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ANNEX VI

to the Commission Implementing Decision on the financing of the multiannual action plan part I in favour of the Regional South Neighbourhood for 2024-2026

Action Document for Support for Improvement in Governance and Communication in the Southern Neighbourhood

MULTIANNUAL ACTION PLAN

This document constitutes the multiannual work programme in the sense of Article 110(2) of the Financial Regulation, and action plan/measure in the sense of Article 23(2) of NDICI-Global Europe Regulation.

1. SYNOPSIS

1.1. Action Summary Table

1. Title OPSYS Basic Act	Support for Improvement in Governance and Communication in the Neighbourhood South Multiannual action plan part I in favour of the Regional South Neighbourhood for 2024-2026 OPSYS business reference ACT-62637 ABAC Commitment level 1 number: JAD.1416019 Financed under the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI-Global Europe)
2. Economic and Investment Plan (EIP)	Yes
EIP Flagship	Yes – Flagship 2 (Human rights, the rule of law, and modern, effective administrations, governance and accountability)
3. Team Europe Initiative	No
4. Beneficiar(y)/(ies) of the action	The action shall be carried out in the Southern Neighbourhood countries: Algeria, Egypt, Israel ¹ , Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine*, Syria ² and Tunisia.

¹ See Guidelines on the eligibility of Israeli entities and their activities in the territories occupied by Israel since June 1967 for grants, prizes and financial instruments funded by the EU from 2014 onwards on http://eurlex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.C_.2013.205.01.0009.01.ENG.

* This designation shall not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual positions of the Member States on this issue. Implementation of the present action will integrate the recommendations of the Communication to the Commission on the review of ongoing financial assistance for Palestine C (2023) 8300, 21.11.2023.

² Co-operation with the Government of Syria suspended since 2011.

5. Programming document	Multi-annual indicative programme for the Southern Neighbourhood (2021-2027) ³			
6. Link with relevant MIP(s) objectives/expected results	Support measures, Cooperation Facilities			
PRIORITY AREAS AND SECTOR INFORMATION				
7. Priority Area(s), sectors	150 - Government and civil society 430 - Other multisector			
8. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	Main SDG (1 only): 16 Promote peaceful and inclusive societies Other significant SDGs: 17 Partnerships for the Goals			
9. DAC code(s)	15110 Public sector policy and administrative management (100%) 99820 – Promotion of development awareness			
10. Main Delivery Channel	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (Contributions to special funds for Technical Co-operation Activities) – 47080 Private sector in provider country - 61000			
11. Targets	<input type="checkbox"/> Migration <input type="checkbox"/> Climate <input type="checkbox"/> Social inclusion and Human Development <input type="checkbox"/> Gender <input type="checkbox"/> Biodiversity <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Human Rights, Democracy and Governance			
12. Markers (from DAC form)	General policy objective	Not targeted	Significant objective	Principal objective
	Participation development/good governance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Aid to environment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Gender equality and women's and girl's empowerment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Reproductive, maternal, new-born and child health	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Disaster Risk Reduction	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Inclusion of persons with Disabilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Nutrition	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	RIO Convention markers	Not targeted	Significant	Principal

³ Commission Implementing Decision C(2021)9399 of 16.12.2021 on a Multi-Annual Indicative Programme for the Southern Neighbourhood.

13. Internal markers and Tags

		objective	objective
Biological diversity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Combat desertification	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Climate change mitigation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Climate change adaptation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Policy objectives	Not targeted	Significant objective	Principal objective
EIP	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
EIP Flagship	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>	
Tags	YES	NO	
transport	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
energy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
environment, climate resilience	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
digital	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
economic development (incl. private sector, trade and macroeconomic support)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
human development (incl. human capital and youth)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
health resilience	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
migration and mobility	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
agriculture, food security and rural development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
rule of law, governance and public administration reform	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Digitalisation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tags	YES	NO	
digital connectivity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
digital governance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
digital entrepreneurship	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
digital skills/literacy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
digital services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Connectivity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tags	YES	NO	

digital connectivity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
energy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
transport	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
health	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
education and research	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Migration	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduction of Inequalities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
COVID-19	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

BUDGET INFORMATION

14. Amounts concerned	Budget line(s) (article, item): 14.020110 Southern Neighbourhood Total estimated cost: EUR 5 734 571.43 Total amount of EU budget contribution: EUR 5 700 000
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MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

15. Implementation modalities (management mode and delivery methods)	Direct management through: - Procurement Indirect management with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)
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1.2. Summary of the Action

This action contributes to efficiently supporting the implementation of the EU partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood region, through 1. the strengthening of better and more resilient public governance systems in beneficiary countries to deliver improved policy outcomes and public services to its citizens and 2. the implementation of strategic communication aiming at raising awareness of EU actions in the Southern Neighbourhood and of their benefits. This supports the general policy objective of strengthening good governance and contributes to the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals, specifically towards Goal 16 (promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies, the provision of access to justice for all, and building effective, accountable institutions at all levels) and Goal 17, Partnerships for the Goals. It contributes to EIP Flagship 2.

This action is programmed under the Multiannual Indicative Programme for the Southern Neighbourhood region for the period 2021-2027 under Support Measures – Cooperation Facilities.

Sector of support 1 – Public Administration Reform

This aims to facilitate more sustainable governance and public administration reforms (PAR) and strengthen public administrations in the Southern Neighbourhood region in line with the Principles of Public Administration, so that they correspond to European values of democracy, human rights/Rule of Law, integrity, predictability, accountability, legality and transparency; and provide quality policy outcomes and services to citizens and businesses in order to support socio-economic development.

This action will be implemented through the programme Support for Improvement in Governance and Management (SIGMA) - a joint initiative of the European Union (EU) and the OECD. SIGMA will contribute towards strengthening the public administrations of beneficiaries through targeted regional activities focused on experience sharing and strengthening of administrative capacities, thereby increasing

transparency, accountability, responsiveness, and participation and provide quality policy outcomes supporting socio-economic development.

The activities will be designed to produce improvements in the implementation of the priorities related to good governance and the rule of law, as set out by the Agenda for the Mediterranean adopted on 9 February 2021⁴. In addition to the dissemination of the best practice at the regional level, this will include also conduct of assessments covering one or more of the 6 core PAR areas further defined by the Principles of Public Administration⁵: strategic framework of public administration reform, policy development and co-ordination, public service and human resource management, accountability, service delivery and public financial management (including internal control, external audit and public procurement), organisation and functioning of government and public administration at national level, distribution of responsibilities and relations between levels of government. This will be based on demand and taking into account country-specific needs.

Sector of support 2 – Support to strategic communication and public diplomacy

This action aims at increasing the understanding and awareness of the EU and its policies as well as improving the public perception of the EU in its Southern Neighbourhood partner countries, again in the framework of the Agenda for the Mediterranean, further reflected in the Multi-Annual Indicative programme for the Southern Neighbourhood (2021-2027), see paragraph 4.2.

The action seeks to build on the lessons learned, success stories, and the innovative approach in communication already initiated and set out under the previous phases of Regional Communication Programmes for the Southern Neighbourhood. It also seeks to support the general trend of modernisation of the EU communication sector by fostering strategic communication approaches. It is intended to support and strengthen existing communication networks and platforms of the EU. It will directly support the EU Delegations' public diplomacy and outreach activities in partner countries by providing targeted support in communicating EU values, policies and results of EU programmes and projects. Through tailored strategic communication activities, it will help to raise the profile of the EU and its work in the target region by generating attractive and compelling stories and by engaging with strategic multiplier groups. It seeks to highlight the benefits of the partnership between the EU and its Southern Neighbourhood countries by channelling facts and stories into thematic communication actions.

1.3. Beneficiar(y)/(ies) of the action

The action shall be carried out in the Southern Neighbourhood: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Syria and Tunisia, out of which only Israel is not included in the list of ODA (Official Development Assistance) recipients.

2. RATIONALE

2.1. Context

Since 2021, the EU policy in the Southern Neighbourhood is guided by the New Agenda for the Mediterranean, which stresses that a strengthened Mediterranean partnership remains a strategic imperative for the European Union, as the challenges that the region continues to face require a common response.

⁴ Joint Communication to the European parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Renewed partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood. A new Agenda for the Mediterranean – [JOIN/2021/2 final](#)

⁵ [Principles of Public Administration - OECD \(sigmaweb.org\)](#)

The Agenda recognises good governance as one of the key elements of the partnership, especially in the context of today's multiple challenges (governance, socio-economic, climate, environmental, security) faced by the region, many of which result from global trends and call for joint action by the EU and Southern Neighbourhood partners. Good governance is the bedrock for stable fair, inclusive and prosperous societies, with respect for diversity and tolerance. Strong, accountable institutions are key to protect rights and fight inequalities, serve human and economic development by contributing to a safe and predictable business environment, help attract foreign direct investment, increase economic resilience and combat poverty .

In addition, the abovementioned Communication recommends that the EU uses all its instruments to ensure the efficient, effective, swift and tailor-made rollout of the new Agenda for the Mediterranean. In this respect, the Communication calls for strategic communication by the EU, aiming at building a shared understanding with Southern Neighbourhood partners of a mutually beneficial partnership and of co-ownership, reflecting each partners' ambitions and commitment to shared values, the agenda of reforms, including on governance, and their implementation, taking into account the region's diversity, interests and needs, attention to the impact of EU cooperation at local level and highlighting the social dynamics and impact of challenges and reforms. It recalls that countering disinformation and misinformation will remain a key aspect of this approach.

The review of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) in 2015 highlighted the need for a stronger partnership with the EU Neighbourhood region as global threats need to be tackled by the international community in a united manner. The need for strong public administrations that support resilience of state in partners in the region has been reiterated by the current crisis in Gaza and its spillover to other countries in the region. The crisis has also heavily affected the perception of the EU in the region, requiring robust answers in terms of strategic communication.

The stabilisation of the Neighbourhood South has become one of the pressing challenges of the EU. Poverty, inequality, corruption, poor governance, and weak economic and social development are sources of instability. The focus on an accountable public administration as key to democratic governance and economic development is in line with the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals. Goal 16 is specifically about the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies, the provision of access to justice for all, and building effective, accountable institutions at all levels.

This Action will seek complementarity with other institution-building tools available in the EU Neighbourhood, notably Twinning, TAIEX, technical assistance and budget support operations on one hand, and with Delegations' bilateral communication programmes and other programmes' components related to communication and visibility on the other hand.

The Action will also promote complementarity and synergies with the better governance projects funded under the 2021-2027 Interreg NEXT MED and Interreg NEXT Italy-Tunisia cross-border cooperation programmes in the Mediterranean Sea Basin.

Sector of support 1 – Public Administration Reform

The EU policy framework recognises the importance of Public Administration Reform (PAR). It remains a key priority in strengthening states' capacity to govern in a context of fragility and is a cross-cutting issue of fundamental importance for success in political and economic reforms and building a basis for implementing good governance standards. The quality of administration directly impacts governments' ability to provide public services, to prevent and fight against corruption and to foster competitiveness and growth. An accountable public administration is key to democratic governance and inclusive economic development.

PAR is about strengthening democratic and independent institutions, the development of a professional, depoliticized and accountable civil service, developing eGovernment and increasing institutional transparency and accountability; improving capacity in policy development, service delivery and management of public finances, and supporting the work of national parliaments.

Sector of support 2 - Support to strategic communication and public diplomacy

The Southern Neighbourhood is a region of strategic importance for the EU and the EU's policies for this region is geared to support reform and democracy, as well as foster prosperity and stability around European borders. In this framework, the EU has a vital interest to engage with citizens in its partner countries to increase knowledge of its values and policies as well as to build support around these.

Over the last decade, several regional communication programmes focusing on the Southern Neighbourhood have been supported by the EU. These programmes have progressively reinforced understanding and awareness of the EU in the region, providing annual data on the evolution of public perception. They have helped shape more strategic communications and strengthen the communication capabilities of EU Delegations in the Neighbourhood.

In this context, the EU guidelines for external action on “Communicating and Raising EU Visibility” developed jointly by Commission services (European Commission Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR)) and the European External Action Service (EEAS) and updated in July 2022 emphasise the following key elements: 1. moving away from a project-based communication to a more thematic-based communication to avoid fragmentation of messages and to support stronger narratives per theme; 2. focus not only on what the action is, but why it is needed, including by emphasising shared values, interests, and impact so as to resonate with the motivations of the target audience; 3. Properly identifying and segmenting target audience, primarily two complementary types of audience: wider audiences, particularly in the 18-35 years age bracket who may not be aware of the EU; and specialised audiences, including key political and opinion leaders, think tanks, business community and private sector, activists and other relevant multipliers; 4. Include alongside classical channels of communication networks and multipliers (media, civil society, academia, business, Member States that can increase reach, credibility and impact) and influencers who are recognised voices who can not only amplify the reach of content, but who can also connect with and engage the target audience.

2.2. Problem Analysis

Sector 1 – Public Administration Reform

Short problem analysis

Generating credible and relevant policy options remains a challenge. The main shortcomings relate to the lack of proper policy analysis capacities, poor quality of legislative drafting and policy development, poor interministerial co-ordination, inadequate public consultation, unstable investment environment and weak fiscal and regulatory impact assessments. In addition, costs for implementation of policies are not systematically calculated and budgeted. These elements largely explain why the beneficiaries continue to suffer from poor implementation and enforcement record of laws, policies and investments.

There is a difficult context for a professional, meritocratic, de-politicised, reliable public administration to emerge.

The overall administrative architecture is fragmented, leading to a proliferation of agencies with various accountability lines and other dysfunctions.

Resource allocation lacks transparency, ministries have very limited capacities to plan and contribute to this. National budgets are not understood as policy instruments and sound, effective management of public finances is not always seen as an important part of public administration.

Identification of main stakeholders and corresponding institutional and/or organisational issues (mandates, potential roles, and capacities) to be covered by the action.

The main stakeholders are the state institutions responsible for public governance reforms, including development of PAR, policy development and co-ordination, public service and human resource management, public financial management (including public procurement, internal control, internal audit, and external audit); structures in charge of coordination among institutions; independent bodies and parliaments within the scope of their scrutiny and oversight powers, and other relevant stakeholders⁶. The actual organisation varies according to the assignment of responsibilities at the level of each beneficiary country.

Sector 2 - Support to strategic communication and public diplomacy

Short problem analysis

As evidenced by opinion polls conducted in February under the ongoing regional communication programme covering the Neighbours South region⁷, the European Union's image has suffered a significant decline in positive perception among citizens in several countries. A stark 14 percentage point drop in the EU's positive image has been recorded, culminating in the lowest approval rating since 2017, with only 26% of respondents across ten countries holding a favourable view. This negative trend is most acute in Jordan, Palestine, and Israel, where the positive image has fallen by 35, 28, and 21 percentage points respectively. The data shows that negative perceptions now outweigh positive ones, with particularly high negative sentiment observed in Libya, Palestine, Syria and Tunisia. Even in countries where positive views are relatively more prevalent, such as Morocco and Lebanon, there has been an observable decline.

The deterioration in the EU's image correlates strongly with public opinion on the EU's response to the events of 7th October and the subsequent crisis in Gaza. Over half of those surveyed believe their perception of the EU has worsened since this date, with at least one in two respondents in each country expressing this sentiment. Furthermore, the polls highlight a generational impact on perceptions of the EU, with the 40-54 age group exhibiting the most significant increase in negative views, rising by 19 percentage points.

Identification of main stakeholders and corresponding institutional and/or organisational issues (mandates, potential roles, and capacities) to be covered by the action.

The anticipated communication efforts aim therefore predominantly at young adults, specifically those aged between 15 and 35, residing in both the Southern Neighbourhood region and within the EU itself. The intent is for these young people to not only receive the messages, but also to act as facilitators and influencers for further dissemination. Educational entities, youth organizations, student groups, and other youth-related bodies are inherently involved as key stakeholders by this approach.

The communication programme will also engage with influential media outlets to cultivate a supportive press environment, thus broadening the reach of its messages. This encompasses various media platforms,

⁶ For example, civil society organisations and business associations.

⁷ [Opinion polls - EU Neighbours](#)

both local and regional, throughout the targeted areas. The communication programme will similarly target other influential, non-traditional entities that could bolster the distribution of the EU's communications.

The communication programme will prioritise other groups within the region to help channel its messages and enhance public backing. These groups include recipients of EU project funding, the civil society sector, local entities, government authorities at different levels, and the social media communities. Additionally, the communication programme will engage the general audience that has an interest in the EU enlargement process, recognizing their role in shaping perceptions and facilitating broader dialogue.

2.3. Lessons Learned

Sector 1 – Public Administration Reform

Lessons learned result in a set of policy recommendations to increase the impact of SIGMA:

- Concentrate efforts on a limited number of key horizontal systems such as completion and modernisation of the general administrative and accountability frameworks; policy development and co-ordination capacities; data collection, monitoring and reporting systems; rationalisation/simplification of administrative structures (especially of enforcement mechanisms) and procedures; public service and human resource management, public procurement and public financial management, including external audit;
- Duly take into account and ensure co-ordination with all PAR related initiatives through close co-ordination with geographical units in the Commission (DG NEAR), EU Delegations, the Project Administrative Officers (PAOs), the relevant line DGs and other donors or international organisations;
- Support the Southern Neighbourhood region beneficiaries and the European Commission on the development of realistic and fully owned public administration and Public Finance Management (PFM) reforms subject to constant monitoring of implementation including stronger links between horizontal and sectorial approaches;
- Contribute to a more adapted, problem driven approach through including national and regional expertise into the design and implementation of specific modernisation efforts, accepting sensitivities concerning terminologies, approaches and solutions.
- Contribute to the European Commission's efforts in raising political awareness and commitment to governance reform, including potential assessment activities and establishing regular dialogue with Southern Neighbourhood region beneficiaries regarding PAR strategies and initiatives.
- Put more emphasis on implementation and provide support on how reforms and sectorial strategies are designed, prioritised, sequenced and implemented. Build up horizontal capacity and the necessary frameworks to support it;
- Deepen the evidence basis of policies in various PAR areas and strengthen instruments for monitoring progress.
- Reinforce the action in priority countries of the Southern Neighbourhood region, while keeping a flexible approach for other countries.

Sector 2 - Support to strategic communication and public diplomacy

The earlier phases of the communication programmes focused on the Southern Neighbourhood region laid the foundations for an increase in visibility and knowledge about the European Neighbourhood Policy and EU programmes in partner countries. The subsequent Regional Communication Programme (2021-2024) brought further progress in disseminating quality information about the EU's action in the regions and has also brought the following lessons learnt:

- The Programme's communication tool and online platforms was at times perceived as competing with Delegation's bilateral communication programmes and accounts. Considerable resources have been deployed to manage the Programme's communication tools and online platforms in full complementarity with bilateral programmes, while providing Delegations with content sourcing and production not covered by the latter;
- Engaging young people as multipliers has shown a large potential in the Southern Neighbourhood region via the Young European Ambassadors initiative (now called the "In their eyes" community) and the EU Jeel Connectors network. These networks currently count 33 EU Goodwill Ambassadors and 194 EU Jeel connectors, but they both have the potential to be further increased. The so-called "coffee labs" proved to serve as powerful triggers of interest with the younger generations;
- Despite the emergence and omnipresence of social networks, traditional media (audiovisual, print and alternative media) remain an important source of information for citizens of the Southern Neighbourhood region;
- To ensure the success of a communication program, it is vital to embrace a multifaceted approach in delivering messages. Recognizing the diversity of the target audience, it is essential to employ a variety of communication channels such as traditional media, social media platforms, and interactive forums like public events and workshops. Additionally, direct engagement with the community can enhance the resonance and impact of the communication efforts. This strategic use of multiple avenues caters to different preferences and accessibility, thereby increasing the likelihood of effective communication.
- Tackling the spread of misinformation head-on with well-coordinated awareness campaigns is imperative for neutralising the threat of disinformation and safeguarding the sanctity of information throughout the region. By proactively educating the public and raising awareness about the methods and consequences of misinformation, individuals can be empowered to critically assess the information they encounter. This approach not only reinforces the resilience of communities against deceptive narratives but also fosters a culture of informed scepticism that values accuracy and truthfulness. Establishing robust channels of credible and transparent communication helps in building public trust and contributes to a more informed and discerning audiences.
- Incorporating flexibility within the framework of programme implementation is crucial for adapting to unforeseen challenges and optimising outcomes without fundamentally altering the core objectives and character of the initiatives undertaken. This agility allows programme manager to respond swiftly to real-time feedback, evolving circumstances, and emerging opportunities, thereby ensuring that the actions remain relevant and effective. By maintaining this adaptive approach, programme can continuously improve their strategies and methodologies, fine-tuning its efforts to better meet the needs of their target audiences and stakeholders.
- Communication actions are at times hampered by the difficulty to gather data and information on the results of the EU-funded projects in the region. The DigiTool, developed as part of a pilot action with the Eastern Neighbourhood region has been extended to the Southern Neighbourhood region and can help overcome this challenge by centralising and improving accessibility of

information. However, the roll-out of this tool to the Delegations has not yet triggered sufficient interest and requires further support.

- As EU Delegations are often understaffed in the field of communication, there is a need to shape communication work according to the ‘less is more’ approach, thus prioritising themes and actions. Streamlining EU Delegation’s communication strategies in better aligning political communication and communication on the policy areas supported by the EU cooperation portfolio is part of the ongoing regional communication programme but requires further support. The experience of the pilot project with the EU Delegations to Lebanon and Morocco has provided valuable recommendations which can be applied to other countries in the region.
- The use of local languages has been an essential part of the successful engagement strategy of the previous and on-going Programmes.
- Ensuring the provision of adequate financial resources is a cornerstone for the successful execution of any communication programme. The allocation of funds is indispensable not only for laying the groundwork for a robust strategic framework but also for enabling a broad engagement across the targeted region. With an appropriate financial allocation, the programme could deploy a diverse range of tools and activities maximising its reach and resonance among diverse audiences.

3. DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION

3.1. Objectives and Expected Outputs

The **Overall Objective** (Impact) of this action is to achieve better and more resilient governance and public administration systems and improve EU awareness in the Southern Neighbourhood Region.

The **Specific Objectives** (Outcomes) of this action are to:

1. Increase the knowledge and application of European principles of good governance in the areas of policy development and coordination, public service and human resource management, accountability, service delivery and public finance management within the overall framework of the Principles of Public Administration
2. Contribute to the improvement of public perception and attitudes towards the EU and to the development of a more receptive environment in the Southern Neighbourhood countries of European values, principles and the benefits of closer association with the EU.

The **Outputs** to be delivered by this action contributing to the corresponding Specific Objectives (Outcomes) are:

- 1.1 contributing to Outcome 1) Increased knowledge and experience sharing on the development and implementation of reforms in the areas of the Principles of Public Administration
- 1.2. contributing to Outcome 1) Strengthened administrative capacities of beneficiary public administrations in the Southern Neighbourhood region in the public governance domain, including the ability to respond to emergency situations.
2. contributing to Outcome 2) Enhanced comprehension and awareness of how the Neighbourhood and Enlargement Policies benefits citizens in the Southern Neighbourhood region, as well as increased engagement in mitigating the spread and impact of false information in the region.

3.2. Indicative Activities

Activities related to Output 1.1:

- SIGMA will organise regional seminars and conferences as platforms for countries of the region to discuss the most important issues linked with public administration reforms. SIGMA will also engage in the elaboration of regional studies and papers on specific topics linked with public administration policy providing for a comparative view of the region, identifying key challenges and providing recommendations on how to overcome those.

Activities related to Output 1.2:

- In line with the Principles of Public Administration, SIGMA will provide support and conduct analyses of the public administration and/or public finance management systems helping the beneficiary institutions in defining the necessary improvements in the functioning of their public administration.

Activities related to Output 2:

- Design of information campaigns, maintenance of the website, production of easy-to-understand, engaging content, engaging with the EU Goodwill Ambassadors and EU Jeel Connect youth networks, collaborating with local journalists and media outlets collecting information on all EU-funded actions per country and region (EU DigiTool), organisation of workshops and training sessions collaboration with influencers development of partnerships with regional media outlets, launch campaigns that tackle misinformation and provide factual information, support local initiatives that aim to bring the EU closer to citizens.

3.3. Mainstreaming

Environmental Protection, Climate Change and Biodiversity

Environmental objectives are not directly targeted by this action. However, the action will have positive effects in terms of quality of legislation and strategies and their proper implementation in all sectors, including environment and related areas. In fact, according to the better regulation approach, SIGMA will support the quality of impact assessments, including fiscal, regulatory and environmental impacts. In addition, awareness will be raised, in all partner countries and through the whole range of communication channels which the action will mobilise, about the importance of the EU Green Deal policy. The 2023 edition of the Principles of Public Administration reflect the expectation that public administration contributes to addressing the environmental challenges, including those of climate change and loss of biodiversity. Environmental and climate aspects will thus be addressed insofar as these are elements of the principles the implementation of which will be supported.

Gender equality and empowerment of women and girls

As per OECD Gender DAC codes identified in section 1.1, this action is labelled as G1. This implies that a gender perspective will be maintained, ensuring that the results of this action affects positively on gender equality. The action will ensure that its advice is consistent with equal opportunities and non-discrimination principles in all relevant areas, in particular on policy development, human resources management and service delivery, and will therefore contribute to mainstream gender equality consideration across public administration. Gender-sensitive considerations will be taken into account in all analyses and in assistance in policy and legislative development and a gender equality perspective will be mainstreamed in all activities and deliverables related to the implementation of this action. The development of a merit-based civil service system, including transparency, de-politicisation and meritocratic recruitment processes can have a positive influence on gender equality and contribute to move towards a Public Administration where it is possible for both women and men to enter and develop within administrations on an equal basis. SIGMA will ensure equal opportunity of participation in action activities to everybody and will strive to integrate the gender

equality dimension in all its actions. Where gender may be directly relevant (e.g., civil service issues, service delivery), SIGMA will ensure that its advice is consistent with this cross-cutting principle.

Gender equality will be at the forefront of our communications component, especially within the challenging context of the Southern neighbourhood region, underpinning the development of bespoke thematic campaigns, media articles, and social media engagement, as well as being woven throughout all other activities. The policy of ensuring equal opportunities will be rigorously upheld in the selection of multipliers or influencers.

Human Rights

This action will contribute to more effective and sustainable public governance, stronger public administrations as well as to increased freedom of expression and support to healthy information environments at all levels in the region, so that they correspond to universal values of human rights.

Disability

As per OECD Disability DAC codes identified in section 1.1, this action is labelled as D1. This implies that this action does not focus on disability as a significant objective. However, the action will have positive effect in terms of quality of legislation and strategies and their proper implementation in all sectors, including disability. To the extent that this action addresses disability-related issues (e.g., civil service issues, service delivery) it will ensure that its advice is consistent with non-discrimination principles. Awareness will be raised as deemed necessary on the European Disability Strategy aiming at creating a barrier-free Europe where persons with disabilities can fully enjoy their rights, autonomy, and equality.

Democracy

This action will support accountable public administrations, both at central and local level, which is key to democratic governance and inclusive economic development. PAR is about strengthening democratic and independent institutions, developing local and regional authorities, depoliticising the civil service, developing eGovernment and increasing institutional transparency and accountability; improving capacity in policy development, service delivery and management of public finances, and supporting the work of national parliaments. It will also contribute to freedom of expression and speech, which are key pillars of democracy.

Conflict sensitivity, peace and resilience

This action will contribute to conflict sensitivity, peace and resilience in its communication component. Unresolved conflicts continue to hamper development in the region and have already caused numerous casualties, damages and displacement of the local population. In this regard, the action takes into account the conflict sensitivity, follows the 'do no harm' principle and aims at reinstating dialogue and mutual understanding, contributing ultimately to peace.

Disaster Risk Reduction

This action will not contribute to disaster risk reduction.

3.4. Risks and Assumptions

Category⁸	Risks	Likelihood (High/ Medium/ Low)	Impact (High/ Medium/ Low)	Mitigating measures
1-External environment	Large scale destabilising events, including military conflict	High	High	The action will continue its engagement with beneficiaries to support them in finding best solutions for strengthening the resilience of their public administrations during crisis times, especially in a more targeted way. Regularly monitor the political situation in the countries and adjust communication strategies as required so as to tackle political instability, security concerns and evolving political relations between partner countries affecting the impact of the Programme.
1-External environment	Broad number of pressing challenges in the Neighbourhood countries and different levels of vulnerability	Medium	Medium	Differentiation and greater mutual ownership will continue being key elements of SIGMA's approach to the countries in the Neighbourhood South region. SIGMA will focus on matters of key importance emerging at the regional level, in consultation with the beneficiary institutions, the European Commission services, the EU Delegations and the PAO, including risk management and mitigation. Regularly monitor the political situation in the countries so as to adjust communication strategies to fluid political and economic situation in partner countries. Enhance close and continuous policy dialogue and strategic cooperation with relevant stakeholders and national authorities.
1-External environment	Disinformation spread by third countries or other actors directly or indirectly affects the receptivity to EU messages in	Medium	Medium	Adopt measures to tackle deliberate disinformation campaigns in the Neighbourhood affecting/ concerning EU cooperation in the region.

⁸ The risk (category) can be related 1-to the external environment; 2-to planning, processes and systems; 3-to people and the organisation; 4-to legality and regularity aspects; 5-to communication and information. See pp44-48 of [Implementation Guide of the Risk management in the Commission](#). *[EC internal link]*

	the target populations.			
4-Legality and regularity aspects	Lack of commitment of political and administrative leaders within national administrations to good governance and PAR	High	High	The Commission and SIGMA will raise awareness of PAR importance and will target a broader range of stakeholders (including civil society) that can support and encourage/add pressure for reform to take effect, and will support more structured and better informed policy dialogue.
2-Planning, processes and systems	Inadequate co-ordination between different national stakeholders involved in reforms of public administration	Medium	Medium	The Commission and SIGMA will ensure involvement of all relevant stakeholders in the design and implementation of its regional Work Programmes (including non-state actors).
3-People and organisation	Low capacity of the Southern Neighbourhood region beneficiaries to absorb and integrate advice and recommendations	Medium	Medium	The Commission and SIGMA will design the regional Work Programmes by involving the beneficiary administrations so that their priorities are taken into account; the action will pursue realistic results that are good enough for Southern Neighbourhood region beneficiaries in transition.
2-Planning, processes and systems	Tendency of Southern Neighbourhood region beneficiaries to focus on solutions before getting and allowing for in depth understanding of the real problems	High	High	The Commission and SIGMA will continue advising on a more problem oriented approach that would focus on a proper policy analysis, including identifying possible alternative solutions to identified problems, assessing them and presenting those to decision makers for informed decisions.
3-People and organisation	Overestimation by beneficiaries about their political and administrative reform capacity	Medium	Medium	The Commission and SIGMA will carefully assess beneficiaries' capacities to carry larger scale reforms and if possible focus SIGMA support on realistically achievable and tangible results.
2-Planning, processes and systems	Fragmentation and lack of coordination of PAR	High	High	The Commission and SIGMA will continue raising awareness on the need for a coordinated approach of PAR, will seek opportunities to reinforce

				coordination of the institutions with relevant competences and will propose specific fora for PAR discussions.
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External Assumptions

The main assumption for this action is that the Southern Neighbourhood region countries remain committed to improving public governance and capacities in the public administration, with some level of ownership and political commitment to public administration reform on one hand and to freedom of expression on the other hand to make progress towards European values and principles. It is also assumed that target audiences in partner countries are not adverse or hesitant to engage with the EU and its outreach activities.

3.5. Intervention Logic

The underlying intervention logic for this action is that better governance and public administration systems in the Southern Neighbourhood region beneficiary countries will contribute to deliver improved policy outcomes and public services to its citizens. This will be achieved through increasing the knowledge and application of European principles of good governance in the areas of policy development and coordination, public service and human resource management, accountability, service delivery and public finance management within the overall framework of the Principles of Public Administration.

To reach the overall objective of this action, beneficiary institutions in the Southern Neighbourhood region will have actively used opportunities for experience sharing in development and implementation of policies in the areas of PAR and PFM and administrative capacities of beneficiary public administrations have been strengthened through change management processes in the public governance domain.

The area of support 2 (outcome 2) aims to contribute to the improvement of public perception and attitudes towards the EU and to the development of a more receptive environment in Southern Neighbourhood countries of European values, principles and the benefits of closer association with the EU. To achieve this, the action will seek to enhance the comprehension and awareness of how the Neighbourhood and Enlargement Policies benefit citizens in the region as well as to increase the engagement in mitigating the spread and impact of false information in the region.

3.6. Indicative Logical Framework Matrix

Results	Results chain: Main expected results [maximum 10 @]	Indicators [it least one indicator per expected result @]	Baselines (values and years)	Targets (values and years)	Sources of data	Assumptions
Impact 1 Impact 2	Achieve better and more resilient governance and public administration systems and improve EU awareness in the Southern Neighbourhood Region dig	1 2	1 2	1 2	1 2	<i>Not applicable</i>

<p>Outcome 1</p>	<p>Increased knowledge and application of European principles of good governance in the areas of policy development and coordination, public service and human resource management, accountability, service delivery and public finance management within the overall framework of the Principles of Public Administration</p>	<p>Enhanced use of the revised principles of Public Administration in the reforms conducted in the areas of public administration and public finance management.</p>	<p>1.1=0</p>	<p>This will be elaborated during programme inception phase I would put value “1”</p>	<p>1.1 Government publications, official gazettes, government websites</p> <p>1.2. SIGMA activity reports</p>	<p>Continued ownership and political commitment of Southern Neighbourhood region beneficiaries to public administration reform to make progress towards European values and principles.</p> <p>Stable relations between the Southern Neighbourhood beneficiaries and the EU</p> <p>Stable and functioning governments and public administrations in Southern Neighbourhood region</p>
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<p>Outcome 2</p>	<p>2. Improved public perception and attitudes towards the EU and furthered development of a more receptive environment in Southern Neighbourhood countries of European values, principles and the benefits of closer association with the EU</p>	<p>2.1 Annual public surveys about the perception of the EU and other surveys; social media and web analytics; media coverage.</p>	<p>2.1 To be assessed per country at the inception period of the programme</p>	<p>2.1 Annual public surveys about the perception of the EU and other surveys; social media and web analytics, media coverage.</p>	<p>2.1 Annual public surveys about the perception of the EU</p>	<p>The EU continues to be of significant interest for the local media and citizens in Neighbourhood partner countries, demonstrating a sustained level of attention and receptiveness. The public perception of the EU and its initiatives in Neighbourhood partner countries is generally positive, creating a conducive environment for successful engagement and effective communication of EU messages and programmes.</p>
<p>Output 1 related to Outcome 1</p>	<p>1.1 Increased knowledge and experience sharing on the development and implementation of reforms in the areas of the Principles of Public Administration</p>	<p>1.1.1 Number of regional seminars / conferences organised 1.1.2 Number of regional studies / papers elaborated</p>	<p>1.1.1= 0 1.1.2= 0</p>	<p>1.1.1. 1 (September 2026) and 2 (November 2027) 1.1.2. 1 (September 2026) and 2 (November 2027)</p>	<p>1.1.1 SIGMA Activity reports 1.1.2 SIGMA Activity reports</p>	

Output 2 related to Outcomes 1	1.2 Strengthened administrative capacities of beneficiary public administrations in the Southern Neighbourhood region in the public governance domain, including the ability to respond to emergency situations.	1.2.1 Number of thematic in-beneficiary analyses, assessments, opinions or comments and support activities within the framework of the principles of public administration. in one or more PAR/PFM areas.	1.2.1= 0	1.2.1. . 3 (September 2026) and 5 (November 2027)	1.2.1	
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<p>Output 1 related Outcome 2</p>	<p>to</p> <p>2.1 Enhanced comprehension and awareness of how the Neighbourhood and Enlargement Policies benefits citizens in the Southern Neighbourhood region as well as increased engagement in mitigating the spread and impact of false information in the region.</p>	<p>2.1.1 Percentage of people with a positive perception of the EU 2.1.2 Number of fake news items in the media analysis</p>	<p>2.1.1 To be determined during the inception phase of the programme 2.1.2 To be determined during the inception phase of the programme</p>	<p>2.1.1 To be determined during the inception phase of the programme 2.1.2 To be determined during the inception phase of the programme</p>	<p>2.1.1 Opinion polls, social media analytics, media analysis reports 2.1.2 Media analysis, disinformation trend analysis, EEAS information analysis reports</p>	<p>Target audiences in partner countries are open and willing to engage with the EU and its outreach activities, despite varying levels of restrictions imposed by national authorities/regimes Young people and other strategic multiplier groups are keen to actively participate within the networks developed by the Programme's segments, demonstrating a strong interest in supporting the dissemination of EU's messages and initiatives.</p>
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4. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

4.1. Financing Agreement

In order to implement this action, it is not envisaged to conclude a financing agreement with the partner countries.

4.2. Indicative Implementation Period

The indicative operational implementation period of this action, during which the activities described in section 3 will be carried out and the corresponding contracts and agreements implemented, is 72 months from the date of entry into force of the financing agreement.

Extensions of the implementation period may be agreed by the Commission's responsible authorising officer by amending this financing Decision and the relevant contracts and agreements.

4.3. Implementation Modalities

The Commission will ensure that the EU appropriate rules and procedures for providing financing to third parties are respected, including review procedures, where appropriate, and compliance of the action with EU restrictive measures⁹.

4.3.1. Direct Management (Procurement)

The procurement will contribute to achieve Outcome 2 specified in section 3.

4.3.2. Indirect Management with a pillar-assessed entity

A part of this action may be implemented in indirect management with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

The implementation entails carrying out the activities identified in section 3, related specifically to Outcome 1 and the overall objective of the action.

The envisaged entity has been selected using the following criteria:

- The action has specific characteristics requiring specialist advisory services in the area of public administration reform in Southern Neighbourhood countries by a recognised international organisation and the OECD is considered to be placed as the best public institution in this regard.
- The OECD as a public organisation has a long-standing experience and specialisation in this area to partner with the EU and has been working for a number of years with the partner countries, notably in the Southern Neighbourhood area. Since 1992, the SIGMA Programme has embodied the commitment of the European Commission to co-operate with the OECD in order to promote better public governance.
- The successive SIGMA programmes have been repeatedly evaluated with a positive track record in terms of efficiency, quality, effectiveness and sustainability of results and

⁹ [EU Sanctions Map](#). Please note that the sanctions map is an IT tool for identifying the sanctions regimes. The source of the sanctions stems from legal acts published in the Official Journal (OJ). In case of discrepancy between the published legal acts and the updates on the website it is the OJ version that prevails.

Southern Neighbourhood beneficiaries have always expressed a high level of satisfaction due to its high level of relevance, flexibility and quality of expertise delivered.

- Overall, the action will contribute to building better governance systems in the Southern Neighbourhood beneficiaries to deliver improved policy outcomes and public services to its citizens. This will support developing more sustainable governance systems and to strengthen the capacities of public administrations in the targeted region to enhance economic well-being and political freedom and facilitate closer economic integration and political co-operation between the EU and its neighbours.
- More specifically, the action will contribute to increased knowledge and application of European principles of good governance in the areas of policy development and coordination, public service and human resource management, accountability, service delivery and public finance management within the overall framework of the Principles of Public Administration.

4.4. Scope of geographical eligibility for procurement and grants

The geographical eligibility in terms of place of establishment for participating in procurement and grant award procedures and in terms of origin of supplies purchased as established in the basic act and set out in the relevant contractual documents shall apply, subject to the following provisions.

The Commission's authorising officer responsible may extend the geographical eligibility on the basis of urgency or of unavailability of services in the markets of the countries or territories concerned, or in other duly substantiated cases where application of the eligibility rules would make the realisation of this action impossible or exceedingly difficult (Article 28(10) NDICI-Global Europe Regulation).

4.5. Indicative Budget

Indicative Budget components	EU contribution (amount in EUR)	Third-party contribution (amount in EUR)
Implementation modalities – cf. section 4.3		
Outcome 1		
Indirect management with the OECD – cf. section 4.3.2	1 700 000	34 571.43
Outcome 2		
Procurement (direct management) – cf. section 4.3.1	4 000 000	N.A.
Evaluation – cf. section 5.2 Audit – cf. section 5.3	may be covered by another Decision	N.A.
Strategic communication and Public diplomacy – cf. section 6	will be covered by another Decision	N.A.
Contingencies	NA	N.A.
Totals	5 700 000	34 571.43

4.6. Organisational Set-up and Responsibilities

Sector 1 – Public Administration Reform

The PAR component is to be implemented by the OECD. The team will be composed of a core of OECD staff, who are thematic experts who have extensive professional experience and knowledge of EU Member States administrations, with special regard to the 6 PAR core areas. They can be assisted, as needed, by external intellectual service providers, with extensive experience of EU Member State systems and NDICI beneficiaries, contracted for short term actions. These would be engaged under regular OECD rules.

The thematic experts are supported by Project Co-ordination/Administration staff who are an integral part of the team.

Since SIGMA is a joint initiative of the OECD and the EU, management and implementation responsibilities are shared between the OECD and European Commission. The OECD and the European Commission will inform each other about the persons appointed within the institutions to manage this action.

Prioritisation of activities will take place in close co-ordination with the European Commission according to the concrete needs of each NDICI beneficiary. Moreover, the European Commission will ensure complementarity and synergies of this action with the different European funding instruments and programmes in the region.

SIGMA will work closely with the geographical units at European Commission Headquarters, in addition to maintaining close relations with the EU Delegations. Ad hoc co-ordination and management meetings will be organised between SIGMA and the European Commission.

Sector 2 – Strategic communication and public diplomacy

The implementation of the procurement contract will take place under the leadership of the Commission (DG NEAR) but will be closely coordinated with the EEAS Stratcom South team and the EU Delegations of the Southern Neighbourhood, according to the practice in place under the ongoing programme.

4.7. Pre-conditions

Sector 1 – Public Administration Reform

SIGMA is committed to contribute to sustainable progress in public administrations in the Southern Neighbourhood beneficiaries. To this aim, continued commitment to reforms by the Southern Neighbourhood beneficiaries is an essential precondition along with their absorption capacities. Assistance shall continue to raise awareness of importance of PAR for socio-economic development as well as to support and promote the involvement of a broader set of stakeholders that can generate internal demands for reforms.

Political instability may also affect to possibility to undertake widely supported reforms. Ownership is key for reform progress. To this aim, assistance shall ensure coherence with highest priorities of the Southern Neighbourhood beneficiaries; SIGMA, the European Commission and the beneficiaries will engage in close policy dialogue.

Finally, acceptance of SIGMA recommendations by the Southern Neighbourhood beneficiaries and capacity to integrate them into their national systems will require assistance to be sufficient flexible and to take into account absorptive capacities.

Sector 2 – Strategic communication and Public Diplomacy

Political instability may also affect to possibility to communicate and raise awareness about the EU as required. It will necessitate that representatives and beneficiaries of EU-funded programmes and projects remain eager to engage with the Programme and share information about their respective initiatives. The

action should make sure that young people and other strategic multipliers groups are interested in actively engaging within the networks developed by the Programme's segments to support dissemination of EU's messages over the lifetime of the programme and that the EU remains of high interest for the local media and citizens in Neighbourhood partner countries. To this aim, assistance shall ensure close policy dialogue with its main stakeholders.

5. PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

5.1. Monitoring and Reporting

The day-to-day technical and financial monitoring of the implementation of this action will be a continuous process, and part of the implementing partners' responsibilities. To this aim, each implementing partner shall establish a permanent internal, technical and financial monitoring system for the action and elaborate a progress report (not less than annual) and final reports. Every report shall provide an accurate account of implementation of the action, difficulties encountered, changes introduced, as well as the degree of achievement of its Outputs and contribution to the achievement of its Outcomes, and if possible, at the time of reporting, contribution to the achievement of its Impacts, as measured by corresponding indicators, using as reference the logframe matrix.

The Commission may undertake additional project monitoring visits both through its own staff and through independent consultants recruited directly by the Commission for independent monitoring reviews (or recruited by the responsible agent contracted by the Commission for implementing such reviews).

Arrangements for monitoring and reporting, including roles and responsibilities for data collection, analysis and monitoring:

The implementing partners will collect and analyse data that can also be used for monitoring and reporting purposes. The data will be shared with the Commission as required to provide evidence on the achievement of set targets for the outcome and output indicators mentioned in the logframe matrix.

5.2. Evaluation

Having regard to the nature of the action, a mid-term, final or ex-post evaluation(s) may be carried out for this action or its components through a joint mission or via an implementing partner. The Commission may, during implementation, decide to undertake such an evaluation for duly justified reasons either on its own decision or on the initiative of the implementing partner.

In case an evaluation is planned, the Commission shall form a Reference Group (RG) composed by representatives from the main stakeholders at both EU and national (representatives from the government, from civil society organisations (private sector, NGOs, etc.), etc.) levels. If deemed necessary, other donors will be invited to join.

The Commission shall inform the implementing partners at least 3 months in advance of the dates envisaged for the evaluation exercise and missions. The implementing partners shall collaborate efficiently and effectively with the evaluation experts, and inter alia provide them with all necessary information and documentation, as well as access to the project premises and activities.

The evaluation reports shall be shared with the partner countries and other key stakeholders following the best practice of evaluation dissemination. The implementing partners and the Commission shall analyse the conclusions and recommendations of the evaluations and, where appropriate, in agreement with the partner

countries, jointly decide on the follow-up actions to be taken and any adjustments necessary, including, if indicated, the reorientation of the project.

The financing of the evaluation shall be covered by another measure constituting a financing Decision.

5.3. Audit and Verifications

Without prejudice to the obligations applicable to contracts concluded for the implementation of this action, the Commission may, on the basis of a risk assessment, contract independent audit or verification assignments for one or several contracts or agreements.

6. STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

All entities implementing EU-funded external actions have the contractual obligation to inform the relevant audiences of the Union's support for their work by displaying the EU emblem and a short funding statement as appropriate on all communication materials related to the actions concerned. To that end they must comply with the instructions given in the 2022 guidance document [*Communicating and raising EU visibility: Guidance for external actions*](#) (or any successor document).

This obligation will apply equally, regardless of whether the actions concerned are implemented by the Commission, the partner country, service providers, grant beneficiaries or entrusted or delegated entities such as UN agencies, international financial institutions and agencies of EU Member States. In each case, a reference to the relevant contractual obligations must be included in the respective financing agreement, procurement and grant contracts, and contribution agreements.

For the purpose of enhancing the visibility of the EU and its contribution to this action, the Commission may sign or enter into joint declarations or statements, as part of its prerogative of budget implementation and to safeguard the financial interests of the Union. Visibility and communication measures should also promote transparency and accountability on the use of funds. Effectiveness of communication activities on awareness about the action and its objectives as well as on EU funding of the action should be measured.

Implementing partners shall keep the Commission and the EU Delegation/Office fully informed of the planning and implementation of specific visibility and communication activities before the implementation. Implementing partners will ensure adequate visibility of EU financing and will report on visibility and communication actions as well as the results of the overall action to the relevant monitoring committees.