such as the need to strengthen capacities of staff in line ministries, municipalities, local gender equality mechanisms and institutions for gender equality, as well as members of sectoral working groups. Also the needs for systematic and continuous vertical and horizontal coordination between gender equality mechanisms at the central and local level will be addressed. Gender equality norms and principles are addressed in **the Kosovo Constitution**, and are directly applicable through international legal instruments, including **the Istanbul Convention** (adopted in 2020). At Kosovo level, the specific policy and legal framework for gender equality, the institutional mechanisms, political participation, and non-discrimination on the basis of gender include: **the Law on Gender Equality, the Kosovo Programme for Gender Equality 2020-2024, and the Law on Anti-Discrimination.**

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

EU *acquis* approximation Facility

This area of support will address thematic priority 2 Administrative capacity and EU *acquis* alignment and thematic priority 4 strategic communication of the window II under the IPA III programming framework. More generally, the first component will be implemented in line with the Commission’s Western Balkans Strategy¹. The component will also support Kosovo to continue its reform of the institutional and legal framework to align with the EU’s gender equality *acquis*, as well as the EU Gender Action Plan (GAP) III pillar 1. This component is also in line with the European Economic and Investment Plan, which emphasises that building a high quality public administration is a foundation for a well-functioning state. In terms of investment management, the state needs strong capacity in order to identify, prioritise, develop and manage future oriented infrastructure and other strategic investment projects.

Pristina-Belgrade dialogue Facility

The area of support 2 will mainly address thematic priority 3 Good Neighbourly Relations and Reconciliation of the window II under the IPA III programming framework. The assistance will support the agreements reached in the context of the Pristina-Belgrade dialogue through IPA Assistance. All the assistance under this action will be gender mainstreamed. It is important to be noted that all projects funded under these two actions will be in line with the Stabilisation and Association Agreement, the Economic Reform Programme, the European Reform Agenda 2, which outlines priority actions and the Kosovo Reports.

Administrative Burden Reduction:

This area of support will address thematic priority 1: Good governance and thematic priority 2: Administrative capacity of the window II under the IPA III programming framework. **The Western Balkans Strategy** and its action

¹ COM(2018) 65 final

plan commit to support particularly eGovernment, eProcurement and eHealth services, but also to the enforcement of the *acquis* in the area of the Digital Single Market. This component will contribute to the implementation of **the Digital Agenda for Western Balkans**, which aims to ensure that the citizens of the Western Balkan region can fully reap the benefits of the fast-paced and inevitable digital transformation. The component will also follow the example of the European Commission's **REFIT programme**, which is part of the EU's better regulation agenda. The programme looks increasingly into the potential of digitalisation, as shown by adopting the principles of the digital approach to administrative burden reduction in the **Tallinn Declaration on government** in 2017.

The policy guidance and Commission assessment of the annual Economic Reform Programmes consistently highlight the weak business environment as a hurdle to competitiveness and the need for reduction of the informal economy (30% of GDP). **The European Reform Agenda 2** underlines the need to reduce the regulatory burden to firms, in particular by making transparent the fees and procedures required to get permits and licenses. This component will also address the European Economic Investment plan's emphasis on a public administration with an efficient and effective civil service that delivers quality services to citizens and businesses.

The Young Cell Scheme

This area of support contributes to thematic priority 1: Good governance: creation of the accountable, transparent and well-functioning public administration and thematic priority 2: Administrative capacity and *acquis* alignment: building of administrative capacities able to take the obligations of a membership; the sector institutions are adopting the ongoing public administration reform. **The Commission Kosovo Report 2021** recognises the need for Kosovo to increase accountability in the public sector and further improve the service delivery by strengthening the civil service. This action will cover two SDGs: SDG 4: Quality education and SDG 5: Gender equality.

In addition, the Western Balkans Summit in Sofia 2020, took initiatives under the Economic and Investment Plan on Human capital, including high quality education and training systems, employment, health and social protection. The EU will improve labour market participation, especially of young people and women, vulnerable groups and minorities, in particular Roma. Finally, the European reform Agenda 2 priorities are fully consistent with recommendations contained in the references mentioned above.

Gender Equality Facility

The area of support adheres to the principles of international guidance on gender-responsive recovery², and the European Commission's 10 key actions for G7 members to promote gender equality and women's economic empowerment in COVID-19 crisis response and recovery.³ It is in line with the High Representative Statement on behalf of the EU "Declaration on human rights in times of the coronavirus pandemic", clearly highlighting women's and girls' rights⁴, and the joint recommendations of women's rights organisations operating in the Western Balkans.⁵

It will contribute to the implementation of the EU Gender Action Plan III "Equal rights and ability for women to participate in policy and governance processes at all levels". At Kosovo policy revision level, contribution is envisaged to several of the EU GAP III thematic engagement areas, including "Addressing the challenges and harnessing the opportunities offered by the green transition and the digital transformation". The area of support will also contribute in addressing the gaps as noted in the 2020 Kosovo Report, institutional and legal through better

² Gender equality and the Covid-19 outbreak: key messages and advocacy points from the Europe and Central Asia Regional Issue-Based Coalition on Gender. See: <https://eca.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/04/gender-equality-and-covid19-outbreak-key-messages-from-regional-issue-based-coalition-on-gender>

Guidance Note for UN Women Country Offices on How to Assess and Engender Fiscal Stimulus Packages to respond to the Socio-Economic Impacts of Covid-19.

ILO Policy Brief. The Covid-19 response: Getting gender equality right for a better future of women at work. See: https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/coronavirus/WCMS_744685/lang--en/index.htm

Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID). Feminist Response to Covid-19. See: <https://www.feministcovidresponse.com/static/media/principles-en.a6f9f4a2.pdf>

³ https://ec.europa.eu/fpi/news/gender-equality-experts-recommend-key-actions-covid-19-response-and-recovery-g7-leaders_en

⁴ High Representative Josep Borrell, 5 May 2020: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2020/05/05/declaration-by-the-high-representative-josep-borrell-on-behalf-of-eu-on-human-rights-in-the-times-of-the-coronavirus-pandemic/>

⁵ Joint statement by CSOs, civil society activists and gender experts taking part in sub-regional consultation for Western Balkans and Turkey.

coordination across institutions. In addition to addressing violence against women and women in decision-making, strengthen implementation of the Law on Gender Equality by enhancing actions that specifically ensure equality of women and men in practice, support effective coordination of implementing across institutions, and improve the production and use of gender-data.

2.5. Lessons learned and links with previous financial assistance

The first two areas of support **EU *acquis* Approximation Facility and the Pristina-Belgrade dialogue Facility** have funded many projects that were successfully implemented under previous IPA programmes. Experience confirms that this type of assistance is particularly useful for responding quickly to urgent needs identified in the course of implementation of IPA assistance or actions stemming from the political dialogue. The experience with the implementation of IPA assistance shows that the capacity of the Kosovo administration still needs to be strengthened.

Support to Administrative Burden Reduction

A 2019 OECD/SIGMA Monitoring Report focused on the service delivery area. This report particularly emphasised the need for clear policy directions and co-ordination of government initiatives in the digitisation of administrative services. For the substantial progress in simplifying the procedures, it is necessary to strengthen the central guidance and have enablers such as digital signatures and online payments in place. The service delivery area is considered particularly relevant to Kosovo's European path, especially with the view on the Single Digital Market. According to the Kosovo National Audit Office, the organisation of IT-services are fragmented, lack of co-operation and poor design of IT structure lead to suboptimal use of IT equipment, to poor management of services and to increases in financial spending.

GIZ has been working with the Tax Agency on financial reporting and with the Business Registration Agency on business registration. Swedish development aid (Project for Support for Policy Development) has been working together with the Office of the Prime Minister on developing the Concept Document on Administrative Burden Reduction and with the development of the Program on Administrative Burden Reduction. This project concluded in December 2020 and main outputs from this project will be taken into account in capacity-building in order to benefit from the Standard Cost Model trainings and for identifying the actions to be supported by the project. The IFC/World Bank Group is also involved in this reform. The EU Twinning project "Support to Civil Registration and Document Security" has provided insights into the potential and value of the once-only principle and on the link with e-services.

The Young Cell Scheme

Over 400 grantees from Kosovo have benefited from a scholarship under the Young Cell Scheme. A general lesson learned is to improve the inter-institutional cooperation within the government, especially as regards the needs assessment from the line ministries and the employment process once the studies are finished. With the Law on Public Officials the employment should be regulated. The selection procedure is the main guarantee of fairness and transparency for the scheme. The Young Cell Scheme Alumni association is showing a positive impact, including in organising the Summer/Winter School at the University of Pristina.

Gender Equality Facility

As government institutions have a key role in implementing the Action, it is crucial to ensure that knowledge products and capacity-development measures are delivered in a manner that responds to concrete needs. Previous work with the administration undertaken by the Kosovo Women's Network highlights the importance of engaging in gender mainstreaming with dedicated working groups from an early stage. A further lesson learned is that draft documents need to be translated in due time to enable gender review by the members of the Kosovo gender mechanism. Engaging in gender mainstreaming is required to be consistently included in all contracts and terms of reference. Gender mainstreaming trainings have to be obligatory and embedded within routine trainings for civil servants, and a sufficient budget allocated to sustain an institutionalised approach.

UN Women benefits from being in the position of drawing upon existing relationships and lessons learned from previous and current UN Women-supported programmes and projects. The component will strive to also use clear synergies with the ongoing technical assistance project on mainstreaming gender, funded by the EU and implemented by the Kosovo Women's Network, the SIDA-funded "Institutional Strengthening of Agency for Gender Equality and Gender Mechanisms" project, and with current UN Women projects. Coordination with women's civil society organisations is essential.

3. DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION

3.1. Planned results and intervention logic

Area of Support 1: EU Acquis Approximation Facility

Outcome: Strengthened technical and administrative capacity of the Kosovo administration in relation to approximation with the EU *acquis*, the effective and efficient implementation and evaluation of IPA assistance, and support to urgent political, economic, environmental, health (including animal health) or social needs.

Output: Coordinated response put in place to meet urgent and unforeseen needs related to Kosovo's European perspective, support measures taken in response to political, economic, environmental, health (including animal health) or social needs and capacities for programming, implementation and evaluation of IPA funds.

The area of support anticipates that by coordinating the response to urgent and unforeseen needs, by providing support measures which will address these needs (accompanied with capacity building), then Kosovo administration will have sufficient capacities to implement the IPA assistance in a more efficient and effective manner.

The main assumptions for the **EU Acquis Approximation Facility** are progress towards approximation with the EU *acquis* and adequate absorption capacity.

Area of Support 2: Dialogue Pristina Belgrade Facility

Outcome: Normalised relations between Kosovo and Serbia and increased mutual trust between the communities.

Output: Support provided in the implementation of existing or future agreements reached within the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue.

This area of support anticipates that by providing concrete assistance to different sectors that relate to the Pristina-Belgrade dialogue this will lead to a normalised relation between the Kosovo and Serbia and most importantly it will improve the lives and increase the mutual trust of the communities.

The main assumptions for the **Pristina-Belgrade dialogue** are political commitment is in place for normalisation of relations at central and local levels and adequate absorption capacity.

Area of Support 3: Administrative burden reduction for improved service delivery

Outcome: The public administration has been strengthened to implement EU related reforms and reducing administrative burden in selected areas

Output 1: improve the capacities of the public administration to systematically review and subsequently abolish administrative burdens from existing legislation and prevent them from appearing in new legislation, as well as assist in delivering digital solutions.

Output 2: improve the co-ordination across the government to ensure concrete progress on the reform.

This area of support anticipates that by improving the administration's capacity to review and abolish administrative burdens and to assist in delivering digital solutions, service delivery and implementation of EU-related reforms will be improved.

The main assumptions are: The strategic significance of the connection between administrative burden reduction and economic competitiveness is acknowledged and visible in political priorities and strategic framework and that the challenges are approached holistically by updating regulations and supporting the institutional capacities to support the service owners with digitalization support.

Area of Support 4: Young Cell Scheme

Outcome: Strengthened Kosovo administration with the competent and professional group of civil servants from the Young Cell Scheme that contribute to the fields identified as weak areas of Kosovo administration.

Output 1: the Kosovo administration will be supported through a targeted scholarship programme.

Output 2: the graduated Young Cell Scheme grantees employed in the civil service in Kosovo institutions upon return to Kosovo for a minimum of three consecutive years

This area of support anticipates that by educating young people in the EU and requiring them to come back to Kosovo to work in the civil service, the competence, capacities and professionalism of the Kosovo civil service will be improved.

The main assumptions are: establishment of the Department of Management of Public Officials in the Ministry of Internal Affairs; employment of all graduates from the previous rounds within the public administration following the completion of their studies; women and members of the non-Albanian community show readiness to apply and complete their studies.

Area of Support 5: Gender Equality Facility

Outcome: Kosovo government at central and local levels will be strengthened to mainstream gender equality across sectors, strengthen its gender equality mechanisms, comply with global norms and standards of gender equality and women's empowerment, and implement the EU Gender Equality *acquis*.

Output 1: Sector reforms, strategies, post-COVID-19 recovery/ development programmes, and plans are designed with gender sensitivity consistently.

Output 2: Local government units engaged in gender mainstreaming.

This area of support anticipates that by strengthening local and central level capacities and coordination for mainstreaming gender equality there will be better implementation of EU Gender Equality *acquis*.

The main assumptions are: sustained political commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment; continued commitment and sustained support to Kosovo European path; political commitment and institutional support for government staff at central and municipal levels to integrate gender equality goals into policies, programmes, budgets, implementation, and monitoring.

3.2. Indicative type of activities

EU *Acquis* Approximation Facility

Output: Coordinated response put in place to meet urgent and unforeseen needs related to Kosovo's European perspective, support measures taken in response to political, economic, environmental, health or social needs and capacities for programming, implementation and evaluation of IPA funds.

- Technical assistance to support to Kosovo structures and line institutions in the fields of approximation to EU *acquis* for emerging issues (according to Stabilisation Association Agreement priorities).
- Technical Assistance Capacity Building for the NIPAC and line institutions staff for legislative procedures and working methods.
- Investment projects to support possible urgent priorities that arise from the approximation with the EU *acquis* or other political developments that are beyond the Commission's control and which cannot be programmed in advance. It will also support urgent political, economic, health (including animal health) or social needs
- Technical assistance to support Kosovo's European Integration Structures/NIPAC and line ministries in preparing and developing programming documents and ensuring their alignment with policy documents, such as the National Development Strategy, the Economic Reform Programme, the European Reform Agenda and the Economic and Investment Plan, as well as any other strategic document.
- Seminars and thematic workshops on legislation and procedures related to the different chapters of the EU *acquis* (according to Stabilisation Association Agreement priorities).

The Pristina-Belgrade Dialogue Facility

Output: Support provided in the implementation of existing or future agreements reached within the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue.

- The activities under this output will target, albeit not exclusively, areas such as the rule of law, decentralisation, support to civil society, public administration reform, economic development, private sector development, employment and social policies, education, training and research, minority communities, culture, support to agriculture, sectorial approximation (energy, transport, environment and climate change mitigation and adaptation), building institutional capacity and construction of local infrastructures (including green and low-carbon choice in line with the EU Green Deal).
- The type of activities expected to be carried out under this facility may include technical assistance for assessments, drafting of project documents, drafting of technical specifications or ad-hoc activities to support the local authorities as a result of the outcomes of the dialogue process. In accordance with the EU Gender Action Plan, gender evidence will be used to inform activities.

Administrative Burden Reduction

Output 1: improve the capacities of the public administration to systematically review and subsequently abolish administrative burdens from existing legislation and prevent them from appearing in new legislation, as well as assist in delivering digital solutions.

- Main indicative activities foreseen under area of support 3 are: Technical assistance for implementing the projects with the administrative burden reduction approaches, such as the cost-recovery principle on administrative fees, as foreseen in the Law on General Administrative Procedures, the once-only principle, open-data or pro-active service delivery.
- Technical assistance to support the government institutions in analysing and drafting the primary and secondary legislation and policies with a goal to improve the service delivery and reduce the administrative burden.
- Technical assistance for capacity building of government institutions to enhance legislative drafting techniques in the field of administrative burden and to strengthen their digital capabilities for administrative burden reduction by implementing international good practices of digital services.
- A screening/analysis of legal basis of secondary legislation to abrogate bylaws without legal basis (known as the guillotine of bylaws).

Output 2: improve the co-ordination across the government to ensure concrete progress on the reform.

- Technical assistance to support the institutions co-ordinating the administrative burden reduction agenda in awareness rising and in managing the processes and networks for implementing the action plans.

Young Cell Scheme

Output 1: the Kosovo administration will be supported through a targeted scholarship programme.

- The main activities under the first output will be linked to the selection of the grantees based on the updated Rules of procedures, organisation of additional trainings for grantees depending on the field, organisation of dedicated orientation days for pre-departure, implementation of one month internship in the public institutions; ensuring financial, professional, logistic, and psychological, visa support to students, etc.

Output 2: the graduated Young Cell Scheme grantees employed in the civil service in Kosovo institutions upon return to Kosovo for a minimum of three consecutive years

- Employment process within the public institutions should be done according to the existing legislation with special attention on % of women and men employed in civil service, disaggregated by decision-making level; monitoring of previous rounds employment and reporting in case of breach of contractual obligation by graduates; recovery of funds from the graduates that have not fulfilled obligation of three years consecutive work for the public institutions.
- Young Cell Alumni association support grantees from their selection and preparation for the studies to the employment; they provide a forum for Young Cell Scheme alumni to further develop their EU related skills and capabilities.

Gender Equality Facility

Output 1: Sector reforms, strategies, post-COVID-19 recovery/development programmes, and plans are designed with gender sensitivity consistently.

- Developing “Gender Mainstreaming in IPA” trainings and integrating them into the standard curriculum for civil servants;
- Provision of assistance to Agency for Gender Equality and its coordination role;
- Direct gender mainstreaming support to Agency for Gender Equality and line ministries;
- Facilitation of structured dialogue on gender equality in selected priority sectors including women’s CSOs;
- Support the EU Office and Implementing Partners (contractors) in mainstreaming gender within IPA programmes and for the reporting on the implementation of the GAP III;
- Communicating EU and Gender Equality to the larger public in cooperation with GoK, EUOK, other EU actors, Member States present in Kosovo, UN agencies, and women’s civil society organisations;
- Provision of small grants to women civil society organisations.
- Logistics and support for networking, knowledge transfer, and exchange of good practices;

Output 2: Local government units engaged in gender mainstreaming.

- Technical assistance to the Ministry of Local Government for enhancing gender equality/mainstreaming on upcoming legislation during the period of implementation of the project; planning, prioritisation, policy and periodic performance monitoring at municipal level;
- In selected municipalities, costing of specific services essential for enhancing gender equality;
- Provision of grants to well performing municipalities, complementary to the Municipal Performance Grant (ref Action 02).

3.3. Risks and assumptions

Risks	Risk level (H/M/L)	Mitigating measures
Risk for Area of support 1: the political environment (political instability leading to weakened commitment to the EU <i>acquis</i> approximation process).	M	Communication and awareness raising campaigns on the objectives of the approximation strategy and benefits for the Kosovo communities.
Risk for Area of support 2: the decreased commitment from the governments to the Pristina-Belgrade Dialogue process.	H	Some of the proposed mitigation measures include putting in place some early warning indicators of potential obstacles, which would allow for swift reaction before the assistance is jeopardised.
Risk 1 for Area of support 3: The Kosovo institutions and other stakeholders are reluctant or have scarce capacity to change primary and secondary legislation and services for lowering the administrative burden	L	Capacity building through technical assistance will be a key activity of the action and should therefore be mitigated against.
Risk 2 for Area of support 3: Municipalities are unwilling to give up their administrative requirements as these are important own source revenues for municipalities.	M	Possibilities of reviewing the funding of municipalities through the Law on Local Government Finance. Compensating for the revenues lost through abolishing administrative burdens through better collection of property taxes that goes to municipalities.
Risk 1 for Area of support 4: The needs assessments to identify the priority sector areas for scholarships is not done before the start of each round.	H	NIPAC office to actively follow up with line ministries to receive their needs assessments in time.
Risk 2 for Area of support 4: The government does not offer employment opportunities for the scholars.	H	Full implementation of the new legal and regulatory framework under the Law on Public officials will mitigate this risk.
Risk 1 for Area of support 5: Economic and/or political crisis and structural reform requirements used as justification for side-lining gender equality concerns.	M	Awareness raising on the importance of gender,; close monitoring of the political situation; ensuring exchange and contact between strategic partners and stakeholders, including women's civil society organisations.
Risk 2 for Area of support 5: Slow progress in implementing key reforms and consolidating new sector coordination structure/mechanism.	M	Monitoring of key reforms and emerging entry points for providing support for gender mainstreaming; and close coordination with actors in governance reform.
Assumptions (to be reflected in the Logical Framework Matrix above) – grouped by outputs and outcomes		
<p>For outcome 1 / output 1 and the main assumptions are progress towards approximation with the EU <i>acquis</i>; and adequate absorption capacity.</p> <p>For outcome 2 /output 1 the main assumptions are political commitment is in place for normalisation of relations between Belgrade and Pristina at central and local levels; and adequate absorption capacity.</p> <p>For outcome 3 / output 1 the main assumption is engagement of key institutions in providing sufficiently resources necessary to carry out the planned interventions. For output 2 the main assumption is Commitment and support of the decision-making institutions to continue political reform and perform their obligations in line with the European perspective.</p> <p>For outcome 4 / output 1 the main assumption is engagement of all stakeholders; help-desk functions assured to all grantees. For output 2 it is Law on Public Officials is implemented properly by the Department for Management of Public Officials and line ministries are preparing the needs assessment prior to the scholarships award.</p> <p>For outcome 5 / output 1 the main assumptions are an environment that supports civil servants engaging in gender mainstreaming and stringent monitoring of gender in/equality in post-COVID-19 recovery and the enlargement context and for Output 2 the government commitment to translating Kosovo Gender Equality policy to the municipal level, and enhancing gender-responsive service delivery progress in fiscal decentralization.</p>		

3.4. Mainstreaming

How does this Action contribute to Gender Equality and Women's and Girls' Empowerment (in line with the EU gender equality strategy 2020-2025)?

The area of support 5 of this action primarily aims at mainstreaming gender equality goals into processes of governance undertaken in the framework of Kosovo's European perspective (i.e. implementation of the Gender Equality *acquis*). The promotion of gender equality and women's rights is a principal goal of the component (OECD-DAC Gender Marker classification G-2). As such, women's and girls' rights as human rights are explicitly promoted, also acknowledging the importance of men and boys as equal partners.

Gender Mainstreaming is especially relevant for the approximation with the EU *acquis*, as EU gender equality is a crucial element of the *acquis* and thus area of support 1 also contributes to gender equality. As institutional learning and capacity development takes time, NIPAC Office, Agency for Gender Equality and line ministries will continue to develop capacity building towards gender mainstreaming in all IPA programming. The action will support women to participate in the EU funded activities.

The action is fully aligned with the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 - striving for a Union of Equality, by supporting gender mainstreaming and systematically including a gender perspective in all stages of policy design across all EU policy areas. This also entails support for gender mainstreaming in structural reform programmes in public administration, state budgeting and financial management, relevant for areas of support 3 and 4 of the action.

How does this Action address Environment and Climate change?

The action is not expected to have a relevant environmental impact. Nevertheless, should any of the sub activities raise environmental and climate change considerations then everything will be screened against environmental sustainability. Furthermore, environmental considerations will be duly reflected in all IPA financed activities.

The area of support 3: Administrative Burden Reduction action foresees the implementation of IT structures, and/or elimination /reduction/merging of Information Obligations and administrative activities. This will lead to reduced need of travel for citizens and companies when complying with such Information Obligations. Further, the reduction in the use of paper can be expected.

The foreseen activities under the area of support 5: **Gender Equality Facility** include gender-sensitive revision of policies. The Action will make available and disseminate EU guidance on gender mainstreaming in environment and climate change with relevant stakeholders. Important areas of gender mainstreaming include the integration of gender equality goals into the measures and plans for the green and circular economy, environmental pollution and waste management, and Kosovo's risk reduction and disaster preparedness plans.

How does this Action address the Rights Based Approach?

The first two areas of support and area of support 4 will have the Rights Based Approach at the very centre of all interventions and special efforts will be made to include Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian students in activities, through close communication with local and international organisations supporting these communities. Vulnerable and social disadvantaged/excluded groups will also be targeted by these actions.

As regards the area of support 3, the administrative burden may often disproportionately hit the most vulnerable in society, as they are often less connected to the power structures and less aware of their rights as citizens. Therefore, the approach to reduce such burden and increasing access to e-services should improve access to services for the vulnerable, including minorities and people with disabilities.

How does this Action promote the systematic engagement with Civil Society?

Specific attention will be paid in the framework of this action to ensure that civil society and other stakeholders are consulted in the right time of the legislative and policy-making process and that the decision-makers are informed about the outcomes of the consultations. The engagement of civil society organisations and stakeholders will therefore be taken into consideration in all aspects of the action by strengthening their capacities, allowing them to engage in an effective dialogue with public and private actors. The area of support 3, administrative burden reduction, foresees a close cooperation with chambers of commerce as these are aware of the key hurdles of businesses when accessing services. Under the Gender Equality Facility, area of support 5, specific attention will be paid to ensuring that consultation processes that foresee active and articulate engagement of civil society, i.e. female and male citizens, and civil society organisations, are conducted in the foreseen manner. This includes the adequate planning, scheduling and conduction of consultative meetings; the application of adequate tools and approved methodologies. Throughout the

action, civil society actors, in particular women's organisations and those working specifically on gender equality and women empowerment will be engaged, consulted and informed.

Others (such as Resilience and Conflict Sensitivity, Roma, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups)

During the implementation of the activities, a special focus will be given to offering equal opportunities for everyone, including minority groups involved in the public sector as well as in the private service sector. The aim will be to contribute to multi-ethnic representation in the institutions benefiting from the projects, which will address the ethnic groups fairly and equitably in accordance with the law, along with other marginalised groups. Special attention will be paid to ensuring involvement of women from diverse minority groups, many of whom are particularly marginalized from decision-making processes. Under the area of support 4, Young Cell Scheme, to make sure unfair advantages are not provided to anyone, the applicants will be given a code that will be a reference through the entire selection process, eliminating the use of their names.

3.5. Conditions for implementation

For the area of support 4 the condition for implementation is the co-financing provided by the government for each round of the Young Cell Scheme.

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

3.6. Logical Framework

Results	Results chain: Main expected results (maximum 10)	Indicators (at least one indicator per expected result)	Baselines (year)	Targets (year)	Sources of data (1 per indicator)	Assumptions
Impact	To enhance capacities of the Kosovo administration in the approximation with the EU <i>acquis</i> , for the efficient use of IPA funds, and for rapid response to urgent political, economic, health or social needs.					<i>Not applicable</i>
Outcome 1	Strengthened technical and administrative capacity of the Kosovo administration in relation to approximation with the EU <i>acquis</i> ; effective and efficient implementation and evaluation of IPA assistance; and support to urgent political, economic, health (including animal health) or social needs ensured.	Degree of Kosovo institutions responsibility for coordination and management of EU assistance programmes.	30% (2020)	50 % (2024)	Annual Monitoring Committee EU Commission Kosovo Report.	Progress towards approximation with the EU <i>acquis</i> .
Outcome 2	Normalised relations between Kosovo and Serbia and increased mutual trust between the communities	Degree of implementation of Agreements reached within the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue	25% (2020)	30% (2024)	Line ministries' reports EU Commission Kosovo Report	Political commitment is in place for normalisation of relations
Outcome 3	Strengthened public administration to implement EU related reforms, and reduced administrative burden in selected areas.	OECD/SIGMA report (The Principles of Public Administration) dimension 'Citizen-oriented service delivery'	3/5 (2019) (final indicator value) (New baseline for 2021 will be available in 2021 SIGMA monitoring report)	4/5 (2025) (final indicator value)	Composite indicator of 13 sub-indicators. Self-assessment using OECD/SIGMA methodology.	The strategic significance of administrative burden reduction for economic competitiveness is reflected in political priorities.
Outcome 4	Strengthened Kosovo administration with competent and professional civil servants from the Young Cell Scheme contribute	Young Cell Scheme graduates are employed upon return from studies, and they are part of the professional, apolitical,	30 graduates employed (2020)	All Young Cell Scheme graduates	Government reports, EU Commission Kosovo Report, Project reports	Establishment of the Department of Management of Public Officials in the Ministry of Internal Affairs;

	to the fields identified as weak areas of Kosovo administration.	accountable and inclusive Public Administration		employed (2024)		women and members of the non-Albanian community show readiness to apply and complete their studies.
Outcome 5	The government of Kosovo at central and local levels increasingly complies with global norms and standards of gender equality and women's empowerment, and implements the EU Gender Equality <i>acquis</i> .	Increase in central policy documents, programmes, and plans reflecting gender and social responsiveness Number of municipalities with gender-responsive area-based development plan Number of IPA programming and IPA related documents on which gender mainstreaming comments provided	3 policy documents, programmes and plans (2020) 24 municipalities with a gender action plan (2019) 13 gender mainstreaming inputs for IPA III documents (2020)	At least 4 additional policy documents, programmes, and plans (2024) Additional 10 municipalities with a gender action plan (2024) Gender mainstreaming inputs for at least 3 IPA III programming documents annually	Review of sectoral and cross-cutting strategies, policies, plans, and development programmes, Annual Agency for Gender Equality Progress Report Annual Ministry of Local Government Administration Performance Monitoring Reports; municipality website Gender Equality Facility Progress Report Data collection method: Desk review	Sustained political commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment; Relatively stable political situation at Kosovo level; Continued mutual commitment to Kosovo's European path; Sector governance architecture is operational; Central level financing of gender-responsive service delivery is increased.
Output 1 related to outcome 1	Coordinated response put in place to meet urgent and unforeseen needs related to Kosovo's European perspective, support measures taken in response to political, economic, health or social needs and capacities for programming, implementation and evaluation of IPA funds.	Number of projects (including support measures) developed, implemented and evaluated under the facility for the approximation with the EU <i>acquis</i>	0 (2020)	15 (2023)	Annual report on Implementation of IPA by the National IPA Coordinator; External Assistance Management Report	Absorption capacity ensured, through effective project design in Kosovo institutions.
Output 1 related to outcome 2	Support provided in the implementation of existing or future agreements reached within the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue.	Number of projects (during the implementation of which beneficiaries will be disaggregated by gender) for socioeconomic development	33 (2020)	40 (2023)	EU Commission Kosovo Report	Political commitment at central and Local level administration to support the dialogue.

Output 1 related to outcome 3	The capacities have been improved to deliver policies and digital solutions for administrative burden reduction	Number of data sharing projects with significant impact implementing once-only principle	0 (2020)	4 (2025)	Assessment by independent external expert	Engagement of key institutions in providing sufficiently resources necessary to carry out the planned interventions
Output 2 related to outcome 3	The co-ordination of administrative burden reduction agenda has been improved between stakeholders for ensuring the progress of reform processes	Administrative burden reduction measures with significant impact in the Government Annual Work Plan annually	0 (2020)	15 (2025)	Assessment by independent external expert	Commitment and support of the decision-making institutions to continue political reform and perform their obligations in line with the European perspective
Output 1 related to outcome 4	The Kosovo administration has been supported through a targeted scholarship programme.	Number of the awarded grantees that successfully concluded Master studies	99% of awarded grantees completed their Master studies (2020)	100% successfully conclude master studies (2024)	Project progress reports, internal and external evaluation	Engagement of all stakeholders; help-desk functions assured to all grantees.
Output 2 related to outcome 4	The graduated Young Cell Scheme grantees have been employed in the civil service in Kosovo institutions upon return to Kosovo for a minimum of three consecutive years	Number of employed graduates in the civil service	60% (2020)	100% (2024)	Project progress reports, internal and external evaluation	Law on Public Officials is implemented properly by the Department for Management of Public Officials and line ministries are preparing the needs assessment prior to the scholarships award.
Output 1 related to outcome 5	Sector reforms, strategies, post-COVID-19 recovery/development programmes, and plans are designed with gender sensitivity consistently.	Number of training modules on gender mainstreaming revised/prepared for incorporation into the curriculum for civil servants Number of gender mainstreaming inputs for government strategies, policies, programmes, and plans Availability of sector-/policy area specific gender	No recent updates of gender mainstreaming modules for KIPA's civil servant trainings (2020) 5 gender mainstreaming inputs for government strategies, policies,	At least 4 gender mainstreaming modules for civil servant training revised/newly prepared (2024) Gender mainstreaming inputs for at least 4 government strategies, policies,	Project progress reports, Kosovo Institute for Public Administration data base, Communication documents; number of views in social media, Data collection method: desk review of documents	Environment that supports civil servants engaging in gender mainstreaming Stringent monitoring of gender in/equality in post-COVID-19 recovery and the enlargement context

		mainstreaming guidance documents	programmes, and plans provided (2020) Sector-/policy area specific gender mainstreaming guidance unavailable (2020)	programmes, and plans provided (2024) Gender mainstreaming guidance for at least 8 sector/policy areas available (2024)		
Output 2 related to outcome 5	Local government units engaged in gender mainstreaming.	Number of municipality staff familiarised with gender mainstreaming tools; Number of municipalities with gender-responsive action plans/service delivery; Number of local government units benefiting from dedicated gender performance grant;	No training on gender mainstreaming tools for local government available (2020) 24 municipalities with gender action plan (2019) 0 local government units benefiting from dedicated gender performance grant (2020)	At least 100 municipality staff trained on gender mainstreaming tools (2024) Additional 10 municipalities with gender action plan (2024) Up to 10 municipalities benefiting from dedicated gender performance grant (2024)	List of participants, agenda, training materials, Local Development Plans, Municipality website; official record of Municipal Council approval, Ministry of Local Government Administration website, desk review of documents	Government commitment to translating Kosovo Gender Equality policy to the municipal level, and enhancing gender-responsive service delivery Progress in fiscal decentralisation

4. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

4.1. Financing agreement

In order to implement this action, it is foreseen to conclude a financing agreement with Kosovo.

4.2. Implementation modalities

The Commission will ensure that the EU appropriate rules and procedures for providing financing to third parties are respected, including review procedures, where appropriate, and compliance of the action with EU restrictive measures⁷.

4.2.1. Direct Management (Grants)

Grants: (direct management)

(a) Purpose of the grant(s)

For the Areas of Support 1 and 2 (EU Approximation Facility and the Pristina-Belgrade Facility) the purpose of the grants is to contribute to support preparation and/or implementation of interventions responding to the challenges identified in the Stabilisation Association Agreement, the Economic Reform Programme, the European Reform Agenda, and the Kosovo Report as well as the EU facilitated Dialogue for the normalisation of relations between Belgrade and Pristina.

For the Area of Support 4 (the Young Cell Scheme) the purpose of the grants is to strengthen the Kosovo Public administration with the competent and professional group of civil servants that will contribute to the fields identified as a weak areas of Kosovo administration

(b) Type of applicants targeted

For the Areas of Support 1 and 2 (EU Approximation Facility and the Pristina-Belgrade Facility) the applicants must be legal entities, local authorities, public bodies, international organisations, civil society organisations and other stakeholders. In the case of twinning grants, applicants must be EU Member State administrations or their mandated bodies.

For the Area of Support 4 (the Young Cell Scheme) the applicants must be legal entities, public bodies, international organisations, economic actors such as non-profit organisations and agencies based in EU Member States involved in in cultural and educational activities.

4.2.2. Direct Management (Procurement)

A part of the Areas of Support 1 and 2 will be implemented via procurement

This delivery method will contribute to the following outputs:

Area of Support 1 / Output: Coordinated response put in place to meet urgent and unforeseen needs related to Kosovo's European perspective, support measures taken in response to political, economic, environmental, health or social needs and capacities for programming, implementation and evaluation of IPA funds.

Area of Support 2 / Output: Support provided in the implementation of existing or future agreements reached within the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue.

EU <i>Acquis</i> approximation Facility and Pristina - Belgrade dialogue Facility	Indicative type (works, supplies, services)	Indicative trimester of launch of the procedure
EU <i>Acquis</i> Approximation Facility	Services, works and supplies	Q2 , Q3 and Q4 of 2022 and 2023

⁷ www.sanctionsmap.eu. Please note that the sanctions map is an IT tool for identifying the sanctions regimes. The source of the sanctions stems from legal acts published in the Official Journal (OJ). In case of discrepancy between the published legal acts and the updates on the website it is the OJ version that prevails.

Pristina - Belgrade Dialogue Facility	Services, works and supplies	Q1, Q3 and Q4 of 2022 and 2023
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4.2.3. Indirect management with entrusted entities

A part of this action, namely **Area of support 3**, may be implemented in indirect management with The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ).

This implementation entails specific objective 2 “Strengthened public administration to implement EU related reforms, and reduced administrative burden in selected areas”, covering all output areas.

The envisaged entity has been selected using the following criteria:

- The entity has a strong operational capacity to manage successfully governance reform projects in Kosovo;
- Has long-term working relationships with a network of local partners engaged in implementing public administration reforms; and
- Can combine a wide range of tools for enhanced impact by integrating policy-making and policy-implementation, including by increasing the capacities to deliver digital services.

In addition, the new GIZ project supporting Kosovo in its European perspective that started in 2021 aims to improve the administrative capacities to deliver reforms by strengthening the policy co-ordination and improving the implementation of these policies. The co-operation between EU and GIZ governance reform initiatives provides better co-ordination when working together with the same pool of local partners and beneficiaries.

A part of this action, namely **Area of support 5**, may be implemented in indirect management with UN Women. This implementation entails “The government of Kosovo at central and local levels increasingly complies with global norms and standards of gender equality and women’s empowerment, and implements the EU Gender Equality acquis”, covering all out areas.

The envisaged entity has been selected using the following criteria:

- UN Women is an entity dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women.
- It works to position gender equality as fundamental to Sustainable Development Goals, and a more inclusive world.
- UN Women has worked in Kosovo since 1999 and collaborates closely with institutions, government, civil society on building and advancing the gender equality mechanisms at the central and local levels to foster gender equality and women's empowerment.
- In recent years, UN Women in Kosovo has supported activities and programmes that focus on ending the violence against women and advancing the women, peace and security agenda. UN Women has implemented other Gender Equality Facilities in neighbouring countries since 2016 and several other actions also jointly with the EU.

In case the envisaged entities mentioned above would need to be replaced, the Commission’s services may select a replacement entity using the same criteria given above.

4.2.4. Changes from indirect to direct management mode (and viceversa) due to exceptional circumstances (one alternative second option)

In exceptional circumstances and upon authorization of the European Commission, changes from indirect to direct management mode (and vice versa) are possible, as well as other changes in the management and procurement modes. In addition, in some unpredicted and emergency situations, with prior approval of the European Commission, support to unforeseen and ad hoc actions may also be possible.

4.3 Scope of geographical eligibility for procurement and grants

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

4.4. Indicative budget

	EU contribution (amount in EUR)	Indicative third party contribution, in currency identified
Output 1: Coordinated response put in place to meet urgent and unforeseen needs related to Kosovo's European perspective, support measures taken in response to political, economic, health or social needs and capacities for programming, implementation and evaluation of IPA funds; composed of	4 360 000	
<i>Direct management (Grants) – cf section 4.2.1</i>	N.A.	
<i>Direct management (Procurement) – cf. section 4.2.2</i>	N.A.	
Output2: Support provided in the implementation of existing or future agreements reached within the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue; composed of	1 500 000	
<i>Direct management (Grants) – cf section 4.2.1</i>	N.A.	
<i>Direct management (Procurement) – cf. section 4.2.2</i>	N.A.	
Output 3: The capacities have been improved to deliver policies and digital solutions for administrative burden reduction and the co-ordination of administrative burden reduction agenda has been improved between stakeholders for ensuring the progress of reform processes; composed of	4 000 000	
<i>Indirect management with GIZ – cf. section 4.2.3</i>	N.A.	
Output 4: The Kosovo administration has been supported through a targeted scholarship programme and the graduated Young Cell Scheme grantees have been employed in the civil service in Kosovo institutions upon return to Kosovo for a minimum of three consecutive years; composed of	3 000 000	1 000 000
<i>Direct management (Grants) – cf section 4.2.1</i>	N.A.	
Output 5: Sector reforms, strategies, post-COVID-19 recovery/development programmes, and plans are designed with gender sensitivity consistently; composed of	1 500 000	
<i>Indirect management with UN WOMEN –cf section 4.2.3</i>	N.A.	
Grants – total envelope under section 4.2.1	4 500 000	N.A.
Procurement – total envelope under section 4.2.2	4 360 000	N.A.
Indirect management with entrusted entities under section 4.2.3	5 500 000	N.A.
Evaluation (cf. section 5.3)	will be covered by another decision	N.A.
Audit/Expenditure verification (cf. section 6)	will be covered by another decision	N.A.
Communication and visibility (cf. section 7)	N.A.	N.A.
Contingencies	N.A.	N.A.
Total	14 360 000	1 000 000

4.5. Organisational set-up and responsibilities

The first two areas of support will be implemented under direct management by the EU Office in Kosovo as Contracting Authority having the overall responsibility for contracting, monitoring and evaluation and the implementation of projects stemming from the two facilities will be coordinated by the relevant beneficiary institutions and the National IPA Coordinator.

For the third area of support, the **Administrative Burden Reduction** the implementing partner GIZ will build on the network established during its previous projects and keep on working with the Office for Strategic Planning, the Legal Office and the Office for Development Cooperation in the Office of the Prime Minister, which are all responsible for coordination of the administrative burden reduction in Kosovo. Other key institutions, such as the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Economy and the Agency for Information Society, will be involved in the implementation of the action. GIZ will have the overall responsibility to oversee coordination of implementation, reporting, monitoring, and evaluation. GIZ will set up a project team. A Steering Committee (SC) involving the local coordinating partners and EU Office in Kosovo will be established to oversee and coordinate the operations of the action.

In area of support 4, **the Young Cell Scheme**, a call for proposal will be launched. The selected implementing partner will work closely with the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Office of the Prime Minister and all other line Ministries to ensure a merit-based selection of candidates and eventual employment of graduates. The implementing partner will establish a project team to ensure implementation of the agreed activities. The project together with the EU Office and the beneficiary institutions will establish a project steering committee.

For the fifth area of support, the **Gender Equality Facility**, UN Women will work in close partnership with the Agency for Gender Equality, the Office for Strategic Planning in the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Local Government, selected line ministries, the EU Office in Kosovo, women's civil society organisations and other partner institutions. UN Women will set up a project team. A Steering Committee (SC) will be established to oversee and coordinate the operations of the action.

5. PERFORMANCE/RESULTS MONITORING AND REPORTING

5.1. Internal monitoring

For the first two areas of support the EU Office will ensure internal monitoring of the actions stemming from the two facilities, as well as ensure full involvement of the NIPAC office and other key stakeholders involved. For area of support three, the implementing partner GIZ will follow its internal monitoring procedures for the monitoring of the action. For the area of support 4, internal monitoring will be ensured by the EU Office. These monitoring efforts will be complemented by the primary action partners, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the NIPAC office. For the fifth area of support, UN Women is responsible for monitoring and reporting. Monitoring of the project will be in accordance with the UN Women regulations and procedures for monitoring.

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

Due to the nature of the first two areas of support, it is not possible at this period in time to describe the performance and monitoring arrangements. The interventions to be financed under these two facilities will be closely coordinated with the NIPAC office. For area of support three, the responsibilities for data collection, analysis and reporting will be with the implementing partner, GIZ. For area of support four, the responsibility for data collection, analysis and reporting will belong to the implementing partner supported by the beneficiary institutions, NIPAC office and relevant ministries. For area of support five, data collection, analysis and reporting will be the responsibility of UN Women, supported by the relevant institutions.

5.3. Evaluation

Having regard to the nature of the action or any of the areas of support, a mid-term or final evaluations will be carried out for this action or its areas of support via independent consultants contracted by the Commission or via an implementing partner. The evaluations will be carried out for learning purposes, in particular with respect to the nature of facilities and the nature of the interventions.

The Commission shall inform the implementing partner at least 1 (one) month in advance of the dates foreseen for the evaluation missions. The implementing partner shall collaborate efficiently and effectively with the evaluation experts, and inter alia provide them with all necessary information and documentation, as well as access to the project premises and activities. The evaluation reports shall be shared with the partner beneficiary and other key stakeholders. The implementing partner and the Commission shall analyse the conclusions and recommendations of the evaluations and,

where appropriate, in agreement with the partner beneficiary, jointly decide on the follow-up actions to be taken and any adjustments necessary, including, if indicated, the reorientation of the project.

Evaluation services shall be covered by another support measure constituting a financing decision. As per the EU Gender Action Plan, monitoring and evaluation will include gender analysis.

6. AUDIT

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

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

7. COMMUNICATION AND VISIBILITY

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

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

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

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

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

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

8. SUSTAINABILITY

With regard to the two first components, the EU *acquis* approximation Facility and the Pristina –Belgrade dialogue Facility, this type of assistance has proved to be extremely useful for the sustainability of the overall EU assistance to Kosovo and we see an increasing ownership of the beneficiary for these types of activities. What is important about these facilities is that its methodology is being slowly taken on board by the IPA II beneficiary. They are now convinced that without having the relevant expertise and preparatory work done they are not able to engage in projects and ensure its successful implementation.

With regard to component three, the Administrative Burden Reduction support, sustainability of the results will be achieved, as the project will work within the government systems and assist in setting up processes for better data sharing, digital services and filters to detect and reduce excessive administrative burdens. The main stakeholders have been actively involved in the design of the action.

With regard to component four, the Young Cell Scheme, the impact ensuring the sustainability is the employment of the graduates in the civil service. With that, the technical capacity and know-how of the government in implementing the EU agenda is continuously improved. This action will counteract the brain-drain. The inclusion of members of disadvantaged groups in the scholarships will contribute to social inclusion.

With regard to component five, the Gender Equality Facility, sustainability of the results will be ensured through alignment of Kosovo policies and strategies with international and EU guidelines on gender equality: by supporting gender mainstreaming in the preparation of policies and action plans, the action includes sustainability in all its activities. By investing in actors, processes and individuals, gender mainstreaming will gradually become institutionalised. One key aspect is to foster cooperation between actors (at central and local government levels and with civil society). Care will be taken not to introduce parallel systems, but to embed gender within frameworks, mechanisms, structures and procedures that exist. The action puts a strong focus on facilitation of dialogue, change, and problem solving within the context of gender mainstreaming legislation, policies and governance in order to help further capacity building beyond the scope of the action.