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ANNEX

of the Individual Measure 2014 in favour of the ENI East and South countries for a Regional Communication Programme Phase II to be financed from the general budget of the European Union

Action Document for Open Neighbourhood: Opportunities, Participation, Engagement and Networking with people from the Neighbourhood area
(Regional Communication Programme phase II)

1. IDENTIFICATION

Title/Number	Open Neighbourhood: Opportunities, Participation, Engagement and Networking with people from the Neighbourhood area (Regional Communication Programme phase II) CRIS number: ENI/2014/037-324		
Total cost	Total estimated cost: EUR 20 million Total amount of EU budget contribution: EUR 20 million for an amount of EUR 15 million from the general budget of the European Union for 2014; and for an amount of EUR 5 million from the general budget of the European Union for 2015, subject to the availability of appropriations following the adoption of the relevant budget		
Aid method / Management mode and type of financing	Project Approach Direct management – procurement of services		
DAC-code	99820	Sector	Promotion of development awareness

2. RATIONALE AND CONTEXT

2.1. Summary of the action and its objectives

The programme OPEN Neighbourhood, which stands for Opportunities, Participation, Engagement and Networking aims at reinforcing the people to people contacts between EU and its Neighbourhood partner countries in the framework of the revised European Neighbourhood Policy.

This programme 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 the Regional Communication Programme. It also seeks to support the general trend (more evident in some partner countries than in others) of modernisation and opening up of the media sector and improving the quality of journalism in Neighbourhood.

The programme will support and sustain existing communication networks and platforms. Through tailored strategic communication activities OPEN Neighbourhood will develop the capacities of the main multipliers of information

and reach out to the general public from partner countries as they are the final beneficiaries of EU development and co-operation initiatives.

It will aim at increasing the sense of interest and ownership of the partnership between Europe and countries and societies in the Neighbourhood area, by using innovative two-way communication tools and platforms, triggering more interaction with the people from and between partner countries, without neglecting traditional communication channels such as print, TV and radio.

With the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, the profile of the delegations of the European Commission has been raised. They have become EU Delegations and currently represent the combined interests of the EU's external action. Therefore, OPEN Neighbourhood will strongly support the EU Delegations public diplomacy and outreach activities in partner countries by providing targeted support to them in communicating EU values, policies and results of EU programmes and projects.

2.2. Context

2.2.1. Regional context

2.2.1.1. Economic and social situation and poverty analysis

The recent deterioration of the macro-economic situation in the Mediterranean region was caused by the economic crisis, soaring food and energy products prices and political and social instability related to the Arab Spring. The countries of the Southern European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) (Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine¹, Syria and Tunisia) are characterized by (i) growth rates relatively lower compared to other developing and emerging regions, with a growth rate of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita which has never exceeded 2.7% on ten-year average, (ii) very high unemployment rates and a low level of participation (about 48% for all countries in the region), particularly for women and (iii) a large informal sector, estimated in some countries at 40% of GDP.

In the Mediterranean countries, living conditions have improved considerably over the last 30 years. Life expectancy, for the entire region, increased from 62.6 years in 1980 to 74.4 years in 2011. Similarly, the infant mortality rate has decreased significantly (from 65.6 (per 1000 births) in 1980 to 15.7 in 2011 for the whole region). In the field of education, the increasing enrolment rates in both the primary school (in average, almost all children in the region are now in school), high school education (where enrolment increased from 56.5% in the years 80-85 to 87.5% on average from 2000 to 2012) and post-graduate (from 16% to 40.5% on the same periods) and increased literacy rates, which rose from 56.3% in the mid-80s to 81% on average over the years 2000-2012, illustrate the efforts and progress made in this area. However, literacy rates of all Mediterranean countries are still lower in comparison to other regions.

Another important achievement of Mediterranean countries is related to the reduction of the level of poverty. Among the developing and emerging countries, Mediterranean countries have, on average, the lowest percentages of the population below the international poverty line poverty. Only 1.8% of people live with less than USD 1.25 per day. Similarly, the Gini index, which gives a measure of the level of income inequality shows that Mediterranean societies are relatively more egalitarian

¹ 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.

than those other regions of the southern hemisphere. However, a significant proportion of the population (10%) is in a vulnerable situation (i.e. living with less than USD 2 per day).

The countries of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) region Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova² and Ukraine, share a common history as young independent countries. The EaP countries are in very different stages of transition, comprising economies still dominated by a large state-owned sector, economies dominated by natural resources, countries which have already implemented intensive reforms to their economic system, and countries continuing with ongoing reform efforts.

Despite progress in some countries and in some fields, the rule of law and human rights remain critical priorities across the Eastern Partnership area. Political will continue to be the key factor determining the development of democracy in Eastern partner countries, and in maintaining and deepening co-operation with the EU.

The 2008-2009 economic crisis strongly affected the Eastern Neighbourhood in many ways: external demand, unemployment, migration, terms of trade adjustment, decline of remittances and in Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). Moreover, the 2008/2009 food price spikes turned the attention of the governments in the region to food security issues and led them to acknowledge agriculture as key contributing factor and hence one of the development priorities in most of them. After a strong growth up to the third quarter of 2011, the pace of recovery slowed down due to the deteriorating external environment and unfavourable domestic factors in several countries. The region's access to international capital markets remains limited and policies in support of private sector development are unequally implemented.

2.2.1.2. Regional development policy

Three years after the Arab upheavals, the situation in the Southern Neighbourhood remains fluid. Despite the unquestioned democratic gains (elections, more vocal civil society), the heated debates about new social contract and the role of religion are strongly polarising Arab societies. The economic situation remains worrisome and social demands still focus on political dignity (freedom, human rights) and improvement of economic situation. The ongoing conflict in Syria with its international repercussions overshadows the whole situation.

The EU's strategic response to the Arab Spring came on 8 March 2011, with the Joint Communication proposing “A partnership for democracy and shared prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean”³. This was followed by the Joint Communication on 25 May 2011 which initiated the launch of “A new response to a changing Neighbourhood”⁴.

In implementing the above, the EU has intensified dialogue and co-operation with regional actors. The EU as co-president of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) together with Jordan, gave a new impetus to the UfM, a unique forum for dialogue among 44⁵ Euro-Mediterranean partners that shares and builds upon the goals of the

² Hereafter referred to as Moldova.

³ COM(2011)200 of 8 March 2011.

⁴ COM(2011)303 of 25 May 2011.

⁵ Austria, Albania, Algeria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, The Czech Republic, Denmark, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Israel, Jordan, Latvia, Lebanon, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Malta, Mauritania, Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco, the Netherlands, Palestine, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Syria,

Barcelona Declaration and complements bilateral relations between the EU and its southern neighbours.

There has been also renewed impetus for co-operation with the League of Arab States (LAS) which is a key forum for finding political and security solutions to conflicts affecting the region. The EU is also developing contacts with the Organisation of Islamic Co-operation (OIC) and supports the sub-regional co-operation, i.e. in Maghreb with the 5+5 Dialogue.

After a long break, UfM successfully held a number of ministerial meetings: in Paris on Women (September 2013), in Brussels on Transport (November 2013), Energy (December 2013), Industry (February 2014) and Environment (May 2014). Others are in preparation. The return to regular Ministerial Meetings is a positive sign expressing a shared objective in establishing deeper regional integration.

Since the launch of the Eastern Partnership in Prague in 2009, the region has seen important progress in a number of areas. Despite this progress, it is essential to continue building sustainable democratic institutions, resolve peacefully protracted conflicts and create a solid foundation for sustainable and inclusive economic growth and job creation.

The Eastern Partnership is a joint initiative of the EU and 6 Eastern European partner countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine) that aims to bring Eastern European countries closer to the EU. It builds on existing bilateral relations between the EU and its partner countries and represents the Eastern dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy.

Following the Joint Communication of 25 May 2011 on "A new response to a changing Neighbourhood" and the Eastern Partnership Summit in Warsaw in September 2011, the Joint Communication "Eastern Partnership: A Roadmap to the autumn 2013 Summit"⁶ guided work until the Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius in November 2013. The Vilnius Declaration set a series of goals to be achieved by the next Summit to be held in 2015.

To implement co-operation in the Eastern Neighbourhood, the Eastern Partnership follows two parallel tracks. The bilateral dimension supports closer bilateral relations between EU and each Eastern partner country. The multilateral dimension provides a forum for dialogue and exchange, via thematic platforms and flagship initiatives and strengthens activities in support of the EU bilateral relationship with each of the Eastern European partners.

Platform meetings are held at least twice a year at the level of senior officials and report to the annual meetings of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Eastern Partnership countries. The work of the platforms may occasionally be promoted through sector-specific Ministerial meetings. Platforms have multi-annual work programmes and can establish panels in order to support its work in specific areas. Panel meetings take place in between the Platform meetings and are of a more technical nature. Partnership with civil society and other stakeholders is also a key priority, and the EU supports the Civil Society Forum and its Working Group meetings. There is also ongoing co-operation with local and regional authorities in the framework of the Conference of the Regional and Local Authorities for the

Sweden, Tunisia, Turkey, The United Kingdom and Libya as an observer. The participation of Syria is currently suspended.

⁶ JOIN(2012)13, of 15 May 2012.

Eastern Partnership (CORLEAP), and with the European Parliament and Eastern Partnership National Parliaments in the Parliamentary component of the Eastern partnership (EURONEST).

2.2.2. *Sector context: policies and challenges*

The EU remains, along with its Member States the biggest contributor in terms of aid delivery on the world stage. Nonetheless, the combined efforts of EU and its Member states are often weakened by the lack of visibility and understanding in the eyes of the final beneficiaries, namely the citizens from partner countries. This is also amplified by the fact that the local media tends to focus on the political clout of the EU, the political messages of its representatives, and tends to picture the EU solely based on what it says about one or other development in the country concerned. In such an over-politicized discussion where newsrooms are dominated by stories of global significance development projects are kept in the background.

Since free, plural and independent media plays a critical role in “translating” the EU activities to the citizens and overall development of democratic institutions in partner countries, there is a good case for the EU to continue working with the main multipliers of information such as the journalists and help them understand the EU’s institutions, policies and co-operation activities. This case is reinforced by the unstable working environment for journalists from partner countries, characterised by low level of autonomy, numerous cases of self-censorship, “instrumentalisation” in general and use of media by various actors on the ground as tools for intervention and control of news and information.

Despite the remnants of the past, democratic transitions in the EU Neighbourhood area have triggered a cultural shift toward “critical professionalism” in journalism. By strengthening the professional capacity of media, increasing access to information and understanding about the various EU initiatives on the ground EU plays a role in supporting this shift and contributes to the overall human and social development in the region thus empowering citizens from partner countries to become the driving force of their own development.

This is a two-way process in which EU must, on one hand, effectively communicate and explain its policies, aid delivery agenda and offer opportunities for partner countries to actively engage in a partnership with the EU, but, on the other hand, EU should continue to uphold the principles of freedom of the press, the right to inform and be informed, which have in 2014 suffered from an overall degradation⁷, jeopardising the path of the reforms’ agenda in partner countries.

The Lisbon treaty introduced significant changes with the view to contributing to a stronger and more unified EU voice on international affairs, including development matters. It has notably anchored the development policy within the EU external action by creating the European External Action Service and giving a stronger mandate to the EU delegations to represent the EU in third countries. The latter has put additional responsibility on the EU Delegations as regards the need to proactively communicate and explain both EU policies and development and co-operation activities to the local audience. Therefore OPEN Neighbourhood will be responding to the new developments by putting much more focus on supporting the work of EU

⁷ World Press freedom index 2014, Reporters without borders, <http://rsf.org/index2014/en-index2014.php>.

Delegations in partner countries and designing and implementing of outreach activities at national level.

The previous two phases of similar programmes (European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument – ENPI – regional information and communication programme 2007-2010 and ENPI regional communication programme), succeeded in increasing the visibility and improving the awareness of European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) partner countries about EU policy. Nonetheless, much remains to be done, especially in the field of understanding the development and co-operation policy linked to the ENP. The overall knowledge and understanding in this field remain weak as pointed by the findings of the four waves of the EU Neighbourhood barometer conducted for the European Commission.

According to its results⁸ “respondents are generally unaware of the EU co-operation programmes with an average of 42.5% for the Maghreb countries, 37.5% for the Mashrek countries and 8.75% in the case of Egypt. This pattern is valid also for the Eastern Partnership countries, where less than three out of respondents are aware of EU support for their countries. At the same citizens from the region show a stable positive attitude towards the EU⁹ which could be reinforced through a better strategic communication of results and the impact of EU aid delivery to the general public in partner countries.

2.3. Lessons learnt

The EU has already implemented a significant number of activities aiming at increasing access to information and raising awareness about its co-operation activities, both at bilateral and regional levels. Nonetheless increase in aid delivery has not automatically led to increase of communication activities and greater understanding about EU and ENP in the eyes of populations from partner countries.

One of the reasons is that in most cases, communication is done by individual projects in a fragmented way leading to a dispersion of results. One of the aims of the ongoing Regional Communication Programme (2011-2014) has been to address these shortcomings, work with the main multipliers of information and raise the profile of EU policies and co-operation and European values in general.

However there is still much to be done, especially in the area of deepening knowledge and understanding among the wider public in partner countries about the EU, its values, policies and co-operation activities.

The Results Oriented Monitoring (ROM)¹⁰ of the ongoing Regional Communication Programme (2011-2014), showed that there is a need to establish a more coherent approach in communication. Despite the well thought out division of labour between the three projects, namely the Journalist training project Media Neighbourhood, the Opinion polling and media monitoring project (EU Neighbourhood barometer) and the Information and Communication support campaign (EU Neighbourhood info Centre), and the progress achieved individually, the three projects have not managed to combine efforts in a synergetic way to increase the impact of their activities and ensure the sustainability of the Programme as a whole. In addition, regional networks

⁸ Special report, EU Neighbourhood barometer, Spring 2013. Report available under <http://euneighbourhood.eu>.

⁹ Press release: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-13-246_en.htm.

¹⁰ Special report on the results of ROM missions for the ENPI Regional Communication programme (2011-2013), March 2013.

established by the projects have had some difficulties in coping with the growing number of projects and initiatives and increasing demand from various EU institutions and partners to focus on results.

The final evaluation of the Regional Information and Communication programme (2007-2010)¹¹ has also recognised the “difficulty to sell the ENPI concept: the complexity and diversity of ENPI, the unknown terminology and the new concepts make it difficult for people to understand (...) To get the message through the subject should be Europe in general - topics of common human interest (...) Factual information about EU projects is not per se interesting, unless it is put into countries’ context (...) and related to people’s lives (...) EU-related subjects are not new, and only highly professional and attractive materials attract public attention. More controversy, more policy analysis, more lessons learnt, more real news-that is what gets noticed”. According to the preliminary findings of the mid-term evaluation of the current Regional Communication Programme EU should put more efforts on highlighting the tangible results of projects within the framework of the values of the European Union and less on attempting to explain complex policy issues to a wider local audiences who “struggle” with EU terminology.

2.4. Complementary actions

The proposed action should be seen in the light of previous projects and policies. It will build on the achievements of the current Regional Communication Programme (2011-2014) as a flagship initiative, which is unique in itself; by developing capacities of main multipliers of information, supporting and strengthening independent journalism and measuring the impact of EU co-operation activities in partner countries it fosters a better understanding among the people in partner countries of EU policies, principles and values and highlights the EU’s initiatives in the Neighbourhood area.

In the field of media development, many organisations - both public and private - have already implemented a range of media initiatives in the EU Neighbourhood. The mapping conducted by the European Commission in 2011¹² on organisations that fund training for journalists in the region will therefore be a useful tool.

The programme will also be complementary to the regional programme “MedMedia: towards media sector reform in the Southern Mediterranean” which supports the creation of an enabling environment for media reform and helps public media in the region realise its potential to act as independent watchdogs.

Moreover, the proposed action will be complementing the activities of the Anna Lindh Foundation, and its valuable work in creating mutual understanding through intercultural dialogue across the civil society organisations in the Southern Mediterranean.

In the Eastern Neighbourhood, the programme will be complementary to the Communication and Visibility Strategy for the Eastern Partnership which aims spreads information about the key principles, activities and benefits of the Eastern Partnership to targeted audiences in a timely manner. This strategy foresees, inter alia, information campaigns for countries about to sign/implement the Association Agreement/Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (AA/DCFTA).

¹¹ Impact evaluation of the ENPI-Regional Information and Communication programme, final evaluation report, 17 May 2010.

¹² http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/neighbourhood/regional-cooperation/journalist/index_fr.htm.

OPEN Neighbourhood will complement similar bilateral activities undertaken by the EU Delegations and tailored to the environments in their host countries. An example of this is the EU Prize for Journalism in Georgia which is appreciated by the media professionals.

The proposed action will also be coherent with the European Commission's overall communication strategy¹³ and the work in this field of the European External action service (EEAS) which has made a significant effort in explaining and promoting the EU external action abroad and the role of EU as a major partner in democratic transition.

2.5. Donor co-ordination

Apart from the EU, a number of other organisations and agencies (World Bank, United Nations agencies, NGOs, etc...) are actively working towards more transparent communication and information environments in the Neighbourhood area. The programme will be exploring possibilities of co-operation in areas of mutual interest.

In line with the European Consensus on Development, the Paris Declaration, the Accra Agenda for Action and the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation harmonisation will be sought in the field of donor co-ordination and sharing of information with other international organisations and bilateral donors to avoid duplication of activities.

This will ensure effective and efficient action and raise the profile of the activities. In practical terms this means co-ordination in partner countries with the Embassies of the Member States and within EU institutions for specific regional activities.

In specific cases, synergies will be sought with activities also developed by other major international donors involved in similar outreach activities.

3. DETAILED DESCRIPTION

3.1. Objectives

The overall objective of this programme will be to support the ongoing process of democratisation in the Neighbourhood area and to contribute to the establishment of a culture of transparency, dialogue and mutual understanding between the people from the EU and its partner countries in the Neighbourhood area, by making the Union's Neighbourhood Policy better understandable and explaining its high relevance to the people in the partner countries and in the EU, in particular with regard to peace, security and stability.

The specific objectives of this programme are:

- To contribute to the improvement of public perceptions and attitudes towards the EU and the development of a more receptive environment for European values and principles in partner countries from the Neighbourhood area. This will be achieved by developing the capacities of relevant multipliers of information and engaging them as well as the general public in a constructive dialogue about the benefits and challenges of the renewed partnership in the framework of the ENP;

¹³ See the Action Plan to improve communicating Europe (COM(2005)494) and the Commission's contribution to the period of reflection and beyond: Plan-D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate (COM(2006)35).

- To support the continued development of free and open opinion formation, and freedom of expression, thus contributing, among others, to the protection and promotion of cultural diversity¹⁴ in the countries of the Neighbourhood area.

3.2. Expected results and main activities

This programme should deliver the following results:

- Improved understanding and awareness of EU and European affairs and values among the population in partner countries.
- Enhanced understanding among EU decision makers of the perception of the EU in partner countries.
- Qualitatively and quantitatively improved media reporting on the EU and EU-related issues in the ENP region.
- Improved level of contacts between media professionals from EU and partner countries and amongst them leading also to a possible inclusion of media professionals/journalists from partner countries into existing university media/journalism training programmes.
- Increased public support by the citizens in partner countries of EU policies and aid delivery activities in the region through the programme's activities.

Building on the strategy underpinning the current Regional Communication Programme (2011-2014), OPEN Neighbourhood will consider journalists and media professionals as the main vehicle for communications and dialogue on a large scale.

To address the earlier mentioned issue of fragmentation in the field of communication the proposed action will focus on strategic communication activities conveying targeted messages through the most suitable media to reach out to the designated audiences in partner countries at the most appropriate time.

With the support of EU Delegations and together with the main stakeholders in partner countries, the programme will be developing annual country-specific communication/intervention strategies. The latter will take into consideration the views of EU Institutional actors, including European External Action Service (EEAS). The programme will combine capacity development initiatives and communication/advocacy (media and public relations) campaigns for designated target audiences. It will be using the widest range of communication tools and electronic media which provide new opportunities for engaging key audiences.

In doing so, OPEN Neighbourhood will take into account the corporate communication priorities of the European Commission¹⁵, and in particular as regards the EU's role in the world (currently "EU as a global player"). In this respect, the European Year for Development should be one of the main actions within this theme for 2015.

¹⁴ Cultural diversity is here understood in line with the 2005 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation Convention on the protection and the promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions.

¹⁵ The political priorities of the European Commission (which are also corporate communication priorities) are defined by the Commission annual work programme and the State of the Union speech, both of which contain a chapter on foreign policy priorities.

Three main clusters of the strategy underpinning OPEN Neighbourhood have been identified, namely:

Cluster 1: Strengthening the capacities of the main multipliers of information

Provide support to journalists and nascent independent media through training, peer-to-peer exchanges, network building and support to efforts to solve problems that hamper the media in the practice of their profession taking into account the specificity of press and media environment in each country.

Cluster 2: Listening to people

Capture and analyse qualitative and quantitative feedback on the state of opinion about the EU, ENP, EU values, policies and co-operation programmes (whether of opinion leaders, the media sector, other specific target groups, or the general public). Capture and analyse the audience response, to the communication activities undertaken within this, and other EU communication programmes.

Cluster 3: Engaging with people

Reach out to the general public through public information and advocacy campaigns including the production, aggregation and targeted dissemination of high quality, relevant and accessible information and communication materials and products with a maximum use of the local languages, with a clear focus on results and impact, and human stories behind the EU initiatives in the region. In the framework of the people-to-people contacts, reaching out also to people in the EU explaining why the Union's Neighbourhood Policy is of high relevance for the EU itself, in particular with regard to peace and security, migration, trade and economic integration.

OPEN Neighbourhood will be using a mix of innovative and traditional communication tools aiming to reach out to a global audience in the Neighbourhood area (such as news aggregators, web-tv and radio, video on demand platforms (VOD) social media interactions, viral campaigns etc.). The programme will be actively disseminating the communication products in local languages. It will complement outreach activities run officially by EU in the region (internet, awareness raising campaigns, media work, etc.) and amplify the impact of communication activities of EU Delegations and of EU programmes and projects run at bilateral, regional and interregional levels, by adopting a strategic communication approach and identifying and featuring human stories behind successful EU and initiatives.

The most likely stakeholders in the proposed programme will be, inter alia, those producers, broadcasters, editors of traditional and new media, as well as intermediaries (organisations or individuals) who may facilitate building the relationship with the specific target groups and in particular young people.

Activities should be complementary to similar work done by EU Delegations, in order to avoid any duplication of efforts. EU Delegations should be involved both in the development and implementation of each cluster and they should also benefit from its results.

Cluster 1 activities

Journalists and nascent independent media will be the main target of this cluster of activities since free and independent media plays a central role in public life and constitutes a fundamental pillar of sustainable democratic human and social development in the Neighbourhood.

In many countries from the region, journalists work under high pressure with low wages and in highly fluid political environments. OPEN Neighbourhood will build on the achievements of previous EU funded journalist training projects, namely the European Neighbourhood Journalism network and MediaNeighbourhood¹⁶. The training components of both projects have been considered as valuable for the professional development of journalists and useful for establishing links with media fellow professionals in the region¹⁷.

OPEN Neighbourhood will continue the process of the professionalization of journalists and journalists-to-be by training, knowledge exchange and networking training thus supporting the rise of independent quality journalism and bringing about increased respect for the work of media professionals. The programme will support in particular on-the-job learning and career development of journalists from partner countries by offering them opportunities for peer-to-peer exchange with journalists working for European media outlets. The EU has put in place similar scheme for international exchange and mobility for students (Erasmus and Erasmus+) which has proved to be one of the most successful EU programmes so far providing opportunities for self-development and cultural understanding.

As part of this cluster a specific collaboration could be engaged with European TV, radio broadcasters, print and web platforms especially when it comes to the design and implementation of the peer to peer exchange of journalists and international broadcasting of the outputs of the programme.

OPEN Neighbourhood will seek opportunities to foster further contacts and exchanges between journalists working in the conflict areas.

To support the communication activities of EU funded projects, the proposed programme will develop the capacities of the project/communication managers of EU funded projects in producing high-quality audio/video material to support a communication campaign – i.e. video footages, press articles/statements reporting on their results/achievements that may be used by the EU Delegations on the ground. The communication seminars for the visibility managers of the EU-funded projects, which are part of the current Regional Communication programme are extremely useful, and their scope will be broadened along with a more professional interaction with the journalists and other multipliers.

Possible focus of activities could be, but are not limited to: on the job training through coaching, mentoring, peer-to-peer/exchanges schemes for journalists, both from EU and partner countries media outlets, support to the creation of crowd funding platforms in view of financing innovative journalism projects linking the EU and its Neighbourhood, creating specific associations/unions of thematic journalists in partner countries and organising specific networking events (webinars, conferences, brokerage events, study tours, communication seminars for project managers of EU funded projects etc).

Specific training schemes could also be designed for a limited number of senior journalists from the Neighbourhood area, who could work as EU affairs correspondents. To ensure the sustainability of this cluster of activities these senior journalists could also potentially be used as trainers of future EU affairs correspondents.

¹⁶ <http://www.medianeighbourhood.eu>

¹⁷ See footnote 11.

Cluster 2 activities

Listening to the public plays a major role and is a prerequisite for engaging citizens from partner countries in an open dialogue about the opportunities and challenges of the Partnership with the EU. By gauging public opinion and monitoring the media in the Neighbourhood area, OPEN Neighbourhood will be providing and analysing the state of opinion and perception about EU values, programmes and policies among opinion leaders, the media sector, other specific target groups, or the general public, and provide a useful feedback regarding the EU initiatives in the region.

Through this cluster of activities OPEN Neighbourhood will be filling the knowledge gap on awareness as regards the EU, its policies and co-operation activities - by providing detailed information on perceptions and attitudes within each partner country on a range of issues relating to the impact of both policy initiatives and communication strategy. Knowledge developed in this cluster will naturally feed in cluster 3 and similar activities developed by EU institutions.

Through face-to-face interviews, online consultations and surveys OPEN Neighbourhood will be tracking, amongst others, the evolution of perceptions of populations in partner countries over time for a range of issues, such as but not limited to: their understanding and knowledge of EU values, policies and aid delivery activities as well as the image and the role of EU as a global actor in the Neighbourhood area. In 2012 the first ever EU Neighbourhood barometer was launched in the region¹⁸. It has so far successfully delivered four waves of regular and ad-hoc opinion polls in various fields (Environment, Energy, Mobility and Migration, Civil society). OPEN Neighbourhood will build on the achievements of the EU Neighbourhood barometer by making a greater use of its results in support of the activities of cluster one and three of this programme.

Possible activities could include, but are not limited to: regular and ad-hoc polls in partner countries on a number of EU related topics. Greater focus will be put on analysis of socio-demographic data and the need take into account the national and local specificities of each country, online consultations/surveys, and also on monitoring and analysis of media both in EU and partner countries, with greater use of the aggregation technology to consolidate information about EU and ENP from relevant websites, thus creating a unique information space/personal newspapers.

Cluster 3 activities

Engaging with the public will be third pillar of OPEN Neighbourhood where the focus will be on the proactive communication activities, raising knowledge and awareness and seeking public support for EU policies and co-operation activities in the region through a greater interaction with broader domestic audiences in partner countries and within the EU through people-to-people contacts. This cluster will comprise **specific annual intervention strategies** to be designed and implemented locally taking into account the specific national contexts. Activities will include general and thematic EU related awareness raising campaigns through various communication channels (conventional and new media, public relations etc.) thus raising the profile of EU co-operation activities values, policies and programmes.

To respond to this ever-growing influence of internet and social media platforms in our partner countries, OPEN Neighbourhood will apply a cross-platform strategy and will have recourse not only to conventional communication channels (press, TV and

¹⁸

Results of this EU funded project are available under: <http://euneighbourhood.eu>.

radio) but will also seek to directly engage with the citizens through innovative social media technologies and platforms appropriate for the local media.

With the advent of new technologies the traditional media outlets are no longer the gatekeepers for news. A dramatic broadband internet development has been observed in the last years in most of the partner countries which has led to an increase of production and use of digital content while bringing global knowledge to the region.

A special effort will be put in content delivery through applications developed for desktops, smartphones and tablets and international broadcasting through facilitation of exchange of audio and video materials of the programme and various video on demand (VOD) platforms. Ad hoc assistance could be provided in developing/designing information material, especially in countries with protracted conflicts and/or having linguistic minorities.

Possible activities could include: design, implementation and evaluation of targeted communication campaigns and through various communication channels (conventional and new media, public relations events, goodwill ambassadors, cultural cooperation activities and exchanges, etc.), in specific EU related thematic areas; production of multi-media packages focusing on social and human interest issues and their active dissemination, amongst others, through a specific Neighbourhood web-TV tool; development, maintenance and update of an interactive multilingual database about EU co-operation programmes and projects in the Neighbourhood region; and an effective centrally managed system for real-time/rapid communications with those multipliers, and opinion influencers on the basis of their national/ regional/topical interests; support function to EU Delegations regarding multi-country instruments best practice and related activities etc.

3.3. Risks and assumptions

The main assumptions of this programme are:

- Media continues to be a powerful tool for communication in the Neighbourhood area and journalists and graduates involved in the activities of the programme (train the trainers operations, pairing schemes, study tours, etc.) continue to be important multipliers of information;
- The EU remains a high interest for the local media and citizens in Neighbourhood partner countries, given its impact on society in partner countries;
- Target audiences in partner countries are not averse to engaging with EU and its outreach activities;
- Representatives from EU funded programmes and projects are eager to engage with the programme and share information about their respective initiatives;
- EU (Headquarters and Delegations) endorse and actively participate in the programme's activities.

The main risks confronting this programme are:

- Political instability, security concerns and evolving political relations between partner countries in certain parts of the region that could make it difficult, even impossible, for some activities to be undertaken/completed, thus affecting the impact of the programme. Depending on political developments,

changes in a sometimes volatile political climate could discourage the media from visible co-operation with the EU;

- Produced high quality audio and video materials are not used by the local media because they are considered as EU propaganda;
- Because of the ongoing reform process in partner countries (including reform of media sector), and the level of freedom of expression in partner countries, journalists participating in the programme cannot stay in their jobs, exercise freely their profession and put in practice the knowledge and skills acquired through the programme;
- Because of the fluid political situation in partner countries outreach activities might not respond to the real needs citizens in partner countries are facing at a given point in time;
- Difficulty to combine the need for communication with a sensitive political agenda and specific context both at national and regional level, given the geographical, cultural and economic differences between the ENP South countries and the countries in the East, which can make it difficult to come up with comprehensive communication products adapted to the context.

3.4. Cross-cutting issues

Activities within this programme will treat as a priority and proactively disseminate the principles of gender equality, especially in the activities targeting the media. Principles of good governance, the importance of a constitutional system based on the rule of law, respect for human rights and civil society participation as well as climate change and environment challenges will be particularly highlighted in the material that will be produced and in the promotion activities.

3.5. Stakeholders

The main stakeholders in partner countries will be European and international media development organisations involved in similar capacity development/communication activities on the ground from both private and public sectors.

Another group of stakeholders important to the objectives of this programme is the European and international academic sector (universities and youth networks and organisations), particularly in journalism universities/schools (professors and graduates), as well as the cultural and creative sectors relevant to the programme, developing joint activities with their counterparts in partner countries.

A wider public in the Neighbourhood area is also considered to be of importance since it will become the recipient of the outputs of the Programme as well as civil society, opinion leaders, co-operation projects beneficiaries, local and international media, online media, social networks groups and EU public in general.

If relevant, partner countries other than ENI countries (Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Chad, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Yemen, Oman, Comoros, Djibouti, Somalia, Iraq, Turkey, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo¹⁹, Albania, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Russian Federation) shall be associated to the activities foreseen by this action, in accordance with Article 16(1) of Regulation (EU) No 232/2014.

¹⁹ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

At the time of writing this action document, EU co-operation with Syrian governmental authorities is still suspended. In case this decision is reversed, the Commission will assess the opportunity to involve Syrian authorities in the implementation. The political instability and/or security situation in Syria will be assessed prior to that in order to confirm the feasibility/opportunity to: a) engage the stakeholders and b) implement the activities.

4. IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

4.1. Financing agreement

In order to implement this action, it is not foreseen to conclude a financing agreement with any partner country, referred to in Article 184(2)(b) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012.

4.2. Indicative operational implementation period

The indicative operational implementation period of this action, during which the activities described in sections 3.2. and 4.3. will be carried out, is 60 months from the adoption of this Action Document, subject to modifications to be agreed by the responsible authorising officer in the relevant agreements (indicative duration of contracts: 48 months). The European Parliament and the relevant Committee shall be informed of the extension of the operational implementation period within one month of that extension being granted.

4.3. Implementation components and modules

Direct management by Headquarters is envisaged for this regional programme. There should be a high level of exchange and interaction amongst delegations participating in the same or similar programmes. The programme will be guided by the feedback from the assessment activities.

4.3.1. Procurement (direct management)

Subject	Type	Indicative number of contracts	Indicative trimester of launch of the procedure
OPEN Neighbourhood programme	Services	3	Q4 2014 and Q1 2015

4.4. Scope of geographical eligibility for procurement and grants

Subject to the following, 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 shall apply.

In accordance with Article 8(3) of Regulation (EU) No 236/2014 and with regard to the regional nature of this action, the Commission decides that natural and legal persons from the following countries, territories or regions may be eligible for participating in procurement procedures: Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates. The supplies originating there may be eligible.

The responsible authorizing officer may extend the geographical eligibility in accordance with Article 9(2)(b) of Regulation (EU) No 236/2014 on the basis of urgency or of unavailability of products and services in the markets of the countries concerned, or other duly substantiated cases where the eligibility rules would make the realisation of this action impossible or exceedingly difficult.

4.5. Indicative budget

Module	Amount in EUR millions	Third party contribution
4.3.1. – Procurement (direct management)	20	N.A
Totals	20	N.A

4.6. Performance monitoring

The actions will be monitored according to standard procedures and ensured through the result-oriented monitoring (ROM) method. Periodic assessment of progress on delivery of specified programme results towards achievement of programme objectives will be carried out by the EU Delegations in the region and Headquarters through monitoring missions.

4.7. Evaluation and audit

A mid-term and final evaluation of programme implementation will be carried out.

Expenditure incurred will have to be certified, as part of the obligations of the contracted parties in the context of implementation of the programme.

Mid-term and final evaluations of the results achieved will be entrusted to independent consultants, and external audits will be carried out if necessary. These evaluations and audits will be funded from sources other than the programme budget.

4.8. Communication and visibility

Communication and visibility of the EU is a legal obligation for all external actions funded by the EU.

Since OPEN Neighbourhood is in itself a communication programme, there is no need for additional communications or visibility activities relating to the programme itself.