



Event Report

EU Environment Partnership Programme for Accession (EPPA)

EPPA Third Steering Committee Meeting

28 September 2021

Live video conference



This Project is funded by the European Union

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The project implemented by the Consortium of NIRAS (lead)
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1 The event

The Project¹ Steering Committee provides oversight of the project implementation, the achieved results, key recommendations, and provides a forum for dialogue between the European Commission and the project beneficiaries. The Steering Committee is formed by the national EPPA Focal Points, nominated by each of the beneficiaries², the European Commission and the consortium implementing the project. The EPPA Third Steering Committee meeting took place on September 28, 2021, via live video conference. The meeting was organized in cooperation with the EC and the project beneficiaries, and under the EPPA project work programme, activity CC.1 “Project Progress monitoring and review”. Information about the previous two meetings can be consulted in the EPPA website³.

The participants came from the relevant authorities of the EPPA beneficiaries: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Turkey. Albania and Montenegro were not present. The EC was represented by the Directorate-General for Environment (DG ENV), and the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR). The Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), as a key project partner, also participated. Finally, the meeting was attended by the project consortium team (NIRAS and the Environment Agency Austria).

The aims of the meeting were to provide information on the EPPA project impact, key outcomes, conclusions and recommendations to be implemented in the next project semester; to take decisions on the items submitted to the SCM consideration, namely the EPPA calendar of events and a potential project amendment; to provide information on latest EU policy and legislative developments in environmental field, coming from the EU Green Deal and Green Agenda for Western Balkans; and to provide information on latest developments regarding the European Commission’s technical assistance planned to support of alignment efforts by EPPA beneficiaries, namely through the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA III) for the 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework period.

The presentations are available in the EPPA project website⁴.

2 Proceedings and conclusions

Mr. Davor Percan, from the Bilateral and Regional Environmental Cooperation Unit (DG ENV), delivered the opening remarks. He welcomed the participants and stakeholders of the EPPA project, and he provided a short update of the EU’s and Member States efforts in the framework of the EU Green Deal (GD) given its relevance to the potential candidate and candidate countries future transposition and implementation of EU policy. The EU adopted the Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, the Circular Economy Action Plan, the Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability, the Organic Action Plan (Farm to Fork Strategy), Zero Pollution Action Plan, 8th Environmental Action Programme, The Blue Economy Strategy, and new legislation related to batteries. Regarding climate, the European Climate law, the Adaptation Strategy and Climate Pact are in place. In the energy sector, there are multiple strategies, including on methane and hydrogen, energy system integration, offshore renewables and trans-European networks for energy. Regarding transport there is the sustainable mobility strategy. The Farm to Fork Strategy already produced a sustainable use of pesticides, leading to a future reform of the Common Agricultural Policy. In the area of industry, the EU adopted an Industrial Strategy and took several steps towards pollution control and plastics control. Biodiversity actions has been marked by preparations for the Convention of Biological Diversity CoP, with potential impacts in the Western Balkans region. Mr. Davor Percan stated the European Commission’s (EC) availability to cooperate with the countries towards a better understanding of the mentioned policies goals and steps, with the current meeting serving to implement this dialogue. He took the opportunity to present the agenda and the topics proposed for discussion in the Steering Committee Meeting. He called on the countries to provide feedback on the policies

¹ More information available at <https://eppanetwork.eu/project/>

² More information available at <https://eppanetwork.eu/beneficiaries/>

³ First meeting at <https://eppanetwork.eu/1st-steering-committee-of-the-eppa-project/> and second meeting at <https://eppanetwork.eu/eppa-2nd-steering-committee-meeting/>

⁴ Available at <https://eppanetwork.eu/eppa-steering-committee-meeting/>



presented, but also on the progress of the EPPA project, its successes, and recommendations. The agenda was approved by unanimity.

Mr. Radovan Nikcevic, from the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), presented the Action Plan for the Implementation of the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans (APGAWB) 2021-2030. He started by highlighting the importance of the EPPA project in supporting a transition to climate neutral societies in the Western Balkans. The Action Plan aims to translate the objectives of the GD into the policy frameworks of the Western Balkan countries, based on the Sofia Declaration (November 2020)⁵, and it is developed and coordinated by the RCC. The first draft of the APGAWB was circulated to the national governments, on the September 20-24 week, for comments. The APGAWB is based on the policies adopted under the GD. The Plan is divided in 3 parts: the first lists all 57 measures from the Sofia Declaration, some new measures, indicative accomplishment timelines, and regional coordinators who will be responsible for the implementation. The second part includes roadmaps for the implementation of the seven components of the Sofia Declaration (climate, energy, mobility, circular economy, de-pollution, sustainable agriculture, nature and biodiversity protection). The roadmaps elaborate on the necessary changes and instruments to achieve the necessary reforms. The third part deals with the governance structure, cooperation mechanisms to implement the Action Plan, performance indicators for progress monitoring, and reporting obligations. The document also forecasts the creation of two cooperation platforms to assist the Plan's implementation, namely one with NGOs (an NGO forum) and the other with local authorities, as well as some measures for donor coordination, and cooperation with the business community. The next steps include the organization of a series of meetings, including of the Regional Working Group for Environment of the RCC, the Biodiversity Taskforce for South-Eastern Europe, the NGO Forum, donor coordination meetings, a conference for municipalities, and a broad scope Ministerial meeting at the end of 2021. The APGAWB was shared with the participants of the EPPA Steering Committee Meeting.

Ms. Madalina Ivanica, from the Bilateral and Regional Environmental Cooperation Unit (DG ENV), presented the new EU Forest Strategy for 2030. It is the latest initiative of DG ENV, adopted in July 2021. The Forest Strategy is a product of the Biodiversity Strategy. Forests cover around 43% of the EU's land surface; it is essential for ecosystem services in terms of biodiversity, water, air, as well as human production and leisure activities. Nevertheless, the forest cover does not have the desirable conservation levels that allow those natural and socio-economic functions to be carried out, being subject to multiple pressures. The new Strategy aims to promote the services provided by forests in a sustainable manner by including measures to improve the quantity and quality of forests. The need of European forests to adapt to new climate conditions is also recognized. The Strategy is based on a holistic approach and is based on an EU level approach, while still respecting the subsidiarity principle. Therefore, the new EU Forest Strategy will support the socio-economic functions of forests for thriving rural areas and boosting forest-based bio-economy within sustainability boundaries, which already generates a large amount of jobs and wealth in the EU. It will also protect, restore, and enlarge the EU's forests to combat climate change, reverse biodiversity loss and ensure resilient and multifunctional forest ecosystems by:

- promoting the sustainable forest bioeconomy for long-lived wood products
- ensuring sustainable use of wood-based resources for bioenergy
- promoting non-wood forest-based bioeconomy, including ecotourism
- developing skills and empowering people for sustainable forest-based bioeconomy
- protecting EU's last remaining primary and old-growth forests
- ensuring forest restoration and reinforced sustainable forest management for climate adaptation and forest resilience
- re- and afforestation of biodiverse forests, including by planting 3 billion additional trees by 2030
- providing financial incentives for forest owners and managers for improving the quantity and quality of EU forests

The Strategy also includes measures on monitoring, reporting and data collection, which includes better use of Copernicus projects and enhancing the forest information system for Europe. Currently,

⁵ Available at <https://www.rcc.int/docs/546/sofia-declaration-on-the-green-agenda-for-the-western-balkans-rn>



forest information on ecosystem services, forest value and conservation status are not uniform and complete, and the data infrastructure is not interoperable. It is expected that the Strategy will contribute to improve the situation, as well as contributing to forest planning. The latter is also considered an area subject to improvement and an essential tool to ensure sustainable forest management at EU and Member State levels. Furthermore, the Strategy identifies enabling factors, such as developing a strong research and innovation agenda to improve our knowledge on forests, implementing an inclusive and coherent EU forest governance framework, and stepping up implementation and enforcement of existing EU acquis.

Mr. Michael Klinkenberg, from the Clean Air Unit (DG ENV), presented the Zero Pollution Action Plan. The Plan was adopted in May 2021 to respond to the impacts of pollution, namely on human health and nature. The Plan seeks to complete the circle between the different strategies under the GD, for instance in terms of biodiversity, resource efficiency, and climate from the angle of pollution. The action plan aims to strengthen the EU green, digital and economic leadership, whilst creating a healthier, socially fairer Europe and planet. It provides a compass to mainstream pollution prevention in all relevant EU policies, to step up implementation of the relevant EU legislation and to identify possible gaps. The zero-pollution vision for 2050 is for air, water and soil pollution to be reduced to levels no longer considered harmful to health and natural ecosystems, that respect the boundaries with which our planet can cope, thereby creating a toxic-free environment. The Plan has a primary focus on prevention, followed by minimization and control, and finally remediation, thus setting a hierarchical approach to the problem. This is translated into key 2030 targets to speed up reducing pollution at source. These targets include:

- improving air quality to reduce the number of premature deaths caused by air pollution by more than 55%;
- improving water quality by reducing waste, plastic litter at sea (by 50%) and microplastics released into the environment (by 30%);
- improving soil quality by reducing nutrient losses and chemical pesticides' use by 50%;
- reducing by 25% the EU ecosystems where air pollution threatens biodiversity;
- reducing the share of people chronically disturbed by transport noise by 30%, and
- significantly reducing waste generation and by 50% residual municipal waste.

The Plan will impact a large number of sectors (energy, transport, industry, residential, etc.). In order to tackle that, the approach taken has been to set thematic priorities (health and well-being, and planetary boundaries) and to focus on zero pollution from production and consumption. The Plan identifies the following enabling factors: stricter enforcement, global cooperation, and increased cooperation across society. The Plan also includes a monitoring framework that will seek to integrate different data streams and fill gaps to achieve a more comprehensive reporting of pollution. The efforts will also provide the basis for modelling and forecasting progress towards the set targets. The EC also launched a zero-pollution platform to bring together multiple stakeholders from the different sectors the Plan has impact on.

Mr. Mauro Di Veroli, from the Western Balkans Regional Programmes, Economic Investment Plan Unit (DG NEAR), gave an update on the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA III) for the 2021-2027 period (14 billion euros). IPA III was adopted in September 2021, and it is retroactively in force since January 2021. The Regulation will be supplemented by a Delegated Act, detailing the scope, objectives, specific implementation rules, etc. As such, the legal framework is not entirely in place (expected by end of 2021) and until then disbursement of funds is not possible. The programming framework has some novelties. There are no longer country envelopes; the programming framework includes all beneficiaries, and it is divided in thematic priorities (windows), as follows: rule of law and fundamental rights, good governance, acquis alignment, Green Agenda, competitiveness and inclusiveness, cross border programmes. The principles of application will be: fair share (countries should receive a fair share of funds) assuring flexibility while respecting the beneficiaries; and the need to give more for more (the assistance will take into account the specific needs of the beneficiaries, relevance of proposals and beneficiary commitments and performance). Countries will be expected to prepare a strategic response to the IPA III programming framework, which will explain how countries intend to take on board IPA III priorities and the amount of funds they plan to draw from each window. The Commission will then carry



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out a relevance assessment of the proposed actions against the EU's policy framework, resulting in a short list of actions that will be developed into action documents by the countries. The Commission will subsequently carry out a maturity assessment (for readiness and relevance) of the action documents, based on which funds will be disbursed (subject to the final step of interservice consultations within the EC). The objective is to ensure funds are used immediately upon disbursement to finance the proposed actions. Currently, the 2021 programming already has the relevance and maturity assessments made. Interservice consultations will begin soon in order to allow a financing decision before the end of 2021. The 2022 programming process has already been launched, for which the EC completed the relevance assessments. The countries are expected to submit their action documents for the 2022 programming until mid-November 2021. Ms. Guillemette Vachey (DG NEAR) added that there is earmarked funding for multicountry projects, namely one devoted to green recovery. That project is expected to start in 2022 with a 10 million euros budget and a period of implementation of up to 38 months.

Mr. Jose Nicolas Dominguez Mendoza, from the Institution Building - TAIEX Twinning Unit (DG NEAR), gave an overview of the latest developments regarding EU TAIEX. He informed the meeting of recent staff changes and new lines of communication with TAIEX. Physical activities are still not possible with online events remaining the rule. However, with the progressive mutual recognition of COVID19 certificates, it is possible that events will return in physical format, or mixed format. Finally, TAIEX and EPPA will soon launch a pilot project to video record events for later publication, in the expectation of increasing the project impact and the sustainability and visibility of the outcomes. Mr. Jose Nicolas Dominguez Mendoza closed by noting the excellent cooperation between TAIEX and EPPA.

Mr. Mihail Dimovski, the EPPA Team Leader, presented the project's activities, main outcomes, proposals, and recommendations for future activities⁶. He started by highlighting that despite the limitations imposed by COVID19, the project team succeed to implement all scheduled activities and deliver the contracted outputs. During the reporting period, the project team organized 17 workshops with 596 participants (around 1000 since the beginning of the project). One of the key achievements was the onboarding of EU Member States expertise in the delivery of the project activities, giving the EPPA beneficiaries the opportunity to benefit first-hand from their implementation experience. Concretely, there were 94 EU Member States experts involved, 108 EU public institutions and 27 EU agencies, including JRC, EEA, etc. Additionally, this strong involvement also facilitated networking between the beneficiaries' staff and their counterparts in the EU Member States.

Regarding support to policy dialogues, there is a Ministerial meeting scheduled to take place to discuss the beneficiaries' initiatives related to the GD. In waste management, the project organized 2 workshops on circular economy, one for Turkey with a high-level character and more than 80 participants; the other for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia. Both policy and concrete examples of circular economy were discussed. Waste collection and recycling are key measures within a circular economy for the beneficiaries, with emphasis on extended producer responsibility.

Regarding water, work was done regarding marine litter issues with further activities being planned for the next period, including a regional agreement for the management of marine litter. Furthermore, work continued on identifying best practices to minimize microplastics in the marine environment, which will result in a report that can be used for policy adjustments. Likewise, a similar report on blue and green infrastructure in relation to marine protected areas is under preparation to offer the beneficiaries tools to ensure a good environmental status of marine areas. Already accomplished is a study on the proposal of marine protected areas in Montenegro, Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina. This is complemented by a second study on green infrastructure and ecological connectivity in the Western Balkans also successfully finalized. The studies are under a publishing process and will be released in their final versions soon. Both studies provide recommendations and conclusions that can be used to meaningful inform programming under IPA III.

In the area of nature, another flagship deliverable is the study on illegal logging and timber flows. Like the other studies, it will be released soon after the publication process is concluded. It analysis the subject matter at country and regional level, identifying drivers of illegal logging, timber trade problems

⁶ For details, please consult the project's 5th Interim Report.



and governance shortcomings (FLEGT and EUTR related) and respective recommendations for intervention. Additionally, the project team organized 2 workshops on timber management and the CITES regulations, that resulted in an informal platform for dialogue to facilitate cross border cooperation and implementation of the relevant legislation. Activities for the next reporting period include a workshop focused on the implementation of nature legislation and environmental assessment of infrastructure projects; 2 meetings of the regional working group on green infrastructure and ecological connectivity.

Progress monitoring of alignment of the acquis is in progress. The progress monitoring manual was updated, and the tables of concordance and implementation questionnaires were developed for each beneficiary. The project team formally communicated these materials to the beneficiaries and held a round of technical meetings with each one to steer the process and offer guidance and assistance when needed. The beneficiaries are now in the process of filling in the tables of concordance and implementation questionnaires. Mr. Mihail Dimovski expressed his gratitude to all stakeholders and beneficiaries for their engagement that made the EPPA project a success so far.

Ms. Mihaela Popovici, the EPPA Key Expert for water management, explained in more detail the project activities regarding the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), marine litter and the Barcelona Convention, that used a coordinated regional approach. She highlighted some of the key recommendations arising from the project activities:

- MSFD and marine litter management must be implemented in synergy with circular economy policies
- Future regional cooperation measures in the context of MSFD and marine litter should include plastic reduction initiatives from all sources, including land-based sources of pollution (including from landlocked countries)
- Define good environmental status and have more ambition in addressing the key pressures over marine environments (in the context of the Barcelona Convention)
- For the establishment of marine protected areas, the designated areas should have appropriate legal status, mechanisms for scientific monitoring, necessary governance structure and funding
- In general, streamlining and coordinating water management (surface waters and marine waters) with other sectoral policies

Mr. Christian Nagl, the EPPA Key Expert for air quality management, presented the project's air management activities and recommendations. The activities focused in the four air quality related directives (AAQD, IED, NECD, Sulphur Directive) through targeted capacity building. Since the last Steering Committee Meeting, 4 workshops took place (one for each directive). The main conclusions and recommendations from the events are that further capacities are needed in some countries, even if significant progress has been made. The priorities should include air quality monitoring and modelling, addressing domestic heating and power plants, reinforcing capacity for air emission inventories, inspection and permitting of industrial facilities, and intra-institutional coordination within the countries. Finally, related to the delivery of online workshops, some countries need to improve digital infrastructure and tools to ensure full benefit from the events. One workshop on the Sulphur Directive remains to be organized at the end of the year.

Mr. Ventzislav Vassilev, the EPPA Senior Expert for green infrastructure, gave more information on the study on green infrastructure and ecological connectivity. The study was completed in 2020, but it was revised in 2021 to respond to changes in the policy environment, as well as the announcement of IPA III. Consequentially, there was additional spatial analysis and identification of green corridors made between EPPA countries and neighbouring EU Member states; an improved link to the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030 and the WBIF/IPA III funding for EPPA countries; and updated conclusions and recommendations. North Macedonia already launched a follow up project to the study that seeks to protect and establish 2 of the identified corridors. Additionally, the regional working group on green corridors and ecological connectivity is following up on the study's recommendations in order to establish regional and bilateral cooperation around the cross-border corridors and green infrastructure.

The Steering Committee Meeting continued with statements made by the EPPA beneficiaries on their latest policy developments, priorities, and impact of EPPA activities. Ms. Azra Rogović-Grubić



(Bosnia and Herzegovina) started by noting the importance of the Commission's services updates on policy developments related with the GD and the Green Agenda as a tool for the countries to be informed and prepared for future, related challenges. Ms. Azra Rogović-Grubić stated the importance of agro-forestry policy in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the context of climate change and expressed her gratitude regarding the information provided regarding IPA III, for which Bosnia and Herzegovina has one project proposal pending. Bosnia and Herzegovina engaged actively in the project activities, despite the limitations of taking place online. Bosnia and Herzegovina highlighted the technical assistance received from EPPA to improve bylaws related to air quality management, the input of Mr. Christian Nagl to a national symposium on air quality, and the EPPA study on new marine protected areas (MPA) that provided the country a basis to designate its first MPA. Additionally, the support given regarding circular economy and the CITES regulations was essential for Bosnia and Herzegovina. The country welcomes the progress monitoring exercise but is running into delays because of its administrative set-up and current political climate.

Mr. Muhamet Malsiu (Kosovo*) confirmed the beneficiary's commitment to the EU approximation process but is facing difficulties and delays both because of the pandemic and political uncertainty. Nevertheless, the competent services have been active. A waste strategy and action plan, with aspects of circular economy, was adopted recently. In addition, Kosovo* is also reviewing the Environment and Sustainable Strategy, which includes chapters on air quality and biodiversity, and in which Kosovo* will integrate at least some of the new policy aspects brought to play by the GD and the Green Agenda. The Ministry is also reviewing the laws on air protection, waste management, nature protection, and horizontal legislation. Mr. Muhamet Malsiu recognized the technical support provided by EPPA to tackle these complex tasks and welcomes future cooperation with the EU.

Ms. Vesna Indova Tochko (North Macedonia) affirmed the country's commitment to continue the harmonization process with the EU acquis. The sectoral strategies include numerous measures to build the national capacity to implement the acquis together with significant investments in new infrastructure. IPA III is envisaged to play a key role in providing funds for further work, coupled with state funds and funds from other international donors. In 2021, 7 new laws were adopted: declaring the Šar Mountains a protected area, on ambient air quality, on batteries and battery waste, on management of electronic and electric equipment, on extended producer responsibility, on waste management and on special waste streams. Others are still under preparation: law on environmental inspection, law on nature, law on industrial emissions and law on climate action. The current alignment efforts and the setting of sectoral priorities are already considering the requirements of the GD and the Green Agenda, namely reduction of greenhouse gases, reduction of air, soil and water pollution, circular economy, biodiversity, and sustainable food production. Furthermore, North Macedonia also adopted a long-term strategy for climate action, as well as revised the national contribution to the Paris agreement. Ms. Vesna Indova Tochko listed current projects improving the infrastructure and capacities for waste, sewage, and air monitoring.

Ms. Sandra Dokic (Serbia) emphasized the importance of the Green Agenda for its policy making. In this sense, it started the preparation of a strategic document for its implementation in the country, including the establishment of a working group involving 18 institutions. The group has been discussing the RCC produced Action Plan. Recent progress in alignment includes a new law on climate change (bylaws under preparation), a law on low carbon development is under preparation. IPA projects have been supporting the developing integrated energy and carbon plan to harmonize all relevant strategic document and plans. Climate change awareness is being fostered by public climate talks, which resulted in the formulation of a carbon reduction target above 30%, when compared to 1990 emissions. In circular economy, Serbia developed a road map to connect all sectoral actors involved in the transition. A Plan for Circular Economy, for the next 3 years, is also under development. In biodiversity, Serbia amended the law on nature protection, as well as an action plan until 2023. New restrictions were introduced on mineral exploration and exploitation in protected areas, in light of the establishment of a Natura 2000 network. In terms of pollution, Serbia is developing an air protection programme and action plan, which includes monitoring, prevention, and control measures. The waste management plan is in a public hearing process to be subsequently adopted by the end of the year. There are also plans to amend the



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waste management law, but the adoption might occur only in 2022. The state budget revision in April 2021 increased the Ministry of Environmental Protection's budget by 50%, an important measure to finance the Green Agenda, which will include funds to support boiler substitution in public institutions and households.

Mr. Bülent Üncü (Turkey) updated the meeting on environmental and climate developments in Turkey. The country recently announced that the Paris Agreement will be submitted to parliament for ratification, which will serve as a basis for the Ministry to work on climate issues. The second major development was the beginning of a high-level dialogue mechanism with the EU to discuss policy issues arising from the Green Deal, including carbon pricing, and a decarbonization road map. Turkey also prepared a Green Action Plan for the entire country, including the border carbon adjustment objectives, green finance, energy supply, sustainable mobility, sustainable agriculture, climate change and awareness raising activities regarding the GD. It includes 81 concrete actions. A climate change law is under preparation, as well as the updated of the climate change and adaptation plan. At local level, municipalities are preparing climate change action plans. Residential areas are also subject to a policy effort to become climate sensitive and energy efficient. Turkey is also performing well in renewable energy, with a high share of renewables in the national energy mix. A circular economy action plan is also under preparation, building on a growing recovery rate of recyclable waste and with the perspective to reach 60% by 2035. Food security and water supply are becoming priorities, which will be reflected in future policy. River basin management plans will be completed for all basins by 2025. The reuse of treated wastewater will also increase to 5% (2023) and 15% (2030). In terms of biodiversity, protected areas cover 11% of Turkey, but the goal is to reach 17% with the goal of also ensuring ecological connectivity between the protected areas. Regarding the EPPA project, the exchange of information promoted by the project regarding policy and practices has been of value to Turkey, feeding Turkey's studies and actions. Mr. Bülent Üncü highlighted the value of the national circular economy workshop organized by EPPA (which contributed to the relevant Turkish action plan), as well as the capacity building for invasive alien species. He also expressed expectation that the cross-border networks of experts and institutions established by the project will be maintained even after the closure of the project.

Ms. Madalina Ivanica expressed the commitment of the European Commission to continue assisting the beneficiaries. She also highlighted the role of EPPA in that regard. She then continued the meeting with 2 points requiring the decision of the EPPA project steering committee: the approval of the calendar of activities and the endorsement of an addendum to the project contract to extend its implementation period (in order to use budgetary savings of 153 000 euros to implement more activities). The EPPA project team proposed two new strands of work: Green Agenda implementation, in particular the establishment of a network to deal with and manage marine litter; and Green Infrastructure, as a follow up to help implement some of the EPPA study's recommendations. This work can be continued after the closure of EPPA by other regional stakeholders like the RCC.

The Steering Committee approved the calendar of events and the addendum by unanimity, safeguarding the proposal by Ms. Madalina Ivanica by which the beneficiaries could still provide feedback by October 5, 2021. Additionally, and given that the green infrastructure proposal refers only to the Western Balkans, Ms. Madalina Ivanica invited Turkey to submit a request for other activities by October 5, 2021, where Turkey could be included. These can also be bilateral activities. The objective is to ensure a fair share of new actions among all beneficiaries.

Ms. Madalina Ivanica closed the meeting by thanking the active engagement of all project stakeholders, namely the countries themselves, project partners, experts, and the project team.

Steering Committee outputs

The Steering Committee main outputs were:

- Briefing on the EPPA project impacts, key outcomes, and conclusions so far, as well as identified recommendations for further actions in each of the project's components;
- Identification and discussion of beneficiaries' priorities considering the project's outcomes so far;



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- Discussion and approval of the EPPA project calendar and activities to be implemented in the project's next semester;
- Discussion and approval of the EPPA project amendment to include new activities over an extra 7 months of implementation;
- Information provided on the latest EU policy and legislative developments in the environmental field, which hold special relevance for the beneficiaries, including those related to the EU Green Deal and the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans;
- Information provided on the opportunities for technical assistance under the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA III) for the 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework period.

Endnotes

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

Annexes

Annex 1: Agenda (provided as a separate document)

Annex 2: List of Participants (provided as a separate document)

Annex 3: Presentations (provided as separate documents)



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