



INTRODUCTION

Dear Reader,

Welcome to the final newsletter of the IPA 2019 Multi-beneficiary Programme (MBP) service contract, where we highlight the achievements and efforts made by the participating National Statistical Institutes (NSIs) of Albania (AL), Bosnia and Herzegovina (BA), North Macedonia (MK), Kosovo¹ (XK), Montenegro (ME), Serbia (RS) and Türkiye (TR). BA and XK fully benefited from this service contract, while five partner countries AL, ME, MK, RS and TR were partially covered by this contract and had limited number of activities as they benefited from direct grants received under the same programme.

The crucial role of official statistics, especially within the fast-paced changes of today's world, cannot be overstated. These statistics are indispensable for informed decision-making that shapes the future of the Western Balkans and Türkiye. Accurate, timely, and harmonised data enables stakeholders to navigate economic, social, and environmental shifts effectively. By adhering to high standards of quality and transparency, NSIs in this region ensure the reliability of data, facilitating policy development and evaluation. This foundational work is essential for driving progress and fostering sustainable development, guided by robust and insightful statistical evidence.

The commitment displayed by the NSIs throughout the duration of the IPA 2019 project have been exemplary. Moreover, the exceptional support and cooperation from Eurostat, especially the team from Unit B3 "Enlargement, neighbourhood, and development cooperation," have been instrumental in the project's success. Their collaborative efforts have ensured the project's efficient and timely execution, leading to productive outcomes. We extend our appreciation to all individuals involved in the IPA 2019 project for their steadfast dedication and valuable contributions.

Collectively, we have achieved remarkable progress in enhancing statistical capabilities and fostering a culture of evidence-based policymaking. The successful implementation of the project has met its anticipated goals and has had a significant impact, particularly in areas such as:

- **Data availability:** The project improved the availability, quality, and comparability of statistics following EU standards, in selected statistical areas, relevant for accession negotiations. Partner countries increased the volume and quality of their data and transmitted it to Eurostat for its validation and dissemination jointly with the EU MS data, upon project completion.
- **Fostering regional cooperation:** The project promoted regional cooperation and best practice exchange between partner countries through workshops, training, and study visits.
- **Capacity development:** The project supported partner countries in enhancing the skills of their staff and ensuring sustainable development, funding around 1400 participants in various events.
- **Ownership:** Partner countries effectively managed to identify their needs, develop their policies and activities by requesting a vast number of ad-hoc activities.
- **Integration into the European Statistical System (ESS):** Partner countries continued aligning their statistics with EU standards, and participated in the methodological discussions within the ESS.
- **New methodologies:** The work focused on new methodologies in line with European standards, to ensure the comparability of statistical information within the region and with the EU Member States.

¹ 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



Funded by
the European Union

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OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT

Overall objective

The overall objective was to prepare the statistical authorities in the partner countries for future EU membership by aligning their present methodologies and practices with the statistical **acquis** and integrating them into the European Statistical System.

Specific purpose

The specific purposes were strongly interconnected because their essence is to improve data quality. However, they describe different parts of development in a statistical system through change in capacity and change in structure.

They stem from the anticipated outputs that the project aimed to achieve.

The purposes of this contract were as follows:

- To improve the availability and quality of statistical data in the partner countries, essential for developing and implementing European policies and for the preparation of the partner countries for future EU membership.
- To upgrade and strengthen the statistical systems in the partner countries, thereby improving the availability, reliability, comparability and timeliness of statistical data, in particular in selected statistical areas.

PROJECT OVERVIEW – GENERAL INFORMATION



Project duration:
01 April 2021 - 31 March 2024



Overall contract budget:
EUR 4,806,944



19 Statistical Projects



302 participants in training courses



47 trainees



144 expert missions
41 remote



399.5 working days
in ad-hoc consultations



26 workshops
8 remote



4.74 Average satisfaction
of the partner countries with
workshops
5 being the best score



33 study visits

8 planned SP study visits
24 ad-hoc study visits

Approximate



400 deliverables produced by partner countries' NSIs



446 participations in working group meetings and alike
154 remote



55 service contracts contracted with the partner countries



1341 participants

from the seven partner countries in horizontal activities organised

- numbers in brackets show those activities that were attended online:

Partner country	WG meetings	Training courses	SP Workshops	Study Visits	Traineeships	Total
Bosnia and Herzegovina	257 (90)	157 (2)	49 (12)	70	5	533 (104)
Kosovo	189 (64)	69 (1)	58 (16)	50	3	366 (81)
TOTAL	446 (154)	226 (3)	107 (28)	120	8	899 (185)

Grant country*	Training courses	SP Workshops	Study Visits	Traineeships	Total
Albania	7	47	9	11	81
Montenegro	2	43	0	4	61
North Macedonia	52	49	12	4	132
Serbia	4	41	5	6	65
Türkiye	11	61	11	14	103
TOTAL	76	241	37	39	442

* Participants from AL, ME, MK, RS and TR financed their participation from the IPA 2019 statistical grants.

MAJOR RESULTS ACHIEVED BY THE PROJECT

At inter-institutional level:

- Overall, the NSIs have experienced a notable enhancement in their role and confidence as coordinators of the national statistical system, solidifying their position as key players in the statistical landscape.
- NSIs and other national authorities have successfully fostered improved cooperation across multiple areas. For instance, collaborations with Central Banks in statistical project contracts have been strengthened, facilitating the exchange of vital information. Similarly, links between NSIs and Customs have been strengthened, leading to more seamless data sharing and coordination. Moreover, significant improvements have been made in communication with stakeholders, particularly with other data providers, resulting in more effective and efficient data dissemination and utilisation.
- The COVID-19 pandemic still had a substantial impact in the beginning of the project, but despite the challenges, inter-institutional cooperation has demonstrated positive progress. NSIs, along with other relevant institutions, have worked together to overcome obstacles and find

innovative solutions. This collective effort has resulted in strengthened inter-institutional relationships and improved coordination, ensuring the continuity of statistical activities and the provision of reliable data even during these difficult times.

At the national level:

- The availability and quality of statistical data have improved across the 19 statistical projects, providing more accurate and reliable information for decision-making and policy formulation.
- The project's active engagement in international capacity building activities has attracted and retained NSI staff while integrating them into the global statistical network. This has significantly contributed to their motivation and professional growth.
- Many improvements were made with regard to data quality and data transmission.
- The knowledge level significantly increased through training courses and horizontal activities.

Selected Achievements Across Partner Countries

Below are some examples of significant improvements in various areas for the different countries.

Data availability is one of the most important and crucial outcomes of this project, and all partner countries were able to submit new data, improve existing data and make significant progress. BA and XK fully benefited from the comprehensive support and resources provided by this project, which enabled them to engage in a wider range of activities. In contrast, the other partner countries (AL, ME, MK, RS, and TR) had a limited number of activities in this project due to the direct grant each of them received under the same programme.

Bosnia and Herzegovina (BA):

- Submitted new or revised QNA Inventories.
- Transmitted EDP/GFS data.
- Elaborated final versions of Inventory on the compilation of government non-financial accounts and EDP statistics.
- Developed new STS indicators in the area of services.
- Transmitted new experimental SPPIs for NACE codes 53.1, 53.2, and 61 to Eurostat.
- Submitted WEEE data to Eurostat.
- Upgraded BHAIS application with new functionality.
- Produced and published reference metadata for statistical surveys in the domain of social protection statistics.
- Jointly conducted a feasibility study regarding potential calculation of Monthly unemployment rates (MURs).

Albania (AL):

- Prepared annual employment data time series for 1995-2011 according to ESA 2010 Transmission Programme requirements.
- Prepared annual individual housing construction time series for 1995-2016.
- Prepared the annual and quarterly previous year's prices and chain-linked volume series of ESA transmission program table 0120 (exports) and table 0121 (imports) for the years 2017 – 2020.
- Transmitted regional data to Eurostat.

Montenegro (ME):

- Revised QNA Inventories.
- Improved data transmitted based on the ESA 2010 Transmission Programme, especially for Tables 0101, 0102, 0103, 0110, 0111 and 0117.
- Elaborated a road map for the revision of national accounts planned for 2026.

North Macedonia (MK):

- Submitted country revision policy documents.
- Submitted new or revised QNA Inventories.
- Improved compliance with the ESA transmission programme.

Kosovo (XK)

- Compiled the SUT for 2016.
- Extended the time series of sector accounts and updated the ASA inventory.
- Transmitted EDP/GFS data.
- Completed various tasks related to PPP, including survey validations and transmission to Eurostat.
- Continued the development of a pilot industrial waste data collection system.
- Submitted data on municipal waste recycling to Eurostat.
- Launched a metadata application and a new web page with a dedicated part for Quality and Metadata.
- Established an interagency working group coordinating ONAs in terms of metadata.
- Introduced an action plan for inclusion of more ONAs in quality-based production of official statistics.

Serbia (RS):

- Submitted country revision policy documents.
- Made significant progress with regional data transmission to Eurostat, meeting fully the requirements for tables 10 and 12.
- Improved compliance with the ESA transmission programme.

Türkiye (TR):

- Submitted country revision policy documents.
- Progress in regional accounts.
- Is close to full compliance with the requirements of the ESA 2010 transmission programme (TP).
- Updated the ASA inventory.

National Statistical Institutes' Insight: Evaluating the Impact of the IPA 2019 Project

This section presents some of the findings directly from the partner countries involved in the 2019 IPA programme. Their voices provide valuable insights into collaboration, capacity building and progress towards harmonisation with EU standards.

Albanian Institute of Statistics (INSTAT)

During the implementation of IPA 2019 MBP, INSTAT actively participated in various meetings, workshops, trainings and other activities. These interactions were instrumental in **knowledge transfer** and enhancing INSTAT's human resource capacity through comprehensive training programs and valuable traineeships. These initiatives have not only strengthened our statistical methodologies but have also significantly improved overall performance and operational efficiency.

In addition, developing institutional networks during these engagements has added significant value to INSTAT's work. These networks have improved **communication and collaboration** with various domestic and international partners."

Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BHAS)

IPA 2019 MBP had a profound impact on **capacity building and knowledge transfer** concerning EU requirements in various statistical domains. This enabled benchmarking and the identification of areas which require further improvement in quality management across statistical institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Additionally, within this project, expert assistance and ad-hoc trainings were conducted at our request to strengthen statistical capacities.

To ensure the **sustainability** of the improvements achieved through this project, statistical institutions in BA have implemented concrete measures, such as internal trainings, to strengthen the internal capacities and promote the adoption of good practices gained from IPA projects."

Kosovo Agency of Statistics (KAS)

Within the framework of this project, **technical support** was provided to KAS. Experts from specific profiles have provided guidance on best practices, methods and standards, helping to improve the quality and comparability of statistical data.

The IPA 2019 MBP has supported the **transfer of knowledge** to staff, e.g. workshops, seminars and other capacity building events have been organised, in most cases with the participation of KAS staff. These activities, not only with the EU countries but also through joint workshops between the countries in the region, have influenced cooperation and exchange of experiences as well as the creation of a social network to continue cooperation and exchange of views even after the activity has ended."

Statistical Office of Montenegro (MONSTAT)

IPA funding is the largest donor in the region, and its **visibility** has always been extremely important. We promote and make visible not only the project itself but also the specific outcomes of the statistical projects implemented within it. MONSTAT has made significant efforts in recent years to improve the visibility of its data, the production of which has been supported by IPA MB programmes. Within IPA 2019 MBP, Monstat worked on the promotion of official statistical data via social networks, the **communication** skills of its staff, the ability and resources to monitor the new social network user groups, and the readiness to provide feedback information and respond to the various challenges that this type of modern communication with users brings."

State Statistical Office of North Macedonia (SSO)

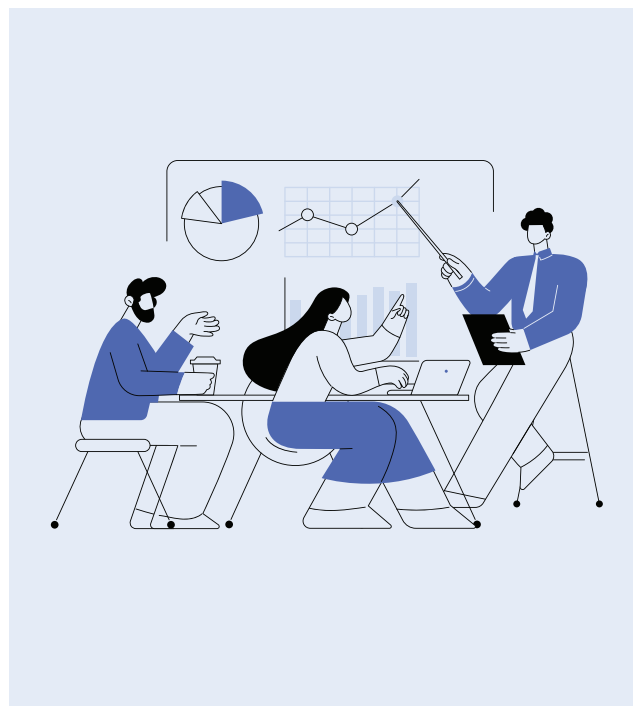
Through this IPA 2019 programme, we have cooperated with the EU statistical institutes and exchanged experiences between partner countries. An example of this is the **cooperation** between the SSO and the Czech Statistical Office (CZSO), which is of a strategic nature and enables a permanent **exchange of experience** and continuous improvement of work not only in the national accounts departments but also in other departments of the SSO.

In terms of **visibility** and informing interested users of statistical data, the work on publishing annual non-financial sector accounts for three years, 2018-2020, can be highlighted. During the IPA 2019, efforts were made to improve the data in the sector accounts, and the result was visible in the publication of the sector accounts (SA). Further efforts will be made to publish the SA as our continuous work."

Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SORS)

IPA 2019 MBP significantly improved **statistical data availability and quality** through various means. Firstly, it introduced standardised data collection methodologies aligned with EU requirements, ensuring consistency and comparability across different datasets. Secondly, by implementing robust quality control measures and enhancing data validation processes, the reliability of statistical outputs increased notably. Economic statistics were the area with the greatest impact, as IPA 2019 focused extensively on harmonising reporting practices in this domain, resulting in more comprehensive and accurate economic indicators. "

In line with the IPA 2019 MBP objectives, SORS has provided Eurostat with a full set of non-financial annual sector accounts data for 2010-2021, significantly improving the timeliness of National Accounts tables transmission. As improvements in the methodology of compiling and publishing National Accounts data and their compliance with the statistical acquis are the key criteria for closing Chapter 18, the impact of the Programme is evident."



Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat)

The project had a great impact on **statistical data availability**. The greatest impact of this project is that, for the first time, gross fixed capital formation is studied at the activity and asset level. In this way, the statistical project National Accounts Methodology pioneered the preparation of more detailed tables in line with EU standards in the planned benchmark revision.

In the statistical project Regional Accounts, the number of employees by province was compiled for the first time. In addition, within this project's scope, regional compensation of employees and regional household accounts began to be transmitted to Eurostat for the first time.

The project contributed to the **promotion of cooperation and confidence building**. In this context, the task and data sharing protocol between the three main GFS/EDP statistical authorities (TurkStat, Ministry of Treasury and Finance, Central Bank of the Republic of Türkiye) was officially signed with the stakeholders to provide a more compatible and standard system for GFS/EDP."



In summary, the 2019 IPA multi-beneficiary programme has played an important role in the further development of national statistical systems in the partner countries, particularly in the broader context of Chapter 18 (Statistics) of the EU accession negotiations, an area fundamental to the functioning of modern societies and economies. Through concerted efforts and cooperation, significant progress has been made in aligning statistical methods and practices with EU standards. This harmonisation not only improves the quality, comparability and timeliness of statistical data but also strengthens the basis for evidence-based policymaking and decision-making and creates a robust statistical framework that is essential for sustainable development and sound governance. What has been achieved emphasises the indispensable role of official statistics in addressing the complex challenges of today's world.

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