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ANNEX VI

to the Commission Implementing Decision on the financing of the 2023 action plan part II in favour of the Regional South Neighbourhood

Action Document for Fostering Biodiversity, Environment and Climate Action in the Mediterranean

ANNUAL ACTION PLAN

This document constitutes the annual 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	Fostering Biodiversity, Environment and Climate Action in the Mediterranean (BECA Med) 2023 annual action plan part II in favour of the Regional South Neighbourhood OPSYS business reference: ACT-61718 ABAC Commitment level 1 number: JAD.1158421 Financed under the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI-Global Europe)
2. Economic and Investment Plan (EIP)	Yes
EIP Flagship	Yes (Flagship 11 – Resource efficiency, including water and waste management, and biodiversity)
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, Libya, Morocco, Palestine ⁽²⁾ , Syria ⁽³⁾ and Tunisia. As per Article 43(1) of NDICI-Global Europe Regulation, for reasons of efficiency and effectiveness, and upon explicit justified request, some activities may be extended to countries from the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM): Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mauritania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Türkiye.

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 [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52013XC0719\(03\)&from=en](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52013XC0719(03)&from=en).

² 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.

³ Co-operation with the Government of Syria suspended since 2011.

	This is justified because the action aims to support the UfM strategy and action plan for environment, climate and biodiversity. This may include cooperation with the above-mentioned UfM member states. It is in line with the multi-annual indicative programme for the Southern Neighbourhood for 2021-2027, which makes reference, under priority 5 (specific objective 2) to the importance of cross regional cooperation. ⁴			
5. Programming document	Multi-annual indicative programme for the Southern Neighbourhood for 2021-2027 ⁵			
6. Link with relevant MIP(s) objectives/expected results	Priority Area 4: Green Transition (main) Priority Area 2: Strengthen resilience, build prosperity and seize the digital transition (secondary)			
PRIORITY AREAS AND SECTOR INFORMATION				
7. Priority Area(s), sectors	410 General environmental protection			
8. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	<u>Main SDG:</u> SDG13: Climate Action <u>Other significant SDG:</u> SDG 6: Clean water and sanitation SDG 14: Life below water SDG 15: Life on land SDG 5: Gender equality SDG 10: Reducing Inequalities SDG 16: Peace, Justice and strong institutions			
9. DAC code(s)	14010 – Water Sector Policy and administrative management (30%) 41030 – Biodiversity (30%) 41081 – Environmental education/training (40%)			
10. Main Delivery Channel	60000 Private sector institution			
11. Targets	<input type="checkbox"/> Migration <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Climate <input type="checkbox"/> Social inclusion and Human Development <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gender <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Biodiversity <input type="checkbox"/> Human Rights, Democracy and Governance			
12. Markers (from DAC form)	General policy objective	Not targeted	Significant objective	Principal objective

⁴ ‘The future regional cooperation should have a flexible geographical and thematic scope, also allowing for interlinkages with other regions, where necessary and appropriate as highlighted in the Joint Communication on a Renewed partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood.’

⁵ Commission Implementing Decision C(2021)9399 of 16.12.2021 on a Multi-Annual Indicative Programme for the Southern Neighbourhood.

Participation development/good governance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Aid to environment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Inclusion of persons with Disabilities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nutrition	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
RIO Convention markers	Not targeted	Significant objective	Principal objective
Biological diversity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Combat desertification	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Climate change mitigation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Climate change adaptation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
13. Internal markers and Tags	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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
environment, climate resilience	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Tags	YES		NO
	digital connectivity	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	digital governance	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	digital entrepreneurship	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	digital skills/literacy	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	digital services	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Connectivity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Tags	YES		NO
	digital connectivity	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" 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"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Reduction of Inequalities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	COVID-19	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
BUDGET INFORMATION				
14. Amounts concerned	Budget line(s) (article, item): 14.020110 Southern Neighbourhood Total estimated cost: EUR 7 000 000 Total amount of EU budget contribution: EUR 7 000 000			
MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION				
15. Implementation modalities (management mode and delivery methods)	Direct management through: - Procurement			

1.2. Summary of the Action

The present action reflects the EU priorities under the Joint Communication on a Renewed Partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood⁶ and its Economic and Investment Plan (EIP)⁷. The objectives of the action are also aligned with the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) political framework.

This action implements the Multi-Annual Indicative Programme for the Southern Neighbourhood (2021-2027)⁸ under its Priority Area 4 “Green Transition”. It contributes to the EIP flagship 11 – “Resource efficiency, including water and waste management, and biodiversity”.

⁶ JOIN (2021) 2 final of 09.02.2021

⁷ SWD(2021) 23 final

⁸ C(2021) 9399 final

The Mediterranean basin is considered a biodiversity hotspot, with an outstanding flora diversity of 15,000 to 25,000 species, 60% of which are unique to the region. However, coastal development, tourism, overexploitation, pollution, climate change, and other drivers are leading to unprecedented rates of species extinction and long-term ecosystem imbalances. These, in turn, have direct consequences on food security, livelihoods and human health.

The Mediterranean region has also been identified as a climate change hotspot, warming 20% faster than the global average, causing a wide range of negative impacts on the environment, the availability of food and water, human health and security. Climate impacts affect key economic sectors, in particular agricultural production and fisheries, hindering economic growth and aggravating social and political tensions, possibly also leading to increased migration. A recent JRC report highlights that millions of people in Northern Africa could be affected by 2070 by changes in agricultural productivity (see chapter 2) and that within the African continent, the largest exposed populations would be in Northern and in Western Africa: <https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC126594>

In view of these challenges, there is a critical need to support Southern Neighbourhood countries in their efforts to protect their natural assets and increase their resilience to climate change. This is even more urgent in the context of increasing vulnerability in the region, due to the repercussions of Russia's war of aggression on Ukraine.

The action includes two separate but complementary components. Together, these two components will contribute to fighting against climate change and minimizing its impact on people and the environment and to address urgent needs in terms of biodiversity protection and restoration.

The first component will focus on improved integration of biodiversity's protection/restoration into partner countries' sector policies, and the reduction of pollution risks and impacts in the Mediterranean Sea. This includes the fight against plastic proliferation and other types of solid and liquid waste pollution. This component will be a follow-up to existing successful regional EU-funded "Water and Environment Support" (WES) programme, which could also contribute to cross-border and cross-regional cooperation, including in relation to the Abraham Accords' process and thus could pave the way for enhanced trilateral cooperation in the field of cross-border integrated water management.

The second component will focus on rolling out massive awareness campaigns towards all socioeconomic layers of the population. Indeed, several studies (including a recent [European Institute for the Mediterranean – IEMED](#) - study) have shown that environmental and climate action are not at all perceived as high priorities by the general population in the Southern Neighbourhood. The population generally feels that they do not have a prominent role to play on these areas, perceived as being under the responsibility of governments and businesses. There is a clear need to work on citizens' perception on these issues and to empower them as agents of change.

The proposed programme aims to contribute to the objectives of the European Green Deal, the commitments made under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) including the Paris Agreement and following COPs, as well as the conclusions of the UN Biodiversity Conference (COP15 – December 2022), the UfM Ministerial Declaration on Environment and Climate Action - October 2021, EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, the EU Climate Adaptation Strategy (2021), the New Agenda for the Mediterranean as well as the UN SDGs 13, 6, 10, 14, 5, 15 & 16.

The action will contribute to the implementation of the EU Gender Action Plan 2021-2025 GAP III, in particular to its thematic area of engagement "Addressing the challenges and harnessing the opportunities offered by the green transition and the digital transformation, digitalisation, climate change and environment".

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

This action will benefit to the following right-holders:

- Local communities

Biodiversity conservation and monitoring is strongly associated with past and current use of the habitats and ecosystems. Local communities are well positioned to understand the diversity and complexity of local ecosystems as well as the needs and priorities at local level, including potential specific needs from women, children and vulnerable groups. Local communities will participate in the identification and designation of marine and coastal protected areas and will also play a key role in their management.

Local communities, including women associations, will also be targeted by the communication and outreach component, while paying particular attention to the local contexts and sensitivities, and making use of local expertise, to ensure a culturally appropriate and impactful outreach. Local communities will be invited to actively take part and engage in specific activities in the context of communication campaigns. Actions will target specific groups within local communities, including school children, youth, women and people with disabilities.

Duty-bearers:

➤ Local authorities

Biodiversity conservation and monitoring often falls within the scope of local authorities' responsibilities. Although their mandates vary from country to country, local authorities have historically been responsible for land use planning, environmental and construction regulation, natural resource management and investments in infrastructure, including irrigation and drainage and protection from natural hazards. These activities are fully included within protected areas' management processes, such as the elaboration or update of management plans. Despite the clear relevance of the local level to meaningful management of protected areas, evidence shows that most local governments in low and transitional economies often face difficulties to contribute effectively to biodiversity conservation due to a lack of technical and financial resources. It will therefore be crucial that local authorities are solicited within the two components of this programme.

➤ Central governments

Central government institutions in charge of biodiversity have the responsibility to enforce national and international regulations and commitments regarding biodiversity preservation and restoration. Other key institutions include ministries of planning, ministries of economy/ finances and ministries in charge of sectors particularly connected to biodiversity aspects and human development (e.g. agriculture, water, infrastructure, transport, energy, industry, gender, human rights, etc.). They will also be associated to activities within this action. Central governments are not a direct target of the outreach and communication component. However, they will be kept informed of project activities, particularly where their approval or facilitation is required.

➤ The private sector

Private sector will benefit and probably contribute to this action, in particular in the framework of its first component (in terms of private-public collaboration, to ensure a proper management of the environmental protected areas, with particular attention to women entrepreneurs). Specific private sector entrepreneurs may be targeted by certain communication and awareness activities, while ensuring complementarity with ongoing projects and striving for maximum impact. This will be specified during the communication strategy's design when formulating the project.

➤ Civil society (CSOs)

CSOs and NGOs active in environmental and climate action will be engaged in the action through inclusive workshops, meetings and environmental conservation actions, including, where appropriate, women and/or gender specific CSOs. CSOs and NGOs will also be directly engaged in the communication and outreach component, as a partner in building communication activities targeting local communities. This will also be an opportunity to strengthen selected CSO capacities on environmental/climate areas.

➤ Media

The communication and outreach component aims to work with the local and regional media, including journalists, bloggers and influencers, in order to enhance their ability to communicate effectively on environment and climate action, targeting local communities with gender-sensitive approach. Efforts to engage with the media will make use of pre-existing partnerships and will differ from one country to the next, depending on how conducive the local context may be.

2. RATIONALE

2.1. Context

The action contributes to Southern Neighbourhood countries' efforts to achieve the Agenda 2030 for sustainable development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It is oriented towards several SDGs: SDG13 on climate action, SDG 6 on clean water and sanitation, SDG 5 on gender equality, SDG14 on life below water, SDG 10 on reducing inequalities, SDG 15 life on land and SDG 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions.

A healthy and productive Mediterranean Sea based on sustainable use of natural resources contributes to economic and social development and an improvement in population's living conditions.

However, at present the environment in the region is under significant pressure from growing population in particular in coastal areas, a high pressure on scarce and limited natural resources, increased contamination, including through waste disposal and untreated wastewater, nutrient over-enrichment and pollution caused by maritime industries, overfishing and destructive fishing, invasive species and degradation of transitional and estuarine areas.

Moreover, with the fast demographic growth in the countries on the Southern and Eastern shores of the Mediterranean Sea, and fast-growing economic activities and increasing demand for more sea resources, the question of sea health and its usage is becoming an imperative for securing sustainable economic growth.

Urbanisation, coastal development, tourism, transport, overexploitation of land and sea resources, pollution, climate change, and other drivers are exerting increasing pressure on the region's environment. Key productive sectors, like fishing, agriculture, forest management, commercial and leisure activities are impacted, threatening the regions' natural and cultural heritage, economic prospects and security of seafood's provision; this also ultimately increases irregular migration's intentions towards the EU.

A primary vehicle for addressing these challenges is through the Barcelona Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean and its Protocols. This action contributes to the implementation of those agreements and the related regional policies. It is even more important considering that the Southern Mediterranean features among the most water scarce regions in the world and is qualified as a "climate change hotspot" warming on average 20% faster than the rest of the world. Addressing water scarcity therefore contributes to enhanced climate adaptation.

The above challenges call for assistance from the international community. Climate action and biodiversity restoration are key priorities of the Commission, being at the core of the European Green Deal. The EU is a global leader in these areas and has committed to devoting a substantial part of its Official Development Assistance to tackling these issues in third countries. This is being recalled in the February 2021 Joint Communication "Renewed Partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood – a New Agenda for the Mediterranean"⁹ and the accompanying Economic and Investment Plan (EIP)¹⁰, where the EU proposes among its key policy areas: "Green transition: climate resilience, energy and environment".

Moreover, the October 2021 UfM Ministerial Declaration on Environment and Climate Change¹¹ reaffirmed this priority as well as other relevant UfM ministerial declarations, in particular the February 2021 UfM Ministerial Declaration on Sustainable Blue Economy¹². These Declarations outline the Ministers' concerns about the critical status of the marine environment in the Mediterranean, the uneven levels of economic development and access to finance as well as the lack of capacity, in particular in the UfM non-EU countries. The Ministers welcome the increasing interest of the European and International Institutions in the Blue Economy and call to prioritize it notably for preservation of the marine ecosystems, innovation, circular economy, waste management and reduction, sustainable food value chains from the sea, sustainable maritime

¹⁰ EIP's Flagship 11 "Resource efficiency, including water and waste management and biodiversity".

¹¹ [UfM-ministerial-declaration-ENV-CA_final-1.pdf \(ufmsecretariat.org\)](#)

¹² [Declaration-UfM-Blue-Economy-EN-1.pdf \(ufmsecretariat.org\)](#)

transport including energy efficiency in ports, sustainable coastal and maritime tourism and adaptation to climate change.

This action will also build on the conclusions of:

- The Council of the European Union on a Sustainable Blue Economy¹³ (May 2021), outlining the commitment for blue economy as an integral part of the European Green Deal;
- the convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in December 2022;
- where applicable, the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction ('High Seas Treaty') in March 2023.

The action will be complementary with other ongoing EU and other donors' projects, notably, at regional level, the "EU for Climate Action in the Southern Neighbourhood (Clima-Med)", the EU regional programme "Bolstering Mediterranean biodiversity and MCPAs for nature (SEMPA Project)", the EU Mission for Oceans and Waters, and the West Med Initiative and other relevant programs supported by the Commission. The action will also promote complementarity and synergies with projects funded under the 2021-2027 Interreg NEXT MED and Interreg NEXT Italy-Tunisia cooperation programmes. Special attention will also be given to complementarities with ongoing projects implemented bilaterally as well as the "Strategic Partnerships for the Implementation of the Paris Agreement" (SPIPA) implemented by GiZ.

A specific component of this action will focus on communication and outreach on critical environmental issues mentioned here above. Here also, particular attention will be paid to ensuring complementarity with ongoing and upcoming communication programmes at regional and bilateral levels, in particular the "EU Neighbours South" communication programme.

The human rights framework spells out the responsibilities of duty bearers to rights-holders with respect to all human rights harms, including those caused by environmental degradation. OHCHR's 2018-2021 Office Management Plan aims at ensuring that: "International and national environmental and climate policies and plans increasingly are implemented in accordance with international human rights standards."

Office of the High Commissioner of the United Nations (OHCHR) aims, in line with the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement on climate change, to promote a human rights-based approach to climate action. This requires that States take ambitious adaptation and mitigation measures that are inclusive and respectful of communities affected by climate change¹⁴.

2.2. Problem Analysis

The main upstream drivers of pollution generation and environmental pressures on the ecosystems in the Mediterranean Sea mainly entail food production, fisheries and agriculture, goods manufacturing, tourism, transport, housing and construction.

Besides land pollution, waste enters the sea from both land and sea-based sources, as a significant contribution to marine litter. Plastic waste accumulates in the sea and is progressively fragmented. This results in micro plastics that affect sea life and ultimately enter the food chain, with potential impacts on human health.

Investment for necessary waste and wastewater treatment infrastructure must be promoted, together with awareness raising, selective collection methods, incentives and a regulatory environment conducive to better waste management and wastewater and reuse.

The sound management of water resources depends on non-controllable events (i.e. weather and climate conditions) and human activity, including its sector management and practices (water sector governance

¹³ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52021DC0240&from=EN>

¹⁴ United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 9 September 2019, Opening Statement to the 42nd session of the Human Rights Council

including water economics, regional cooperation of shared aquifers, rivers and lakes etc...). Water losses and leakages are particularly high in the region.

Agriculture is a significant source of revenue in the regions and consumes around 70% of fresh water. Lack of water savings and inefficient irrigation techniques lead to unsustainable use of water. Water loss is particularly relevant with high evapotranspiration levels, as a result of the warmer temperatures of the region, whilst effective irrigation methods exist but are hardly used due to obstacles to investments and insufficient awareness. Promoting sustainable water management is also key to building climate resilience.

EU's support to the water sector must prioritize enhanced regulatory frameworks (conducive to more cost-efficient investments), a more sustainable use of non-conventional resources, better transboundary management of water resources and awareness raising towards populations on the need for resource efficient behaviours.

The Mediterranean region has been qualified as a climate change hotspot, warming on average 20% faster than the rest of the world, as per the findings of the Mediterranean Experts on Climate and Environmental Change first Mediterranean Assessment Report (MAR1)¹⁵, released in 2020. The impacts of climate change in the region are already severe. Extreme weather events such as heat waves, fires, draughts, heavy rains and floods are increasingly frequent and intense. Sea levels in the Mediterranean has risen on average by 6 cm over the past 20 years, and this trend is expected to accelerate, with dire consequences for heavily populated coastal cities. Sea level rise will impact infrastructure, aquifers, coastal crops but also cultural assets and world heritage sites that are of intrinsic value and also generate tourism, an important economic activity for the region. Climate impacts affect key economic sectors, in particular agricultural production and fisheries, hindering economic growth and aggravating social and political tensions, possibly also leading to increased migration. Due to existing inequalities and limited access to resources and decision-making, women are particularly vulnerable to climate change. The MAR 1 concludes that due to global and regional trends in climate change drivers, climate change impacts will be exacerbated in the coming decades, especially if global warming is not kept within 1.5 to 2C above pre-industrial levels. It further adds that significantly enhanced efforts are needed in order to adapt to the inevitable changes, mitigate change drivers and increase resilience.

In addition, efforts are needed to promote behavioural change of all socioeconomic actors. This not only for environmental reasons but also because green growth and behavioural changes could lead to job creation (through recycling/circular economy). Massive awareness campaigns targeting all socioeconomic layers of the populations must be implemented. Recent studies have indeed shown that awareness/understanding of climate change and environmental issues and their relevance remains limited in the Southern Neighbourhood. Building awareness of these issues is a process that takes decades, as it points to a transformation in people's ways of thinking and behaving. This programme seeks to accelerate this process.

Although citizens in the region are generally aware of climate change, many do not fully understand all the implications that climate change can have, for example on water and food availability. They may not know what they individually can do to take part in the solution, both to reduce emissions and to successfully adapt to the unavoidable consequences of climate change. Environmental protection and biodiversity are perceived by many as secondary priorities, as compared to economic challenges, unemployment and political unrest. This is particularly true at this point in time, while economies are still trying to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and are trying to cope with the repercussions of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, in particular on their food security. A recently published JRC report on the relationship between food insecurity and migration in Africa identifies the sociodemographic characteristics of those who are willing to migrate. These include, among others, the type of employment sectors (notably agriculture vs non agriculture) (*cf* <https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC130534>).

However, the health of our planet underpins all future economic activities and is the bedrock to build improved resilience to economic shocks. Climate change and environmental deterioration can have deleterious effects, not only on the economies, but also on societies as a whole and on human security, as

¹⁵ https://www.medecce.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/MedECC_MAR1_SPM_ENG.pdf

they can aggravate political tensions. As such, environment and climate action cannot be neglected or perceived as an afterthought. Finally, increased environmental awareness in the population, in time, can lead to increased attention to environmental sustainability in governments and businesses.

The EU promotes increased awareness of climate change and environmental matters through its various bilateral and cooperation programmes. Those focussed on the environment and on climate change always have a communication component, which aims to raise awareness of the programme itself, its outcomes and, by extension, the environmental/climate issues at stake. These programmes certainly have their merits and have improved climate/environmental awareness in the region to a certain level. The proposed action will coordinate its activities closely with Delegations, ensuring consistency and coherence in the narrative and branding, and proposing activities to amplify and deepen existing awareness raising in relation to environment and climate change.

At regional level, the “EU Neighbours South regional communication programme”¹⁶ covers the whole Southern Neighbourhood region, tackling all key themes of EU cooperation. This programme’s general objective is to contribute to the improvement of public perception and attitudes towards the EU and to the development of a more receptive environment for European values and principles in Neighbourhood partner countries. Its four components are: 1) Integrated communication campaigns, raising awareness and improving understanding on the ground as well as through online platforms; 2) partnering with multipliers including the establishment and management of a network of young people, including young influencers from the Neighbourhood South region to engage in people-to-people outreach as well as building a network of media partners; 3) Conducting opinion polls to track the evolution of perception of the general population; 4) Providing guidance to EU Delegations and EU-funded project to improve strategic communication.

This action will closely coordinate its activities with the “EU Neighbours South” programme, and build on its existing networks, while also amplifying and deepening its action on environment and climate change. The focus of this outreach component is different than that of the EU Neighbours South, as its aim is not to influence public perception of the EU in the partner countries, but rather perception of the climate/environmental issues at stake and their relevance to the region itself. This action proposes to further mobilise the existing networks of youth, influencers and multipliers created through EU Neighbours South with a specific focus on environmental and climate matters. While the EU Neighbours South programme aims to partner with media for co-production and wider dissemination of EU related content, this programme proposes to further activate the media by engaging them in specific discussions/debates/trainings relating to environmental and climate aspects of strategic importance, with gender sensitive approach, noting that these activities may be more developed in some countries than others, depending on the local contexts. The project will also work with environmental/climate NGOs that may not already be engaged in any EU programmes, to collaborate on specific activities aiming to promote behavioural change with different target groups (for example, children, women, entrepreneurs, people with disabilities, etc.). The recently published Civil Society Mapping Report on Climate Change Civic Engagement in Egypt¹⁷, clearly highlights in its recommendations, the need to provide further support for internal capacity building for environment and climate CSOs as well as the need to explore community-based research and learning, particularly on climate-related issues. Again, the focus will be to make use of existing networks and not duplicate or fragment communication efforts but rather amplify existing efforts with a specific focus on environment and climate action¹⁸.

2.3. Lessons Learned

- Regional cooperation facilitates the relations between neighbouring countries, and sub-regional cooperation approaches may prove effective in certain sectors or as demonstration cases.
- Regional programmes require extensive organisational work in order to secure adhesion of the participating countries and stakeholders, which in turn requires consistent dedicated resources.

¹⁶ [About the programme - EU Neighbours](#)

¹⁷ Report published in 2022 by two NGOs: Greenish and Climate Outreach.

¹⁸ Also ensuring complementarity and possible synergies with the Young Mediterranean Voices programme under the Anna Lindh Foundation

- Project-based communication, with its limited scope and duration tends to result in fragmented messaging. It should therefore be replaced by more strategic and thematic-based communication, promoting effective and impactful communication on key priority areas.
- EU strategic communication initiatives at bilateral and regional level must ensure coherence and complementarity, making use of existing platforms and networks, and reinforcing one other, under a unified branding.
- EU communication efforts in any given region must imperatively rely on local expertise and be deployed in local languages to ensure that the narrative resonates with the target audience and is seen as credible. Messages passed within a community by respected local personalities are more likely to have traction than messages passed from an EU ‘expert’ or other outsider.

3. DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION

The proposed action will capitalize on the work initiated since as far back as 2009 by ENI Horizon 2020 Capacity Building, Sustainable Water Integrated Management (SWIM) project and most recently with the Water and Environment Support (WES) project 2019-2024. It will aim at deepening and upscaling the outputs and outcomes of these projects’ components, namely: Environment and Water, while adapting and integrating them within the more general concerns and framework of climate change; Protection and restoration of biodiversity and strengthening of the green/blue circular economy invoked by the European Green Deal.

The new phase of WES will build on these deliverables and provide continuity, also integrating new elements and recent institutional, scientific and technical developments; it will contribute to applying the external dimension of the European Green Deal in its Neighbourhood. The “integration” concept will be privileged, through more regional exchanges of good practices and lessons learned (regional activities) and through the continuation of the WES work at the local and national levels (country-specific activities).

The communication and outreach activities will also build on existing initiatives, as detailed in the previous ‘Problem Analysis’ section, and will be closely coordinated with existing regional and bilateral activities.

3.1. Objectives and Expected Outputs

The **overall objective** of the programme is to improve the protection and restoration of biodiversity and the environment, while enhancing the resilience to climate change in the Mediterranean region.

The programme has three **specific objectives** which will be implemented through two separate but complementary components:

Specific objective 1 (Water, Biodiversity and Environment): an integrated approach to biodiversity protection and restoration, pollution reduction and prevention is promoted.

Specific objective 2 (Water, Biodiversity and Environment): Scarce water resources in the Southern Neighbourhood are managed more efficiently, in line with the Barcelona Convention.

Specific Objective 3 (Communication and Outreach): Awareness, understanding and behavioural change by the general public (and specific segments of the population) are promoted towards improved climate action and environmental protection.

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

Component I (Water, Biodiversity and Environment):

Objective 1:

- 1.1: Relevant national regulatory frameworks in the field of pollution reduction are enhanced.
- 1.2: Innovative approaches and successful practices in terms of sustainable environment, biodiversity protection and restoration are identified, disseminated and put in practice.
- 1.3: Regional, sub-regional and cross-regional collaborations on enhanced environmental resources' protection and management are multiplied, including in the framework of the Abraham Accords¹⁹.

Objective 2:

- 2.1: Efficient and sustainable use of water in urban and rural areas is strengthened through capacity building.
- 2.2: Innovative technologies for improved water sector efficiency are disseminated.

Component II (Communication and Outreach):

- 2.1: A communication and outreach strategy focussed on environment and climate action is established.
- 2.2: Communication and outreach actions/campaigns are implemented, with gender sensitive approach, as defined in the approved strategy.
- 2.3: The mobilisation of Civil Society is enhanced, through a dedicated support to local CSOs and NGOs, and local media, with particular attention to women organisations.
- 2.4: Regional networks of climate change/environmental champions are activated and supported, promoting people-to-people outreach.

3.2. Indicative Activities

For component I, the main Mediterranean environment and water priorities to be considered for developing the 2024-2028 work programme, are:

- Efficient Use of Water
- Pollution Prevention
- Curbing Plastic Pollution & Marine Litter
- Addressing Water Scarcity and Climate Change, through both mitigation and adaptation (e.g. promoting Non-Conventional Water Resources (NCWR) by combining renewable energies with water activities; cleaning and reuse wastewater, demineralisation of brackish waters; desalination).
- Promoting the Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystem (WEFE) Nexus approach, elevating the ecosystem component for protection of biodiversity and for advancing nature-based solutions and ecosystem services.
- Improving environmental governance and particularly promoting Agenda 2030, its SDGs and the Aarhus Convention in the Mediterranean.
- Stimulating green/blue/circular economies along with job creations for the youth population in the Southern Neighbourhood.
- Supporting the Partner Countries and UNEP/MAP to prepare their new NAPs (National Action Plans) (2025-2035) principally in line with the legally binding commitments of the six new regional plans under Article 15 of the LBS Protocol (Land-Based Sources).
- Developing all the above in a spirit of regional/subregional and cross-regional cooperation, solidarity and peace (like for instance and indicatively the “Aqaba joint coastal management”). This could also be relevant in the framework of the normalisation process (Abraham Accords).

The proposed (indicative and non-exhaustive list of) activities are as follows:

¹⁹ Cf. Abraham Accords

- a) Developing and promoting further the “integration/nexus” concept, coupled with good practices and lessons learned. This could be most appropriately demonstrated through the Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystem (WEFE) Nexus. The project will also integrate the notion of “land-freshwater-marine (or Source to Sea) continuum”.
- b) Better addressing the environmental and water challenges of key economically sectors such as:
 - Agriculture
 - Tourism
 - Specific industrial subsectors such as the Food Industry, Plastics, Construction and Demolition Waste, etc²⁰.
- c) Pursuing in parallel the WES work with local and national authorities for a better management of urban solid waste and waste waters, by encouraging (among others):
 - the production and use of compost and biogas;
 - the use of Non-Conventional Water Resources in order to maintain green spaces, and restore urban, peri-urban and/or endangered ecosystems/biodiversity.
- d) Conduct a gender need assessment on environmental management.

Activities within Component II of this action (indicatively and on-exhaustively) consist of:

2.1: The drafting of a Communication strategy:

- 2.1.1 Review of relevant surveys, publications and opinion polls providing information on the level of awareness on climate and environmental aspects in the target countries and target groups, including women organisations, and lessons-learnt from previous similar initiatives in the region.
- 2.1.2 Consultations with relevant EU stakeholders , Commission services, the EEAS and EU Delegations) on specific themes to be covered, target groups and communication approaches to adopt.
- 2.1.3 Consultations with other stakeholders including project implementers (EU Neighbourhood South, Clima-Med, WES, IMAP MPA, etc), regional bodies such as the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), the European Institute for the Mediterranean (IEMED), relevant CSOs, NGOs and Media active in the region on environmental and climate action.
- 2.1.4 Drafting of the Communication and Outreach Strategy, with a specific focus on outreach targeted at behavioural change, based on strategic priorities communicated by the Commission and on identified country needs. The target groups and specific outreach methodologies will be clearly defined, taking into account different countries’ local contexts and gender sensitive approach.

2.2: Communication and Outreach delivery

- 2.2.1 Production and dissemination of communication material, as defined in the communication and outreach strategy (this will include publications, audio-visual content, radio announcements, online content, human stories, social media posts, graphic work, etc.). Particular attention will be paid to using existing platforms when possible and using channels that specifically target the local population, including women, young and people with disabilities.
- 2.2.2 Preparation and implementation of specific awareness campaigns and outreach activities in countries, in coordination with relevant EU Delegations. The actions/campaigns will target the general public and specific groups deemed more likely to be receptive and become agents of change at household and community levels, such as women and youth. The project will define a specific number of cities per country (with attention to local needs and projected impact of the outreach) which will be targeted by an outreach campaign, including a possible roadshow campaign.
- 2.2.3 Regular monitoring and evaluation of communication campaigns and outreach initiatives to monitor their impact on target groups.

2.3: Civil Society mobilisation

²⁰ Should the conditions allow for it, the case of the industrial pollution of the Libyan coasts could be given particular attention.

- 2.3.1 Assessment of local NGOs/CSOs active on environment/climate action education/outreach in the region. The assessment will also review local media's activities.
- 2.3.2 Based on the outcomes of the consultation with CSOs launched in March-April 2022 aimed to identify priorities, launch of a call for proposals to select NGOs/CSOs/ women's associations to implement specific outreach activities within the region. Outreach may target specifically school children, youth and women and/or other relevant groups. Local media will be targeted by the call for proposal (where feasible and appropriate), with a view to enhancing medias' ability to communicate accurately and effectively on climate and environmental themes. The support to local CSOs and NGOs will aim at improving their ability to implement effective and accurate communication and outreach activities on climate and environment, targeting specific groups.
- 2.3.3 Organisation of roundtables for the selected NGOs/CSOs/Media, focusing on accurate and effective communication and outreach on environmental and climate matters in the region. These roundtables will bring together European and local expertise on the thematic areas and on communication.
- 2.3.4 Assessment and review of outreach activities implemented by CSO/NGOs to monitor impact.

2.4: The setup/enhancement of regional networks

- 2.4.1 Review of existing networks in the region (for example, the network of young people, 'EU Jeel Connect' women associations, including young influencers and multipliers from the region, established by the EU Neighbours South programme), their activities and their impact.
- 2.4.2 Formulate and agree on proposals on how to capitalize on what is already active. This may entail agreeing on a strategy to further activate/reinforce/expand existing networks with a focus on climate and environmental 'people to people' outreach.
- 2.4.3 Support, activate and monitor the network's activity to assess impact.

3.3. Mainstreaming

Environmental Protection, Climate Change and Biodiversity

According to Article 25.5 of NDICI-Global Europe Regulation: "Appropriate environmental screening, including for climate change and biodiversity impacts, shall be undertaken at the level of actions, in accordance with the applicable legislative acts of the Union, [...], comprising, where applicable, an environmental impact assessment, including the impact on climate change, ecosystems and biodiversity, for environmentally sensitive actions, in particular for major new infrastructure".

The EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment) and CRA (Climate Risk Assessment) screening classified the action as Category C (no need for further assessment). This related to the fact that this action will be fully dedicated to this crucial crosscutting issue and will therefore not present any risk in terms of environment/biodiversity degradation nor climate negative impact.

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 gender equality and empowerment of women and girls will be mainstreamed and integrated in the design of individual actions, whenever relevant, and will be included in the set of indicators accompanying each action.

Disability

As per OECD Disability DAC codes identified in section 1.1, this action is labelled as D0. This implies that disabilities will be mainstreamed where relevant in the design of individual actions but will not be included in the sets of indicators accompanying these actions.

Other considerations

Human Rights, democracy, conflict sensitivity, peace and resilience and disaster risk reduction will be integrated in the design of individual actions, whenever relevant, and will be included in the set of indicators accompanying these actions.

3.4. Risks and Assumptions

Category	Risks	Likelihood (High/ Medium/ Low)	Impact (High/ Medium/ Low)	Mitigating measures
External environment	Political unrest or major natural disasters derail activities in the region	M	M	The political situation in target countries will be monitored. If required, in-country activities would be temporarily suspended.
External environment	Lack of support from governmental bodies for specific activities (for example in relation to the engagement with the Media)	M	M	Communication and dialogue with central bodies to explain the goals of the engagement activities. If required, re-orientation of certain project activities if they are deemed not feasible in a certain local context
External environment	Lack of response/interest/availability in the target population	M	M	The communication and outreach strategy will be a living document, which may be reviewed, based on lessons learnt during the project lifetime, to ensure that it delivers on its expected results

The following assumptions apply:

- The initiative receives political support at each national level.
- Political conditions allow for close and efficient cooperation with civil society organisations and media.

3.5. Intervention Logic

The underlying intervention logic for this action is as follows:

Improving the health of our planet, and addressing climate change, environmental degradation and the loss of biodiversity requires concerted action at all levels and by all stakeholders, including at the local level, by individuals and community organisations. The importance of these actions is recognised within the EU, through initiatives such as the Climate Pact, an integral part of the European Green Deal aiming to build awareness and to mobilise the population around climate action.

Historically affected by the water scarcity, the Southern Mediterranean region is now also highly affected by the impacts of climate change, biodiversity loss and environmental deterioration. These phenomena are posing real threats not only to the natural environment, but also to productive resources, economies, livelihoods, human health and security. It is imperative to build climate resilience and prevent further environmental deterioration in this region, already struggling with a lot of additional challenges.

IF the biodiversity protection and restoration is to be promoted, THEN an integrated approach comprising better water management, pollution prevention and reduction and more broadly environmental governance is to be adopted;

IF water scarcity and climate change issues in the Mediterranean Region are to be tackled, THEN water management is to be considered from both ends of water production, including NCWR promotion, and efficient use of water (through monitoring and innovative technologies);

Besides massive technical assistance to key stakeholders in charge of promoting sustainable environment and biodiversity's protection and restoration, the proposed action aims to improve awareness and mobilise the local population in similar ways as the Climate Pact does within the EU, based on the identified lack of awareness and engagement on environmental and climate action in the Southern Neighbourhood.

IF the population is more aware of the environmental and climate impacts of their actions and incentivised to adopt more sustainable/less polluting/less carbon-intensive lifestyles, THEN this will promote greater climate mitigation and better environmental protection in the region. IF the population of the region becomes more environmentally conscious, THEN this may contribute towards making their politicians and institutions more accountable for their actions.

IF the approaches taken are culturally appropriate, IF they use the latest research on effective outreach methodologies and are specifically targeted to local contexts, THEN the impact of the outreach campaigns are likely to be deeper and more long-lasting.

Indeed, the approaches will be culturally adapted to each target country, will rely on local expertise and local champion/influencers to promote peer-to-peer exchanges and debates. The intervention will aim at promoting behavioural change, using latest research on the latter, and using positive communication, focussed on benefits to be reaped through more conscious consumer behaviour and improved preservation of natural resources. The changes promoted by the project will need to be actionable, and mindful of people's economic/social/cultural contexts.

3.6. Indicative Logical Framework Matrix

Results	Results chain: Main expected results	Indicators	Baselines (Values and years)	Targets (Values and years)	Sources of data	Assumptions
Impact 1	The overall objective of the programme is to improve the protection and restoration of biodiversity and the environment, while enhancing the resilience to climate change in the Mediterranean region	To be specified at contracting stage (<u>noting that special attention will be paid to the inclusion of indicators disaggregated by sex, at all levels; outcomes, outputs and activities</u>)	2023 Values to be defined during formulation	2027 Values to be defined during formulation	Environmental assessments/studies/reports Report on Marine pollutions indicators in Mediterranean countries (MED POL report) SDG reports by PC countries	<i>Not applicable</i>
Outcome 1	An integrated approach to biodiversity protection and restoration, pollution reduction and prevention is promoted.	To be specified at contracting stage	2023 Values to be defined during formulation	2027 Values to be defined during formulation	Environmental assessments/studies/reports Report on Marine pollutions indicators in Mediterranean countries (MED POL report) SDG reports by partner countries	The initiative receives partner countries' political support at national level.
Outcome 2	Scarce water resources in the Southern Neighbourhood are managed more efficiently, in line with the Barcelona Convention	To be specified at contracting stage	2023 Values to be defined during formulation	2027 Values to be defined during formulation	2.1 Opinion polls/surveys 2.2 Pre/post campaign surveys	The initiative receives partner countries' political support at national level.
Outcome 3	Awareness, understanding and behavioural change by the general public (and specific segments of the population) are promoted, towards improved climate action and environmental protection	To be specified at contracting stage	2023 Values to be defined during formulation	2027 Values to be defined during formulation	31 Opinion polls/surveys 3.2 Pre/post campaign surveys	The initiative receives partner countries' political support at national level. Political conditions allow for close and

						efficient cooperation with civil society organisations and media.
Outputs linked to Outcome 1	<p>1.1: Relevant national regulatory frameworks in the field of pollution reduction are enhanced.</p> <p>1.2: Innovative approaches and successful practices in terms of sustainable environment, biodiversity protection and restoration are identified, disseminated and put in practice.</p> <p>1.3: Cross-regional, regional and sub-regional collaborations on enhanced environmental resources' protection and management are multiplied, including in the framework of the Abraham Accords process</p>	To be specified at contracting stage	2023 Values to be defined during formulation	2027 Values to be defined during formulation		The initiative receives partner countries' political support at national level.
Outputs linked to Outcome 2	<p>2.1: Efficient and sustainable use of water in urban and rural areas is strengthened through capacity building</p> <p>2.2: Innovative technologies for</p>	To be specified at contracting stage	2023 Values to be defined during formulation	2027 Values to be defined during formulation		The initiative receives partner countries' political support at national level.

	improved water sector efficiency are disseminated					
Outputs linked with Outcome 3	<p>3.1 A communication and outreach strategy is established</p> <p>3.2 Communication and outreach actions/campaigns are implemented, as defined in the approved strategy.</p> <p>3.3 The mobilisation of Civil Society is enhanced, through a dedicated support to local CSOs and NGOs</p> <p>3.4 Regional Networks of climate change/environmental champions are activated and supported</p>	<p>3.1 Gender-sensitive communication strategy drafted and approved</p> <p>3.2 Number of outreach campaigns, communication products, outreach events produced</p> <p>3.3 Number of CSOs/NGOs/women organisations selected via the Call for Proposals and supported through the project</p> <p>3.4. Number of influencers, champions and networks activated</p> <p>3.5 Number of women, men, girls and boys, in all their diversity, activists and environmental rights defenders acting as agents of change on fighting Climate change and pursuing environmental justice, at local, national and regional level, disaggregated at least by sex (GAP III key outcome indicators).</p>	2023	2027	<p>Opinion polls</p> <p>Pre/post campaign surveys</p> <p>Project and other relevant reports</p>	<p>The initiative receives partner countries' political support at national level.</p> <p>Political conditions allow for close and efficient cooperation with civil society organisations and media.</p>

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 adoption by the Commission of this financing Decision.

Extensions of the implementation period may be agreed by the Commission's responsible authorising officer in duly justified cases.

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 measures²¹.

4.3.1. Direct Management (Procurement)

The action will be implemented through a service contract.

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).

²¹ [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.

4.5. Indicative Budget

Indicative Budget components	EU contribution (Amount in EUR)
Implementation modalities – cf. section 4.3	
Procurement (direct management) – cf. section 4.3.1	7 000 000
Evaluation – cf. section 5.2 Audit – cf. section 5.3	will be covered by another Decision
Strategic communication and Public diplomacy – cf. section 6	will be covered by another Decision
Contingencies	N.A.
Totals	7 000 000

4.6. Organisational Set-up and Responsibilities

Under the overall supervision of the project management team, a Project Steering Committee (PSC) will be established and convene annually. The PSC will carry out the function of a Project Board. The PSC will consist of representatives of beneficiary countries, the Commission services, the contractor. Moreover, the UfM Secretariat will be invited as an observer.

As part of its prerogative of budget implementation and to safeguard the financial interests of the Union, the Commission may participate in the above governance structures set up for governing the implementation of the action.

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 partner's responsibilities. To this aim, the implementing partner shall establish a permanent internal, technical and financial monitoring system for the action and elaborate regular progress reports (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).

The implementing partner will provide with any requested information within the course of the project monitoring, and he will assist the Commission staff or any responsible agent contracted by the Commission during the implementation of such monitoring exercises.

5.2. Evaluation

Having regard to the nature of the action, a final evaluation will be carried out for this action via independent consultants contracted by the Commission.

It will be carried out for accountability and learning purposes at various levels (including for policy revision).

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 partner at least 3 months in advance of the dates envisaged for the evaluation exercise and missions. The implementing partner 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 dissemination²². The implementing partner 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 countries, 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.

Any actions related to communication and visibility will be coordinated with the strategic communication actions of the EU Delegations, to ensure coherence of narrative and message, as well as horizontal strategic communication.

²² See best practice of evaluation dissemination.

Appendix 1: IDENTIFICATION OF THE PRIMARY INTERVENTION LEVEL FOR REPORTING IN OPSYS

A primary intervention (project/programme) is a coherent set of results structured in a logical framework aiming at delivering development change or progress. Identifying the level of the primary intervention will allow for:

- ✓ Differentiating these actions or contracts from those that do not produce direct reportable development results, defined as support entities (i.e. audits, evaluations);
- ✓ Articulating actions and/or contracts according to an expected common chain of results and therefore allowing them to ensure a more efficient and aggregated monitoring and reporting of performance;
- ✓ Having a complete and exhaustive mapping of all results-bearing actions and contracts.

The present action identifies as:

Action level (i.e. budget support, blending)		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Single action	Present action: all contracts in the present action
Group of actions level (i.e: i) top-up cases, ii) second, third, etc. phases of a programme)		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Group of actions	Actions reference (CRIS#/OPSYS#): <Present action> <Other actions>
Contract level (i.e. grants, contribution agreements, any case in which foreseen individual legal commitments identified in the budget will have different log frames, even if part of the same Action Document)		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Single contract 1	One contract is foreseen
Group of contracts level (i.e: i) series of programme estimates, ii) cases in which an Action Document foresees many foreseen individual legal commitments (for instance four contracts and one of them being a technical assistance) and two of them, a technical assistance contract and a contribution agreement, aim at the same objectives and complement each other, iii) follow up contracts that share the same log frame of the original contract)		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Group of contracts	<foreseen individual legal commitment (or contract) 1> <foreseen individual legal commitment (or contract) 2> <foreseen individual legal commitment (or contract) #>