



Strategic Plan 2020-2024

Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and
Enlargement Negotiations - DG NEAR

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INTRODUCTION

The European Union's future is closely tied to the future of its neighbours and its partners. A stable, secure and prosperous region around our Union is of paramount importance. By managing the EU's Enlargement and Neighbourhood policies in accordance with the mission letter issued by the Commission President to the Commissioner in charge of Neighbourhood and Enlargement¹, DG NEAR plays an essential role in implementing the Von Der Leyen Commission priority of making Europe stronger in the world. DG NEAR also significantly contributes to delivering on the following Commission priorities:

- a European Green Deal,
- a Europe fit for the digital age
- an economy that works for people, and
- promoting our European way of life.

DG NEAR's strategic plan for 2020-2024 therefore addresses the above-mentioned general objectives of the Commission, articulating these around nine specific objectives which highlight DG NEAR's main policy initiatives and planned interventions.

To deliver on its mandate, DG NEAR will organise and mobilise its human, financial and digital resources accordingly, and, thereby, support the Commission's target on its way to a modern digital public administration with due account taken of the environmental impact of its activities, and help the Commission become a climate neutral institution by 2030.

In the next years, DG NEAR will continue to work shoulder-to-shoulder with neighbouring countries and partners. It will seek to reaffirm the European perspective of the countries of the Western Balkans, and to ensure a sustainable basis for improved relations with Turkey. DG NEAR will strive to make the accession process more effective, more dynamic, more predictable and more credible, and subject to stronger political steering. DG NEAR will maintain its strong focus on the fundamentals of the rule of law, economic development, as well as democratic institutions and public administration reforms.

For the European Neighbourhood, the common goals of stabilising neighbourhood countries in political, socio-economic and security terms remains, as well as support to the rule of law and human rights. DG NEAR will bring the Eastern Partnership forward through intensified engagement with Eastern European neighbours, notably on the basis of the Eastern Partnership Joint Communication adopted on 18 March 2020² and of the post-2020 deliverables due to be agreed at the March 2021 Eastern Partnership Summit, and continue to develop bilateral and regional relations with Southern Mediterranean neighbours, cooperating on common challenges and opportunities, including through regional co-operation.

¹https://ec.europa.eu/commission/commissioners/sites/comm-cwt2019/files/commissioner_mission_letters/president-elect_von_der_leyens_mission_letter_to_oliver_varhelyi.pdf

² JOIN(2020) 7 final of 18 March 2020

EU relations with individual partner countries are framed by political and economic bilateral agreements and priorities, which will be reviewed and updated as appropriate by DG NEAR, in close cooperation with the European External Action Service. To support their implementation, DG NEAR manages a broad range of financial and technical assistance in support of essential reforms, primarily through the Instrument for Pre-Accession, the European Neighbourhood Instrument and, as of 2021, the Neighbourhood and Development Cooperation Instrument. They are aligned with the interests and principles set out in the Global Strategy for the foreign and security policy of the EU. DG NEAR programmes and policies contribute to deliver the objectives of the 2017 European Consensus on Development, the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals, as well as the Paris Agreement on climate change.

In line with the European Commission's Communication "Europe's moment: Repair and Prepare for the Next Generation"³ and the Joint Communication on the Global EU Response to Covid-19⁴, this strategic plan integrates DG NEAR's response to the unfolding COVID-19 crisis, which is addressing both short-term emergency needs and will support longer-term structural impacts on partner countries' societies and economies. Following the 'Team Europe' approach set out in the Communication, DG NEAR will work closely with other services, with EU Member States and financial institutions, in particular, the European Investment Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. More broadly, DG NEAR will further engage with international and regional organisations, the private sector, as well as local and international civil society.

³ COM(2020) 456 final of 27 May 2020

⁴ JOIN(2020) 11 final of 8 April 2020

PART 1. Delivering on the Commission's priorities

A. Mission statement

The mission of DG NEAR is to take forward the EU's Neighbourhood and Enlargement policies. It primarily serves the Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, Olivér Várhelyi and, to a lesser degree, the High Representative/Vice-President, the President of the Commission and other Commissioners where appropriate. DG NEAR works closely with the European External Action Service and the Commission services in charge of thematic priorities. The DG has approximately 1,791 staff members in Brussels and in the EU Delegations in the partner countries.

In the Neighbourhood, the DG is responsible for co-ordinating across the Commission the implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), working closely with the European External Action Service. Through its implementation of financial assistance in Europe's eastern and southern neighbourhood, DG NEAR supports key reforms and democratic consolidation, and contributes to strengthening stability and security around Europe and fostering political and economic reforms. DG NEAR helps to promote EU values, policies and interests in the region, and contributes to developing the special relationship of the EU with its neighbouring countries.

In the Enlargement field, DG NEAR assists those countries with the prospect of joining the EU in their efforts to meet the EU membership criteria, as defined by the Treaty on European Union and the European Council. DG NEAR closely monitors the progress of enlargement countries towards the EU and supports accession negotiations as required by the Council. The DG manages the bilateral relations of the Union with candidate countries and potential candidates on their path to the EU, frontloading reforms on rule of law, economic governance and public administration reform. Concerning the Western Balkans, the DG develops and implements the stabilisation and association policy of the European Union as defined by the European Council.

B. Operating context

Article 8 of the Treaty on European Union provides the **legal framework** guiding the work on the neighbourhood policy, noting in particular that “*The Union shall develop a special relationship with neighbouring countries, aiming to establish an area of prosperity and good neighbourliness, founded on the values of the Union and characterised by close and peaceful relations based on cooperation*”. Furthermore, Article 49 TEU provides the legal framework guiding the work on the enlargement policy, noting in particular that “*Any European State which respects the values referred to in Article 2 and is committed to promoting them may apply to become a member of the Union*”. The legal acts which guide the DG’s financial assistance for both policy areas are provided through articles 209 and 212 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

All decisions on **enlargement policy** are based on unanimity amongst EU member states. DG NEAR, on behalf of the Commission, supports the preparation of the enlargement countries for accession to the EU, with the overall objective of promoting stability and prosperity in Europe. DG NEAR coordinates accession negotiations and the Stabilisation and Association process with Western Balkans countries, notably by promoting and supporting alignment of their national legislation and systems with EU laws and standards (the *acquis*). DG NEAR manages the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA II), by which the EU supports reforms throughout the accession process with financial and technical assistance. For the period 2014-2020 IPA II had a budget of € 11.7 billion; IPA III, its successor for the period 2021-2027, has a proposed budget of € 12.9 billion in constant 2018 prices.

DG NEAR coordinates the implementation of the **European Neighbourhood Policy** (ENP) and contributes to developing and implementing with Neighbourhood countries partnerships that are more effective, based on EU priorities and tailor-made to take into account the different ambitions, interests and capacities of partner countries. To this effect, DG NEAR leads on the implementation of the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI), which provides the bulk of EU funding to 16 ENP partner countries to support their reform efforts, with a budget of € 15.4 billion for 2014-2020. It will be succeeded in 2021 by the Neighbourhood and Development Cooperation Instrument (NDICI), a single instrument with worldwide coverage, with a proposed overall budget of € 86 billion (€ 17.2 billion for the neighbourhood (ENP) in constant 2018 prices according to the July 2020 European Council conclusions – the final figure is still to be negotiated).

Assistance is implemented through a broad range of **management modes** which take into account the different levels of preparedness of the beneficiary countries: direct management, both centralised (in Brussels) and decentralised to EU Delegations under the supervision of DG NEAR; indirect management, by beneficiary countries and by entrusted entities, notably International Organisations and Financial Institutions as well as Member State development assistance agencies. The DG also manages the TAIEX and Twinning instruments, to support institutional capacity building in partner countries.

The **main stakeholders** of the DG are the EEAS, the RELEX family of DGs (DEVCO, FPI, ECHO, TRADE) as well as more broadly "internal" DGs such as ECFIN, ENER, JUST, HOME, REGIO and EAC. The main stakeholders on implementing the policies include partner

countries, EU Member States and other European institutions, international and regional organisations, international financial institutions, the private sector, as well as local and international civil society organisations.

C. Strategy

General objective 4: A stronger Europe in the World

DG NEAR intends to make its main contribution to the objective of making Europe stronger in the world by taking forward the enlargement and neighbourhood policies, and addressing the unprecedented challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic in partner countries.

The firm, merit-based prospect of EU membership for the Western Balkans is in the Union's very own political, security and economic interest. In times of increasing global challenges and divisions, it remains more than ever a geostrategic investment in a stable, strong and united Europe. A credible accession perspective is the key incentive and driver of transformation in the region and thus enhances our collective security and prosperity. It is a key tool to promote democracy, rule of law and the respect for fundamental rights, which are also the main engines of economic integration and the essential anchor for fostering regional reconciliation and stability. Maintaining and enhancing this policy is thus indispensable for the EU's credibility, for the EU's success and for the EU's influence in the region and beyond - especially at times of heightened geopolitical competition.

The ENP aims to build more tailor-made and effective partnerships between the EU and its neighbours, based on mutual interests. Through the ENP, the EU has greater leverage to achieve its common goals of stabilising neighbourhood countries in political, socio-economic and security terms. Strengthening the state and societal resilience of EU neighbours is a key priority in the face of threats and pressures they are experiencing, including challenges associated with migration and mobility. Key principles of the ENP are differentiation among partner countries, flexibility, joint ownership, greater involvement of the EU Member States, and shared responsibility. Through the ENP, the EU offers partner countries potential greater access to the EU's market and regulatory framework, standards and internal agencies and programmes.

To contribute to **general objective 4: A Stronger Europe in the world**, DG NEAR will pursue the following five **specific objectives**:

Western Balkans and Turkey:

- 4.1. The Western Balkans are brought closer to the EU and their economic development is strengthened, based on a credible, merit-based accession perspective and application of the revised enlargement methodology.
- 4.2. Regional cooperation and neighbourly relations in the Western Balkans are improved.
- 4.3. A sustainable basis for improved relations with Turkey is ensured.

Neighbourhood policy:

- 4.4. Take the Eastern Partnership to the next level.

4.5. Stability, resilience, economic development and regional integration are reinforced through our cooperation and policy dialogue in the Southern Neighbourhood.

DG NEAR will boost **external and strategic communication efforts** with a view to (1) raising awareness of the positive results and the impact of EU policies and support regarding stability, security, socio-economic benefits; (2) increasing interactions with the wider public and specific target groups about DG NEAR policies, and (3) counteracting disinformation and false narratives about the EU through strategic communication by highlighting the facts, values and benefits the EU brings.

More specifically, strategic communication will apply storytelling techniques to convey the results and impact of EU policies and cooperation, based on facts and tailored information that match the needs of citizens. It will facilitate informed dialogue, and aims to intensify interactions with different audiences through media, social media, study visits, events, citizens' dialogues, press trips, workshops and seminars. Key messages will include universal values, fostering of democratic and socio-economic transformation, good neighbourly relations and investment in social and human development. Special attention will be given to key thematic priorities under the Von Der Leyen Commission's objectives, including the European Green Deal, the Digital transformation, and the economy, notably the economic recovery after the coronavirus pandemic.

As regards the Covid-19 pandemic, DG NEAR's communication activities and outreach will be in the form of dedicated press releases, factsheets, social media campaigns and possible future outreach events to media and citizens. In addition, in light of the Global response and the 'Team Europe' support, DG NEAR will hook up to high level meetings and events and contribute to corporate actions, including the corporate Recovery campaign to which it has contributed several stories. Particular focus will be on ensuring EU visibility and branding of all actions.

In order to achieve these objectives in alignment with actions at corporate and local level (EU Delegations/offices), DG NEAR manages regional communication programmes for the Neighbourhood and Western Balkan regions. Important features include regional and thematic integrated communication campaigns, events and engaging with networks like the Young European Ambassadors and multipliers from the regions. EU visibility and branding will play an equally important role in the work. Annual opinion polls as well as ad-hoc focus groups will continue to be held in the Enlargement and Neighbourhood regions.

Monitoring and evaluation activities provide the Commission with hard evidence about how actions are implemented, to improve their design, efficiency and accountability. This Strategic Plan foresees strategic and complex evaluations, which assess EU support, over a significant time period, looking at specific sectors/themes, country support, aid modalities, financial instruments. Evaluations planned for the next five years are listed under their relevant specific objectives. In addition, DG NEAR planned the strategic evaluations below:

- TAIEX, 2020 – instrument;
- Cooperation with UN, 2021 – thematic;
- Ex-post evaluation of IPA I, 2021 – programme;
- Ex-post evaluation of ENPI, 2021 – programme;

- Blending instruments, 2022 – instrument;
- Connectivity, transport and energy, 2023 – thematic;
- Mid-term evaluation of IPA III , 2024 – instrument;
- Cooperation with the Council of Europe, 2024 – thematic.

Impact indicators selected under this objective aim at showing the long term effects of the Commission’s interventions in Enlargement and Neighbourhood countries. In the Enlargement field, they will measure the increase in readiness of countries to join the EU in terms of the political and economic criteria. In the Neighbourhood, they will measure progress in fundamental areas of good governance, rule of law and control of corruption.

Theme 1: Western Balkans and Turkey

Specific objective 4.1:

The Western Balkans are brought closer to the EU, and their economic development is strengthened, based on a credible, merit-based accession perspective and application of the revised enlargement methodology.

The EU perspective of the Western Balkan region has helped to overcome historic divisions and set in motion substantial political and economic reforms. At the same time, external influence in the region has been growing significantly. It is imperative that we sustain and accelerate progress in the next five years, through a merit-based assessment of each candidate country and potential candidate, keeping a credible perspective of future accession. The Commission will support the on-going accession negotiations with Montenegro and Serbia and the launch of accession negotiations with North Macedonia and Albania following the Council’s decision in March 2020 to open negotiations with these two countries. The Commission will also monitor the follow up that Bosnia and Herzegovina will give to the priorities stemming from the Commission opinion on the country’s application for EU membership and the implementation of the reform agenda in Kosovo*.

In the period 2020-2024, DG NEAR will work to support the countries in speeding up structural and institutional reforms, and focus its efforts on ensuring that countries prioritise reforms in the fundamental areas of rule of law, including judicial reform and the fight against corruption and organised crime, fundamental rights, economic development and the functioning of democratic institutions and public administration reform.

The Covid-19 pandemic will leave a heavy mark on the economies of the Western Balkans, which may take years to recover. It will therefore call for redoubling of efforts to make the region an attractive investment destination, in supporting the development of small and medium-size enterprises and improving the overall business climate. The EU’s financial and technical assistance will accompany the beneficiaries in this endeavour.

Finally, the Covid-19 crisis has also demonstrated that the health systems in the region need to further develop their resilience to shocks and develop their technical capacities.

* 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.

Closer coordination with the EU mechanisms in this respect will be encouraged, as detailed under Specific Objective 3 below.

The DG will aim at achieving this specific objective through the following **interventions** for the period 2020-2024:

- Coordinating the accession process including accession negotiations within the Commission and steering the enlargement countries through the process;
- Following up on the implementation of the stabilisation and association agreements in place with the countries of the Western Balkans, which bring these countries closer to EU norms, standards and rules;
- Issuing of annual reports, which provide a detailed overview of progress achieved by the enlargement countries as to their readiness for EU membership and guidance on reforms ahead;
- Coordinating the Economic Reform Programmes exercise through providing economic policy guidance to the partners;
- Implementation of the planned economic and investment plan for the Western Balkans (autumn 2020)
- Providing support under the Instrument for pre-accession Assistance (IPA) including technical assistance through the Technical Assistance and Information Exchange instrument (TAIEX)

In 2019, opinion polls showed that a majority of citizens in the Western Balkans had an overall positive perception of the EU. However, there are significant variations, from 39.3% with a positive attitude in Serbia (and 29.7% with a negative attitude) to 88% positive attitude in Albania. **External communication activities** in the Western Balkans accompanying the implementation of the enlargement policy will aim to improve the approval rating and positive perceptions of the EU in the Western Balkans.

The objectives of the communication activities in the Western Balkans region are to promote and increase understanding of the enlargement policy amongst citizens and stakeholders; to raise awareness of results and impact of EU cooperation, policies and funding and to counter disinformation and malign narratives.

This will be achieved through various activities implemented by DG NEAR, and at local level by the Delegations/Office: integrated communication campaigns (regional, local, thematic), events (including big events like Media Days, Europe Day celebrations, or award ceremonies), presence at conferences, publications and audio-visual material, traditional and social media (facts, positive communication through story telling), use of networks to promote EU policies and values (Young European Ambassadors), media relations (press trips, press briefings), and cooperation with think tanks, and other stakeholders.

The majority of activities, including through the integrated regional programme, will take place in and for the Western Balkans, and will seek to tie in with larger events and high-level meetings. However, as the EU itself also needs to ensure that it will be ready to welcome new Member States once they have met the set conditions, there is a need to also promote the EU enlargement policy in the Member States, showcase EU-Western Balkan cooperation, and raise awareness of the EU citizens and stakeholders. In this respect, steps

and progress in the enlargement process will be explained and promoted. The Eurobarometer results will provide information on the percentage of EU citizens supporting further enlargement (46% in August 2019).

Under this specific objective, DG NEAR has planned the following **strategic evaluations** in the upcoming period:

- Sector budget support in IPA beneficiaries, 2020 - thematic;
- Albania, in 2020 - geographic;
- North Macedonia, 2022 - geographic;
- Evaluation of EU's cooperation with Kosovo, 2023 - geographic;
- Country evaluation Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2024 – geographic.

Specific objective 4.2:

Regional cooperation and neighbourly relations in the Western Balkans are improved.

Promoting regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations is one of the cornerstones of the EU's policy approach in the Western Balkans and an essential element of the stabilisation and association process and of the enlargement process. These are an integral part of each of the six Stabilisation and Association Agreements. Reconciliation, resolving bilateral disputes and overcoming the legacy of the past are key for firmly anchoring peace and stability in the region and avoiding importing conflicts into the EU

In the midst of the crisis following the COVID-19 pandemic, regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations are even more essential, not least for the socio-economic recovery in the region. Deepening of economic integration, people to people contacts, and infrastructure connectivity can bring the region together, support the post-pandemic recovery and contribute to improving citizens' lives, creating a conducive environment to overcoming the legacy of the past.

Consolidating a market of 18 million people will boost economic recovery, growth and create opportunities for citizens and business alike. Building on the achievements of the first phase of the Regional Economic Area, DG NEAR will continue to work on connecting the economies of the Western Balkans more effectively within the region itself, and with the EU, in order to help the region make the most of its economic potential and align itself with EU standards. The focus will be on improving socio-economic performance, business and investment friendliness to allow economies to recover in a green and inclusive manner by strengthening regional economic cooperation, enhancing intra-regional trade, attracting more investment, ensuring closer integration of value chains and thereby maximising the growth potential of the region (*Connecting economies*).

Transport, energy and digital connectivity within the region and between the region and the EU will continue to play a key part of our financial assistance and engagement with the Western Balkans. DG NEAR will focus on reinforcing infrastructure links within the region by ensuring completion of the 2015 connectivity pledge and progress to the next phase of the Connectivity agenda under the Western Balkans Investment Framework. Support will be provided through the Energy Community and the Transport Community Treaties, in order to facilitate the creation of a regional electricity market, opening of the energy market,

finalisation of border crossing agreements and implementation of Connectivity Reform Measures (*Connecting infrastructure*).

DG NEAR will support efforts towards building good neighbourly relations and the resolution of bilateral disputes. The focus will be on resolving past impediments by strengthening regional co-operation on “legacy issues”, notably war crimes, and establishing an accurate record of past crimes at regional level. People to people exchanges will be further strengthened by increasing youth mobility primarily through Erasmus+ and through initiatives such as the Regional Youth Cooperation Council as well as strengthening cooperation in areas of mutual interest such as security cooperation (*Connecting people*)

DG NEAR will support the efforts of the EU Special Representative Lajcak with regard to the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue. North Macedonia has played a constructive role in regional cooperation and has strengthened good neighbourly relations. The Prespa agreement was a major breakthrough. This, together with the Treaty on Good Neighbourly Relations with Bulgaria, needs to continue to be implemented in good faith by all sides. DG NEAR will support North Macedonia in this endeavour.

DG NEAR aims to support this specific objective through the following main **interventions**:

- Supporting politically and financially inclusive regional cooperation in the Western Balkans building on commitments already taken and making full use of existing regional structures, also through financial support to key regional organisations;
- Support region-led deepening of regional inclusive economic integration under the current MAP-Regional Economic Area (REA) ending in 2020 and the new phase of the REA 2021-2024;
- Completing in 2020 the 2015 connectivity pledge, advancing its implementation and preparing a new package for the MFF 2021-27 opening up the Western Balkans Investment Framework (WBIF) to new areas such as green (smart) cities, smart energy connections (incl. smart grids), greener transport;
- Supporting enhanced political ownership of regional cooperation including contributing to the successful organisation of regular EU-Western Balkan summits;
- Provide financial assistance to initiatives strengthening regional co-operation to overcome the legacy of the past, promoting a positive agenda of cooperation in areas of common interest and and people to people exchanges (with a focus on youth exchanges) in various areas including culture;
- Supporting efforts in addressing bilateral disputes as well as supporting the implementation of bilateral agreements.

Under this objective, **external communication activities** will focus on economic cooperation and development, connectivity (including digital transformation), alignment of partner countries with the EU climate goals and actions, media and civil society support, and good neighbourly relations/cooperation. The communication activities will be tailored to specific needs, and will seek to tie in with larger events, conferences and high-level meetings, where this can be beneficial. Activities will include events, publications and audio-visual material, media relations, campaigns and social media. As a strong contributor to economic recovery of the Western Balkans after the coronavirus pandemic, the planned

economic and investment plan for the Western Balkans (autumn 2020) will also be accompanied by dedicated communication activities.

One **strategic evaluation** is foreseen under this specific objective: the final evaluation of IPA-IPA Cross-border cooperation (CBC) programmes for the period 2014-2020 is planned to start in 2024.

Specific objective 4.3:

A sustainable basis for improved relations with Turkey is ensured.

Turkey remains a key partner for the EU, with common challenges and interests such as related to security, migration, economy and trade. However, relations with Turkey have been affected by a steady and serious decline in democratic standards in Turkey and a deterioration in bilateral relations between Turkey and some EU Member States, notably accelerated following the coup attempt of 15 July 2016. The EU continues to have serious concerns on persistent negative developments in the fundamental areas of the accession process, namely democracy, the rule of law, fundamental rights, the judiciary, public administration reform and economic governance. As Turkey continues to move away from the EU, its accession negotiations have effectively come to a standstill, and no further chapters can be considered for opening or closing, and no further work towards the modernisation of the EU-Turkey Customs Union is foreseen since 2018. The implementation of a number of elements of the March 2016 EU-Turkey Statement has been halted.

Turkish foreign policy has been increasingly at odds with the EU Common and Foreign Security Policy. In light of Turkey's unauthorised drilling activities in the Eastern Mediterranean, the Council has gradually taken a number of restrictive decisions, ranging from the suspension of high-level dialogues, suspension of meetings of the EU-Turkey Association Council, and further reduction in financial support under IPA (in total € 1.3 billion since 2017) in July 2019 to the listing of two individuals under the framework regime for restrictive measures in February 2020.

In the period 2020-2024, DG NEAR will focus on sustaining engagement with Turkey, including at the highest political level, within the political margins defined by the Council in all areas of joint interest. The engagement with Turkey will continue within the framework of the EU-Turkey Association Agreement and the EU-Turkey Customs Union. DG NEAR will support DG TRADE in enhancing trade relations, in particular in following discussions by Member States on the mandate for and prospects of initiating negotiations on the modernisation of the EU-Turkey Customs Union, when political conditions are ripe. DG NEAR will support DG ECFIN in the policy dialogue on economic governance, which is crucial for developing a stable basis for trade and economy relations. On relations with Turkey, DG NEAR will work closely with the EEAS.

Since all major stands of the engagement form part of the EU-Turkey Statement of 18 March 2016, DG NEAR will contribute to its monitoring and will lead on the implementation of the EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey. DG NEAR will also steer the discussions on the future needs of the refugees in Turkey, and the appropriate EU response. This will ensure the protection of those in need but also strengthen the resilience of the host communities

in Turkey, and limit irregular arrivals from Turkey to the EU, which will have a direct impact on the overall state of relations.

DG NEAR will help Turkey address the long-term effects of the Covid-19 crisis on its society and economy, through a policy dialogue on economic governance and related issues. DG NEAR will also continue to promote the rule of law and fundamental rights as the extraordinary measures required to fight the pandemic must not lead to further backtracking in these key areas. This is crucial as the developments in these fields have a tangible impact on the overall engagement with the country. Implementation of the Facility for Refugees and any possible further EU refugee support would contribute to the strengthening of the resilience of refugees and host communities in Turkey.

Main **interventions** and **policy outputs** for the period 2020-2024:

- Continuous implementation of the EU-Turkey Association Agreement, notably in the framework of the Association Committee and sectoral sub-committees.
- Follow-up on the implementation of the EU-Turkey Customs Union, including in the framework of Customs Union Joint Committee meetings; if conditions allow, contribution to launching the modernisation of the Customs Union.
- Implementation of the Facility for Refugees in Turkey and of any possible further EU support to refugees and host communities in Turkey.
- Continuous monitoring of developments and providing policy recommendations on democracy, rule of law, judiciary, security, fundamental rights and freedoms, through annual reports as well as policy dialogue with Turkey on reform process.
- Support through the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance, in line with the EU's political priorities.

With a need to sustain and improve the relations with Turkey, the focus of **external communication activities** in and on Turkey will focus on issues of common interest, and highlight the positive results and impact of EU-Turkey cooperation and the support to refugees through the EU Facility for refugees in Turkey. DG NEAR will also continue to promote EU values, the rule of law and fundamental rights and freedoms, inter alia through cooperation with media actors and civil society. Communication activities will be adjusted to match the policy needs and specific objectives and could include events, publications, networks, audio-visual material, media relations, and social media campaigns. Specific communication activities will be planned for the communication of the results and impact of the projects under the EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey.

With regard to **strategic evaluations**, a country evaluation of EU's cooperation with Turkey is planned to start in 2023.

Theme 2: Neighbourhood policy

Specific objective 4.4:

Take the Eastern Partnership to the next level.

Launched in 2009, the Eastern Partnership is a joint initiative of the European Union, its Member States and their Eastern European partners Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, and Ukraine. It is a strategic and ambitious partnership based on

common values, mutual interests and commitments as well as shared ownership and responsibility. It aims to strengthen and deepen the relations between the EU, its Member States and partner countries.

Over the past 10 years, the Eastern Partnership has been instrumental in bringing the EU and partner countries closer together. It will continue to aim at building a common area of democracy, prosperity, stability and increased cooperation. Building on these achievements, the joint communication “Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020: Reinforcing Resilience – an Eastern Partnership that delivers for all” adopted on 18 March 2020 outlines how the EU will work together with Eastern partner countries to tackle common challenges and strengthen their resilience. This will be done through investments in i) strengthening economic resilience, interconnectivity and reducing inequalities, ii) supporting rule of law, tackling corruption and strengthening security, iii) addressing health, environmental and climate challenges and supporting the green transition, iv) digital transformation, and v) developing resilient, fair and inclusive societies through support to civil society, public administration reform, youth, media and human rights. Gender equality will be mainstreamed into all policy initiatives and programmes.

In particular, DG NEAR will work together with EU Member States and partner countries on the following interventions and policy outputs:

- Endorsement of the post-2020 deliverables at the March 2021 Eastern Partnership Summit. The joint communication sets out the policy and its key five policy objectives for the next five years. Recommendations outlined in this communication will be the basis for the development of a new concrete reform agenda (“deliverables”) for the post-2020 Eastern Partnership. Jointly shaping the future deliverables with partner countries, member states and line DGs is foreseen in the second half of 2020. Endorsement by partner countries is planned for the Eastern Partnership Summit to be held in early 2021.
- Implementation and regular monitoring of the post-2020 reform agenda (new generation of deliverables). Similar to the 20 Deliverables for 2020 agenda, the implementation of the post-2020 deliverables will be regularly monitored to ensure that concrete results for citizens on the ground will be delivered.
- Renewal of the Association Agendas for Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA) countries, or reconfirmation of those still valid, and where applicable partnership priorities or equivalent documents with the other three eastern partners.

Political agreements underpin the relationship between the EU and the partner countries. In addition to the joint communication and the post-2020 deliverables, the Association Agendas (AA) and partnership priorities provide the short term reform priorities. The momentum on implementing the AA/DCFTA with the three DCFTA countries, as a basis for furthering reform, supporting economic development and building resilience will be key.

The Covid-19 pandemic calls for quick and deep reaction of the EU and, as part of the Team Europe approach, close to € 1 billion of support for the Eastern Partnership (EaP) has been directed towards an EU response, to address the socio-economic impact of the pandemic, through support to SMEs as well as mitigating the impact of the pandemic for the most vulnerable groups.

Annual opinion polls held in the region show that more than half of the citizens in the Eastern Neighbourhood have a positive image of the EU and that the percentage has been growing over the years. In spring 2020, 49% of the population had a positive image of the EU, 36% had a neutral stance and only 11% feels negative about it. Thus the objective of **external communication activities** will be to promote the benefits of the Eastern Partnership through the use of positive narratives, and to counter disinformation and malign narratives. The priorities of the Commission – including the ‘European Green Deal’ – and ‘resilient, sustainable and integrated economies’, including stronger interconnectivity and a resilient digital transformation, will receive special attention. Most activities will take place in and for the Neighbourhood East countries, and will, where deemed useful, tie in with larger events, conferences and meetings, including high-level meetings or thematic events.

Concrete external communication activities should underline the policy, actions and notably the results and impact of the EU’s involvement. These include integrated communication campaigns, the use of networks, multipliers and influencers to promote the Neighbourhood Policy and EU values (for example the network of Young European Ambassadors), social media, publications, audio-visual material, events, and media relations (media partnerships, media support, press trips, press briefings).

DG NEAR has planned three strategic country evaluations in this area, on Georgia, Moldova (2020) and Ukraine (2021).

Specific objective 4.5:

Stability, resilience, economic development and regional integration are reinforced through our cooperation and policy dialogue in the Southern Neighbourhood.

The overarching objective of EU cooperation in the Neighbourhood South is to support and foster stability, resilience, economic development and regional integration. These will be achieved through partnerships agreements tailored to the needs of the partner countries that constitute the relevant frameworks for EU-neighbours relationships and strengthening the credibility of regional fora, such as the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM).

Assistance will be focused on a limited number of areas, addressing as a priority governance and rule of law, inclusive economic development and job creation, particularly for youth, that make up more than a third of the population. In addition the protection of the environment and effective migration management policies are themes that will be addressed.

The setting of a positive agenda with the whole region will be pursued through policy discussions and regional cooperation programmes. Efforts to strengthen the credibility of regional fora, such as the Union for the Mediterranean, in tackling common challenges and promoting regional integration, will continue. Regional cooperation in the Neighbourhood South will focus on resilience/stability, inclusive economic development/job creation, joint efforts on climate change, environment and energy, and complement bilateral efforts in favour of civil society, job opportunities and reduction of economic inequality. Where

appropriate, opportunities offered by the renewed partnership between the EU and Africa – including North Africa – will be used to foster a policy-oriented approach in the region.

The EU will continue adapting partnership priorities or equivalent documents to the partner country needs and to the evolving situation. These partnerships agreed with the Member States will allow timely and relevant deployment of EU assistance in a coordinated manner.

The EU will support State institutions and re-inforcement of good governance, democratic institutions, the rule of law and fight against corruption.

In a region where poverty and social fragility fuel instability, violent extremism and acts of terrorism, the EU has an interest in a stable neighbourhood with solid state institutions, maintaining stability and security while providing services and social benefits to the most vulnerable. The fight against corruption is necessary to restore the trust of the population in the national and local institutions. State administrations will be among the front-line beneficiaries while civil society organisations will be supported and involved in programme definitions.

In the economic domain, EU assistance will foster inclusive economic development through enabling business environment and leveraging investments in infrastructure through blending of loans and grants. Programmes will address job creation, particularly among the youth, and will support economic empowerment of women and will endeavour to contribute to reduce economic inequalities (see also specific objective 3).

A common subject of concern, the protection of the environment and the climate change issue will be particularly high on the agenda of EU-Neighbours cooperation (see also specific objective 2) as well as the management of the migration (see also specific objective 5).

The Covid-19 pandemic calls for a quick and deep reaction of the EU. Health systems of partner countries will be supported and programmes will endeavour to address the likely long term socio-economic impact of the pandemic.

Main **interventions** and **policy outputs** for the period 2020-2024:

- Contribution to a Communication setting out the perspective of a renewed Euro-Mediterranean Partnership
- Partnership priorities agreed, updated and implemented
- Strengthen regional fora and promote regional integration
- Support democratic reforms and rule of law
- Support growth and job creation, particularly for youth
- Support the Middle-East Peace Process in line with EU parameters
- Mitigate/address the effects of the Syria and Libya crisis
- Address challenges associated with migration and mobility in the region
- Integrate the European Green Deal goals and actions in dialogues and cooperation with the Neighbourhood South countries
- Promote digital transformation in line with EU best practices

Annual opinion polls (2019) show that in the Neighbourhood South 46% of people living in the Maghreb countries and 50% of people living in the Mashrek countries view the EU

positively. **External communication activities** under this objective will promote, through positive communication, all aspects of the European Neighbourhood Policy and EU cooperation, with a focus on stability, security, EU values standards, and economic development, and counter disinformation.

The majority of the activities and events, including through the EU Neighbours regional communication programme, will take place in and for the Neighbourhood South countries and would, where deemed useful, tie in with larger events, including high-level meetings or specific thematic events.

Concrete external communication activities, which should underline the policy, actions and notably the results and impact of the EU's involvement, will include integrated (thematic) communication campaigns, the use of networks, multipliers and influencers to promote the Neighbourhood Policy and EU values (for example through specific campaigns and the support of influencers), social media, publications and audio-visual material, events, and media relations (press trips). Specific communication activities will be planned and implemented for the communication of the results and impact of the projects under the EU Regional Trust Fund in response to the Syria crisis, and the North Africa window of the EU Emergency Trust Fund for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa.

DG NEAR has planned four strategic geographic evaluations under this objective, in Egypt (2021), Lebanon (2022), Palestine (2023) and Jordan (2024).

General objective 1: A European Green Deal

The European Green Deal provides a roadmap for making the EU's economy sustainable. This will happen by turning climate and environmental challenges into opportunities across all policy areas and making the transition just and inclusive for all. DG NEAR will contribute to this general policy objective by fostering a better coherence between internal and external policies of the EU, while ensuring that goals and actions foreseen in the European Green Deal are also integrated in our relations with Enlargement and Neighbourhood countries. The ecological transition for Europe can only be fully effective if the EU's immediate neighbourhood also takes effective action.

The European Green Deal is an integral part of this Commission's strategy to implement the United Nation's 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals. Its external component stresses that the EU should also reinforce current initiatives and engage with third countries on cross-cutting climate and environment issues.

Under this objective, **external communication activities** will promote the alignment of partner countries with the European Green Deal, including but not limited to EU climate goals and actions, raise awareness about it amongst citizens and stakeholders, and counter disinformation and false narratives.

Depending on the specific regional policies and developments, DG NEAR will achieve this via various activities through the regional communication programmes, and at local level - by the Delegations/offices. Activities can include: integrated communication campaigns, events, conferences, publications and audio-visual material, traditional and social media

(focusing on facts and positive communication through storytelling), use of networks to promote EU policies and values (Young European Ambassadors, influencers), media relations (press trips, press briefings) cooperation with think tanks and other stakeholders.

Specific objective 1

The implementation of the external dimension of the European Green Deal is supported in partner countries

In its external dimension “The EU as a global leader”, the European Green Deal communication foresees the following: *“The EU will put emphasis on supporting its immediate neighbours. The ecological transition for Europe can only be fully effective if the EU’s immediate neighbourhood also takes effective action. Work is underway on a green agenda for the Western Balkans. The Commission and the High Representative are also envisaging a number of strong environment, energy and climate partnerships with the Southern Neighbourhood and within the Eastern Partnership.”*

In that perspective, DG NEAR will support partner countries in their transitions to a growth strategy to achieve a fair and prosperous society, with a modern, resource-efficient, decarbonised and competitive economy.

Countering the economic impact of COVID-19 is a major challenge for the EU and its partner countries. But it also reinforces the need for conditions for a green economic recovery that will lead to a socio-economic model which is: more resource-efficient; resilient to environmental, health and economic threats; and low-carbon. Greening the economy has a significant potential for job creation that can help partner countries recover from the economic shock.

Main interventions and policy outputs will be the following:

- Design and implementation of the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans
- Design and implementation of strong environment, energy and climate partnerships with the Southern Neighbourhood and within the Eastern Partnership

Evaluation of the EU's support to climate change and environment in Enlargement and Neighbourhood regions is planned to start in 2020.

General objective 3: An Economy that Works for People

To contribute to the Commission’s general objective of an economy that works for people, DG NEAR will support **inclusive and sustainable economic growth**, better **employment** and increased connectivity in the EU and in the Neighbourhood and Enlargement countries. By acting at the Union level on economic dialogues, reform and spending programmes, the EU has greater leverage to influence the partner countries with a view to improving the prosperity of their people and that of the EU. These activities are also highly complementary with the EU activities on Trade.

Enhancing **connectivity** within the neighbouring regions represents a strategic interest for both the region and the EU. Increasing transport and energy connections improve

competitiveness, drive economic growth and ensure security of supply. They are at the same time an important prerequisite for economic integration. They further enhance the focus on connecting people in the region in all dimensions: transport, energy, digital, economic and human.

Under this objective, DG NEAR actions will contribute to:

- Promoting the **stabilisation and development of the Neighbourhood**, which is in the EU's economic interest;
- Address the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic;
- Supporting the gradual **economic integration** of some of our partners in the EU internal market and therefore to the creation of a larger economic area.
- Increasing **competitiveness and promote measures to foster direct job creation** in the Enlargement and Neighbourhood countries;
- Expanding **opportunities** for EU companies, investors, consumers, and property owners;
- Boosting **connectivity** within neighbouring countries as well as between the regions and the EU; supporting and promoting inter-regional cooperation between the EU and its southern partners.
- Progressive integration of **transport and energy markets** of Enlargement and Neighbourhood countries into the EU market on the basis of the relevant acquis.

External communication activities under this objective will promote EU support towards inclusive and sustainable economic growth and increased connectivity, raise awareness about it amongst citizens and stakeholders in partner countries, and counter disinformation and false narratives. Depending on the specific regional policies and developments, DG NEAR will achieve this via various activities through the regional communication programmes, and at local level - by the Delegations/offices. Activities can include: integrated communication campaigns (regional, local), events, conferences, publications, audio-visual material, traditional and social media (presenting facts, positive communication through story telling among others), use of networks to promote EU policies and values (Young European Ambassadors, influencers), media relations (press trips, press briefings) cooperation with think tanks and other stakeholders.

Specific objective 3

Support inclusive and sustainable economic growth, better employment and increased connectivity in partner countries

To achieve this objective, DG NEAR will continue to hold **economic dialogues** with partner countries, and provide policy advice on **economic governance and development**. These dialogues mainly aim at supporting partner countries in improving the business climate, macro-economic stability, public finance management and encouraging more inclusive economic development (in particular for the youth).

In Enlargement countries, the Commission manages an annual exercise whereby the enlargement countries submit **Economic Reform Programmes (ERPs)**, which set out key structural reforms and a medium-term macro-fiscal policy framework aimed at boosting

competitiveness. Based on ERPs, country-specific recommendations are jointly adopted by the EU and the Western Balkans and Turkey in the annual Economic and Financial Dialogue meeting. These recommendations are also fully reflected in the Commission's underlying **enlargement package/annual reports**.

DG NEAR will continue to support efforts of candidates and potential candidates to meet the economic criteria and align with economic related **acquis chapters**, notably via the accession negotiations and technical support to their work towards reaching relevant EU standards and chapters of the *acquis*. These include free movement of goods, of services, and of capital, as well as public procurement, company law, intellectual property rights, competition, financial services, taxation, employment, enterprise and industrial policy, research, consumer protection, customs, transport, energy, environment and digital sectors.

On trade, DG NEAR will continue to support the preparation, conclusion and implementation of **trade agreements** with partner countries, in close cooperation with DG TRADE. These agreements serve to facilitate the exchanges of goods and services between partner countries and the EU and to improve conditions for citizens, consumers, workers and self-employed, as well as small, medium and large enterprises. Overall, they contribute to delivering growth, jobs, investment and innovation. In turn this will help foster prosperity, and strengthen solidarity and security in both partner countries and the EU.

Finally, DG NEAR will implement **programmes** under its IPA, ENI and NDICI financing instruments, including the Western Balkans Investment Framework (WBIF) regional blending facility and the Neighbourhood Investment Platform (NIP). These programmes support economic reforms by providing financial and technical assistance to strategic investments in the energy, environment, social, transport, and digital infrastructure sectors. Private sector development initiatives will also be supported. In addition, DG NEAR will continue to work directly with partners to build their capacities on economic governance and improve their public finance management.

DG NEAR will ensure that people and businesses will benefit from **infrastructure** projects, through implementation of connectivity reform measures, which requires the adaption of regulatory and legal frameworks. In the energy sector, reform measures, for example, will contribute to establish a regional single electricity market, which will reduce energy costs and increase energy security.

NEAR will pursue this specific objective with the following interventions and policy outputs:

- **Economic dialogues** with the partner countries, policy advice in the area of economic governance and development;
- Coordination of **Economic Reform Programmes** (ERPs) in Enlargement countries, and adoption of ERP-based country-specific **recommendations**, in the framework of annual Economic and Financial Dialogue meetings;
- Implementation of the planned economic and investment plan for the Western Balkans (autumn 2020)
- Monitoring and support to Economic criteria and alignment with economic related **acquis chapters** via the accession negotiations and technical support;

- Support to the implementation of **the Transport and Energy Community Treaty**, including investments on extension of the Trans European Network (TEN-T/TEN-E);
- **Trade facilitation** and increased exchanges of goods and services between EU and partner countries and to improving conditions for citizens, consumers, workers and self-employed;
- Delivery of **financial and technical assistance** under financing instruments managed by DG NEAR, with a particular focus on the Western Balkans Investment Framework (WBIF) regional blending facility and the European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD);
- Cooperation with **International Financial Institutions** (IFIs), in particular by blending EU grants and loans to support in particular infrastructure projects and SMEs development.

In this area, DG NEAR has planned the following **strategic evaluations**:

- Evaluation of public administration reform with a focus on public finance management, 2022 – thematic;
- Evaluation of EU support to business climate in enlargement and neighbourhood regions, 2022 – thematic;
- Evaluation of SIGMA – thematic.

Covid-19 crisis response

The 2020 Covid-19 crisis is the biggest crisis the EU has faced since World War II and it has had (and still has) a profound impact on all areas of life. Covid-19 hit our partner countries hard and it was paramount for the EU to show its solidarity with them.

The restrictions adopted across the countries to help slow the spread of the virus have a spill over effect on social and economic stability. This is why the EU's response not only addressed short-term emergency needs, but also the longer-term structural impacts on societies and economies. The **'Team Europe'** approach has led to the preparation of response packagesre these combining contributions from all EU institutions, EU Member States and International Financial Institutions (IFIs), in particular the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). The Joint Communication adopted the following 'Team Europe' priorities:

- Responding to the **immediate health crisis** and the resulting humanitarian needs;
- **Strengthening health, water and sanitation systems;**
- Mitigating the immediate **social and economic consequences**.

DG NEAR was in the forefront of designing and implementing this approach vis-a-vis our partner countries. DG NEAR already redirected over € 3.8 billion to the Western Balkans and neighbourhood East and South. This was a combination of repurposed existing external actions resources and fresh 2020 funding adjusted to serve COVID-19 related needs. The overall assistance from EU institutions and IFIs has reached a total of more than € 15.6 billion, and over € 20 billion together with the Member State contributions.

Team Europe priorities and EU's response to Covid-19:

Urgent, short-term emergency response to the health crisis and the resulting humanitarian needs: The EU is responding by supplying protective equipment, secure essential goods and food and basic health services. On the economic front, the EU will provide guarantees and liquidity provisions to local banks.

Support to strengthen research, health and water systems: the EU will help partner countries to step up hygiene and to make health systems resilient, contribute to awareness-raising and communication efforts, provide technical assistance, crisis management protocols and guidelines and sharing expert opinions. The EU also promotes equal access to the health system to migrant, refugee, displaced and host communities.

Addressing the economic and social consequences: Team Europe's third priority responds to the crisis' adverse economic and social effects that will require long term focused engagement and adaptation of existing financial instruments. Actions under this priority include cushions in the face of possible macro-economic shocks, appropriate backing to financial intermediaries, a mix of financing options for the public and private sector. It also includes a protective framework for the workforce and incomeless households.

Some of the key challenges to address under this priority are avoiding a sharp increase in unemployment and liquidity challenges. The EU intends to help partner governments with facilitating social protection measures such as deferment of tax and social security payments, affordably priced credit and rescheduled loan repayments. In the private sector, it will be necessary to maintain companies' ability to finance longer-term investments.

To help countries face socio-economic challenges stemming from the COVID-19 crisis, the European Commission will:

- Provide technical assistance, to adopt fiscal, monetary, social and public health policy reforms, financing strategies and regulatory frameworks;
- Provide guarantees, liquidity, working capital and trade finance to private sector, especially (M)SMEs;
- Providing public sector EIB loans for healthcare equipment and supplies;
- Help build strong and resilient value chains in strategic sectors;
- Promote forms of debt relief;
- Support policy reform on human rights, democracy and support to civil society.

DG NEAR will continue to ensure that the instruments adapted in the wake of the crisis remain relevant and tailored to each of the partner country's needs. DG NEAR will support partner countries' efforts in tackling the long-term aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic to avoid any destabilisation while helping build resilient health systems.

DG NEAR will continue to promote and uphold good governance, the rule of law, human rights, gender equality and non-discrimination, decent work conditions as well as humanitarian principles. The special and extraordinary measures required to contain the pandemic must not lead to backtracking on the fundamental values and principles of our open and democratic societies. Civil society actors will also be a key partner in this endeavour, and will continue to receive additional financial assistance to support and protect the most vulnerable, tackle disinformation and support free media in the region. In

addition, our collective COVID-19 response should avoid policy and investment decisions that exacerbate existing crises such as biodiversity loss and climate emergencies.

As a strong contributor to economic recovery of the Western Balkans after the coronavirus pandemic, the planned economic and investment plan for the Western Balkans (autumn 2020) will be accompanied by a communication plan and activities.

General objective 2: A Europe fit for the digital age

Through the general objective “A Europe fit for the digital age”, the Commission seeks to harness the full potential of the digital transformation for European citizens. This commitment includes the investment in next-generation hyperscale technologies, the achievement of technological sovereignty, improving citizens’ digital literacy as well as a strengthened resilience to cyberattacks.

With regard to its enlargement and neighbourhood policy, the EU’s strong digital presence will drive growth and sustainable development through the up-take of ICT and digital opportunities in partner countries, and contribute to stronger and more resilient economies.

Major global events, such as climate change and the 2020 Covid-19 health crisis, challenge the EU and its partners alike to rapidly adapt their societies, businesses, education systems and working conditions to embrace digital innovation. This pivoting underlines the need to ensure connectivity, ICT equipment and accessible e-learning opportunities in schools, higher education and vocational training, on the one hand, and the crucial importance of digital skills for the contemporary working environment, on the other hand. It is also important to improve citizens’ level of digital skills so they can take part of services that the digital world offers and become less vulnerable to online threats.

DG NEAR works to support partners in their efforts to reduce their digital gap with the Union. In particular, its activities focus on strengthening the institutional capacities in the area of e-governance and data protection, and supporting the development of digital skills and high tech entrepreneurship.

The access to digital infrastructure and services is a crucial cross-sectoral, cross-cutting factor in the achievement of the Sustainable Development goals: By facilitating and accelerating economic growth, social inclusion, equality, accessibility and accountability of public institutions, as well as innovation across all societal sectors, digital technologies can contribute to the majority of SDG’s in the partner countries.

External communication activities will promote the take-up of digital opportunities in partner countries, raise awareness about it amongst citizens and stakeholders in partner countries, and counter disinformation and false narratives. Depending on the specific regional policies and developments, DG NEAR will achieve this via various activities through the regional communication programmes, and at local level - by the Delegations/offices. Activities can include: integrated communication campaigns (regional, local), events, conferences, publications, audio-visual material, traditional and social media (presenting facts, positive communication through story telling among others), use of networks to promote EU policies and values (Young European Ambassadors, influencers), media relations (press trips, press briefings) cooperation with think tanks and other stakeholders

Specific objective 2

Increased take-up of digital opportunities in partner countries

The up-take of digital opportunities is a substantial condition for partner countries to improve access to the Union's Single market and to participate in regional cooperation. The EU has a strong interest in deepening integration with its enlargement candidates and regional partners to support them in addressing digital policy challenges: Close alignment fosters a coherent information society in Europe and its neighbourhood by increasing trust and cybersecurity, fostering cross-border business opportunities and leveraging digital technologies for the improvement of public services.

Digitalisation presents a major opportunity for enlargement candidates and geographical neighbours of the Union. The Commission supports the partner countries through instruments such as regional roaming agreements, alignment of telecommunication rules, investment into high-speed broadband, transformation towards e-government or capacity building on cybersecurity. Through better integrated economies and value chains, such EU facilitated economic acceleration and approximation of standards ultimately also provide strong economic prospects for the Union.

Main **interventions** and **policy outputs** for the period 2020-2024:

In the Western Balkans, the Commission will continue its support for the uptake of digital opportunities beyond the achievements of the 2018 Western Balkans Digital Agenda. The Agenda's successful implementation should be followed by further action to ensure close alignment – and ultimately full-fledged integration – of the region with the EU's digital single market, including relevant strategies such as the European digital strategy, and the EU data strategy. Key areas for further action will be:

1. Digital infrastructure and connectivity;
2. Digital skills and competence;
3. Trustworthy regional space;
4. Conducive and competitive environment for innovative businesses;
5. Resilient cyber space.

In the Eastern neighbourhood, the Commission has focused on the harmonisation of roaming, the promotion of high-speed broadband internet to boost economies and expand e-services, and the creation of more jobs in the digital industry. Through the three year EU4Digital Facility, activities in the policy areas of Telecom rules, Trust & Security, eTrade, ICT innovation, eHealth, and eSkills will be financed. EU4Digital support is planned to be stepped-up, as digital transformation gains more prominence in the Eastern Partnership policy beyond 2020. Future assistance will aim to extend the benefits of the Digital Single Market to the partner countries, focusing on key areas such as digital infrastructure, eGovernance, digital economy and innovation, and cyber resilience .

In the Southern Neighbourhood, the Commission support has focused on harmonisation of rules in the telecom sector (EMERG) and providing high quality access to the EU research and innovation network GEANT through the EUMedConnect programmes. The Commission is now working towards a new approach with reinforced cooperation to the digital strategies of certain partner countries and possibilities for integration in EU projects.

General objective 5: Promoting our European Way of Life

Under this objective, the Commission is committed to keeping Europe safe while upholding the EU's core values, including respecting the human rights of migrants, asylum seekers, refugees and those forcibly displaced in EU and partner countries, and more cohesive societies. In that regard, the internal and external aspects of migration are inextricably linked, and essential to deliver a more resilient and more effective migration and asylum system, which together with effective border management will also underpin confidence in the Schengen Area of free movement. Migration is a global phenomenon and it needs common approaches with partner countries. Both the EU and its partners have an interest in cooperating in mutually beneficial partnerships on migration. The European Neighbourhood and Enlargement Policies are therefore central to the external dimension of migration, as this Commission general objective will only be achieved by working together with our nearest partners, with whom we share land and sea borders.

Actions under this general objective will directly contribute to SDG target 10.7, which calls on countries *“to facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies”*. Addressing migration objectives also involves dialogue in other policy areas, including development, good governance, security, human rights, employment, health, education, agriculture, food security, social protection, environment, and climate change. Therefore, work on migration will also contribute to other SDGs (1: No Poverty, 8: Decent work and economic growth, 11: Sustainable cities and communities, 13: Climate action).

In the past few years, increased efforts have been devoted to achieving well-managed policies on migration in our partner countries via comprehensive partnerships. By continuing efforts in consolidating partnerships with priority neighbouring and enlargement countries, the Commission will increase trust and stability in our vicinity and bring more confidence to our citizens.

The objective of the communication activities will be to present the EU support towards effective migration management. The focus will be on the concrete results and impact of EU programmes and projects, both for migrants and local communities in areas with a high percentage of migrants, raise awareness about it amongst citizens and stakeholders in partner countries and in Member States, and counter disinformation and false narratives.

DG NEAR will achieve this via various activities at regional and local level, with support of the Trust Funds and the EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey, and at local level - by the Delegations/offices. Activities can include: integrated communication campaigns (regional, local), events, conferences, publications, videos & photos (exhibitions), traditional and social media (presenting facts, positive communication through story telling among others), use of networks to promote EU policies and values, media relations (press trips, press briefings) cooperation with think tanks and other stakeholders.

Specific objective 5

Effective migration management with partner countries is in place

DG NEAR will work towards the establishment by 2024 of effective partnerships to develop policies addressing migration-related issues in partner countries. It will also work together with DG HOME and the EEAS on consolidating partnerships with priority partner countries deploying a wide range of policy tools, political, legal, economic and financial. Co-operation will be established with governments and international partners, and will tailor the approach depending on the country context. DG NEAR will work on all the essential migration issues, including migration governance, protection of migrants and forcibly displaced people, human rights of migrants and asylum seekers, border management and fight against criminal networks, return and reintegration.

DG NEAR will address this specific objective by the following **interventions** and **policy outputs**:

- Delivering on the external aspects of the EU migration policy as indicated in the New Pact on Migration and Asylum, in coordination with line DGs and Member States;
- Consolidating comprehensive partnerships with key NEAR partner countries;
- Continuing to align closely the legislation, standards and practices in the areas of asylum, protection, border management, and legal migration, of accession and potential candidate countries of the Western Balkans, as well as in Turkey, with the EU *acquis* within the framework of the EU enlargement process;
- With available funds and instruments, dedicating specific programmes and actions to better address the full range of issues relevant to migration and forced displacement, including trafficking in human beings and smuggling of migrants, border management, addressing the root causes, remittances, international protection and return, readmission and reintegration, and legal pathways. All actions should be carried out on the basis of mutual accountability and full respect of humanitarian and human rights obligations.

D. Key performance indicators

- **KPI 1:**

Degree of readiness of Western Balkans on EU approximation and acquis

(Cf. Result indicator 4.1.1)

Explanation: This indicator shows where the enlargement countries stand in terms of their alignment with the EU acquis across all chapters and EU compatible reforms. It is given as the sum of Western Balkans beneficiaries. It is measured on a scale from 1 to 5.

Source of data: Annual Enlargement country reports, European Commission

- **KPI 2:**

Number of partnership priorities, Association agendas, or equivalent documents, which are revised, adopted or agreed with Eastern and Southern Neighbourhood partners

(Cf. Result indicators 4.4.1 and 4.5.3)

Explanation: The indicator monitors the number of key bilateral policy documents (Partnership priorities, Association Agendas, or equivalent documents) revised, adopted or agreed during the period.

Source of data: EU Results Framework

- **KPI 3:**

Number of direct jobs supported/sustained by the EU

(Cf. Result indicator 3.1)

Explanation: The number of jobs supported through EU programmes

Source of data: EU results Framework, IPA Performance Framework

- **KPI 4:**

Estimated risk at closure (residual error rate)

(Cf. Result indicator Sound Financial Management)

Explanation: The RER provides an estimation of the residual errors not detected by the internal control system, in order to conclude on its effectiveness.

Source of data: DG NEAR annual activity report

PART 2. Modernising the administration

The political guidance of President von der Leyen strives for the European Commission to be a modern, high performing and sustainable administration. DG NEAR will contribute to this objective via the mobilisation and organisation of its resources as set out below. DG NEAR's strategy to modernise the administration takes particular account of the areas highlighted by the Commission President, such as gender equality, digitalisation, collaborative working and sustainability.

As a modern public administration, the Commission implements an internal control framework inspired by the highest international standards. The Commission's system covers all the principles of internal control identified in the Committee of Sponsoring Organisations of the Treadway Commission 2013 Internal Control framework, including financial control, risk management, human resource management, communication and the safeguarding and protection of information. DG NEAR has established an internal control system tailored to its particular characteristics and circumstances and regularly assesses its implementation and overall functioning. This assessment is based on indicators, the most strategic of which are listed in this section of the strategic plan.

A. Human resource management

Objective: DG NEAR employs a competent and engaged workforce and contributes to gender equality at all levels of management to deliver effectively on the Commission's priorities and core business.

The performance of any organisation depends on its staff. The Commission attaches great importance to human resource management and puts the engagement and development of its staff at the core of its management objectives. A corporate human resource (HR) strategy will be the centrepiece for the area of human resource management to which DG NEAR will contribute.

In order to ensure the effective management of human resources and to optimise the capacity to deliver on priorities in this strategic plan, DG NEAR will develop a local HR strategy with a medium to long-term outlook (3–5 years) consistent with the overall corporate HR strategy. DG NEAR will also continue to work jointly with the European External Action Service and the other external relations DGs in order to develop a set of measures for Delegations that ensure the best possible match between staff competencies and services needed.

DG NEAR will focus on several priority actions with the overarching objective of having HR policies that allow for recruiting and retaining highly skilled and engaged staff. The staff engagement index for DG NEAR in the 2018 staff survey was 65% (69% for staff in HQ and 59% for staff in EU Delegations). DG NEAR will thus continue to implement actions and measures aiming at maintaining and improving staff satisfaction. These will focus on areas where improvements were noted in the 2018 Staff Satisfaction Survey including work-life balance, workload, learning and development and the professional future as managers of female staff.

- Improve **work-life balance**

Amongst these efforts, supported and accompanied by the collaborative network OurNEAR, will be the creation of a management charter that will encompass values and principles managers should adhere to. Special attention will be given to facilitating a good work-life balance of staff by having guidance on workload distribution, organising meetings and sharing good practices on using emails.

For Delegations in particular, DG NEAR will support the implementation of flexitime and telework arrangements in order to promote a better work-life balance for staff, subject to the interest of the service. Rules on flexitime have been harmonised across the network of Delegations.

In addition DG NEAR, in collaboration with the European External Action Service, will raise awareness of the fit@work strategy, by promoting health-enhancing physical activity, encouraging healthier ways to commute to work, etc.

The information sessions planned at HQ for the wellbeing of staff (how to manage digital workload, mental health and meditation, ergonomics) will equally be available for staff in Delegations.

Regular updates on progress made in implementing these actions will be given using all available means of communication, intranet, management meetings and info sessions for staff. In line with the ongoing work of the working group OurNEAR, internal two-way communication, including between staff and senior management, will be improved through more regular meetings, collaboration and team building. Means of information will be adapted to fit Delegations' needs.

- Maximise **resource efficiency** through improved workload planning and monitoring as well as organisational agility

DG NEAR has been operating in recent years in an environment of increasing priorities to be addressed with a stable workforce. For this reason DG NEAR applies a rigorous management of job quota, analysing every vacant post against the needs of the service.

In 2020 and beyond DG NEAR will require a staff reinforcement to cater for specific profiles in order to support the DG with the implementation of the external dimension of the Green Deal and Digital Agenda in the neighbourhood and enlargement countries, ensure the implementation of the revised methodology on enlargement and the expected enlargement negotiations with two additional countries, and prepare for the implementation of EFSD+.

The DG will regularly assess the workload of areas which need reinforcement and ensure an agile organisation that responds quickly to emerging political priorities, and will continue to measure the workload in Delegations, in line with Commission decision on the management of Commission resources in Union Delegations⁵, in order to identify the need for reinforcement, and eventually redeployment of resources for the coming years. This exercise shall take full account of the role of the Steering Committee for delegations chaired by the EEAS (EUDEL)⁶. Prior to the launch of the workload assessment in delegations, the Commission's internal coordination committee for the management of Commission resources in delegations (COMDEL) shall endorse its methodological principles and objective indicators. The goal would be to optimise the use of staff through a rebalancing exercise allowing staff in Delegations to have a comparable working environment.

The use of project-based work in cross-sectorial teams will be further expanded. The purpose of horizontal project teams is to enable delivery on policy priorities with existing staff, by pooling resources and ensuring consistency in approach, fostering direct communication and considerably reducing the need for downstream coordination.

⁵ C(2019)8634 final

⁶ as set out in Decision JOIN(2012)8

Guidelines will be issued in parallel with the creation of the project teams to ensure that they are created where there is a need and that all relevant information, notably about the deliverables and the estimated resource needs is available from the outset.

- Learning and development: Maintain and reinforce a strong **managerial taskforce**. Facilitate the integration and learning of **newly arrived staff**.

In view of reinforcing managerial skills of established managers, DG NEAR will develop a package for middle managers that will include 360° evaluations, coaching and first-hand information on managerial topics through information sessions provided by DG HR - HR pills.

Managers will be given the possibility to become coaches and mentors of their staff, which will address newcomers in a first instance, as part of the package. DG NEAR will develop an induction package that will help newcomers integrate and become fully operational in a short period of time. This will include coaching and mentorship, training and job shadowing.

DG NEAR will also continue to work towards the goals of the Joint Paper with the European External Action Service with a view to develop a dedicated career path for staff in the external relations area and increase mobility between the two institutions.

- Boost **female representation** at all management levels and contribute to the Commission's objective to reach gender equality to effectively deliver on the Commission's priorities and core business

DG NEAR will continue to participate in the yearly corporate female talent management programme aiming at creating a pool of candidates to address the future needs inside the DG and beyond. The DG will add a tailor-made programme for female colleagues with management potential, complementary to the corporate offer, which will focus on women's specific biases and traits and help them reflect on the perspective of becoming managers. In an initial pilot whose implementation will start in 2020, female colleagues with a current management role, as either team leader, head of sector or deputy head of unit, irrespective of their grade, would be able to participate.

DG NEAR will also continue to actively encourage applications from eligible female staff for middle management positions and ensure that managers are made aware of the importance of identifying female talent and providing the appropriate training and management opportunities for them.

B. Sound financial management

Objective: The authorising officer by delegation has reasonable assurance that resources have been used in accordance with the principles of sound financial management, and that cost-effective controls are in place which gives the necessary guarantees, concerning the legality and regularity of underlying transactions.

The principle of sound financial management requires that funds must be managed in accordance with the principles of economy (the resources used in the pursuit of an activity should be made available in due time, in appropriate quantity and quality and at the best price), efficiency (best relationship between resources employed and results achieved) and effectiveness (attaining the specific objectives set and the intended results). The principle of sound financial management is laid down in the Financial Regulation⁷; this Regulation is the main point of reference for the principles and procedures governing the use of financial resources entrusted to the Commission, in order to ensure the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions. In this respect, the DG has adopted in February 2019 an internal control strategy, which takes into account the risks to the achievement of objectives and reduce them to acceptable levels through cost-effective controls. The strategy is regularly reassessed and adjusted to consider the evolution of the identified risks, including those related to the COVID-19 crisis.

In order to measure its progress toward the achievement of this corporate strategic goal, DG NEAR will monitor the results in terms of global residual error rate (RER). The RER provides an estimation of the residual errors not detected by the internal control system, in order to conclude on its effectiveness. In particular, it is the error identified in the completed transactions once all possibilities for detection through ordinary controls have been exhausted; it is calculated as the ratio between the value of the undetected ineligible expenses and the total amount of payments for the contracts closed in a certain year. A RER below the materiality threshold of 2% is a strong indicator that the controls put in place at all levels of the DG are effective. DG NEAR's objective is to ensure the best use of financial resources by keeping the error rate below 2%, consistently throughout the strategic planning period and for all DG NEAR's programmes, regardless of the management mode.

In particular, DG NEAR has achieved a consistent low overall RER in the past strategic planning period (0.53% in 2019). However, as weaknesses were detected in a specific part of its portfolio, in particular in grants in direct management⁸; **priority actions** in the next five years **will then be focused on grant management**, with the objective to further contain the level of errors in this area. Concrete priority measures will be launched already in 2020 and include:

- the promotion of a preventive approach in the annual control plans (i.e. increased on-the-spot checks of grant contracts towards the beginning of projects and increased

⁷ Art. 30 Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union.

⁸ The RER was above 2% but below 3% over the period 2017-2019.

audits on contracts after final payment and before closure as necessary), in order to be able to identify and correct more mistakes during the grant life cycle;

- an in-depth analysis of the typology of errors, to be conducted every year, in order to better identify the most common ones and their sources;
- trainings and awareness raising initiatives to help address the most common errors and on how to prevent them, involving grantees and the financial and operational staff.

Based on the registered overall low level of errors in the past strategic planning period, DG NEAR will also focus on achieving a virtuous balance between the benefit (e.g. reducing/avoiding the financial/reputational impact of errors) and the cost of controls. DG NEAR aims indeed to keep the cost of controls under the ceiling of 5% of the total value of funds managed. In this light, DG NEAR's internal control strategy will be continuously reassessed to enhance the controls on the most risky transactions, taking into account their evolution.

C. Fraud risk management

Objective: The risk of fraud is minimised through the application of effective anti-fraud measures and the implementation of the Commission Anti-Fraud Strategy (CAFS) aimed at the prevention, detection and correction of fraud.

Following the guidance of the Commission's Anti-Fraud Strategy (CAFS) adopted in April 2019 (COM(2019)196), DG NEAR will stay alert against the risk of fraud, corruption and other intentional irregularities, as well as the risk of serious wrongdoing inside the organisation.

DG NEAR is indeed fully committed to implement the new **CAFS** by the end of the Commission's mandate, with actions targeted to its complex geographical, political and organisational environment. In particular, DG NEAR is entrusted with the implementation of large amounts of financial assistance, implying a high number of operations and associated financial transactions, under different management modes and across different partner countries, with diverse political, economic, legal and social complexities. In addition, DG NEAR works with different public and private organisations, from small to very large sizes, from private firms to NGOs and beneficiary states. Finally, within DG NEAR, the financial assistance is implemented both in HQ and in Delegations, in different forms and modes (project approach, budget support, sector approach, indirect management with beneficiary country or with an entrusted entity, blending, trust funds, shared management under Cross Border Cooperation, etc.).

Therefore, DG NEAR is more exposed than other services to risks of fraud (and irregularities) committed before, during or after the implementation of projects or contracts, such as the artificial inflation of costs, double funding, kickback payments (commission on turnover/ supplies) and other irregularities in subcontracting, false/ falsified documents presented in tendering procedures, disclose of internal information, collusion, corruption, etc.

DG NEAR intends to enhance its comprehensive anti-fraud controls during the strategic planning period in order to address its specific challenges. In this respect, DG NEAR will complete firstly an internal fraud-risk assessment in autumn 2020. Based on this, it will update by the end of 2020 the **DG NEAR anti-fraud strategy** for the entire planning period (2020-2024). The purpose of this strategy will be to better tailor controls to the developments in the (anti-)fraud environment and related risks and to the design and launch of new programmes, instruments and operations, including the ones following the Global EU Response to COVID-19. In addition, it will **ensure cooperation** with services in the external action family (through the External Action Fraud Prevention and Detection Network Subgroup) and with OLAF (the European Anti-Fraud Office) and other Commission's services, especially in implementing the action plan of the Commission's anti-fraud strategy. **Fraud awareness campaigns** will be regularly targeted to staff in Headquarter and EU Delegations and to partner countries, particularly in order to strengthen the fraud detection capacity by operational and financial staff including authorising officers. Finally, DG NEAR will further **reinforce the monitoring and**

reporting to senior management on ongoing fraud cases and enhance the follow-up of financial and non-financial findings of OLAF investigations.

D. Digital transformation and information management

Objective: DG NEAR is using innovative, trusted digital solutions for better policy-shaping, information management and administrative processes to forge a truly digitally transformed, user-focused and data-driven Commission.

The focus of digital solutions required within DG NEAR is to the greatest extent on financial and operational IT tools that enable the delivery of financial assistance to EU partner countries in a reliable and efficient manner. This is why DG NEAR's contribution to the **Commission's Digital Strategy**⁹ will focus on the following priorities between 2020 and 2024:

- **Implementation of corporate IT projects in DG NEAR**

DG NEAR will contribute to the full implementation of the OPSYS project in collaboration with DG DEVCO. The OPSYS project's aim is to replace the Relex family's operational information system called CRIS (Common Relex Information System) progressively in order to reach a full digitalisation of the core business of DG NEAR, the programming and implementation of financial assistance by the end of 2024. Through this DG NEAR will also contribute to the Commission's capacity to monitor and report on the performance of the financial programmes implemented by it.

By the end of the Commission mandate, the main deliverables expected from OPSYS will be to facilitate electronic signature, access by and exchange of information with third parties, and consolidate data from various corporate systems (e.g. ABAC, Compass, ARES/Hermes, Sedia) to which it will be connected. In ensuring interoperability DG NEAR will contribute to the adherence to important principles of the EC Digital Strategy.

- **Contribution to EC Digital Strategy by modernising local applications**

DG NEAR will continue both with the modernisation of local applications that are essential for its business and will phase out other local applications such as MIS – the Management Information System - whose functions will be fully replaced by OPSYS by the end of 2024.

DG NEAR will continue to align with the corporate policy. Local applications such as IPA-APP (application used for reporting and follow up on Indirect Management with beneficiaries) and IESAcq (application for managing translated legislation) will continue to be developed using corporate components. TMS (application to manage TAIEX) will remain available to other interested DGs (currently: Reform, DEVCO, FPI, REGIO and Environment).

The procurement lifecycle, payment forecasting and risk assessment services of MIS will be integrated into OPSYS, a good example of corporate re-usability made possible because of the use of a modern architecture. Furthermore, all NEAR applications will continue to have updated IT security plans and remain compliant with the General Data Protection Regulation.

⁹ (C(2018)7118

On an administrative level, DG NEAR will continue to be guided by the facilities provided in My Workplace by DG DIGIT in HQ. The use of electronic signatures in administrative actions will become the norm. All colleagues will use collaborative tools to work to maximise synergies while working amongst colleagues in HQ, and where possible also with our colleagues in Delegations.

As the EEAS is responsible for the EU Delegations (including their IT infrastructure and tools), DG NEAR (as part of the Commission's efforts) will strive for harmonisation of key tools and infrastructure between COM and Delegations by 2024.

DG NEAR's contribution to the EC Digital Strategy is challenged by the fact that DG NEAR delivers financial assistance in partner countries in close collaboration with 24 EU Delegations, who are under the supervision of the European External Action Service including for the provision of digital solutions and IT infrastructure. In view of staff in EU Delegations of DG NEAR representing some 1000 people, which is more than 60% of the total staff in DG NEAR, efficient digital solutions for the DG will require a stepped up co-operation between the EEAS and the Commission in searching for joint digital solutions.

DG NEAR will contribute to the **Commission's strategy on data, information and knowledge management** as follows:

Improving information retrieval and delivery will be greatly facilitated by OPSYS, where files will be processed electronically (linked automatically with Ares) and the data is stored centrally. DG NEAR will primarily use the affiliated data services provided by DEVCO (through their Data Warehouse – DWH) as input for its policy making and reporting. Local applications (such as TMS and IPAapp) will be adapted to enable data exchange with OPSYS and/or DWH to allow for complete, updated and timely reporting. In addition, DG NEAR will continue to participate in the DG DEVCO Data Governance Board.

In addition, to maximise the use of data for better policy making, key data assets within DG NEAR have been identified in line with the DataStrategy@EC action plan. DG NEAR will implement the next phases of this action plan in line with the guiding principles defined in the "Data governance and data policies at the European Commission", starting with sharing these key data assets in a COM catalogue (scheduled for 2020).

Being able to work together and share knowledge requires having both the tools and the skills available. In terms of tools, DG NEAR will build on the anticipated corporate roll-out of Teams in 2020 and maximise the use of all the collaborative functionalities it offers. In terms of skills, DG NEAR will place particular attention in first increasing the proficiency of all staff to use these tools (based on the training opportunities provided by DG HR), and then shift towards its use and the sharing of good practices.

DG NEAR will contribute to the **data protection obligations of the Commission under Regulation (EU) 1725/2018**.

The priority actions over the next five years will focus on embedding the data protection rules in the daily work of all DG NEAR staff (1791, including EU Delegations)¹⁰, ensuring that compliance with data protection rules becomes routine for staff and that everyone would know exactly how to identify a processing operation and its related record in order to correctly apply the rules.

By the end of 2019, participation in awareness raising activities¹¹ on data protection compliance organised by the Data Protection Coordinator stood at 83 staff in HQ which amounted to 12,5%. DG NEAR's target is to continue with awareness raising activities to ensure that by the end of 2024, 100% of staff has attended awareness raising activities on data protection compliance. In order to reach this target, it is expected that by the end of 2022, 60% of DG NEAR staff will have followed awareness raising activities and the remaining 40% by the end of 2024¹².

¹⁰ The data protection awareness activities for DG NEAR staff assigned to the EU Delegations are conducted by the Data Protection Officer of the EEAS. NEAR DPC provided general data protection presentation to NEAR F&C staff in the EU Delegation and, when requested, was associated to the awareness activities organised by the EEAS DPO (with regard to data protection compliance in the external action award procedures).

¹¹ General presentations, targeted presentations, bilateral meetings, Data Protection day quiz, second ranking among the Commission's services with participation of 101 of DG NEAR staff, information tools - guidance provided on myNEARnet data protection dedicated page and NEAR MAP - Manual of Procedures.

¹² The corresponding annual targets are: (15%-20%-25%-20%-20%) for the years (2020-2021-2022-2023-2024) respectively.

E. Sound environmental management

Objective: DG NEAR takes full account of its environmental impact in all its actions and actively promotes measures to reduce the related day-to-day impact of the administration and its work.

The Communication on the Green Deal¹³ stipulates that the **Commission, as an institution and employer, aims to be climate neutral by 2030**. DG NEAR will actively contribute to the achievement towards this target during the period 2020 to 2024 by promoting EMAS corporate campaigns at local level and implementing dedicated local environmental actions.

Based on the findings of EMAS Environmental Building Profiles (EEBF) survey published by the Office for Infrastructure and Logistics in Brussels (OIB) in 2019¹⁴ and DG NEAR's current CO2 emission level per capita¹⁵ which remain above Commission average, DG NEAR will put a strategic focus on two priority areas between 2020 and 2024: the **reduction of waste production** and **reduction of emission of CO2 per capita**.

The target will be to reduce waste production from current 0.19 ton/person (2018) to 0.15 ton/person by 2024, with an intermediate targets in year 2022 of 0.17 ton/person. To start a first milestone of 0.18 ton/person to be achieved is set at the end of 2020.

Concerning the reduction of CO2 emissions per capita, DG NEAR's ambition is to reduce the emission value by the end of 2024 (baseline: 2,064 tonnes/person for missions by air in 2018).

The implementation of the targets shall be achieved by raising the awareness of staff and organising related awareness raising events. To this effect, DG NEAR staff will be engaged into a participatory leadership process (OurNEAR) under the guidance of the Director General. Five working groups have already been set up. They will identify local actions to progressively 1) reduce plastic use, 2) go paperless (reduce paper waste), 3) reduce food-waste, 4) green the cafeteria and 5) strengthen the internal communication.

Concerning the reduction of CO2 emissions per capita, the main deliverable for DG NEAR will be to achieve a progressive increase of videoconferences and skype meeting opportunities.

¹³ COM(2019) 640

¹⁴ DG HR. Missions emissions by DG/Service: Data for air, rail and car hire booked through the Commission's travel agency in 2018. Ares(2020)1088801. DG NEAR scored higher than the average on **waste production** in one of its two buildings (L-15) and higher than the average on **water consumption** in the other of its two buildings (J-54), whose occupation is shared with another DG.

¹⁵ DG NEAR scored, with the 5 968 261 km (604 people) and 1,758 tons of CO2 per capita above the overall Commission value for air travel, but remained below the top 10 within the Commission, in terms of per capita or total emissions.

ANNEX: Performance tables

General Objective 4: A stronger Europe in the World

Impact indicator 2: Readiness of enlargement countries on political criteria

Explanation: This indicator shows where the enlargement countries stand in terms of their preparations for meeting key areas of the political accession criteria, namely the functioning of the judiciary, fight against corruption, fight against organised crime, freedom of expression and public administration reform. It is given as an overall sum of enlargement countries. It is measured on a scale from 1 to 5

Source of the data: European Commission

Methodology for calculating the indicator: In each of the areas, the state of play (i.e. the readiness) is assessed according to the following five-tier standard assessment scale:

1. Early stage
2. Some level of preparation
3. Moderately prepared
4. Good level of preparation
5. Well advanced

Baseline (2019)	Interim milestone (2022)	Target (2024)
1.99	Increase	Increase

Impact indicator 3: Readiness of enlargement countries on economic criteria

Explanation: This indicator shows where the enlargement countries stand in terms of their preparations for meeting key areas of the two economic accession criteria, namely the existence of a functioning market economy and the capacity to cope with competitive pressures and market forces within the EU. It is given as an overall sum of enlargement countries. It is measured on a scale from 1 to 5.

Source of the data: European Commission

Methodology for calculating the indicator: In each of the areas, the state of play (i.e. the readiness) is assessed according to the following five-tier standard assessment scale:

1. Early stage
2. Some level of preparation
3. Moderately prepared
4. Good level of preparation
5. Well advanced

Baseline (2019)	Interim milestone (2022)	Target (2024)
2.64	Increase	increase

Impact indicator 4: Governance in the EU’s neighbourhood

Explanation: The following three indicators are measured for the eastern and southern neighbourhood countries. They are measured on a scale from 0 to 100

- **Voice and accountability** captures perceptions of the extent to which a country’s citizens are able to participate in selecting their government, as well as freedom of expression, freedom of association, and a free media
- **Government effectiveness** captures perceptions of the quality of public services, the quality of the civil service and the degree of its independence from political pressures, the quality of policy formulation and implementation, and the credibility of the government’s commitment to such policies
- **Political stability and absence of violence / terrorism** captures perceptions of the likelihood of political instability and / or politically-motivated violence, including terrorism

Source of the data: The World Bank’s [Worldwide Governance Indicators \(WGI\) project](#) compile and summarise

information from over 30 existing data sources that report the views and experiences of citizens, entrepreneurs, and experts in the public, private and NGO sectors from around the world, on the quality of various aspects of governance

Baseline (2017)	Interim milestone (2022)	Target (2024)
Voice and accountability: Eastern neighbourhood: 33.09 Southern neighbourhood: 27.98	Increase	Increase
Government effectiveness: Eastern neighbourhood: 46.32 Southern neighbourhood: 37.98	Increase	Increase
Political stability and absence of violence / terrorism: Eastern neighbourhood: 27.06 Southern neighbourhood: 13.43	Stabilise	Increase

Impact indicator .5: Rule of law in the EU's Neighbourhood

Explanation: This indicator captures perceptions of the extent to which agents have confidence in and abide by the rules of society and in particular the quality of contract enforcement property rights, and the courts, as well as the likelihood of crime and violence

Source of the data: The [World Bank's World Governance Indicators \(WGI\) project](#) compile and summarise information from over 30 existing data sources that report the views and experiences of citizens, entrepreneurs, and experts in the public, private and NGO sectors from around the world, on the quality of various aspects of governance

Baseline (2017)	Interim milestone (2022)	Target (2024)
Eastern neighbourhood: 33.09	Increase	Increase
Southern neighbourhood: 36.06	Stabilise	Increase

Impact indicator 6: Control of corruption in the EU's Neighbourhood

Explanation: This indicator captures perceptions of the extent to which public power is exercised for private gain, including both petty and grand forms of corruption, as well as 'capture' of the state by elites and private interests

Source of the data: The [World Bank's World Governance Indicators \(WGI\) project](#) compile and summarise information from over 30 existing data sources that report the views and experiences of citizens, entrepreneurs, and experts in the public, private and NGO sectors from around the world, on the quality of various aspects of governance

Baseline (2017)	Interim milestone (2022)	Target (2024)
Eastern neighbourhood: 36.38	Increase	Increase
Southern neighbourhood: 38.99	Increase	Increase

Specific objective 4.1:

The Western Balkans are brought closer to the EU and their economic development is strengthened, based on a credible, merit-based accession perspective and application of the revised enlargement methodology

Related to spending programme:
IPA II, IPA III

Result indicator 4.1.1: Degree of readiness of Western Balkans on EU approximation and acquis

Explanation: This indicator shows where the enlargement countries stand in terms of their alignment with the EU acquis across all chapters and EU compatible reforms. It is given as the sum of Western Balkan beneficiaries. It is measured on a scale from 1 to 5.

Source of data: Annual Enlargement country reports, European Commission

Baseline (2019)	Interim milestone (2022)	Target (2024)
2,56	Increase	Increase

Result indicator 4.1.2: Progress of Western Balkans in Public Administration Reform

Explanation: This indicator shows where the Western Balkans stand in terms of the implementation of reforms of public administration to ensure its efficiency and ability to implement and enforce the EU acquis. It is given as the sum of Western Balkan beneficiaries. It is measured on a scale from 1 to 5.

Source of data: Annual Enlargement country reports, European Commission

Baseline 2019	Interim milestone (2022)	Target (2024)
2,57	Increase	Increase

Result indicator 4.1.3: Implementation of policy guidance in the Economic Reform Programmes

Explanation: The indicator quantifies the level of implementation of policy guidance agreed in the Joint Conclusions of the annual Economic and Financial Dialogue between the EU and each of the the Western Balkans partners as part of the discussion of the annual national Economic Reform Programmes (ERPs). The score is calculated as the average percentage of implementation. for all partners.

Source of data: European Commission and ECB

Baseline (2020)	Interim milestone (2022)	Target (2024)
35%	At least 40%	At least 50%

Specific objective 4.2:

Regional cooperation and neighbourly relations in the Western Balkans are improved.

Related to spending programme:
IPA II, IPA III

Result indicator 4.2.1: Total length of the indicative extension of the TEN-T rail and road core network to the Western Balkans supported by the EU through a) new construction and b) rehabilitation

Explanation: This indicator shows progress in completion of the TEN-T rail and road core network in the Western Balkans supporting connectivity amongst the Western Balkans and between the Western Balkans and the EU. It is measured in km.

Source of data: WBIF Monitoring Information System, WBIF Annual Reports, European Commission; Transport Community Treaty Secretariat

Baseline (2019)	Interim milestone (2022)	Target (2024)
147 km	502 km	748 km

Result indicator 4.2.2: Attitudes on Regional Cooperation and EU Integration

Explanation: This indicator measures the attitude of the Western Balkan citizens towards regional cooperation. It aims to capture to what extent they see it as a positive influence on the political, economic or security situation their societies. .

Source of data: Balkan Public Barometer, Regional Cooperation Council

Baseline (2018)	Interim milestone (2022)	Target (2024)
51%	53%	55%

Result indicator 4.2.3 Percentage of intra-regional trade to GDP

Explanation: This indicator measures the regional trade openness as the total of intraregional trade flows as percentage of the region's GDP. It aims at capturing the results of the regional economic integration efforts, whilst taking into account the economic growth of the region.

Source of data: National statistics, Regional Cooperation Council

Baseline (2018)	Interim milestone (2022)	Target (2024)
9,6%	10,5%	11,5%

Specific objective 4.3:

A sustainable basis for improved relations with Turkey is ensured

Related to spending programme:
IPA II, IPA III

Result indicator 4.3.1: Number of formal high-level dialogues at ministerial level per year (including on migration)

Explanation: This indicator shows the amount of high level meetings between EU and Turkey as a measure of political cooperation.

Source of data: European Commission

Baseline	Interim milestone	Target
2019	(2022)	(2024)
2	Increase	Increase

Result indicator 4.3.2: Share of EU goods and services in imports to Turkey

Explanation: This indicator illustrates trade relations between EU and Turkey. If relations are improved, notably through the modernisation of the CU, the share of imports originating from the EU in particular on services should increase.

Source of data: Eurostat: <https://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/countries/turkey/>

Baseline	Interim milestone	Target
2018	(2022)	(2024)
32.3%	Increase	Increase

Result indicator 4.3.3: Detections of illegal border-crossings at the EU borders with Turkey

Explanation: This indicator shows the number of illegal border-crossings detected by EU member states at the EU side of the EU-Turkey border

Source of data: Frontex

https://frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/Risk_Analysis/Risk_Analysis/Annual_Risk_Analysis_2020.pdf

Baseline	Interim milestone	Target
2019	(2022)	(2024)
85078	Decrease	Decrease

Specific objective 4.4:
Take the Eastern Partnership to the next level

Related to spending programmes:
 ENI, NDICI

Result indicator 4.4.1: Number of partnership priorities, Association agendas, or equivalent documents, which are revised, adopted or agreed

Explanation: The indicator monitors the number of key bilateral policy documents (Partnership priorities, Association Agendas, or equivalent documents) revised and adopted during the period. Since the indicator measures the evolution during 2020-2024 period, the base is set at 0. It does not imply that no action was taken in the past.

Source of data: EU Results Framework

Baseline (Beginning of 2020)	Interim milestone (2022)	Target (2024)
0	4	5

Result indicator 4.4.2: Percentage of Eastern Partnership post-2020 deliverables completed

Explanation: Based on the 5 policy objectives of the EaP post-2020, this new set of deliverables will be prepared in the second half of 2020 and endorsed at the EaP Summit in early 2021. After that, they will be implemented. Similar to the current reform agenda, monitoring of the new set of deliverables will be done regularly by the EU together with partner countries in a public report.

Source of data: European Commission

Baseline (2020)	Interim milestone (2022)	Target (2024)
0	120% of 2020 end results	170% of 2020 end results

Result indicator 4.4.3: Number of grassroots civil society organisations benefitting from (or reached by) EU support

Explanation: The indicator measures the outreach of our civil society programmes, as a broad base of civil society is crucial for the EU to be an open and receptive foreign policy actor. Grassroots actors often play a vital role in giving voice to citizen's, including in situations of restricted space.

Source of data: European Commission

Baseline (2020)	Interim milestone (2022)	Target (2024)
approx. 1,200	approx. 1,700	approx. 2,500

Specific objective 4.5:
Stability, resilience, economic development and regional co-operation are reinforced through our cooperation in the Southern Neighbourhood

Related to spending programmes:
 ENI, NDICI

Result indicator 4.5.1: Number of state institutions and non-state actors supported on security, border management, countering violent extremism, conflict prevention, protection of civilian population and human rights

Explanation: This indicator measures the EU assistance to good governance and capacity building in support of security, protection of civil population and enforcement of human rights

Source of data: EU Results Framework

Baseline 2018	Interim milestone (2022)	Target (2024)

Neigh. South: 420	stable trend	stable trend
<p>Result indicator 4.5.2: Number of countries supported by the EU to strengthen revenue mobilisation, public financial management and/or budget transparency</p> <p>Explanation: This indicator measures the support of the EU to the Southern Neighbourhood countries for the improvement of public finance management measures</p> <p>Source of data: EU Results Framework</p>		
Baseline 2018	Interim milestone (2022)	Target (2024)
Neigh. South 7	7	7
<p>Result indicator 4.5.3: Number of partnership priorities, Association agendas, or equivalent documents, which are revised, adopted or agreed</p> <p>Explanation: The indicator monitors the number of key bilateral policy documents (Partnership priorities, Association Agendas, or equivalent documents) revised and adopted during the period.</p> <p>Source of data: European Commission</p>		
Baseline (2020)	Interim milestone (2021)	Target (2024)
8	8	8

General objective 1: A European Green Deal

Impact indicator 3: Climate mainstreaming in the European Union budget

Explanation: Proportion of climate related spending (mainstreaming) in the EU budget

Source of the data: European Commission Draft Budget Reports

Baseline (2018)	Interim milestone (2022)	Target (2024)
21% ¹⁶	25% ¹⁷	25% ¹⁸

Specific objective 1:

The implementation of the external dimension of the European Green Deal is supported in partner countries

Related to spending programmes:
ENI, NDICI, IPA II, IPA III

Result indicator 1.1: Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions avoided (tonnes CO2eq) with EU support ;

Explanation: This indicator measures the result of EU supported actions in terms of reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. Since the indicator measures the evolution during the 2020-2024 period, the baseline is set at 0. It does not imply that no action was taken in the past. **Source of data:** IPA Performance Framework and EU Results Framework

Baseline 2020	Interim milestone 2022	Target 2024
0	105% of final 2020 results	110% of final 2020 results

Result indicator 1.2: Number of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise applying Sustainable Consumption and Production practices with EU support.

Explanation: Indicator 2.2. measures the results of EU supported interventions in order to promote sustainable and production practices at the level of private companies. Since the indicator measures the evolution during the 2020-2024 period, the baseline is set at 0. It does not imply that no action was taken in the past

Source of data: EU Results Framework

Baseline 2020	Interim milestone (2022)	Target (2024)
0	105% of final 2020 results	110% of final 2020 results

Result indicator 1.3: Areas of terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems under a) protection, b) sustainable management with EU support (ha).

Explanation: The indicator measures the contribution of the EU to the protection and sustainable management of ecosystems. Since the indicator measures the evolution during the 2020-2024 period, the baseline is set at 0. It does not imply that no action was taken in the past

Source of data: EU Results Framework

Baseline 2018	Interim milestone (2022)	Target (2024)
0	105% of final 2020 results	110% of final 2020 results

¹⁶ The baseline for ENI: 16% and for IPA: 14%, both for 2019.

¹⁷ The milestone for IPA and ENI/NDICI is to achieve an increase in comparison with the baseline.

¹⁸ The target for ENI/NDICI to achieve 25% or more and for IPA to achieve 16% or more.

General objective 3: An Economy that Works for People

Impact indicator 7: Employment rate of persons aged 20 to 64

Explanation: The employment rate is calculated by dividing the number of persons aged 20 to 64 in employment by the total population of the same age group

Source of the data: Eurostat (Eurostat online data code: sdg_08_30), based on the EU Labour Force Survey

Baseline (2018)	Interim milestone (2020)	Target (2024)
72.4% ¹⁹	75%	Increase ²⁰

Specific objective 3:

Inclusive and sustainable economic growth, better employment and increased connectivity are supported in partner countries.

Related to spending programmes:
NDICI, IPA III

Result indicator 3.1: Number of direct jobs supported/sustained by the EU

Explanation: The number of jobs supported through EU programmes

Source of data: EU results Framework, IPA Performance Framework

Baseline 2018	Interim milestone (2022)	Target (2024)
IPA: 2388	Increase	Increase

Result indicator 3.2: Number of beneficiaries with access to financial services with EU support: a) firms, b) individuals

Explanation: Indicator 3.2 aims at measuring the EU contribution to providing access to financial services to companies and individuals in all partner countries

Source of data: EU results Framework, IPA Performance Framework.

Baseline 2018	Interim milestone (2022)	Target (2024)
Neigh. East: 2600 Neigh. South: 1700 IPA: 1466	Increase	Increase

Result indicator 3.3: Total length of road supported by the EU through a) construction, b) rehabilitation, c) maintenance (kms)

Explanation: This indicator shows how much road construction has been supported through the EU as a measure of increased connectivity within partner countries. Since the indicator measures the evolution during the 2020-2024 period, the baseline is set at 0. It does not imply that no action was taken in the past.

Source of data: IPA Performance Framework and EU Results Framework

Baseline 2018	Interim milestone (2022)	Target (2024)
0	Increase	Increase

Result indicator 3.4: Number of individuals directly benefiting from EU supported interventions

¹⁹ The baselines for 2018 in DG NEAR regions: Western Balkans: 56,42%; Turkey: 55,60%; Eastern Neighbourhood: 69,25%; Southern Neighbourhood: 47,99%.

²⁰ The milestones and targets for DG NEAR regions are increase in comparison to baselines figures.

that aim to reduce social and economic inequality

Explanation: It measures the contribution of EU support to the reduction on social and economic inequalities in terms of population reached. Since the indicator measures the evolution during the 2020-2024 period, the baseline is set at 0. It does not imply that no action was taken in the past.

Source of data: EU results Framework, IPA Performance Framework

Baseline (2020)	Interim milestone (2022)	Target (2024)
0	Increase	Increase

General objective 2 A Europe fit for the digital age

Impact indicator 2: Digital Skills

Explanation: The basic digital skills indicator looks at selected activities performed by individuals aged 16 to 74 on the internet in the four specific areas (information, communication, problem solving, content creation). It is assumed that individuals having performed certain activities have the corresponding skills; therefore, the indicator can be considered as a proxy of the digital competences and skills of individuals. Finally, based on the performance in the four specific areas, an overall digital skills indicator is calculated as a proxy of the digital competences and skills of individuals ('no skills', 'low', 'basic' or 'above basic'). The basic digital skills indicator shows the share of individuals with 'basic' and 'above basic' skills.

Source of the data: Eurostat (Eurostat online data code: [isoc_sk_dskl_i](#) and [isoc_sk_cskl_i](#))

Baseline (2018)	Interim milestone (2022)	Target (2024)
Basic digital skills: 56% ²¹	63%	67% ²²

Impact indicator 1: Aggregate score in the Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI)

Explanation: DESI is a composite index that summarises relevant indicators on Europe's digital performance and tracks the evolution of EU Member States in digital competitiveness. Higher values indicate a better performance

Source of the data: [DESI](#)

Methodology for calculating the indicator: The DESI index is calculated as the weighted average of the five main DESI dimensions: 1 Connectivity (25%), 2 Human Capital (25%), 3 Use of Internet (15%), 4 Integration of Digital Technology (20%) and 5 Digital Public Services (15%).

Baseline (2019)	Interim milestone (2022)	Target (2024)
52.45 ²³	Increase ²⁴	Increase ²⁵

Specific objective 2:

Increased take-up of digital opportunities in partner countries.

Related to spending programmes:
NDICI, IPA III

Result indicator 2.1: Proportion of financial assistance on digital opportunities actions under NDICI and IPA III

Explanation: This indicator measures the proportion of EU funding allocated to the support of digital opportunities in DG NEAR partner countries. Rising levels of investment will reflect the EU's strong commitment to support the digital transformation in its neighbourhood. Since the indicator measures the evolution during the 2020-2024 period, the baseline is set at 0. It does not imply that no action was taken in the past.

Source of data: European Commission

Baseline Beginning of 2020	Interim milestone (2022)	Target (2024)

²¹ Baselines (only available for IPA): Basic digital skills: WB 21,2%; Turkey 12,0%; Advanced digital skills: WB 9,0%; Turkey: 24,0%.

²² Milestones and targets should lead to an increase in overall percentage (both basic and digital skills combined).

²³ It is imperative to improve the reporting situation for the DESI indicator for EU partners, in particular concerning recipients of funding through the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance. The baseline in 2019 is that only 1 out of 6 IPA beneficiaries is able to calculate DESI (Serbia). Note that the data on this indicator exists only for IPA region.

²⁴ Milestone is to increase coverage in comparison to the baseline.

²⁵ Target for DG NEAR is to have 5 out of 6 IPA beneficiaries covered.

0	105% of final 2020 results	110% of final 2020 results
<p>Result indicator 2.2: Number of people who have benefited from VET/skills development interventions supported by the EU for ICT skills (disaggregated by sex, region geographic and/or urban/rural, age group).</p> <p>Explanation: The development of digital skills is a pre-requisite for the uptake of digital opportunities. This indicator reflects EU support for this key element of a functioning digital economy, and provides a direct link to the impact indicator. Since the indicator measures the evolution during the 2020-2024 period, the baseline is set at 0. It does not imply that no action was taken in the past.</p> <p>Source of data: OPSYS</p>		
Baseline Beginning of 2020	Interim milestone (2022)	Target (2024)
0	110% of final 2020 results	120% of final 2020 results
<p>Result indicator 2.3: Number of people who benefit from access to digitalised public and private services thanks to EU support (disaggregated by sex, region geographic and/or urban/rural, age group, type of user i.e. firms, individuals), with specific reference to a° digitalised government services; b) digitalised financial services</p> <p>Explanation: The availability of digitalised public and private services is a direct indication for the uptake of digital opportunities. In particular, the link between the number of people benefitting from such services and EU support reflects the Commissions' ambition to facilitate the advancement of e-government, e-health, digitalised industry etc. in partner countries. Since the indicator measures the evolution during the 2020-2024 period, the baseline is set at 0. It does not imply that no action was taken in the past.</p> <p>Source of data: OPSYS</p>		
Baseline Beginning of 2020	Interim milestone (2022)	Target (2024)
0	110% of final 2020 results	120% of final 2020 results

General objective 5: Promoting European Way of Life

Impact indicator 6: Third countries with migration policies to facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people

Explanation: The indicator describes the state of national migration policies. It is based on six policy domains: migrant rights, whole-of-government / evidence-based policies, cooperation and partnerships, socioeconomic well-being, mobility dimensions of crises, as well as safe, orderly and regular migration. The indicator gives the percentage share of governments in the EU's proximity that meet or fully meet the requirements

Source of the data: International Organization for Migration and United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs as custodian agencies; Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development as partner agency

Methodology for calculating the indicator: Explained in the [UN metadata file](#). Data will be available every two years as of 2019. 111 countries have provided data, which will be released before the end of 2019

Baseline (2018)	Interim milestone (2022)	Target (2024)
Western Balkans: 2.75 Turkey: 2 Eastern neighbourhood: 2.7 Southern neighbourhood: 2.3	Increase	Increase

Specific objective 5:

Effective migration management with partner countries is in place.

Related to spending programmes:
NDICI, IPA III

Result indicator 5.1: Number of migration management and/or forced displacement public policies a) developed/revised, and/or b) under implementation with EU support

Explanation: This indicator measures the plans and strategies on migration management under implementation or revised with EU support as a way of assessing the progress of migration management policies in partner countries.

Source of data: IPA Performance Framework and EU Results Framework

Baseline (2018)	Interim milestone (2022)	Target (2024)
Neigh. East: 9 Neigh. South: 6	Increase	Increase

Result indicator 5.2: Number of EU funded assistance interventions reporting improvement of compliance of Border and Security Systems with EU /Schengen Acquis

Explanation: This indicator is a proxy for assessing the progress of partner countries in their compliance with EU border and security standards.

Source of data: IPA Performance Framework

Baseline (2018)	Interim milestone (2022)	Target (2024)
3	Increase	Increase

Result indicator 5.3: Number of migrants, forcibly displaced people or individuals from host communities protected or assisted with EU support

Explanation: This indicator measures the number of displaced people who have received protection and assistance with EU support, as part of an overall effort in improving migration and displacement management.

Source of data: EU Results Framework

Baseline (2018)	Interim milestone (2022)	Target (2024)
Neigh. East: 20 000 Neigh. South: 1 002 000	Increase	Increase

Human Resource Management

Objective: DG NEAR employs a competent and engaged workforce and contributes to gender equality at all levels of management to effectively deliver on the Commission's priorities and core business

Indicator 1: Number and percentage of first female appointments to middle management positions

Source of data: DG HR

Baseline (female representation in management) (2019)	Target ²⁶ (2022)
9 (39%)	2

Indicator 2: DG NEAR staff engagement index

Source of data: Commission staff survey [data to be provided by DG HR]

Baseline (2018)	Target (2024)
69%	>=70%

²⁶ The target will be revised and extended for the period 2023-2024 by January 2023.

Sound Financial Management

Objective: The authorising officer by delegation has reasonable assurance that resources have been used in accordance with the principles of sound financial management, and that cost-effective controls are in place which give the necessary guarantees concerning the legality and regularity of underlying transactions

Indicator Estimated risk at closure (residual error rate)

Source of data: DG NEAR annual activity report

Baseline (2019)	Target (2024)
0,53%	< 2% of relevant expenditure

Indicator: Overall estimated cost of controls

Source of data: DG NEAR annual activity report

Baseline (2019)	Target (2024)
2,4%	< 5% of the total managed funds

Fraud Risk Management

Objective: The risk of fraud is minimised through the application of effective anti-fraud measures and the implementation of the Commission Anti-Fraud Strategy²⁷ aimed at the prevention, detection and correction²⁸ of fraud

Indicator Implementation of the actions included in DG NEAR anti-fraud strategy over the whole strategic plan lifecycle (2020-2024)

Source of data: DG NEAR annual activity report, DG NEAR anti-fraud strategy, OLAF reporting

Baseline (2020)	Target (2024)
0% of actions under the new strategy	100% of action points implemented in time

²⁷ Communication from the Commission 'Commission Anti-Fraud Strategy: enhanced action to protect the EU budget', COM(2019) 176 of 29 April 2019 – 'the CAFS Communication' – and the accompanying action plan, SWD(2019) 170 – 'the CAFS Action Plan'.

²⁸ Correction of fraud is an umbrella term, which notably refers to the recovery of amounts unduly spent and to administrative sanctions.

Digital Transformation and Information Management

<p>Objective: DG NEAR is using innovative, trusted digital solutions for better policy-shaping, information management and administrative processes to forge a truly digitally transformed, user-focused and data-driven Commission</p>		
<p>Indicator 1: Degree of implementation of the digital strategy principles by the most important IT solutions²⁹</p>		
<p>Source of data: DG NEAR</p>		
<p>Baseline (2020)</p>	<p>Interim milestone (2022)</p>	<p>Target (2024)</p>
1.1	1.3	1.5
<p>Indicator 2: Percentage of DG NEAR’s key data assets for which corporate principles for data governance have been implemented</p>		
<p>Source of data: [DG NEAR – key data asset inventory (in units C3, R1 and R5)]</p>		
<p>Baseline (2020)</p>	<p>Interim milestone (2022)</p>	<p>Target (2024)</p>
55%	65%	75%
<p>Indicator 3: Percentage of staff attending awareness raising activities on data protection compliance</p>		
<p>Source of data: HR AMC and DPC</p>		
<p>Baseline (2019)</p>	<p>Interim milestone (2022)</p>	<p>Target (2024)</p>
12.5%	60%	100%

²⁹ The European Commission Digital Strategy (C(2018)7118) calls on Commission services to digitally transform their business processes by developing new innovative digital solutions or make evolve the existing ones in line with the principles of the strategy. At the beginning of the year N+1, the Solution Owner and IT Investments Team will assess the progress made on the basis of the proposed modernisation plan. For each of the 3 solutions, a table will reflect – per principle - the progress achieved during the last year.

Expected degree of implementation of the EC Digital Strategy principles:

MIS (Management Information System)*

ID	PRINCIPLE	BASELINE 2020	TARGET 2024
1.1	Digital by default	1	
1.2	Once only	1,2	
2.1	Security	1	
2.2	Privacy	2	
3.1	Openness	1	
3.2	Transparency	1	
4.1	Interoperability	1,3	
4.2	Cross border	1,5	
5.1	User centric	1	
5.2	Data driven	0	
5.3	Agile	1,3	
	Average	55,91%	

IPA-APP

ID	PRINCIPLE	BASELINE 2020	TARGET 2024
1.1	Digital by default	1	1
1.2	Once only	1,5	1,8
2.1	Security	1,5	2
2.2	Privacy	2	2
3.1	Openness	1	1,5
3.2	Transparency	1	1,5
4.1	Interoperability	1,3	1,5
4.2	Cross border	1	1

5.1	User centric	1	1,5
5.2	Data driven	0	1
5.3	Agile	1,3	1,5
	Average	57,27%	74,09%

TMS

ID	PRINCIPLE	BASELINE 2020	TARGET 2024
1.1	Digital by default	1	1
1.2	Once only	1,2	1,8
2.1	Security	1	2
2.2	Privacy	1,5	2
3.1	Openness	1	1,5
3.2	Transparency	1	1,5
4.1	Interoperability	1	1,5
4.2	Cross border	1,5	1,5
5.1	User centric	1,2	1,75
5.2	Data driven	0	1
5.3	Agile	1,2	1,5
	Average	52,73%	77,50%

IESAQ**

ID	PRINCIPLE	BASELINE 2020	TARGET 2024
1.1	Digital by default		1
1.2	Once only		1,8
2.1	Security		2
2.2	Privacy		2
3.1	Openness		1,5

3.2	Transparency		1,5
4.1	Interoperability		1,5
4.2	Cross border		1,5
5.1	User centric		1,5
5.2	Data driven		1
5.3	Agile		1,5
	Average		76,36%

*MIS is expected to be phased out before 2024

**IESAQ is a new IT application currently under development and is expected to be rolled out in 2021