



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

Kosovo*

EU4 Social protection following the COVID-19 crisis

Action summary

This action will support vulnerable groups with social protection following the COVID-19 crisis. It will strengthen resilience of the social protection system to cope with increasing demand.

By supporting the most vulnerable people, including women, it will contribute to maintain social cohesion. The action will also improve the governance and efficiency of social assistance and protection through targeted support for the completion of key sector reforms.

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

Action Identification	
Action Programme Title	Annual Action Programme for Kosovo* for the year 2019 – Part II
Action Title	EU4 Social protection following the COVID-19 crisis
Action ID	IPA 2019/041248/03/EU4 social protection
Sector Information	
IPA II Sector	Education, Employment and Social Policies
DAC Sector	11110
Budget	
Total cost	11 860 000 EUR
EU contribution	11 860 000 EUR
Budget line(s)	22. 02 01 02
Management and Implementation	
Method of implementation	Direct management and Indirect Management
<i>Direct management:</i> EU Office	European Union Office in Kosovo
<i>Indirect management:</i> other entrusted entity	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) International Organisation for Migration (IOM)
Implementation responsibilities	European Union Office in Kosovo
Location	
Zone benefiting from the action	Kosovo
Specific implementation area(s)	n/a
Timeline	
Final date for concluding Financing Agreement(s) with IPA II beneficiary	At the latest by 31 December 2020
Final date for concluding contribution/delegation agreements, procurement and grant contracts	3 years following the date of conclusion of the Financing Agreement, with the exception of cases listed under Article 114(2) of the Financial Regulation
Indicative operational implementation period	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"/>	×
Aid to environment	×	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gender equality (including Women In Development)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	×
Trade Development	×	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reproductive, Maternal, New born and child health	×	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
RIO Convention markers	Not targeted	Significant objective	Main objective
Biological diversity	×	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Combat desertification	×	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Climate change mitigation	×	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Climate change adaptation	×	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Internal markers¹			
Migration ¹	<input type="checkbox"/>	×	<input type="checkbox"/>
Coronavirus response	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	×

¹ Please refer to note Ares(2019)1031349 of 19/02/2019.

1. RATIONALE

This action will support vulnerable groups with social protection in the short, medium, and long term following the COVID-19 crisis. The aim is to alleviate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the poorest and most vulnerable groups by addressing basic and pressing needs such as nutrition, sheltering, healthcare and psychosocial support. In the medium term, the action will strengthen resilience of the social protection system to cope with the increasing demand for assistance after the crisis. The action will also contribute to increase access to rights based services and to social, health and employment benefit schemes for women and children and those from minorities, who are not officially registered.

PROBLEM AND STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

Outbreak of the COVID-19 and Kosovo government response

The global pandemic that has affected the entire world began as a health crisis and is already having far-reaching socio-economic implications. The sudden stop of all formal and informal economic activities, job losses and social distancing measures are producing unprecedented shocks and fast societal changes, which have increased the risk of erosion of social cohesion. With an estimated 55% of the global population having no access to social protection, this crisis will produce durable effect across societies, impacting education, employment, fundamental rights and, in the most severe cases, food security and nutrition². Given their care responsibilities and sectors of work, women have been particularly affected worldwide, including in Kosovo³. Short to medium term socio-economic implications on the resilience of welfare systems and citizens' ability to cope is evident particularly among the most vulnerable groups globally, but also in Kosovo.

Minority communities and households of vulnerable groups living in or at risk of poverty are significantly more exposed to health risks during the crisis than the rest of the population due to their limited access to financial support.

Kosovo responded quickly to limit spread of the propagation of the pandemic as well as to limit the economic and social impact of the crisis. The Kosovo government declared a public health emergency on 15 March introducing special measures to prevent the infection and to control the pandemic situation including restrictions of movements, temporary closure of education institutions at all levels, suspension of public and private gatherings, closure of bars, restaurants, shopping centres, and public parks.

The Inter-institutional Group for Incidents Management, led by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, is responsible to plan and coordinate activities in response to the pandemic the following priorities and constitute the strategic response:

- Containment of the spread of the pandemic through properly equipped health institutions and health-care workers;
- Immediate need for intelligence/data collection, analysis and forecasting which will guide the Group in decision-making;
- Crisis communication particularly towards citizens on the need to strictly observe movement restrictions;
- Maintaining law and order through safety and security institutions;
- Reducing economic fall-out through a stimulus package for the emergency phase Kosovo faces limited health capacities, with shortages of medication, equipment, and the overall medical supply chain. The Infection Clinic within the Clinical Centre Pristina is the only authorised medical centre for treatment of COVID-19 victims. The Ministry of Health has undertaken measures to prepare 100 additional beds in the new Sports Medicine facility, which together with further additional premises should make around 500 beds available in the case of a possible higher number of patients with COVID-19. Partners, including the EU, have assisted in the immediate health response with the provision of funds for medical equipment, including respirators, covid-19 tests and personal protection equipment.

²https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/presscenter/pressreleases/2020/COVID19_Crisis_in_developing_countries_threatens_devastate_economies.html

³ European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), "Coronavirus puts women in the frontline", March 2020. For Kosovo, see: Kosovo Women's Network, "Addressing COVID19 From a Gender Perspective", 2020, at: https://womensnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Addressing-COVID-19-from-a-Gender-Perspective_04_04_2020.pdf

Political instability, such as the collapse of the Vetevendosje-Democratic League of Kosovo governing coalition following a no-confidence vote on 25 March, poses additional challenges to the capacity of policy makers to effectively handle the COVID-19 crisis response.

The immediate fiscal measures by the government have focused on mitigating the effect of the crisis on businesses and households and on creating the conditions for increased health spending. Key actions include: (i) financial transfers to SMEs and other sectors most affected by the lockdown; (ii) advancing payment for social assistance schemes by one month to support families in need; (iii) extra allocations to the Ministry of Health to procure medical gear; (iv) deferrals of corporate and personal income taxes and Value Added Tax (VAT); (v) temporary removal of VAT on imports of wheat and flour; and (vi) deferral of public utilities payments until the end of April. These measures will be accommodated within a reduced total expenditure envelope through spending reallocations within goods and services and out of capital spending. The Central Bank of Kosovo also suspended the payment of loan instalments for businesses and individuals from 16 March until the end of April, with a possibility of extension of suspension. Spending on social assistance schemes doubled in March.

In addition, Kosovo government approved an Economic Emergency Package for economic and social recovery amounting to EUR 179.6 million, which is estimated at 2.5–3.5% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The measures included in the package are primarily financial support to private sector and their employees (55% of the fiscal package) and targeted to support public institutions, such as municipalities, affected by the spread of the pandemic and the Ministry of Health, (29% of the fiscal package).

An envelope equal to 6% of the fiscal package (EUR 29.6 million) has been allocated to support to the welfare system targeting beneficiaries of social assistance schemes the basic pension schemes and the poorest families. In March, some 98 100 citizens included in these schemes received additional monthly assistance, totalling EUR 2.55 million. The same was done in April raising the value of the intervention to EUR 7.6 million. Many pension scheme beneficiaries receive less than 100 euros on a monthly basis. All these beneficiaries received in March, April and May an additional 30 euros on a monthly basis. This group mainly includes beneficiaries of the basic pension scheme, pensions for disabled persons and family pension beneficiaries. Additionally, the authorities allocated EUR 2 million for initiatives and projects that target the improvement of the conditions of minorities most affected by the pandemic.

Impact on the most vulnerable groups

These emergency measures will only partially address the immediate needs of the most vulnerable people. The consequences of the pandemic on Kosovo's economy are expected to be severe (-5% GDP decline in 2020 estimated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF)) and they will intensify existing economic inequalities and vulnerabilities particularly for women and girls. The inability of businesses to conduct their work is already affecting the employment and income of citizens, thus directly impacting consumption, which is in sharp decline. Moreover, the flow of remittances is expected to decrease considerably which will further weaken consumption. In turn, many small and medium-sized enterprises will go bankrupt of which micro enterprises will be facing the greatest risks. Poverty and vulnerability are expected to significantly increase in the coming months.

Over the last years Kosovo's economic growth has neither reduced the rates of unemployment, nor created enough new jobs to reverse the trend of migration with its brain drain effects. Kosovo has a predominantly young population (average age of population is around 30 years and only 7.4% of the population is older than 65 years), and a high incidence of poverty.

An estimated 18% of Kosovo's population lives below the poverty line, and 5% lives in extreme poverty.⁴ Households with three or more children have a poverty rate of 26.3% and extreme poverty rate of 8%⁵. Overall, the poverty rate among children is 23%.

The minority communities are also among the most vulnerable in Kosovo. Children of these communities under five are three times more likely to suffer from chronic malnutrition and less than 54% of them have been vaccinated against measles, compared to 94% of the rest of the child population.

Inhabitants of rural areas and female-led households are other risk groups particularly affected by poverty. They face more difficulties to access education, health and social services and are therefore more exposed to the economic and social impact of the current crisis. Groups such as the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, as well as women and disabled people, face greater risks through long-term unemployment, higher participation in the grey economy, low salaries, and lack of opportunities to generate alternative income sources.

While 18% of the population lives below the poverty line, only 6% of the population benefits from social assistance services and 11% of the population benefits from the basic pension scheme. As the economy shrinks and unemployment increases, these groups at risk of poverty will be disproportionately affected.

Beyond poverty, women are in a vulnerable position within Kosovo society. At the household and individual level the isolation and financial difficulties resulting from the closure of schools and economic activities, are leading to an increase of domestic violence, especially gender based violence and violence against children with victims suffering in their homes, which they share with their perpetrators. Meanwhile, their access to assistance and services is being hindered by the limited functioning of the institutions. The latest data from the Ministry of Justice indicate for this year an increase by 30% of reported cases of domestic violence compared to the same period of last year.

Moreover, women are on the frontline of this pandemic – through health care, maternal care, elderly care, childcare, social work and volunteering. However, in times of crisis women are not sufficiently involved in the decision-making process and policy development – they are left out from shaping the decisions that affect their lives. Some of the identified gendered impacts⁴ of the pandemic outbreak include increased women's burden of unpaid care work, economic dis-empowerment and a rise in gender gaps in employment (women are predominantly found in informal and part-time work), loss of jobs and no access to childcare, limited access to, and reduced quality of, health services.

Women with a minority background in addition face multiple discrimination on a daily basis, perpetrated both by persons from the majority society (structural, gender and individually perpetrated acts of discrimination) as well as by persons from their own communities (strong patriarchal norms, structures and economic and legal dependency on male members of their households).

State of the social protection system

The Social Assistance Schemes amount to less than 0.5% of GDP. Between 2009 and 2016, the spending has fallen by 12.3% in real terms from 0.7% to 0.5% of GDP. In parallel, the number of beneficiaries declined from over 40 000 households in 2005 to 26 000 in 2017. Spending on social protection more generally increased only for pensions for the elderly and for war veterans. The expansion of programmes targeting specific population groups (like war veterans) have crowded out spending on social assistance targeting the poor. Decreases in spending on poverty targeted social assistance in Kosovo goes against a worldwide trend. According to a recent analysis of the World Bank, there is considerable room for improvement in terms of expanding coverage equitability and overall effectiveness.

Kosovo has a legal and institutional framework for decentralised social service delivery with the aim of bringing services closer to citizens. However, this is not matched by adequate funding and resources. Due to several legal, policy and budgetary challenges decentralization has not yet been finalized.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare⁵ (and more recently the Ministry of Health), is responsible for organising the provision and development of social and family services, while municipalities are responsible for delivery of social service. However, these social services are funded from the central budget in the general municipal grant without being earmarked¹⁰ At the local level, the Municipal Directorates for Health and Social Welfare oversee the planning and development of services, while the Centres of Social Work are responsible for service delivery in all 38 municipalities (through 40 Centres).

These Centres are the primary bodies mandated to assist potential beneficiaries of social assistance as well as to deliver social and family services like counselling, consultation on healthcare and social protection, or referral to other relevant services. Currently, the Centres serve more as providers of administrative support to people who apply for social assistance schemes, compensations for children with disabilities and payments for foster families, rather than as providers of psychological, social, or re-integration services.

The Centres face several policy and budgetary issues, which limit their capacity to respond to the needs of people such as finances, human resources, inappropriate facilities and infrastructure, and lack of cooperation with other stakeholders and non-governmental organisations.

⁴ <https://eige.europa.eu/topics/health/covid-19-and-gender-equality>

⁵ The names, terms, and expressions used in this section are based on the Law no. 02/L-17 on Social and Family Services, April 2005, and do not reflect the initiated re-formatting of ministries of the Kurti government.

Under such circumstances, the Centres have very limited capacity to respond to a crisis situation and often refer persons in need of social protection to external service providers. These providers are non-governmental organisations (NGOs), which are often underfunded. The Centres also require further support in capacity development in the design of victim-centred rehabilitation and reintegration services

The entire system of social service provision relies on these NGOs. Currently, 22 NGOs are licensed by the relevant Ministry for providing social and family services at central and local level. The licensing mechanism is weak and not able to cover those prevention and rehabilitation services, which are currently provided also by non-licensed NGOs. The NGOs are only partially funded by the municipal budgets and instead operate on a project basis with donor funds. Their financial sustainability is usually equal to zero. The government provides some additional funding distributed through an annual call, but for the past years every year the funding has been delayed, leaving them for several months without any budget.

Without parameters for a specific financial formula for social services to be allocated to municipalities, funding remains a challenge for the provision of services. A concept document for the reform of family and social services that would introduce a more adequate financing mechanism for social services was approved by the government in January 2019, but the new financing model requires amendment of the current Law on Municipal Financing as well as the completion of the new Law on Family and Social Services.

The problem is further exacerbated by the lack of capacity for planning within the municipalities, partially related to weak statistical data on the most vulnerable groups. Municipalities have limited capacity to undertake a proper accounting of the needs in social services at the local level, but there is also a broader challenge related to competing priorities at the municipal level. This in turn appears to result in limited attention to social services by municipal authorities.

OUTLINE OF IPA II ASSISTANCE

In close coordination with the institutional stakeholders, the Ministry of Health, Municipalities and municipal Centres for Social Work, the Action will respond to the socio-economic consequences of the COVID-19 crisis by improving the system of social services and provide targeted support initiatives for the most vulnerable groups through each of the following components:

1. **Ensuring basic services:** Filling the gap or complementing government support to the increasing number of vulnerable households in the COVID-19 crisis by implementing a relief and humanitarian support facility. The facility will provide vulnerable households with access to nutrition, basic healthcare and social services in close coordination with the relevant Ministries, Municipalities and the municipal Centres for Social Work. The facility shall improve the government's early identification of vulnerable households and ensure the right level of support. In doing so it will consider the best use of existing methodologies based on latest studies and recommendations⁶. This component corresponds primarily to output 1 of the Log-frame matrix.
2. **Strengthening accessibility to social services and personal protective equipment for front-line workers to mitigate the effect of the pandemic** including healthcare facilities, family and social services, prison services, NGOs supported by the Action) through: i) provision of basic health and safety equipment for front-line workers ii) support to the work of the Centres for Social Work, shelters and improved access to healthcare and social services for the most vulnerable groups through mobile clinics and transportation services; iii) improvement of physical accessibility and hygienic conditions (access ramps, hygienic services, access to water and functional sewage systems, etc.) of Centre of Social Work, public shelters and/or other community services identified in coordination with central and local authorities. This component corresponds primarily to output 2 of the Log-frame matrix.
3. **Strengthening the financial and institutional system and legal framework** to improve the quality and accessibility of social services through i) sub-grants for providers of social services in Kosovo (NGOs/Civil Society Organisations) for the most vulnerable and marginalised groups; ii) provide technical support to public institutions at the central and local level throughout the action duration in order to advance the legislative and regulatory reform processes related to the social protection sector (e.g. decentralisation,

⁶ Kosovo Social Assistance Scheme, Study Assessment and Reform Options, World Bank Group, March 2019

secondary legislation related to the implementation of the law on Child protection, the completion of the Law on Family and Social Services based on the 2019 Concept Document and the related reforms). This component corresponds to output 3 of the Log-frame matrix.

4. **Strengthening social cohesion and minority inclusion:** maintain social cohesion of more marginalised and disadvantaged minority communities in the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis through local community initiatives and sustainable income generation accessible to all communities in Kosovo ensuring their sustainable (re)integration, social cohesion and reducing irregular migration. This component corresponds to output 4 the Log-frame matrix.
5. **Support to women:** improve women's access to government programmes, economic development opportunities, social services and emergency aid that address short and mid-term implications of the COVID-19 crisis on women; support the participation and influence of women's groups and organisations in decision-making, and cooperation with local and government for women's economic empowerment and social welfare during and after the COVID-19 crisis. This cross-cutting component will contribute particularly to output 5 of the Log-frame matrix.

The action will have a direct impact on the most vulnerable groups and individuals living in all 38 municipalities of Kosovo who will be identified in close coordination with the Ministry of Health, Municipal Departments of Health and Social Welfare and Centres of Social Work. These groups will comprise the following non-exhaustive list:

Families living in poverty; women, children and elderly people living in isolation or poverty; families from certain minority communities such as Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians living in poverty or at risk of socio-economic marginalisation; children without parental care; children and adults with physical or mental disability; women and/or children victims of or at risk of gender based violence, abuse or domestic violence; women and children living in remote or rural areas who experience difficulties to access medical, social or educational facilities and services.

The action's direct target beneficiaries are also all public institutions with different roles in the social protection system i.e. the Ministry of Health, the Municipal Departments of Health and Social Welfare, the Centres of Social Work, public shelters, as well as civil society organisations providing different types of support services to the most vulnerable people. These partners will benefit from EU technical, and financial support.

RELEVANCE WITH THE IPA II STRATEGY PAPER AND OTHER KEY REFERENCES

The action is linked with section five of part IV of the **Indicative Strategy Paper 2014-2020**, which tackles Education, Employment and Social Policies. The action helps meet the objective of assisting the most marginalised groups.

The action will address findings of the **Kosovo Report 2019**, section 6.11 on Social Policy and Employment. According to the report, Kosovo has a legal and institutional framework for social service delivery in place, but limited financial resources and human capacities and a lack of proper planning by public institutions resulting in an inadequate provision of social services to the most vulnerable population. This is aggravated by a general lack of data collection on population numbers broken down by gender, age groups, ethnicity, ability and vulnerability. Furthermore, the action contributes in addressing the findings on fundamental rights. There is widespread prevalence of gender-based violence and various forms of discrimination against women in Kosovo. In this regard, Kosovo needs to strengthen the implementation of the Law on gender equality, promote the representation of women in decision-making roles and advance the implementation of the strategy in both the government and the municipalities. On community rights, the report encourages the government to step up its efforts to create conditions to exercise community rights. The Action will address all these issues.

Additionally, the action contributes to the **Europe 2020 Strategy**, Flagship Initiative: "European Platform Against Poverty" which aims to ensure social and territorial cohesion such that the benefits of growth and jobs are widely shared and people experiencing poverty and social exclusion are enabled to live in dignity and take an active part in society.

This Action will contribute to several objectives of the EU **Gender Action Plan (GAP)**, including Objective 7 "Girls and women free from all forms of violence against them", Objective 9 "Protection for all women and men of all ages from sexual and gender based violence in crisis situations", Objective 10 "Equal access to quality and preventive, curative and rehabilitative physical and mental health care services for girls and women" and Objective 14 "Access to decent work for women of all ages".

The Action is also linked with the relevant strategies. It directly contributes to the Strategic Objective 3 of the **Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare Sector Strategy 2018-2022**. This objective aims at increasing social welfare through expanding and raising the quality of protection and social and family services, with a special focus on groups in need and gender equality. Furthermore, the action is in line with the situation analysis of the capacities of Social Service Providers in Kosovo⁷, published in 2018, and financed by the EU. The report highlights the main challenges of social service delivery in Kosovo some of which are addressed by this Action: insufficient financing for social services, insufficient capacities of the Centres for Social Work, and limited financial sustainability of NGOs providing social services.

The Action is also supporting **EU policies in regard to the protection of Human Rights in the world including and especially the Right of the Child**. In light of the adoption of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development and the commitment to “leave no one behind”, Article 2 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is of particular importance for the EU. It addresses non-discrimination and stipulates that all the rights apply to all children without exception. It is Kosovo’s obligation to protect children from any form of discrimination and to take positive action to promote their rights. However, currently millions of children are globally missing out on basic services such as decent healthcare and quality education not only because of poverty but also because they may face discrimination – based on their ethnic background, their gender, their region of origin, a disability, their migrant or refugee status.

LESSONS LEARNED AND LINK TO PREVIOUS FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Over the past 10 years, the EU has supported several projects addressing the themes covered by this Action. The main issues and lessons learned from previous assistance are listed below.

Components 1) Ensuring basic services, **2)** Strengthening accessibility to social services and personal protective equipment for front-line workers to mitigate the effect of the pandemic, and **3)** Strengthening the financial, institutional and legal system, build upon previous actions supporting the process of decentralisation of social services, and the needs of discriminated or most vulnerable groups such as children, women and people with disabilities.

Two consecutive projects supported the capacities of the institutions to advance the decentralisation process (particularly as regards quality assurance, budgeting and licensing). More recently, the first phase of an EU funded project (implemented by Save the Children) supported the institutions in developing a municipal financing formula for sustainable services and the Centres for Social Work, as well as the licensing of organisations and professionals working in the social sphere. The project also implemented a scheme in support of licensed civil society organisations to provide higher quality social services primarily for vulnerable communities, specifically for children and adults in need, vulnerable and marginalised persons, victims of domestic violence and trafficking, and senior citizens.

Several projects funded under the IPA Civil Society Facility (CSF) and the European Instrument for Democracy and Human rights (EIDHR) support the advocacy and partnership efforts of civil society organisations (e.g. KOMF, HandiKos, Kosovo Women Network, SOS Kosovo, RI2020, ROMACTED, the regional Roma women empowerment network among others) to protect the rights of citizens in need through cooperation with institutions at central and local level and participation in relevant policy making and consultation mechanisms.

The main issues identified and lessons learnt by the above-mentioned projects are summarized below:

- Despite some progress related to the regulatory and legislative framework, the system governing the provision of social services in Kosovo remains underfunded and underperforming. As further confirmed in the annual report 2019 of the Ombudsperson, the Centres for Social Work have been transformed into administrative-technical institutions and much less into institutions providing professional social services, due to the lack of professional staff and the lack of facilities to provide adequate service. Cash-entitlement programmes providing social assistance are currently the bulk of the effort of the authorities to achieve social protection goals. Social services remain a relatively marginal component of the social protection system. They still lack a

⁷ ‘Legal and Fiscal Context as well as the Capacities of Social Service Providers in Kosovo’, Save the Children in Kosovo/a European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research, Prishtinë/Vienna March 2018

meaningful service provision model, the number of services is too limited and they are not well integrated in the existing social assistance schemes and vocational and employment services.

- Funding for social services remains subject to political will and budgetary priorities set out by municipal authorities. Municipalities have competing priorities and limited capacities to carry out financial planning of the resources required for social services. As a result, too few resources are allocated at the local level. Currently, the Ministry of Health provides limited short-term grants to licensed organisations, while only a few municipalities finance such organisations.
- At the core of the weaknesses facing the social service system in Kosovo are the limited budget and persistent capacity constraints of the Centres for Social Work. It is widely recognized that these centres mostly adopt a reactive approach, with limited prevention and follow-up services available. The list of social services offered by the centres is limited in scope and geographic reach. There is limited forward planning and the centres are saddled with high caseloads and limited human resources.
- While a financing formula has been developed with the help of a previous EU project, legal changes are needed to bring it into use. As legislative changes take time, the new formula is not expected to be applied during the budget years 2021 and 2022. However, in the meantime, the government and the municipalities can take some urgent actions:
 - Increase the threshold of minimum financing for social services provided by the non-governmental sector, in order to enable a continued provision of services to citizens in need.
 - Take all measures to ensure the financing of direct social services within their municipality through the financial support of Centres for social Work and the purchase of services from the non-governmental sector.
 - Empower the municipalities in terms of budget planning and management, including gender-responsive budgeting, in order to prepare them for when the budget would be transferred to the Centres for Social Work. Municipal Directorates of Health and Social Welfare should develop and profile professional staff with capacities for planning, management and monitoring of social services.
- The government and municipalities should better prioritise the implementation of social services at the central and municipal level. Besides the legal regulation of social service financing, they should clarify the division of responsibilities, including inspection and monitoring functions (as well as for the purpose of licensing), between central and municipal levels, increasing the accountability in the field of social and family services, increasing the infrastructure and capacities, and investing in professional development of the municipal staff and service providers. The Ministry in charge of social protection should take over a leading and facilitating role for the completion of this process.
- The government should approve a new Law on Social and Family Services that foresees a reform of social services including the municipal financing for social services, defining prevention, protection, rehabilitation and reintegration services, as well as classifying services into three categories/levels, thus guaranteeing the right to social services for all children and persons in need. Furthermore, this law should envisage a new organisation of services by moving some social services from the Centres for Social Work to the non-governmental private sector, coupled with institutionalised, regular funding.

Over a 10 years' period the EU and UNICEF have supported Kosovo institutions in developing and implementing a justice system for juveniles and children that would enable full protection of their rights. An external evaluation conducted in 2018 confirmed the value of the support and its importance within the overall machinery of actions aimed at promoting the protection of children's rights. For follow-up the evaluators highlighted inter alia that future activities must correspond realistically to available resources and the need to ensure stronger participation of civil society organisations. A follow up phase should focus on supporting the application of the new child protection law and the revised sections of the juvenile justice code, in order to ensure a proper coordination between the two legal frameworks and an integrated approach to child protection. With these recommendations in mind the action Protection and integration of disadvantaged children was included under IPA 2020 programming to be implemented jointly with UNICEF. The aim of this programme is to increase the number of boys and girls benefiting from multi-disciplinary approaches and services responding to socio-economic vulnerabilities, violence, neglect, abuse and inequitable access to justice. It is planned to commence approximately at the same time as the current action and close cooperation will be essential for its success.

An evaluation of the EU support to social protection related services is planned in 2021 and will provide important information during the implementation of this Action.

Component 4) Strengthening *Social cohesion and minority inclusion* addresses particularly the needs of minority communities and builds upon the results and lessons learned from and best practices developed from the previous phases of the EU Community Stabilisation Programme (CSP).

The success achieved in the previous phases are direct results of the programme's evolution through lessons learned, fieldwork and developing innovative business approaches. Improvements in the different iterations of this programme have systematically been the result of extensive consultation with minority communities relevant municipal authorities and mainstream businesses. Overtime the programme maintained those approaches and models that have proven to be effective while further developing innovations and addressing new opportunities identified during the previous phases in order to maximise the impact and efficiency of the action.

Furthermore, in terms of lessons learned from previous similar actions the participation of stakeholders and beneficiaries is an important element in ensuring the quality and sustainability of the ventures supported as well as 'buy-in' at both community and individual levels, like individual small-scale "co-financing" of equipment municipal co-financing on the community level.

The previous three phases of CSP programme (IPA 2009, 2011 and 2014) as well as the ongoing one (2018) have been monitored and evaluated several times over the implementation period from 2010 to present. In the latest external evaluation from 2017, it was noted that the "the relevance of the CSP is confirmed throughout the three phases of the programme". The CSP programme has demonstrated a remarkable level of effectiveness: 100% of beneficiaries visited are effectively running stable businesses and 100% of community interventions are regularly used by the communities. Start-up businesses are generating a livelihood for the individual families despite a challenging business/trade environment.

CSP contribution to the promotion of gender equality has been significant as the action empowered female-run businesses.

The biggest challenges affecting communities sector are of political and social nature. The Kosovo-Serb communities are often affected by the political developments between Kosovo and Serbia. In many regions where Kosovo-Serb communities live, a parallel administrative system is still present interfering with governance issues and social services. On the other hand, of all communities, the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities are the most marginalised due to their socio-economic conditions, level of education and property rights.

The inter-institutional cooperation in the sector is another challenging factor that should be carefully considered during the implementation of this Action. The many actors (Ministry of Communities and Returns, Municipal Offices for communities and returns, the Office of Community Affairs and the Office of Good Governance at the Office of the Prime Minister, the Consultative Council for Communities (under the authority of the President) makes the institutional coordination quite a challenge. On top of this is the fact that the forced returns (repatriated process including minority community members) from third countries and EU Member States is dealt with by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Municipal Offices for communities and returns.

Component 5) *Support to Women* of this Action will target primarily vulnerable women and groups (formal and informal), building on the experience and background of the EU funded projects implemented by local civil society organisations to support women in their communities, including through capacity building programmes and re-granting mechanisms. Since 2013 the EU financial support to gender equality, women's participation and empowerment was delivered primarily through central level advocacy jointly with more than 150 community level initiatives (as part of EIDHR and IPA CSF programmes). According to an evaluation of the CSF programme of 2017, financial support to third parties (commonly referred to as sub-granting) is an efficient model particularly for reaching out to local grass-root organisations, where continuous guidance and presence in the field of the main implementing partner is essential to support the capacities of local CSOs and their initiatives and where English is not required to be the main contractual language.

Over the last 3 years field monitoring events (ROM missions and EUD monitoring and verification) of civil society projects promoting women rights confirmed that solidarity and cooperation across activists groups and organisations are play an important role in reaching otherwise marginalised groups, as well as empower local women. This is particularly important to respond to the needs of women CSOs outside Pristina that tend to be under-funded, with limited capacities and generally more exposed to social and cultural barriers.

2. Intervention logic - LOGICAL FRAMEWORK MATRIX

OVERALL OBJECTIVE(S) / (IMPACT(S))	INDICATOR'S NAME	OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS			SOURCES & MEANS OF VERIFICATION
		BASELINES (INCL. VALUE & REFERENCE YEAR)	MILESTONES (INCL. VALUE & REFERENCE YEAR)	TARGETS (INCL. VALUE & REFERENCE YEAR)	
Kosovo's social service system is financed by the budget and operates based on inclusive and non-discriminatory policies and services. Basic services are ensured to the most vulnerable amidst the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath and beyond.	Social services policies and services are inclusive, equitable and non-discriminatory System of government regular financing for CSO providers of public services exists, including shelters.	(2018), Report "Situation Analysis: Legal and Fiscal Context as well as the Capacities of Social Service Providers in Kosovo" (Save the Children) (2020) Ad-hoc funding for some social services without regular financing formula or r approach.	Approval of the Law on Social Assistance, Law on Social and Family Services, (2021) Revision of the Law on Local Finance	By (2022) social services policies have provisions and/or mechanism for inclusive and non-discriminatory service delivery, including institutionalized, regular financing for public services provided by CSOs.	EU Kosovo Report – annually Government Report(s) – Annually
	# of licensed social service providers in Kosovo, disaggregated by service type, that are financed by the budget and offering quality services	0 (2020) (In 2020 in Kosovo there are 22 NGOs licensed for social services)	N/A	30 (2023)	Project reporting and monitoring documents.
	% of beneficiaries of project-supported services disaggregated by ethnic background and ability status of women and girls beneficiaries	0 (2020)	N/A	60% of beneficiaries are women or girls (2023) (disaggregated by ethnic background and ability status of women and girls beneficiaries)	Project reporting and monitoring documents.

To ensure social cohesion is preserved and enhanced in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath with a specific focus on non-majority communities and women.	% in perception for positive change in socio-economic, livelihood and durable solutions for non-majority communities improved. Reduction of gender inequalities, and relevant GAP indicators (2018) ⁸ ; EUO reported on 7 (2019)	80% improved perception of communities (2017)	85 % (2021)	90 % (2023) Progress made towards at least 8 GAP II objectives and possibly GAP III objectives (2023)	Statistics and reports generated by Kosovo Statistical Agency, Ministry of Communities and returns Municipal Offices for communities and returns, UN Agencies, OSCE, IOM and other local and I international actors. <i>Kosovo Gender Analysis</i> , Progress Reports, GAP reports	
SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE(S) / OUTCOME(S)	OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS (*)				SOURCES OF VERIFICATION	ASSUMPTIONS
1. Basic services are ensured to the most vulnerable groups in the midst of the socio-economic crisis resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.	# of individuals who receive humanitarian support in a timely and gender responsive manner, disaggregated by ethnicity, where possible, and gender	2018 data from on beneficiaries (25, 400 families)	Needs assessment of the most vulnerable groups, through a gender lens, is conducted (2021)	(2022) 30% of beneficiaries are women heads of households, single mothers, and other vulnerable categories	Project Report (s) – annually Centres of Social Work (s)Report (s) – annually	The demand for support is commensurate with financial capacities of the project; needs assessment involves minority and gender analysis

⁸ *Kosovo Gender Analysis*, at: <https://womensnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/womens-network.pdf>,

<p>2. Strengthened accessibility to social services and personal protective equipment for front-line workers to mitigate the effect of the pandemic.</p>	<p>Accessibility to social services Accessibility to personal protective equipment for front-line workers</p>	<p>TBC Baseline on accessibility is based on the project's initial assessment, data from Ministry of Health and information from Municipalises and Centres of Social Work</p>		<p>(2021) All (100%) Vulnerable people with reduced mobility, PWDs or living in remote or rural areas have access to social services. (2022) at least 20% of identified needs of physical accessibility of improvement of safety and hygienic of municipal Centres of Social Work and services fare addressed (2021) At least 50% of front-line workers are equipped with PPE, of which at least 50% are women</p>	<p>Project Report (s) – annually Centres of Social Work (s)Report (s) – annually</p>	
<p>3. All vulnerable citizens have equal access to social services in Kosovo amidst the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath.⁹</p>	<p>3.1 # of persons who benefit from project-supported social services, disaggregated by ethnicity (where possible), gender, age, ability and service type 3.2 Operational capabilities of the Centres of Social Work to address the needs of beneficiaries in a timely and gender responsive manner</p>	<p>3.1 0 (2020) 3.2 (2018), Report “Situation Analysis: Legal and Fiscal Context as well as the Capacities of Social Service Providers in Kosovo” (Save the Children): 84% of Centres of Social Work report insufficient number of staff</p>	<p>N/A 3.2 Capacities of Centres of Social Work improved (to be measured through an (2021)</p>	<p>3.1 6,000 of which at least 50% are women (2023) 3.2 At least 80% of Centres of Social Work staff benefit from capacity development activities in response to post COVID-19, of which at least 50% women, including from a minority background.</p>	<p>Project reporting and monitoring documents. Cooperation and / or mutual assistance report form; Project reporting and monitoring documents Project Report (s) – annually Centres of Social Work Report (s) – annually Project or Institutional survey/evaluation of Centres of Social Work</p>	<p>Girls, boys, women and men in need approach social service providers for quality services. Social service providers offer quality social services. Services ensure outreach to persons that would not normally access the services. Roma communities need to have access to information. The package of laws is approved; corresponding secondary legislation is drafted; university graduates apply for the internship programme; willingness of Centres of Social</p>

⁹ Equal access would imply that vulnerable groups (women, PWDs, RAE) are over represented amongst recipients.

				Human resources of Centres of Social Work improved with a minimum of 38 individuals are provided with internship in Centres of Social Work, of which 50% are qualified women (2022) , including from minority backgrounds	staff capacities for treating different cases	Work staff to participate in capacity development activities Graduates with minority background are able to benefit from affirmative actions on equal basis as other graduates
4. To create income-generating opportunities for non-majority communities amidst the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath.	# of beneficiaries receiving income resulting from project assistance, disaggregated by gender and ethnicity , where possible.	500 beneficiaries (2017)	604 beneficiaries (2020)	Up to 904 beneficiaries, of which at least 50% are women (2023) , including from minority backgrounds	Action documentation, applications, proposals, Implementation Agreements	
5. Women's and girls' rights and specific interests/needs inform decision making and financial support amidst the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath and beyond.	% of women Human Rights Defenders who have received EU Support (EURF, GAP II, indicator 18.1)	EU <i>Kosovo Gender Analysis</i> identified several gender inequalities, and relevant GAP indicators (2018) ¹⁰ ; EUO reported on 7 (2019)	Progress made towards 6 objectives in this Action, totalling 8 (2020)	Progress made towards at least 8 GAP II objectives and possibly GAP III objectives (2023)	<i>Kosovo Gender Analysis</i> , Progress Reports, GAP reports Gendered statistics on Roma inclusions	Political instability hinders progress.
OUTPUTS	OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS (*)				SOURCES OF VERIFICATION	ASSUMPTIONS
Output 1: Improved service provision for the most vulnerable groups amidst the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath.	# of individuals who receive humanitarian support in a timely and gender responsive manner, disaggregated by ethnicity and gender	2018 data from on beneficiaries (25, 400 families)	Needs assessment of the most vulnerable groups, through a gender lens, is conducted (2020)	(2022) 30% of beneficiaries are women heads of households, single mothers, and other vulnerable categories, including ethnicity	Project Report (s) – annually Centres of Social Work (s)Report (s) – annually	The demand for support is commensurate with financial capacities of the project; needs assessment involves gender analysis

¹⁰ *Kosovo Gender Analysis*, at: <https://womensnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/womens-network.pdf>,

Output 2: Strengthened accessibility to social services and personal protective equipment for front-line workers to mitigate the effect of the pandemic.	# of transportation services/ mobile clinics operational and utilised by target groups/beneficiaries disaggregated by ethnicity where possible) and gender	0 (no mobile clinics exist)	Establishing mobile clinics for social and/or health assessment for rural/hard to reach areas	(2022) Establish 7 mobile clinics to deliver services for vulnerable families/individuals, of which 50% should be women including women beneficiaries from minorities	Project Report (s) – annually Centres of Social Work Report (s) – annually	Vulnerable individuals and families are willing to use services provided by mobile clinics
	# of front-line workers who benefit from protective personal equipment, disaggregated by ethnicity and gender	TBC	(2020) Front-line workers are equipped with protective personal equipment (2021) At least 1 million pieces of PPE are produced through this Action for front-line workers	(2021) At least 50% of front-line workers are equipped with protective personal equipment of which at least 50% are women		Locally available protective personal equipment tock
	# of women and girls (including from vulnerable and marginalized groups) who access life-saving services during restrictions created by COVID-19	TBC	100 (2020)	300 (2022) disaggregated by ethnicity and ability status		
Output 3: Delivery of social services through a sub granting scheme and new financing mechanism for social services in place; & technical assistance delivered to public institutions involved in the provision of social services to help mitigate the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 crisis.	# of children with disability or adults in need who have access to social services, disaggregated by ethnicity where possible and gender	N/A	N/A	3,400 (2022) of which at least 50% are girls	Project reporting and monitoring documents.	
	# of home-based services for the elderly, children and adults in need disaggregated by ethnicity and gender	N/A	N/A	2000 (2022) of which at least 50% are women including women beneficiaries from minorities	Project reporting and monitoring documents.	

	# of beneficiaries of services for the victims of domestic violence, gender-based violence, violence against children and trafficking	N/A	N/A	600 (2022)	Project reporting and monitoring documents.	
	# of public institution representatives completed minority and gender training provided by training institutions disaggregated by ethnicity and gender	0 (2020)	N/A	100, of which at least 50% are women (2023) including women beneficiaries from minorities	Training pre and post-tests; Project reporting and monitoring documents.	The situation created via COVID-19 eases and the project can resume business as usual.
Output 4: Non-majority entrepreneurs supported & enhanced social integration between local ethnic communities amidst the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath	# start-up and operational businesses established through the disbursement of assistance by the end-of-the action, disaggregated by ethnicity (where possible) and gender of owner	500 Projects (2017)	604 Projects (2020)	Up to 904 projects (2023) of a minimum duration of 6 months. 50% of projects supported by this action are related to businesses owned and managed by women		
	# of minority community development projects funded	150 projects (2017)	196 initiatives (2020)	Up to 254 projects (2023)		
	# of beneficiaries of social inclusion initiatives implemented, disaggregated by gender, ethnicity and ability status	0 initiatives (2020)	N/A	Up to 78 (2023) of which at least 50% are women of girls		
Output 5: Capacity development and financial support given to CSOs working for gender equality amidst the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath and beyond.	N# of women's CSOs that have received support under this Action (EURF, GAP II, indicator 18.1)	0 through this initiative (2020)	At least 31 (2021)	At least 62 (2023)	Monitoring reports; success stories	Gender equality can be furthered amid political instability and existing gender inequalities; activist burnout prevented.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES

Output 1: Improved service provision for the most vulnerable groups amidst the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath¹¹.

This output - will consist of the following activities:

Activity 1.1: Support the Centres for social work for the identification/case management of programme beneficiaries and for the delivery of humanitarian and basic services (developing integrated case management system; introducing internship scheme for the newly graduated psychosocial workers)

Activity 1.2: Engage women and girls for gender responsive initiatives (such as the production of prevention supplies), identification of needs and community actions to address minority-based and gender-discriminatory social norms, attitudes and behaviours.

Activity 1.3: Provide family packages (food, hygiene, household, and other essential items including female hygiene products such as sanitary napkins and panty liners) to vulnerable households in coordination with Centres for social work, ensuring that minorities and persons that are outside any protection scheme are reached.

Activity 1.4: Provide funds to cover the basic living costs (utilities, rent, basic transport, emergency shelter, heating supplies, etc.) for families living in extreme poverty and residential social services if need be, including support to persons living in illegal settlements/constructions (access to basic public infrastructures and funds to cover basic living costs).

Output 2: Strengthening accessibility to social services and personal protective equipment for front-line workers to mitigate the effect of the pandemic.

This output will consist of the following activities:

Activity 2.1: Distribution of Personal Protective Equipment for front-line workers (e.g. social services, emergency response, prison services, waste collection workers, NGOs);

Activity 2.2: Improvement of accessibility, hygienic conditions of and transportation to social services in order to reach out to the most vulnerable persons (works to improve accessibility, mobile social clinics) with regular delivery flow of basic food, hygienic packages etc.

Output 3: Delivery of social services through a sub-granting scheme and improvement of governance and financing of social services. This output is primarily related to component three.

This output will consist of the following activities:

Activity 3.1: Implementation of sub-granting scheme/s to ensure continued provision of residential, day-care, home-based and preventive services (including online/phone-line help services or drop-in services, health services (information and response to cases), for most vulnerable persons (elderly, children and adults in need, minorities, victims of domestic violence, gender-based violence and trafficking, including for their economic independence and re-integration);

Activity 3.2: Provision of technical assistance to central and local level institutions to advance social sector reforms and enable them to adequately respond to Kosovo's social service needs, including through regular

¹¹ All capacity building activities shall be implemented through the relevant training institutions of the Kosovo government.

financing of non-governmental providers of social services and capacities for minority and gender-responsive policies and programmes.

Output 4: Support of minority communities and women entrepreneurs to establish/maintain production and enhanced social integration between communities amidst the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath. This output is related to component four.

This output will consist of the following activities:

Activity 4.1: Support to non-majority and inter-ethnic small enterprises and business associations to leverage economies of scale for groups of producers (sub granting scheme & business advisory);

Activity 4.2: Support to 20 community projects to address the post-crisis needs of all communities in non-majority areas and support to 38 social inclusion initiatives to promote inter-community dialogue and integration (sub granting scheme);

Activity 4.3: distribute (food and non-food) packages to families of minority communities living in extreme poverty in coordination with Centres for social work and close collaboration with women and minority organizations active at local level;

Output 5: Capacity development and financial support given to CSOs working for gender equality amidst the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath and beyond. (EU GAP Obj. 18). This output is related to component five.

This output will consist of the following activities:

Activity 5.1: Small grants for women’s CSOs and vulnerable groups to engage in decision-making processes and policy reforms, particularly related to the response to the socio-economic crisis resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic;

Activity 5.2: Provision of capacity development for women’s CSOs, including provision of and training in ICT equipment and technologies, enabling improved operations and impact amidst the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath and in the future.

RISKS

The main potential risks are listed in the table below along with the proposed mitigation measures:

Risks	Mitigation measures
The situation created with the spread of COVID-19 creates an environment where it is difficult to continue business as usual.	Implementing agencies will work with all parties involved – including public institutions and social service providers – to ensure all necessary measures are in place that allow for the provision of safe and high quality social services even under COVID-19 circumstances.
Unpredictable evolution of the pandemic	Adaptability of the activities linked to this action and to government measures

New government(s) may delay and/or hinder legal reform, including the adoption of the Law on Social Services and the financing formula. New fiscal priorities that exclude social services may be introduced.	Implementing agencies will work closely with any new government(s) and ministers to push forward the agenda, in cooperation with the EU Office, of legislation reform so that delays are mitigated and crucial reforms are adopted. New minister(s) will be duly informed of the work and importance of reform and how reform is tied to continued support from the EU and the project.
The Centres for Social Work are unwilling or unable to cooperate in improving service delivery	Project interventions support capacity development of the CSWs to improve their operational capacities based on pre-existing needs.
Assistance does not reach the most needy and vulnerable groups	Use existing institutional mechanisms and systems, including those from CSOs, to identify the most vulnerable groups in need of support.
Lack of overall policy and financial environment favouring the advancement of Gender Equality and Women Economic Empowerment Agenda in Kosovo	Active lobbying and promotion of Gender Equality and Women Economic Empowerment in Kosovo, including the need for a strengthened gender mainstreaming mechanism, in cooperation with UNKT, Agency for Gender Equality, Office for Good Governance/National Roma Contact Point-NRCP
Political tensions and security concerns diminish the ability of the Community Stabilisation Programme (CSP) project teams to access potential and actual beneficiaries.	The security situation at the project sites will be regularly monitored by IOM staff. In the event that tensions persist and the situation continues to deteriorate, potential solutions such as allocating funds to non-affected areas, will be discussed with the steering committee members.
Limited number of applicants interested in the CSP call for proposals delaying activity implementation.	CSP project teams will promote the call for proposals widely throughout all municipalities to ensure wide participation among non-majority communities.
Established non-majority businesses are heavily impacted by COVID-19 related crisis despite the support received	Rapid assessment on the needs of previously supported businesses will be conducted to define specific tailored interventions to address the effects of COVID-19 spread on non-majority businesses. Additional existing and start-up businesses will benefit from tailor-made recovery support (in line with government measures).
The Action project is unable to successfully reach out to and target women, girls, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups, including ethnic minorities.	Implementers have a long-standing presence in Kosovo, as well as experience and success in designing and implementing activities that cater to the most vulnerable communities, including girls, women, children and adults with disabilities, and persons from the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities. This and a careful approach will facilitate access and success.
Minority communities lack access to information to benefit from the project	Coordination work of Office for Good Governance/Office of the Prime Minister of Kosovo, National Roma Contact Point and line-Ministries to share information with local authorities and large public announcement.

CONDITIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

For the implementation of all action components, the following conditions are the most important in the short term:

- The central institutions and in particular the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of local government Administration shall in a timely manner provide detailed instructions to the municipalities and the Centres of Social Work regarding their role and functions for operations at municipal level as well as on the modalities to participate and make best use of the possibilities offered by the action;
- The beneficiary institutions shall take all the necessary steps to ensure the smooth implementation of each planned operation (such as timely provision of lists or specifications for works or equipment; timely issuance of permissions for works, transportations etc.; cooperation protocols or other administrative acts linked to the execution of the programme) and maintain a good cooperation with the implementing partners.

For all components and particularly for component 3 the following assumptions apply in the medium/long-term period:

- adoption by the central government of the new legislative and regulatory framework for social and family services and the specific financing formula based on the social needs mapping in each municipality;
- improvement by the central government (harmonise and clarify) of the existing institutional framework, including regulations and policies to contract social services through NGOs, as a pre-requisite to accessible and quality service delivery
- adoption by the central government of a new law that would reform the Social Assistance Scheme in order to eliminate discrimination, promote inclusion, equitability and overall effectiveness. The new law should aim to introduce a reform of the schemes by eliminating the categorical criteria, which serve as inexact proxies of poverty.

3. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The **Ministry of Health**, specifically the **Department of Social and Family Policy**, will be the lead institution for the implementation of this project.

The **Municipalities** and **Centres for Social Work** are also very important partners in implementing the provision of social and family services as well as supporting social NGOs, the CSOs and social enterprises during the implementation phase of the project.

Other important institutions involved in the implementation of the project are the **Ministry of Finance and Transfers** and the **Ministry of Local Governance Administration** whose role in the designing of mechanisms and financing formula for social services will enable and ensure the sustainability of services and the complete financial allocation for the provision of social services after completion of the project.

The Ministry of Communities and Return is responsible to develop as well as implement legislation for the promotion and protection of communities and their member rights. **The Office for Community Affairs** under the Prime Minister's Office focuses in practice on implementing projects for minority communities, while its actual mandate is much broader, including in-depth involvement in policy-making regarding communities' rights and interests.

The Agency for Gender Equality is an important body for the functioning of democratic institutions. It has the mandate to draft, implement, propose, coordinate and monitor local and international public policies on

gender equality. It is responsible for promoting, protecting and advancing the equal participation of women and men in all spheres of political, economic, social and cultural life in Kosovo.

The **Ombudsperson Institution of Kosovo** to ensure increased enforcement of anti-discrimination legislation and revision of structurally discriminating administrative requirements preventing the most vulnerable from accessing social, health, education and employment benefit schemes.

The **CSOs/licenced social NGOs** and social enterprises are also very important players in providing and increasing the quality of social and family services for the beneficiaries by providing information on community based needs and challenges in the social sector, which need to be addressed by both the municipal and central level authorities.

The Office of the Prime Minister is responsible for coordinating donor assistance.

The action will be coordinated through regular meetings of the main institutional stakeholders, the EU and implementing partners. At the level of each Action component, the coordination and steering will be ensured through inter-institutional committees that will always entail the presence of the relevant above-mentioned institutions.

METHOD(S) OF IMPLEMENTATION AND TYPE(S) OF FINANCING (SEE ANNEX IMPLEMENTATION – BUDGET)

4. PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

METHODOLOGY FOR MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The European Commission may carry out a mid-term, a final or an ex-post evaluation for this Action or its components via independent consultants, through a joint mission or via an implementing partner. In case a mid-term or final evaluation is not foreseen, the European Commission may decide to undertake such an evaluation during implementation for duly justified reasons either on its own decision or on the initiative of the partner. The evaluations will be carried out as prescribed by the DG NEAR guidelines for evaluations. In addition, the Action might be subject to external monitoring in line with the European Commission rules and procedures set in the Financing Agreement.

Project monitoring should be set up in each grant, twinning, service and supply contract and call for proposals, through the following actions:

- a) Contractor will ensure that monitoring requirements are promoted in information to potential beneficiaries;
- b) During calls for proposals/tenders, the Contractor and CA will ensure that monitoring requirements are explained to potential beneficiaries in the guidelines for applicants, and that the requirements for financial, outputs and results information in the application form is compatible with the strategic documents (financial table and measure-level monitoring indicators) and the operating structure's monitoring needs;
- c) The request for payment from contractors, including the financial, outputs and results data, will be checked by the CA and verified by Beneficiary, as part of the financial management and control system, before being forwarded for payment, to ensure they are compatible with the contractual obligations
- d) The verification of operations by the CA/ Beneficiary through sample on-the-spot visits to projects will include checks as to whether the expenditure claimed has actually been incurred and the outputs achieved.
- e) The Project Steering Committee (PSC) will hold the main responsibility for monitoring and evaluating the projects. The PSC will also be responsible for establishing the methodology and instruments for monitoring the implementation of the project.

The overall coordination of monitoring the financial and technical progress of the Action will be conducted by the EU Office for Kosovo (EUO) as Contracting Authority.

5. SECTOR APPROACH ASSESSMENT

The **government Strategy and Action Plan for Cooperation with Civil Society** adopted in 2019 highlights the need to develop best practices and procedures for contracting of CSOs for the provision of public services. The assessment of challenges and opportunities of contracting CSOs to deliver public services in Kosovo prepared in 2017 identified, among other things, the need for developing the internal database of public/social service providers. This should facilitate the establishment of a comprehensive internal referral mechanism that provides the necessary data for adequate planning of need-based services in each municipality and the standards for contracting of CSOs.

Through **IPA I** and **II** the EU has been continuously supporting the government of Kosovo in its efforts to design a decentralised and efficient social service system for Kosovo, in promoting gender equality and lasting inter-ethnic existence. This action will further assist in the reform process of social service provision in Kosovo - through supporting the most vulnerable groups of the society and enabling them to become active in society.

Regarding coordination of foreign donors' assistance in Kosovo, the following bodies are established:

1.1 High level Forum

1.2 Sector Working Groups

1.3 Sub-Sector Working Groups

This project proposal is further in line with the following sectoral strategies of the government:

1. Sectoral Strategy on Employment and Social Inclusion, 2014-2020.

The Action contributes to the Specific Objective nr.2 of the strategy: "Increase of social welfare by expanding and improving the quality of social and family services provision, with particular focus on vulnerable groups."

2. Strategy 2018-2022 of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare.

The action is also linked with other sectoral strategies. It directly contributes to the Strategic Objective 3 of the Strategy 2018-2022 of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare. This objective aims increasing social welfare through expanding and raising the quality of protection and social and family services, with a special focus on groups in need and gender equality.

3. National Strategy for Protection from Violence in Family 2016-2020

This action contributes to the strategic objective 4 of this strategy, which aims to establish services for the rehabilitation of victims of domestic violence and increasing their effectiveness, at the central and municipal level.

4. Priorities of the government Programme 2020-2023

Increasing welfare and restructuring social services is one of the priorities of the government. The government is committed to undertake a comprehensive reform of social policies with a focus on supporting shelters and community-based centres. Furthermore, the government plans to improve legal framework for services and social assistance, strengthen the mechanisms of financing and decentralization of social services - through the creation of a special grant of social services, and capacity building of social workers through implementation of training programs. On human rights, gender equality and communities, the government will focus on strengthening the role and position of women in society, developing appropriate policies for their economic empowerment. It will be committed to strengthening institutional mechanisms for gender equality, beyond participation constraints and quotas, and will develop policies to protect against domestic

violence. The government will undertake the protection, observance and commitment to the full integration of the rights of communities, marginalized groups and vulnerable groups in Kosovo.

6. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

GENDER MAINSTREAMING

The EU GAP II requires that gender analyses be used to inform all EU external spending, policymaking, and programming (Objective 4). Moreover, Kosovo Law 05/L-020 on Gender Equality calls for a gender perspective to be mainstreamed throughout all policies, documents and legislation in Kosovo (Article 5.1.3); it also requires gender-responsive budgeting. Therefore, this Action has been informed by gender analysis, which has been incorporated into the problem analysis section and has informed the Action's design. In summary, already existing gender inequalities and risks for women, including physical, social and economic insecurities, have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Historically, gender equality has been more pronounced during such pandemics.¹² Among other issues, the pandemic has led to a heightened risk of domestic violence because of isolation and financial difficulties as well as a heightened burden of unpaid work due to the closure of schools and work places.¹³ Moreover, given occupational gender segregation, women can frequently be found at the frontlines of the pandemic, including as health and social workers.¹⁴ Shelters remain under-funded and ill equipped to function amid the crisis, lacking technical equipment, capacities, psychologists, other human resources, and financial support in collaboration with CSWs for reintegration and rehabilitation programs. On top of this, women from minority communities face multiple discrimination due to their ethnicity, and women living in or at risk of poverty face disproportionate problems in accessing health services, social and employment benefits and access to adult education that could remedy their employability. These problems are exacerbated by the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 health crisis. Considering the gendered nature of the pandemic and the response towards it, gender neutral emergency measures may be gender blind towards women's and men's different needs, priorities, and situations. Therefore, a gender-responsive approach as foreseen in this Action is essential. The Action categorises as an OECD Gender Marker 1, with gender equality as a significant objective of the action. The Action will contribute to progress on several EU GAP II objectives and indicators, including several indicators under Objectives 4, 6, 8, 9, 14, and 17:

- 3.1.1. Change (increase) in dedicated funding to improving results for girls and women
- 4.1.1. N# of programmes per year using gender analysis to inform design.
- 4.1.2. N# of programme evaluations per year that include an assessment of impact on women and girls,
- 4.3.1. % of programmes using findings of consultations with National Gender Equality Mechanisms, CSOs, women's organisations, to inform action design.
- 5.1.2. % of results disaggregated where relevant by sex in Results Framework(s)
- N# of research projects co-financed by EU (EUD/MS) on gender related issues, (GAP 6.1.1.);
- N# of programmes reporting improvement in quality and availability of sex-disaggregated/gender specific statistics through EU support (GAP 6.1.2)
- N# of projects building awareness of media on gender issues in beneficiaries and supported by EU (GAP 6.4.1.):
- 6.3.2. N# of sector programmes working with the National Gender Equality Mechanism (NGEM) (e.g., Agency for Gender Equality, ministerial and municipal gender equality officers)

¹² Kosovo Women's Network, Addressing COVID19 From a Gender Perspective, 2020, at: https://womensnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Addressing-COVID-19-from-a-Gender-Perspective_04_04_2020.pdf

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) (March 2020). Coronavirus puts women in the frontline. Source: <https://eige.europa.eu/news/coronavirus-puts-women-frontline>.

- N# of individuals directly benefiting from Justice, Rule of Law and Security Sector Reform programmes funded by EU (EU RF, GAP 7.5),
- Prevalence of girls and women 15-49 who have experienced physical or sexual violence (by an intimate partner) in the last 12 months, (SDG 5.38, GAP 7.2):
- N# of beneficiaries that comply with recommendations from the Universal Periodic Review and UN Treaties (ref. CEDAW, CRC, UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Palermo Protocol) (adaptation of SDG 16.2, GAP 8.1 and 9.2):
- N# of individuals directly benefiting from EU supported programmes that specifically aim to support civilian post-conflict peace building and/ or conflict prevention, (EURF, GAP 9.6.)
- 9.7. N# of EU funded humanitarian targeted actions that respond to gender based violence
- Ratio of female to male who have benefitted from Vocational Education and Training / Skills development and other active labour market programmes with EU support (EURF, GAP 13.10.)
- Average number of hours spent on paid and unpaid work combined (total work burden) by sex (SDG 5.42, GAP 14.2):
- Employment to population ratio (EPR) by, gender and age group (15-64) (SDG 8.5, EU GAP 14.4.):
- N# of women and men who have secured tenure of land with EU support (EURF, GAP 15.7.)
- N# of women accessing EU supported community level, (micro-) financial services (EURF, GAP 15.8.)
- # of women benefiting from legal aid programmes supported by the EU (EURF, GAP II 17.5.)
- Number of beneficiaries carrying out gender-responsive budgeting at local and central level with EU support (GAP 17.7)
- N# of women Human Rights Defenders who have received EU Support (EURF, GAP 18.1)

Further, the Action will contribute to several Sustainable Development Goals related to gender equality and women's empowerment, including SDG 1, SDG 5, and SDG 8.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

The Action is designed and will be implemented to pursue a more equitable system of social protection during and after the time of the COVID-19 related crisis. In this regard each operation is designed to allocate more resources to those hardest to reach or (for example through transportation services, mobile clinics, home visits, drop in centres etc.) more exposed to risks (women or children at risk, victims of gender based violence or domestic violence, children and adults with disabilities and their families, minority communities living in remote areas, etc.).

The Action was developed in close coordination with the institutions responsible for social and family services, international organisations and NGOs operating for women's rights, children and vulnerable communities as well as through direct cooperation with civil society representatives and/or prioritising the position of civil society networks and coalitions engaged in relevant sectors such as social services, child protection, people with disabilities and women's rights/gender equality. These organisations will constantly be engaged (within steering committees or bilateral relations with stakeholders) to monitor the implementation of the Action and in doing so ensure that equal opportunities are offered to all groups.

Operations will pay special attention to ensure that services and support will be inclusive and accessible by people with disabilities. Facilities and services involved should be fully accessible, including full accessibility of information. Protective equipment, sterilisers and other hygiene materials should be equally available for persons with disabilities. They should be placed in an accessible site with information to point to its location, and the mechanism to dispense the product should be accessible

MINORITIES AND VULNERABLE GROUPS

Disadvantaged, discriminated and vulnerable groups are the main target of this Action. People belonging to ethnic minority communities are specifically targeted by one component designed to address their social and economic needs. Targeted minority ethnic communities are Serbian, Roma, Ashkali, Egyptian, Gorani,

Bosniaks, Turks, and Croats throughout Kosovo and Albanian Communities living in Northern municipalities of Kosovo. These are all targeted by all Action components and outputs with impact in the short and medium/long term period. Besides the assistance in strengthening the protection offices at local level (CSWs), community-based organisations will be supported to represent the needs and provide first-hand response to the local communities. The Action will maintain a certain flexibility to ensure that context specificities and needs of people are met locally through a non-discriminatory and rights-based approach. Special attention will be paid to ensuring that people facing multiple discrimination and who are at greater risk of abuse and violence (e.g. women and girls with disabilities), and people who are most marginalised because of stigma and other barriers (e.g. persons with intellectual disabilities and deaf-blindness), are also fully benefitting of this Action and meaningfully consulted about, all measures undertaken. The needs of vulnerable returnees will also be taken into consideration.

ENGAGEMENT WITH CIVIL SOCIETY (AND IF RELEVANT OTHER STAKEHOLDERS)

Civil society organisations (CSOs including NGOs) play a prominent role within the Action as:

- main providers of essential social and family services as well as important resources for local communities, particularly at the local level in times of crisis. They complement the work of the CSWs and public Institutions at the central and local level with essential services to vulnerable groups including victims of domestic or gender-based violence. Services provided by CSOs are also hampered by limited human and financial resources as they mostly operate on a project base with limited funding from municipal budgets or donors;
- within local communities, CSOs are the first, or only, point of reference for individuals and families about COVID-19 performing public utility services, including delivering food and medical services to at-risk and low-income individuals and families. CSOs work to maintain social cohesion during the mandated periods of social distancing. Women's organizations, and other grassroots organisations, are on the front line of community response – supporting those most affected economically by the crisis, ensuring shelters remain open for domestic violence victims, and channelling public health education messages;
- CSOs advocating for the rights of women, children, people with disabilities or other vulnerable groups play an essential role to ensure that the voice, needs of their constituencies are adequately heard/met during the COVID-19 crisis as well as in the context of the economic and social recovery;

The Action supports CSOs' efforts to assist the most disadvantaged ones by providing services and protecting their rights. It is estimated that approximately 100 CSOs/NGOs delivering services and/or supporting local groups and communities will be directly supported by the action and will directly contribute to achieve the envisaged outcomes.

Over the last years the EU in Kosovo as well as main institutional partners have improved the level of strategic cooperation with civil society through several initiatives of which the most relevant is the government Strategy for cooperation with CS 2109-2023. One of the main objective of the strategy is the enabling environment for civil society through the achievement of a coherent, harmonised and clear legal and regulatory framework for public service delivery by CSOs. It is envisaged that this objective will be pursued in the coming 2 years and this Action will further contribute to its attainment.

Civil society engagement is envisaged throughout the implementation of the Action and it started during the identification and design phase. All Action's components have been designed through direct cooperation with civil society representatives and/or prioritising the position of civil society networks and coalitions engaged in relevant sectors such as social services, child protection, people with disabilities and women's rights/gender equality.

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE (AND IF RELEVANT DISASTER RESILIENCE)

Environmental considerations will be duly reflected in all IPA financed activities. This action however is not directly linked and does not foresee any activity in relation to the environment acquis and climate change.

7. SUSTAINABILITY

The sustainability of the Action's outputs and outcomes in the medium and long-term is linked to the conditions of implementation which require institutional efforts to undertake reforms in the area of social protection. Namely, the Action will provide technical support to central and local level institutions to conduct necessary and crucial legislative reform – including the adoption of the new Law on Social Services and the specific financing formula, including for institutionalized regular financing of CSO service providers. In fact, a more equitable model of financing of social services would be part of a broader reform of the sector represents an important milestone for the long-term sustainability of the system (and the Action) including the regular funding of the Centres of Social Work and NGOs service providers.

Similarly, the Action will support the efficiency and quality of the protection system through an integrated model of case management that will ensure higher compliance of local needs of each citizen in need with a more active and efficient network services available technical support. To this end all planned interventions will seek to establish collaboration and mutual assistance between Centres for Social Work, NGOs and other public services or Institutions (such as public shelters or Municipal offices for communities and returns.. This collaboration will allow these entities to network with one another and create lasting working relations that will outlive the project's lifespan and continue to benefit all parties involved.

The Action will also contribute to improve the performance of the Centres of Social Work as well as of NGOs or other public and private service providers. By strengthening the technical capacities of the Institutions, the Action will contribute to establish a more efficient and accountable monitoring and evaluation mechanism to measure the performance against professional standards and client satisfaction surveys. Similarly, it will facilitate the training of staff of Centres of Social Work and prepare potential additional human resources for the system through the internship programme.

As regards specific interventions with communities the sustainability is determined by the level of ownership and active involvement of beneficiaries (communities through the beneficiaries themselves), but also the Ministry of Communities and Return and the Municipal Offices for Communities and Return as well as Municipal Centres for Social Work through their constant cooperation in all steps of the action.

Previous phases of the CSP programme show that Ministry of Communities and Return `s full involved in all aspects of programming, financing, contracting and implementation proved efficient and indispensable in ensuring sustainability of the action. This approach will be maintained under this action. The Ministry of Communities and Return will continue to provide financial contribution to the action and will remain involved in action activities and implementation. At the local/municipal level the Municipal Offices for Communities and Returns and Municipal Centres for Social work will continue to work closely with the staff of the action in (i) field activities reaching out to potential beneficiaries; (ii) identification of most vulnerable members of non-majority communities as well as (iii) screening and pre-selection of projects to be supported by this action.

The most vulnerable women and families will benefit at different levels from the Action (humanitarian support, psychosocial, healthcare or legal services, transportation, small size grants for economic empowerment and/or support to advocacy on gender representation in policy making). Women and girls will obtain facilitated access to relief, support and empowerment opportunities, which in turn will lift themselves out of poverty, isolation or discrimination including the possibility to escape gender based violence (through access safe shelters and opportunities for social and economic empowerment). Special attention will be given to not exclude persons who lack civil documentation and/or recognition of residency, by assisting them to get such documents and thereby qualify for emergency measures and benefits provided for by the municipalities.

The project will ensure that all relevant institutions and actors are continuously engaged throughout all activities and have buy-in on all deliverables of the project. This will ensure that all relevant institutions share a sense of ownership with the results of the project and are ready to integrate them into their individual work plans and day-to-day work following the end of the project.

8. COMMUNICATION AND VISIBILITY

Communication and visibility will be given high importance during the implementation of the Action. The implementation of the communication activities shall be the responsibility of the IPA II beneficiary and the implementing partners under the respective agreements, and shall be funded from the amounts allocated to the Action.

All necessary measures will be taken to publicise the fact that the Action has received funding from the EU in line with the EU communication and visibility requirements in force. All stakeholders and implementing partners shall ensure the visibility of EU financial assistance provided through IPA II throughout all phases of the programme cycle.

Visibility and communication actions shall demonstrate how the intervention contributes to the agreed programme objectives, as well as the benefits of the action for the general public. Actions shall be aimed at strengthening general public awareness and support of interventions financed and the objectives pursued. The actions shall aim at highlighting to the relevant target audiences the added value and impact of the EU's interventions and will promote transparency and accountability on the use of funds.

The implementing partners will develop consolidated communication and visibility plans for their implementation actions, to be shared and updated regularly with the EU Office on the ground. The plans will also set agreed communication narratives and master messages customised for the different target audiences (stakeholders, civil society, general public, etc.).

Effectiveness of communication activities will be measured inter alia through public surveys in the IPA II beneficiaries on awareness about the Action and its objectives, as well as the fact that it is funded by the EU. As a minimum, one survey should be carried out before the start of the implementation of the communication and visibility plan and one after its completion.

Visibility and communication aspects shall be complementary to the activities implemented by DG NEAR and the EU Office in the field. It is the responsibility of the beneficiary to keep the European Union Office fully informed of the planning and implementation of the specific visibility and communication activities. The beneficiary shall report on its visibility and communication actions in the report submitted to the IPA monitoring committee and the sectoral monitoring committees.