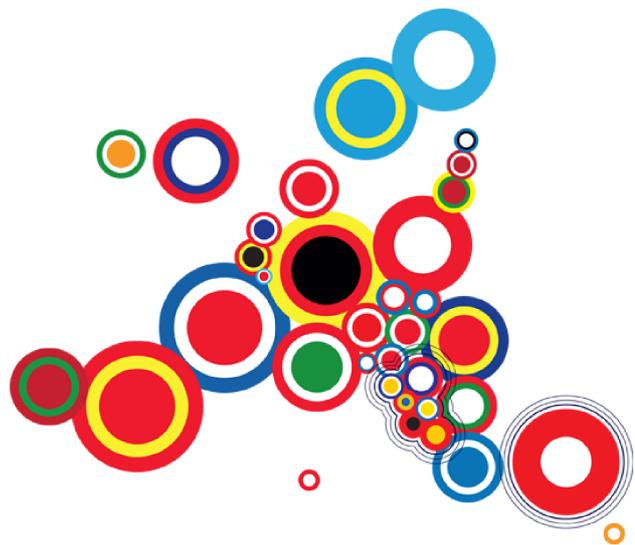




INSTRUMENT FOR PRE-ACCESSION ASSISTANCE (IPA II) 2014-2020



Action summary

The purpose of this Action is twofold: to strengthen sector policy making and to support the implementation of the national employment, education and social inclusion strategies. This will contribute to reducing the high rate of unemployment, increasing labour market participation, in particular of young people and women, increasing access to quality education and training, improving skills matches and establishing a modern and flexible social protection system.

Action Identification	
Action Programme Title	Annual Action Programme Republic of Macedonia for the year 2017
Action Title	EU Support for Education, Employment and Social Policy
Action ID	IPA 2017/040-202/06.01/MK/EUSEESP
Sector Information	
IPA II Sector	Education, Employment and Social Policy
DAC Sector	11110 – Education and administrative management 16010 – Social/welfare services 16020 – Employment policy and administrative management
Budget	
Total cost	EUR 25,150,000
EU contribution	EUR 23,700,000
Budget line(s)	22.02.01.02
Management and Implementation	
Management mode	Direct and indirect management
<i>Direct management:</i> EU Delegation	The activities related to achieving Results 1, 4 and the horizontal evaluation of the action will be managed under direct management by the EU Delegation to Republic of Macedonia
<i>Indirect management:</i> Beneficiary Country	The activities related to achieving Results 2 and 3 will be managed under indirect management. The Central Financing and Contracting Department (CFCD) will be the Contracting Authority and will be responsible for all administrative and procedural aspects of the tendering process, contracting matters and financial management including payment of project activities. The Head of CFCD is: Ms. Radica Koceva Central Financing and Contracting Department Ministry of Finance Tel: +389-2-3231 219 Fax: +389-2- 3106 612 e-mail: radica.koceva@finance.gov.mk
Implementation responsibilities	Direct management for Results 1, 4 and the evaluation of the action. Indirect management with beneficiary country for Results 2 and 3
Location	
Zone benefiting from the action	Republic of Macedonia
Specific implementation area(s)	Country-wide
Timeline	
Final date for concluding Financing Agreement(s) with IPA II beneficiary	At the latest by 31 December 2018
Final date for concluding delegation agreements under indirect management	At the latest by 31 December 2018
Final date for concluding procurement and grant contracts	3 years following the date of conclusion of the Financing Agreement, with the exception of cases listed under Article 189(2) of the Financial Regulation
Final date for operational implementation	6 years following the conclusion of the Financing Agreement

Final date for implementing the Financing Agreement (date by which this programme should be de-committed and closed)	12 years following the conclusion of the Financing Agreement		
Policy objectives / Markers (DAC form)			
General policy objective	Not targeted	Significant objective	Main objective
Participation development/good governance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	x
Aid to environment	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gender equality (including Women In Development)	<input type="checkbox"/>	x	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trade Development	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reproductive, Maternal, New born and child health	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
RIO Convention markers	Not targeted	Significant objective	Main objective
Biological diversity	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Combat desertification	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Climate change mitigation	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Climate change adaptation	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

1. RATIONALE

PROBLEM AND STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

Employment

Low level of employment, wide gender gap in employment and low level of **employment of young people and vulnerable groups** remain key challenges in the country. The employment structure is unfavourable, dominated by low level occupations. The Government has been implementing a set of employment policies aiming at boosting labour demand, enhancing labour and skills supply and better functioning of the labour market. Since 2010 IPA contributes to active labour market measures by improving their scope and quality. Recent evaluations¹ demonstrate high effectiveness of the supported labour measures, which calls for enhanced funding, with a particular focus on long-term unemployed people and people having particular difficulties to get employment.

Women are a very vulnerable category on the labour market. Society still features divisions and stereotypes regarding “male” and “female” occupations. Women are usually not active in the labour market due to their household obligations and other barriers when trying to access the labour market (lack of flexible working; direct and indirect discrimination). IPA I assessed the implementation of equal opportunity of women and men in the country and promoted alternative child care services for increased participation of women in the labour market. The need for further transposition of the EU acquis on gender equality and strengthened gender mainstreaming in the policies has been identified. Moreover, it is necessary to develop and implement sound employment practices that will eliminate discrimination and promote equality of opportunity.

Another challenge is existence of **informal employment** especially among men engaged in elementary occupation and in sectors such as agriculture, tourism, construction, personal services. The government has been fighting the undeclared work mainly through deterrence measures applied by its inspections services. IPA I provided support to the State Labour Inspectorate to improve their capacity and fight more effectively against undeclared work. Greater cooperation is still necessary with other inspection services and institutions. Specific schemes for formalization of informal work need to be introduced in the relevant economic sectors in consultation with social partners.

National Economic and Social Council (NESC) is the only tripartite **social dialogue institution** at national level, with a consultative role to the Government on labour, employment and social protection related policies, laws and programmes. IPA I created tool for communication and monitoring the effectiveness of NESC’s opinions. New Economic-social councils at local level were established. Nonetheless, lack of budget prevents NESC to implement specific activities, such as research, promotional campaigns, meetings, hosting of the website, etc. This affects its capacity to provide sound recommendations and to participate in the discussion of the economic and social reform agenda in the country. Furthermore, IPA I encouraged collective bargaining and setting sector collective bargaining infrastructures. However, social partner organizations lag behind in providing assistance, training, and legal protection to their members. Their capacity to plan and programme capacity-building activities needs to be enhanced.

Education

The education system comprises a mix of pre-school, elementary (6-15 years), secondary (15-18/19 years) and higher education. Elementary (9 years) and secondary education are compulsory and free (of charge) for all students. The system of secondary education includes: general education (gymnasium), vocational education, art schools and education for children with special educational needs on their mother tongue. The higher education sector comprises 5 public and 9 private universities and five non-university private institutions. There are approximately 59,359 students enrolled in higher education institutions, 85% of whom are attending public universities. According to the data of the MoES, only 1,049 students or 1.82% in the year 2011 are enrolled in post-secondary education institutions.

Since 2012, 53 institutions for adult education have been verified, and 130 special programmes for adult education (programmes for non-formal learning) have been accredited leading to qualifications or partial qualifications. These programmes are designed in accordance with occupational standards. In addition, 190 separate vocational education and training programmes for acquiring specific knowledge, skills and

¹ “Impact evaluation of active labour market programmes in **Republic of Macedonia**: key findings”, ILO, 2015

competencies have been verified since 2014. Within the National Qualifications Framework establishment process, a catalogue of qualifications was prepared providing, primary, secondary, higher and adult education and professional qualifications which would be referenced to the European Qualifications Framework².

Despite the achievements, the country continues to face serious difficulties in improving the educational standards as clearly indicated by the PISA Results 2015, where the country ranks among the last ones (4th to bottom). An educational sub-system in strong need of massive and visionary investment is the **pre-school education**, which is essential³ for the educational performance of students at secondary school level and for reducing the student dropout rates. All recent analysis has proven that pre-school attendance increases child's basic cognitive skills (literacy and numeracy skills). Moreover, pre-school helps with social inclusion and social cohesion. This is extremely important in the specific context of the country where large communities experience today the impact of the established segregated education. Pre-school education is also being considered crucial for inclusion of children with disabilities into education system and outreach to their families, where the country scores poorly as well. The need to improve early child development (ECD) and pre-school attendance in the country has been highlighted systematically by the last SAA Sub-Committee Innovation (education, employment and social affairs). Commission assessment (DG EAC) made in the context of the preparation of the ERP 2017 clearly states that early childhood education is a key obstacle to growth and competitiveness within the area of education and skills.

At the same time the involvement of children in pre-school education remains insufficient and the system has limited capacities for involvement of bigger number of children. Despite the significant progress in increasing the available pre-school facilities, only 20.1% of children aged 0-6 attended pre-school institutions in 2015⁴ Participation of children aged between 3 years and the mandatory school age reached 28.4% and it significantly lags behind the EU-28 average of 93%. Pre-school institutions implement "Programme for Early Learning and Development (ELD)" (developed by the Bureau for Development of Education) that observe the ELD Standards. ELD standards for children aged 0-6 have been launched by MLSP in 2009 and cover motor, socio-emotional and cognitive development of children. However, the ELD standards are incomplete. In 2015 a ELD programme for children with disabilities was introduced. Learning environment in the pre-school institutions is unsatisfactory and implementation of the norms and standards in pre-school institutions is inconsistent. Kindergartens' directors, teachers and the other staff must pass an exam and obtain a 5-year license to work in the pre-school institution. To renew the license, the staff needs to be continuously trained. Mechanism of professional development and career advancement of those employees is insufficiently developed while the system of their licensing needs to be revised.

During initial phase of preparation of the Education Strategy 2017-2020, a number of challenges regarding the **primary and secondary education** were identified: establishment of standards for defining the learning outcomes, preparation of effective, efficient and relevant curricula; equipping schools with modern and accurate didactic means, materials, upgrading teaching resources and ICT equipment, training of and improvements on teaching methods and introduction of interactive learning approaches. Also, there is a need for adoption of relevant and effective system for quality assurance. Although, during the last two years a number of psychologists, pedagogues and special educators have been employed in the compulsory education, the schools remain insufficiently supported to ensure inclusiveness of the education process.

As regards **vocational education and training** the need of a holistic approach, that will lead to better educational outputs for all, has become apparent. Furthermore, the links between the VET supply and the labour market demand and cooperation with business sector specifically in terms of students' practical training and work-based learning should be improved. Also, the system of professional development of school staff and career advancement of students needs to be modernized.

As for the **adult education**, the interest of employees who participated in adult education programmes have been increased as a result of promotional events, established system for verification of adult education

² http://mrk.mk/?page_id=408&lang=mk

³ European Commission's recent analysis - http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/school/early-childhood_en;

Council conclusions on early childhood education and care: providing all our children with the best start for the world of tomorrow (2011/C 175/03);

Communication From The Commission: Early Childhood Education and Care: Providing all our children with the best start for the world of tomorrow (COM/2011/0066 final)

⁴ <http://www.stat.gov.mk/Publikacii/2.4.16.01.pdf>, p.9 and data from MLSP

programmes and providers, established partner connections between the relevant national institutions. Still, the lack of comprehensive system for adult education and validation of non-formal and informal learning remains a main challenge. That is why stronger partnerships between employers, businesses and training institutions are needed and introduction of new initiatives emphasizing the indissoluble links between training and employment i.e. NQF, life-long learning, work-based learning, adult and continuing education should be encouraged.

Social protection, social inclusion and equal opportunities

Deinstitutionalisation, decentralisation and pluralisation of social services for the most vulnerable citizens, especially persons with disabilities remain a key challenge. The Strategy for Deinstitutionalisation 2008-2018 will be revised in 2017 to ensure a new momentum in the decentralisation process, deinstitutionalization so far was mostly limited to persons with mental/intellectual disability. The state has supported foster care and establishment of 32 day-care centres for children with disability (run by social work centres), 6 day-care centres for adults (18+) with mental disability (managed by non-governmental organizations, but with financial support of the MLSP), 17 housing units for supported living in the community (managed by non-governmental organization, but funded by MLSP). To date 59 persons from the biggest residential home in the country were shifted to community based living situation. However, there are 357 persons with disabilities still residing in the residential homes (larger institutions). In addition, there is an increased demand for supported living by new entrants in the system, both children and young people who turned 18 years of age. To shift gradually an additional number of residential home beneficiaries to community based living and to prevent any new admissions into the residential homes, MLSP plans to double the number of community based housing units for supported living by 2025.

There is a lot of work ahead to promote independent living close to the family and community and participation in the labour market for adults with disabilities, including persons with multiple disabilities. First, the territorial coverage of day-care centres for persons with disabilities aged 18+ must be expanded as they are currently concentrated in Skopje, Negotino, Radovish and Kumanovo. Second, basic models and standards for professional rehabilitation and personal assistance for people with mental/intellectual disabilities are currently being devised with IPA I assistance, but these are not put into practice yet. Such services have to be adapted according to the type of disability/impairment. As the rehabilitation and the process of transition is a multi-dimensional process, there is a need for intensive trainings and cooperation of professionals from social, medical and education areas, which now is lacking. Third, non-state actors, such as NGOs have been active in delivery of alternative care services. Their participation needs to be further promoted by encouraging new providers in the market and by enriching the offer of quality services.

Social entrepreneurship is in early phase of development in the country. Although the concept is not recognized in the legal framework, there are civil society organizations that have been running economic activity which fit the definition of social enterprises. The MLSP has drafted a law on social entrepreneurship, which will create a framework for operation of social enterprises, which still needs to be adopted. Key challenges on the mid-run are to create support infrastructure and to enable access to financing for social enterprises.

Roma people are among the poorest and most vulnerable groups. The unemployment and activity rate among Roma are very low compared to the population in general. The housing situation of Roma is particularly difficult with a large portion of the population living in inadequate, unhygienic environments. Roma Information Centres (RIC) and Roma mediators have been an important link between Roma communities, public institutions (employment centres, social protection institutions, health-care providers and schools) and local authorities and their role needs further strengthening. Despite numerous policies and initiatives in recent years to improve the situation of Roma people, such as the introduction of Health Mediators, Teacher Assistants and Roma Coordinators at the local level, the range and effectiveness of social services and initiatives to promote their inclusion into society needs to be enhanced.

Stakeholders

The **principal stakeholders** are the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP), the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES), the Employment Services Agency (ESA), the VET Centre, the Centre for Adult Education, the Bureau for Educational Development, the State Examination Centre, social protection institutions and social dialogue institutions. For the most part, the stakeholders possess the institutional,

human and technical resources to drive the reform process. Additional support through this Action Document will be provided to strengthen the Ministries' capacity and cooperation for evidence-based policy making.

Other stakeholders include the general education and VET schools, adult education providers and civil society organizations. The end recipients are job-seekers, disadvantaged and marginalized social groups, teachers, students, and employers.

OUTLINE OF IPA II ASSISTANCE

The purpose of this Action is twofold: to strengthen sector policy making and to support the implementation of the national employment, education and social inclusion strategies. This will contribute to reducing the high rate of unemployment, increasing labour market participation, in particular of young people and women, increasing access to quality education and training, improving skills matches and establishing a modern and flexible social protection system.

More specifically the Action aims to achieve 4 key results:

Result 1: Strengthened sector governance, policy framework and statistics. The activities will focus on upgrading the existing forecasting system and analytical capacities of the leading ministries in sector "Education, employment and social policy" as well as on advancement of social dialogue. Data collection in MLSP, MoES, ESA and social protection institutions will be improved for greater relevance and usage of data for policy making, policy monitoring and citizens' information purposes. Dialogue with social partners will be extended and focused on key issues where practical working solutions for improvements will be crafted such as occupational health and safety etc.

Result 2: Equitable access to quality inclusive education at all levels. The action will strengthen the system for quality assessment in education, will support the professional development of the school teachers and staff and is expected to improve students' achievements. In order to make individuals more competitive and mobile in education & training and in the labour market, the action will introduce further improvements in the process for quality assurance in qualifications acquisition and development. In addition, it will address the capacity and quality of pre-school institutions, which is essential for improving the educational performance of students and decreasing the drop out rate in the secondary school.

Result 3: Improved employability and access to labour market and decent work. The action envisages activities which lead to employment and employability of the young people and other harder to employ individuals, such as Roma. It will seek to improve certain aspects of the working conditions and promote decent work, inter alia through better legal, policy and institutional framework. At the same time the priority will be given to practical education and training in VET and improving the quality assurance in VET, adult and post-secondary education. Close links between VET and adult education, employers and social partners will be promoted through investments in work-based learning and post-secondary education, updating the occupational standards, standards for qualifications and curricula building on the success of IPA I. An innovative approach for improving the efficiency of the VET and AE systems will be introduced by establishment of VET Regional Center of Excellence.

Result 4: Improved quality and availability of social services. The action support further de-institutionalization of social protection services and will boost the quality and range of services for persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups. Access of Roma Community to social protection, housing, education and health will be enhanced. The action will contribute to the implementation of the recommendations presented in the Roma Evaluation Report.⁵ The concept for inclusive education will be operationalized by developing support mechanisms for children and students from vulnerable groups such as: children and students from families with low income, drop-out students (focus on women, Roma, other ethnic communities) and children and students with disabilities and special educational needs. Support services for social enterprises initiatives will be introduced to help them develop or implement their social mission and strategy.

⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/financial_assistance/phare/evaluation/2015/20150806-thematic-evaluation-on-ipa-support-to-roma-communities.zip

RELEVANCE WITH THE IPA II STRATEGY PAPER AND OTHER KEY REFERENCES

This Action is grounded in the results and priorities for financial assistance as defined in the **Indicative Strategy Paper 2014-2020**. The Action will contribute to a more inclusive and effective labour market by financing employment programmes and services, by modernising the way ESA delivers its services, by reinforcing the labour market institutions e.g. minimum wage, employment protection, gender equality and social dialogue. To improve match between skills demand and supply, the Action will advance forecasting of labour market skills by competent institutions. Furthermore, the social protection system will be modernised by accelerating the establishment of non-institutional social protection services for persons with disability and by delivery of integrated and targeted solutions for the most vulnerable, such as Roma. Upgrade of the quality of information in the administrative databases and cross-referencing of information from various sources will improve the statistical indicators in support of better policy making. The targeted improvements in the quality of teaching will enhance the inclusiveness in compulsory education and the attractiveness of VET and adult education.

The latest **EC Progress Report (November 2016)** rates the sectors of Education and Training and Employment and Social Policy as moderately prepared. Access to quality education for all should be improved, in particular for children with disabilities and children from Roma communities. Additional efforts are needed to tackle unemployment and improve the labour market conditions, in particular for young people, the long-term unemployed and socially disadvantaged groups. Appropriate institutional and financial resources should be made available to implement the existing social inclusion and poverty alleviation strategy, the Roma action plans, the Roma Seminar conclusions and meet Chapter 23 benchmarks relevant to Roma/RAE inclusion and IDPs.

The interventions described below are in line with the Government's principal planning documents for the Education, Employment and Social Policy Sector, notably the **Employment and Social Reform Programme (ESRP)**, **Comprehensive Education Strategy 2017-2020**, **the National Employment Strategy 2016-2020** and **the National Strategy on the Alleviation of Poverty and Social Exclusion 2010-2020**.

The Action is closely linked to the core **ESRP** policy reforms in these three sub-sectors for smart, inclusive and sustainable growth:

(1) Labour market and employment: improving the unemployment situation of the most vulnerable groups of people (young people, long-term unemployed, etc.); tackling informal employment; promoting work and service quality of the public employment service; strengthening and intensifying the social dialogue at all levels and fostering collective bargaining.

(2) Human capital and skills: Reducing the drop-out rate among students in education and early school leavers; providing equal access to education for all; strengthening the process of development of qualifications in the life-long learning perspective and the quality assurance of education; strengthening workforce employability and building learning pathways in the context of the life-long learning.

(3) Social inclusion and social protection: Promoting the decentralization of social protection services; strengthening and advancing the process of deinstitutionalization; further development of social services and pluralization; improving the social inclusion of Roma.

LESSONS LEARNED AND LINK TO PREVIOUS FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

IPA supported the implementation of the national sector policies by addressing the main challenges, complementing the national efforts. Significant progress was achieved in this area:

- The scope of active labour market measures was extended with IPA to improve the territorial coverage, diversity and frequency of the different support to the unemployed. IPA II will further strengthen the services for jobseekers and employers through piloting of a set of targeted services and measures for young people and harder to employ individuals. In addition, it will further extend the capacities of the employment agency and other key bodies to better analyse the labour market and design more responsive and effective labour market policies. At the same time, further investments will be done in improving the employability of parents, which will contribute to better

reconciliation of family and working life. The Action will build upon the achievements under IPA I in promoting more flexible, affordable and quality childcare.

- IPA invested in post-secondary, VET and adult education through setting occupational standards, curricula development and VET teacher professional development. It established the institutional structures for the National Qualifications Framework. IPA II will consolidate the process of VET and adult education reform, focusing on rationalisation and more efficient use of resources (i.e. through VET Regional Centres of Excellence to act as a 'hub' for VET schools), as well as on rolling-out the upgraded modular and practice learning approach. As a next step, the employers need to be involved directly in developing occupational standards and in the work of the new priority Sectoral Committees for Qualifications.
- IPA laid the grounds for promoting inclusive education by examining the existing system in terms of effectiveness and capacity to support cultural interaction. IPA II will provide a more focused and intensive support to advance inclusive and inter-cultural education in practice. It will pursue a wider, more holistic approach to education and training, allowing the effective inclusion of vulnerable groups, Roma and children with disabilities across all levels of education including pre-school education. Focus will be given to teacher professional development, improving the learning materials and support to scholarship programme for students from Roma communities and those with disabilities.
- As regards the development of social entrepreneurship, IPA created the legal framework and piloted some successful measures for stimulation of social enterprises. IPA II will continue further by direct investments in social enterprises and establishing targeted service to support them and ensure knowledge transfer.
- IPA II will extend the support to social dialogue and improving the socio-economic governance. The action will implement the recommendations of the nationwide survey on undeclared work carried out under IPA I and will further invest in the capacities of the national and social socio-economic committees to influence both policy-making and the employers with the objective to facilitate transition back to formality, improve work conditions and implement the labour standards.
- Previous experience under IPA as well as recent horizontal assessment demonstrated that employed measures have limited impact on Roma integration. IPA II will build upon some very successful models (for example scholarships for Roma children) and pilot other measures (for employment and community services) to enhance social integration of Roma.

Furthermore, IPA helped the country for the first time to set up structures in three ministries for management of EU funds in the area of human resources development, which were meant to prepare the ground for the Structural Funds. During a 10 year-period of preparation and implementation, the Ministry of Finance (MF), the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP) and the Ministry of Education (MoES) gained significant experience in managing public funds following the principles of sound financial management and transparency. The same applies for the Employment Service Agency - implementation of direct grants was the single most significant catalyst for change. In addition, the principles of programming, consultations, monitoring and evaluation influenced the national policy making and enhanced the quality of public investment. Finally, implementation of IPA enhanced the interaction between many institutions/organizations.

Main lessons learned during the design and implementation of IPA are the following:

- channel the assistance as much as possible through public institutions since it enables co-financing of the national policies, on one hand and effectively enhances the capacities of the institutions through learning-by-doing;
- have a greater focus on results and deliverables;
- support to smaller actors is difficult but in the long-run fosters development of local market for social services of general interest – this increases the absorption capacities in the country;
- for maintaining the momentum, build on achievements and recommendations of previous projects, especially those that developed, tested and introduced new models/concepts/services;
- foresee mechanisms for on-going and ex-post evaluation of pilot actions (implemented through grants) and explore the possibility for their incorporation in the system;

- plan large scale actions with longer duration;
- promote balance between the need to have clear but sufficiently flexible action design, to be adapted when needed in time for its launch;
- careful sequencing and bundling of projects. Given the limited flexibility in programme design and implementation, the timing of the technical assistance needs to be synchronized with related equipping/adaptation activities;
- activities with cross-cutting sector element or many stakeholders should include strong coordination mechanisms;
- coordination between various activities taking place at the same time should be promoted within a sector.

2. INTERVENTION LOGIC

LOGICAL FRAMEWORK MATRIX

OVERALL OBJECTIVE	OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS	SOURCES OF VERIFICATION	
To improve the effectiveness of the country's policy in the sectors of education, employment and social inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress made towards meeting accession criteria • Employment rate 15-64 years, total % • Unemployment rate (15+), Total % • Increased students' achievements on international tests 	European Commission Country Report; Eurostat/State Statistical Office basic indicators Educational tests (i.e. PISA)	
SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE	OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS	SOURCES OF VERIFICATION	ASSUMPTIONS
To reduce the high rate of unemployment, increase labour market participation, in particular of young people and women, increase access to quality education and training, improve skills matches and modernize the social protection system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No of persons in employment, including self-employment 6 months upon benefiting from employment programmes or services of this Action • % of early leavers from education and training: percentage of population aged 18-24 with at most a lower secondary education and not in further education and training • Decreased drop-out rates (segregated data for primary, secondary-gymnasium, VET) • Number of persons benefiting from non-institutional (alternative) community based social services • Trade Union density rate and Employers organisation density rate 	ESA database; ESA/MLSP reports; MoES/ CAE data base; State Statistical Office reports; MLSP database on social protection institutions; Official reports from the social partners; report generated from the MLSP database on SP membership;	Economic stability to ensure job creation and revenue flow; Political stability to ensure all commitments are implemented;
RESULTS	OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS(*)	SOURCES OF VERIFICATION	ASSUMPTIONS
Result 1 Strengthened sector governance, policy framework and statistics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of labour market analyses prepared / % of all labour market and employment measures subject to analysis from a gender perspective /No of data analysis of employability status of students (leavers and graduates) from different VET/HE curricula. • Number of beneficiaries with improved (upgraded) data collection and data analysis skills • % of NESC opinions on economic and social reforms upon 	Intervention's report; MLSP, MoES, ESA reports and Skills Observatory reports; NESC tracking mechanism; Minutes from the NESC sessions; LESC meeting minutes;	The country continues to address the priorities, objectives and measures set out in the Employment and Social Reform Programme and the respective sub-sector planning documents, meet their obligations as defined in the Accession

	<p>which feedback by the Government is received</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of local employment pacts concluded 		<p>Partnership and the National Programme for the Adoption of the Acquis and provide the needed funding for this</p> <p>Social partners, civil society organisations, universities, schools, training and consultancy providers, business sector, municipalities demonstrate a will and capacity to be involved in implementation of the activities;</p> <p>There is indigenous interest in entering in social entrepreneurship, employment and education on behalf of the target groups</p>
<p>Result 2 Equitable access to quality inclusive education at all levels</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of additional spaces for children 0-6 years created in pre-school institutions • Number of revised/modernised and verified educational programmes on all educational levels. • Number of trained school staff /% of pre-school teachers and caregivers involved in professional development programmes /% of school staff in primary schools trained for early recognition and support of pupils with special educational needs • Number of qualifications developed and adopted according to the labour market needs; • Number of qualifications integrated/registered inside the NQF register No of Sector Qualification Committees established and operational 	<p>State Statistical Office, MLSP database on pre-school institutions;</p> <p>Primary and secondary schools data;</p> <p>MoES and MLSP orders; Record and reports of the Bureau for Development of Education;</p> <p>MoES Orders;</p> <p>SEC reports;</p> <p>NVETEC Minutes;</p> <p>EMIS available on-line;</p>	
<p>Result 3 Improved employability and access to labour market and decent work</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased number of participants in post secondary education • Number of revised/modernised and verified adult educational programmes • Number of persons involved in employment programmes and services supported by the Action – segregated data by gender/age group/ethnicity • Number of new measures to fight undeclared work developed, piloted and implemented • Number of organisations in the private or public sector supported in introduction of flexible work organisation arrangements or any other type of change that facilitates reconciliation of work and family life of their employees 	<p>State Statistical Office;</p> <p>Governmental decree on the concept;</p> <p>Decree on the establishment of institutionalised VNFIL system;</p> <p>Progress reports of the corresponding institution/body on the results of the validation procedures;</p> <p>Progress reports of the corresponding institutions such as ESA, VET Centre, CAE, National Examination Centre, Municipalities and VET schools;</p> <p>ESA database; ESA/MLSP reports; documents on the attendance of persons participating in employment programmes; resumes of participants; copies of certificates/diplomas (in case they are issued); evaluation reports;</p> <p>Governmental information; intervention reports</p>	

<p>Result 4 Improved quality and availability of social services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of non-institutional (alternative) community based services developed - cumulative • Number of establishments adopting and respecting the standards for social and vocation rehabilitation • Number of persons benefiting from the supported social housing and social services established in the context of deinstitutionalization • Number of students from vulnerable groups supported by mentors and tutors and by scholarships • School attendance rate among the supported students • Number of Roma benefiting from improved living conditions in their communities • Number of social enterprises supported (segregated data by type of activity, gender, vulnerability and ethnic sensitiveness) 	<p>MLSP database on social protection institutions, State Statistical Office reports, Database on social enterprises; intervention reports RIC reports and database; MLSP reports, Government information;</p>
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DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES

Result 1: Strengthened sector governance, policy framework and statistics

Activity 1.1 Upgrading social sector data collection and analysis

This activity aims to improve the quality and availability of data on employment, education and social protection and to upgrade the skills for data analysis and forecasting.

With EU support, in 2013 MLSP established the HERMAC model for labour market long-term forecasting, which enables basic mismatch analyses according to ISCO and ISCED. This activity will update, adjust and test the HERMAC model based on demographic projections, employer and vacancies surveys, education data, employment projections or sector studies.

This activity will also upgrade the methodology of the Skill Needs Analysis carried out annually by ESA since 2009 and improve recording in the ESA job vacancy bank (including its IT job vacancy platform) so that it provides reliable information to job seekers on jobs and occupations most demanded by the labour market.

At the beginning of 2016 the Ministry of Education and Science, in cooperation with the European Training Foundation (ETF) through a World Bank loan started with the implementation of Tracer study. The aim of the Tracer Study is to provide feedback for improvements in TVET and higher education, therefore a broad range of aspects of employment and work as well as prior learning experiences has been included in the study. MoES will continue to provide information on performance. The Tracer study is part of the Skills Observatory management information tool addressing the dynamics of labour market conditions and supply of training programmes. The Skills observatory is foreseen to be established in 2017 in order to support the development of evidence-based policymaking for vocational and professional education in the country. The Observatory is to provide adequate information, data and data analysis about the capacity building institutions, the employability status of student leavers and student graduates and inform about the dynamics of the skills/qualifications supply as well as employability of graduates from different VET/HE curricula.

The Activity is intended to further strengthen the capacities for conducting tracer studies within the Skills Observatory and to provide trainings on analysis of the data. This information then will be used for shaping the policy as regards the secondary education curricula, higher education study programmes as well as adult learning training programmes, which will be better tuned to the needs of the labour market. Thus the activity will have both impact on strengthening evidence-based policy making and on supporting the employability of youth (through improved professional orientation of students and adults).

With regards to the social protection data, MLSP will be supported in generation of standard reports on social institutions' daily operations, statistical reports and data from all available and validated sources for quality policy analysis.

Moreover, MLSP and MoES will be assisted with review or thematic evaluations and assessments of the sub-sector strategies or ESRP. Finally, capacities and mechanisms for gender mainstreaming and gender impact analysis on sector and sub-sector level will be strengthened. The later includes collection and analysis of statistical data at national and local level across all sectors, disaggregated by gender.

Finally, the Activity will define the kind of sector data that will be available for stakeholders, including non-state stakeholders and citizens as well as how data will be available to them.

Activity 1.2 Enhancing capacity of the NESCC to pro-actively participate in the economic and social reform

Building on lessons learnt in the IPA I intervention on promoting social dialogue, the proposed activity aims at assisting the National Economic and Social Council (NESCC) to become a self-sustainable independent advisory body to the Government. The action will identify the most adequate model for ensuring financial independence for NESCC. The activity will also assist in revisiting the current tripartite agreement on the functioning of the NESCC, which currently constitutes its legal basis. The Council will be assisted to increase its participation in the national policy dialogue over a span of economic and social reforms, including decent

job creation, enabling environment for sustainable enterprises, future of work. Targeted technical capacity building would be secured for the newly created NESC standing committees on labour relations and wages, employment and labour market policy, social security and OSH, concerning inter alia policy impact assessment, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

The activity will then directly support the legal harmonization with the international labour standards and EU acquis. Based on legal and implementation gap analysis carried out under IPAI, this activity is intended to provide policy and legal advice to tackle shortcomings in the realization of fundamental rights, including freedom of association, right to strike, right to collective bargaining as enshrined in ILO conventions no. 87, 98, 144, 151, 154 and EU acquis. For this purpose, the knowledge of the members of the NESC and its standing committee on monitoring the implementation of ratified conventions will be increased.

With regards to the newly created mechanism for peaceful settlement of labour disputes, the MLSP and the NESC committee on ALDS will be guided to fully take over the management of the mechanism. The activity will provide legal policy advice in extending the conciliation to individual labour disputes and clarifying the roles of the conciliators and arbitrators, as coaching and mentoring will be provided to provide solutions to specific cases dealing with particular cases.

Activity 1.3 Enhancing social dialogue at the local level

Current role and functioning of the existing 15 local economic and social councils (LESC) in the local labour market will be assessed and the networking will be encouraged. The activity thus envisages peer review missions and exchange visits between the LESCs, aiming at know-how transfer on good practices and innovative solutions in addressing unemployment and skills mismatch in the local labour market. The activity will assist the operational LESCs to negotiate and conclude local employment pacts, addressing among other youth unemployment and vocational and educational programmes. OSH dialogue on local level will be established and facilitated. As a result, the network will be strengthened allowing independent and sustainable information exchange among the LESCs in future.

Activity 1.4 Increasing visibility and effectiveness of Trade Unions and Employer's organization

The objective of the activity is to allow Social Partners (SP) (both federations and branch level organisations) modernize their services, attract new members and improve their authority and credibility. The activity envisages an in-depth analysis (members' requirements) and piloting of relevant demand driven services (e.g. legal advice, policy advice, OSH assistance, HR assistance, etc). However, the main weakness identified is the lack of resources and appropriate skills of staff and outdated information and communication tools in the regional, but also in central SP offices. Therefore, strategic approach will be two-fold: first, investing in the local and regional offices (where needed) of relevant workers' and employers' organizations; and second, based on service needs analysis, development, marketing and delivery of specific highly-demanded service (i.e. training on labour standards, advocacy, communications with PR/media skills, legal advice, web design, HR, financial and accounting skills for SMEs, etc). SP central and regional offices will be equipped with appropriate IT equipment and software for more efficient and effective membership and services management.

Result 2 Equitable access to quality inclusive education at all levels

Activity 2.1 Improving the quality of pre-school education and care

The goal is to raise the quality of pre-school education and care by modernizing the framework for early learning and development of children and the framework for career development of pre-school staff.

The activity encompasses revision of Standards and the Programme for Early Learning and Development for children aged 0-6, their piloting and introduction in the kindergartens. Moreover, description of didactic resources and materials to be used in the learning process (e.g. toys, equipment) will be developed or revised. This includes didactic materials promoting multiculturalism and those for children with special educational needs. A mechanism will be developed to increase involvement of parents in planning of the pre-school education and to support of family-based education. The quality assurance mechanisms that are to be

designed need to take into account the role and participation of parents as collaborators and contributors to the external monitoring and evaluation processes.

Furthermore, the activity will modernize the system for professional and career development of pre-school institutions' teachers and other staff. Namely, professional standards, job profiles and programme for career development of employees of pre-school institutions will be developed and introduced. Trainings for the pre-school institutions' staff will be organized.

A pre-school mapping will be undertaken to gather information regarding national and donor investments, status and needs assessment in and of pre-school institutions ongoing and planned. The mapping is to be a pre-condition prior to advancing with Activity 2.2.

Activity 2.1 will also assist the line Ministry in preparing the tender documentation for works and supplies to be supported under Activity 2.2.

Activity 2.2 Expanding the network of public pre-school institutions in rural and urban areas

The activity will enable more children to access pre-school education and care according to inclusive education approach. IPA II will co-finance infrastructure investments of municipalities, which may include construction of new or expansion/adaptation of pre-school buildings and facilities as well as primary schools to be converted into pre-schools. It will also support investment in the supply of equipment according to needs assessment from the mapping report. The selection of the benefiting municipalities will be done on the grounds of the results of the school mapping exercise and a national call for participation in the programme.

Activity 2.3 Further support to the implementation of the National Qualifications Framework

Under the IPA II the further implementation of the NQF will be built towards establishing a coordinated and more effective system of quality assurance in qualifications development, validation and accreditation process. This will enable the process of development and acquisition of knowledge, skills and competences. The IPA II support in this area will build on the ground work of IPA I and will further strengthen the institutional structure responsible for the NQF. It will support establishment and operationalization of the sector qualifications committees, where the employers have an active and direct role. As vital to the employability of young adults, support for the process of development of learning outcomes, as well as validation of non-formal and informal learning is also foreseen.

The Action will support establishment and operationalization of at least six sector qualifications committees. In 2017 two Sector Committees (for the tourism and IT sector) are being established with the support of the IPA I. The new Sector Committees, to be established under IPA II, will be responsible for identifying the needs for different types of qualifications in line with the labour market and the societal needs, analysis and evaluation of existing qualifications, reviewing of proposals for the introduction of new qualifications, assessment standards, occupational standards and standards of qualifications. This Activity will also support operationalization of a new NQF (qualifications) register.

Activity 2.4 Improving quality of the education

This activity is designed to support the improvement of the quality of education through upgrading the quality assurance system and investing in teachers' professional development. It encompasses two key elements (1) review and revision of internal and external quality assessment system in schools and (2) improvement and advancement of teacher professional development.

First, the activity will improve the analysis of the data provided by the international surveys on student's achievements, by integral evaluations conducted by the State Education Inspectorate, self-evaluations done by the schools, external testing in compulsory education, including data gathered of the State Matura, School Matura and vocational exams for the secondary education. The upgraded data will thus serve shaping a new policy for improving the quality of the educational process.

Further on, the activity will focus on developing a national system for evaluation of the teachers' work, at all levels of education, which will also include a more effective system of pupil/student evaluation. At present, the education system is lacking a harmonized structure that effectively recognizes the work of the teachers

and advances their professional development on the one hand and the achievements of pupils/students on the other.

Second, this activity will support the Bureau for Educational Development and the State Examination Centre as well as all other relevant educational institutions to develop and implement a policy for continuous training (and certification) of in-service teaching staff. The recent reform of teaching curricula in compulsory education means that there is a need for supporting both pre-service and in-service training of the teaching staff. The training programmes for teachers will be upgraded and the professional competences of educational staff improved. The activity will also assist institutions involved in teacher training to introduce new pedagogical and methodological approaches for inclusive education with a special focus on the subjects that are part of the external examination and State Matura. Recommendations will also be formulated for new study programmes for Pedagogical and Defectology (Special Needs Education) Faculties in the country.

This activity therefore is expected to strengthen the system for assessment of student achievements and the standards for quality assurance, as well as to increase the teacher competences.

Result 3 Improved employability and access to labour market and decent work

Activity 3.1 Increasing attractiveness, inclusiveness and relevance of VET and adult education

This activity tackles practical education and training in VET schools, including enabling adequate access to training in companies, developing training networks and improving the quality assurance in VET, as well as coordination and monitoring of employers involvement. Also, close links between VET and adult education will be promoted and further developed. In that direction, the national authorities will be further supported to optimize the VET and adult education systems in terms of relevance, attractiveness and inclusiveness.

With a perspective to expand the entire VET and AE systems, Regional Centres of Excellence are planned to be introduced by transforming selected number of existing VET schools. Several (1 to 3 max) VET providers will be selected to become the future Centres of Excellence. The capacities of the selected VET centres will be upgraded to assume this new role. The implementation of the new concept of RVETCs will also be upgraded to improve their performance and results. Under this activity, intense technical assistance will be provided at all levels (individual RVETC), including central level (public bodies, employers) to ensure greater confidence in the system. The activity is expected improve the quality of VET education and increase enrolment in VET.

In parallel, the action seeks to improve the work of 'VET school companies' (VET schools which also provide specialized services) and promote the work based learning concept. For this purpose technical assistance will be provided in the form of business guidance and mentoring: The cooperation between business and the VET schools will be improved. Development of system policies and amending of legislation for ensuring sustainability of the 'VET school companies' and work based learning are also foreseen. This activity will equally support the system for professional development of VET teachers, improving their knowledge and skills in the occupation they pursue. Accordingly, training sessions for VET teachers and other school staff will be delivered based on accurate needs assessment and international and national best practices.

Activity 3.2 Support to comprehensive and inclusive Adult Education system

The concept for non-formal education and informal learning was developed in 2015 in cooperation with the European Training Foundation (ETF). The system has been designed for the validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL). IPA II support is planned to fully prepare and implement this system by 2020. The validation of individuals' knowledge and skills acquired in non-formal or informal education and training will help individuals to obtain proper, official certification which will improve their employability and career prospects. Within this activity adults will be provided with a possibility to complete their compulsory education, as set out in the national legislation for adult education, thereby making them more competitive on the labour market.

Activity 3.3 Improving the post-secondary education

This activity is intended to support the implementation of the Concept of post-secondary education prepared under IPA I. The Concept aims at better tuning the post-secondary education to the needs of the labour market. The activity will provide technical support for introducing educational programmes that reflect labour market demand and strengthening the cooperation with social partners in order to better identify needs of qualifications. Further, new curricula (including all necessary teaching, learning and assessment materials) will be developed. Special focus will be given for recognition of prior learning obtained by formal, non-formal or informal paths in order to facilitate entry into the formal post-secondary education.

Activity 3.4 Alignment of the VET and adult education quality assurance systems with the EQAVET

The European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET (the Framework) provides policy makers and stakeholders with a means to document, develop, monitor, evaluate and improve the effectiveness of the VET measures and quality management practices. The Framework is adaptable to the different national systems and it can be used in accordance with national legislation and practice.

The Framework stresses the importance of common ten indicators which are already used as a “tool box” by EU countries as they work on adapting and developing their VET systems. This activity will support the process of identification of the most appropriate set of indicators for monitoring and reporting purposes under the EQAVET framework. IPA II will build on the recommendations from IPA I for modernizing the system of licensing of directors. It will include support for the alignment of the national systems of VET and AE with the EQAVET.

Activity 3.5 Implementing targeted employment services and active labour market measures

The activity will invest in the national active employment programmes and measures, managed by the national Employment Service Agency (ESA). For this purpose a direct grant to ESA is foreseen (also covering Activity 3.6). Jobseekers will be offered employment service or measure, according to the assessed degree of their employability, performed by ESA (easy employable persons, hard employable persons, very hard employable persons). The specific measures and target population to be supported with this Action will be defined at the time of negotiation of the direct grant. Wherever possible, active measures will be combined with measures for reconciliation of work and family life (child support liabilities) to encourage participation of parents in the labour market.

Activity 3.6 Strengthening ESA’s services for young people and harder to employ individuals

The activity will expand the labour market services and measures and pilot new ones in order to enhance the employment outcomes for hard to employ persons (e.g. long-term unemployed – registered as active jobseeker for more than 1 year, women, Roma or individuals from other vulnerable groups such as social assistance beneficiaries).

With IPA I support, ESA piloted active labour market projects in four regions in the country. Building on this experience, the activity foresees to expand the collaboration and involvement of social partners and other stakeholders at the local level both in the design and delivery of the measures and services. ESA staff will be trained for implementation of the new approaches/programmes.

Secondly, to ease the transition from school to work, the activity will finance ESA’s efforts to develop or implement dedicated services targeting youth, which include “youth day” in largest employment centres, youth Info-points and access to the Youth Start programme.

To increase labour market prospects of Roma people, the activity will apply active labour market measures targeting Roma, combined with anti-discrimination measures. A strong emphasis will be put on completion of education and adult education, vocational training for specific occupations demanded in the labour market, tailored on-the-job trainings, support for entrepreneurship and job creation.

Activity 3.7 Supporting the implementation of selected legal, policy, institutional and awareness raising measures facilitating transition to formality

The activity intends to implement policy recommendations, which were provided within IPA I and which include measures to improve the working organisation, methodology, working processes and procedures within the State labour inspectorate; measures to improve inter-institutional cooperation among stakeholders involved in the fight against undeclared work, and measures to fight the most common types of undeclared work.

The activity focuses on introduction and testing (where appropriate) of system (procedures, legislation, etc.) for legalization in selected sectors with the highest incidents of undeclared activities such as agriculture, construction, home repair, trade, tourism and hospitality or personal services.

The activity will also include design and launching of a public awareness campaign on the detrimental effects of informal activity. The campaign will be targeted at the general public, employers (businesses) and labour force.

Finally, MLSP and State Labour Inspectorate will engage with the MoES to ensure that training course on workers' right and on the negative effects of undeclared employment is designed and included in regular education curricula.

Activity 3.8 Fighting gender based discrimination at work and reconciliation of family and professional life

While IPA I focused on diversification of childcare, clear recommendations were formulated as regards the need of reconciliation of work and family life, and increased participation of men in the care and upbringing of children. The activity therefore focuses on review and improvements of the legal provisions and measures for reconciliation of family with work, promotion of flexicurity at work (including guaranteeing same rights and security regardless of the contractual arrangements) and assessment of the costs for putting in place those measures in practice. Flexible working arrangements or other practices that promote equal treatment of men and women at work place will be tested with selected employer(s) and the costs and effects of their implementation will be evaluated.

Result 4 Improved quality and availability of social services

Activity 4.1 Supporting modernization and de-institutionalization of social services

The activity will support reform of social services and community based social services to allow persons with disabilities to leave the residential institutions and live in the community with appropriate support. Moreover, through strengthening of community services new entrants into institutional care will be slowed and prevented.

The activity has three components:

- Building the capacities of the staff at central and local level to manage the transition towards deinstitutionalization and to support non-institutional and alternative community based care and mainstream services (education, health care, housing, transportation, etc). This involves an intensive technical assistance, coaching and guiding support covering the whole process from conceptualisation to evaluation of the results. National system for monitoring and assessment of the quality of the community-based services will be put in place to ensure transparency in de-institutionalization process and encourage fair and accountable use of public resources.
- Building the capacities of non-state providers to participate in the market of social services and deliver high quality non-institutional care services. This component will promote effective practices in delivery of social services and will help their introduction in the country. Particular focus will be put on implementing biopsychosocial, social and vocational rehabilitation models incl. personal assistance, for facilitating independent living and integration in the labour market. The activity will contribute to diversifying rehabilitation services and personal assistance for people with mental, physical and multiple disabilities.
- Direct support for the development, implementation and expansion of the range of social services including community based housing, prevention and family support services. IPA I developed and piloted basic model of vocational rehabilitation and personal assistance for persons with disability.

However, the development of these services is still at a very early stage. The activity will co-finance the piloting and upgrading of supported community based housing, small group homes, day-care centres, home-care, personal assistance, rehabilitation and other support social services.

Activity 4.2 Establishing support services for social enterprises

Following initial recommendations of IPA I, the activity will invest in developing social enterprises through:

- establishing a centre for support of social businesses. The centre will be either imbedded into an existing organizations (e.g. CSO, private entity), selected following an open call for participation, or established as a new entity. The centre will provide diverse range of services to social enterprises, such as education and training, business coaching, sharing of office space or equipment, etc. The activity will build (through training, internships, study visits, mentoring, etc.) the capacity of the centre to analyse and monitor the market of social business, identify needs, develop and promote new services. By the end of the activity, the centre should grow in self-sustainable organization(s) for support of social entrepreneurship.
- direct investments in the social enterprises through an open call for proposal, which would allow various social businesses to develop or extend their scope of operations, grow and improve their performance on the market, ensure better protection of their employees, and better services.

Activity 4.3 Combating discrimination by improving inclusiveness in compulsory education

This activity will advance inclusive education of children and students from vulnerable groups such as: children and students from families with low income, drop-out students (focus on females, Roma, other ethnic communities) and children and students with disabilities and special educational needs. It builds up on a successful model for supporting school integration of Roma students in the country, which will be enhanced and expanded by including a wider range of vulnerable children (children with disabilities and other vulnerable children).

The activity encompasses a scholarship scheme to strengthen motivation for school participation and improving the quality of additional teaching service offered to vulnerable children. Apart of the targeted scholarships, the activity will also provide support to teachers working with students and parents in either carrying out formative assessments or targeted/tailored instruction. The activity will focus on improving competences of school staff dealing with vulnerable groups. The system for identification of vulnerable children and students and those with special needs at municipal and school level will also be upgraded and the capacities of the national authorities to manage similar schemes in future improved.

The activity is expected to increase student retention rates, raise of individuals' Grade Point Average (GPA) and decrease of dropouts. The activity is in line with the newly issued EU Guidelines on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Child - Leave no Child Behind.

Activity 4.4 Facilitating social inclusion of Roma

The activity intends to help reducing poverty, to foster social inclusion of the Roma population and improve living conditions in Roma settlements. Interventions may range from improvement of housing and living conditions, legalization of Roma settlements and housing, preparation and implementation of plans for forced evacuations, to development of the social infrastructure including educational, health care, child care, and specific community services for Roma. Municipalities will be strongly encouraged to participate, along with civil society and private sector.

In line with the Roma Inclusion Strategy, the action promotes an integrated approach to service provision. This activity complements activities 3.6. and 4.3. Activity 3.6. will pilot a targeted set of services and measures for harder to employ individuals such as Roma. The idea is to deliver these services as part of the regular services of the Employment Service Agency (ESA). Coordinators and mentors in the ESA will be in charge for identification and motivation of unemployed Roma, profiling, career counselling, mentorship and following the professional development of the participants. Roma will be offered opportunity to complete their education and attend adult education courses, vocational trainings, tailored on-the-job trainings, support for entrepreneurship or subsidies employment. Activity 4.3 involves support to mechanisms and practices

for inclusion of Roma children in compulsory education through a scholarship and tutoring scheme and capacity building of all relevant stakeholders.

Horizontal - Evaluation

The European Commission will carry out an ex-post evaluation for this Action to receive an independent assessment of the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the action

RISKS

The following risks have been identified for the implementation of this Action

- Political - Prolonged political crisis can impact negatively both the country's commitment to the implementation of the Employment and Social Reform Programme and the Economic Reform Programme and the management of the EU funds. This risk is beyond the scope of the parties involved in the implementation of the action. Already in 2016, the absence of a stable government had a negative impact on the adoption of the reform programmes and related legislation (e.g. the law on social entrepreneurship). The elections of 11 December 2016 give some chances for overcoming the already 3-year acute political crisis. Yet, the risk continues to be present.
- Social – despite the many efforts invested so far, the interest of entering into employment of some communities remain limited. This concerns particularly women from ethnic minorities, where social and cultural stereotypes create a barrier to the women's active participation in the work and social life. This risk has been assessed and mitigation measures planned i.e. engagement of counsellors, coordinators and mentors who are culturally sensitive and skilled to assess the specific needs of women from different social backgrounds; provision of informative-advisory work with Roma women in Roma settlements that should be supportive, motivating and continuous; offering possibility for completion of formal education and learning basic skills, including literacy and numeracy; covering costs of transportation and organising support in terms of child care during trainings; collaboration with Roma Information Centres and NGOs that have stronger context-specific knowledge and credibility in the Roma communities; cooperation of ESA with social work and primary healthcare services, etc. Interventions in the field of education such as identifying at-risk students, early professional orientation in school, and providing monetary incentives to remain in school or in training and achieve better results, will help to overcome the traditional stereotypes and will prevent the next generation of disadvantaged communities from being excluded. Still, overcoming of traditional stereotypes is a long process, which will require more than one action to deliver results.

CONDITIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Preconditions/preparatory actions

- Given the importance of the sector reform for achieving the results of this action, the signature of the planned contract is conditional on the adoption of the following key documents: Economic and social reform programme and Comprehensive education strategy and action plan containing realistic budget estimations 2017-2020.
- The beneficiary institutions should demonstrate sufficient capacity and provide adequate resources to allow the implementation of the activities and the absorption of the envisaged IPA aid. The beneficiary country must ensure continuity in the efforts to improve the education, employment and social integration policies and guarantee the sustainability of what has been achieved under IPA I.

3. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

For activities under direct management, the contracting authority will be the EU Delegation, which will cooperate directly with the **Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy**, hosting the respective IPA units (acting as project implementation units).

For activities that will be implemented through indirect management by the beneficiary country, the **Contracting authority will be the Central Financing and Contracting Department (CFCD)** within the Ministry of Finance. Activities will be implemented by the **Operating structure**, which apart from CFCD includes the **IPA units** in the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.

Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy are the policy-making bodies responsible for managing issues in their field of competence as defined in the Law on the organization and the competences of state bodies and related substantive laws. In the context of the management of the EU funds, the established IPA units in both ministries are responsible for programming as well as planning, implementation and monitoring at contract and action level.

The ministries are supported in this job by the **Sector Working Group (SWG)** for Education, Employment and Social Policy sector, which was established in 2016 following the introduction of sector approach under IPA II. The SWG is responsible to align the national planning process in the sector with the IPA programming ensuring that all EU funds are properly targeted to achieve synergy with the national funds and increase the impact on the sector. It is also mandated with the ongoing monitoring of the implementation at the level of the action.

National IPA Coordinator and the Secretariat for European Affairs have the mandate for overall coordination of the programming of the IPA and other foreign assistance as well as for monitoring of the use of the EU funds at programme level.

The implementation structure also involves the established coordination and monitoring mechanisms, involving both the European Commission and the national authorities. These include monthly coordination meetings, Sector Committee meetings and IPA Committee Meetings.

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

Interventions under this Action programme will be delivered via twinning, direct grants to public bodies and international organization, service and supply. In total 18 contracts are envisaged for the implementation of this action.

Result/Activity/Title		Type of contracts
	Activities	
Result 1	Strengthened sector governance, policy framework and statistics	
Activity 1.1	Upgrading social sector data collection and analysis	Service and supply
Activity 1.2	Enhancing capacity of the NESG to pro- actively participate in the economic and social reform	Direct Grant to ILO
Activity 1.3	Enhancing social dialogue at local level	
Activity 1.4	Increasing visibility and effectiveness of Trade Unions and Employer's organization	
Result 2	Equitable access to quality inclusive education at all levels	
Activity 2.1	Improving the quality of pre-school education and care	Service, Works and Supplies
Activity 2.2	Expanding the network of public pre-school institutions in rural and urban areas	
Activity 2.3	Further support to the implementation of the National Qualifications Framework	Twinning and Supply
Activity 2.4	Improving quality of the education	Service

Result 3	Improved employability and access to labour market and decent work	
Activity 3.1	Increasing attractiveness, inclusiveness and relevance of VET and adult education	Service
Activity 3.2	Support to comprehensive and inclusive Adult Education system	
Activity 3.3	Improving the post-secondary education	
Activity 3.4	Alignment of the VET and AE quality assurance systems with the EQAVET	
Activity 3.5	Implementing targeted employment services and active labour market measures	Direct grant to ESA
Activity 3.6	Strengthening ESA's services for young people and harder to employ individuals	
Activity 3.7	Supporting the implementation of selected legal, policy, institutional and awareness raising measures facilitating transition to formality	Service
Activity 3.8	Fighting gender based discrimination at work and reconciliation of family and professional life	
Result 4	Improved quality and availability of social services	
Activity 4.1	Supporting modernization and de-institutionalisation of social services	Service and Grant Scheme
Activity 4.2	Establishing support services for social enterprises	Service and Grant Scheme
Activity 4.3	Combating discrimination by improving inclusiveness in compulsory education	Grant scheme
Activity 4.4	Facilitating social inclusion of Roma	Grant scheme
Horizontal - Evaluation		Service

4. PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

METHODOLOGY FOR MONITORING (AND EVALUATION)

The responsibility for monitoring of the action will be shared between the EU Delegation and the national authorities. The monitoring indicators, to serve as a basis for tracing success, have been included in this action document and will be used throughout the action implementation cycle. Internal monitoring and evaluation will be in line with DG NEAR Guidelines on linking planning/programming, monitoring and evaluation.

At contract level, the monitoring will involve the EUD (for direct management) and the CFCD (for indirect management).

The EU Delegation performs the monitoring function in compliance with the adopted in 2015 and revised in 2016 Monitoring Strategy. The monitoring methodology is based on a review of the regular progress and final reports, on the spot visits, participation in project steering committees and on-going monitoring following the everyday communication with project stakeholders and regular flow of information (including media one). In order to enhance monitoring, specific instructions will be given to the contractors on the production of the regular and final reports. Every report shall provide an accurate account of implementation of the specific activity, difficulties encountered, changes introduced, as well as the degree of achievement of its results (outputs and direct outcomes) as measured by corresponding indicators, using as reference the respective list of indicators included in this document. The report shall be laid out in such a way as to allow

monitoring of the means envisaged and employed and of the budget details. The final report, narrative and financial, will cover the entire period of implementation

The EC may undertake monitoring visits through independent consultants recruited for independent monitoring reviews, like the Result Oriented Monitoring (ROM) (or recruited by the responsible agent contracted by the EC for implementing such reviews).

In line with the IPA II Implementing Regulation 447/2014, an IPA II beneficiary who has been entrusted budget implementation tasks of IPA II assistance shall be responsible for conducting evaluations of the programmes it manages. The CFCD will thus employ its standard monitoring procedures in cooperation with the beneficiaries and the NIPAC office.

Specific SCs will be set up at contract level.

At action level, the progress will be monitored jointly by the EUD and the NIPAC with the close involvement of the established sector working group (SWG). The SWG is responsible for coordinating activities related to the programming and management of EU funds and other international assistance. Representatives of the donor community and CSOs participate in the SWG meetings based on the needs and requirements of each SWG meeting and take part in consultation processes.

At sector level, the action will be monitored through the sector Monitoring Committee, which will be set up in line with the provisions of the IPA II regulation.

The European Commission will carry out an ex-post evaluation for this Action to obtain an independent assessment of the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the project. The evaluation will be carried out as prescribed by the DG NEAR guidelines for evaluations. Funds for this evaluation have been planned within this action.

INDICATOR MEASUREMENT

Indicator	Baseline (value + year) (2)	Target 2020 (3)	Final Target (year) (4)	Source of information
IMPACT INDICATORS				
Progress made towards meeting accession criteria	Moderately prepared (2016)	Good level of preparation	Well advanced (2022)	European Commission Country Report
Employment rate 15-64 years, total %	43.52% (2010)	50.8%	> 53% (2022)	Eurostat
Unemployment rate (15+) Total %	32.0% (2010)	21.5%	< 19% (2022)	State Statistical Office
Increased students' achievements in international tests	<p>PIRLS – out of 45 participating countries, Republic of Macedonia was ranked on place No. 38 (2006⁶)</p> <p>TIMSS – out of 59 participating countries, Republic of Macedonia was ranked in mathematics on 43 place, and in science knowledge it was ranked on 52 place. (2011⁷)</p> <p>PISA – out of 72 participating countries, Republic of Macedonia in literacy and science was ranked on 69 place and in mathematics it was ranked on 68 place. (2015)</p>	<p>Improved level results in reading literacy since last participation in PIRLS</p> <p>Improved level results in mathematics and science knowledge since last participation in TIMSS</p> <p>Improved level results (closer to the OECD average) in science, reading and mathematics since last participation in PISA</p>	<p>Improved level results in reading literacy since last participation in PIRLS</p> <p>Improved level results in mathematics and science knowledge since last participation in TIMSS</p> <p>Improved level results (closer to the OECD average) in science, reading and mathematics since last participation in PISA</p>	Official PIRLS, TIMSS and PISA Reports
OUTCOME INDICATORS				

⁷ latest available data

⁷ latest available data, only population from grade 8 covered

Indicator	Baseline (value + year) (2)	Target 2020 (3)	Final Target (year) (4)	Source of information
Number of persons in employment, including self-employment 6 months upon benefiting from employment programmes or services of this Action Segregation of data by gender and age group	Minimum 1000 ⁸ women - 60% young people (18-29) - 70%	Minimum 1500 ⁹ women - 50% young people (18-29) - 30%	Minimum 1500 ¹⁰ women - 50% young people (18-29) - 30%	ESA database; ESA/MLSP reports;
Percentage of early leavers from education and training: percentage of population aged 18-24 with at most a lower secondary education and not in further education and training	11,3 % (2015)	10,5%	9,5%	State Statistical Office
Students drop-out rate in compulsory education – segregated data per - type of educational level/type: primary, secondary-gymnasium, VET; - gender, - status - students with special educational needs, talented pupils, students from low-income families and from rural areas, minority	- 0,8% student drop-out rate in primary education -0,9% student drop-out rate in secondary education ¹¹	Students drop-out rate in primary and secondary education decreased by 0,8% from the data for 2015/2016 school year.	Students drop-out rate in primary and secondary education decreased by 0,8% from the data for 2015/2016 school year.	State Statistical office, MoES EMIS system, Primary and secondary schools data

⁸ This figure is an estimate since the project financed under IPA I is still in implementation (completion date - beginning of 2018)

⁹ 30% of persons benefiting from employment programmes or services of this Action

¹⁰ 30% of persons benefiting from employment programmes or services of this Action

¹¹ The rate is estimated according to the MoES data on the number of students in primary and secondary education who dropped-out of school for some reason, as a share of the total number of enrolled students in the 2015/2016 school year. In the estimations are included also the special primary and secondary schools for students with special educational needs.

Indicator	Baseline (value + year) (2)	Target 2020 (3)	Final Target (year) (4)	Source of information
Number of persons benefiting from non-institutional (alternative) community based social services - segregated data by type of service (day-care centres, home-care and other support social services, excluding foster families) and gender/ethnic group/disabilities - cumulative	611 (2016) beneficiaries in day-care centres 0 beneficiaries of home-care 0 beneficiaries of other support social services	1250	1600 ¹²	MLSP database on social protection institutions, State Statistical Office reports
Trade Union Density rate and Employers organisations density rate	Trade Union Density rate - 22% ¹³ (2016)	25%	26%	The official reports from the social partners; report generated from the MLSP database on SP membership
OUTPUT INDICATORS				
No of labour market analysis prepared ¹⁴ Percentage of all labour market and employment measures ¹⁵ subject to analysis from a gender perspective	0	1 (30%)	2 (70%)	MLSP and ESA reports; Governmental information; intervention reports
Percentage of persons (students/unemployed/employed/adult learners) covered by statistics	0	50%	75%	MLSP and ESA reports;
No of beneficiaries with improved skills for data collection and data analysis and forecast skills	5	15	20	Intervention's report

¹²The estimations take into consideration: 1). The establishment of a minimum of 30 new alternative services which will benefit at least 25 persons with disability each (average capacity of a day care facility). This results into 750 persons directly benefiting from the alternative services, 2). Inclusion of about 200 carers who will benefit from the project and 3). Inclusion of about 300 family members who will receive support services. Further on, the natural diversification of the services and increased national funding is expected to result in new services and new beneficiaries.

¹³ Trade unions density rate calculated on the basis of the number of decisions on the representativeness of trade unions (117,856 employees) and the total number of employees of 541,459 in the first quarter of 2016 as per the State Statistical Office Labour Force Survey Release 2.1.16.23- Employed by economic status and sectors of activities. Note: Precise data will be established as of 2017 when the MLSP database on social partners membership will become functional

Indicator	Baseline (value + year) (2)	Target 2020 (3)	Final Target (year) (4)	Source of information
Percentage of NESC opinions on economic and social reforms upon which feedback by the Government is received	0	50%	80%	NESC tracking mechanism
Number of local employment pacts concluded	0	3	4	LESC meeting minutes
Number of additional spaces for children 0-6 years created in pre-school institutions	0 (2016) ¹⁶	590	590	State Statistical office, MLSP database on pre-school institutions
Revised programme for pre-schools education meeting the requirements of the ELD Standards adopted	0	1	1	Official gazette
Percentage of pre-school teachers and caregivers involved in professional development programme / % of school staff in primary schools are trained for early recognition and support of pupils with special educational needs	0	30%	50%	Intervention reports; MLSP and MoES database
No of revised/modernised and verified educational programmes for adults	0 /130	3/150	200	MoES/ CAE data base
Number of qualifications developed, adopted (and integrated/registered inside the NQF register) according to the labour market needs	0 ¹⁷	60	100	Government Decisions; MoES Orders; NVETEC Minutes; Reports of the appropriate body

¹⁴ Analyses for educational and policy making purposes

¹⁵ Labour market and employment measures which are part of the ESRP, National Employment Strategy and its related documents

¹⁶ In 2015, 32660 children attended pre-school institutions

¹⁷ Until 2016, only electronic data-base of qualifications was developed (mrk.mk), which encompasses approximately 1500 qualifications for all levels of education (primary, secondary, higher and adult education). Having in mind that the qualifications have to be quality assured (i.e their revision has to be done by passing the quality assurance procedures, which will be enabled with the development of the relevant NQF register), the baseline is 0. The 60 qualifications that are planned to be developed until 2020 and 100 by the end of the Programme, will be part of the process of development of new qualifications which is separate than the process of revision of old qualifications.

Indicator	Baseline (value + year) (2)	Target 2020 (3)	Final Target (year) (4)	Source of information
No of Sector Qualification Committees established and operational	0	6	10	Government Decisions; MoES Orders; NVETEC Minutes; Reports of the appropriate body
Number of students enrolled in post-secondary education	600 (2015/2016 school year)	750	900	MoES EMIS system and CAE data base
Number of persons involved in employment programmes and services supported by the Action, segregated data by gender, age group, ethnicity	4720 ¹⁸ women - 60% young people (18-29) - 70% Roma - 32	5000 women - 50% young people (18-29) - 30% Roma - 200	5000 women - 50% young people (18-29) - 30% Roma - 200	ESA database; ESA/MLSP reports; documents on the attendance of persons participating in employment programmes; resumes of participants; copies of certificates/diplomas (in case they are issued); evaluation reports.
Number of new measures to fight undeclared work developed, piloted and implemented ¹⁹	0	1	2	MLSP reports; Governmental information; reports of the intervention
Number of organisations in the private or public sector supported in introduction of flexible work organisation arrangements or any other type of change that facilitates reconciliation of work and family life of their employees	0	2	4	Reports of the intervention
Number of non-institutional (alternative) community based services for persons with disabilities developed – cumulative	55 (2016)	70 ²⁰	100	Intervention reports MLSP database

¹⁸ This is the total number of persons supported in the frame of the IPA I funded project “Support to the Employment of Young People, Long-Term Unemployed and Women (II)”

¹⁹ The indicator refers to new measures in the field of undeclared work. E.g. introduction of “voucher” system for seasonal workers in agriculture or tourism, tax rebate schemes, educational activities. The specific measures will be designed in the frame of the activity.

Indicator	Baseline (value + year) (2)	Target 2020 (3)	Final Target (year) (4)	Source of information
No of establishments adopting and respecting the standards for social and vocation rehabilitation	0	2	2	Intervention reports Official Gazette
Number of persons who benefit out of the supported housing and social services established in the context of deinstitutionalization (cumulative)	81 (2016)	130 ²¹	155	MLSP database on social protection institutions
Number of students from vulnerable groups supported by mentors and tutors	(600 Roma secondary schools students supported by mentors and tutors	600 Roma secondary schools students supported by mentors and tutors	1200 Roma secondary schools students supported by mentors and tutors	MoES Reports Primary and secondary schools data
School attendance rate among the supported students	NA	90% ²²	95%	School data and internal MoES reports
Number of Roma benefiting from improved living conditions in their communities	0	1000	1000	Intervention reports
Percentage of funds spent to Roma integration	Not measured at the moment	5% of this action	5% of this action	Implementation reports

²⁰ The calculation takes into account a minimum number of 15 new services that would be established through the planned grant scheme (as an immediate output), including the community based housing units (at least 5 new day-care centers or other community based support facility+10 new housing units). However, the expectation is that the initial services will be naturally diversified once the community centres will be established, thus providing the needed hosting and institutional support, which would allow the services to raise to 45 new services (13 housing units + at least 32 different forms of community services, including day-care centers, family clubs, support services for independent living which will be foreseen in the costed Action plan of the revised Strategy for deinstitutionalization currently being prepared).

²¹ The targets were calculated on the basis of the assumption that the action will support the establishment and initial operation of 10 new housing units for persons with disabilities in addition to the existing 18 community based housing units at the moment. This represents a 55% increase in the number/capacity of housing units. Each of the community based housing unit is designed to accommodate 5 persons, which means that the 10 new community based housing facilities could accept about 50 (max 60) new persons. Raising the expected national contribution would allow to increase the housing units with additional 3. Thus the total number of persons that could benefit from 31 housing services (18 existing+13 new housing units) could be at least 155 persons (residents) (if there are to be 5 persons accommodated in each housing unit). This represents a 91% increase of the current capacities.

²² Approximately 4500 students will be supported with the scholarships under this action. Baseline cannot be estimated because the target group of the Roma scholarship project refers only to Roma secondary students.

Indicator	Baseline (value + year) (2)	Target 2020 (3)	Final Target (year) (4)	Source of information
Number of social enterprises supported, breakdown by: - type of support received - field of activity - gender sensitiveness (management/ownership or business focus) - vulnerability/minority sensitive (management/ownership or business focus)	0	50	150	Database on social enterprises; intervention reports

5. SECTOR APPROACH ASSESSMENT

The Sector approach has been introduced in this sector in compliance with the requirements, albeit that in certain areas further work is needed to sustain the achievements.

There are highly relevant Education, Employment and Social Policy Sector strategies and Action Plans, which address the main challenges facing their respective sub-sectors and which are aligned with national strategic documents, the Accession Partnership, the NPAA, Europe 2020 and SEE 2020. The Employment and Social Policy Reform Programme (in final stage of preparation) will bring core priorities and accompanying measures in the area of employment, education and social protection in more general sector strategic framework.

The institutional arrangements are in place to drive and coordinate the reform processes in the Education, Employment and Social Policy areas. Further efforts will be made to strengthen inter-ministerial coordination, to address staffing problems, and ensure that the necessary technical equipment and tools are available to the institutions.

The sector and donor coordination has been ensured in line with the Sector Policy Co-ordination Framework as developed by the SEA and adopted by the government.

Performance assessment framework for the sector is being developed. Further support will be needed to strengthen analytical capacities of the ministries, develop and apply policy monitoring tools and streamline structures and processes for monitoring.

The government is actively pursuing policies targeted at macro-economic stability and fiscal prudence. Public Finance Management is expected to be further strengthened with the adoption and implementation of a PFM reform programme, which will address the recommendations of the SIGMA and PEFA. Annual and multi-annual programme-based budgeting is still at an early stage but significant efforts are invested to strengthen the budget planning process.

6. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

GENDER MAINSTREAMING AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Gender equality will be promoted with special actions aimed at men and women. The legal framework will be modernized and specific measures will be devised and implemented to fight gender based discrimination and to reconcile family and professional life. Access of women to the employment services and measures will be encouraged. Preventing drop-out among female students shall be given special attention. Overall, activities for incorporating the gender perspective in the sector policies will be supported.

The monitoring indicators for measuring the success of the Action will be gender-sensitive and broken down by gender/gender disaggregated for the purposes of action monitoring. Activities targeting directly individuals will create equal opportunities for both men and women from the target group to access the specific service or measure. The impact of this document on gender equality will be considered as part of its evaluation.

MINORITIES AND VULNERABLE GROUPS

All activities are designed to promote access for minorities and vulnerable groups to social protection services, educational and employment opportunities, to ensure their further incorporation into the mainstream economy, and to support the implementation of the Government's social inclusion policies. In this context, the principal target groups will include the Roma, persons with disabilities and young persons. Namely, it is foreseen to introduce targeted approaches and services for the persons belonging to the aforementioned groups and thus create equal opportunities for them to access the offered services. The monitoring indicators will be segregated by ethnicity and vulnerability wherever possible for the purposes of action monitoring. The impact of this document on promoting equal opportunities will be considered as part of its evaluation, where relevant. Infrastructures supported in the frame of this Action must be made accessible for persons with physical and multiple disabilities.

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

The role of social partners (employers' associations and trades unions) and civil society organizations has been mainstreamed into the design, management and implementation of the interventions foreseen under this Action. In particular, representatives from these structures will be engaged in the implementation of a credible and relevant education reform, employment strategy, designed to strengthen the interface between the educational system and the labour market, both through consultations and implementing specific initiatives. Technical capacity of the social partners (both federations and branch level organisations) will be increased in relation to the minimum wage setting, employment protection legislation, non-standard forms of employment, informal employment and undeclared work. They will be assisted to develop services for their members. Wherever possible, CSOs expertise will be used in collaborative process through contracting or (re)granting schemes for the monitoring and evaluation processes, scoping analysis, trainings, services providing, raising awareness campaigns, etc. Involvement of the various actors, including CSOs will be stimulated in particular in the area of delivery of social services and promotion of social entrepreneurship. In addition, the social partner and CSOs will be involved in the sector coordination mechanisms.

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE (AND IF RELEVANT DISASTER RESILIENCE)

The Action, although not directly focused on addressing environment or climate issues, will, aim to respect principles of environmental suitability. For example, some of the social enterprises that will be supported may be contributing to environmental aims. In a long run the planned investments in education will have a return on the improved environmental awareness and behaviour of the young people.

7. SUSTAINABILITY

The sustainability of the assistance provided under IPA II will be ensured in several ways, primarily through the continuation of a comprehensive policy dialogue with the principal stakeholders, the central public authorities, the social partners and civil society organizations. The dialogue will focus not only on reinforcing the need to implement coherent sector policies, aligned with national, regional and sub-sector strategies, and consistent with the provisions of the Accession Partnership, Europe 2020 and SEE 2020, but also on the allocation of sufficient funding in the annual and multi-annual budgets to ensure that the policy gains are sustained.

Moreover, progress will be measured by continuous monitoring of the output, result and impact indicators contained in the relevant Government strategies and action plans. This will be achieved by strengthening the capacities of the ministries to carry out comprehensive policy monitoring and/or when necessary by commissioning independent progress reviews.

8. COMMUNICATION AND VISIBILITY

Communication and visibility will be given high importance during the implementation of the Action, starting from the promotion of the opportunities to obtain EU funding (i.e. calls for proposals) until the promotion of the results and changes achieved.

The communication approach is based on several pillars:

- Promotion of the action through the visibility and communication strategy of the EU Delegation at highest level possible. At present a whole campaign "EU for YOU" has been launched to outline the benefits for the citizens of the EU aid; a number of events are planned to promote the support in the social sector and this effort will be further extended to streamline the single-face of EU approach. In addition, all EU projects are promoted through the Delegation web-site.
- Promotion of the EU support at the level of the action – this implies selection of one or two activities out of the whole Action with very high media potential and creating a media event allowing to promote in general the EU values and principles in a certain specific context. This approach is being piloted under 2016 IPA annual programme and will be extended further. The cooperation with the NIPAC office and beneficiaries will be very important to ensure one-

voice communication to citizens. Some good opportunities are provided by the scholarship programme, the social services and the employment enhancement activity.

- Promotion of the EU support at the level of each single contractor and in line with Communication and Visibility Manual for EU External Actions. All contractors have to develop a communication plan, which will be approved by the EU Delegation. The communication and visibility plan should highlight the external communication activities that need to take place. In approving the communication plan the EU Delegation usually encourages "out-of the-box" communication solution having the potential to attract the attention of media and citizens and allow passing important messages. This action gives a lot of opportunity for applying this approach since most of the activities are focused at citizens and will impact directly on their lives. At the same time, all contractors are expected also to show a good communication reflex and the ability to exploit unexpected opportunities to the benefit of the action. Having in mind importance of digital communication in today's era of web technologies and social media, creation of EU-funded projects' communication materials in an internet friendly format is essential. The implementation of the communication activities shall be funded from the amounts allocated to the Action. It is the responsibility of the contractors and beneficiaries to keep the EU Delegation and the Commission fully informed of the planning and implementation of the specific visibility and communication activities. The beneficiary shall also report on the visibility and communication actions in the relevant reports.

All visibility and communication actions shall focus on results and changes and shall demonstrate how the EU support brings the country closer to the EU standards. The objective is to improve the general public awareness and not only target specific audiences. The objective of this approach is to make sure that the added value and impact of the EU's interventions are understood by the general public but also to promote transparency and accountability on the use of public funds in general.