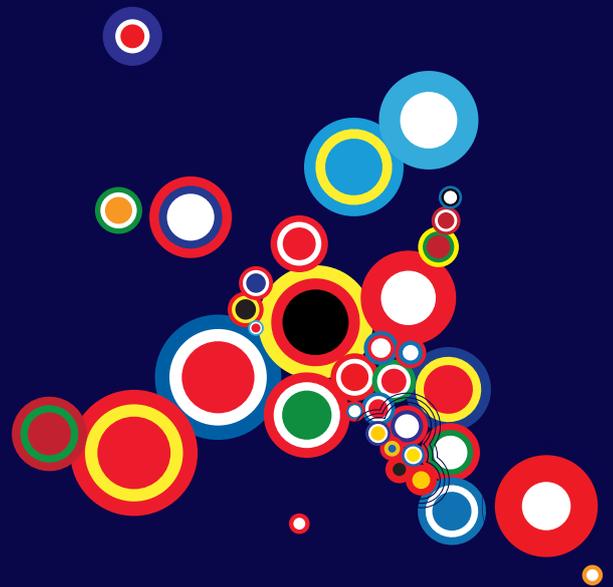




INSTRUMENT FOR PRE-ACCESSION ASSISTANCE (IPA II) 2014-2020

MULTI-COUNTRY Western Balkans Youth Window under Erasmus+



Action Summary

Western Balkans Youth Window under Erasmus +

The European Union shares with the Western Balkans ambitious objectives for smart, inclusive and sustainable growth with a view to delivering high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion. Investing in human and social capital is an essential condition to achieve those growth targets.

The Western Balkans Youth Window will reinforce the levels of participation of the Western Balkans in Erasmus+ in a twofold way:

- By increasing the number of Erasmus+ non-formal learning projects involving the participation of organisations and participants - notably young people and youth workers - from the Western Balkans;
- By allowing organisations from Western Balkans to be project coordinators and apply directly for an EU grant under the framework of Erasmus+.

The Programme will be implemented by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA).

Action Identification	
Programme Title	IPA II Multi-country action programme 2014
Action Title	Western Balkans Youth Window under Erasmus +
Action Reference	IPA 2014/SI2.692592.09/MC/Youth
Sector Information	
ELARG Sectors	Education, employment and social policies
DAC Sector	11420 Higher Education (Youth)
Budget	
Total cost (VAT excluded)¹	EUR 3.6 million
EU contribution	EUR 3 million
Management and Implementation	
Method of implementation	Direct management
<i>Direct management:</i> Implementing Agency	The Programme will be implemented by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA)
Location	
Zone benefiting from the action	Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, Serbia)
Specific implementation area(s)	N/A
Timeline	
Deadline for conclusion of the Financing Agreement	N/A
Contracting deadline	31 December 2015
End of operational implementation period	31 December 2018

¹ The total action cost should be net of VAT and/or of other taxes. Should this not be the case, clearly indicate the amount of VAT and the reasons why it is considered eligible.

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

1. RATIONALE

The European Union shares with the Western Balkans ambitious objectives for smart, inclusive and sustainable growth with a view to delivering high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion. Investing in human and social capital is an essential condition to achieve those growth targets. Such investments can yield even better returns when they are focused on the young generation, which has to be equipped with the skills it needs to succeed in an increasingly complex and fast-changing social and economic reality and which has to get the opportunity to share a feeling of appropriation and belonging to a common project to which it can contribute.

In this context, Europe and the Western Balkans need to extend and broaden learning opportunities for young people as a whole, including supporting the acquisition of skills through non-formal educational activities. Today the effectiveness of traditional education is challenged and learning pathways are no longer for everyone alike. Learning can take place everywhere, in schools, but also in associations, on social media or in social life. Many young people are actively engaged and take leadership roles in youth organisations. This helps them acquire transversal skills which allow them to be fit to adapt to the rapidly evolving change in the demands for jobs and skills, even for jobs and skills that do not yet exist.

Moreover, the European Union aims at encouraging people-to-people contacts, in particular among the young generation, as an important dimension of its relations with third countries. People-to-people contacts are important to promote mutual understanding as well as social, cultural and economic development. They are particularly important when promoted at an early stage so as to instil a culture of dialogue and understanding in the young generations. This has been reaffirmed in various documents and contexts with reference to relations with different partner regions and countries.

The Erasmus+ programme is one of the key instruments of the European Union for achieving its objectives in terms of young people's personal, socio-educational and professional development. The Erasmus+ programme has a youth dimension which offers opportunities for young people and youth workers in the area of non-formal learning. Such a youth dimension is also open to young people, youth workers and youth organisations from the Western Balkans, although with resources that are not able to cope with the growing demand of actors from the region.

Therefore, the Western Balkans Youth Window will reinforce the levels of participation of the Western Balkans in Erasmus + in a twofold way:

- By increasing the number of Erasmus+ non-formal learning projects involving the participation of organisations and participants – notably young people and youth workers - from the Western Balkan countries;
- By allowing organisations from Western Balkan countries to be project coordinators and apply directly for an EU grant under the framework of Erasmus+.

Under Erasmus+ Key Action 2, which fosters cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practice and, more specifically, capacity building in the field of youth, the Western Balkan Youth Window will promote the sustained development of youth organisations in the region and the practice of youth work using non-formal learning, as appropriate, by:

- Supporting activities encouraging cooperation, networking and exchanges of practices in the field of youth, such as seminars, conferences, workshops, meetings, training courses, study visits and job-shadowing, and notably activities involving young people with fewer opportunities, aimed to develop competences and skills that increase their employability or self-employment prospects, foster their active participation in society and that reinforce their mutual understanding, sense of solidarity and tolerance;
- Supporting Youth Exchanges and the participation of young people in the European Voluntary Service (with a special attention paid to the involvement of young people with fewer opportunities).

opportunities) and the mobility of youth workers between Erasmus+ programme countries² and Western Balkans countries;

- Professional development activities for youth workers³, that raise the quality, the international dimension and recognition of their work;
- Cooperation activities that foster networking between civil society organisations, public authorities and institutions active in youth to strengthen their capacities, establish or reinforce their cooperation on a trans-national cross-border basis within the region, and with organisations from other Erasmus+ programme countries.

PROBLEM AND STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

The main challenge of the education and training systems in the Western Balkans and in the Union nowadays is to equip citizens, and in particular young people, with the competences that will prepare them for a demanding and rapidly changing labour market. In this challenging social and economic context, young people are confronted with rising levels of knowledge and multiple skills requirements, a need that cannot be satisfied by the formal education sector alone. "School-based learning and apprenticeship are no longer sufficient to "last" the whole life-course. Human capital is more than ever before about learning to learn, social skills, adaptability, etc.⁴. A recent survey of more than 500 business leaders from across Europe found that most (54%) think young people lack 'soft skills' such as confidence, teamwork, self-motivation, networking and presentation skills. Furthermore, living in diverse and ageing societies requires more intercultural, inter-community and intergenerational dialogue as well as the development of a culture of solidarity, care and understanding among citizens, especially the youngest generations. Yet, the benefits of intercultural dialogue are challenged by one fourth of the youth population in the EU, as they consider that culture is not enriched by foreigners or immigrants.

Another challenge relates to the development of social capital among youth, the empowerment of young people and their ability to participate actively in society. Young people are much less likely to vote than adults, their voices are much less heard in political debates. Insufficient opportunities for participation, limited awareness of the importance to participate, mistrust in the institutions, low interest in politics, insufficient youth-targeted information, inadequate tools to reach out to young people are among the causes of such disaffection and the significant decline in participation in society and democratic life. On the other hand, new forms of involvement are emerging through the new media and social networks, which young people have embraced in large numbers.

Formal education systems address these issues, but they cannot tackle them alone: besides formal learning, non-formal learning has an important contribution to make. A wide range of skills and attitudes, which are likely to increase young people's achievements in school settings as well as opportunities to find a job, can be developed through out-of-school activities, in non-formal learning settings. Young people who experience a diverse range of educational relationships in different contexts develop a stronger sense of confidence in social interaction, and a better understanding of how relationships work. More flexible learning pathways can facilitate transitions between the phases

² The Erasmus+ programme countries are defined a) in the Regulation (EU) N° 1288/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 establishing 'Erasmus+': the Union programme for education, training, youth and sport and b) in the Erasmus+ Programme Guide. Currently, the following countries are defined as Programme countries: The Member States of the European Union and the following non EU-Programme countries: former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Turkey. Switzerland is currently being dealt with as a partner country.

³ Participation of youth workers in international seminars, training courses, contact-making events, study visits, job shadowing, and related activities.

⁴ BEPA – Bureau of European Policy Advisors (2007), *Investing in youth: an empowerment strategy*

of work and learning and can better suit the increasingly non-linear transitions that young people experience. They can also better suit the needs of those young people who are left behind or are not able to cope with the requirements of the formal education system. As a third educational environment after family and schools, non-formal learning offers a space where young people are free to experiment, take initiative, and learn from their own mistakes. Involvement in such activities can also have a positive impact on participation: those active in extracurricular activities during their school years are more likely to be more politically and civically active in their adult years.

The following groups can be distinguished as the most affected groups:

- **Young people** (and in particular the most disadvantaged ones): Youth is a period of transition, generally agreed as the passage from a dependent childhood to independent, autonomous adulthood. These transitions have lost their linear nature, are less predictable and more diversified, which reflects the diversity of opportunities available to youth today but also introduces new risks and challenges, especially for the most vulnerable. These challenges have been exacerbated by the recent economic crisis, which has strongly hit young people, as exemplified for instance by the high levels of youth unemployment. Not all young people are adequately equipped to deal with the rapid changes occurring in today's societies and some of them are particularly affected. Disadvantaged young people are often excluded from opportunities to fully participate in society and to enjoy the benefits of education, employment and social welfare. Not all young people can benefit from mobility experiences, which can equip them with the necessary social skills and competences needed for their future life;
- **Youth workers:** professionals who work with young people in a wide variety of non-formal and informal contexts (e.g. within youth organisations, municipalities, youth centres, etc.). Youth workers can be either volunteers or paid workers. Despite the key role they play in young people's development, in many countries youth work is not sufficiently well established as a profession and/or is not visible enough to ensure appropriate recognition. Moreover, opportunities for international training and networking for youth workers beyond the EU are limited;
- **Non-governmental youth organisations:** these organisations are present at every level of decision making, from the local level to the international level and represent a whole range of youth groups. As they represent young people and are aware of their changing needs, youth organisations play an important role in ensuring that youth concerns are taken into account when developing actions and policies that concern them. They are also an important actor in addressing young people's issues and problems as they are the best placed to reach young people in their own reality. Moreover, they are an important component of civil society involved in the development and implementation of non-formal learning opportunities for young people and key project promoters.

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

In accordance to the Multi-Country Indicative Strategy Paper (MCSP) 2014-2020⁵, IPA II will provide financial support for capacity building projects in the field of youth non-formal learning - including a flexible range of activities such as mobility activities for young people and youth workers - to foster youth cooperation between Erasmus+ programme countries and the Western Balkans. The action is also within the SEE 2020 Priorities of Smart Growth and Inclusive Growth.

LESSONS LEARNED AND LINK TO PREVIOUS FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Since 2000, organisations and young people from the Western Balkans have had the possibility to participate as partners in certain activities supported through the Youth programme (2000-2006).

⁵ C(2014) 4293, 30.06.2014

In 2005, the European Commission launched a pilot initiative aimed at reinforcing the level of participation of organisations from the region in the Youth programme. By such means, organisations from the Western Balkans were granted the opportunity to become coordinating organisations for youth projects and to apply directly to the European Commission for a project grant. Despite the limited resources, the results of the pilot phase were successful both in terms of the number of applications received and the quality of the projects submitted. These results showed that there was a demand for greater opportunities to participate in youth projects in the region.

The modalities of participation for Western Balkan organisations introduced in 2005 were confirmed under the Youth in Action programme covering the period 2007-2013. The EU was called upon to increase its actions and instruments supporting non-formal education of young people in the region. In line with this perceived need, the European Commission Communication “the Western Balkans on the road to the EU: consolidating stability and raising prosperity”⁶, reaffirms the commitment made by the European Union to reinforce cooperation with the Western Balkans in the area of youth and emphasises that the European Commission will create new opportunities. In this context, the establishment of a Western Balkans Youth Window, funded by IPA within the Youth in Action programme, reflected the commitments made in the Commission’s Communication by allowing for more projects submitted by Western Balkan organisations to be supported.

The Western Balkan Youth Window's over-riding aim is to support young people's transnational non-formal learning mobility through cooperation projects and activities. Actions supported by the Window aim at promoting active citizenship, social inclusion and solidarity amongst young people and the society they live in. The Window fosters key skills and competences of young people, notably contributing to their employability, civic participation and intercultural understanding.

The first Western Balkan Window within the Youth in Action programme was implemented in 2008 with an amount of EUR 1,000,000. In 2009, 2010 and 2011, the Western Balkan Youth Window dedicated to the Youth in Action programme amounted to EUR 1,500,000 per year and was further increased to annually EUR 3,000,000 in the years 2012 and 2013. The amounts allocated to the Western Balkan Youth Window allowed involving between 2008 and 2013 additional 17,000 young people and youth workers from Western Balkan countries and the EU into joint activities. Although funds for Western Balkan Youth Window were increased over the years, the demand still exceeds the available budget by far.

After six years of support for youth activities in the Western Balkan region under the Youth in Action programme, the youth sector would continue to benefit from youth non-formal learning opportunities within the framework of Erasmus+.

It is evident that the position and needs of youth organisations in the Western Balkans, including organisations acting as advocates for young people, were different from those of similar organisations coming from the Youth in Action Programme countries. This optic has not changed with the advent of Erasmus+.

Additionally, a new Western Balkan Youth Window should give a high priority to increasing financial transparency in the way beneficiaries manage European Union funding, as well as increasing the visible return upon the investment being made.

⁶ COM (2006)27, 27.01.06

2. INTERVENTION LOGIC

LOGICAL FRAMEWORK MATRIX

OVERALL OBJECTIVE	OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS (OVI)	SOURCES OF VERIFICATION	
<p>Promote growth and strengthen democracy, civil society and social inclusion in the Western Balkans, as well as young people's mutual understanding, sense of solidarity and tolerance, by facilitating the integration and active participation of young people in society.</p>	<p>Active participation of young people, youth workers and youth organisations from Western Balkans in democratic life and civil society through involvement in joint projects of NGOs, notably youth organisations, National Youth Councils and public bodies at local, regional or national level between Western Balkans and Erasmus+ programme countries (EU Member States, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Turkey). About 300 organisations involving about 4000 individuals over the period of 2 years of project implementation</p>	<p>Official statistics of national governments, surveys of professional evaluation organisations and reports from beneficiaries of joint projects.</p>	
SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE	OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS (OVI)	SOURCES OF VERIFICATION	ASSUMPTIONS
<p>Promote youth non-formal education and youth work in the region by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1. Supporting activities encouraging cooperation, networking and exchanges of practices in the field of youth, such as seminars, conferences, workshops, meetings, training courses, study visits and job-shadowing, involving all Western Balkan countries in a balanced way in order to develop competences and skills that increase young peoples' employability or self-employment prospects, foster their active participation in society and reinforce their mutual understanding, sense of solidarity and tolerance; • 2. Supporting Youth Exchanges and the participation of young people in the European Voluntary Service (with a special attention paid to the involvement of young people with fewer opportunities due to physical, 	<p>1. and 4. Participation of youth and other organisations from the Western Balkans in joint activities under this Window with organisations from Erasmus+ Programme countries. About 150 organisations participating from all Western Balkan countries in a balanced way during the 2-year project implementation</p> <p>2. and 3. Participation of young people, in particular young people with fewer opportunities, and youth workers from all Western Balkan countries in a balanced way in</p>	<p>Official statistics of national governments, surveys of professional evaluation organisations and reports from beneficiaries of joint projects.</p>	<p>Involvement of youth organisations, youth workers and young people in joint activities will allow young people to better understand and participate more actively in democratic life and civil society. The special emphasis on young people with fewer opportunities will improve their inclusion into society.</p>

<p>mental, health or economic disadvantages) and the mobility of youth workers between Programme countries and all Western Balkan countries in a balanced way;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3. Supporting professional development activities for youth workers¹, that raise the quality, the international dimension and recognition of their work; • 4. Cooperation activities that foster networking between civil society organisations, public authorities and institutions active in youth in all Western Balkan countries to strengthen their capacities and to establish or reinforce their cooperation with organisations with Erasmus+ programme countries. 	<p>joint projects with organisations from the Erasmus+ Programme countries. About 4000 young people and youth workers could be involved in joint projects during the project implementation phase of 2 years.</p>		
<p>RESULTS</p>	<p>OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS (OVI)</p>	<p>SOURCES OF VERIFICATION</p>	<p>ASSUMPTIONS</p>
<p>Result 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of long-lasting partnerships between youth organisations from all Western Balkan countries with organisations from the Erasmus+ Programme countries as well as the exchange of expertise and know-how between them in the field of youth and non-formal education; <p>Result 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved involvement of young people from Western Balkans in international youth cooperation to acquire socio-economical skills which could facilitate young people's employability and their integration in society. Special emphasis will be given to participation of young people with fewer opportunities. 	<p>Results 1:</p> <p>(i) the number of joint projects supported annually under the Western Balkans Youth Window;</p> <p>(ii) the number of meetings, seminars and events between youth organisations from the Western Balkans and the Erasmus+ Programme countries</p> <p>Result 2:</p> <p>(i) the total number of young people and the number of young people with fewer opportunities participating in Youth Exchanges and the total number of volunteers and the number of volunteers with fewer opportunities participating in the European Voluntary Service,</p> <p>(ii) young peoples' assessment of their employability, their skills and competences</p>	<p>General statistics on the implementation of the programme by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency;</p> <p>official statistics of national governments;</p> <p>surveys by specialised organisations;</p> <p>use of Youth-pass for the personal development of young people and youth workers</p>	<p>See above</p>

¹ Participation of youth workers in international seminars, training courses, contact-making events, study visits, job shadowing, and related activities.

<p>Result 3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased involvement of Western Balkans youth workers in joint projects with youth organisations from Erasmus+ program countries <p>Result 4:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvement of the operational capacity of organisations established in the Western Balkans, notably youth organisations, NGOs and National Youth Councils, in particular with regard to the management of international cooperation projects supported by European Union funds. 	<p>before and after having participated in a joint activity.</p> <p>Result 3:</p> <p>(i) the number of youth workers from Western Balkans participating in joint projects with organisations from Erasmus+ programme countries.</p> <p>(ii) youth workers' assessment of their skills and competences before and after having participated in joint projects.</p> <p>Results 4:</p> <p>the number of joint projects managed by youth organisations from Western Balkan countries.</p>		
ACTIVITIES	MEANS	OVERALL COST	ASSUMPTIONS
<p>Activities to achieve Result 1:</p> <p>Activities to achieve Result 2:</p> <p>Regular Capacity building activities (including non-formal learning mobility) foreseen by the Erasmus+ programme implemented through projects submitted by partnerships led by promoters from the Western Balkan countries</p>	<p>Grants (as foreseen by Erasmus+)</p>	<p>EUR 3 million (EU contribution)</p>	

ADDITIONAL DESCRIPTION

Main activities

In order to reach the Western Balkans Youth Window's objectives, organisational development and capacity building projects in the field of youth will be implemented with the aim to strengthen youth cooperation between Erasmus+ Programme countries and Western Balkan countries, as well as cross-border cooperation within the Western Balkan region. Activities to be supported will include encouraging cooperation, networking and exchanges of practices in the field of youth, seminars, conferences, workshops, meetings, training courses, study visits and job-shadowing and, for example,

- Promoting strategic cooperation between youth organisations and public authorities;
- Fostering cooperation between youth organisations and organisations in the education and training fields as well as with representatives of the business and the labour market;
- Strengthening the capacities of youth councils, youth platforms and local, regional and national authorities dealing with youth;
- Supporting Youth Exchanges and the participation of young people in the European Voluntary Service (with a special attention paid to the involvement of young people with fewer opportunities) and the mobility of youth workers;
- Enhancing the management, governance, and internationalisation of youth organisations in the Western Balkan countries.

Project promoters will be expected to plan, organise and evaluate the results of a linked set of these activities. Emphasis will be placed upon the development of the capacities of young people, youth workers and youth organisations.

Expected results

- An increased number of young people - notably also from disadvantaged background - from Western Balkan countries, will be involved in projects with the potential to contribute to their education, their employability, citizenship and their quality of life in the Communities concerned;
- The projects delivered will have addressed a wide range of priority themes, relating to local, national, regional and EU priorities, for example relating to non-formal education, skills development, health, environment, inter-cultural and inter-ethnic dialogue;
- The skills acquired and developed by young people through their participation will have had a positive impact on their personal and social development, evidenced through increased employability, greater commitment to civic participation, increased self-esteem, enhanced understanding of their role in society and their relations with others, including young people from other countries and cultures;
- The grants scheme will have contributed to the development of greater social inclusion of young people and social cohesion between young people and their communities;
- The capacity of the youth sector at governmental and civil society level will have been increased as a result of the experience gained in projects;
- The lessons learned from the implementation of the grant scheme will, with the support of the EACEA and the SALTO South East Europe Resource Centre, have fed into the evidence base and broader public and policy debates in the Western Balkans region regarding youth policy development and the provision of services for youth.

Risks and mitigation measures

Risk 1. Uneven delivery of the grant scheme across the region and within countries: Variation in the capacity and commitment of civil society organisations across the region may lead to an uneven pattern of grant awards (for example, between countries or between urban and rural areas). Grant scheme management should take measures to ensure equity of access for interested stakeholders, particularly focusing on young people with fewer opportunities and participants who traditionally have been underrepresented in such schemes, and provide opportunities ensuring that NGOs' needs for capacity building are effectively addressed.

Risk 2. Difficulties encountered in reaching key target groups: The majority of young people in Western Balkan countries do not participate in organised activities. Furthermore, in the case of certain disadvantaged groups, a considerable degree of isolation from mainstream social engagement can be seen, and this affects the information flow to these young people, and their ability to make their voices heard. There is, accordingly, a risk that the programme will not be able to involve these key beneficiaries into its activities. This will be mitigated through the focus of the grants scheme on engaging with disadvantaged youth and through the support to be provided by the SALTO South-East Europe Resource Centre in reaching out to this category of young people.

3. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Western Balkans Window will be implemented by the EACEA under the supervision of the Commission (EAC and ELARG). Regular meetings between the Agency and the Commission will allow the fixing of the conditions of the implementation (Guidelines for Applicants and Administrative and Financial Handbook) after consultation of the Member States in the relevant support groups. Likewise regular information on the implementation progress and results will be provided by the Agency to the Commission and the relevant Committees.

Furthermore, the Erasmus+ Sport, Youth and EU Aid Volunteers Unit of the EACEA:

- Provides support to the target public of the Programme, the beneficiary organisations and the participants engaged in project activities;
- Gives support concerning the diffusion of good practice.

The SALTO⁸ South East Europe (SEE) Resource Centre, supported by the Erasmus+ Programme, will promote information about the Window and the involvement of young people, youth workers, youth organisations and other youth stakeholders in joint activities of participants from Erasmus+ Programme countries and Western Balkan countries. In this context, SALTO SEE offers training and project partner finding activities for youth leaders and youth workers and contributes to the training of EVS volunteers in South East Europe and the production and dissemination of resource material. SALTO SEE is based in the Erasmus+ National Agency of Slovenia. SALTO SEE's activities are complemented by Contact Points in the Western Balkan countries which ensure proximity of support for those interested in organising or carrying out youth projects under Erasmus+.

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

The Action will be implemented in direct management by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) on the basis of the Erasmus+ Call for proposals.

Projects funded will correspond to Erasmus+, Key Action 2 projects, which foster the cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices and contribute to capacity building in the field of youth.

The activities supported under Key Action 2 of Erasmus+ are to be managed at centralised level. Grant proposals are submitted to, selected and managed by the Education, Audio-visual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) established in Brussels.

Organisations from the Western Balkans can submit applications under Key Action 2, in accordance with the deadlines for submission of applications set out in the Erasmus+ Programme Guide.

The financial planning prepared by the Executive Agency allows involving annually about 4,000 – 5,000 young people and youth workers from Western Balkan countries and the EU into joint activities. The selection processes are organised in such a way that the notification of results intervenes normally 2 months before the beginning of the eligibility period. The payment of the pre-financing of the projects is initiated after signature of the grant agreement by both contractual parties (i.e. beneficiary organisation and the EACEA).

4. PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

METHODOLOGY FOR MONITORING (AND EVALUATION)

Implementation of the Western Balkans Youth Window will be monitored on a permanent basis by the EACEA through analysis of progress reports, financial statements and final reports prepared by the beneficiaries as well as through monitoring visits.

In addition, the outcomes of the Western Balkans Youth Window will be monitored in the context of Erasmus+ surveys launched periodically and targeting samples of beneficiaries and participants. In 2010 and 2011, the Commission launched two surveys - reaching out a sample of more than 4,500 participants - on the qualitative impact of the past programme in the youth field. The results of these surveys confirm the contribution of these activities to fostering active citizenship, promoting the acquisition of skills leading to personal, social and professional development of young people as well as supporting capacity-building and competence development of youth workers and youth organisations. The detailed results can be found online:

2011 survey:

http://ec.europa.eu/youth/focus/doc/monitoring_survey/main_results_monitoring_survey_2011.pdf (main results)

http://ec.europa.eu/youth/focus/doc/monitoring_survey/report_monitoring_survey_2011.pdf (full report)

2010 survey:

http://ec.europa.eu/youth/focus/doc/monitoring_survey/main_results_monitoring_survey.pdf (main results)

The data will be monitored on an annual basis and checked against the targets set. Baseline figures refer to 2014 being the first year of the Western Balkan Youth Window under Erasmus+ Programme is implemented in this form. Target figures refer to projects selected in the target year (2015), taking into account the action implementation period of mainly 2 years.

⁸ SALTO stands for "Support, Advanced Learning and Training Opportunities".

INDICATOR MEASUREMENT

Indicator	Description	Baseline (year)	Target (year)
<i>MCSP indicator</i>			
<p>Participation of youth organisations from the Western Balkans and the Erasmus+ Programme countries in joint activities. About 300 organisations from all Western Balkan countries and the Erasmus+ Programme countries will be involved.</p> <p>Number of projects supported annually.</p> <p>Number of youth organisations from both Programme countries and Partner countries annually involved in cooperation projects.</p> <p>Call for proposals.</p>	<p>Involvement of about 300 youth organisations from the Western Balkans and the Erasmus+ Programme countries in joint activities over the period of 2 years of project implementation, leading to increased involvement of Western Balkans youth organisations in the Erasmus+ Programme.</p>	<p><i>0 (2014) organisations</i></p>	<p><i>300 (2015) organisations</i></p>
<p>Participation of young people in Youth Exchanges and in the European Voluntary Service and of youth workers in training and networking activities from all Western Balkan countries in joint projects with organisations from the Erasmus+ Programme countries.</p> <p>Special emphasis will be given to participation of young people with fewer opportunities. In total, about 4000 young people and youth workers will be involved in joint projects during the project implementation phase of 2 years.</p> <p>Number of young people and youth workers engaged in mobility projects supported, by country, action and gender</p> <p>Call for proposals.</p>	<p>Involvement of about 4000 young people and youth workers from the Western Balkans and the Erasmus+ Programme countries in joint projects allowing them to gain a better understanding of European democratic society, develop their personal and social competencies and improve their employability. Special emphasis is put on young people with fewer opportunities. Likewise, youth workers will benefit from the participation in joint activities to strengthen their professional capacities.</p>	<p><i>0 (2014) individuals</i></p>	<p><i>4 000 (2015) individuals</i></p>
<p>Participation of youth organisations from the Western Balkans in joint activities under this Window with organisations from Erasmus+ Programme countries. About 150 organisations participating from all Western Balkan countries in a balanced way, many of them as coordinator of the joint projects.</p> <p>Number of projects supported annually and being managed by organisations from Western Balkan countries.</p>	<p>Involvement of youth organisations from the Western Balkans in joint activities with organisations from the Programme Countries in cooperation and networking projects, leading to increased operational capacity and ownership of Western Balkans youth organisations by providing them with the possibility to submit applications to the EACEA.</p>	<p><i>0 (2014) organisations</i></p>	<p><i>150 (2015) organisations</i></p>

Indicator	Description	Baseline (year)	Target (year)
Call for proposals.			

5. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE (AND IF RELEVANT DISASTER RESILIENCE)

Issues on Environment and Climate Change are by the nature of this activity not directly applicable. However, since the activity is covering youth and several sectors it could be considered secured that environment and climate change will be duly addressed.

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

Non-profit or non-governmental organisations make up by far the largest group of eligible applicants. These may be organisations of young people, organisations concerned with policies and initiatives relevant to young people, or a combination of the two.

As projects are based upon partnerships this means that non-profit or non-governmental organisations from different eligible countries are engaged in joint discussions and activities. Projects should stimulate young people and their organisations, including organisations which act as advocates for young people, to reflect on the essential characteristics of European society and, above all, encourage them to play an active role in their communities. To feel European, young people must become aware of the fact that they play a role in the construction of the current and future Europe. Therefore, a project with a European dimension should not only 'discover' Europe, but also - and most importantly - aim to build it through increased civil society action.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND GENDER MAINSTREAMING

An important priority of the youth actions supported under Erasmus+ is to give all young people equal opportunities to access to the activities supported through the programme. These actions are open to all young people, not having regard of their educational background or their status. As regards group activities as Youth Exchanges and cooperation activities for youth workers, the balance of the groups in terms of gender is one of the award criteria.

MINORITIES AND VULNERABLE GROUPS

The Erasmus+ Programme aims at promoting equity and inclusion by facilitating the access to learners with disadvantaged backgrounds and fewer opportunities compared to their peers. The obstacles or difficulties these persons may face are:

- Disability (i.e. participants with special needs): people with mental (intellectual, cognitive, learning), physical, sensory or other disabilities;
- Educational difficulties: young people with learning difficulties; early school-leavers; lower qualified persons; young people with poor school performance;
- Economic obstacles: people with a low standard of living, low income, dependence on social welfare system; young people in long-term unemployment or poverty; people who are homeless, people in debt or with financial problems;
- Cultural differences: immigrants or refugees or descendants from immigrant or refugee families; people belonging to a national or ethnic minority; people with linguistic adaptation and cultural inclusion difficulties;
- Health problems: people with chronic health problems, severe illnesses or psychiatric conditions;

- Social obstacles: people facing discrimination because of gender, age, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, disability, etc.; people with limited social skills or anti-social or risky behaviours; people in a precarious situation; (ex-)offenders, (ex-)drug or alcohol abusers; young and/or single parents; orphans;
- Geographical obstacles: people from remote or rural areas; people living in small islands or peripheral regions; people from urban problem zones; people from less serviced areas (limited public transport, poor facilities).

The projects supported under the Erasmus+ Western Balkans Youth Window will offer young people with fewer opportunities the opportunity to take part in transnational activities. The involvement of young people with fewer opportunities will be taken into account in the award criteria of the respective Calls for projects. Specific training related to the involvement of young people with fewer opportunities will be provided. Funding provisions will allow covering additional costs related to young people with fewer opportunities and also, more specifically, to participants with disabilities.

6. SUSTAINABILITY

The interest from youth organisations of the Western Balkans in applying for youth projects reflects their needs to enhance their capacity through participation in cooperation projects and activities with other European and Western Balkan countries. In addition, the skills and knowledge acquired and developed by young people through their participation in cooperation projects and activities will have a positive impact on their personal and social development also in the mid- and long-term.

7. COMMUNICATION AND VISIBILITY

All projects funded under the Erasmus+ Programme must develop measures aimed at ensuring the visibility of their project and of the Programme. Visibility consists in spreading information about the project, its objectives and attained results, as well as in promoting the contribution of the EU Erasmus+ Programme to the realisation of the project. Visibility measures mainly occur before and during the implementation of the project. Such measures can be for example: developing information or promotional material; issuing 'press releases' or writing articles for newspapers, magazines, websites or newsletters; creating an e-group, a web space, a photo-gallery or blog on the Internet, etc.

Beneficiaries must clearly acknowledge the European Union's support in all communications or publications, in whatever form or whatever medium, including the Internet, or on the occasion of activities for which the grant is used.

LIST OF ANNEXES

- 1. Essential eligibility, selection and award criteria and selection process**
- 2. Maximum EU co-financing rate, indicative amount per Call and indicative launch of Call**

ANNEX 1: Essential eligibility, selection and award criteria and selection process

Essential eligibility criteria

Applicants can be

- Non-profit organisations, associations, NGO's (including European Youth NGOs);
- National Youth Councils;
- Public bodies at local, regional or national level; established in a Western Balkans country.

The applicant applies on behalf of all organisations involved in the project. Other types of organisations can be involved only as partners. Applicants must – at the specific deadline for submitting their proposals – have been legally registered for at least one year.

A *participating organisation* can be any public or private organisation established in an Erasmus+ Programme Country or a Western Balkan country (such as a non-profit organisation, a National Youth Council, a public body at local, regional or national level, a school/institute/educational centre at any level, a public or private enterprise, a social partner or other representative of working life, a higher education institution, a research institute, a foundation, an inter-company training centre, a cultural organisation, library, museum, a body providing professional counselling and information services).

Projects must be *transnational* and involve a minimum of 3 participating organisations from 3 different countries of which at least one is a Western Balkans Country and one an Erasmus+ Programme Country.

The *duration* of the project will be from 9 months to 2 years. The duration has to be chosen at application stage, based on the objective of the project and on the type of activities foreseen over time.

Only one project proposal per deadline may be submitted by the same applicant.

These and other additional criteria for embedded mobility activities – Youth Exchanges, European Voluntary Service, Mobility of Youth Workers) are in coherence with the eligibility criteria listed in the Erasmus+ Programme Guide for 'Capacity Building in the Field of Youth' projects.

Essential selection criteria

The Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency will assess the applicant's financial and operational capacity to complete the proposed project on the basis of the criteria established in the Erasmus+ Programme Guide.

Essential award criteria

Projects will be assessed against the following criteria:

- Relevance of the project (20 points),
- Quality of the project design and implementation (30 points),
- Quality of the project team and the cooperation arrangements (30 points).

Selection procedure

Project applications are selected by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency on the basis of criteria defined in the Erasmus+ Programme Guide, which has the status of a permanent call for proposals.

The evaluation of the projects is performed by external evaluators, selected on the basis of their knowledge of the youth sector. All eligible projects are assessed twice. The final score of each project reflects the average scoring given by the two evaluators. When the difference of points given by the first and the second evaluator is equal to or exceeds 20, a third evaluator assesses the applications concerned. The final score given to these projects reflects the average scoring between the two closest evaluations.

Each evaluation includes an overall assessment summarising the conclusions of the analysis, underlining the strengths and weaknesses of the project and formulating recommendations to the attention of the applicant.

The evaluation committee proposes to the Authorising Officer, on the basis of the evaluation performed by the external evaluators, the list of projects suggested for acceptance. The Authorising Officer takes the final decision.

ANNEX 2: Maximum EU co-financing rate, indicative amount per Call and indicative launch of Call

Maximum rate of EU co-financing

The maximum grant awarded for an Erasmus+ Western Balkans Youth Window project is EUR 150 000. EU co-financing is based on a combination of Unit costs and portion of eligible costs according to the funding rules specified in the Erasmus+ Programme Guide for Key Action 2 "Capacity building in the field of youth" type of projects. Activity based costs will be covered up to a maximum of 80% of eligible costs. The specific financial rules are outlined in the Erasmus+ Programme Guide.

Indicative amount per Call

The Erasmus+ Programme Guide, acting as a permanent call for proposals, includes two deadlines per year, which leads to the indicative amount of EUR 1.5 million for each of them.

Indicative date for launch of the call for proposals

Applicants have to submit their grant application by the following indicative *dates*:

- 3 April at 12pm (midday Brussels time) for projects starting between 1 October of the same year and 28 February of the following year;
- 2 September 12pm (midday Brussels time) for projects starting 1 March and 31 July of the following year.