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Regional Programme on Local Democracy
in the Western Balkans 2 (ReLOaD2)

IPA/2020/421-996

Description of the Action

Title of the action:	Regional Programme on Local Democracy in the Western Balkans 2 (ReLOaD2)
Location(s) of the action:	Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia
Name of the lead applicant	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Bosnia and Herzegovina
Nationality of the lead applicant	International Organisation

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* For the European Union, this designation is without prejudice to position on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence. For UNDP all references to Kosovo shall be understood in the context of the UN Resolution 1244/1999.

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Regional Programme on Local Democracy in the Western Balkans 2 (ReLOaD2)

1 GENERAL INFORMATION

Reference of the call for proposals	Direct Agreement
Title of the call for proposals	N/A
Name of the lead applicant	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Bosnia and Herzegovina
Number of the proposal	N/A
Title of the action	Regional Programme on Local Democracy in the Western Balkans 2 (ReLOaD 2)
Location of the action	Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia (Western Balkans region ¹) with a focus on 50 local governments
Duration of the action	48 months

¹ For the purposes of this action, Western Balkans region includes the following IPA beneficiaries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia.

2 THE ACTION

2.1. Description of the action

As a critical component of democratic systems, civil society has been and will continue to be an important actor of reform processes taking place in the Western Balkans. In this context, the European Union (EU) accession agenda in the region promotes the role of civil society in further democratisation, including consultation in decision making, contribution to processes associated with policy and regulatory changes, as well as performing of a watchdog function and promoting of public accountability.

The overall objective of the Action is to strengthen participatory democracies and the EU integration process in the Western Balkans by empowering civil society and youth to actively take part in decision making and by stimulating an enabling legal and financial environment for CSOs.

The Action is based on previous efforts realised through EU supported initiatives – Reinforcement of Local Democracy Project (LOD, 2009-2016)² and a subsequent scale-up Regional Programme on Local Democracy in the Western Balkans (ReLOaD, 2017-2020).³

Same as the previous phase, ReLOaD2 will be implemented throughout the region, in the following IPA beneficiaries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro, and Serbia.

The specific objective of the Action is to strengthen partnerships between local governments and civil society in the Western Balkans by enhancing transparency in funding of CSOs from local government budgets and promoting youth and civic engagement in decision-making and community development.

Working across the region, ReLOaD2 will enhance capacities of local governments⁴ and CSOs to engage in productive partnerships and contribute to improved service delivery and realisation of local priorities in line with development strategies. It will incite local governments to use public funding for CSOs in a transparent and development-oriented manner, recognising local needs and embracing a project-based approach. Also, the Action will promote youth engagement and support implementation of youth initiatives and will work on improvement of their economic perspectives in partner localities.

The Action will strive to achieve the following results:

R0 Project structures and management principles set-up for efficient support to CSOs, local governments and stakeholders.

R1 The capacity of local governments to institutionalise transparent and gender responsive grant schemes is strengthened.

R2 The capacity of CSOs and local governments to implement grant schemes and deliver good quality and gender responsive projects servicing the local community is strengthened.

R3 Capacity of local authorities and CSOs to generate greater civic and youth engagement in local affairs is enhanced.

R4 Regional networking and dialogue among civil society and local governments across the Western Balkans is enhanced.

The Action duration is 48 months.

² Implemented by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the LOD Project worked on strengthening inclusiveness and transparency in local government funding for CSOs. It introduced competitive project-based funding, inciting CSOs to professionalize and provide specific services, in accordance with local development priorities.

³ http://www.ba.undp.org/content/bosnia_and_herzegovina/en/home/operations/projects/poverty_reduction/regional-programme-on-local-democracy-in-the-western-balkans--re.html

⁴ For the purposes of this document, terms local governments, municipalities and/or cities are the same and might be used interchangeably throughout the document.

Background

Environment for civil society development in the Western Balkan region

Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro, and Serbia (hereinafter: IPA beneficiaries) face challenges when it comes to the cooperation between governments and CSOs, including limitations in the overall environment for CSO operations, lack of structured CSO participation in public affairs and inadequate CSO capacities. CSOs remain largely dependent on financing by foreign donors, which is due to a combination of factors including limitations in public funding and lack of transparent mechanisms for funds disbursement. This clearly undermines the CSO sustainability and independence and represents one of the main obstacles to development and functioning of credible civil society.⁵

Across the Western Balkans, CSOs are also important actors in the context of local governance. They promote inclusion, activate participation in public affairs, reinforce accountability systems, and contribute to reducing gaps in public service delivery. However, limitations in the environment for CSO work, as well as capacity constraints faced by both CSOs and local governments affect their cooperation efforts. While local governments across the region provide sizeable public funding to CSOs,⁶ they also face transparency and accountability challenges. Public funding disbursement is often not based on clear criteria, reporting by CSOs on received funding is inadequate, monitoring of awarded funds is not performed, and effects are not measured nor adequately communicated to the public.

Youth engagement in the Western Balkan region

While considered critical for strengthening fragile democracies and promoting broad-based social transformations in the Western Balkans, youth engagement in the region leaves a lot to be desired. Recent surveys have shown that many young people do not consider participation in community or politics-related initiatives and activities as important.⁷ Several studies also show that they are largely dissatisfied with the level of democracy in their countries. Youth are marginalised also due to the limited job opportunities⁸ and inadequate skills which are a direct consequence of outdated educational systems that fail to respond to the needs of the labour market. Weak incentives to stay in the Western Balkans region have made emigration a popular option, resulting in alarming levels of brain drain. All of the above results in youth alienation and disengagement, limiting prospects for the positive transformation of societies in the region.

Context in IPA beneficiaries

In **Albania**, the Government is committed to strengthening cooperation with civil society, recognizing the importance of CSOs role in addressing citizens' needs. In this context, the Government adopted an updated *Roadmap for the Policy towards more Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development*. However, as stated in the *Albania 2020 Report* "the financial sustainability of civil society organisations remains a challenge due to unfavourable fiscal and legal frameworks."⁹ Local governments have limited experience with CSO projects, mainly due to limited financial resources and lack of clear procedures.¹⁰ Through ReLOaD, 12 partner local governments have introduced mechanisms for disbursement of public funds to CSOs.

⁵ Multi-Country Civil Society Facility and Media Action Document 2014-2015:

http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/financial_assistance/ipa/2015/multi-country/ipa_ii_2014-031-605.01_2015-037-653.01-csf-and-media-multi-country.pdf

⁶ Based on estimates, around 50% of public spending awarded to CSOs in the region comes from local governments (except for Albania and Montenegro).

⁷ 79% of youth in Southeast Europe do not engage in any unpaid voluntary activity and completely lack this experience and understanding of benefits in community engagement. Lavrić, Milan, et al. "FES Youth Studies Southeast Europe 2018/2019." *Youth Studies in Southeast Europe 2018/2019*, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Apr. 2019, www.fes-soe.org/features/youth-studies/, page 68.

⁸ Youth unemployment rates (15 – 29), as a percentage of the labour force, range between 20%-50% in the Western Balkans 6, www.fes-soe.org/features/youth-studies/ page 26.

⁹ Albania 2020 Report, Accompanying the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions 2020, Communication on EU Enlargement Policy (page 13) https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/albania_report_2020.pdf

¹⁰ Report on existing financial mechanisms for civil society organisations in Albania, United Nations Development Programme, October 2018, http://www.al.undp.org/content/albania/en/home/library/democratic_governance/1--report-on-existing-financial-mechanisms-for-civil-society-org.html, (page 32)

Considering the lack of legal framework, this was a breakthrough, indicating strong local governments' interest to adopt relevant bylaws and institutionalise mechanisms for transparent disbursement of funds for CSOs. The position of youth in Albania is similar as in the rest of the region, with young people facing lack of optimism, quality education, high unemployment rates, etc. The recently adopted National Law on Youth No 75/2019,¹¹ among other, defines obligatory elements of youth organizations and their functioning including source of funding, etc. The law intends "to protect the rights of young people in a comprehensive manner, create the necessary conditions for the activation, participation and support of young people, determine the functions and competencies of institutions at central and local level, and to cooperate with organizations that exercise activities in the field of youth".¹² Another important document is the National Youth Action Plan (NYAP) 2015-2020.¹³ The Plan has six general objectives, including youth promotion and participation in democratic processes, employment and education.¹⁴ Despite recent development of regulatory and strategic framework, the position of youth still needs to be significantly improved in order to reverse negative trends.

Bosnia and Herzegovina experienced some progress in establishing institutional mechanisms for cooperation between government and CSOs, as well as in public financing of CSOs. These improvements on a local level have been mostly achieved because of the EU-funded interventions LOD and ReLOaD, where 53 out of 145 local governments have institutionalized the methodology for transparent disbursement of funds to CSOs. Despite the achievements, there are remaining challenges to be addressed in order to improve cooperation and enhance partnerships between local authorities and CSOs. *Bosnia and Herzegovina 2020 Report* by the European Commission states that "the distribution of public funds is not fully transparent and impartial. Only a few municipalities have regulations for the transparent funding of civil society organisations that are based on clearly defined criteria and require monitoring and evaluation tools. A framework for the transparent funding of civil society is needed across the country."¹⁵ Local authorities, which account for approximately 50% of domestic public funding for CSOs, often do not publish public calls for grants or apply adequate selection procedures for public calls.¹⁶ Most of the funding continues to be transferred directly to sport clubs¹⁷ and organizations stemming from the last war (e.g. associations representing war veterans, families of fallen soldiers, etc.).

As for youth-related issues, the Government of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina issued a Decision on appointing a working group to develop the Youth Strategy 2021-2025, but ever since there was no progress. On the other side, the other entity, Republika Srpska, has a strategic approach in a form of the Youth Policy of Republika Srpska for 2016-2020 which aims to be implemented in five priority fields that are in line with ReLoad2 interventions. Youth Strategy of Brčko District is in development process and is coordinated by the Youth Council of Brčko District and Brčko District Government.

In **Kosovo** some progress has been noted in the overall environment for CSO operations with focus on the areas of public consultations in policy making and public funding of CSO programmes and projects; while less progress has been made in the areas of volunteering and improving standards for public service delivery by CSOs.¹⁸ The strategic framework for structured cooperation between the government and civil society for the 2019-2023 period has been endorsed in 2019. Based on the strategic framework, a new Government Council for Cooperation with Civil Society was established in July 2019.¹⁹ There is ongoing work to introduce public consultation standards also at municipal level, however, there is still a need for systematic transparency in the

¹¹ Law No 75/2019 Date 04.11.2019

¹² Article 1, Law No 75/2019 Date 04.11.2019

¹³ Decision of the Council of Ministers No. 383 of 06.05.2015

¹⁴ National Youth Action Plan 2015-2020, p. 9.

¹⁵ EC report, Commission staff working document Bosnia and Herzegovina 2020, Report Accompanying the document Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions 2020 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy (page 11), https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/bosnia_and_herzegovina_report_2020.pdf

¹⁶ 2018 Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index, available at: <https://www.fhi360.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/resource-csosi-2018-report-europe-eurasia.pdf>, page 52

¹⁷ Both professional and amateur sport clubs/associations are registered under the same regulatory framework. Consequently, they are financed from the same budget lines foreseen for CSOs. Professional sports clubs gain profit and at the same time receive largest portions of public funding foreseen for CSOs.

¹⁸ Available at: http://www.civikos.net/repository/docs/Strategy_eng_291507.pdf Government Strategy for Cooperation with Civil Society 2019-2023

¹⁹ Ibid.

disbursement of public funds to NGOs. The allocation of funds for CSOs is defined by the *Regulation on the criteria, standards and procedures for public funding of NGOs* (MF-04/2017) adopted in June 2017, which has established a funding system public for CSOs, including clearly defined rules and transparency both at central and local level.²⁰ While this is a very positive step towards the transparency of public funding for CSOs, which was also supported by ReLOaD in five municipalities out of 38, there is still a need for systematic transparency in the disbursement of public funds to CSOs.²¹

Kosovo society has established a strong legal base towards a convenient educational, social, cultural, and political conditions for the welfare of young people, regardless of ethnicity, nationality, race, gender, religion, or culture. There have been some major legal accomplishments in Youth Policy in Kosovo. The Law on Empowerment and Participation of Youth (2009) promotes the participation of youth in the decision-making processes for the development of a democratic society and the improvement of the quality of life of youth²². The law also outlines the rights, responsibilities and obligations of governmental authorities and youth organizations.

The climate in which CSOs operate in **North Macedonia** has continued to improve. The *North Macedonia 2020 Report* by the European Commission notes that “Civil society remained active and played a key role in policy and decision-making processes.”²³ Some progress was noted in the cooperation between the Government and the civil society by regular functioning of the Council for Cooperation with NGOs.²⁴ The Government adopted the *2018-2020 Strategy for Collaboration with Civil Society and its Action Plan*,²⁵ which among others, envisages further support for civil sector development, civil society participation in policy design and implementation, and improved CSO sustainability, including through transparent public funding. CSOs may receive funds from the national and the municipal budgets, as specified in the *Law on Association and Foundations*²⁶, but according to the 2020 Progress Report “the legal and financial frameworks still need to be improved and implemented in practice”(…)“adequate administrative capacity and proper organisational set-up is needed in the Government unit for NGO Cooperation, including sufficient state funding to ensure proper implementation of the 2018-2020 strategy”.²⁷ Generally, public funding for CSOs is limited. Cooperation between local governments and CSOs remains weak and there is no unified system for CSO funding with clearly defined rules and procedures. Also, many local authorities do not have precise information about CSOs operating within their localities.²⁸ With the ReLOaD support, four local governments have introduced the mechanism for transparent funds disbursement to CSOs. This has entailed consultations with CSOs, adoption of relevant local regulations, institutional capacity development, as well as learning by doing through pilot calls-for-proposals.

As for youth-related issues, the Law on Youth Participation and Youth Policies²⁹ was prepared in consultations with the representatives from the youth wings of the largest political parties, several youth CSOs and the Youth Affairs and Policies Club in the Parliament. This is the first legislative act exclusively covering youth, which establishes the concepts of “youth organization”, “youth umbrella organization”, “National Youth Parliament”, “National Advisory Body on Youth Policies” and “local youth councils.”

In **Montenegro**, mechanisms for Government’s consultation of CSOs are in place, but they need clear rules, and genuine engagement on both sides. The *Montenegro 2020 Report* by the European Commission states that “The rules for public funding of CSOs secure a minimum of 0.5% of the state budget to be allocated to civil

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ EC Kosovo* Progress Report 2019, page.9, <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20190529-kosovo-report.pdf>

²² https://www.youthpolicy.org/national/Kosovo_2009_Youth_Law.pdf

²³ North Macedonia 2020 Report, 2019 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy {COM(2019) 260 final}, page 7, https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/north_macedonia_report_2020.pdf

²⁴ <https://www.nvosorabotka.gov.mk/>

²⁵ Government of the FYR of Macedonia. Strategy for Cooperation with the Civil Society 2018 – 2020 https://www.nvosorabotka.gov.mk/sites/default/files/Strategija%202018%20-%202020%20usvoena%209%2010%202018_0.pdf

²⁶ Law on Association and Foundations Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia”no.52/2010 and 135/2011)

https://www.legislationline.org/download/id/7554/file/fYROM_law_associations_foundations_2010_am2011_en.pdf

²⁷ North Macedonia 2020 Report, 2019 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy {COM(2019) 260 final}, page 11,

https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/north_macedonia_report_2020.pdf

²⁸ Jankulovski, Zoran, 2018, Analysis of the LOD Methodology application in the ReLOaD partner municipalities

²⁹ <https://www.pravdiko.mk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Zakon-za-mladinsko-uchestvo-i-mladinski-politiki-16-01-2020.pdf>

society. In 2019, this budget amounted to EUR 3.7 million (compared with EUR 4 million in 2020). While the overall process has become more transparent in recent years with the recruitment of external assessors, concerns over the evaluation process persist.³⁰ Furthermore, the same report concludes that “CSOs can also access funds at local level under the law on local self-governments, but the majority of municipalities lack transparent procedures.” The national *Strategy for Improvement of the Environment for Work of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) for 2018 - 2020*³¹ was adopted in late 2017, providing some guidance for improving administrative and legal framework for more active CSO participation in policy design and decision making and targeting mostly national level. Ministry for Public Administration is working on the *Programme on public institutions and NGOs cooperation for 2021 – 2023* that should replace the existing Strategy.

However, majority of local governments face challenges with the implementation, including programming of funds, participatory defining of priorities for financing, monitoring and reporting on allocated funds, etc. Moreover, CSO capacities to design and implement projects for the benefit of their target groups remain limited. Through ReLOaD, five local governments have been capacitated to implement transparent procedures for allocation of public funds to CSOs. Capacities of organisations to prepare project proposals and implement projects proved to be very low, although the programme has been working in relatively developed localities.

The Law on youth³² (amended in May 2019) provides for improving the functioning of youth organizations and associations in Montenegro, formal representation in the Council for Youth and for introducing new service at local level – youth clubs/centres, which should be established by local self-governments with co-financing by national government. Both national and local authorities are obliged to adopt policy documents for youth: National Youth Strategy³³ with the Action Plan and Local Youth Action Plans (adopted by all municipalities). Ministry of Sports and Youth (in charge for youth policy), Ministry for Education and Employment Agency of Montenegro are leading institutions in funding youth initiatives, programmes and projects in accordance with the Law, while municipalities have somewhat moderate scale of funding, depending on their financial capacities.

Serbia has in place the regulatory framework that provides for the participation of CSOs in public policy making at both national and local level, as well as for financing of CSOs from public sources, including local government budgets. Amendments to the Regulation on Funds to Support Programmes or Missing Amount of Funds for Programmes of Public Interest implemented by Associations were adopted in 2018, aiming to harmonize the internal legal acts regulating public funding of CSOs, and increase transparency and accountability. In 2019, the Office for cooperation with civil society published an e-calendar of public calls and all public administration bodies were obliged to submit an annual plan as regards public calls for financing CSOs, however, the practice of such annual plans needs to be monitored. Still, the *Serbia 2020 Progress Report* notes that “the criteria for public financial support for CSOs need to be better defined and implemented to ensure overall transparency, especially at local level.” A separate budget line for donations to civil society does not guarantee financing of CSO projects. Local governments tend to favour disbursing smaller grants to a larger number of organizations, while civil society participation in programming and design of calls-for-proposals is rare. The Office for Cooperation with Civil Society has produced “Guidelines for Transparent Financing of Associations and Other Civil Society Organizations from Local Governments’ Budgets” and delivered several training sessions on transparent public funding of CSOs to public institutions at the national level. ReLOaD has capacitated five out of 145 local governments in Serbia to introduce transparent mechanisms for funding CSOs. Following the model set through ReLOaD, other five local self-governments selected under the Sida-funded *Accountable Public Finance Platform* project have committed to adopt/improve local legislation that regulates the financing of CSOs, in line with the Regulation and the LOD

³⁰ Montenegro 2020 Report, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions 2020 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy, https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/montenegro_report_2020.pdf

³¹ Strategy for Improvement of the Environment for work of NGOs, <http://www.mju.gov.me/ResourceManager/FileDownload.aspx?rid=301459&rType=2&file=Strategija%20unapredenja%20podsticajnog%20okruzenja%20%202018-20120.pdf>

³² Law on Youth, Official Gazette of Montenegro, No. 025/19 from 30.04.2019, 027/19 from 17.05.2019 <http://www.ms.gov.me/biblioteka/zakoni?alphabet=lat>

³³ Youth Strategy 2017 – 2021, Government of Montenegro, <http://www.strategijazamlade.me/>

methodology. However, further efforts are needed to improve the clarity of funding criteria and introduce robust monitoring and evaluation practices across local governments.

Related to youth, Serbia adopted a framework Law in 2011, however the practice is still not entirely aligned with legislative provisions. The National Youth Strategy³⁴ (for the period from 2015 to 2025) was adopted in 2015, and the actual Action Plan for its implementation was adopted in 2018 for a period of 3 years (2018-2021). The strategy defines nine strategic goals as desirable, changed conditions for young people in areas of their interest.³⁵ The goals are aligned with ReLOaD2.

About the ReLOaD1 programme (2017-2020)

During almost four years of the implementation, ReLOaD1 has worked actively with 53 local governments (10% of all local governments in the region) by building their capacities and introducing procedures for transparent management and disbursement of public funds. 42 partner local governments have formally adopted and institutionalised the mechanisms for transparent disbursement of funds for CSOs. ReLOaD has also worked intensively with CSOs, strengthening capacities of more than 1,400 grassroots CSOs. The initiative has supported implementation of 128 public calls for funding of CSOs, resulting in financing of more than 490 CSO projects across the region. ReLOaD was successful in establishing cross-regional platforms for exchange of concepts, knowledge and experiences between different types of stakeholders and target groups across the region.

The ReLOaD partners have almost unanimously agreed that the initiative provided significant benefits for their work. As underlined in the external evaluation findings:

In all of the six IPA beneficiaries, the ReLOaD initiative was and still is very relevant in relation to ongoing policy development and implementation as well as timely. Within the overall process of EU accession, all countries/territories either recognise the need for and are in the (early) process of developing relevant legislation (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and North Macedonia) or they are starting to implement, monitor and subsequently revise recently developed legislation regarding transparent (local) government funding of CSOs (Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia). The objectives of these efforts are all similar: improve public finance management, improve service delivery to citizens and improve cooperation between local governments and CSOs.³⁶

Furthermore, “the high relevance of the project (for both national government, the EU and UNDP) is mainly related to the fact that ReLOaD does not have an exclusive focus on either enhancing the capacities of CSOs or local governments separately as so many other projects do, but on strengthening them simultaneously, while it uses, at the same time, a very practical tool (the LOD methodology) and some funding incentives to stimulate real cooperation and partnership.”³⁷ Through partners’ support, ReLOaD had broader impact in the region by improving the situation in partner communities/citizens and in general, democratisation processes on a local level.

The ReLOaD2 is a logical continuation of efforts started in the previous programmes. The positive feedback from the local level and the results achieved have demonstrated appropriateness of such an initiative. Thus, building on earlier efforts, ReLOaD2 is providing far more than replication and continuation of previous activities. The present Action will provide more results through the involvement of new beneficiaries (local governments and CSOs). New activities will be included such as intensive support to youth initiatives, strengthened and more tailored approach to capacity building and support to CSOs.

Alignment with EU objectives

³⁴ Official Gazette of RS, 22/15. All strategic documents of the Republic of Serbia are available at <http://www.gs.gov.rs/lat/strategije-vs.html>.

³⁵ National Youth Strategy 2015-2025, p.7.

³⁶ Final project evaluation” Paul J. M. van Hoof, December 2019, p20. <https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/documents/download/15411>

³⁷ Final project evaluation” Paul J. M. van Hoof, December 2019, p21. <https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/documents/download/15411>

The Action falls under the regional efforts of the EU under the IPA II programme in participating IPA beneficiaries. The Action contributes to the development of democracies in the Western Balkans, in particular to participatory development and functioning of civil society and local governance. The whole context of the Action follows closely the EU objective which is “to promote peace, stability and economic development in the Western Balkans and open up the prospect of EU integration.”³⁸ By enhancing government-civil society interactions and empowering civil society, ReLOaD2 efforts would support the EU enlargement processes in the Western Balkans in line with the Enlargement Strategy for the Western Balkans.³⁹ They would contribute to the realisation of priorities set in the 2014-2020 Revised Multi-country Indicative Strategy Paper, recognizing civil society as an essential component of any participatory democracy and highlighting the importance of “increased support to CSOs, including capacity building and encouraging the creation of an enabling environment for its development and greater involvement of stakeholders in reforms, including through greater transparency of government action and spending.”⁴⁰ Furthermore, the Action is in line with the objectives set by the Guidelines for EU support to civil society in enlargement countries 2014-2020,⁴¹ in relation to the enabling financial environment which supports CSO sustainability, CSO-government cooperation mechanisms and CSO capacities.

Alignment with local/central level objectives

In addition to contributing to the fulfilment of EU objectives in the region, strong emphasis is given to the alignment to central and local objectives and strategies in IPA beneficiaries as well as implementation of regulations and plans set in the region. Some of the direct relations between the intervention and the objectives are presented in the *Context in IPA beneficiaries* section above.

Furthermore, the Action will clearly contribute to the Western Balkans region to achieve the targets set within the **16th Sustainable Development Goal (SDG): Peace, justice and strong institutions** - Peace, stability, human rights and effective governance based on the rule of law are important conditions for sustainable development.

Target groups and final beneficiaries

The Action tackles a range of target groups and final beneficiaries which all have their role in the context of the Action’s objectives and broader civil society objectives. The target groups are:

- **Local governments in the Western Balkans region.** Local governments are one of the key actors in providing CSOs with financial resources and framework conditions for their functioning. Support to civil society is often a low priority at the local level in the Western Balkans and local governments are often neglecting the importance of this area. The common challenges are the absence of a strategic vision, limited financial resources and limited capacities.
- **CSOs in the Western Balkans region.** Civil society is somewhat neglected in the Western Balkans, occasionally even deliberately set-aside. This results in a limited performance of CSOs and impact on their target groups. On the other side, CSOs are also struggling in defining their strategic objectives, strengthening linkages with their target groups and positioning themselves in a long-term strategic manner.
- **Youth in the Western Balkans region.** This group is facing significant challenges due to slow progress and limited perspectives of the region. Approximately half of the youth would be prepared to leave the region for better opportunities abroad (mainly EU) should they have a chance.

The final beneficiaries as understood by this Action are:

³⁸ <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/168/the-western-balkans>

³⁹ A credible enlargement perspective for and enhanced EU engagement with the Western Balkans, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, Strasbourg, 6/2/2018 COM(2018) 65 final. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/communication-credible-enlargement-perspective-western-balkans_en.pdf

⁴⁰ Revised Multi-country Indicative Strategy Paper for the period 2014-2020, 31/05/2018, <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20180817-revised-multi-country-indicative-strategy-paper-2014-2020.pdf>

⁴¹ DG Enlargement Guidelines for EU support to civil society in enlargement countries, 2014-2020 https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/civil_society/doc_guidelines_cs_support.pdf

- **Citizens and communities at the local level** which are natural beneficiaries from activities and efforts of CSOs, particularly of grassroots CSOs. A range of activities and themes normally implemented by CSOs provide solutions to the needs of individuals and groups at the local level. In the absence of a systematic policy set up and with internal challenges within CSOs, only limited impact on the final beneficiaries is achieved.

The following table presents the relation between specific needs and constraints of target groups, final beneficiaries, and the planned Action's interventions.

Table 1 Relation between the Action and the needs and constraints of the target groups and final beneficiaries.

Target group / final beneficiaries	Challenges faced	Benefits from the Action
Local governments in the Western Balkans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited capacities for implementation of comprehensive support and financing measures for CSOs • Absence (lack of regulation) or insufficient implementation of transparent procedures for financial and monitoring mechanisms • Lack of understanding of the benefits of cooperation with civil society • Limited financial resources for the financing of CSOs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Building of capacities of and providing advice to local governments in the implementation of CSOs' support and financial mechanisms ✓ Transferring of the LOD methodology and providing advice in the initial stage ✓ Further work on the alignment of procedures for CSOs financing at the policy making level ✓ Supporting local governments in the introduction and maintenance of procedures at the local level ✓ Supporting local governments in strategic planning and alignment of local objectives ✓ Provision of financial support through local grant schemes ✓ Identification of eventual additional resources (outside of public) for the financing of CSOs
CSOs in the Western Balkans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited capacities of CSOs for the preparation and implementation of projects • Challenges in identifying the current needs of target groups and in addressing them • Limited financial resources for taking action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Implementation of a series of training workshops and individual mentoring on the preparation of projects ✓ Mentoring support provided during the CSO projects' implementation phase ✓ Training and mentoring support to CSOs in identifying and responding to target groups' needs ✓ Strengthening linkages between CSOs and local governments for the benefits of target groups ✓ Provision of support through local grant schemes
Youth from the Western Balkans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited opportunities for youth in the Western Balkans region, in particular related to employment and economic activity • Emigration of youth • General reluctance of youth to participate in socio-economic and political decision making at different levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Provision of vocational training and work practice, to equip youth with skills and experience necessary to find a job ✓ Organising a series of workshops around topics which are important for youth; creative, strategic and inclusive thinking of youth will be encouraged ✓ Support to mechanisms for youth participation in local decision making, community engagement initiatives, and activities for youngsters ✓
Individuals and communities at the local level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges related to socio-economic status • Specific challenges of vulnerable groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Strengthening linkages between CSOs and target groups through training and mentoring ✓ The Action will promote the principle of joint work for change, CSOs will assist local governments in improving situation at the local level ✓ Financing of CSOs' projects, addressing specific needs ✓ Specific activities with vulnerable groups, motivating them for participation and engagement

Key stakeholders' groups

Implementation of the ReLOaD1 enabled UNDP to establish and maintain regular contacts with most of the relevant stakeholders. Within this Action, the stakeholders' relations will continue to be based on the established principles with more focus on IPA beneficiaries' specifics. A value added of ReLOaD2 will be a more individual approach in reviewing and addressing the needs of different stakeholders and focus on youth.

The key stakeholders' groups relevant for the implementation of ReLOaD2 are:

- **Policy level organisations** will receive, based on the experiences and feedback from their work with local governments, advice and guidance in the creation and implementation of their policies and legislation for financing and supporting civil society.
- **Professional organisations, including academia** will be part of capacity building activities and are expected to contribute to the sustainability of the overall system of support.
- **Other donors' supported initiatives** with potential synergies with ReLOaD and joint participation in supporting the CSOs framework.

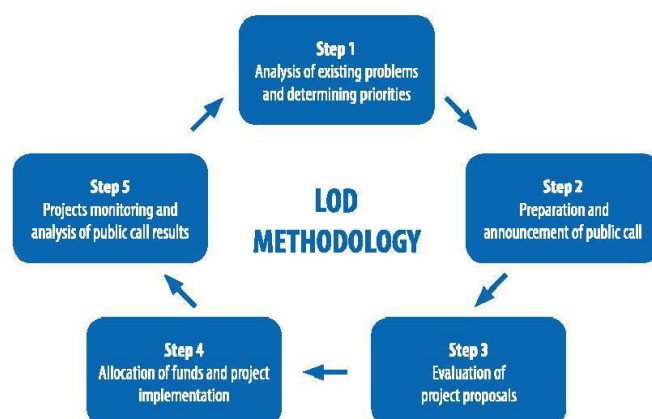
Financial assistance to third parties

The implementation of the Action includes financial assistance to third parties. This will be delivered in the form of grants awarded through open public calls for proposal and dedicated to CSOs as eligible bodies. In the specific segment of the grant schemes dedicated to supporting youth initiatives, other actors from the public or civil sector might be considered eligible. In total, EUR 6,63 million (USD 7,76 million) is foreseen to be allocated as support through local grant schemes. The award of grant will need to be done in line with UNDP's rules and regulations.

The local grant schemes will be implemented in line with the methodology developed in the Reinforcement of Local Democracy (LOD) Project, implemented in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The methodology is promoting transparent and open competition as its main purpose was the introduction of transparent and coherent financing procedures in local governments. Also, in ReLOaD1 this methodology was promoted, adjusted to respect IPA beneficiary specifics (regulations, practices, etc.) and used with notable success.

The LOD methodology⁴² is based on a comprehensive approach, taking into account all elements in the cycle of award and implementation of grants. The key principles are prior identification of needs, clear criteria and transparent process of evaluation and thorough monitoring of implementation process. The basic outline of the methodology is presented in the following scheme.

Scheme: Outline of the LOD methodology



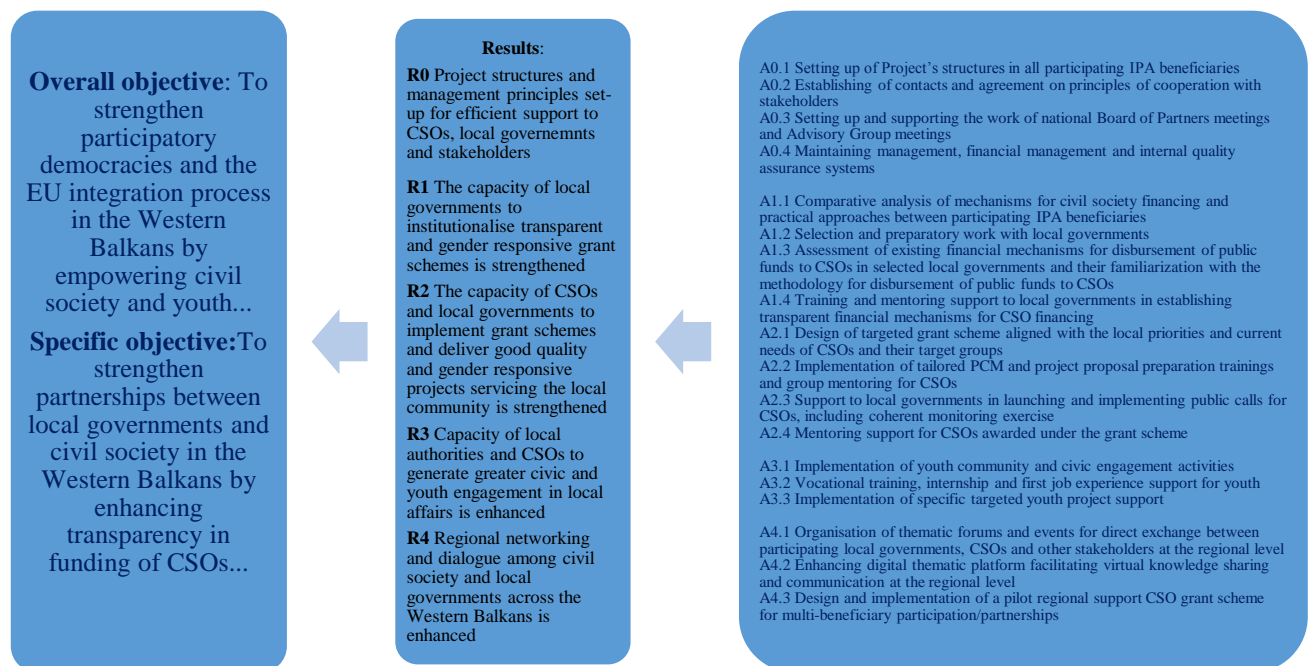
⁴² LOD Methodology for Allocation of Funds to Civil Society Organizations - for the full practical guide see the following link: https://www.ba.undp.org/content/bosnia_and_herzegovina/en/home/library/poverty/lod-methodology-for-allocation-of-funds-to-civil-society-organiz.html

The LOD methodology is closely aligned with the basic provisions and requirements of EU funding rules for External Actions: openness of the procedure, equal opportunities for all candidates, visibility, avoidance of conflict of interest and transparency in the implementation of procedures.

2.2. Intervention Logic

All segments of the Action were planned in coherent and logical manner. Significant efforts were invested in the preparatory phase to identify the project elements. Relations are presented in the below scheme.

Scheme: relation between project elements



The details on the implementation of specific activities and their contribution to the fulfilment of the Action's objectives are presented in the following sections.

2.2.1 Overview of activities

Activities related to Result 0:

A0.1 Setting up of Project's structures in all participating IPA beneficiaries

To set basis for efficient and timely implementation of core project activities

Tasks:

- Recruitment of core project teams in all participating IPA beneficiaries
- Agreement of internal procedures for management and reporting
- Organisation of kick-off meeting (on-line or physical)

Activity Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Project teams in-place in all participating IPA beneficiaries▪ Internal procedures for management and reporting developed▪ Kick-off meeting organised; minutes of the meeting prepared
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Timing	Month 1-6
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Recruitment of the core project teams in all participating IPA beneficiaries will be implemented immediately after the kick-off of the project. Basic outline of the organisation has already been prepared which will allow efficient and timely recruitment of the project teams.

In the initial phase, the project team will **agree on internal procedures for management and reporting**. Considering the relatively complex outlay of the activities/results and the involvement of several teams from different IPA beneficiaries, the project management will stipulate standardised and regular flow of internal information. The information will be collected and processed centrally by the Regional office in Sarajevo with contribution from other UNDP Country Offices across the region. The regional office will in principle be responsible for the overall contractual obligations and communication with the Contracting Authority. The project team will also agree on standardised procedures for other administrative and content segments to allow maximum efficiency and comparison between the offices. The segments which will be defined from the beginning, among others, include the following: financial management provisions, maintenance and flow of supporting documentation, public procurement procedures, reporting and internal monitoring procedures.

The **kick-off meeting will be organised** during the inception period. Depending on the COVID19 situation in the region, the meeting will be organised with physical presence of participants or as an on-line conference call.

The duration of the Action will be 48 months, with a six-month inception period during which the necessary amendments on the DoA will be prepared and submitted along with inception report.

A0.2 Establishing of contacts and agreement on principles of cooperation with stakeholders

To establish contacts and networks necessary for efficient implementation of the Project

Tasks:

- Initial meetings with key partners and stakeholders (on-line or physical)
- Establishing principles of cooperation and exchange of information with stakeholders

Activity Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Initial meetings with at least 20 relevant stakeholders organized▪ Principles of cooperation and exchange of information established
Timing	Month 1-5

Initial meetings with key partners and stakeholders will be organised either by physical presence or on-line, depending on the current epidemiological situation in a relevant IPA beneficiary. The purpose of these initial meetings will be to outline the project intervention, present changes from the previous phase and to examine the current situation, needs and expectations of stakeholders. Specific attention will be given to explore possible contributions by partners and stakeholders (including EU-funded initiatives such as TACSO3, RomActed, Resource centres, etc.) particularly in view of desired creation and maintenance of a long-term sustainable and efficient system of CSOs.

Principles of cooperation and exchange of information with partners/stakeholders will be determined based on typology of each stakeholder, their potential interest and contribution to project activities. The project team will maintain regular contacts with partners and stakeholders through the implementation of specific activities (relevant for these stakeholders) and through participation in the Board of Partners along with other consultative bodies like Advisory Group or similar.

A0.3 Setting up and supporting the work of national Board of Partners meetings and Advisory Group meetings

To engage external bodies which will contribute to the Action and increase sustainability

Tasks:

- Establishing and supporting the work of national Boards of Partners
- Establishing and supporting the work of Advisory Group/Body meetings

Activity Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Board of partners established in all IPA beneficiaries; at least 8 meetings organised in each (48 in total)▪ Advisory body established in all IPA beneficiaries; at least 6 meetings implemented in each (36 in total)
Timing	Month 4-48

During the implementation of ReLOaD1, the support of partner and advisory bodies proved extremely important for the implementation process. Involvement of these bodies significantly extended dimension and the reach of the project as well as allowed exchange of experiences, concepts, and knowledge. This best practice will be continued in this Action.

National Boards of Partners were composed of relevant bodies in each of the IPA beneficiaries. The Boards are expected to meet at least twice a year and they will be an important element in the implementation process. Jointly with the project team, they will assess the progress of the Action and assist in planning further activities. ToR for the Board of Partners in each IPA beneficiary will be adopted.

Advisory Groups were somewhat less active in ReLOaD1 phase. For this reason, more efforts will be invested by the project team to set-up and maintain Advisory Groups or similar advisory bodies suitable for each IPA beneficiary. The bodies will in principle include representatives of academia, civil society but also might include representatives of local governments that participated in ReLOaD1. It is expected that these bodies could contribute with their critical professional opinions and experiences to further increase the quality and the impact of the Action. At least one meeting per year is anticipated. TOR for Advisory Groups, or similar advisory body, in each IPA beneficiary will be adopted.

The Boards of Partners, Advisory Groups, or similar advisory mechanisms are expected to be established and respective ToRs adopted during the inception period. More details on the composition of these bodies is presented further below under *2.1.2. Implementation Approach*.

A0.4 Maintaining management, financial management and internal quality assurance systems

To implement project efficiently and fully in line with procedural requirements

Tasks:

- Establishing of project and financial management systems
- Visibility and promotion activities including communication lines for implementation
- Setting up and maintaining an internal monitoring and quality assurance system

Activity Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensured coherent project and financial management throughout the duration of the Action ▪ Visibility plan prepared and communication channels and internal approval system with EC/EUDs defined ▪ At least 200 articles/media appearances throughout the Western Balkans region ▪ Internal monitoring system set-up and functioning
Timing	Month 3-48

Project and financial management will be implemented in line with the contract signed with the EU, applying general rules, provisions and relevant business practice for such type of interventions. Project management part will focus on the coherent implementation of planned activities and delivery of outputs. The functions of project management will include staff management, coordination of efforts among offices in IPA beneficiaries and external relations/contacts. Financial function will ensure transparency and audit trail for all costs incurring in the implementation.

Visibility and promotion activities will be organised for the broader promotion of Action's activities and general awareness raising related to the issues addressed. Region-wide activities will be implemented. More details on the visibility principles are presented under *2.1.2. Implementation Approach*.

The project team will **set up and maintain an internal monitoring and quality assurance system**. The system will allow constant assessment of progress and will thus have important impact on the Action's efficiency and timely implementation. The system will be based on original plans/benchmarks defined in this proposal. More details on the internal information system are presented under *2.1.2. Implementation Approach*.

Activities related to Result 1:

A1.1 Comparative analysis of mechanisms for civil society financing and practical approaches between participating IPA beneficiaries

Tasks:

- Review of existing regulations, policies and practices with preparation of gap assessment across the Western Balkans
- Comparative analysis and enabling transfer of experiences between IPA beneficiaries

Activity Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ One review and gap assessment implemented in IPA beneficiaries▪ Number of positive practices for transfer of experiences between IPA beneficiaries identified
Timing	Month 18-30

Due to differences (capacity level, different approaches, etc.) within the Western Balkans, an analysis of existing financing mechanisms for CSOs will be conducted for each IPA beneficiary. It will include the **review of central and local policies and practices**, gaps and shortcomings and their influence the overall public transfers to CSOs. Experiences and best practices will be collected in terms of application of transparent financial mechanisms including capacities of institutional players.

Comparative analysis would enable transfer of experiences between IPA beneficiaries and enable mutual learning process and resolution of specific needs/gaps. The principle of exchange will be identification of gap → review of similar cases in other IPA beneficiaries (participating local governments) → checking the relevance of identified solutions with original gap/challenge → transfer of experiences to resolve the issues. The activity will not only resolve concrete issues but will also open possibilities for increased exchange and cooperation at institutional level between IPA beneficiaries.

A1.2 Selection and preparatory work with local governments

Tasks:

- Development and adjustment of criteria for selection
- Public calls announced and promoted
- Selection procedure implemented in an open and transparent manner
- Preparatory meetings with the selected local governments

Activity Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ A set of selection criteria developed and agreed in each IPA beneficiary▪ At least 50 local governments selected in transparent and open process▪ At least 2 initial meetings with each selected local government (100 in total)
Timing	Month: 1-6

Partner local governments will be selected through a transparent process in all participating IPA beneficiaries. Call for participation, including a predefined set of criteria, will be published in each IPA beneficiary. The aim of the selection process is to select ca. 50 local governments. Considering specifics of each IPA beneficiary, the selection of local governments will include a combination of new local governments and some from the previous phase (e.g. in Serbia only new local governments will be selected as partners, while at least two local governments from the previous phase will be involved as a mentoring support). It could also

include clusters of municipalities (two or more municipalities grouped in a cluster – in Montenegro), or take regional approach to municipal selection (North Macedonia) – all with purpose to maximise the results of the Action across the region. The selection process will be adjusted accordingly in line with specifics of each IPA beneficiary.

The first step in the selection process will be the **development and agreement of criteria for selection**. The general outline of selection criteria will be adjusted for all participating IPA beneficiaries considering specifics. Selection criteria⁴³ for competitive selection will be divided into two groups: obligatory and additional criteria.

Obligatory criteria will be as follows:

- Local government is willing to initiate and formalize a project-based funding of CSO (or have already done so in previous phase of the ReLOaD),
- Local government is willing to co-finance CSOs projects with a minimum of 20% of the total funding it receives through the Action framework,
- Local government will continue with publishing its own public calls for CSOs (public funds) regularly.

Additional criteria could include the following:

- Existence of active civil society organizations in a territory of the local government,
- Experience of a local government and/or its readiness to allocate funding for CSOs within a separate budget line using project-based approach,
- Geographical distribution of local governments,
- Local government has a record of interaction, cooperation, and partnership with civil society,
- Local government has an adopted community development plan/strategy where local socio-economic development priorities are identified in a participatory manner with CSOs.

Other criteria for selection such as combination of urban and rural local governments or a regional selection, development level and similar might be taken into consideration. Final criteria for the selection of local governments will *be tailored for each IPA beneficiary based on the specifics* and inputs provided by key stakeholders. Although there are significant differences across the IPA beneficiaries in local governance structures and history of cooperation with civil society, the intention is to keep obligatory criteria identical for all participating IPA beneficiaries and to tailor additional criteria according to the local context, so to select the most suitable candidates. The aim is to attract larger local governments but also to give a chance to smaller and/or less prominent ones that demonstrate strong willingness towards more transparency, have democratic potential and determination to make a change. The final criteria will be tailored and specified for each IPA beneficiary, and approved by the Board of Partners. Where applicable, partner local governments from ReLOaD1 would be encouraged to present and transfer the knowledge gained earlier and provide mentoring role to the newly selected local governments.

Public calls for selection will be announced and promoted using various communication channels and partners' networks (newspapers/internet portals, associations of cities and municipalities, governance platforms, social platforms etc.). Open days will be organized within a public call in each participating IPA beneficiary and will serve to inform and guide interested local governments to prepare their applications.

The **selection procedure will be implemented in an open and transparent manner**. In each IPA beneficiary a dedicated selection committee will be nominated which will implement the evaluation and selection process. The selection committees will consist of project team/experts with potential participation of

⁴³ Selection criteria stated here are not final and will be subject of change in line with IPA beneficiaries' specifics. They are stated here to provide overall idea about the selection process.

others as observers. All the proceedings will be registered in written form in standardised evaluation reports. The final selection will be approved by the Board of Partners in each IPA beneficiary.

Preparatory meetings with the selected local governments will be organised to define the operational aspects of the Action’s implementation and examine concrete needs and expectations from the Action.

A1.3 Assessment of existing financial mechanisms for disbursement of public funds to CSOs in selected local governments and their familiarization with the methodology for disbursement of public funds to CSOs

Tasks:

- Assessment of existing financial mechanisms in participating local governments
- Awareness raising and presentation of benefits of transparent CSOs’ financing to local governments’ leadership and CSOs
- Design of a joint workplan with partner local governments with detailed set of activities in relation to the mainstreaming of the methodology for disbursement of public funds to CSOs

Activity Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Existing mechanisms in at least 50 local governments assessed ▪ Presentation meetings implemented for each of the local governments that have not participated in ReLOaD1 (35 local government in total) ▪ At least 50 joint plans prepared
Timing	Month 8-16

Implementation of this activity will consider that some of participating local governments have already adopted transparent mechanisms for disbursement of public funds to CSOs based on LOD methodology.

Assessment of existing financial mechanisms will be conducted for new partner local governments, and where needed, of the previous participants. For new local governments a thorough assessment will be implemented including the analysis of current budgetary rules and practices (from planning to implementation and monitoring provisions). The principle of needs-based preparation of budget (in this case a budget line for civil society) will be specifically examined. Past practices show that the budgets for specific sectors have often been planned on ad-hoc basis without strong connection to real needs and planning (strategic) documents. The baseline assessment will serve as a starting point for further discussions with local authorities. For local governments that already participated in earlier stage of ReLOaD, the assessment will focus on verifying their adopted procedures and examining further possibilities for improvement.

Awareness raising and presentation of benefits will be done through bilateral meetings with representatives of local governments and where possible CSOs. The meetings would ideally bring together the decision-making level in local governments as well as specialists dealing with civil society and budget. The meetings will focus on the presentation of benefits of the LOD methodology. Some of the motivation factors are: more efficient use of public funds, targeted use of funds enable addressing of concrete needs, fair competition enhances trust in government, etc.

Design of a joint workplan with partner local governments is relevant for verifying all relevant steps for this activity and reconfirming local governments’ leadership commitment in relation to the mainstreaming of the methodology for disbursement of public funds to CSOs.

A1.4 Training and mentoring support to local governments in establishing transparent financial mechanisms for CSO financing

Tasks:

- Training and mentoring support in the development of financial mechanisms
- Establishing transparent financial mechanisms in partner local governments

Activity Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Presentation meetings organised for each of the new 35 local governments ▪ At least 45 training and 200 mentoring sessions provided ▪ At least 35 transparent financial mechanisms established
Timing	Month 6-36

Same as in previous sub-activity, it will be considered that some of participating local governments have already adopted transparent financial mechanisms while newly selected ones must undergo the whole process of setting-up and implementation.

Training and mentoring support in development of financial mechanisms will focus on practical aspects of new procedures including ensuring consistency with local strategic planning. Assistance will be delivered in targeted and tailor-made manner. The project experts and local government representatives will review corrective measures which need to be taken in each step of the implementation of financial mechanisms at the local level. When necessary written procedures and instructions will be prepared.

Civil servants that are often reserved towards changes will be provided with tailored **trainings** related to understanding key elements of projects cycle management, participatory budgeting and all necessary steps related to implementation of the transparent financial mechanisms for funds disbursement. When and where necessary, written procedures and instructions will be prepared.

In addition, trainings will be in coherence with principles of local planning and monitoring. The experiences and the results from ReLOaD1 and LOD initiatives showed that implementation of financial mechanisms as such cannot be successful unless closely integrated into strategic and planning framework and monitoring. The financial mechanisms should be observed in a broader context, considering their alignment with the needs of final beneficiaries and overall local development plans.

Mentoring will be organised with local governments in a form of regular visits to local practitioners prior to implementation of key activities such as budget preparation, alignment with strategic development framework, planning and implementation of public call for CSOs.

In order to **establish transparent financial mechanisms** in new partner local governments, the Action will initiate necessary administrative procedures for institutionalization of transparent and project-based funding of CSOs. The process will be facilitated within each local government by securing adoption of bylaws by municipal assemblies/councils. The Action presupposes that the process of institutionalization will depend on the development level in each participating local government and will be aligned with the national and local regulations. It is anticipated that some local governments improve their existing formal procedures, while in some cases, greater changes and new procedures will be introduced.

Activities related to Result 2:

A2.1 Design of targeted grant scheme aligned with the local priorities and current needs of CSOs and their target groups

Tasks:

- Review of local priorities, current needs of CSOs and their target groups
- Design and agreement of the targeted grant schemes at the local level

Activity Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Local priorities and areas of intervention for grant schemes defined▪ At least one local tailored grant schemes designed per participating local government
Timing	Month 10-40

The design of local grant schemes will follow the methodological approach developed by UNDP in earlier initiatives. The local grant scheme will be published in every participating local government or clusters of local governments (Montenegro). Since one of the challenges identified in ReLOaD1 was limited alignment of CSOs' support measures with local priorities and real needs, strong emphasis will be given to this segment.

Review of local priorities, current needs of CSOs and their target groups will define a broader framework of all the grant schemes published under the Action. The process of defining priorities of a call for CSOs in every partner local government or a cluster will be inclusive. The preparation process includes different steps starting with defining local government's priority areas, as per identified strategic priorities (existing local development strategies and other relevant action plans) and needs in each community. Priorities related to the following topics will be mainstreamed throughout the call for CSOs: youth, social cohesion, social inclusion and social services for most vulnerable, gender equality, environmental protection, and human rights issues as well as the rights of minority groups, in particular the Roma.

Design and agreement of the targeted grant schemes at the local level will be done in cooperation with local counterparts. Priority areas for calls for CSO proposals will go through consultative meetings/public hearings with grassroots CSOs and citizens. Public discussions and/or public hearings that will involve civil society (as direct representatives of their constituencies and a voice of citizens) and citizens in targeted localities are essential for transparency of the process and alignment of the priority areas with most urgent needs of the citizens. Other elements of the calls for proposals will follow the proven LOD methodology.

It is foreseen that on average each partner local government/cluster⁴⁴ receives approximately EUR 70,000 (USD 82,000) from the Action for public call for CSOs. This amount is approximate, since the final amount will depend on the number of partner local governments in an IPA beneficiary, local governments' co-financing, absorptive capacities of targeted local governments, the level of CSO development in a certain locality and the quality of submitted project proposals. Thus, some local governments might absorb more funds/projects than others taking into account all factors.

Where necessary, the project team will organise meetings with prominent CSO representatives and local government representatives to present the plans and agree on the grounds for further cooperation within the Action. This is relevant, because in some localities civil society is not recognised as a service provider or a problem solver or a partner that could contribute to realization of strategic goals in a certain community.

⁴⁴ In case of local governments operating in clusters then, public calls for CSOs will be organised per cluster (Montenegro).

A2.2 Implementation of tailored PCM⁴⁵ and project proposal preparation trainings and group mentoring for CSOs

Tasks:

- Implementation of tailored PCM and project proposal preparation trainings for CSOs
- Establishment and maintenance of group mentoring and direct support to the potential CSOs applicants

Activity Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ At least 90 tailored trainings in project preparation organised▪ Number of group mentoring sessions organised supporting at least 180 CSOs
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Timing	Month 10-38
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Delivery of tailored PCM and project proposal preparation trainings for CSOs will represent the first step in support to CSOs in preparation of their proposals. The overall training cycle⁴⁶ is designed in a logical manner with the themes being structured from basic to more advanced. The basic training will cover the main principles of PCM, present different elements of the projects and the internal logic. This will be followed by more detailed assessment of project elements (objectives, activities, results, indicators), demonstrating their internal dependence and connectivity. One segment of the training will focus on implementing practices and provisions to demonstrate the relations between project proposals and (feasible) implementation process. The trainings will apply practical and targeted approach with usage of concrete real-life examples and where possible, include solutions to the challenges caused by COVID-19 such as inclusion of digital tools in their work, etc.

As a follow-up to the trainings the Action will **ensure group mentoring and direct support to the potential CSO applicants**. This mechanism represents a continuation of good practice initiated in ReLOaD1. Learning from previous experiences, it was established that before finalisation of their proposals, potential applicant CSOs are facing several concrete questions and issues which later impact the quality of their project proposals. The mentoring support at this stage enables them to resolve these concrete issues and finalise their proposals. During both trainings and group mentoring concrete application forms anticipated in the public calls will be used to ensure familiarity with the methodology and application process.

Where possible the Action will join forces with other EU-funded projects to provide more capacity development assistance to CSOs interested in improving their skills and preparing better project proposals. In particular, both TACSO3 and resource centres will be contacted, and depending on their interests, plans and resources they could get involved to increase CSO capacities.

⁴⁵ Project Cycle Management

⁴⁶ Trainings for CSOs in PCM and proposal writing are 2-3 days long, depending on specifics in each IPA beneficiary.

A2.3 Support to local governments in launching and implementing public calls for CSOs, including coherent monitoring exercise

Tasks:

- Support to publication of public calls for CSO proposals and information campaign
- Supporting and ensuring quality control in work of the evaluation commission
- Organisation and coordination of signing ceremonies for awarded CSOs
- Monitoring of grant awarded CSO projects

Activity Outputs

- At least 90 local public calls for CSO proposals launched
- At least one information session organised per each launched call for proposals
- At least 90 evaluations successfully completed with evaluation reports prepared
- Number of signing ceremonies (for single or group of partner local governments) organised across the Western Balkans region with strong media coverage
- At least 760 monitoring visits of awarded CSO projects conducted

Timing

Month 10-40

Grant schemes will be managed by UNDP with strong participation of partner local governments. This approach should allow local governments to understand all details of this process, and by participating in it they should learn how to execute public calls for CSOs independently.

In general, there will be smaller grants in the range of ca. EUR 5,000-10,000⁴⁷ (USD 5,900 – 11,700) and largest grants in the range of EUR 10,000 – 35,000 (USD 11,700 – 41,000). Still, the size of grants is to be further determined in each IPA beneficiary respecting national regulations, local governments practices, capacities of CSOs to deliver and previous experience (from ReLOaD1). In this context, it will be necessary to factor in the maximum number of CSO projects that can be feasibly managed and monitored by project teams in each IPA beneficiary. UNDP will provide a basic training on implementation of calls for CSO proposals, basics of project management and evaluation of project proposals. Assistance to the evaluation commissions will focus on procedures in the selection of project proposals by presenting in detail the evaluation criteria and providing practical examples and exercises on evaluation.

Supporting the publication of public calls for CSO proposals and information campaign – partner local governments will be conducting public calls for CSOs that are to be open, on an equal basis to all formally registered CSOs⁴⁸, while the activities of awarded CSOs will be implemented on the territory of the respective locality. The focus of the grant scheme will be on local/grassroots' CSOs. In cases where CSOs' capacities are weak, partnerships between well-established and larger CSOs (from other parts of a country/territory) with local grassroots' CSOs will be promoted. Specifics will be decided on a case-by-case basis for each IPA beneficiary.

The project team will assist in promoting the public calls for CSO proposals. It is anticipated that an Open Day (information session) will accompany each call.

The calls for proposals are expected to be open for 4 weeks as no major increase of interest was noted in ReLOaD1 when the deadlines were extended to 5 or 6 weeks. Still the decision will depend on the practices and experience in each IPA beneficiary.

⁴⁷ A grant scheme for grassroots CSOs (small CSOs) with grants size EUR 2,000-5,000 (USD 2,341 – 5,852) will be organised in Serbia.

⁴⁸ Decision on CSO eligible to apply for public calls for CSOs in partner local governments will depend on IPA beneficiaries' specifics and endorsed by Board of Partners in IPA beneficiary.

Upon the closure of the public calls, the project team will **provide support to and ensure quality control of the work of the evaluation commission**. The selection will be made by the representatives of local governments, ReLOaD2 project team and with the involvement of representatives of the civil society. Arrangements related to the composition of the evaluation commission, especially participation of CSO representative(s)⁴⁹ will be organised in line with national laws and agreement with the EUDs and other Board of Partner members in each IPA beneficiary to avoid any potential conflict of interest. The evaluation will be implemented in line with the predefined evaluation criteria and an evaluation report will be prepared for each public call for CSOs. The final list of CSOs awarded under the grant scheme will be approved by the Board of Partners before the signing of contracts. A specific training/crash course will be organised for members of evaluation committees. In addition to the general procedure and key steps during evaluation, the criteria will be presented in detail with practical examples and evaluation exercises.

Signing ceremonies for awarded CSOs⁵⁰ will be organised either in each locality or as a joint event in each IPA beneficiary recognising awarded projects and providing visibility to the Action.

Aside of the formal marking of the CSO projects, the project team will organise implementation meetings with the awarded CSOs and provide them with key information related to the key rules related to implementation of their projects such as procurement, reporting, visibility, etc. These sessions will involve local governments representatives as partners in the Action.

Monitoring of grant awarded CSO projects will be carried out as proved extremely relevant and successful in ReLOaD1. Through the monitoring exercise, local government representatives will get additional insights on transparent implementation of local funding mechanisms. By monitoring different aspects of implementation, including financial management, the local governments are achieving higher level of compliance with efficient accounting practices and budgetary rules. In addition, efficient monitoring provides guidance for implementing CSOs as on-the-job coaching. During monitoring field visits CSOs are coached on different issues related to implementation of their projects and/or other challenges they face such as planning, transparent hiring and procurement practices, visibility, etc. The monitoring exercise will be combined with mentoring support to CSOs envisaged during implementation of their projects.

A2.4 Mentoring support for CSOs awarded under the grant scheme

Tasks:

- Selection of the pool of mentors
- Maintenance of mentoring support for CSOs with registering of feedback

Activity Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ At least 10 mentors involved in the process ▪ At least 100 CSOs covered through 200 individual mentoring sessions
Timing	Month 12-46

⁴⁹ Participation of CSO representative(s) in the evaluation commission will be specified for each IPA beneficiary, and confirmed by EUDs and Board of Partners. To avoid potential conflict of interest, participation and the role of CSO representatives will take into consideration, where applicable, national regulations, existing practices as well as project team and Board of Partners' recommendations. In a certain cases (North Macedonia) CSO representatives will have observer role without the possibility to apply to the open calls, while in others, a CSO representative(s) will have same role as other evaluation commission members.

⁵⁰ UNDP will sign a contract (Low Value Grant Agreement – LVGA) with each awarded CSO.

In addition to ensuring that the procedural requirements were respected throughout the implementation, the mentoring is a strong capacity building tool for CSOs. The Action will invest efforts into mentoring of awarded CSOs which will result in larger benefits for CSOs. The benefits are not only related to the efficiency of project implementation and ensuring compliance with procedural requirements, but also to building up internal capacities of CSOs to better respond to the needs of their constituencies.

Selection of the pool of mentors will be based on anticipated needs of the CSOs. All the mentors will have previous experiences in working with CSOs on project management (ideally also financial management). In each of the IPA beneficiaries a dedicated pool of mentors will be activated in line with specific needs.

Mentoring support will be implemented in line with needs of CSOs. CSOs often have relatively limited experiences with the implementation of project initiatives, hence any assistance in this sense will be important. The mentors will work on general capacities of these CSOs aiming to overcome the (earlier identified) challenge of limited sustainability of grassroots organisations. Thus, the mentors will, in close cooperation with monitoring support, work with CSOs on their daily challenges such as procurement or hiring procedures. In addition, they will also provide support in defining their long-term strategic positions, objectives and their relation to the target groups. The mentoring exercise will be systematically registered as brief reports from mentors will be required. The reports might include: examples of discrepancies within CSOs, mitigation approaches taken by mentors, reviews of good and bad practice examples, etc. As an important factor in building capacities of especially grass-root civil society organization is public relations support for key staff within CSOs. Training will help them to acquire theoretical and practical knowledge on good practices and effective methods of planning, development and implementation of PR strategies and plans within the organization.

Activities related to Result 3:

A3.1 Implementation of youth community and civic engagement activities

To promote involvement of youth in development of their communities

Tasks:

- Selection and support to youth community leaders
- Organising thematic forums with youth at the local level
- Implementation of a concrete youth initiatives

Activity Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Community leaders selected and supported (minimum 50)▪ Thematic forums implemented (minimum 50; minimum 300 participants respecting gender representation)▪ At least 100 youth initiatives implemented (2 per each partner local government)
Timing	Month 13-44

Despite of general reluctance of young people to involve in civic issues, their propensity for involvement rises with their own community representatives or youth organisations/institutions. While external interventions (outside of a community) can be beneficial as a support, trust within the community seems to be the main motivator for stronger involvement. ReLOaD2 will aim at identifying youth community leaders (organisation and individuals) which will promote engagement and implementation of youth initiatives at the level of their communities.

Selection process of youth community leaders will be based on their position within the community, competencies and gender. Selection will be conducted with a support from local governments, specifically departments dealing with youth. Local youth councils and/or youth associations, where exist, will be encouraged to nominate their representatives. The selection will be facilitated by the partner local governments and the project team. Existence of clear selection criteria including strong involvement of young people is a prerequisite for selection. The project team will ensure fair distribution and selection of youth community leaders respecting the principals of gender equality but also offering equal opportunity to young people with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups. In some partner localities, where necessary, a preceding step will include an assessment of partner local governments to tailor the intervention to the exact needs and specifics related to community engagement of youth.

The selection process is expected to yield at least one youth community leader in each partner local locality. Community leaders will work (on a voluntary basis) in line with relevant legislation in each IPA beneficiary.

Initial training on their role and facilitation of the forums and discussions will be provided from the Action and subsequent mentoring support will be delivered through the implementation of youth support activities.

Organizing thematic forums to identify issues vital for youth in local communities will encourage the youth to take part in community affairs and work closer with local authorities. Thematic forums will be organised around the issues relevant for a specific community/surrounding. Youth community leaders will be engaged to facilitate forums and discussions along with local government official in charge of cooperation with youth (where available). Since the aim of this task is to engage youth in systematic manner, tools and techniques such as creative thinking, strategic planning and innovative engagement will be promoted. Possible topics for the thematic forums are voluntarism, involvement of youth in local affairs (governance and leadership), integration of and support to vulnerable groups, mechanisms of inter-community support, etc. Forums will be differentiated depending on the list of priorities relevant for that local community and general interest. Specific criteria for selection of any proposed action, or solution to the identified priorities, is high level of community engagement and volunteer work. Additionally, areas that might not be suitable for resolving through this type of community actions will be nominated as specific priority areas under the public call for

CSOs. This should boost motivation of participating youth by crating higher confidence in significance of such engagement (see A3.3 for details).

Implementation of concrete youth initiatives will materialise the findings from the thematic forums and discussions in partner localities and it will include at least two initiatives per locality. The project team will, in close cooperation with partner local governments and forum participants, nominate a CSO closely related to youth, to lead and administrate the implementation of youth initiatives. It is expected concrete youth initiatives to range from refurbishment of youth centres or schools, cleaning local rivers and parks, restoration of playgrounds or similar social areas, support to youth (people) with disabilities, etc. Key principle is massive volunteering and larger voluntary engagement of youth.

A3.2 Vocational training, internship and first job experience support for youth

To promote economic perspectives of youth and to decrease brain-drain

Tasks:

- Further development of youth skills through vocational training and soft skills training
- Implementation of tailored internship scheme⁵¹
- Provision of first job experience scheme (specific only for Kosovo)
- Monitoring of results of training, internship and first job schemes

Activity outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Competencies of at least 200 youth individuals, both male and female, increased through vocational and soft skill training ▪ At least 140 youth engaged in an internship scheme ▪ First job experience provided to 35 youth of both gender ▪ Monitoring and assessment of the services provided executed
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Timing	Month 13-44
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This activity will be implemented with assistance of external service providers but also include close cooperation with local, and where necessary national actors (employment offices, labour and employment agencies, etc). Close coordination with external service providers will be maintained by the project team. Additionally, given the specifics in each IPA beneficiary, the tasks under this activity will be implemented with different intensity across the region as indicated below.

Further development of youth skills through vocational training and soft skills training aims to enhance youth skills in line with the market needs and enable young people to be more competitive on the market. The execution of this task will depend on local circumstances and thus be adjusted to local needs. For example, in Serbia the training will be streamlined towards the IT industry since it is indicated as the most prosperous for future employment. On the other hand, in Kosovo the training will target disadvantaged youth, in particular young women in rural areas. In the similar manner support in Bosnia and Herzegovina will be directed toward specific needs of youth in partner local governments. The preparation for this task will include the review of situation in partner local governments and consequent tailoring of the intervention. In parallel, service providers will be identified and included in the training process with renowned methodology and training curricula for both vocational training as well as for soft skills training. **The vocational training** ensures greater employability of youth while **soft skills training** (e.g. CV/resume writing training and job interview preparations training, etc.) increases youth competitiveness. For each of these activities training plans will be developed and target groups selected in close cooperation with local partners. The approach will be standardised, as much as possible, throughout the region, to enable monitoring and comparison of results.

⁵¹ Internship scheme will be designed and implemented respecting specifics of IPA beneficiaries.

This activity will be implemented in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Serbia. It will not be implemented in Albania, Montenegro or North Macedonia due to overlaps with already existing initiatives or necessity to involve a significant number of new stakeholders at national level which is not realistic given the financial and operational scope of this activity.

Implementation of tailored internship scheme will provide an opportunity for the youth to gain experience in real working environment and gain skills to future jobs and career. Same principles for provision of opportunities for youngsters will be respected while the modality for execution will be adjusted to local specifics in order to achieve higher efficiency. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the activity aims to achieve multiple gains foreseeing to place participants in local government administrations. Besides their regular engagement they would also support ReLOaD2 team in relation to planned youth related activities. Similar approach is planned in Serbia with engagement of youth in local governments, through the national UN Youth Volunteer model.⁵² The scheme will be designed for placement of young men and women in local government institutions. As for Montenegro, the activity will include an assessment of actual and most current needs in target local governments before executing an open call for the internship. The support in Montenegro is intended to be directed toward smaller and more rural local governments and implementation modality will be similar to the one in Serbia. Cooperation with relevant national authorities (Employment offices and agencies, and other UNDP projects⁵³ etc) will be introduced with greater intensity level as in Kosovo where the scheme will rely on cooperation with national authorities in this regard in all phases of the intervention. Internship duration⁵⁴ will be aligned to IPA beneficiary specifics (law requirements and practices) and funding. It will be implemented in all IPA beneficiaries except Albania and North Macedonia since both have intensive governmental or UNDP and other international interventions in the area where ReLOaD envisages only limited engagement.

Activities related to **a first job experience** will be executed only in Kosovo as it was identified as the sole location where such intervention, is worthwhile. Young women and men, who graduated with minimum of bachelors' degree, will be given the opportunity to obtain their first job experience by volunteering in the programmes/activities of CSOs, local governments or others depending on the needs. The work will enable them to gain the first job experience and increase their employability. Aside of knowledge and experience gains, their work will be financially compensated in accordance with the relevant regulations and practices.

Selection of young people for any of these activities will, aside of basic criteria for selection, take into consideration gender aspect as well as whether young people belong to the vulnerable groups, especially young people with disabilities, those coming from poor families, minority groups, and similar.

Monitoring of results of training, internship and first job experience has been identified as significant challenge in implementation of similar initiatives financed from central level (example of National Employment Service initiatives in Serbia). In order to improve performance, the project team will promote systematic and standardised monitoring. This will enable comparison between different trainings/practices in IPA beneficiaries. Assessment of progress will also help identifying eventual gaps in the system, thus providing valuable feed-back for future planning of such initiatives.

⁵² United Nations Volunteers model is already proven through cooperation with the sister agency United Nations Volunteers which already implemented the Youth Internships Program with unique and innovative design.

⁵³ UNDP Kosovo- Active Labour Market Programmes for Youth.

⁵⁴ Bosnia and Herzegovina - 12 months, Kosovo - 3 months, Montenegro - 9 months, Serbia – 9 months.

A3.3 Implementation of specific targeted youth project support

Tasks:

- Announcing of Public Call for CSOs with specific theme aimed at youth
- Evaluation procedure and selection of youth projects
- Monitoring and mentoring support in implementation of financed projects

Activity outputs

- Youth support schemes implemented as a part of local grant schemes for CSOs
- At least 100 youth projects selected for funding
- 150 monitoring visits of youth projects performed and 50 individual mentoring assistances

Timing

Month 13-44

In addition to the activity 3.1, where youth and community engagement activities will be supported directly, the areas that might not be resolved through this type of actions will be nominated as specific priority areas within the **Action's grant schemes and public calls for CSOs (as a specific LOT)** or within a **separate and specific public call for youth**.⁵⁵

Rules and procedures will be based on standard methodology with differentiated eligibility and priority areas targeting youth and youth organisations. Eligible youth projects will include wide range of youth activities in line with the priorities defined through the youth community forums and public consultations executed under the 3.1 activity (explained above). Awarded projects will have strong community engagement and volunteering elements.

Evaluation procedure and selection of projects will follow the procedures which generally apply for local CSO grant scheme (following transparent principles and guidance provided in the methodology), with envisaged tailoring to IPA beneficiary specifics. The Action will favour youth projects and it will be opted for 20% ca. of all awarded CSO projects to be committed to youth.

Monitoring and mentoring support in implementation of financed projects will be provided in the same manner as for other funded initiatives. It is nevertheless expected that youth projects would require more support through mentoring and support by the ReLOaD team. It will be respected and thus ensure results that could boost role of youth in local communities and their perception in local communities could be further strengthened.

⁵⁵ IPA beneficiary specifics will be taken into consideration and the public calls will be tailored to fit all specific requirements.

Activities related to Result 4:

A4.1 Organisation of thematic forums and events for direct exchange between participating local governments, CSOs and other stakeholders at the regional level

Tasks:

- Organisation of regional thematic forums and events
- Selection of themes to be addressed by regional thematic forums

Activity outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ At least 4 regional thematic forums implemented▪ At least 4 themes for regional forums defined
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Timing	Month 3-48
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Regional knowledge sharing events (conferences) aim to bring together practitioners for in-depth, targeted discussions on emerging issues, challenges, innovations, and practices from the Western Balkans. Topics are to be related to the (local) governments - CSO affairs with purpose to enable exchange of experience and lessons learned. The experiences from ReLOaD1 show significant benefits of the regional meetings and forums as well as needs for more specific and technical discussions that would bring together entities and individuals dealing with similar issues. One of the thematic forums could also serve as a thematic event for local governments, their coordinators and awarded CSOs for discussions on existing ReLOaD2 practices, experiences and lessons learned. Also, these events are complementary to the regional (digital) thematic platform which discussions will be aligned.

Selection of themes to be addressed will derive from the challenge's civil society, local governments and other key stakeholders face. The preference will be given to the issues that are common to several or all participating IPA beneficiaries as well as one of the focuses of the Action - youth. The themes will be defined in cooperation with participating bodies and stakeholders and EU.

As a general rule, CSOs, local governments, central level policy makers and institutions, professional organisations, academia and other stakeholders' dealing with specific issues will be invited to participate. In addition, participation of experts in specific area will enable in-depth discussion and provide a possibility for development of concrete conclusions and recommendations. Forums' discussions will be presented in the form of conclusions. If relevant official proposal to policy making level will be done. Regional events will be organised in IPA beneficiaries on rotating principle and convened once a year over the course of the Action.

The Action will specifically consider the issue of COVID-19 and related restrictions. Consequently, the project team will utilise all available tools to respect restrictions related to gatherings in larger groups, traveling, etc. Some of thematic forums and events might be organised online in order to ensure regular flow of information and exchange but also to enable our key stakeholders being in contact and discussing solutions related to supporting civil society in the times of COVID-19 and/or similar challenges.

A4.2 Enhancing digital thematic platform facilitating virtual knowledge sharing and communication at the regional level

Tasks:

- Encouraging policy dialogue through digital thematic platform
- Presentation of results of CSO project awarded through the Action
- Facilitation of exchange within stakeholders in the Western Balkans region

Activity outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ At least 3 thematic dialogues facilitated with at least 15 participants on each▪ Results of at least 430 CSO projects promoted through platform▪ Exchange among stakeholders facilitated on at least 5 thematic areas
Timing	Month 8-48

Regional knowledge sharing platform was established within ReLOaD1. The mechanism proved efficient for promoting regional coordination and communication, nevertheless more entities should be attracted to participate. Strong attention will therefore be given in this Action to further mainstream the platform by local and central authorities, CSOs and networks, academia, etc. This will add to the quality of exchange and final impact. The **digital platform** also serves as **an interactive repository of information** where all interested parties could find regulations, analyses, strategic documents, or regulatory framework related to civil society from IPA beneficiaries. In addition to serving as interactive repository of information, the platform will also feature interactive discussions on specific topics of interest to the members (series of thematic discussions to be agreed among the members), as well as stories providing case studies and hands-on experiences. Identification of thematic priorities and issues will be derived from each IPA beneficiary, collecting inputs from ReLOaD practices, experience and lessons learned, steering and advisory bodies, partner local governments, civil society etc. Special attention will be given to the critical issues of the Western Balkans region such as youth, shrinking of civic space and regional cooperation. Other specific issues will surely be considered depending on the stakeholders' inputs.

Dialogue thematic platform will encourage policy dialogue. By showcasing positive developments throughout the region, some of the conclusions and suggestions would ideally result in incentives for improvement of legislative and/or institutional support to civil society or improvement of existing cooperation between government and civil society.

Nonetheless, the digital platform will be utilised to further **present and communicate results of CSO projects awarded through the Action** as well as and other cases from partner local governments that are demonstrating positive results from cooperation with civil society.

The project team will **facilitate exchange within the key stakeholders in the region**. It is planned that each thematic area is given a facilitator. Learning from previous experiences it is crucial that the participating CSOs and local government practitioners are encouraged and regularly supported in their discussion and contributions.

For the purposes of enhancing and multiplying effects of the virtual knowledge sharing, the Action will involve other players and existing platforms such as RYCO and RCC in order to avoid duplication but also to focus on mainstreaming this platform as a space where key information and contacts could be established.

A4.3 Design and implementation of a pilot regional support CSO grant scheme for multi-beneficiary

participation/partnerships

Tasks:

- Design of a pilot regional support scheme
- Implementation of the regional public call for proposals and evaluation
- Provision of monitoring and support in the implementation phase

Activity outputs

- One pilot regional support scheme developed and launched
- At least 4 regional initiatives supported financial through the scheme
- 12 monitoring visits performed (at 3 monitoring visits conducted for each grant awarded CSO project)

Timing

Month 25-46

To further enhance regional cooperation, the introduction of a new pilot regional support scheme for CSOs is proposed. The scheme would support CSOs and thematic CSO regional networks. Basic eligibility criterium is location of implementation (a minimum of two IPA beneficiaries included) as well as participants from different IPA beneficiaries (basic eligibility criteria). The scheme is complementary to the activities of regional platform and forums for exchange and it provides concrete financial support to joint initiatives.

Design of a pilot regional CSO support scheme will be based on challenges identified for several or all IPA beneficiaries using previous UNDP experience from other regional programmes. Main focus of the regional CSO support grant scheme is youth and its needs. It is anticipated that awarded projects include activities such as: community actions and volunteering, building capacities of youth, awareness raising, experience exchange, informal education, trainings, etc. The final themes will be defined and approved by the Project Board.

Implementation of the regional public call for CSO proposals and evaluation will in principle follow the Action's methodological approach taking into account regional specifics. It remains to be decided whether the call would be fully open or somewhat restricted. In this latter case, a prior short-list of potential CSO or CSOs networks would be drafted and the process would be steered to achieve maximum effect. The evaluation will be implemented based on pre-defined standardised criteria such as: relevance and coherence of the project design, experiences and competencies of candidates, etc.

Monitoring and support to the awarded regional projects will be executed in the similar way as other awarded projects. Awardee projects will be supported in all aspects of implementation.

2.2.2. Implementation approach

Methods proposed for implementation

The overall methodology is based on the previously developed model in Bosnia and Herzegovina but also previous phase of the ReLOaD programme where the principal model has already been tested and altered in line with specifics of IPA beneficiaries across the Western Balkans region. Thus, the methodological approach is rather similar with improvements recognised over the course of ReLOaD1 implementation.

A model of transparent and project-based funding of CSOs by local governments or the Methodology for Transparent Allocation of Public Funds to CSOs (known as ***LOD methodology***)⁵⁶ aims to assist local governments to use public funds planned for CSOs in a transparent and development-oriented manner, recognising the local needs and embracing a project-based approach. As said above, the model had already been tested and adjusted to fit the national regulations, practices and other particularities of IPA beneficiaries.

Important factors determining implementation:

- Involvement of IPA beneficiaries that demonstrate different levels of development in regard to civil society including existing regulations and practices on local and central level,
- Complex set of activities with a large number of different partners, beneficiaries and other stakeholders targeted,
- Political situation in the region that influences enabling environment for civil society and in general slows down democratisation processes,
- Fiscal impact of COVID19 to local governments resulting with cutting public spending for civil society and focusing on new urgencies.

The Action embraces six IPA beneficiaries of the Western Balkans region and Turkey (participating in exchange of knowledge and regional forums).

Implementation of activities will be adapted to the concrete needs and in particularly to the level of capacities at the local level. This specifically relates to:

- policy and regulatory framework that differs across the Western Balkans region**, where some of the participating IPA beneficiaries have significantly advanced their regulatory frameworks⁵⁷ for civil society on a central level and their implementation at the local level;
- different approach to selection of partner local governments** - IPA beneficiaries might apply somewhat different approach in selection of participant local governments and other procedural steps, depending on the requirements from EU Delegations and other circumstances such as geographical (regional) dispersion, etc.. The methodology of work will be adapted to these different preferences and specifics while the key obligatory criteria will remain.
- type and intensity of other relevant interventions funded by EU and other donors** - the Action will deploy its support considering other initiatives and will ensure synergies where possible.

The Action will continue to create conditions for competitive project-based approach to local government funds disbursement in line with the replication model and existing regulations, while at the same time, **motivating CSOs to professionalize and become better service providers** when competing for these funds. Besides, anchoring the transparent project-based funds disbursement approach and mainstreaming the principles of transparency and inclusiveness, it will improve utilization and transparency of local

⁵⁶ Methodology for Allocation of Funds to Civil Society Organizations for the full practical guide see the following link:
http://www.ba.undp.org/content/bosnia_and_herzegovina/en/home/library/poverty/lod-methodology-for-allocation-of-funds-to-civil-society-organiz.html

⁵⁷ Kosovo and Montenegro developed quite comprehensive regulations (regulator or law) adopted on a central level regulating funding to civil society and other issues.

governments' grant schemes. Experiences from ReLOaD1 will be fully utilised especially in terms of supporting capacities and partnerships between local governments and CSOs.

The Action will continue to seek, as much as possible, to involve participating local governments and their communities to ensure: i) tailoring of the assistance to the specific circumstances and needs, ii) stimulating local government-CSO collaboration within targeted localities and maximizing usage of municipal funds for meeting local priorities by applying a competitive project-based approach, iii) promotion of regional networking and exchange of practices across the targeted countries and specific localities.

Mechanisms for disbursement of funds foreseen for CSO project-based activities must be inclusive for civil society and the citizens and fully aligned with local service needs and strategic priorities. **Capacity building and technical assistance** will be provided to **partner local governments and CSOs** in accordance with results of conducted needs assessments. It will include, among others, training, on-the-job coaching, formal and informal exchange of lessons learned, as well as legal advice in developing regulatory framework for transparent mechanism for CSO funding. Capacity assistance will include new modalities such as mentoring to both civil society but also local government practitioners. Also, local governments will, through the Action's grant scheme not only learn by doing about the benefits of this approach, but also be trained for the full implementation and management of the grant scheme.

The Action will take into consideration how the gender equality and social inclusion, especially people with disabilities and their rights are promoted and provide additional efforts to promote the importance of these topics within local communities. Important focus will be youth, their position, involvement and needs and they will have special attention of the Action in all IPA beneficiaries.

While working primarily at the local level, the Action will seek to establish sound linkages with strategic and legislative frameworks of higher government levels that deal with CSOs. The Action will build up potentials for scalability through the national counterparts. Already established partnerships with central authorities, offices for collaboration with civil society, the Associations of Cities and Municipalities, civil society networks and resource centres and prominent CSOs, will be remain and where possible extended to anchoring transparency in public spending and further promotion of the Methodology for Transparent Allocation of Public Funds for CSOs.

Regular experience and lessons learned sharing activities will be an integral part of the regional component ensuring information flow and exchange of practices within the Western Balkans countries. Furthermore, to increase the impact of the Action, close synergies will be ensured with other EU-funded and UNDP-implemented interventions in the field of civil society, local governance and local development.

Visibility and promotion

Visibility and promotion will represent an important part of the Action, since the activities anticipate involvement of a broad range of beneficiaries and stakeholders which need to be properly and regularly informed about the Action's proceedings. In addition, the visibility and promotion will aim at raising awareness about the issues of civil society with a broader public. UNDP and the project team will use the following channels for promotion of the Action:

- Announcements in electronic and printed media through the region,
- Paid adverts in case of calls for proposals and other announcement,
- Participation at live shows and debates on national, regional and local TV/Radio,
- Promotion through electronic and social media,
- Direct contacts with representatives of target groups, stakeholders and final beneficiaries.

The Action will ensure visibility according to the Joint Visibility Guidelines for EU – United Nations Actions in the field.⁵⁸ The visibility activities will be executed in close cooperation between the UNDP and EU focusing on outputs and the impact of the Action's results. Visibility strategy and communication plan will be basis for promoting project objectives and results. Visibility and Communication Plan is included as *Annex VI* of the EU-UNDP Contribution Agreement.

Synergies and complementarities with other actions

The Action will further utilise cooperation with other regional interventions but will explore relevant intervention on the level of each IPA Beneficiary. However, due to its regional format ReLOaD2 will invest highest effort into synergising ant regional initiatives active in the Western Balkans region. The areas covered by the Action were recognised by the EU and other donors as very important for further development of Western Balkans region, therefore other initiatives are either active in the moment or are planned in the future. UNDP has implemented close review of current and planned initiatives to identify potential synergies with the ReLOaD2. The key principle of coordination work will be establishment of contacts with all relevant (regional and central) initiatives in the inception period and preparation of proposal for joint conduct. The exchange of information and coordination will continue through the implementation period. The overview of complementary regional initiatives is presented in continuation.

Technical Assistance to Civil Society Organisations in the Western Balkans and Turkey (TACSO3) is a regional project funded by the EU that improves capacities and strengthens the role of civil society organizations. 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. TACSO is, like ReLOaD2, part of the Civil Society Facility (CSF) and provides support to CSOs in similar geographical area. TACSO holds strong role in creating coherent support to civil society development in the region through services and assistance provided. Thus, must indirect cooperation is expected with TACSO. ReLOAD1 also strongly cooperated and coordinated with TACSO thus TACSO3 will be invited to assume different roles in ReLOaD partner or advisory bodies. They are more policy oriented with work on higher government levels than ReLOaD2 and thus it seems to be significant possibilities for cooperation and joint initiatives or mutual support. Direct potential synergies are also seen in work with policy making level and building of capacities of stakeholders.

Further to general cooperation with TACSO ReLOaD 2 will maintain cooperation with **Resource Centres for Civil Society Organisations** that has been set-up in IPA beneficiaries. The Centres were designed with the aim of improving the capacities of civil society organizations and informal groups in IPA beneficiaries. The Centres serve as information and networking tool for CSOs. Potential synergies with Resource Centres will be explored specifically for each IPA beneficiary as typology of their work differs slightly. Segments where cooperation can be expected are above all information campaigns and strengthening capacities of CSOs (for participation in ReLOaD2 funding initiatives).

Dialogue for the Future: Fostering Dialogue and Social Cohesion in, and between, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Republic of Serbia. The overall goal of the joint regional programme, Dialogue for the Future (DFF), is to help create more spaces for constructive dialogue between various communities, between citizens and their highest elected leaders, thus promoting peaceful coexistence, increased trust and genuine respect for diversity. This peacebuilding initiative was launched in 2014 in BiH and second phase was developed as regional initiative (2019-2021), the United Nations Country Teams in BiH, Montenegro and the Republic of Serbia, are working with institutional and civil society stakeholders. The most significant field of cooperation with ReLOaD is related to DFF goals 2 (empower adolescents and youth for constructive engagement and leadership) and 4 (empowering young girls and women for greater social activism) thus possible fields of cooperation will be explored in the elements of ReLOaD supporting youth.

ROMACTED – “Promoting good governance and Roma empowerment at local level”, is a Joint Programme between the European Union (DG NEAR) and the Council of Europe. The programme is implemented by the

⁵⁸ Document available at: https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/delegations/rome/documents/eu_united_nations/ec_un_joint_visibility_guidelines_en.pdf

Council of Europe's Roma and Travellers Team and the Office of the Directorate General of Programmes in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Turkey, for the period from May 2017 until the end of 2020 (with likely extension). When extended programme will have a significant possibility for synergies with the ReLOaD2, in particularly in the segment of work with local governments, community, minority rights and youth engagement.

Western Balkans Youth Cooperation Platform (WBYCP) is a grassroots regional youth platform implemented by Cooperation and Development Institute (CDI), together with the umbrella youth organizations of the six Western Balkans participants National Youth Congress of Albania, National Youth Council of Macedonia, National Youth Council of Serbia, High School Students Union of Montenegro, Central Youth Action Council of Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina Association for United Nations with the support of Hans Seidel Foundation. The platform enables youth to design and implement joint initiatives, exchange ideas, consult a youth library, and built and carry outreach and lobbying action. WBYCP is designed to function as a resource centre for youth in the Western Balkans. In line with WBYCP mandate there will be a strong possibility for cooperation in the field of youth support and especially community engagement actions.

The **Youth Education Cooperation Fund** is a grant scheme established by The Balkan Forum, with support of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, which aims to foster regional cooperation and dialogue between young people in the Western Balkans, namely Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia. The areas covered by the grant scheme include: education, energy, tourism, human capital and labour market. The Youth education cooperation fund supports youth with microgrants but in line with thematic areas supported ReLOaD2 will explore possibility for cooperation and synergies relevant for actions grant scheme and grant scheme for youth.

Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO) is an independently functioning institutional mechanism, founded by the Western Balkans 6 participants: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia, aiming to promote the spirit of reconciliation and cooperation between the youth in the region through youth exchange programs. RYCO is working on support to specific initiatives (including through financing calls for proposals), networking and building of capacities throughout the region. Through exchange of information ReLOaD2 will explore synergetic possibilities and will lesion with the RYCO team regarding youth activities.

The **Western Balkans Youth Lab Project** is the three-year EU funded and RCC implemented Western Balkans Youth Lab Project that kicked-off in January 2020 aims to provide opportunities for youth to participate in decision-making. The project is covering Western Balkans Six economies: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia and North Macedonia strives to create a longer-term structured regional dialogue between youth organisations and national administrations focused on jointly devising policies which will increase youth participation in decision-making, to improve the overall socio-economic environment for and mobility of youth in the Western Balkans economies through different types of activities. Thus, ReLOaD2 will explore possibilities for cooperation in relation to youth community engagement.

Organisational arrangements

Internal organisation

The organisational principles and structure will follow the logic of the ReLOaD1 which proved coherent and efficient in relation to the project objectives/activities/results. The organisational structure in the previous phase allowed implementation of even broader scope of support as initially anticipated. In most cases these extended efforts were aimed at monitoring of the larger number of CSOs' projects than anticipated.

The organisational structure will cover all the participating IPA beneficiaries in direct and tailor-made manor. This will be allowed by setting-up specific office in each IPA beneficiary. The offices will be able to respond to concrete needs in their environment in timely and efficient manner.

Scheme: Basic outlay of institutional organisation



Regional office will maintain overall coordination over the project activities. It will ensure efficient flow of information, knowledge and concepts between the local offices, local beneficiaries and regional context. The Regional office/ coordinator will at the same time provide support to local offices in any specific matters and activities. The aim of the UNDP is to create **standardised, systematised and aligned support** in all IPA beneficiaries. Such approach will be important for efficient implementation as well as for efficient follow-up monitoring and evaluation (as comparison in performance and achievements will be possible).

Steering and management arrangements

UNDP will assume full responsibility and accountability for the overall management of the Action, including monitoring and evaluation of interventions, achieving of the objectives and specified results, and the efficient and effective use of resources.

On the other hand, the structure of the Action anticipates and requires involvement of a broad range of stakeholders. They include central bodies, local bodies, professional institutions, civil society, other EU-funded interventions, etc. Stakeholders' involvement will be ensured through their participation in activities and also partners' and advisory bodies. The structure follows the (good practice) experiences from ReLOaD1. If necessary additional adjustments will be done in the inception phase.

The Action institutional structure comprises the **Project Board**, the **Board of Partners**, the **Advisory Group** (or similar advisory bodies suitable for each IPA beneficiary), the **Project Assurance**, and the **Project Team**.

The **Project Board** will be the group responsible for making, by consensus, management decisions for the Action. It will be formed immediately upon start of the Action. The Project Board meets at least once a year, or more often based on needs. The Project Board's scope of work will include project oversight, as well as regular review of work plans and reports. In addition to overseeing the Action implementation progress, the Project Board will provide strategic guidance, as well as give final approval to milestone strategic and operational matters. The Project Board ensures that required resources are committed and arbitrates on any

conflicts within the Action or negotiates a solution to any problems between the Action and external bodies. The Project Board members are DG NEAR (European Union) and UNDP representatives. Furthermore, the extended **Project Board forum**, constituting the members of all Board of Partners and acting as a regional coordination function (see the details in the following section about constitution of the Board of Partners in each participating IPA beneficiary) will meet at least once a year and provide their inputs relevant for the Action strategic guidance.

Board of Partners will be established in each participating IPA beneficiary providing operational and advisory guidance to project teams.⁵⁹ The Board of Partners will provide advice to the Project Board related to project plans as well as recommendations for alterations, ensuring that all interested parties' views are considered. Members of the Board of Partners will be representatives of relevant ministry and/or other government institution in charge of cooperation with civil society, representatives of Associations of Cities and Municipalities from each participating IPA beneficiary, EU Delegation and UNDP Country Office from participating IPA beneficiaries as well as similar EU-funded initiatives such as TACSO3. Furthermore, the members of Boards of Partners from each IPA beneficiary will participate in the meetings of the **Project Board forum** at least once a year and provide their inputs relevant for project strategic guidance.

Envisaged structure of the Board of Partners:

Albania: Office of Minister of Local Issues (designated Ministry representative), Albanian Association of Municipalities (AAM), Agency for Support of Civil Society, Association of Local Autonomy (ALA), EU Delegation to Albania, UNDP, civil society representative(s) (mandated by Advisory Group) and TACSO Albania - in the capacity of observer (non-voting member).

Bosnia and Herzegovina: Ministry of Justice of Bosnia and Herzegovina (central level), Ministry of Justice⁶⁰ of the Entity of FBiH (entity level), Ministry of Administration and Local Self-Government of the Entity of RS⁶¹ (entity level), Associations of Cities and Municipalities⁶² of FBiH and RS, European Union Delegation to Bosnia and Herzegovina, UNDP, civil society representative(s) (mandated by Advisory Group) and TACSO Bosnia and Herzegovina - in the capacity of observer (non-voting member).

Kosovo: The Office of Good Governance of the Office of Prime Minister, Ministry of Local Government Administration, Association of Kosovo Municipalities, CiviKos⁶³), European Union Office in Kosovo, UNDP, civil society representative(s) (mandated by Advisory Group) and TACSO Kosovo in the capacity of observer (non-voting member).

Montenegro: Ministry for Public Administration (Directorate for local self-governance and Directorate for good governance), Ministry for Sports and Youth (central level), Union of Municipalities of Montenegro, Delegation of the European Union to Montenegro, UNDP, civil society representative(s) and TACSO Montenegro - in the capacity of observer (non-voting member).

North Macedonia: Ministry of Local Self-Government (central level), Association of Units of Local Self-Government of the Republic of Macedonia, Delegation of the European Union to North Macedonia, UNDP, civil society representative(s) (mandated by Advisory Group), and TACSO North Macedonia - in the capacity of observer (non-voting member).

⁵⁹ Matters to be reviewed by the Board of Partners include (among others): approval of final criteria for selection of partner local governments, final approval of results of calls for CSO project proposals in each IPA beneficiary, etc.

⁶⁰ Note: this is an entity (not state) Ministry of Justice organized within the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina entity. For details about the structure of Bosnia and Herzegovina please consult the following link: <https://www.oecd.org/countries/bosniaandherzegovina/46817943.pdf> (page 95).

⁶¹ Note: this is an entity (not state) Ministry of Administration and Local Self-Governance of Republika Srpska organized within the Republika Srpska entity. For details about the structure of Bosnia and Herzegovina please consult the following link: <https://www.oecd.org/countries/bosniaandherzegovina/46817943.pdf> (page 95).

⁶² Considering additional foreseen activities for BiH, the role of the Associations of Cities and Municipalities of FBiH and RS will be confirmed in the inception period.

⁶³ CiviKos Platform is a voluntary union of civil society organizations, committed to the development of a favourable environment for cooperation between Civil Society and Public Authorities.

Serbia: Ministry for Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue, Government of the Republic of Serbia (central level), Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities, Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Serbia, UNDP, civil society representative(s) (mandated by Advisory Group), and TACSO Serbia - in the capacity of observer (non-voting member).

The **Advisory Group** (or similar advisory bodies suitable for each IPA beneficiary) will be employed in each IPA beneficiary with a purpose of providing advisory support to the **Board of Partners** ensuring regular feedback vis-à-vis the implementation of the Action and its effects on civil society and local governments. It will also share information about other relevant developments in the field of civil society and/or local governance that might influence the implementation of the Action as well as to provide other advisory services to the Board of Partners on an ad hoc basis.

Lessons learned ReLOaD1 – Board of Partner and Advisory Group

During the first phase of ReLOaD Programme it was noted that the Boards of Partners had very pro-active and supportive role in implementation. The outlay of their participation will be therefore transferred to ReLOaD2 with possible additional engagement. The Advisory Groups were somewhat less active and their members showed certain reluctance to participate in Project activities. The role of Advisory Groups will be therefore altered in the ReLOaD2, giving them more responsibility and possibility for larger involvement. Also, where applicable, more efficient alternate consultative groups instead of Advisory groups that were operational during ReLOaD1.

The **Project Assurance** role supports the Project Board by carrying out objective and independent Action oversight and monitoring functions, in order to ensure the set milestones are managed and completed. The Project Assurance role is delegated by the Project Board, but it cannot be delegated to the Project Manager since the Project Assurance and Project Management roles must be separated. The Project Assurance will be performed by the **UNDP Rural and Regional Development Sector Leader in Bosnia and Herzegovina**, supported by **the Sector Associate**. The Project Assurance will ensure that the following aspects have been addressed throughout the project implementation: thorough liaison between the members of the Project Board is maintained; beneficiary needs and expectations are being met or managed; risks are being controlled; project goals and activities remain viable and fit well with the overall UNDP Country Programmes; applicable UNDP rules and regulations are being observed, as well as any legislative constraints; relevant monitoring and reporting requirements and standards are being observed; quality management procedures are properly followed; Project Board's decisions are followed and revisions are managed in line with the required procedures, etc. Additional support (quality assurance) services for Serbia and Kosovo that also include technical inputs and direction to the project team, shall be provided by assigned Portfolio Manager and Programme Coordinator.

Project team and project office

The **Project Team** consists of 23 staff, including the Regional Project Team and Project Teams operating in each Western Balkans IPA beneficiary. Based on the experience from ReLOaD1 and the findings from the external evaluation, composition of the project team was altered, and the team expended to manage a heavy workload and all foreseen activities.

The **Regional Project Team** (3.5 team members) will comprise the Regional Programme Manager/Team Leader, Capacity Development Officer, Project Officer, Project Associate and Communication Associate (half-time).

The **Regional Programme Manager/Team Leader** (full-time post, 48 months) has the authority to run the Action on a day-to-day basis on behalf of UNDP. The Regional Project Manager/Team Leader will have the responsibility to ensure that the Action produces the required results, capable of achieving the benefits defined in this document. S/he will be responsible for day-to-day management, coordination with the Projects Managers and respective Project Teams from all IPA beneficiaries, and also will ensure that the Action produces the results specified, to the required corporate standards and within the constraints of time and cost.

The **Regional Capacity Development Expert** (full-time post, 48 months) will support the implementation and regional replication, networking and knowledge sharing activities. S/he will be responsible for knowledge transfer based on experiences as well as provision of advisory services related to the adoption and adjustment of the CSO funding mechanism and tools, given existing practices in local governments across the region. Furthermore, s/he will oversee monitoring and evaluation plan implementation for the Action, including other expert support to the Project Teams, and their stakeholders, in properly addressing capacity development assistance and baseline setting for partner local governments and CSOs. The **Regional Capacity Development Expert** will support Regional Programme manager/Team leader in regular duties including reporting, communication with partners and donor.

The **Regional Project Associate** (full-time post, 48 months) will provide overall financial, administrative and logistical support for the Action implementation, including provision of support to regional activities. Furthermore, s/he will ensure horizontal communication and coordination with the Project teams in other Western Balkans offices, providing support in relation to administrative and financial management and reporting aspects. The Regional Project Associate will coordinate reporting and financial management activities between all six project teams and prepare finalised reports for the Action.

The **Communication Associate** (full-time post, 48 months - shared 50% Regional and 50% BiH team) will support the formulation and implementation of the ReLOaD2 communications and advocacy strategies under supervision of the regional office. S/he will prepare media releases, articles and administrate relevant project website subpages and social media. Furthermore, the Communication Associate will ensure all photograph, video and other communication contents produce content to promote projects, their partners and results to the media and other targeted audiences. This post will provide support to the regional team and Bosnia and Herzegovina team.

Composition of national Project Teams vary depending on the size of available funds per IPA beneficiary and work distribution (number of partner municipalities).

Concretely, Project Teams in **Albania and Kosovo** will consist of a Project Manager (full-time post 48 months) and a Project Associate (full-time post 48 months) while the teams in **Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia**, based on their specifics will extend the team with additional position - Project Assistant (full-time post 48 months) in Montenegro and Serbia, and Monitoring Officer in North Macedonia.

They are indicated below:

The **Project Manager** (48 months) will be in charge of project implementation and achievement of the Action milestones within the respective IPA beneficiary. S/he will be responsible for day-to-day management, ensuring that the Action produces the results specified. S/he will ensure regular communication and networking with national partners, EU Delegations/Offices, civil society and other stakeholders as well as other Project Teams in the Western Balkans. Project Manager will coordinate and report to the Regional Project Manager/Team Leader.

The **Project Associate** (full-time post, 48 months) will have a programmatic and finance/administrative role. As for the programmatic role, s/he will be enrolled in all field implementation activities, assisting the Project Manager in developing and implementing strategies for anchoring mechanisms for transparent distribution of CSO funds, performing financial and ad hoc monitoring of CSO projects in the field, and assisting in capacity development activities. In terms of finance/administrative role, the Project Associate will be responsible for the overall financial, administrative and logistical support within the respective IPA beneficiary including, but not limited to, administrative and financial support to the grant scheme for CSOs, follow-up activities related to the public calls for CSO proposals, including regular and timely disbursement of awarded funds to CSOs, logistical support to the capacity development activities (formal trainings, on-the job coaching, etc.) for local government officials and representatives of CSOs.

The **Project Assistant** (full-time post, 48 months in **Montenegro and Serbia**) will support to the team and Project manager in implementation of activities. S/he will assist in evaluation of CSO project proposals, result-based and financial monitoring of awarded CSO projects, and capacity building. Furthermore, the

responsibilities include data collection and ensuring the quality of inputs and products through implementation of funded CSO projects. They will also serve as a logistic support for organization of various seminars, trainings, field visits, etc.

The **Monitoring Officer** (full-time post, 36 months in **North Macedonia**) will assist in the field implementation activities in 7 local governments. S/he will be employed to ensure field presence and support the implementation of the project components under the direct supervision of the Project Manager. S/he will work with partner local governments, in developing and implementing Action plans, capacity building of local governments' officials and representatives of CSOs. In addition, Monitoring Officer will oversee monitoring of CSO projects, including financial monitoring, regular and ad hoc field missions, supervision of experts for monitoring and will also serve as a logistic support for organization of various seminars, trainings, visits in the field.

Taking into consideration higher budget in **Bosnia and Herzegovina** as well as larger scope of work in terms of activities, the project team in Bosnia and Hercegovina will consists of (6.5 staff members): Project Manager, Governance Officer, Grant Officer, Field Associate, Youth Associate, Project Associate and Communication Associate (half-time).

While the Project Manager and Project Associate will have the same roles as in other IPA beneficiaries, the **Governance Officer** (full-time post, 48 months) will coordinate activities related to the adoption and implementation of the methodology for transparent funds disbursement into practices of local governments as well as working on further horizontal integration of the methodology. S/he will be in charge of planning and organisation of capacity building activities foreseen for local governments, ensuring the wide representation and full participation of local stakeholders, lead policy processes and ensure smooth communication and coordination with and within partner local governments. S/he will closely coordinate with the entity Associations of Municipalities and Cities related to mainstreaming and anchoring the methodology for transparent funds disbursement.

The **Grant Officer** (full-time post, 44 months) will provide overall management of a CSO grant scheme in partner local governments. S/he will provide technical expertise and coordinate civil society efforts to understand the project objectives and effectively participate definition in design and implementation of public calls for CSOs in partner local governments. Also, by establishing effective forums and work groups in partner municipalities between CSOs and local authorities s/he will promote partnership and facilitate implementation of local government strategic plans implementation. Also, the Grant Officer will organise and oversee the capacity development activities for CSOs such as trainings in PCM, mentorship support in proposal writing, etc. S/he will be ultimately responsible for execution the Action's grant scheme in partner local governments, including evaluation of CSO project proposals. In addition, Grant Officer will be responsible for coordination and quality service delivered by mentors for CSOs.

Youth Associate (full-time post, 36 months) will coordinate and support field activities in partner local governments related to youth activities. S/he will provide technical expertise and coordinate work of youth civil society activists and youth organisations in partner local governments. This includes follow up on implementation of youth projects and close coordination with the Grant Officer. The Youth Associate will also work on preparation and overseeing of the activities related first job experience and internships for youth. S/he will organise capacity development activities for youth CSOs establishing synergies with local authorities and other counterparts - national and international initiatives.

Field Associate (full-time post, 48 months) will be employed to coordinate field presence and support the implementation under the direct supervision of the Project Manager. S/he will, in close coordination with the Grant Officer, Governance Officer and Youth Associate, execute policies and plans foreseen by the Action. S/he will oversee monitoring of CSO projects, including regular and ad hoc field missions, including supervision of experts for monitoring. In addition, the Field Associate will lead activities related to the improving citizens participation in decision making processes in partner local governments.

The core project team will be supported by short-term experts that will be engaged for specific segments of project activities. Support will be related, but not limited to, the following functions: analysis, training, mentoring, monitoring etc.

Besides cost of staff and short-term experts, **the project office costs** required for the implementation of the Action will include travel and subsistence costs, depreciation costs, rental costs or lease, maintenance and repair costs, consumables and supplies, IT and telecommunication services, energy and water, costs of facility management contracts, including security fees and insurance costs, detailed in the Annex III - Budget of the Action.

Monitoring and evaluation

Internal monitoring system

The present Action anticipates relatively complex scope of activities, results and related resources. In order to achieve maximum efficiency for the given funds the Project team will introduce principles and measures for internal monitoring and control of implementation. The overall coordination over the Action will be maintained by the ReLOaD2 Regional office in Sarajevo, where the core team will be placed and the overall backstopping function provided. The organisational context will connect project teams in each of six IPA beneficiaries. The internal monitoring system will be based on definition of initial benchmarks and responsibilities of local teams. For each participating IPA beneficiary, the activities and results will be regularly communicated to the Regional office in Sarajevo. The anticipated results and outputs will be defined and with time perspective. Delays in implementation or failure to meet benchmarks will result in corrective measures.

System of indicators

The project team will utilise a set of quantitative indicators for monitoring and measurement of performance. The initially planned benchmarks will be set as a basis for the internal monitoring system and the progress / fulfilment of these indicators will be regularly monitored.

Due to the complex outline of the project the logical framework matrix only presents key performance indicators. To allow quantitative measurement of achievements, additional activity outputs/indicators are presented within each of the activities described above.

Reporting

An **Inception Report** will be prepared following six-month inception phase.

Annual narrative report will be prepared and submitted to the EU and the Project Board. **Annual reports** will be submitted following the EU reporting requirements laid out in annex II of the General Conditions (annex II to the Contribution Agreement).

A **Final Report** (cumulative) will also be prepared and submitted to the EU and the Project Board following the EU reporting requirements within six months of the end of the Action, incorporating the findings of the final independent evaluation.

External evaluation

In line with the procedure an external independent evaluation is planned within the Action. In line with general agreement between UNDP and EU, UNDPs external evaluation guidelines⁶⁴ will be observed. ToR for the evaluation will be agreed between UNDP and EU. The **final evaluation** of the Action will be conducted

⁶⁴ http://web.undp.org/evaluation/guideline/documents/PDF/UNDP_Evaluation_Guidelines.pdf

before closing of the Action and it will provide an overview of the whole implementation period and will also provide recommendations for future support to civil society in the Western Balkans.

UNDP and the project team will also remain open and available to support and provide information to any other external evaluation or monitoring, including Results Oriented Monitoring missions initiated by EU.

2.2.3. Indicative action plan for implementing the Action

The duration of the Action will be 48 months, including a six-month inception period.

Year 1													
	Half-year						Half-year						
Activity	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Implementing body
R0 Project structures and management principles set-up for efficient support to CSOs, local governments and stakeholders.													
A0.1 Setting up of Project's structures in all participating IPA beneficiaries													UNDP
A0.2 Establishing of contacts and agreement on principles of cooperation with stakeholders													UNDP
A0.3 Setting up and supporting the work of national Board of Partners meetings and Advisory Group meetings													UNDP
A0.4 Maintaining management, financial management and internal quality assurance systems													UNDP
R1 The capacity of local governments to institutionalise transparent and gender responsive grant schemes is strengthened													
A1.1 Comparative analysis of mechanisms for civil society financing and practical approaches between participating IPA beneficiaries													UNDP
A1.2 Selection and preparatory work with local governments													UNDP
A1.3 Assessment of existing financial mechanisms for disbursement of public funds to CSOs in selected local governments and their familiarization with the methodology for disbursement of public funds to CSOs													UNDP
A1.4 Training and mentoring support to local governments in establishing transparent financial mechanisms for CSO financing													
R2 The capacity of CSOs and local governments to implement grant schemes and deliver good quality and gender responsive projects servicing the local community is strengthened													
A2.1 Design of targeted grant scheme aligned with the local priorities and current needs of CSOs and their target groups													UNDP
A2.2 Implementation of tailored PCM and project proposal preparation trainings and group mentoring for CSOs													UNDP
A2.3 Support to local governments in launching and implementing public calls for CSOs, including coherent monitoring exercise													UNDP

Year 1													
	Half-year						Half-year						
Activity	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Implementing body
A2.4 Mentoring support for CSOs awarded under the grant scheme													UNDP
R3 Capacity of local authorities and CSOs to generate greater civic and youth engagement in local affairs is enhanced													
A3.1 Implementation of youth community and civic engagement activities													UNDP
A3.2 Vocational training, internship and first job experience support for youth													UNDP
A3.3 Implementation of specific targeted youth project support													UNDP
R4 Regional networking and dialogue among civil society and local governments across the Western Balkans is enhanced													
A4.1 Organisation of thematic forums and events for direct exchange between participating local governments, CSOs and other stakeholders at the regional level													UNDP
A4.2 Enhancing digital thematic platform facilitating virtual knowledge sharing and communication at the regional level													UNDP
A4.3 Design and implementation of a pilot regional support CSO grant scheme for multi-beneficiary participation/partnerships													UNDP

Year 2													
	Half-year						Half-year						
Activity	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Implementing body
R0 Project structures and management principles set-up for efficient support to CSOs, local governments and stakeholders.													
A0.1 Setting up of Project's structures in all participating IPA beneficiaries													UNDP
A0.2 Establishing of contacts and agreement on principles of cooperation with stakeholders													UNDP
A0.3 Setting up and supporting the work of national Board of Partners meetings and Advisory Group meetings													UNDP
A0.4 Maintaining management, financial management and internal quality assurance systems													UNDP
R1 The capacity of local governments to institutionalise transparent and gender responsive grant schemes is strengthened													
A1.1 Comparative analysis of mechanisms for civil society financing and practical approaches between participating IPA beneficiaries													UNDP
A1.2 Selection and preparatory work with													UNDP

Year 2													
	Half-year						Half-year						
Activity	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Implementing body
local governments													
A1.3 Assessment of existing financial mechanisms for disbursement of public funds to CSOs in selected local governments and their familiarization with the methodology for disbursement of public funds to CSOs													UNDP
A1.4 Training and mentoring support to local governments in establishing transparent financial mechanisms for CSO financing													
R2 The capacity of CSOs and local governments to implement grant schemes and deliver good quality and gender responsive projects servicing the local community is strengthened													UNDP
A2.1 Design of targeted grant scheme aligned with the local priorities and current needs of CSOs and their target groups													UNDP
A2.2 Implementation of tailored PCM and project proposal preparation trainings and group mentoring for CSOs													UNDP
A2.3 Support to local governments in launching and implementing public calls for CSOs, including coherent monitoring exercise													UNDP
A2.4 Mentoring support for CSOs awarded under the grant scheme													UNDP
R3 Capacity of local authorities and CSOs to generate greater civic and youth engagement in local affairs is enhanced													
A3.1 Implementation of youth community and civic engagement activities													UNDP
A3.2 Vocational training, internship and first job experience support for youth													UNDP
A3.3 Implementation of specific targeted youth project support													UNDP
R4 Regional networking and dialogue among civil society and local governments across the Western Balkans is enhanced.													
A4.1 Organisation of thematic forums and events for direct exchange between participating local governments, CSOs and other stakeholders at the regional level													UNDP
A4.2 Enhancing digital thematic platform facilitating virtual knowledge sharing and communication at the regional level													UNDP
A4.3 Design and implementation of a pilot regional support CSO grant scheme for multi-beneficiary participation/partnerships													UNDP

Year 3													
	Half-year						Half-year						

Activity	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Implementing body
R0 Project structures and management principles set-up for efficient support to CSOs, local governments and stakeholders.													
A0.1 Setting up of Project's structures in all participating IPA beneficiaries													UNDP
A0.2 Establishing of contacts and agreement on principles of cooperation with stakeholders													UNDP
A0.3 Setting up and supporting the work of national Board of Partners meetings and Advisory Group meetings													UNDP
A0.4 Maintaining management, financial management and internal quality assurance systems													UNDP
R1 The capacity of local governments to institutionalise transparent and gender responsive grant schemes is strengthened													
A1.1 Comparative analysis of mechanisms for civil society financing and practical approaches between participating IPA beneficiaries													UNDP
A1.2 Selection and preparatory work with local governments													UNDP
A1.3 Assessment of existing financial mechanisms for disbursement of public funds to CSOs in selected local governments and their familiarization with the methodology for disbursement of public funds to CSOs													UNDP
A1.4 Training and mentoring support to local governments in establishing transparent financial mechanisms for CSO financing													
R2 The capacity of CSOs and local governments to implement grant schemes and deliver good quality and gender responsive projects servicing the local community is strengthened													UNDP
A2.1 Design of targeted grant scheme aligned with the local priorities and current needs of CSOs and their target groups													UNDP
A2.2 Implementation of tailored PCM and project proposal preparation trainings and group mentoring for CSOs													UNDP
A2.3 Support to local governments in launching and implementing public calls for CSOs, including coherent monitoring exercise													UNDP
A2.4 Mentoring support for CSOs awarded under the grant scheme													UNDP
R3 Capacity of local authorities and CSOs to generate greater civic and youth engagement in local affairs is enhanced													
A3.1 Implementation of youth community and civic engagement activities													UNDP
A3.2 Vocational training, internship and first job experience support for youth													UNDP
A3.3 Implementation of specific targeted youth project support													UNDP
R4 Regional networking and dialogue													

Year 3													
	Half-year						Half-year						
Activity	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Implementing body
among civil society and local governments across the Western Balkans is enhanced													
A4.1 Organisation of thematic forums and events for direct exchange between participating local governments, CSOs and other stakeholders at the regional level													UNDP
A4.2 Enhancing digital thematic platform facilitating virtual knowledge sharing and communication at the regional level													UNDP
A4.3 Design and implementation of a pilot regional support CSO grant scheme for multi-beneficiary participation/partnerships													UNDP

Year 4													
	Half-year						Half-year						
Activity	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Implementing body
R0 Project structures and management principles set-up for efficient support to CSOs, local governments and stakeholders.													
A0.1 Setting up of Project's structures in all participating IPA beneficiaries													UNDP
A0.2 Establishing of contacts and agreement on principles of cooperation with stakeholders													UNDP
A0.3 Setting up and supporting the work of national Board of Partners meetings and Advisory Group meetings													UNDP
A0.4 Maintaining management, financial management and internal quality assurance systems													UNDP
R1 The capacity of local governments to institutionalise transparent and gender responsive grant schemes is strengthened													
A1.1 Comparative analysis of mechanisms for civil society financing and practical approaches between participating IPA beneficiaries													UNDP
A1.2 Selection and preparatory work with local governments													UNDP
A1.3 Assessment of existing financial mechanisms for disbursement of public funds to CSOs in selected local governments and their familiarization with the methodology for disbursement of public funds to CSOs													UNDP
A1.4 Training and mentoring support to local governments in establishing transparent financial mechanisms for CSO financing													
R2 The capacity of CSOs and local governments to implement grant schemes													UNDP

and deliver good quality and gender responsive projects servicing the local community is strengthened														
A2.1 Design of targeted grant scheme aligned with the local priorities and current needs of CSOs and their target groups														UNDP
A2.2 Implementation of tailored PCM and project proposal preparation trainings and group mentoring for CSOs														UNDP
A2.3 Support to local governments in launching and implementing public calls for CSOs, including coherent monitoring exercise														UNDP
A2.4 Mentoring support for CSOs awarded under the grant scheme														UNDP
R3 Capacity of local authorities and CSOs to generate greater civic and youth engagement in local affairs is enhanced														
A3.1 Implementation of youth community and civic engagement activities														UNDP
A3.2 Vocational training, internship and first job experience support for youth														UNDP
A3.3 Implementation of specific targeted youth project support														UNDP
R4 Regional networking and dialogue among civil society and local governments across the Western Balkans is enhanced.														
A4.1 Organisation of thematic forums and events for direct exchange between participating local governments, CSOs and other stakeholders at the regional level														UNDP
A4.2 Enhancing digital thematic platform facilitating virtual knowledge sharing and communication at the regional level														UNDP
A4.3 Design and implementation of a pilot regional support CSO grant scheme for multi-beneficiary participation/partnerships														UNDP

2.2.4. Sustainability of the action

Impact on target groups

The impact of the Action on target groups and final beneficiaries can be expected at two levels.

The Action will demonstrate clear **direct impact** on target groups through implementation of support and financing measures. These benefits will be as follows.

- **Local governments.** 50 local governments will be directly involved in project activities. The project team and experts will work on advancement of their capacities for transparent implementation of financing for civil society. Though primarily aimed at civil society the support will undoubtedly have positive impact in overall local planning and budgetary context. Local governments will be able to respond better to the needs of their citizens and civil society since the efficiency of funding will be increased.
- **Civil Society Organisations.** At least 300 CSOs will be involved in the project directly through training and mentoring support. The project team will work on increasing their capacities, building of long-term sustainability and perspectives, strategic planning and vision. The Action will also support at least 300 project initiatives through local grant schemes, enabling CSOs to deal with concrete issues at the local level. Participation in the Action will strengthen their position in eyes of their target groups and in relation to local governments.
- **Youth from the Western Balkans region.** Youth from the region will be direct beneficiary of one set of support activities. The Action will work on strengthening their position, providing perspectives in economic sense, improving their community and civic engagement. A proportion of the local grant schemes will be dedicated specifically for support to youth initiatives supporting over 100 youth projects.
- **Local communities and citizens** will improve their situation and resolve concrete challenges at the local level through implementation of local grant schemes. It is expected that at least 40,000 citizens will benefit from the Action. The project team will promote strong connection of CSOs with communities, insisting that the issues tackled by the grant supported projects are planned on bottom-up principle.

The Action will also demonstrate **indirect impact** as support for civil society provided by UNDP in ReLOaD2 is equally applicable to any other sectors and segments of socio-economic support at the local level. The Action should result in an overall increase of performance of local governments and thus improved socio-economic situation for all citizens in involved local areas.

Risk analysis

This section provides an overview of potential risks that might occur during the implementation, defining them from the perspective of **probability of occurrence** and **potential impact on the Action**.

Potential risks are structured per Results provided in the logical framework matrix. Mitigations measures for each of the risks are presented in the below table as well.

The key principles for elimination of eventual risks will be early detection through the internal monitoring system and implementation of corrective measures, based on pre-defined scenarios.

Result	Type of risk	Probability	Impact	Mitigation measures
R0 Project structures and management principles set-up for efficient	Continuation of COVID-19 influencing ability of the project team to maintain physical and direct contacts with stakeholders (Physical)	High	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Maintenance of regular contacts with stakeholders on on-line basis✓ Adjustment to online mode for project activities, wherever possible

support to CSOs, local governments and stakeholders	Political changes influencing readiness of stakeholders to contribute in the project (Political)	Medium	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Promotion of practical, professional and apolitical nature of proposed changes and support ✓ Maintenance of regular contacts with policy level also in situation of changes
	Changes in priorities and focus of stakeholders due to potential economic crisis, following COVID-19 (Economic and Social)	High	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The Action by definition promotes more efficient use of public funds and this assumption will be repeatedly presented ✓ Possible alignment of some of the local priorities (call priorities) to issues newly opened by health and economic crisis
R1 The capacity of local governments to institutionalise transparent and gender responsive grant schemes is strengthened	Limited interest and commitment by the local governments to participate in the project (political)	Low	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Clear and intensive promotion of benefits brought by the Action to any local government ✓ Extended selection pool – initial review of more candidates to select the best ones through the process
	Limited interest by local governments to promote transparent mechanisms for financing and support to CSOs (political) as well as to institutionalize transparent model for funding of CSOs	Low	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Stressing through contacts with local governments the benefits of the new system ✓ Stressing the increased efficiency of funding
	Personal fluctuations in local governments are lowering overall capacities; individuals that have previously passed the trainings are leaving local governments (economic and social)	Medium	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The project team will promote the principle of “organisational capacities” rather than personal capacities ✓ Participant local governments will be encouraged to involve a broader scope of employees in trainings and other activities ✓ Usage of written procedures which will be available to eventual new employees will be encouraged
	Inability of local governments to co-finance grant schemes due to limited budget resources (economic)	Low	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The project team will promote strategic and sustainable planning of local finances, thus giving local governments possibility for planning CSOs financing ✓ The co-financing principles will be negotiated with each local government separately (minimum 20%), considering their financial capabilities
	Low interest of urban local governments to participate in the Action, specifically in cluster of municipalities/local governments (Montenegro)	Medium	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Project Team and “old” ReLOaD municipalities (from phase 1) would provide mentoring support to “new” municipalities, ✓ Cluster municipalities would be requested to sign Memorandum of Cooperation; ✓ Certain percentage of an awarded NGO/CSO project activities to be implemented within the territories of each cluster member (local government/municipality).
R2 The capacity of CSOs and local governments to implement grant schemes and deliver good quality and	CSOs participating in the project do not achieve long-term sustainability (economic and social)	Medium	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The project team will work on promotion of more systematic set-up of CSOs, also building their capacities for strategic planning ✓ A good proportion of the Action will be aimed at strengthening the linkages between CSOs and their target groups, which represent the basis for their sustainability.

gender responsive projects servicing the local community is strengthened	Limited capacities for preparation and implementation of projects due to lack of seriousness and commitment (ad-hoc or voluntary based organisations) (social)	Medium	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The Action will provide CSOs with a series of support trainings, including basic PCM and project preparation training ✓ Mentoring support and advice will be provided in the process of project preparation ✓ Mentoring support will be provided in the process of project implementation
	Violation of procedures and consequential lack of transparency in evaluation commissions for grant projects (social)	Low	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The Action will define precise proceedings for evaluation commission, including for selection of the evaluating members ✓ Thorough monitoring of the work of evaluation commissions will be ensured from the Action
R3 Capacity of local authorities and CSOs to generate greater civic and youth engagement in local affairs is enhanced	Limited interest and general reluctance of youth to participate in the Action's activities (social)	Low	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The project team will in the first instance identify community leaders and opinion makers which will promote project benefits ✓ A series of information and motivation workshops will be implemented at the start of activities ✓ The project team will develop innovative and creative tools which will attract youth
R4 Regional networking and dialogue among civil society and local governments across the Western Balkans is enhanced	Changed regional relations limiting possibilities for regional cooperation (political)	Low	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Promotion of Action's benefit at the policy level through the duration of the project ✓ Promotion of elements which are integrative rather than divisive
	Continuous COVID19 preventing travel and meetings of regional stakeholders	High	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Implementation of activities on on-line basis ✓ Development of innovative approaches to cooperation which will make the best use of available on-line possibilities
	Differences in opinions or priorities between different participating IPA beneficiaries prevent efficient dialogue and implementation of joint initiatives	Low	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The project team will define in advance the areas which are of common interest for regional stakeholders and will build cooperation around them

Sustainability of the Action

Sustainability of the Action will be guaranteed by the coherent design of the initial proposal and efficient implementation by competent and experienced project team. The project management part of the Action has in-built control mechanisms, such as internal monitoring system and evaluations, which will help in achieving set objectives.

Based on previous experiences UNDP has set two main assumptions related to sustainability.

- Civil Society Organisations at the local level (especially grassroots organisations) face significant challenges in achieving long-term sustainability due to limitation of capacities, lack of financing, fluctuations etc.
- Local Governments struggle with sustainability of their efforts due to ever-changing political climate and changes in perception and expectations of local population.

These two assumptions will be addressed throughout the implementation of the Action in the following manner.

Financial sustainability

Local governments are constantly facing the challenge of limited resources as they are not able to answer all the needs at the local level. In addition to that the allocations of funds are not always following systematic, strategic and transparent principles what results in decrease of efficiency and loss of funds.

The ReLOaD2 will work on systematisation and increase of transparency in local funding. In addition to that it will strongly promote the principles of regular examination of real, current needs of communities and citizens, as well as monitoring of the impact of funding. Participating local governments will through more systematic and transparent funding be able to achieve more for the given funds. Once such principles are expanded to other areas of local financing, significant saving and better impact of local financing can be expected.

CSOs are on the other hand facing constant deficiency of funds for their operating and services. While the local grant schemes supported from the Action will not resolve long-term funding challenges, some immediate effects will surely be visible. By promoting transparent and system funding from local governments' budgets CSOs can ideally expect support in more regular and long-term basis.

Institutional sustainability

Institutional sustainability will be firstly built on introduction of transparent and efficient mechanisms for local financing (of civil society). The local governments which have adapted the LOD principles at earlier stages report significant improvement of performance and also increase in satisfaction rate from applicants and civil servants. With continuation of such approach more local governments will embrace these principles and long-term benefits provided by them.

Institutional sustainability will also be achieved through strengthening the contacts and networks within the Action. UNDP will work even stronger than previously on strengthening regional networks and contacts. Within ReLOaD2 specific funding will be provided for joint regional initiatives and also cooperation at the central level will be strongly encouraged. The Action anticipate involvement of a broader range of stakeholders which will be specifically considered and motivated to contribute to institutional sustainability of the results.

UNDP and the project team will during the implementation process try to identify local partners which might continue some of the Action's activities and efforts after the conclusion of the Action.

Policy level sustainability

Significant results were achieved within ReLOaD1 project in respect to policy level support and measures. In several cases (BiH, Kosovo) ReLOaD1 team has supported preparation and adaption of central level legislation related to CSOs or supported alignment and putting into practice these policies and their financial support. Such approach will continue in this Action, where it is planned to deliver assistance in more targeted and tailor-made manner. One specific activity of the Action is anticipating gap-assessment of central level legislation, regulation, practices, and provision of support measures in filling these gaps.

Dissemination plan

The concepts developed within the ReLOaD2 will have an impact and relevance beyond the scope of the Action. The principles developed in the participating local governments are namely relevant for practically all local governments in the Western Balkans region.

Taking this assumption as a basis, UNDP and the project team will dedicate significant attention to potential replication and dissemination of results. The following main efforts will be done in that sense:

- **Development of documented trail of proceedings.** The project team will ensure that the procedures and practices for introduction of new concepts are closely followed and registered. Practical cases and main challenges faced in the process will be given attention. Such written instructions will be made available to any interested entity and/or local government.
- **Direct contacts with other local governments.** In addition to direct participating partners UNDP and the project team will promote the concepts (above all the transparent financial mechanisms) with other local governments in the region. It is expected that positive experiences of their counterparts will mean a significant motivation for their similar application of the transparent procedures.
- **Broader exchange of concepts.** It is anticipated that representatives of Turkey will be invited to regional forums, what will open additional possibilities for exchange of experiences and replication of concepts. The project team will also apply the principle of inviting to regional forums other interested local governments, CSOs and bodies which were not necessarily involved in the Action's implementation.

2.2.5. Logical framework

	<i>Results chain</i>	<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Baseline (value & reference year)</i>	<i>Target (value & reference year)</i>	<i>Current value (reference year) (to be included in interim and final reports)</i>	<i>Source and mean of verification</i>	<i>Assumptions</i>
<i>Impact (Overall objective)</i>	To strengthen participatory democracies and the EU integration process in the Western Balkans by empowering civil society and youth to actively take part in decision making and by stimulating an enabling legal and financial environment for Civil Society Organisations (CSOs).	Increase in local incentives aimed at supporting CSOs and their target groups in transparent, systematic and participatory manner.	Limited contribution of CSOs to beneficiaries (individuals) at the local level due to the absence of systematic financial and institutional support by local governments.	5% increase of a supported beneficiaries (individuals) by CSOs' services, in the local governments involved in the Action.	The latest available value of the indicator(s) at the time of reporting (to be updated in interim and final reports)	Action records local governments' records on execution of grant schemes for CSOs, meeting minutes, monitoring reports, CSO reports, media coverage, EU annual progress report per IPA beneficiary.	<i>Not applicable</i>
<i>Outcome (s) (Specific)</i>	To strengthen partnerships between local governments and civil society in the Western Balkans by enhancing transparency in funding of CSOs from local government budgets and promoting youth and civic engagement in decision-making and community	O.1.1 Number of local governments with more efficient and transparent system of funding of CSOs from public sources.	53 local governments (2020; ReLOaD1) Albania: 12 BiH: 21 Kosovo: 5 North Macedonia: 5 Montenegro: 5 Serbia: 5	88 local governments (2024) (including baseline value - 35 new local governments) ⁶⁵ <i>Total number of anticipated partner LGs is 50 (35 new LG and 15 LGs from ReLOaD1) both will further increase efficiency of the transparent funding of CSOs.</i>		O1.1 Formal agreements / memorandums of understanding and contracts between local governments and CSOs in participating IPA beneficiaries.	Relevant institutional partners responsible for coordination with civil society organisations engage pro-actively in the Action. Sufficient number of local governments apply for participation in interventions under

⁶⁵ "New" local governments are those that are joining ReLOaD programme for the first time, while the "old" local governments have participated in previous phase of the Action (ReLOaD1).

	development.			Albania: 18 (6 new + 4 from ReLOaD1) BiH:26 (5 new + 7 from ReLOaD1 and LOD) Kosovo 12 (7 new) North Macedonia: 10 (5 new + 2 from ReLOaD1) Montenegro 10 (5 new + 5 from ReLOaD 1) Serbia 12 (7 new)			the Action. Local governments' leaderships are committed to introduce and systemically further apply the new CSO funding model.
		O.1.2 Number of citizens receiving benefits and support from CSOs supported by the action.	105,046 (2020; ReLOaD1) Albania: 28,000 BiH: 47,749 Kosovo: 6,139 North Macedonia: 7,618 Montenegro: 5,231 Serbia: 10,309	140,315 (2024; at least 50% female; including baseline value) Albania: 33,500 BiH: 57,349 Kosovo: 10,339 North Macedonia: 13,218 Montenegro: 10,000 Serbia: 15,909		sam O1.2: Action field monitoring reports, CSO reports for implementation of projects indicating beneficiaries, statistics and data from beneficiary CSOs.	
Outputs	R0 Project structures and management principles set-up for efficient support to CSOs, local governments and stakeholders.	R0.1 Internal project structures functional R0.2 Number of meetings of project coordination advisory bodies held.	0 79 (2020; LOD and ReLOaD1) Albania: 18 BiH: 18 Kosovo: 9 North Macedonia: 8 Montenegro: 11 Serbia: 15	1 163 (2024) (including baseline value) Albania: 32 BiH:32 Kosovo: 23 North Macedonia: 22 Montenegro: 25 Serbia: 29		R0.1 Action documents, contracts and meeting documents.	Sufficient number of CSOs willing to participate in interventions of the Action. Continuing political commitment to development of civil society.

	<p>R1 The capacity of local governments to institutionalise transparent and gender responsive grant schemes is strengthened.</p>	<p>R1.1 Number of local governments with institutionalized model of transparent and project-based funding of CSOs in the Western Balkan partners.</p> <p>R1.2 Average annual percentage of increase in transparently disbursed public funds to CSOs from budgets of participating local government.</p>	<p>81 (2020; LOD and ReLOaD1) Albania: 12 BiH: 53 (<i>37 baseline LGs, 11 new ReLOaD partner LGs and 3 additional non-partner LGs that were supported in institutionalisation</i>) Kosovo: 5 North Macedonia: 4 Montenegro: 3 Serbia: 4</p> <p>0</p>	<p>117 (2024) (including baseline value) Albania: 17 BiH: 58 Kosovo: 12 (<i>Kosovo had 5 LGs under this indicator with institutionalised model in ReLOaD 1 as relevant regulation on national level was adopted thus it is counted here but will be achieved by default</i>) North Macedonia: 9 Montenegro: 10 (2 partner Local governments form ReLOaD1 will be included that have not institutionalised the model) Serbia: 11</p> <p>5% (2024)</p>		<p>R 1.1 Formal local government decisions and documents, Action records.</p> <p>R1.2 Action records and Municipal records on execution of grant schemes.</p>	
	<p>R2 The capacity of CSOs and local governments to implement grant schemes and deliver good quality and gender responsive projects servicing the local community is strengthened.</p>	<p>R2.1 Number of citizens in targeted local governments who directly benefit from improved local services as a result from the assistance.</p>	<p>105,046 (2020; ReLOaD1) Albania: 28,000 BiH: 47,749 Kosovo: 6,139 North Macedonia: 7,618 Montenegro: 5,231 Serbia: 10,309</p>	<p>140,315 (2024; at least 50% female; including baseline value) Albania: 33,500 BiH: 57,349 Kosovo: 10,339 North Macedonia: 13,218 Montenegro: 10,000 Serbia: 15,909</p>		<p>R2.1: Action field monitoring reports, CSO reports for implementation of projects indicating beneficiaries, statistics and data from beneficiary CSOs.</p>	

	R2.2 Number of CSO projects funded addressing citizens' needs in participating IPA beneficiaries, incl. minority CSO.	403⁶⁶ (2020; ReLOaD1) Albania: 59 BiH: 177 Kosovo: 46 North Macedonia: 35 Montenegro:48 Serbia: 38	747 (2024) (including baseline value) Albania: 71 BiH: 297 Kosovo: 88 North Macedonia: 85 Montenegro:108 Serbia: 98		R 2.2 Calls for Proposals for CSOs in target localities; contracts and Action records related to grants awarded.
R3 Capacity of local authorities and CSOs to generate greater civic and youth engagement in local affairs is enhanced.	R3.1 Number of projects supported enhancing youth, youth activism and participation in a gender balanced way.	90⁶⁷ (2020; ReLOaD1) Albania: 23 BiH: 40 Kosovo: 6 North Macedonia: 8 Montenegro: 7 Serbia: 6	192 (2024) (including baseline value) Albania: 39 BiH: 64 Kosovo: 20 North Macedonia: 22 Montenegro:27 Serbia: 20		R 3.1 Calls for Proposals for CSOs in target localities; contracts and Action records related to grants awarded.
	R3.2 Number of actions enhancing skills and employment experience of young women and men.	0	8 (2024) actions in IPA beneficiaries targeting 416 youth (<i>VET - 206, Internship - 140 and first job - 70</i>). BiH: 2 actions targeting 130 youth (<i>VET - 100 and Internship - 30</i>) Kosovo: 3 actions targeting 201 youth (<i>VET - 56, Internship - 75 and first job - 70</i>).Montenegro: 1		R3.2: Action field reports, reports for implementation of actions indicating beneficiaries, statistics and data.

⁶⁶ Total number of CSO projects awarded within ReLOaD1 was 493, out of which 90 youth projects. Thus, the baseline indicated here excludes youth projects and is set as 403.

⁶⁷ Number of youth projects awarded within ReLOaD1 was 90 out of total 493 awarded CSO projects.

		R3.3 Number of documented youth and civic actions contributing to meeting identified needs of female and male local citizens.	0	<p>action targeting at least 15 youth (<i>Internship</i>). Serbia: 2 actions targeting 70 youth (<i>VET - 50 and Internship - 20</i>).</p> <p>100 (2024) Albania: 12 BiH: 24 Kosovo: 14 North Macedonia: 14 Montenegro: 20 Serbia: 14</p>		R3.3: Action field monitoring reports, forum meeting minutes in target localities; contracts and Action records related to youth actions.	
	R4 Regional networking and dialogue among civil society and local governments across the Western Balkans is enhanced.	R4.1 Number of documented cases of cross-fertilisation of best practices and co-operation opportunities, incl. youth from minorities.	2 (2020; ReLOaD1)	14 (2024)		R 4.1 Web platform records; Success stories published; discussion records on the platform, etc.	
		R4.1 Number of CSOs, local governments and other stakeholders involved in regional thematic forums.	544 (2020; ReLOaD1)	600 (2024)		R4.2 Web platform records.	

<p>Activity Matrix</p> <p>R0 Project structures and management principles set-up for efficient support to CSOs, local governments and stakeholders.</p> <p>A0.1 Setting up of Project’s structures in all participating IPA beneficiaries A0.2 Establishing of contacts and agreement on principles of cooperation with stakeholders A0.3 Setting up and supporting the work of national Board of Partners meetings and Advisory Group meetings A0.4 Maintaining management, financial management and internal quality assurance systems</p> <p>R1 The capacity of local governments to institutionalise transparent and gender responsive grant schemes is strengthened.</p> <p>A1.1 Comparative analysis of mechanisms for civil society financing and practical approaches between participating IPA beneficiaries A1.2 Selection and preparatory work with local governments A1.3 Assessment of existing financial mechanisms for disbursement of public funds to CSOs in selected local governments and their familiarization with the methodology for disbursement of public funds to CSOs A1.4 Training and mentoring support to local governments in establishing transparent financial mechanisms for CSO financing</p> <p>R2The capacity of CSOs and local governments to implement grant schemes and deliver good quality and gender responsive projects servicing the local community is strengthened.</p> <p>A2.1 Design of targeted grant scheme aligned with the local priorities and current needs of CSOs and their target groups A2.2 Implementation of tailored PCM and project proposal preparation trainings and group mentoring for CSOs A2.3 Support to local governments in launching and implementing public calls for CSOs, including coherent monitoring exercise A2.4 Mentoring support for CSOs awarded under the grant scheme</p> <p>R3 Capacity of local authorities and CSOs to generate greater civic and youth engagement in local affairs is enhanced.</p> <p>A3.1 Implementation of youth community and civic engagement activities A3.2 Vocational training, internship and first job experience support for youth A3.3 Implementation of specific targeted youth project support</p> <p>R4 Regional networking and dialogue among civil society and local governments across the Western Balkans is enhanced.</p> <p>A4.1 Organisation of thematic forums and events for direct exchange between participating local governments, CSOs and other stakeholders at the regional level A4.2 Enhancing digital thematic platform facilitating virtual knowledge sharing and communication at the regional level A4.3 Design and implementation of a pilot regional support CSO grant scheme for multi-beneficiary participation/partnerships</p>	<p>Means</p> <p>Core project teams in all 6 IPA Beneficiaries Mentors engaged from the Project resources Local and international travel Equipment External services in support to core project team</p> <p>(please see detailed budget in annex III)</p>	<p>Assumptions</p> <p>Beneficiaries – local governments and CSOs remain committed to the objectives through implementation.</p> <p>Political outset at the national and local level in IPA beneficiaries continues to be favourable in relation to transparency and CSOs support.</p>
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2.2.6. Budget

Please see detailed budget of the Action enclosed as Annex III.

3 ORGANIGRAMME

